

Requests for Indications of Interest in Serving on a
Pedestrian Safety Steering Committee
for the upcoming
Town of Amherst Downtown Walkability and Traffic Calming Study

The Town of Amherst has been working with the Central Virginia Metropolitan Planning Organization and VDOT to arrange for consultant that would study improvements to pedestrian safety in the downtown Amherst. There is a need for a group of individuals that would provide appropriate local feedback as the consultant performs technical work. In concept, this pedestrian safety “steering committee” would be a temporary body that would meet with the consultant several times between July 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016.

Ideally, committee members would have some connection to downtown Amherst. It is anticipated that members would be found from communities such as downtown merchants and property owners, Town Council, Planning Commission, IDA, Amherst County Chamber of Commerce, the Police Department and other groups that might have an interest in vehicular and pedestrian safety and downtown walkability.

Excerpts from the funding approval document and the consultants draft scope of work for the study are attached.

This study would be coordinated with other activities pertaining to downtown Amherst are underway and anticipated future activities.

Current Activities

- Main Street Waterline Replacement (Town)
- Urban Development Area Study (Planning Commission)
- Amherst County Economic Development Strategy Development (County)
- Main Street Bicycle Accommodation Study (VDOT)
- Cultivate Amherst! Arts-based Economic Development Planning Study (Second Stage)
- Town Square Events (Various nonprofits)

Anticipated Activities

- Updated zoning regulations in the Central Business District (Planning Commission)
- Main Street Repaving (VDOT)

Individuals willing to serve on such a steering committee are requested to send their name, telephone number and email, and a statement of interest to townhall@amhertva.gov by June 1, 2016.

Proposed CENTRAL VIRGINIA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
(CVMPO)
FY17 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)
Adopted on April 14, 2016

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Product.

Budget:
Comple

WALKABILITY AND MAIN STREET TRAFFIC CALMING STUDY

Town of Amherst, VA

DRAFT SCOPE of WORK

Overview

The Town of Amherst is interested in identifying improvements to create a more walkable community including downtown and calming traffic along Main Street. The vision may include expanding multimodal facilities, slowing traffic along Main Street via traffic calming techniques, and removing obstacles to walking, with the desired outcome of enhancing the vibrancy and economic activity in the Town.

This scope of work addresses planning for improved walkability and conceptual street modifications to slow traffic and enhance the sense of “place” for the downtown environment. The work effort will include:

- Working closely with a Town appointed steering committee to address the goals and project opportunities
- Assessment of existing conditions in terms of walkability throughout the town, travel conditions on Main Street, and the current aesthetic character along Main Street
- Identification of potential recommendations
- Presentation to the project steering committee and interested citizens
- Project coordination meetings, presentations to Town Council, and others as appropriate
- Preparation of final documentation to include recommendations, planning level costs, and implementation strategies

The resulting work product will augment and be informed by the Urban Development Area planning study that is currently underway.

Task 1 – Data Collection and Base Mapping

In this task our staff will research past and ongoing planning efforts that might have a bearing on our current planning effort. This will include reports and the Town’s code/ordinance information relative to walkability and the downtown street system. EPR will also assemble GIS files and aerial information to create base maps for the public process and plan elements. Finally, 48 hour bi-directional traffic counts will be taken along Main Street and the hourly traffic data, speed statistics, and traffic composition will be summarized.

Deliverables: Base mapping files, summary of research, traffic data summary.

Task 2 – Steering Committee and Project Management Meetings

The consulting team will work with a Town appointed steering committee and project management team to identify project goals, issues, and opportunities. A series of three meetings with the steering committee will be conducted, to include:

1. A project kickoff meeting to discuss the scope of work, schedule, and deliverables. At this meeting, the consulting team will provide a presentation regarding economic and placemaking benefits of creating a walkable environment in the Town. Following the presentation, a walking tour (walkability audit) will be conducted. The tour will consist of walking around town and discussing, in the field, issues and opportunities. The consultant will lead a walking tour/field study of the areas of interest. Each person that participates in the walkability audit will have a clipboard with either a map of the area, or generic block or intersection diagrams. The facilitator will stop at various points to talk about what he/she is seeing and then ask participants to mark their observations on the map or generic block/intersection diagrams. This phase of the audit is critical for raising awareness of the obstacles to walkability, and identifying specific areas of interest.
2. Discussion of draft recommendations for town-wide walkability and traffic calming along Main Street. A discussion will also be conducted regarding potential streetscape elements/themes, the accessibility analysis (see Task 3), prioritization of projects and the pending community meeting format, and content.
3. A final steering committee meeting will be conducted to review final recommendations and implementation strategies.

Deliverables: Steering Committee Meetings

Task 3 – Accessibility Analysis

The consultants during this phase will run the identified proposed physical improvements (new sidewalk connections) through the walk accessibility model to show how they improve walking access in the town. This analysis uses a GIS model to analyze area by area how accessible different parts of the town are for walking to jobs and services (for example, how many jobs can a person reach within a 30 minute walk). A benefit to this type of analysis is that potential improvements can be entered into the model in to see how walkability improvements will change walking access to jobs/services. In other words, this analysis evaluates how effective some proposed improvements coming out of the walkability audit will be for actually improving walkability. This analysis will be useful for helping to prioritize the recommended improvements.

Deliverables: GIS based walkability analysis, map showing desired new sidewalk locations, bicycle paths, and bicycle lanes (as applicable per the public input)

Task 4 – Traffic Calming / Streetscape Analysis

This task will entail developing schematic level concepts for modifications to pavement markings and curb lines along Main Street, as well as identify desired streetscape thematic elements. The input received from the steering committee and community meeting (Task 5) will guide the selection of potential streetscape themes and elements (benches, trash cans, bicycle racks, light poles) along with various styles of sidewalk enhancements (hardscape and concrete patterns).

The overall goal will be to create a concept for a plan that will serve to slow traffic, preserve parking, provide for multimodal mobility, and provide for streetscape features. The combination of these elements will enhance the sense of “place” along Main Street, which should help to draw in more visitors for downtown businesses and enhance the economic vitality in the downtown.

Deliverables: Up to four concepts for improving Main Street will be prepared, along with a summary of streetscape elements.

Task 5 - Community Meeting

A community meeting session will be conducted to share information about the project along with the draft recommendations. The meeting is envisioned as including a presentation regarding walkability, traffic calming, and street features followed by an open house format session where attendees can peruse illustrative boards and related project information. The information to be displayed may include:

- Graphics of the sidewalk improvement maps
- Accessibility summary mapping
- Bicycle path and lane mapping
- Main Street enhancement concepts
- Suggested streetscape thematic elements

Input will be gathered on the project graphics and on note boards placed around the room.

Deliverables: Community meeting and meeting summary

Task 6 – Recommendation Summary / Reporting

Using the feedback from the steering committee input and the community meeting as a means to select specific recommendations, the project team will assemble a plan document to summarize the work

effort and to illustrate and summarize the final recommendations. The plan document will include a summary of the community meeting, along with text and graphics necessary to summarize the study methodology and recommendations.

The plan will include opinions of costs for the Main Street project, and the top six sidewalk projects. The plan will also include a summary of potential grant funding sources along with related application criteria, application timelines, and related implementation steps to advance along the identified projects as opportunities arise.

Deliverables: Draft Report (PDF format) and Final Report – five hardcopies and PDF file on CDs (5).

Task 7– Project Meetings

The project will be conducted over a four to five month timeframe, to be completed by December 2016. It is anticipated that coordination meetings will include:

1. Kickoff meeting- steering committee meeting #1
2. Steering committee meeting #2
3. Steering committee meeting # 3
4. Community meeting
5. Up to three additional meetings (Town Council presentations, or others still TBD)

Deliverables: Meetings as described.