

Plan Lee Highway (PLH) April Neighborhood Focus Groups Summary

Monday April 8th, 6-7pm - East Falls Church

Monday April 8th, 7:30-9pm - Lyon Village and N. Highlands

Tuesday April 9th, 6:30-7:30pm – Leeway Overlee, Yorktown, Tara-Leeway Heights

Tuesday April 9th, 8-9pm - Langston, Yorktown, Tara-Leeway Heights

Thursday April 11th, 6-7:30 - Old Dominion, GlebeWood, Waycroft-Woodlawn, Waverly Hills and Donaldson Run

Thursday April 11th, 7:30-9pm - Cherrydale and Maywood

**Lee Highway Alliance Office
4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208**

Focus Group Overview

As part of PLH Phase 1 Existing Conditions analysis, initial focus group meetings were held the week of April 8-12, 2019. The meetings were organized around six groups of neighborhoods (see Neighborhood Map in Attachment 1) within the Planning Area. Participants were primarily members of the PLH Community Forum (CF), Lee Highway Alliance (LHA) Community Advisory Committee and people who had applied to become at-large members of the PLH CF. Participants included a few property owners, business owners and representatives from the 14 Civic Associations located within the planning area.

The initial focus group meetings were intended to be small groups to encourage focused discussion and detailed feedback. The meetings followed a structured format, either 60 or 90 minutes in length, and were facilitated by a member of the consultant team (AECOM). The same general agenda topics was used for each meeting, including discussion of land use, urban design, transportation and housing (See Agenda in Attachment 2).

These initial focus group meetings were held to obtain perspectives on the priorities, preferences, concerns, and desires of each neighborhood individually. Specific areas of interest were as follows:

- The characteristics that define/support quality of life in their specific neighborhood.
- Perceived opportunities and challenges to achieve the planning goals in each neighborhood.
- How change could happen while being authentic to the character of each neighborhood.

As part of the dialogue, participants reviewed maps that showed “opportunity sites” that had been previously identified by community members in the 2016 visioning efforts, PLH public engagement activities, and/or LHA walking tours or other forums. These opportunity sites were described as places where the community had previously said the PLH development goals could best be met. Participants were asked to discuss the opportunity sites and suggest potential refinements based on their understanding of the neighborhood’s concerns and desires.

Discussions were meant to help build understanding of critical issues relevant to the goals of the Plan and were not intended to arrive at a decision or conclusion about redevelopment. Key points from these

conversations will be used as one data point to identify the key considerations in analyzing the corridor's existing conditions and help tailor future engagement efforts with a broader group of neighborhood participants. Additional neighborhood focus group and larger public meetings will be held throughout the process to identify areas of change in each neighborhood, and ultimately describe the level of change.

If you are interested in learning more about and attending neighborhood-based focus group meetings. Please sign up on the [PLH website](#) to receive future meeting notifications.

Key Takeaways from Participant Comments

A summary of key participant comments is provided below for each of the focus groups. It is important to note that, as a result of overlapping neighborhoods, some people participated in multiple focus groups.

East Falls Church

- The East Falls Church Area Plan is a good plan; recommendations and next steps from the plan should be actioned and implemented in a timelier manner.
- East Falls Church provides important transit connections to a much broader area by bus and Metro. Bus service (connections and frequency) to East Falls Church Metro station from other neighborhoods should be improved so that transit can be used by more people in the corridor area and single occupancy vehicle travel/trips can be reduced.
- Traffic flow on the 1st and last mile, connecting Leeway to East Falls Church, should be improved so there is quicker and convenient access to the station and improved livability in the Leeway neighborhood.
- Thoughtful architectural design and transitions between uses and buildings mitigate impacts of adding height and bulk.
- The most important design issue is to 'fix the strip malls' and improve the aesthetics of the architecture, design, and ease of parking. A good mix of tenants was also mentioned as an important element of redeveloping commercial areas.

North Highlands and Lyon Village

- Both Lyon Village and North Highlands have established, tight-knit neighborhood communities.
- North Highlands and the north part of Lyon Village have varied heights, densities and scales, with a range of dwelling types from single to multi-family; however, the southern part of Lyon Village has more single-family residential. There is concern about 'tear-downs' and traffic cutting through the neighborhood in Lyon Village.
- There is concern about the future of the single-family area north of Lee Highway, in terms of redevelopment, and that more engagement from those residents is needed.
- The existing duplexes that are being renovated are contributing important 'missing middle' housing.
- There may be locations where redevelopment with more height and density than what is currently there may be appropriate, but it would have to complement and add to the existing

neighborhoods and be served by infrastructure that supports various mobility options and provides better ways to cross Lee Highway to access metro.

- Current transitions in the neighborhood between multi-family and single-family are abrupt. To accommodate new density, transitions in scale are important.
- It's important to a) create finer grain east-west connections, particularly north of the highway (including adding sidewalks where missing), to improve connections for people west of Mom's market to access the store, community center and park without relying on Lee Highway; b) design for a safer and more inviting environment (landscape buffering and trees) for pedestrians and cyclists; c) increase access to more green space and parks; and d) improve existing parks.
- Lee Highway dominates and detracts from the overall character of the neighborhoods; traffic calming and improving the overall public realm would go a long way to improving the character of both neighborhoods.
- Lee Highway is too wide here and cars move too fast. Ideas for bike lanes, on-street parking, trees and/or linear parks (like pedestrian islands in Cherrydale) were mentioned.
- School bus stop and crossing the corridor is unsafe.
- On-off ramps to I-66 are unsafe for pedestrians.

Leeway Overlee, Yorktown, and Tara-Leeway Heights

- Enhancing the experience and safety for pedestrians and improving the look and feel of the commercial uses along the corridor would have far reaching impact for enhancing the existing character of these neighborhoods.
- Increased height and density along the corridor would be acceptable if done well aesthetically and with good transitions to adjacent residential uses, including smaller scale buildings such as with multiplex buildings or townhomes, or factoring in transitions within the plot such as open space.
- Size and configuration of commercial parcels in these neighborhoods are challenging as a result of being very narrow and not very deep.
- Garden City is not as well maintained as residents want it to be, noting that the alley is in poor condition and trash collection is an issue (from noise and timing of collection).
- Two places considered as models for the corridor included Shirlington – for the way commercial building design and parking worked together, and Greenville, SC, quoted as the 'best small town in the country' – largely a result of its expansive tree canopy.
- Significant mobility challenges are present in this area for all ages. Participants are interested in a range of improvements to enhance the overall pedestrian experience including widening sidewalks, undergrounding utilities and improving crossings at different dangerous intersections with pedestrian activated lights, protected pedestrian islands and 4-way stops (particularly at 26th Street).
- Greening the corridor was considered a priority, as was using 'greening' as an opportunity to improve stormwater management.
- Participants identified new opportunity zones such as using the radio tower in Halls Hill for open space and identified the CVS parking lot as an underutilized piece of land.

- The commercial strip with Bray and Scarff store could be an opportunity area.

Langston, Yorktown, Tara-Leeway Heights

- This area is rich in history and culture that has not been told in full yet but offer many opportunities for building on the past and incorporating in the future. Repurposing, updating and integrating existing buildings with historic/cultural significance rather than fencing off is desired.
- These neighborhoods have strong commercial anchors but need traffic calming and other interventions to improve the pedestrian experience and encourage people to walk more. Places that facilitate engagement with all members of the community are a priority.
- With a strong commercial economy, there are many local businesses along the corridor that are established and contribute to the overall health of the corridor's economy. Redevelopment may put pressure on that.
- Primary issue for businesses is parking. There is interest for proactive solutions.
- There is interest in new types of housing but want old and new designs to 'speak to each other,' and not clash.
- A notable increase in property taxes could be a serious problem for small business owners.
- No 'cookie-cutter' designs. Participants are interested in new defining landmarks and public art to enhance the area.
- There is a lack of spaces and places for kids and teens, and this should receive increased focus.
- Favorite places include Lee Heights and Shirlington, for the trees and greenery, mix of buildings, free parking, and general feel that invites walkability.
- Participants questioned whether there is a 'highway cool'? For example, Albuquerque is keeping old signs and other commemorative pieces, but increasing mobility options and making the urban environment more attractive and livable.
- East Falls Church does a good job of integrating commemoration into the built environment – the Target sidewalk has plaques about the quarry that is subtle but contributes to retaining history and memories of place.
- Some participants commented that there is enough affordable housing in Langston.
- Accessory Dwellings (ADs) are a key tool for improving affordability.
- Rezoning to permit more types of houses could promote alternatives to the 'McMansion' style development, with particular focus on duplexes.
- Transitions in activity (loading, service and dumpster areas) are considered as important as transitions in scale.

Old Dominion, GlebeWood, Waycroft-Woodlawn, Waverly Hills and Donaldson Run

- Some participants commented that neighborhoods need more people to attract and retain more amenities, while others noted an increase in population brings more cars and traffic.
- Smooth transitions are important. While no specific maximum height or density was mentioned, it was preferred that new development respects the existing residential neighborhoods and

existing sightlines and views. Some participants noted that height and density can be stepped back to protect views and visibility of sky.

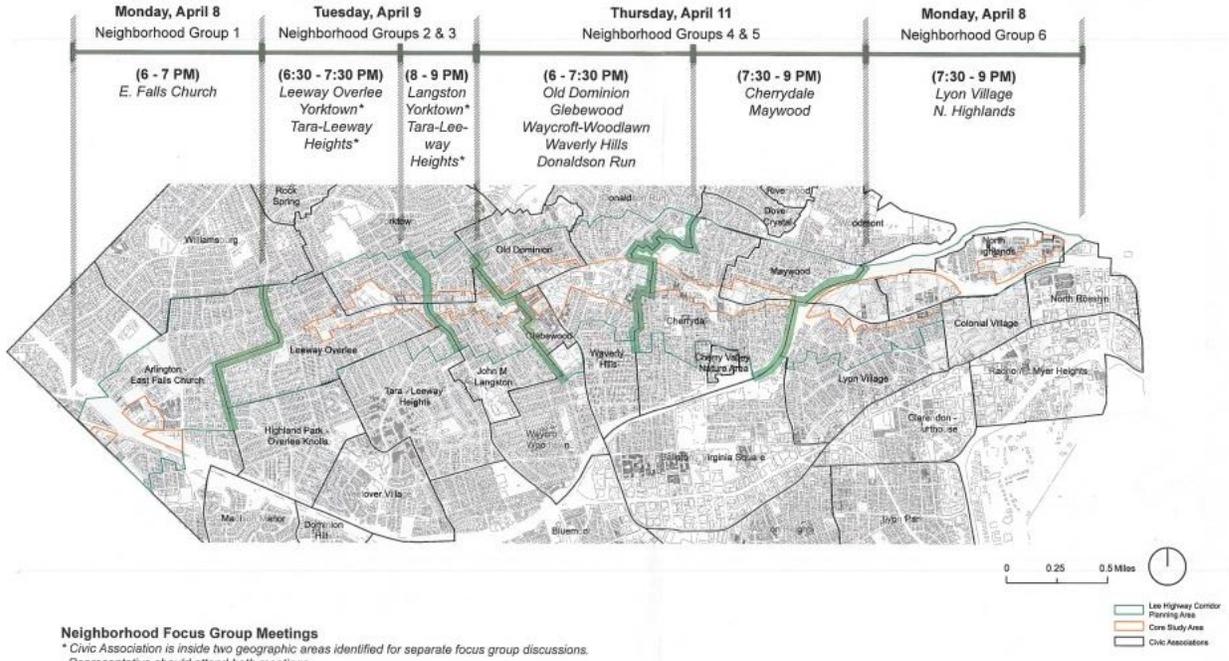
- Infrastructure to support new development should be provided.
- There are lots of different types of character along the corridor and this variation should be maintained.
- Sometimes character is clear directly from the corridor while other times it is tucked back within the neighborhood.
- Cherrydale, with its street trees and underground utilities, is a positive example, however, undergrounding is expensive and could require increased scale of redevelopment to implement.
- Opportunity zones boundaries should be fluid to a certain extent.
- ROW should be allocated specifically for mass transit and for slower, human powered modes.
- Improved transit service east-west along the corridor would be popular and suggested a free shuttle like the circulator, which, considering the topography, could help with aging in place.
- Teaser parking or structured parking is preferable, and surface parking in front of retail should be avoided.
- Current and future forms of parking should be flexible for re-use – considering how future needs for parking will change – and plans and zoning should accommodate this.
- There are dangerous slip lanes on Lee Highway (i.e. right turn off Old-Dominion).
- It's important to plan for new mobility options now.

Cherrydale and Maywood

- Both neighborhoods have a long-standing history with historic buildings and architecture that strongly contribute to the character of Cherrydale and Maywood.
- There is an engaged community and sense of place that is a clear strength for the neighborhoods.
- Future development is only an issue if it clashes with the existing fabric, and that if it preserved, or through adaptive re-use, made use of existing buildings, it is positive.
- An attractive mix of old and new was emphasized, as was a high-quality design aesthetic that transitioned well to adjacent residential uses off the corridor.
- Improvements for pedestrians and cyclists are critical (i.e. increasing the number of safe intersections and crossings, enhancing the experience through wider sidewalks, pedestrian islands and less pavement on Lee Highway).
- There are no safe routes for kids to walk to school.
- More green space should be added to allow for gatherings and community events. The planning effort should be very clear about what to keep 'as a whole' or as part of 'adaptive reuse.' People in Cherrydale still love the historic buildings, like the fire station, and some newer buildings like the Bromptons.
- There is interested in partnering with developers of new projects to trade sensitive height or density for public benefits like public space and better architectural aesthetics.

- Some participants commented that there are too many car dealerships and that the size of parcels and building design clashes with character of Cherrydale.
- New buildings do not need to look like old buildings and should have complementary materials and common patterns and proportions in doorways, fenestration and façade articulation (similar language).

Attachment 1 – Map of Focus Groups



Attachment 2 - Agendas

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)

Neighborhood Focus Group 1 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 8, 2019 (6-7 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: E. Falls Church

Background and Purpose

Throughout public engagement activities to date, the community has voiced general support for protecting and celebrating the character of existing neighborhoods, improving walkability, encouraging mixed-use redevelopment and improving the diversity of housing choices throughout the corridor. There were also a wide variety of concerns and potentially conflicting perspectives on the potential changes to Lee Highway and the scale of new development. As part of the Existing Conditions Analysis for Phase 1, discussions about these issues will be held to understand the priorities, preferences and perspectives of each neighborhood individually. Specifically, the purpose of these focus group meetings is for the County, VDOT and Consultant team to better understand how each community:

- Describes the characteristics that define/support quality of life in their specific neighborhood.
- Perceives opportunities and challenges to achieve the planning goals in each neighborhood.
- Describes how change can happen while being authentic to the character of each neighborhood.

The discussion today will help build the team's understanding of how each neighborhood views critical issues, relevant to the goals of the plan, and is not intended to arrive at a decision or conclusion about redevelopment. The dialogue will help tailor future engagement efforts, which will eventually inform the alternative land use scenarios that will be developed for the Core Study Area in Phase 2.

Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

5 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

20 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

25 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

5 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)

Neighborhood Focus Group 6 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 8, 2019 (7:30 - 9 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: N. Highlands and Lyon Village

Background and Purpose

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Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

10 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

30 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

30 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

15 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)
Neighborhood Focus Group 2 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 9, 2019 (6:30 – 7:30 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: Leeway Overlee, Yorktown and Tara-Leeway Heights

Background and Purpose

Throughout public engagement activities to date, the community has voiced general support for protecting and celebrating the character of existing neighborhoods, improving walkability, encouraging mixed-use redevelopment and improving the diversity of housing choices throughout the corridor. There were also a wide variety of concerns and potentially conflicting perspectives on the potential changes to Lee Highway and the scale of new development. As part of the Existing Conditions Analysis for Phase 1, discussions about these issues will be held to understand the priorities, preferences and perspectives of each neighborhood individually. Specifically, the purpose of these focus group meetings is for the County, VDOT and Consultant team to better understand how each community:

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Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

5 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

20 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

25 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

5 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)
Neighborhood Focus Group 3 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 9, 2019 (8-9 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: Langston, Yorktown, Tara-Leeway Heights

Background and Purpose

Throughout public engagement activities to date, the community has voiced general support for protecting and celebrating the character of existing neighborhoods, improving walkability, encouraging mixed-use redevelopment and improving the diversity of housing choices throughout the corridor. There were also a wide variety of concerns and potentially conflicting perspectives on the potential changes to Lee Highway and the scale of new development. As part of the Existing Conditions Analysis for Phase 1, discussions about these issues will be held to understand the priorities, preferences and perspectives of each neighborhood individually. Specifically, the purpose of these focus group meetings is for the County, VDOT and Consultant team to better understand how each community:

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Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

5 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

20 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

25 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

5 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)
Neighborhood Focus Group 4 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 11, 2019 (6 - 7:30 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: Waycroft-Woodlawn, Old Dominion, GlebeWood, Waverly Hills, Donaldson Run

Background and Purpose

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Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

10 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

30 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

30 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

15 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss

Plan Lee Highway (PLH)
Neighborhood Focus Group 5 Meeting

4620 Lee Highway, Suite 208

Date/Time: April 11, 2019 (7:30 – 9 PM)

Neighborhoods Discussed: Cherrydale and Maywood

Background and Purpose

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Agenda:

5 minutes-

Introductions, overview of purpose and format of the discussion.

10 minutes

Participants fill out brief survey

30 minutes

Facilitated discussion of survey responses. Volunteers will be asked to share the answers they gave and draw out common storylines or illuminate points of conflict.

30 minutes

Identifying opportunities and challenges to meeting planning goals in each neighborhood.

15 minutes

Additional topics participants wish to discuss