

Planning Committee Staff Report

January 28th, 2022



Case No: 21-AREA-0001

Project Name: Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, NuLu Neighborhood Plan

Applicant: Louisville Metro

Jurisdiction: Louisville Metro

Council Districts: Jecorey Arthur (4)

Case Manager: Michael King, Planning Manager

REQUEST

- Approval of the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, NuLu Neighborhood Plan (with Appendix)
- Adoption of the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, NuLu Neighborhood Plan Executive Summary as an Amendment to Plan 2040

CASE SUMMARY

Background

The Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, NuLu Neighborhood Plan was initiated by former Metro Councilmember Barbara Sexton-Smith, Metro Councilmember Bill Hollander, the Butchertown Neighborhood Association, the Phoenix Hill Neighborhood Association, and the NuLu Business Association. The study area comprises the Butchertown and Phoenix Hill neighborhoods, as well as the unincorporated business district known as NuLu. The study area lies entirely within Metro Council District 4, though it was also within Metro Council District 9 when the planning process began in 2019. The plan was developed by the planning and design firm MKSK, in collaboration with Louisville Metro's Office of Advanced Planning and Sustainability.

The planning process began in October 2019 and wrapped up in October 2021. The goal of the process was to engage the residents, workers, and visitors of the study area and proactively articulate a vision for the future. This process built upon previous neighborhood plans for the Butchertown and Phoenix Hill neighborhoods, which were adopted in 2008. Primary topics of discussion were improving connectivity and access to multiple modes of transportation, capitalizing on the environmental asset of Beargrass Creek, and preserving and promoting equity and affordability in the study area as it continues to grow.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges early in the process, causing the planning process to be delayed, but the planning team was able to adapt and overcome to create a final product that reflects the vision of the community.

Unique to this plan, Louisville Metro partnered with the Louisville Downtown Partnership and the consulting firm WSP to create a concurrent study that focused on connectivity between downtown and the regional destinations within the study area. The resulting Connectivity Study is included as an Appendix to the plan and should be included when considering this plan for approval and adoption.

Advisory Group/Community Engagement Process

In accordance with Chapter 161 of the Louisville Metro Code of Ordinances (Neighborhood Development Plans), an advisory group was established to help guide the planning team throughout the planning process. Members of the advisory group were selected by Advanced Planning & Sustainability in collaboration with Barbara Sexton-Smith, the previous Metro Councilmember for District 4, and Bill Hollander, the Metro Councilmember for District 9. The 13-person advisory group was comprised of representatives of the neighborhood associations, as well as local businesses and institutions. The group officially convened during each phase of the planning process, for a total of three meetings, and advised the planning team during the planning process and beyond. Meetings were primarily virtual due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic early in the planning process caused the planning team to adapt to primarily virtual engagements after the first public workshop in January 2020. Online engagement and smaller, outdoor, in-person engagements were the primary tools to gather community ideas and feedback.

An online survey was launched in December 2019 and ran through January 2020, with approximately 400 responses. This was followed by the first in-person workshop at the Waterfront Botanical Gardens in January 2020, which was attended by over 55 members of the community. The first workshop focused on introducing the planning process and gathering information about strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within the study area.

In order to engage with people who cannot be reached with traditional methods, members of the planning team and volunteers from the community conducted a series of canvassing events focused in the Phoenix Hill neighborhood. They spoke to around 30 community members who said that they liked the neighborhood they live in and wish that things like transportation infrastructure and litter could be improved.

The planning team used the information that they had gathered in these initial community discussions to create a draft vision statement and plan recommendations that were shared with the Advisory Group and on the plan website, with another online survey. This survey had fewer responses than the first survey, likely due to the delay in the planning process caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the planning team gathered valuable information on the proposed elements of the plan.

A draft plan was finalized in Spring 2021 and a recorded online engagement and survey were launched in May 2021, followed by two in-person, outdoor engagements in the Phoenix Hill neighborhood. The draft plan was shared with the Butchertown and Phoenix Hill Neighborhood Associations, as well as the NuLu Business Association. Comments from these various engagements were incorporated into the draft plan, which is being presented today.

Vision Statement

The initial vision statement was created from the input gathered at the first community workshop, with refinement from the Advisory Group. The vision statement reads as follows:

Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu are historic, energetic, and resilient urban communities located in the heart of Louisville, where smart growth promotes an environment for everyone to succeed.

The Vision Statement reflects the community values of guiding growth to support livability, improving connections for all modes, welcoming all families and individuals, promoting a green neighborhood and Beargrass Creek, and continuing to be authentic and unique.

Plan Components

In accordance with Chapter 161 of the Louisville Metro Code of Ordinances (Neighborhood Development Plans), a neighborhood plan must contain two mandatory components: Land Use/Community Form and Mobility. Other optional plan components may also be included in a neighborhood plan. The Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan contains four plan components: Land Use/Community Form, Mobility, Beargrass Creek, and Equity & Affordability.

Land Use & Community Form Recommendations

The Land Use & Community Form plan component is focused on evaluating land uses and promoting policies that will preserve the character of the area and enhance quality of life. Land Use & Community Form recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Land Use & Community Form recommendations are as follows:

- LU1 Support residential portions of the community to enhance what makes them unique and build on their character and livability.
- LU2 Infill vacant and underutilized properties, targeting known “gaps” and identify industrial properties that may transition into residential, mixed-use, or commercial.
- LU3 Promote economic development opportunities along the Broadway corridor.
- LU4 Collaborate with active industrial and manufacturing users expected to remain in the community.
- LU5 Prioritize properties along Hancock and Clay Streets as a neighborhood-scale mixed-use spine.
- LU6 Implement local and city-wide policies that prioritize sustainability, with the goal of achieving a standard sustainability certification for the study area, such as LEED.

Mobility Recommendations

The Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan seeks strategies to improve mobility within the area by evaluating existing transportation patterns and general connectivity. Final recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Mobility recommendations are as follows:

- M1 Transform major corridors into two-way streets that reflect Complete Streets principles and prioritize pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders over vehicles.
- M2 Create a seamless multi-modal connection between Broadway and the waterfront using a system of neighborhood-scale streets and alleys.

- M3 Redesign and right-size intersections that hinder connectivity and safety, using traffic-calming measures and techniques.
- M4 Use public art, placemaking, and urban activation to improve connectivity gaps within the study area, and at significant gateways.

Beargrass Creek Recommendations

The Beargrass Creek plan component is focused on promoting policies that will preserve and enhance Beargrass Creek as a local and regional natural asset. These recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Beargrass Creek recommendations are as follows:

- BC1 Restore Beargrass Creek's stream health and natural ecology.
- BC2 Transform the Beargrass Creek corridor into a world-class greenway that connects neighborhoods with nature.
- BC3 Shape development along the Beargrass Creek corridor so new buildings face and engage a revitalized waterfront.
- BC4 Create a regional vision plan for Beargrass Creek that expands beyond this study area and connects to Cherokee Park and the Louisville Zoo.

Equity & Affordability Recommendations

Preserving and promoting equity and affordability in the neighborhood, particularly in housing, were vital to the community's vision for the future, leading to the Equity & Affordability plan element. Final recommendations are based on the study and analysis of existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and the public input process from the planning process. The Equity & Affordability recommendations are as follows:

- EA1 Support multiple housing types in new developments beyond traditional mixed-use or single-family to establish multiple price points.
- EA2 Prevent the displacement of longtime residents caused by development pressures and the effects of gentrification, and welcome new residents of all income groups.
- EA3 Work with local businesses to establish hiring and operational policies that combat systemic racism.
- EA4 Focus on resident health and economic well-being to address the inequities heightened by the COVID-19 global pandemic, and its long-term effects.

Interested Party Comments

The draft of the plan that is being presented today contains several changes requested by the neighborhood associations after their review. Because of the challenges caused by COVID-19, the draft plan was presented online and comments were accepted virtually. Approximately 25 comments were received and changes to the plan were made to reflect those comments.

Staff Findings – Plan 2040

The Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan is in conformance with Plan 2040. More specifically, the recommendations support the following goals of the comprehensive plan:

Community Form Goal 1

The proposed recommendations guide the form and design of development to be responsive to the distinctive physical, historic and cultural qualities of the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu area.

Community Form Goal 2

The proposed recommendations encourage sustainable growth and density around corridors.

Community Form Goal 3

The proposed recommendations enhance the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu area by protecting and integrating open space, watersheds and other natural resources.

Community Form Goal 4

The proposed recommendations promote the historic resources that contribute to the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu area's authenticity.

Mobility Goal 1

The proposed recommendations promote an accessible system of alternative transportation modes.

Mobility Goal 2

The proposed recommendations promote a safe, accessible and efficient transportation system.

Mobility Goal 3

The proposed recommendations encourage land use and transportation patterns that connect the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu area and support future growth.

Community Facilities Goal 2

The proposed recommendations support community facilities to improve quality of life.

Livability Goal 1

The proposed recommendations encourage the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and integration with the built environment as development occurs.

Livability Goal 2

The proposed recommendations promote equitable health and safety outcomes for all.

Livability Goal 3

The proposed recommendations promote equitable access to land use planning and policy-making resources.

Livability Goal 4

The proposed recommendations integrate sustainability and resilience in the community planning process.

STAFF CONCLUSIONS AND REQUIRED ACTIONS

Staff finds that the proposed goals, objectives, and recommendations contained in the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan and Executive Summary are in conformance with the Neighborhood Plan Ordinance (Chapter 161) and Plan 2040. Based upon the information in this staff report, the testimony and evidence provided at the public hearing, the Planning Commission must determine if the proposal is in conformance with Plan 2040.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan (with Appendix)
2. Executive Summary of the Butchertown, Phoenix Hill, and NuLu Neighborhood Plan