

Prepared by Maia Small, Thurlow Small Architecture  
From notes by Andrew Thurlow & Maureen Chlebek  
06.25.2010

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|--------------------|--|
| 6:00 PM            | <b>Welcome and Introduction</b><br>Barney Heath, City of Pawtucket Planning Department   |
| 6:10 PM            | <b>Presentation</b><br>Maia Small, Thurlow Small Architecture<br><br>The Pawtucket Downtown Design Plan :<br>WHAT / WHO / HOW / WHEN / WHY |
| 6:35 PM            | <b>General questions and comments</b><br>from community audience<br><b>Responses</b><br>from Maia Small                                    |
| 7:40 PM<br>8:10 PM | <b>Group meeting adjourned</b><br>Informal discussion in lobby   |

Question 1:  
What is the overall vision?

Response 1:  
There is no design being presented yet, this is only a kick-off meeting, but the next meeting will include design options. There are two things we are collecting now to help us in the design process, existing conditions information (data, maps, etc.) and, from this meeting and comments on the website, information from you and how you experience downtown Pawtucket.

Question 2:  
Is there a parking problem? I notice a "sea" of parking... and the private lots are empty 90% of the time...

Response 2:  
We see more of a parking perception problem and less an amount problem. The lots that are there are either hard to get to, the rules for their use are unclear or they are generally lacking signage. That is simply an impression, though, we are in the process of collecting data so we know more objectively.

Question 3:  
We've had many parking studies done for years and we don't want to redo the issue... the existing information should be available online and then everyone can review it for themselves.

Response 3:  
Part of our work includes gathering all of the available studies, reports and previous planning work and making it available through a new Downtown Pawtucket online database. I also worked on a project a few years ago, an exhibition called "Planning Pawtucket," where we collected and displayed all of the plans for the City from the 1960s to present. That material is also included. The data is currently on an FTP site that should be available online in the next month once the City and Foundation approve that it's ok for it all to be public. Anyone will be welcome to review the material. We are not redoing work; we are currently in the first phase of the work of collecting what has been done and analyzing it.

Question 4:  
Three years ago we went through a similar process with Larry Quick and that program lasted a year with lots of charettes and when it was over there were no results. We want ideas from professionals-- we want to be told. We don't want to be asked questions.

Response 4:  
I too was part of that process and remember it well... two things-- the first is that we wanted to make sure that we offered an opportunity for anyone to be heard. Some people are very involved, but we need to make sure that we open up the process so that everyone can forward their ideas. The second is that we are looking forward to providing ideas and design concepts as is planned prior to the next meeting. We just aren't at that phase yet, but it will happen over the summer.

Questions 5:

Is “design” the right goal? Or should we make the downtown more walkable and business friendly? Maybe this project should be more focused on how to make the City friendly?

Question 6:

When you are designing this project, please consider jogging paths in addition to bike enhancement...

Question 7:

We previously had work done for the MBTA commuter rail stop, is all of the prior study information available?

Question 8:

Was wondering about the map that is shown with arrows, lines and circles-- what does that all mean? It doesn't show accurately that part of Main Street was relocated five years ago.

Question 9:

Once you create the design, will you also have an action plan to implement the design?

Question 10:

I think that considering the tourism impact is really important for this plan. And we need more crosswalks for pedestrians.

Question 11:

It seems like in Pawtucket “you can't get there from here” People are always asking for directions... there is poor signage and it is confusing.

Question 12:

Police and Fire Department are missing in meetings and participation.

Question 13:

It seems that even if we make the downtown look better, we will still have homeless people that congregate-- does this plan address that?

Question 14:

This isn't the first time that the community has been asked to participate again, why isn't the City Planning office doing their job?

Response 5:

For us, “design” is more than how things look, it is more about how things work. In the past, there were expectations that new physical changes would revive the economic conditions-- that didn't work. Physical changes can only go so far, but our goal is to make the urban systems work as well as possible so that things can build on top of them naturally.

Response 6:

Great suggestion, please include that on your form...

Response 7:

Yes. We also have bridge construction updates, RIPTA and RIDOT information. It is important to us that we know all of the projects that are happening right now and hear about developments as they come.

Response 8:

The map is just for indicating the six primary intersections we will be studying, some preliminary ideas about the places where connections can happen, and the important congestion spots we are already familiar with. This will be studied much more in depth this month when we complete our Existing Condition Report. I also noticed the error in the short segment of Main Street just today and it has been fixed on our base map.

Response 9:

Yes, we are considering implementation from the very start in the project. One of the reasons for meeting with the technical advisory committee is to begin to figure out how the pieces can get funded from the beginning. This is also not just one project, it will be organized as a series of pieces that add up to overall change. Our goal is implementation, we're not interested in just having another plan on the shelf.

Response 10:

I agree, this is a great opportunity for the City to improve itself for everyone here, but also it can be a destination. And we will certainly consider areas for better pedestrian crossings.

Response 11:

Traffic patterns and signage are definitely part of the scope of this project.

Response 12:

We will look into how to make connections with them in the development this process through the Planning Department.

Response 13:

Unfortunately, that is outside of our scope of work, but this project is just one of many efforts going on in the city and we hope to collaborate with the other agencies that we know who are already addressing this issue.

Response 14:

In this instance, we aren't asking for the community do to the “work” nor to solve all of the problems, we just want to make sure that the community is aware of the project and has an opportunity to participate and provide input. We are not the planning department, but as hired consultants, are happy to do the work and come up with ideas, but we just want to make

sure that we understand how the city works from your perspective so that whatever we propose will work with the existing conditions of the City. Some of the past efforts maybe didn't work because the expectations were too high that planning could overcome larger economic and social issues in the region. We want to make sure that our ideas fit with the way the city is now so it can grow sustainability.

Question 15:

We recently had a successful show at Mixed Magic in downtown Pawtucket and brought in people from the outside who said that the city looked like it has no energy. Without this event, no one would come here...

Response 15:

First a question, do you think there isn't energy here? I believe that there is-- at Mixed Magic, in the schools, at the YMCA... Sometimes it looks like nothing is going on, but I think there is, it is just hard to see it unless you know where it is. In this project, we hope to design public spaces and consider how event space might work so that the energy is there can be seen, grow, and maybe new things will emerge too. Pawtucket is growing, just very slowly and we want to make it as easy as possible for things to thrive by improving the way the urban systems work.

Question 16:

The downtown, especially Main Street, has a lot of empty storefronts. Is there any way that the City can put pressure on property owners to improve their properties and clean up the sidewalks and streets?

Response 16:

The City is unfortunately limited in what it can do to improve private property. The best we can do is to clean up public spaces and incentive ways for private land owners to develop their properties by making zoning and City regulations easier to navigate. This is in our scope of work.

Question 17:

It is important that everyone understand that this City wasn't planned like so many other ones-- it isn't on a grid, but is instead more like Boston, where patterns came from footpaths over time. We have to think about our city differently.

Response 17:

In many ways we are lucky because we have the historic and organic patterns of a city that grew with lots of little individual decisions. It made our city unique in ways that cities in other places are trying to duplicate inauthentically. We can enhance this, make things work together better, but promote the local character.

Question 18:

As part of the Technical Advisory Committee, I am confident that the team will wrap up prior work and not redo it. Also, I have first hand experience of talking to developers about working in Pawtucket and they are concerned because the downtown isn't walkable. Even though it's early in the process, can you describe some of the types of improvements that you'll consider maybe from your experiences in other places?

Response 18:

Something we see elsewhere that Pawtucket could benefit from is that other cities have clear protocols for where different kind of traffic should flow. When you don't have bike lanes, bicyclists ride on the sidewalk; if they don't it's dangerous because drivers, bikers and pedestrian don't know what to expect. Part of this is putting the systems in place and helping people understand how to use them. For example, I was recently in the Netherlands where people begin riding bikes from a very early age until their 80s-- it is not uncommon to see a woman in heels, riding on a bike with groceries on the front, kids not the back, while talking on a cellphone while riding through downtown Amsterdam. And without a helmet. They can do that there because they know that if they see red pavement, that's where bicycles go-- the cars know, the people and so it makes it safer and more efficient for everyone. They even have traffic signals for bicycles. It's a traffic protocol and we think of it as Complete Street design. RI isn't the Netherlands-- as it completely flat there-- but we can create our own protocol based on who we are and also what we want our community to be like.

Question 19:

I spend four years living in Barcelona and there all you had to do was pay \$10 and you could use any of the City bikes all year long... it was a great program...

Response 19:

Bike programs have been growing in many places, especially in Europe, and they are quite successful. We have the East Bay Bike Path and the Blackstone Valley Bike Paths meeting right here in Pawtucket in the next few years which is a great opportunity to be able to ride 30 miles through the state. We want to make sure that the bicycle system is there for recreation, but also for everyday use. As well, we also know it is important to consider how systems will work here-- just because they work in other places doesn't mean they will fit our culture, that's why hearing from everyone is important so we can best understand our city.

Question 20:

Pawtucket has been victimized by plans-- for example I-95. There are also unresolved issues that can't be solved, but we are now in a place where there isn't a common sense of place as each street has its own appearance. The City has been worn down by previous plans, you may sense the cynicism in the room because in reality, we want you to fix it all, and bring back what we've lost! We don't want you to be burdened by past projects. We know there is no magic bullet. So we imagine that we can focus on the low hanging fruit, the simple things we can change to improve the sense of overall place. All of these hot questions reflect that people care....

Question 21:

This was a nice presentation and I hope that people will listen to Maia-- Maia will you advocate for Pawtucket? For your plan?

Question 22:

We need to get buy-in from the City and State to get this work done... how do we involve them so that we get the stamp of approval for this work?

Question 23A:

Artists have lots of ideas, but they need to be shown that they aren't just dreaming, we would like to do a Street Poetry Festival, how do we make it happen?

Question 23B:

I think his question is how will the project be funded?

Response 20:

Perhaps "plan" as a word isn't the most appropriate, really we are just trying to make sure that the systems of the City will work. In the US, unlike other places in the world, our cities grow by a set of individual decisions set in a framework that is organized in each place. From having seen other places you can understand a variety of ways that cities evolve. In India, it is perhaps the extreme of lots of individual decisions adding up to very big and organic places; in China, perhaps the opposite where the government is in control of land and makes decision from the top down. Here in America, we need to make sure the systems support what we want as a community and discourage what we don't want. Sometimes it's the little things that aren't hard to fix that can have a big impact-- helping overcome the small code violations, the small road blocks. We want to help make it easier. Part of why plans in the past didn't work was they expected too much from making physical improvements. Physical changes have to be based on the existing and real conditions of a place. This project is just a set of pieces that can partner with other projects already underway so that what is already happening can continue. And the tough questions don't bother me, I would much rather that then have no one here-- that would be a much bigger concern!

Response 21:

Absolutely. I have been a Pawtucket advocate from some time and would never put out work that I am not proud of. You can count on me to sell this to anyone anywhere who will listen. I want this project to be as productive as possible.

Response 22:

This is a very important issues and something I hope you all can help with. We want help from the community in the political process and we hope to by getting people involved from the very start. Also, our goal with the Technical Advisory Committee is to make those linkages early in the process so that the components of the work are ready to go.

Response 23:

We will work for it to happen, but I also hope that we hear from our local dreaming artists, who think beyond the pragmatics-- we want big and creative ideas, we want to think with a big vision-- some projects will be little things that can happen now, but we also care about a long term future and we want to have the best for Pawtucket. In the Netherlands, they talk about planning for the next five years, but also for the next 200. This project will happen in little and big pieces so that we can organize the work around projects that can get funding from the various public agents, but also partner with the private projects that are already happening. We think these things aren't incompatible or distract from one another, but rather you can add them together and get more.

**Meeting Attendees**

|                                       |    | <b>First Name</b> | <b>Last Name</b> |
|---------------------------------------|----|-------------------|------------------|
| Community                             | 1  | Janice            | McHale           |
|                                       | 2  | Rick              | Goldstein        |
|                                       | 3  | Ron               | Travers          |
|                                       | 4  | Cait              | Lozano           |
|                                       | 5  | Edward            | Brown            |
|                                       | 6  | Jim               | DeRentis         |
|                                       | 7  | Nadia             | Mahfuz           |
|                                       | 8  | Richard           | Kazarian         |
|                                       | 9  | Joan              | Hausrath         |
|                                       | 10 | Marguerite        | Pile             |
|                                       | 11 | Paul              | Mowry            |
|                                       | 12 | David             | Ethansen         |
|                                       | 13 | Katherine         | McPhillips       |
|                                       | 14 | Mike              | Burns            |
|                                       | 15 | Karen             | Marshall         |
|                                       | 16 | Samantha          | Best             |
|                                       | 17 | Andrew            | Pierson          |
|                                       | 18 | Michael           | Lozano           |
|                                       | 19 | Liliana           | Fijmau           |
|                                       | 20 | Jim               | Ruthowski        |
|                                       | 21 | Karen             | Scott            |
|                                       | 22 | Jack              | Carney           |
|                                       | 23 | Derek             | Callamati        |
|                                       | 24 | Bill              | Hunt             |
|                                       | 25 | Paul              | Oudette          |
|                                       | 26 | Ricardo           | Pitts-Wiley      |
|                                       | 27 | Toba              | Weintraub        |
|                                       | 28 | Jan               | Besette          |
|                                       | 29 | Mark              | Besette          |
|                                       | 30 | Wilma             | Smith            |
|                                       | 31 | Patti             | McAlpine         |
|                                       | 32 | Daniel            | Montanez         |
|                                       | 33 | Susan             | Rivet            |
|                                       | 34 | Andrew            | Springarm        |
|                                       | 35 | Laura             | Burbett          |
|                                       | 36 | Thomas            | Mann             |
|                                       | 37 | Morris            | Nathanson        |
|                                       | 38 | Joseph            | Haskett          |
|                                       | 39 | Mathew            | Kierstead        |
| Design Consultants                    |    | Maia              | Small            |
|                                       |    | Andrew            | Thurlow          |
|                                       |    | Maureen           | Chlebek          |
|                                       |    | Nate              | Kelly            |
|                                       |    | Jason             | Hogue            |
| City of Pawtucket Planning Department |    | Tanya             | Kelley           |
|                                       |    | Barney            | Health           |