

Dorie Bolze

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Subject: Item 11- BOMA- Thank you for your leadership to recommend a Small Area Plan for the West Harpeth rural area
Attachments: Resolution 2020-172 on Special Area plan and staff rec.pdf

Dear Franklin Board of Mayor and Aldermen
Franklin Planning Commission
Eric Stuckey, Vernon Gerth
Planning and Engineering Departments

RE: Item 11 on BOMA agenda, Sept. 22, 7pm: Support BOMA's recommendation for a Small Area Plan to update Envision Franklin for the West Harpeth rural area

The Harpeth Conservancy would like to lend its support to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen for its leadership these past few months regarding two development proposals, one on Brownland Farm that was just withdrawn and another on the Campbell property tied to annexation that is adjacent to two century farms and historic sites. Both of these development proposals highlight the need for a Small Area Plan as described in option C of this resolution for this last rural area of Franklin. This Northwest quadrant of the city, from Brownland Farm in the East to Gentry Farm in the West north of highway 96 West, contributes greatly to the historic agricultural heritage of the city and county. We also support the Planning Commission endorsing BOMA's resolution and officially calling for a Small Area Plan to be completed.

As several aldermen noted in recent discussions on the major thoroughfare plan for this rural area, "this area needs a different feel" from West Haven and "we need to go back to the drawing board on how to get this area developed more in keeping with the area North of 96." Yet, Envision Franklin currently states that "the continuation of the traditional residential development pattern found at Westhaven" is what is appropriate for this rural area which the plan defines as the Northwest Quadrant of Mack Hatcher Parkway, between Hillsboro Road and New Highway 96 West to the edges of the UGB (p. 38). The number of emails citizens have sent to BOMA, the Planning Commission, and to their County Commissioners over the past several months and the current 5550+ signatures on two petitions related to these proposals indicate a broad public support for a Small Area Plan as described in the resolution.

As we noted in our analysis and comments provided to the Planning Commission and BOMA in late August regarding the floodplain alteration proposal for the Brownland Farm development proposal, a special area plan for the NW quadrant for Envision Franklin could focus on how to support agricultural and lower density uses of this rural area. This translates into much reduced cost in infrastructure needs from roads, schools, sewer and drinking water expansion, and public safety risk from flooding. The 2018 study by [Dr. Sims of the U. of Tennessee on the loss of farmland across the region](#) highlights the economic value to integrating into land use plans ways to prioritize low density and agricultural based land uses.

The Small Area Plan could focus on how to invest in the historic and rural character that includes the deep history tied to the equestrian industry in Franklin, Williamson county and the region. HC participated in and supported Williamson County's recently adopted Williamson2040 plan that has a key goal to preserve the rural character of the county. Infrastructure costs in terms of schools and roads were studied in this plan and by others in this region. A key recommendation as well is to work on a rural agricultural plan that prioritizes rural land uses such as agri-hoods, small farms, the equestrian industry and more. HC staff are part of the Greater Nashville Regional Council's Regional Environmental Roundtable that will soon be discussing a regional conservation strategy. One aspect of this broad effort could involve pulling expertise together regarding rural land conservation strategies as part of land use planning across the region. This would be helpful to the Small Area Plan effort.

The equestrian industry is a major part of this area's history and current culture. The city invested in this with the purchase and creation of Franklin's Park at Harlinsdale Farm. On Brownland Farm, Cissy Anderton and her family created and have run a renowned horse show business for nearly 60 years. This includes the high caliber Music Country Grand Prix show jumping competition that is also the featured charity fundraising event for Saddle Up. A 2010 [Williamson Herald](#) story notes that \$30 million is generated in local revenue from horse industry, much from Brownland Farm. The process of the Small Area Plan could foster ways that the city and county could adopt features in land use plans and ordinances and adopt programs that incentivize this important industry and other agricultural uses to the local economy that have little burden on infrastructure.

The resolution states that the Small Area Plan would actively involve the public in discussions of future land use, local road network, floodplain management/flood resilience, and public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure to provide details to guide future development in the area. As we mentioned in our comments, Harpeth Conservancy will gladly provide our help and expertise to work with the city, county and agencies on a floodplain resiliency plan for the Harpeth River and West Harpeth river from downtown Franklin to Highway 100 Davidson county line as a key need for any future development in the rural Northwest quadrant of Franklin. A floodplain resiliency plan needs to include climate change predictions to prevent future flooding, address current flooding caused by man-made conditions (such as roads, bridges, culverts and older development requirements), and protect the natural river floodplain by limiting cut and fill. Designing resilient communities is planning for the future and is a major lesson from the May 2010 flood, especially as this region continues to grow.

As a point of clarification on process, how does BOMA and the PC handle annexation and rezoning proposals in the area during the process of working with the community and experts on the Small Area Plan?

Again, thank you for your leadership and we will gladly offer our expertise, networks, and time to work with the city on the Small Area Plan and in others ways we are of value to the city and county and the community.

Sincerely,

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