

## Section 23 – Meeting notes: #8

### Policies and Areas for Commercial Centers – July 11, 2007

**Members Present:** Rich Kramer (Chair), Gladys Morton, Gloria Bogen, Tim Griffin, Monte Hilleman, Chuck Repke, David Stokes and Dede Wolfson.

**Members Absent:** Bob Cudahy, Kevin Flynn, Lori Fritts, Keith Jans, Ed Johnson, Lorrie Louder, Eric Mitchell, Dick Nowlin and Jeff Ochs.

**Staff:** Penny Simison and Andrew Jacobson.

1. **Welcome** by Rich Kramer
2. **Introduction** by Penny Simison. This meeting focused on commercial centers. Urban design, sustainability and parking were other topics for discussion. The primary activity was identifying which commercial centers should be encouraged or strengthened within Saint Paul.
3. **Mapping and identifying commercial centers** that should be strengthened was the next activity. The map was broken into different zoning classifications where retail could be located (although downtown – B4 and B5 was not listed), including general business (B) 1 through B3 and traditional neighborhood (TN) 1 through TN3. Some of the commercial centers were labeled pedestrian oriented.

Some good discussion happened while mapping.

- It was noted that unlike other building types, retail locates where retail wants to be. In other words, retail will move where and when the market determines.
- Retail depends on access and location not just surrounding density.
- Differences in zoning classification – one is least dense and most restrictive; three is the densest. TN is more flexible for mixed use/residential areas although it does not allow everything B does. Also, TN sites have design standards.
- Map of illegitimate commercial activity would be an interesting overlay. Although, fixing bad housing is the best strategy to alleviate this activity.
- Residents near 7<sup>th</sup>, Phalen, Payne and Arcade – where do they shop?
- Does downtown have satellite centers of regional importance, like Highland, Midway, Sunray and possibly Bridges. Or, is downtown an equal or lesser center compared to these regional retail areas?
- Redevelopment of the Ford site will add some commercial; this will complement the existing retail in Highland.
- What is the difference in planning, investment and return on investment in Ford and the Phalen Corridor? And in other corridors?
- Ford is unique because it has only one owner.
- 3M also has one owner, although the nearby neighborhood is less desirable than Highland.
- Might denser opportunities be more feasible or acceptable on the East side vs. Highland?

- Do all regional centers have certain criteria that need to be met? Are they all equal? Is there a checklist of criteria that need to be met for success?

4. **Discussion** revolving around **policies for commercial centers** followed. The discussion can be grouped by ideas.

- **Downtown**
  - Does it deserve its own section in the commercial section? Yes, it is a unique commercial district.
  - The problem with downtown is parking. The parking fees are backward. The first few hours should be cheap.
  - Minneapolis plan “Do the Town” was a concerted effort at marketing downtown as a retail district joined with free or reduced parking after 4 pm.
  - What downtown Saint Paul should be is still undecided.
  - Gateways to downtown are good except coming from the East. East 7<sup>th</sup> and the Lafayette Bridge (which will be redone) are prime for redevelopment.
  - Do other gateways to Saint Paul need work? Is there a checklist for the gateways to be successful?
- **Terminology**
  - Terminology will be important.
  - Be specific about different types of commercial districts.
  - Regional, neighborhood and community centers should each have their own theme.
  - Use the language of the marketplace in this section, with ULI definitions.
  - ‘Auto-oriented’ may have negative connotations, use regional.
- **Random**
  - Is it appropriate in the Comprehensive Plan to be as specific as we want such and such here?
  - Who is this section geared towards? Developers or the planning commission?
  - Create a report card for development for the City to use.

5. **Urban design** was discussed briefly. The ideas are listed below.

- Maybe not all buildings should be placed up to the lot line, right on the street? Spruce Tree on University is too close for example.
- Buildings should be built up to the sidewalk; however, the sidewalk should extend 14 feet, stretching from the building to the street. A wider sidewalk allows for snow storage, bus stops, tree boxes, plantings and outdoor seating. Could this be a policy for pedestrian commercial centers?
- Especially as it applies to leased retail, the barrier to entry is low along most commercial corridors. Many of these business owners do not understand the basics of retail.
- Are design guidelines needed as minimum standards for store fronts?
- Should the design guidelines for TN3 districts be applied citywide, or written within the Comprehensive Plan?
- Should commercial corridors be rezoned TN?

6. **No clear sustainability policies** are currently in the plan.
7. **Parking issues** were brought up briefly. Parking is a large issue with no obvious answers. Discussion revolved around parking meters. Parking meters exist only in downtown Saint Paul. Meters require meter maids, people to service them etc. Is it a net plus or minus to the city budget? They could be an unconventional revenue source? It helps to have permit parking in the surrounding neighborhood to push people onto parking meters, although along Lake Street it is not needed. Density and volume are important for the success of parking meters.
8. **Closing** by Simison. The task force has the summer off while Simison writes a draft of the plan. Simison will use the legislative format of editing older writings – striking out unnecessary lines and underlining new words. Simison also stressed that if anyone has particular thoughts that do not get brought up in the meeting, they should feel free to discuss them personally with her. Lastly, Simison is planning on having approximately two meetings around November so that the task force can review her draft of the plan.

Meeting ended at 7:05.