

Fountain District Urban Village Master Planning

Elm Street Corridor / "Commercial Transition" Zone

Participant Comments

Focus Group Meeting 2: September 30th, 2009

6:00 – 9:00 pm, Fountain Community Church

General Issues / Comments / Questions

- "Commercial Transition" is misnomer – call it mixed-use neighborhood, historic mixed use, or???
- Height limits (is 35' appropriate?)
- Restrictions on existing building forms tied to commercial and SFR zoning (design standards)
- Small scale commercial a plus, allows walkable uses (smaller vehicular impacts)
- Concern about historic decay due to increased rentals
- Setbacks and requirements are currently limiting uses
- Height limit may restrict variation in height, how will this be addressed. Don't want to see all flat roofs
- Current zoning is restrictive causing businesses to leave and properties to decay
- Business owners can't rely on foot traffic, parking is necessary to draw some customers
- Eliminating parking will allow the market to decide how much parking is necessary for businesses.
- Some think commercial at both ends of the zone will be death to residential in between the built up commercial.
- Some support three story mixed use buildings throughout the zone
- Land owners in lower section do not want to see change to current zone. Don't want to see three story buildings. Want to keep zoned commercial and historical.
- Some want to keep zoning the same
- Square footage is the limiting factor now for buildup of lots and protection of historic character. The toolkit will not have much effect on the area as it is now.
- Elm is a busy street -- worried about historic decay because of an increase in rentals.
- Commercial lot owner: It is difficult to build a multi use building with current parking standards, unless you construct a tiny building. A three story building on my current lot size would be impossible to build with the current parking standards. I don't like strip malls but the only way to build currently is to buy up lots and create this. How can this be addressed in the master plan?
- How will redevelopment allow for small business owners to succeed? Setbacks and requirements are currently limiting use.
- Having a height limit in place may cause flat roofs to become common. My house is historic and is 50 feet tall. This restriction may cause very little variation in height. How will this be addressed?
- Downside of current zoning and codes is that single family is very restrictive on lots that are historically commercial lots causing businesses to leave the area, which causes the properties to decay.

- Lower Elm Street is kind of a done deal for uses and many of these owners don't have problems as the upper half of Elm Street owners do. These two areas seem to have different issues.
- Maybe we should focus on roof lines and square footage restrictions rather than a height limit to keep a more diversified looking and interesting neighborhood.
- You can't own a business and rely only on foot traffic, there has to be some parking to draw customers in throughout the neighborhoods.
- Eliminating parking requirements will allow for the market to decide how much parking the business' will need.
- As energy costs become more expensive I believe that we will see the return of mixed-use buildings, with living spaces above commercial.
- No parking requirements downtown is not fair to us here in the Fountain District commercial zone. How will this be addressed?
- Historic residential boundary is nice; can we build something in to the plan to note a historical commercial district?
- The automobile era is a historical feature and is a part of the Elm Street character. Maybe we can think of these past automotive commercial lots as historic commercial. It gives an eclectic feel to the area.
- Allowing these forms really adds to the neighborhood. Having this character and flexibility of commercial use gives the neighborhood its character and eclectic feel.
- We have to preserve the homes for people to live in.
- We need to preserve the commercial businesses to allow for a walkable neighborhood, especially for the retirement community.
- Having commercial at both ends of the Commercial Transition Zone will be death to the residential in between the built-up commercial. The commercial will eventually connect. Meridian will eventually grow up. This will squeeze the life out of the neighborhood.
- Land owners in the lower section would not like to see the current zoning changed. And don't want to see three story buildings. We want to keep it historic and zoned commercial. Currently it is not economically feasible to build up so it is remaining the same.
- Commercial zoning will take value away from the abutting 14 homes as developers will want to buy the ones facing the street raising their value.
- The best way to preserve the area is to keep the zoning how it is.
- Square footage is the limiting factor now for buildup of lots and the protection of historic charter. The toolkit will not have much of an effect on the area as it is now.
- Lower portion of Elm is established. Northern portion has more challenges
- With increased energy costs there may be more mixed used buildings with residential above in the future
- No parking requirements downtown unfair to Fountain District commercial zone. How will this be addressed?
- Can a historic commercial district be developed?
- The automotive era is a historical feature and is part of the Elm Street character. Maybe consider the past automotive commercial lots as historical commercial.
- Having this character and flexibility of commercial uses give the neighborhood character and an eclectic feel.

- Further explore character of single family residential and commercial uses – develop design standards for Single Family Residential forms regardless of uses

Q: What uses *should* be allowed in the area?

- Mixed-use (3 story)
 - North of Monroe (+7 -2)
 - Between Broadway and Monroe
- Multi-family (3 story)
 - Adaptive reuses of structures
- Walkable businesses along the north end of Elm

Q: What uses *should not* be allowed?

Porn, gun, and pawn shops, drive-thrus (want fewer cars crossing sidewalks), three or four-plexes

Q: What new building types and forms would be acceptable?

- If Giffords or State Farm go away acceptable forms would be:
 - Commercial with residential above
 - Corner parcel setback vs. mid block scenario
- Eliminate need for condition use permits every time a business needs to adapt
- Neighborly “look” – Need design standards
- Buffer noise from neighborhoods (Single Family Residential) and commerce
- Fence review (height limits) at transition zones
- Minimize parking standards
- Focus less on height limits and more on roof lines and square footage for diversified look

Q: Should there be a variety of services in the upper northern end of Elm Street?

- most agreed that yes – they would like to walk to a business in that area.

Q: Would you like to see three story multi-use buildings throughout the entire zone?

8 agreed that this would be good to see.

Just in the upper zone? 8 agreed and 2 disagreed.

In the lower zone? 10 agreed with no opposition.