

Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on Thursday, October 5, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. in the Murray City Council Chambers, 10 East 4800 South, Council Chambers, Murray, Utah.

The public was able to view the meeting via the live stream at <http://www.murraycitylive.com> or <https://www.facebook.com/Murraycityutah/>. Anyone who wanted to make a comment on an agenda item may submit comments via email at planningcommission@murray.utah.gov.

Present: Jake Pehrson, Chair
 Lisa Milkavich, Vice Chair
 Ned Hacker
 Jeremy Lowry
 Maren Patterson
 Travis Nay
 Michael Henrie
 Susan Nixon, Senior Planner
 Zachary Smallwood, Senior Planner
 Elvon Farrell, CED
 Christine Richman, GSBS
 Erika Chmielewski, GSBS

Members of the Millcreek Planning Commission:
Shawn LaMar, Chair
Victoria Reid, Vice Chair
Christian Larsen
Diane Soule

The Staff Review meeting was held from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Planning Commission members briefly reviewed the applications on the agenda. An audio recording is available at the Murray City Community and Economic Development Department Office.

The first portion of this meeting was a joint discussion including the Millcreek Planning Commission and GSBS Consultants.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Murray North Station Area Plan Workshop 1 - Discussion on Preliminary Concepts/Directions and Implementation Steps for the Murray North Station Area Plan

Christine Richman, principal planner with GSBS Consulting, introduced herself and project planner Erika Chmielewski. GSBS was hired by Murray City, Millcreek City, and the Wasatch Front Regional Council to complete a station area plan for the area around the North Murray TRAX station. She explained that state law requires stationary plans for jurisdictions with fixed rail stations to address development within a half-mile radius of the platform. The purpose is to identify a shared community vision and implementation steps, focusing on opportunities, constraints, affordable housing, and short and long-term strategic recommendations. She showed a map of the half-mile radius around the station, encompassing parts of Murray and Millcreek. She pointed out the major roadways and transportation infrastructure, such as I-15, surrounding the area that impact connectivity. She noted there has already been a new development, so the plan aims to build on that momentum and identify further improvements. Once complete, the plan must be adopted by the city councils and get certified by the Wasatch

Front Regional Council and Utah Transit Authority. The timeline is a 20-year vision but with an emphasis on actions for the next five years.

Ms. Richman confirmed the half mile radius circle on the map represents the area encompassed by the plan, extending into Millcreek since the radius overlaps both cities. She explained the planning process has three main phases:

1. Gathering information - They spent a lot of time walking the area, talking to stakeholders, reviewing existing plans, and conducting the first phase of community engagement to understand what's working well and what could be improved.
2. Identifying the preferred approach - Based on the input gathered, they are starting to identify the preferred direction moving forward, which is why they are meeting with the Planning Commissions now.
3. Creating the plan - The next stage will involve developing the graphics, maps, and implementation plans to provide a roadmap for achieving the shared vision of the future.

In terms of what has been done so far, Ms. Richman said they mapped and analyzed data on existing land use, transportation, crime statistics, demographics, and zoning. They also conducted stakeholder interviews and public open houses. Key takeaways were desires for safer and more walkable neighborhoods, a mix of housing options, new development that fits the neighborhood character, and utilizing the station as an asset. She noted crime data showed this area has higher crime rates than other parts of the cities. The early feedback will help shape the preferred approach as they move into creating the final plan.

Vice Chair Milkavich asked what the timeframe was for the data used in the analysis.

Ms. Chmielewski said they used one year's worth of data in the official analysis, but they did look at around five years, noting that they've seen an increased trend in crime for the area.

Vice Chair Milkavich said she thinks there was less crime before the area was developed. With the new development there is more crime. She says that more recently, crime has been addressed differently, so they're hoping to see a dip in crime.

Ms. Richman noted that crime statistics lag since they are not reported in real-time. The team also analyzed other safety factors like crash data, pedestrian and bike safety issues, and community assets. They launched a website to communicate with the public, conduct surveys, gather input on maps, and enable conversations. They held several in-person events including open houses, outreach at the climbing gym, and giving away coffee/food on the TRAX platform. Stakeholder meetings included city staff, police, UTA, residents, business owners, and regional experts. One-on-one interviews were also conducted. She showed the existing land use map, noting the area's industrial history. When the station first opened, this was one of the first areas to see new housing and transit-oriented development, transitioning away from industrial uses. That development momentum has continued to spread outward over time.

Commissioner Hacker asked how much property within that half mile is owned by individuals or businesses, Mill Creek, Murray City or UTA.

Ms. Richman said that most of it is owned by private landowners. UTA owns a small portion of parcels, but Salt Lake County owns a large portion.

Ms. Richman provided a comprehensive overview of the ongoing discussions regarding the development plans for Birkhill Boulevard. This area is currently being considered for redevelopment by Murray and Salt Lake County in collaboration with the Utah Transit Authority (UTA). The proposed plan involves extending Birkhill further south and redirecting it towards Main Street, a move aimed at improving traffic flow in the vicinity. Notably, there is an existing approval for a new apartment complex on a parcel owned by Evergreen, and Salt Lake County is actively engaged in negotiations with potential developers to introduce housing on their own parcel. This endeavor may also entail the acquisition of part of UTA's property, which currently contains contaminated soils requiring cleanup, along with potential environmental concerns due to its prior use as a public works facility. She emphasized the importance of careful land use planning to minimize conflicts arising from adjacent industrial activities. This involves ensuring a smooth transition from industrial to transit-supportive uses to enhance overall livability in the area. Additionally, the plan aims to improve the connectivity of the grid network, addressing the numerous roadways and railways that currently act as barriers hindering access to the station for neighboring communities. The presented map showcased the age distribution of housing in the area. Lighter shades represented older single-family homes, remnants of the pre-industrialization era, while darker reds signified newer multifamily developments that have emerged since the introduction of the tracks line. Ms. Richman noted a scarcity of ownership opportunities, with a predominant presence of rental options. Striking a balance between renters and homeownership was identified as an area of concern. Furthermore, there was an urgent need to enhance access to social and economic opportunities, particularly groceries and services, especially for families with children residing in the area. Ms. Richman highlighted the importance of providing access to recreational facilities, especially for children and youth. Additionally, she emphasized the necessity to expand transportation choices and connections, enabling various means of reaching the station, such as biking and walking, in order to reduce reliance on conventional driving and parking. Environmental considerations were also brought into focus, with a call to address contamination and enhance Big Cottonwood Creek, creating more space for recreational activities and trails. Additionally, there was a proposal to augment the tree canopy in the area, as it was comparatively sparse compared to other parts of Murray and Mill Creek, which would further contribute to overall livability. Ms. Richman discussed safety and security concerns in the area, as depicted in the crime heatmap. Darker areas on the map represented higher crime rates, which, although partially influenced by the concentration of households, were notably elevated compared to other regions within the two cities. This underlined the need for careful attention to safety measures and community policing efforts.

Ms. Richman expressed concern over Brick Gate Apartments, noting that area has experienced crimes, particularly those related to traffic. They clarify that not all the incidents in these locations are traffic-related, but they emphasize that there is a distinct issue in certain areas, particularly evident in specific spots they point out. She stresses the importance of forward-thinking urban design strategies. This includes implementing measures to enhance visibility, ensuring adequate lighting, avoiding the creation of blind alleys, and establishing seamless connectivity within the area. She also highlights the necessity of access control and regular maintenance to foster a safe environment. Ms. Richman mentioned the dead-end areas within a portion of the location, indicating that these may warrant attention. She addressed the problem of vacant storefronts, which can give the impression of low activity levels despite a significant residential population. She expressed a desire to explore methods to revitalize and enhance these aspects of urban design, particularly in light of potential new developments.

Commissioner Larsen mentioned the proposed road connecting north Cottonwood Creek, which goes through an approved high-density area. He wondered if that was included in the plan. Ms. Richman indicated that it is part of the plan.

Vice Chair Reid asked about responsibility for adding more trees along the creek, whether that falls to developers, cities, or grants.

Ms. Richman responded it depends on whose property it is. For private property, requirements could be incorporated into development approvals. For public trails, it could be funded through capital improvement plans. Grants are also available from organizations like TreeUtah to increase tree canopy.

Vice Chair Reid followed up asking specifically about Millcreek's ownership along Big Cottonwood Creek and whether it's private or industrial.

Ms. Richman clarified that Millcreek does not own any of the land along the creek in this area.

Ms. Richman stated that connectivity is a major consideration in the station area. In addition to the obvious barriers like major roads and rail, there are also gaps in the sidewalk network and insufficient safe crossings of barriers like State Street. Millcreek's general plan includes a potential new mid-block crossing on State Street that UDOT seems receptive to currently. More crossings are needed to safely access bus stops like the common buses used by the neighborhood south of the station. Riders going south currently have no safe crossing options to legally access the bus stop traveling southbound. UTA has committed to adding more bus stops to reduce the distance between stops and crossing opportunities. Other connectivity priorities include improving bike and micro-mobility networks which are currently challenging. Urban design and placemaking could better identify the station location which is hard to find currently. Enhancing the identity and edges of the station area would make it more visible and welcoming.

Vice Chair Milkavich asked who would be responsible for improving the station's visibility - the city or the state, since placement on state property or right-of-way poses challenges. She noted potential limitations around municipal sign codes and expenses. She inquired about barriers if the city wanted to place something on private property to better identify the station location.

Mr. Smallwood responded that Murray could place signage or other identifiers on city right-of-way, but noted State Street would pose more challenges since it is under UDOT's jurisdiction. However, he acknowledged there are opportunities to enhance station visibility that they can continue to explore.

Ms. Richman noted that enhancements don't all have to happen immediately. There are already small blue signs on State Street pointing to the station, but they get lost among other visual stimuli. Parking has also been a frequent complaint from the area west of the tracks developed under old regulations. Newer parking rules applied in the Birkhill area have not drawn as many concerns.

Vice Chair Milkavich feels like it's a tough topic. Suggestions to reduce parking so that people will walk don't always work, then there are complaints about not enough parking.

Commissioner Larsen stated that he can attest to the parking problem in that area west of the tracks at Fireclay. He understands that this was planned by previous city officials with different ideas in mind.

Commissioner Nay said that the occupancy of the nearby apartments exceeds what is attended, but the property owner continues to sell parking passes regardless of whether there's a parking spot available for them.

Ms. Richman stated that reducing parking to encourage alternative transportation requires making those options easy and appealing. If the goal is for more biking and walking in the neighborhood, the experience has to be improved and made a convenient choice rather than seeming unsafe or difficult. The plan needs to consider how to make active transportation the easy and preferred option.

Mr. Smallwood shared an anecdote from a Technical Advisory Committee meeting where they probed about parking problems in Fireclay. When asked to identify specific locations with issues, the committee members all pointed only to the west side where earlier development occurred under old regulations. They indicated no parking problems on the newer east side like the Birkhill area. Mr. Smallwood found it enlightening but discouraging that people associate the whole Fireclay area with parking challenges based solely on the older west side projects. He felt it was important to clarify the parking issues are isolated and not district wide.

Commissioner Soule asked why it's so complicated to navigate getting out of the parking area, stating that you have to go onto Main Street instead of directly onto 4500 South, making multiple turns. She asked why that property can't be accessed.

Vice Chair Milkavich said that the property is owned by Salt Lake County, who will not sell it.

Commissioner Nay also pointed out the grading issues with the property.

Mr. Smallwood pointed out that it's also a UDOT-owned right-of-way, who limits access to their property and would not allow a new road there.

Ms. Richman acknowledged there are parking issues specifically with older developments on the west side of the station area, while parking elsewhere is generally well-utilized without being overwhelmed. More parking options are desired for the west side. Market analysis shows strong regional demand for retail, housing and eventually office. The goal is attracting investment internally focused between State Street and 4500 South rather than spread along the major thoroughfares. This requires creating an appealing environment, not just adding housing units, since existing residents alone likely can't support significant retail. Residents, especially longer-term, want a complete community with amenities, social interaction, and basic shopping within walking distance. They value increased connectivity, high-quality urban design, safety improvements, and an enhanced sense of place. Alternatives focused on either the station platform or Main Street as the nucleus, but the preference is expanding the successful core outwards to create a cohesive transit-oriented neighborhood. The connectivity vision includes greenway trails along the rail, creek, and 4500 South, Main Street becomes a bikeway linking the station to Salt Lake City and pedestrian bridges improve south access. Major moves are extending Fireclay under the Union Pacific tracks to reach 300 West, and improving the Central Ave underpass for cars, bikes, and pedestrians. This dramatically improves access to unlock

development west of the tracks. Additional State Street crossings are also proposed. This connectivity framework supports a more unified district.

Vice Chair Milkavich asked how realistic these concepts are.

Ms. Richman said there are factors that could help with implementing the ambitious connectivity proposals, such as the federal Connecting Communities grant program. A grant application focused on overcoming the railroad barriers could be promising, especially since the federal Department of Transportation has more leverage engaging Union Pacific's cooperation.

Vice Chair Milkavich asked about the realism of the proposed north-south and east-west transportation bypasses shown on the plan, including how much land purchase might be required in the existing developed areas.

Ms. Richman explained the cities currently expand the Creekside trail through development requirements as parcels redevelop. So, acquiring large swaths of land along the creek likely isn't needed. The cities mandate creek setbacks that can then incorporate trails, so redevelopment provides opportunities to implement the trail vision incrementally.

Commissioner Nay asked about the feasibility of a trail system along the creek on the east side outside the development area, where there is significant hardscaping installed for flood control. He inquired whether a trail along the creek is realistic in that area or if the hardscaping prevents it.

Mr. Smallwood responded that continuing the creek trail eastward from the development area would be very difficult since the land along that portion of the creek is largely residential backyards in Millcreek and Murray. He suggested it's not realistic to extend it farther east in the next 10-15 years. However, west of I-15 the land is owned by Salt Lake County, so connecting to the Jordan River Parkway on that side could be more feasible. He recommended focusing efforts on opportunities to go west once able to get under I-15.

Ms. Richman said that using the creeks, that a creek system is a sort of regional goal to help with connectivity.

Chair LaMar asked about the idea of putting a park above 4500 South.

Ms. Richman clarified she was referring to the idea of "capping" 4500 South by covering the below-grade highway to connect the areas on either side, similar to projects in other cities like Dallas, Boston, and Phoenix. She acknowledged this is possible but would be very expensive. From an infrastructure investment perspective, they want connectivity projects to unlock sufficient development potential to justify the cost. A highway cap across 4500 South would require more intensive development on both sides to warrant that level of investment. However, in community input residents expressed a desire for maintaining the medium density character rather than much higher intensity uses. So, while additional pedestrian bridges over 4500 South are proposed, the plan does not currently recommend a full highway cap based on community goals and the density needed to rationalize the expense.

Chair Pehrson asked about the green corridor, clarifying with Ms. Richman that Murray City would be able to develop that when the properties are redeveloped. Based on the development age of some of these properties, that's going to be about fifty years from now.

Mr. Smallwood stated that most of the east-west, at least from state to pretty much to the Union Pacific, to the edge of Murray is already developed, showing on the map that it's already there. Highlighting the areas included. He also showed some areas that aren't developing, where opportunities still exist.

Ms. Richman agreed that's already in place. And Millcreek has, as part of the development that is under construction here. There, they have this section going in on the north side as well. So, some pieces of it are in place.

Chair Pehrson feels the area is mostly developed already. He doesn't see that it's feasible for this to be redeveloped. He feels it's going to take a long time to make that a walkable corridor.

Mr. Smallwood noted some of the area is newly developed but going toward Brick Gate Apartments there is a very wide sidewalk section with room to improve the area adjacent to the tracks. South of 4500 South the west side is very old and could be redeveloped, even if it remains manufacturing, to push buildings farther west and widen the corridor. He acknowledged this expanded right-of-way is not a short-term project but will take 10+ years. However, documenting it in the plan now provides direction so when redevelopment occurs the city can request dedication to incrementally achieve the vision over time.

Ms. Richman noted they are thinking about phasing since this is a big plan covering a large area. There is already strong momentum in the core that can be built outward from over time. The full vision likely won't be realized for 10-15 years but documenting it now provides direction as redevelopment allows incremental progress. She pointed out the Millcreek portion of the creek trail was identified in a plan from 12 years ago, reinforcing the long timeline but the importance of memorializing future hopes. It would be ideal to implement the full connectivity vision immediately, but financial realities require a phased approach growing out from the existing vibrant core. She explained the area currently has a high concentration of affordable housing units. To attract desired services, amenities, and businesses, there needs to be greater housing diversity including market rate and ownership options to increase disposable income. Affordable housing should continue but in balance with other types. Public amenities and gathering spaces are also key, like potentially repurposing part of the UTA lot for an urban plaza lined with restaurants and activities. Urban trail concepts could incorporate adjacent cafes and patios. An urban central plaza adds greenspace and a safe enclosed feel. The Main/4500 intersection is ideal for a grocery store to serve the broader area, not just the immediate neighborhood. A public market concept with fresh foods and vendors may be more feasible than a large store. Housing above would boost units.

Commissioner Patterson noted that existing amenities were built by individual developments for their residents' private use. She asked how to better interconnect everything and share amenities between buildings beyond just trails and greenspace. She inquired whether certain public amenities could be required of developers or incorporated to promote more cohesion.

Ms. Richman responded there would likely need to be some public investment in shared amenities. She noted multifamily projects are required to provide amenities for their residents, which is equivalent to a private backyard for a single-family home. But cities also furnish public parks available to all residents, even those with backyards. Just because developments have private amenities doesn't remove the need for public parks and spaces in the neighborhood for broader interaction.

Commissioner Patterson referenced discussions in the MCCD about enclosed yet publicly accessible spaces like plazas where amenities face a central gathering spot. She felt this concept would be helpful in the station area so required development amenities interconnect rather than remain restricted. The goal would be expanding access so residents aren't limited in which amenities they can utilize within the broader community.

Ms. Richman clarified that it's publicly accessible private space and stated that they do that when they have a setback and are required to do a seating area.

Vice Chair Reid believed cities cannot collect park impact fees from developments to fund future public parks and amenities. She mentioned coming from a place where large projects had to contribute money for park dedication, which over time allowed the city to accrue funding to purchase public parks.

Ms. Richman clarified that both Murray and Millcreek do impose park impact fees on new development, exactly for the purpose Vicky Reid described. Each city charges a set amount per housing unit that goes into a park impact fee fund. This money is then used to invest in new public parks and amenities to maintain a consistent level of park service as the population grows, rather than eroding service for existing residents. She confirmed there is existing funding accruing that can help provide new public spaces in this area through the fees collected.

Commissioner Soule pointed out they have an opportunity with former industrial areas transitioning to residential to designate new public park spaces, not just private amenities. She questioned whether, for instance on the west side where new road connections are proposed, they could identify a specific location for a new public park in the redevelopment areas while it is still undeveloped. She felt with the conversion of old industrial properties, the cities should consider designating some portion as new public open space rather than just allowing full residential redevelopment without a park component.

Mr. Smallwood agreed with Commissioner Soule's point and said he understands the desire to designate public park spaces, especially with former industrial areas transitioning. However, he noted the west side is still segmented by the railroad barrier, so that portion will likely evolve over 10 years as connectivity improves. He explained the plan won't get to the granular level just yet. The next phase will involve implementation details where they can specify code requirements for a certain percentage of new development areas to be public open space. So, setting aside specific park locations can happen in the more unified detailed planning the cities will continue refining. However, the vision plan starts the process and intention of ensuring public spaces amidst the redevelopment.

Ms. Richman acknowledged Mr. Smallwood raised a good point that the plan needs to address - the existing park space per population is already below the level of service goals in both cities, even before recent housing growth. While they have included some new park spaces, she appreciated this triggering awareness that the plan should quantify the acreage needed to meet

level of service targets and include strategies to attain those ratios. Whether or not specific locations are identified, at minimum the plan can establish a measurable goal for expanding park space commensurate with the additional residents.

Commissioner Nay pointed out that neither city currently owns a parcel of property that can do that.

Commissioner Patterson stated that given it was formerly industrial, the lack of parks and open space in the station area is severely deficient, especially on the Murray side. With no school or even school grounds, children are bused far away. The Murray portion in particular is very barren for community amenities and greenspace. She felt the industrial legacy resulted in an assumption of low need, but current resident demands require addressing the shortage.

Ms. Richman noted they have heard desires for more youth activities and amenities for kids, not just in the Murray area but also in the Sunnyvale neighborhood west of the freeway in Millcreek. While Sunnyvale has a small community center, additional facilities are needed given the high concentration of families with children. With other neighborhoods developing, demand for recreational resources will likely continue increasing on both sides of the border.

Chair LaMar suggested an idea for future consideration by the planning staff of both cities. Rather than having a developer put all required amenities within their own project, perhaps they could split them with another nearby project to concentrate investments in larger shared amenities when strategic. For instance, a single consolidated dog park rather than small dog runs at each site, then paired with another more substantial amenity. This could produce better overall outcomes through synergies between projects versus having repetitive amenities in isolation.

Ms. Richman noted that was a good idea and worth exploring.

Commissioner Larsen provided feedback that while he understands the rationale for locating the market at Main/4500, he doesn't think that placement will encourage biking and walking access very well. People are more likely to drive between the market and the nearby Smith's. Given the long-term outlook, he recommended the plan also include vision for an interior neighborhood market more accessible through active transportation from the station area core. While the Main/4500 location makes sense for visibility and regional access now, in 20 years an additional market located closer to the station could be feasible and better serve people bicycling or walking who want to grab items after work. The plan should incorporate improving walkability over time.

Commissioner Henrie asked what the current residential population in the study area is and if that has been projected out into the future. Ms. Richman stated that it's right around 2000. The projected amount is about 7500 in the 20-year timeframe.

Commissioner Patterson acknowledged the ideal is to locate a grocery or other amenities directly within the Fireclay area. However, she asked how feasible it might be as an interim step to put something on State Street within reasonable proximity for residents to access without a car. While not perfect, a nearby State Street location could help fill the gap until the vision for interior neighborhood options is achievable.

Mr. Smallwood discussed trying to identify feasible interim grocery locations. Using software analyzing cell phone data, their economic development specialist explored where Fireclay residents currently shop and eat. They learned State Street is such a major barrier that access to the south side is very limited. Potentially a small location north of Parris RV, by the D I thrift store, could work as it's slightly more accessible, but State Street severely restricts connectivity to existing commerce on the south side.

Ms. Richman clarified the public market concept they envision is not a full-scale grocery store, which would require more parcel depth. The Parris RV site likely has enough depth, but smaller parcels like the DI thrift store probably do not. In terms of size, the DI property could potentially work but likely couldn't accommodate a full grocery store footprint.

Commissioner Soule suggested considering a smaller-format grocery like a Walmart Neighborhood Market or the downtown Holiday Harmons. That more compact size could potentially fit in the neighborhood and attract people stopping by after work.

Ms. Richman noted certain grocery formats like Harmons Market target different demographics than currently present in the neighborhood. And Walmart needs extensive parking. She explained the next steps are to incorporate the commission's feedback into the preliminary plan and then bring that back through staff review. They will start drafting goals, strategies and implementation steps. They also loop back with developers and landowners to get their feedback on the draft plan. The intent is to bring a more refined version back for additional guidance on shaping the final plan. She expressed that she felt this was a great conversation and thanked the commissioners for their time.

Chair LaMar adjourned the Millcreek Planning Commission. The Murray Planning Commission had one agenda item to attend to.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to be approved for this meeting.

FINDINGS OF FACT

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Commissioner Hacker made a motion to approve the finding of fact for Legacy Materials, for a Concrete Block Production Manufacturing & Storage business are 4300 South Commerce Drive. Seconded Vice Chair Milkavich. A voice vote was taken, with all in favor. Vote was 7-0 in favor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND QUESTIONS

The next scheduled meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19th 2023, at 6:30 p.m. in the Murray City Council Chambers, 10 East 4800 South, Murray, Utah. Chair Pehrson will be absent and Vice Chair Milkavich will be acting Chair for that meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Nay made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 pm. Seconded by Commissioner Patterson. A voice vote was taken, with all in favor of adjournment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Philip J. Markham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Philip J. Markham, Director
Community & Economic Development Department