

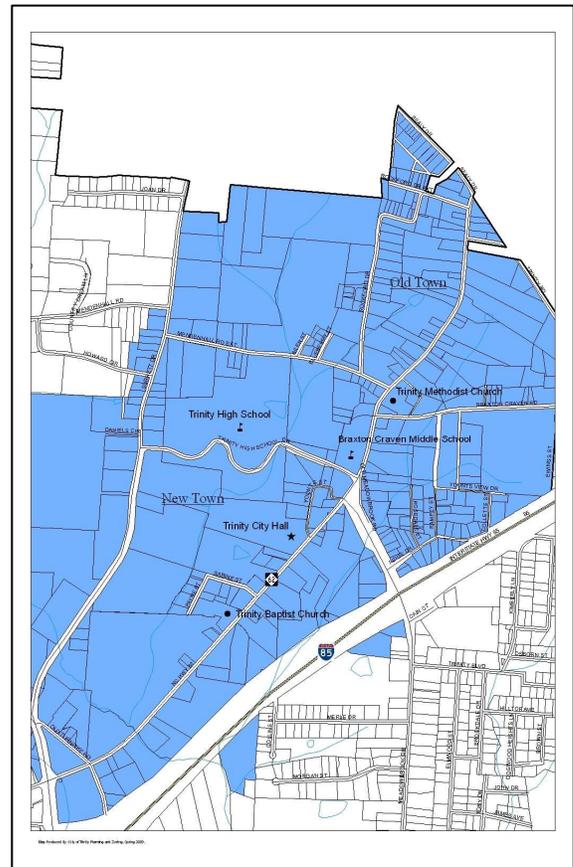
Trinity Center City Plan The Planning Process: What is a Charrette?

The City of Trinity is taking the next bold step in planning its future with the Center City Plan. This roughly 500 acre area, long considered the heart of the community is loosely bounded by NC 62/Interstate 85 to the south, Surrett Drive to the north and west, and Trinity Road/Sealy Drive to the northeast. It includes the historic core of the community as well as the high school (in Old Town) and a large swath of largely undeveloped land near the Interstate (New Town).

Why plan now? Very simply, the welcome extension of public sewer to serve the existing community in this area and relieve the increasing number of septic problems will make previously undevelopable land much more attractive to developers and builders. And, given the proximity of this area to the surrounding region as well ease of accessibility, planners have long identified this area as the next hot zone for growth.

To best facilitate this planning process, the City will be using a planning and design charrette to engage the public and create a workable plan to guide growth over the coming years. The term charrette comes from the French, meaning “little cart.” The word’s origins are traced to an art school tradition from 19th century Paris. A cart was sent around to students’ studios to collect work to be graded by professors. Like most students, these artists and architects in training worked until the last minute and often followed the charrette through the streets making finishing touches on their work as the cart rumbled towards judgment.

The idea has been refined by architects to indicate a process on a fast-track, undertaken in the presence of their clients, in this case the property owners in the study area as well as the entire City of Trinity. By involving everyone who can enable or block decisions and by committing to produce actionable plans within a set timeframe, charrettes can save months – even years – of tedious back-and-forth negotiations and redesign. They also provide an experience that’s increasingly rare for most people: they get to be involved in something organized especially to listen to their ideas and to act on them immediately.



A kickoff public workshop for Trinity’s Center City Plan will occur on the evening of Monday, April 27th to give the general public an opportunity to hear more about the plan and help to generate ideas to manage growth in this area. It will then be followed by a four-day charrette on May 11th -14th. The charrette consists of an opening presentation and public workshop, numerous public meetings, design sessions, evening pin-up sessions, and a closing presentation. This will give the design team the most efficient opportunity to meet with a large number of interest groups and citizens, solicit their input, and

produce a detailed series of high quality recommendations, plans and renderings that accurately reflect the vision of the community.

There are four guiding principles for charrettes:

INVOLVE EVERYONE FROM THE START: Anyone who might have an opinion or be affected by the plan should be involved from the very beginning. By making people roll up their sleeves and work with the design team, the process gains mutual authorship and shared vision.



WORK CONCURRENTLY AND CROSS-FUNCTIONALLY: The design team should have many different specialties, but during the charrette, everyone becomes generalists, assimilating everyone's expertise and reflecting the wisdom of each participant.

WORK IN SHORT FEEDBACK LOOPS: The public needs to be able to propose an idea and see it designed for review in a short period of time. The

charrette process typically includes pin-up critique sessions every evening to garner input on the preferred direction based upon what was learned during the day.

WORK IN DETAIL: Only through designing to a level of detail that includes both the details of building types, blocks, and public spaces as well as the big picture of circulation, transportation, land use, and major public amenities can fatal flaws be reduced or eliminated.

The keys to a successful plan include a balanced mix of careful analysis of the existing conditions and constraints; extensive and meaningful public engagement; visionary, but practical planning and design; and financially and politically feasible implementation. Regardless of the scale of the project—from a redevelopment of a block in downtown to a county-wide comprehensive plan—each effort must maintain this balance.

A charrette raises expectations. It builds enthusiasm. It draws clear lines of accountability. Because everyone knows who made the plan, everyone knows who's responsible if it goes sour. When a developer or a government body chooses a charrette process, it means investing resources to assemble and support a team of experts through four to ten days of near round-the-clock work sessions and community discussions. It's a leap of faith in the citizens, in the design team, and in the process itself. But, the potential rewards are great. The pay-off is not only in terms of time and money saved but in the pleasure of partnering with an entire community on a project everyone can be proud of.

Source: The Lawrence Group

Adam Stumb is the Planning & Zoning Administrator for the City of Trinity



Trinity Center City Project

Kickoff Public Workshop
Monday, April 27th at 7 pm

Public Design Charrette
May 11th – 14th all day

Closing Charrette Presentation
Thursday, May 14th at 7 pm

All activities will take place at Trinity City Hall Annex, 6703 NC Hwy. 62. For information call 431-2841