

1 **Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Focus Group Five: Real Estate Development & Property**
2 **Management**

3 **Wednesday, October 21, 1:30pm-3pm**

4 **Meeting Summary**

5 Focus Group Participants:

- 6 • Kim Young, Pheasant Run Apartments and Willow Hills Subdivision
- 7 • Jennifer McCloskey – The Hills Harrisonburg
- 8 • Mary Masserley, Matchbox Realty
- 9 • Luke Smith, Funkhouser Realty

10 City Department Participants:

- 11 • Adam Fletcher, Planning & Community Development Department
- 12 • Brad Reed, Public Works Department
- 13 • Tom Hartman, Public Works
- 14 • Jim Baker, Public Works
- 15 • James Wininger, Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation
- 16 • Alleyn Harned, Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee

17 Other Participants:

- 18 • Moderator: Thanh Dang, Public Works Department
- 19 • Notetaker: Danielle Morris, Public Works Department

20
21 1) Thanh welcomed the group, described the purpose, and guidelines for this meeting.

22
23 Thanh introduced City department representatives.

24
25 2) Participants introduced themselves.

- 26 a) Kim Young, Pheasant Run Townhomes. Student community, also get young
- 27 professionals and graduates.
- 28 b) Jennifer McCloskey, The Hills. South View, North View, and Stone Gate. Jennifer new
- 29 to the area.
- 30 c) Luke Smith, Funkhouser Real Estate Group. Works with homeowners and potential
- 31 investors. Went to JMU and has lived here as a young professional.
- 32 d) Mary Masserley, Matchbox Realty. Main clients are students in downtown Harrisonburg.

33
34 3) Thanh – In a typical week, what places do you, students, staff, residents need to go to and
35 how do they get there? What influences the decision to bike, walk, take the bus, or drive?

36 a) Kim –

- 37 i) Kim lives in Rockingham County. When she comes to Harrisonburg it's to and from
- 38 work, conducting business, doctor's appointments, and groceries. She does have
- 39 employees have moved into the City to be closer to downtown and events. Residents
- 40 bike, walk or take the bus, going to JMU, to downtown areas. For new homes that she

41 has built in Willow Hills, new homeowners purchase in the City to be closer to JMU
42 where they work. They like being closer to restaurants, Farmers Market, and
43 downtown. The Bluestone Trail offers more benefits and a lot of Pheasant Run
44 residents walk or bike to JMU along the trail. Before the Bluestone Trail opened she
45 had noticed more residents biking on South Main St bike lanes and walking along
46 Main St to JMU when JMU closed campus to vehicles. Now with the trail, if you're
47 not an expert and don't feel comfortable biking on South Main St you can use the trail
48 as an alternative. Lots of residents run for exercise along the Bluestone Trail, and
49 walk to campus. Since JMU is becoming more bike/walk friendly, the students are
50 starting to become so.

51 b) Luke –

52 i) Lives a couple blocks from downtown. Spends a lot of time downtown at restaurants
53 and events. Goes to Westover Park. If going downtown or to Westover Park he walks
54 or bikes, and thinks others in his neighborhood do the same.

55 ii) If he goes to his office, he drives. He works near University Boulevard & Reservoir
56 Street and would like to see more sidewalks and bike lanes in the area.

57 iii) He would like to try shopping at Costco on his bike with a trailer in the future, if he
58 felt better about biking on Reservoir St or East Market St.

59 iv) Sometimes he grabs lunches around his office and might drive. He knows that new
60 construction requires sidewalks to be constructed, and believes it would be a
61 challenge to retrofit new sidewalks in that area, but seems like that area could use
62 them. He sees visitors staying at nearby hotels and they are walking to restaurants and
63 are walking in the street, which doesn't look good and can't be comfortable. Thinks
64 this area could be more walkable. What's happening with Reservoir Street?

65 (1) Tom – Reservoir Street Project will provide more sidewalk and bike lanes on
66 Reservoir between south city limits to Neff Avenue, and only sidewalks between
67 Neff Avenue to University Blvd. Also, pending grant funding there's a new Safe
68 Routes to School project planned for Spotswood Elementary that proposes
69 sidewalks along Reservoir St. in that area.

70 c) Jennifer – Is new to the area and drives mostly between three properties. She has tried to
71 walk, but it's a lot of time. Residents take the bus because it's easier than taking your car
72 to JMU campus. Some residents are runners, but some don't feel safe running in the area
73 due to site development taking place. A lot of residents are choosing to go to the fitness
74 center to run/ walk because they don't want to be on the main road. They would prefer to
75 be outside.

76 d) Mary – Most of her residents are going to campus. Has parking garages under Urban
77 Exchange and there are as many bicycles as there are cars. . They have had to install more
78 bike racks in the garage and outside for visitors. Residents also go Farmer's Market and
79 downtown. It's free to park a bike in the garage, but costs money to park a car.

80

81 4) Thanh – Some people purchase a bike and then it gets left parked for a long time. What do
82 you think influences people's decision to ride their bike?

83 a) Mary – The weather is the biggest influence.

84 b) Luke – The weather and where you are going. If you're going to campus or around
85 downtown or to one of the parks on the west side, it is easy, faster, and fun to get around

- 86 on your bike. But if you have to go to East Market St or Reservoir St, you'd probably hop
87 in your car because it's a further distance and it's safer.
- 88 c) There was nodding in agreement from the other participants.
- 89 d) Jennifer – A lot of her residents don't choose to drive to campus because of the parking
90 situation on campus. It takes them longer to drive and park and walk to class. To take the
91 bus and get dropped off where they need to go is a lot easier.
- 92 e) Luke – And the expense of the parking permit.
- 93
- 94 f) Luke – He was on the Bluestone Trail recently and asked Kim if Pheasant Run has a bike
95 kiosk.
- 96 i) Kim – Yes.
- 97
- 98 ii) Kim-
- 99 (1) Agrees that weather and where they are going influences whether they bike or not.
100 Resident scan enroll in the bike share program for \$30 per year for unlimited 12
101 hour use. There are 6 bikes available for use. Helmets are available for free. Has
102 about 30% increase of use on that program since last year.
- 103 (2) Has seen more and more resident's bike more often.
- 104 (3) Residents from Park Apartments next door are also using the Bluestone Trail.
105 They are walking through Pheasant Run to get to the trail, and she sees one
106 gentleman walk by around the same time every day.
- 107 iii) Brad – is the bike share program open to anybody?
- 108 (1) Kim – Yes. Open to all – sign up online.
- 109 iv) Luke – Has been seeing more bike shares in other cities he has visited, and stations
110 are available everywhere. Thinks that Harrisonbug would be a good candidate for that
111 for a bike share program. Would be nice if City had a Bike Share program with
112 stations around the city. It could be good for citizens and visitors. Might also be good
113 for people who don't want to make a commitment to buy a bike.
- 114 v) Kim – That actually was what started her bike share program. Each year, there were
115 10-15 bikes per year that got left behind. She thought initially of doing a program on
116 her own to offer free access to bikes. But then saw a bike share program when she
117 traveled somewhere, and thought this partnership in a more structured environment
118 would keep the bikes better maintained, avoid problems with being stolen or lost, or
119 liability issues. So she entered into a partnership with Zagster. Zagster could expand
120 bikes and kiosks to other locations on campus and downtown.
- 121 vi) Luke – if you are visiting town it would add to the experience.
- 122 vii) Kim –
- 123 (1) There are people, like her, who wouldn't necessarily bike for the physical activity,
124 but would for the enjoyment. Some people want to bike to experience the area
125 without driving.
- 126 (2) Bike share gives them an opportunity without the financial investment.
- 127 (3) Pheasant Run has also partnered with Bluestone Bike & Run for events to show
128 residents opportunities in the area.
- 129
- 130 5) Thanh – What are important transportation factors that influence where future residents
131 choose to move within the City?

- 132 a) Luke –
133 i) If you have family, how busy the roads are.
134 ii) If you are JMU student or a parent, then bus routes are important.
135 iii) Doesn't hear about bus routes from many other people.
136 iv) Biking is important to people who are bikers.
- 137 b) Mary –
138 i) Bus routes are huge. She has spoken with Harrisonburg Public Transportation about
139 bus routes and it doesn't seem that setting up bus routes in certain areas is not as
140 critical to them. But to a parent or to a property manager, where you put that bus
141 route is critical. Where you put the bus route, and if it's not a direct route to campus it
142 could make or break a property.
143 ii) Urban Exchange does not have a direct bus route to campus. It is a roundabout route
144 to Cloverleaf Shopping Center, etc. To get to JMU, you have to either walk, bike, or
145 have a car. So for parents who don't send their kids here with cars anymore, that is
146 make or break during lease signing and where they choose to live. Feels there is
147 insensitivity when talking about bus schedule. It would be nice if the Urban Exchange
148 had a direct route to JMU to serve the 192 apartments that are primarily students,
149 even if only a couple times a day.
- 150 c) Jennifer – Arboretum Trail is nice so students are not on the main road walking from
151 Stone Gate Apartments. Parents like that because their son or daughter can walk or bike
152 away from the main road.
- 153 d) Luke – Even if you're outside of downtown, being able to walk around safe at all hours
154 of the day without being worried about being mowed over a by a vehicle.
155
- 156 6) Thanh – What factors make a place more “walkable”?
157 a) Luke –
158 i) Sidewalks help a lot.
159 ii) Crosswalks at busy roads.
160 iii) Slow traffic patterns.
161 iv) On Bruce Street, sometimes crossing 42 you have to wait a while. People are flying.
162 The way it comes around the bend, feels that it is probably more risky to cross in a
163 car.
- 164 b) Mary –
165 i) Shrubbery. Sometimes in the downtown area, it's hard to see around shrubs at night.
166 Is that the homeowners or the city's responsibility?
167 ii) Taking care of sidewalks for trip hazards.
168 iii) Parking spaces have been added in front of Benny's and it's a car hazard, pulling out
169 into traffic to see around the cars.
- 170 c) Luke – the sidewalk on the west side of the parking garage on Liberty Street. Half of the
171 sidewalk is taken up by the holy bushes. Two people can't walk side by side.
- 172 d) Thanh encouraged additional comments like this from the participants. If there are other
173 problem areas please email them to Thanh.
174
- 175 7) Thanh – What transportation infrastructure improvements have been positive for the
176 community?
177 a) Kim –

- 178 i) Bluestone Trail is a nice asset. It's great to see different factions of the community
179 using it. Not just students. It's pulling all the aspects of our unique community
180 together for everyone to enjoy. It's a fantastic addition.
- 181 ii) Likes all the pocket parks in different residential areas, makes it more accessible to
182 walk or bike to those facilities.
- 183 iii) Appears that there are a lot of people using bike lanes and sidewalks along Stone
184 Spring Road. Notices more people out and about.
- 185 iv) Improvements in downtown area that is more aesthetically pleasing gives more
186 character to the downtown area.
- 187 b) Luke –
- 188 i) Ice House Expansion and landscaping is nice.
- 189 ii) Is at Westover and Hillandale Park a lot – disc golf and trails.
- 190 iii) There are a lot of doggy bag stations and it's great for dog owners.
- 191 iv) As downtown is starting to expand to the north and Liberty Street is starting to get
192 more used.
- 193 v) And more use along Wolfe Street with the food trucks and new brewery, hopefully
194 will get more people walking along that corridor.
- 195 vi) JMU making it more difficult to drive across campus with the gates makes it nicer to
196 bike across.
- 197 c) Kim –
- 198 i) If you're not a JMU student and you don't have access to get around campus, it is
199 difficult to get onto campus. She volunteers for an organization, and can't park
200 anywhere. Attending the housing fair can be unbearable to cart all of her things. It
201 restricts the interactiveness, but is probably better for JMU.
- 202 ii) Thinks people like being in small town, where people are approachable, all of these
203 additions to parks, paths, beatification projects, makes people want to spend more
204 time in the city and invest in the area.
- 205 iii) Thinks all the projects have enhanced the city.
- 206
- 207 8) Thanh – Have you experienced, observed, or received feedback about difficult places and
208 routes to access places in Harrisonburg?
- 209 a) Luke –
- 210 i) Holy bushes along Bruce St parking deck on Liberty Street.
- 211 ii) University Blvd & Reservoir Street needs more sidewalks. He would walk to
212 restaurants during his lunch breaks if he didn't have to walk on the road or through
213 parking lots. A lot of people in his office drive to lunch too.
- 214 iii) Trying to cross Route 42 from the downtown area to go to Westover Park is not very
215 safe. The two crosswalks are Market St and MLK, which is far away. Suggested
216 considering a tunnel under Route 42 for pedestrians and bike riders.
- 217 b) Kim – concerned about trails in Purcell Park. Doesn't recommend that people walk
218 through there even as it's getting dark. Says some of the area is questionable. At one
219 point in time, there were homeless people closer to the Interstate.
- 220 c) Mary – Reservoir Street between 1pm – 5pm, there is a lot of traffic coming off Evelyn
221 Byrd Ave and they stay in the right lane which causes a lot of backup.
- 222 i) Adam – a lot of it is due to students trying to get home to Chestnut Ridge Dr. and
223 other student housing to the south.

- 224 ii) Brad – should be taken care of with the Reservoir Street Project.
225
- 226 9) Thanh – What could be done to encourage people to walk, bike, or take transit more?
227 Infrastructure & Education, Enforcement, Encouragement?
228 a) Kim –
229 i) Half of her residents don't even know there is a park just beyond Pheasant Run. If
230 residents at other properties are the same, many students don't know beyond what
231 they can't see.
232 ii) With Bike Share Program, Pheasant Run lets the students ride the bikes, get on the
233 trail and explore Purcell Park.
234 iii) Suggests education and visibility about the city parks, trails and amenities in the city
235 with brochures
236 iv) She markets the Bluestone Trail heavily for getting to Purcell Park and to JMU.
237 v) Doesn't think most college students know what's around them. A lot of students don't
238 know about Westover Park.
239 b) Luke – Lots of students have no idea about the parks and what they offer – Westover
240 Park offers fisbee golf, fooseball, weight room, etc.
241 c) Kim – There is overall lack of knowledge about the amenities in this area.
242 d) Thanh – Summarized the discussion that if residents, including students, knew about
243 amenities near them, they might walk and bike more.
244
- 245 10) Thanh - In addition to a community map, what other ideas do you have to share this
246 information with neighbors, customers, etc?
247 a) Mary – Create phone app to show nearby attractions. Students don't use paper maps, but
248 have their phones with them 24/7.
249 b) Kim – App of things to do in the area. The app might feature different things to do in the
250 area to expose students to different things to do.
251 c) Mary - If Bike Share Program set up around Harrisonburg, each station could have
252 electronic informational kiosks to tell people what destinations are near the kiosks
253 d) Luke - Encouraged YELP reviews for parks and community centers – Is used a lot in
254 other places, but not used as much in this area.
255 e) Brad – Do students/ customers not use google maps or similar tools to search for what's
256 nearby?
257 i) Kim – they are not focused on looking unless something specific is suggested to
258 them.
259 ii) Mary – you have to market the park like you would market an apartment and show
260 what you have to offer.
261 f) Kim – subscribes to the City Bike/Walk Monthly Newsletter and it has given her
262 information that she relays to her residents by facebook, etc. It's a great resource that
263 would be of interest to other people.
264 g) Jennifer – It would be nice to give residents a paper Move-In brochure about the
265 amenities to give to new people moving in would be nice.
266 h) Thanh asked if an organization in the City could create that and distribute a brochure to
267 the apartment complexes, would they distribute it?
268 i) Jennifer – Yes, she would distribute it because it helps her residents.

- 269 ii) Kim – Thinks that JMU would want to help promote this information as an alternative
270 to drinking
- 271 i) Thanh – this information will be relayed to Parks & Recreation Department
272
- 273 11) Thanh – What programs have benefited you/your clients? What programs do you wish to see
274 more of, or are there new ones that you would like to see?
- 275 a) Kim – Has partnered with Bluestone Bike & Run who has come and given bike and trail
276 safety, etiquette, and maintenance talks at Pheasant Run for residents.
- 277 b) Luke – Thinks those workshops are happening frequently in our area at other bike shops
278 too. Pointing people to the local bike shops for information to be aware of events.
- 279 c) Mary – Works also at Harrisonburg Fire Department and gives out informational
280 brochures about brain injury awareness, bicycle and pedestrian safety, helmets, etc. that
281 she could get for apartment complexes to give out. Contact her.
282
- 283 12) Thanh – If you were given a list of new bike/ped projects and programs needed in the City,
284 how would you prioritize which projects should be funded? How would you decide what is
285 the most important? What considerations would you make?
- 286 a) Kim –
- 287 i) She would look concentration of housing and retail areas, using population numbers
288 ii) Would put new sidewalks where there are people.
- 289 b) Luke – connect areas where the most people spend the most time
- 290 c) Kim – Agrees with Mary on buses. Pheasant Run gets infrequent service on weekends
291 and over the summer it's on demand. Many residents are choosing not to have cars. More
292 people walking and biking, and affordability is a bigger issue. Not having buses run
293 regularly is a big negative for residents.
- 294 d) Adam – what are the vacancy rates over the summer?
- 295 i) Kim – if they have jobs they are staying. Many are taking classes over the summer.
296 She sees a drop only in July and August, but consistent numbers the rest of the year.
- 297 ii) Mary – doesn't have a ton of drop. Over the summer, students may go home for a few
298 days and come back because their apartment is home. Not having a direct bus route to
299 campus is a tough sell.
- 300 e) Kim – thinks the gate system on campus is forcing more and more people not to have
301 cars. Pushing people to walk, bike, and take transit more. Is the City finding increases in
302 bus ridership? Or is it the same?
- 303 i) James – not really tied to gate system. Number of students has remained about the
304 same, but changes with new housing off campus.
- 305 ii) Kim – says when Pheasant Run first opened, they were giving out passes for 4
306 parking spaces per apartment. Now she may give out 2 or 3 per apartment. She is
307 seeing more bikes and is purchasing more bike racks and is seeing more people at bus
308 stops. Maybe in her community it's not making an impact over the whole system.
- 309 iii) James – ridership has gone up over the last 10 years, maybe nearly doubled. And
310 more people are riding the bus from one side of campus to the other.
- 311 iv) Mary – She has spoken with Reggie at Public Transit, he said that Urban Exchange
312 doesn't have any students who ride the bus. Mary says it's because they have no
313 direct routes.

- 314 v) Kim – says she has hourly service, but there’s not a direct route either from Pheasant
315 Run. On demand service was problematic for her residents.
- 316 vi) James – Acknowledged the big hurdle involved with asking riders to transfer buses.
- 317 f) Thanh summarized the priorities discussed
- 318 i) Prioritizing biking and walking infrastructure based on concentration of housing
- 319 ii) Connecting where people spend the most time
- 320 iii) Improving the bus schedule and provide more direct service
- 321 g) Kim is glad Pheasant Run did the lighting along the trail within Pheasant Run.
- 322 i) Tom Purcell Park is technically closed at night which is why it was not lighted.
- 323 h) Kim suggested connecting to what’s in existence and making it better. Add on and extend
324 to new location. Enhancing and increasing what is there, to make a longer trail, rather
325 than start at a whole new place.
- 326
- 327 13) Thanh – Have we missed anything? Any questions for staff or from staff to the participants?
- 328 a) Adam – In communities, how many are not students and what mode of travel are they
329 using the most?
- 330 i) Kim – only about 2-3% are not students and they drive
- 331 ii) Mary – about 40% are not students (grad students on up) and they utilize all modes of
332 travel. They have chosen to live downtown to be within walking and biking distance.
333 They may get into their car to go to work, but they chose this as home to enjoy the
334 downtown amenities.
- 335 iii) Jennifer – little to no non-students. North View has more non students due to lower
336 pricing and her company will be raising the price.
- 337 b) Luke – Really don’t have a use for the bus system because he really doesn’t see a place to
338 bus to. He has situated himself where he wants to walk to places.
- 339 c) Kim – Willow Hills is a good example of an opportunity where residents may utilize
340 trails if they led to downtown, campus etc. Perhaps there is an opportunity to use the
341 Bluestone Trail by Stone Spring Road, but it is rather intimidating with the hills and the
342 traffic. Thinks people would use trail system to get to downtown, campus, Purcell, etc.
- 343 d) Luke - Hills are a barrier for biking/walking. We live hilly area. Thinks that may be
344 where more bus routes should go, to connect those areas to parks and downtown. Thinks
345 more frequent bus lines would be good. Could charging more help? Are the buses free?
- 346 i) James – Only “free” to JMU students. Transit has a contract with JMU and it costs a
347 \$1.00 to ride the bus for non-JMU students (per ride), ridership has stayed steady for
348 the past few years.
- 349 e) Alleyn – Do you use the trails only during the day?
- 350 i) Kim – yes, I don’t encourage using them at night due to no lighting, I don’t feel safe
351 or secure at it gets closer to dusk. I don’t worry about it during the day. Feels safe and
352 comfortable during the day. Its utilized frequently and a lot of traffic. Feels unsafe
353 during downtime when people are not around.
- 354 ii) James – Arboretum not lit at night, very treacherous.
- 355
- 356 14) Thanh – summarized next steps for the Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan.
- 357 15) Adam – Went over the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and encouraged them to come make
358 comments, etc. Also, made them aware of the Bike/Ped Plan.