



Gold Line BRTOD: Helmo Station Oakdale City Council Feedback on Phase 2 Alternatives

10 October 2017, in-person Work Session at Oakdale City Hall

Participants

- Mayor Paul Reinke, Council members Kevin Zabel, Lori Pulkrabek, Bill Rasmussen, Mark Landis
- Oakdale staff and Sara Allen from WCRRA
- Crandall Arambula project team members Don Arambula and Anne Carroll

Materials

- [Presentation](#) on BRTOD alternatives

Council Feedback, Discussion

- *Notes:*
 - *Presentation addressed moving the station to the south and rerouting Hudson Road*
 - *Alternatives included “district” and “neighborhood” options, with recommendation to further refine neighborhood concept*
 - *Unless otherwise identified, questions were from Council members and answers were from project team members and Gold Line partners*
- Like the neighborhood style better; like connections between retail and housing; like higher density toward freeway
- Like changing route to behind station; concerned about intersection of Helmo and 4th, including turning issues
- <Don: Park and Ride could move closer to freeway>
- Very much prefer neighborhood over district option: love the main street feel; like central park; like work-live opportunities; love brownstone-type housing; like gradual shift in density north to south, low to high; for neighborhood concept, would like to consider replacing some of the multifamily with possibly retail – such as to the northeast <Don: we can talk about how that might work; we are very cautious about over-retailing; retail market is changing quickly, though one of the directions it is going is pedestrian-oriented – so want to be sure not to over-build retail and commercial uses>
- Really good idea to realign Hudson, and also may help future development
- Larry Olimb, Carlson Real Estate Company: We’ve have had chance to talk with our own team; agree this looks wonderful, but some concerns about overdoing retail; Carlson came in 10 years

ago with the idea to build what we did on the other side of town with the Carlson Center (office space, high-end office finishes); seeing the amount of office space proposed here, we're hesitant about lots of office space already being built without much success. Have one 60,000 SF building already with lots of vacancies, so concerned that market really isn't here for that. Have talked with City about bringing jobs to Oakdale and we're still very committed to that. We also have 4, 15,000 SF office suite buildings; have had some success but not as much as we need – still too much is vacant. This is certainly not suitable for a distribution center, but market seems to be going in the direction of mixed office use and warehouse. <Don: With any of these concepts, we don't want to back ourselves into corners. Could take some of the parcels and use them for things we call "maker space" for owners to do things like a brew pub and brewery together. Take care with uses that rely heavily on trucks/autos rather than taking advantage of the transit orientation. Would be better to set up this area to support a variety of uses – within specific permitted uses that support the comprehensive plan – and really follow that plan to support implementation in 5 years vs. 20 years. Lock down on critical requirements that really matter, and stay flexible on others to account for developer preferences and the market.>

- Dan Salzer, Scannell Properties: How would this kind of flexibility translate to zoning changes? <Don: don't want to jump too quickly into those details – craft the plans first and then do the details.> I initially envisioned a business park approach with some manufacturers who might attract more employees who might use transit. <Don: Some of the flex office manufacturing sites can attract smaller businesses that relate directly to some of the larger businesses in the area. For example, with major businesses like 3M so close, think about how attractive this may be for residents and businesses.>
- Important to explore an approach that gives us multiple wins vs. being too limiting
- Timing for all this? <Don: ideally, some of the key development is in place before the Gold Line opens in 2024. Lay out the plan, look at what public infrastructure investments will encourage development, and work through phasing options and time horizons. Also, if you move too fast on things like high-density housing, you may be too far ahead of the market.>
- Some good concept plans here, but need to develop our BRT first and then figure out what the market looks like c. 10 years from now, and let developers decide what they want to do then based on the market. Timing is important. <Don: What we fundamentally say is this must work with or without BRT; BRT is a value-added, not a driver – can't say, "build it and they will come" ...that's a dangerous proposition>
- Housing density will be a challenge here; can we build something that's different from what we're doing elsewhere?
- Three-story housing seems more appropriate than five stories <Don: We understand, and when you talk about scale of buildings there's no guarantee you'll get it; there are ways to ensure character by design guidelines, and you do want to have enough density to ensure value; probably not four+ stories high on 4th, but there may be stair-stepping options by the station; most people can't tell the difference in density, but they do see differences in height and mass>
- Brad Lis, Lis Services (developer): Timing is critical; time kills landowners and developers; need to ensure marketability and be cognizant of what the market will support <Don: need to remember that we're breaking the mold here; look forward not back, and examine what the element is that changes the mold – and it's the BRT station; so need to take market projections with a grain of salt while still respecting those analyses>
- Council direction: Pursue refinement of neighborhood concept, considering possibilities (per notes above) and involving developers