

meeting summary

February 12, 2018
7:00- 9:00p
City Building

Land Use and Zoning Committee Meeting

attendees	Kevin Barbian	Ingrid Kreiling
	Heidi Barrett	Hilary Landwehr
	Dan Fehler	Linda Malloy
	Dona Fehler	Brent Niese
	Dan Gorman	Nancy Schneider
	Patrick Hagerty	Jann Seidenfaden
	Mary Healy	John Slawter
	Frances Hoffman	Debbie Buckley
	Patti Hudepohl	Kris Hopkins

agenda:

(Materials distributed at the meeting are attached at the end of this report.)

- Comments on Public Forum (January 24, 2018)
- Overview of City's economic development and Renaissance activities by Debbie Buckley
- Discussion of potential/draft economic development strategies

presentation:

- Public Forum Update. The public forum/open house was held on 1/24/18 at the Mess Hall and was well attended. There were three display boards for the Land Use and Zoning topic. A summary of the comments is attached. Attendees were also asked to comment on three different building typologies and their suitability to the CBD and the Midway business districts.
- Debbie Buckley provided a summary of the City's Main Street/Renaissance program that she administers. Fort Thomas is one of 92 cities in the Commonwealth that is part of the National Main Street Program.
- The Main Street program embraces a 4-point program (DOPE):
 - > Design
 - > Organization
 - > Promotion and
 - > Economic Vitality
- Ft Thomas' program began in 2002 with two designated districts: the Town Center and Midway. Debbie started as the Renaissance Manager/Economic Development Director in 2006. She highlighted a number of success stories that have happened in the last 12 years, including establishing the Farmers' Market, the Fort Thomas Military and Community Museum, and the Historic

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Midway District, façade improvements that were completed thanks to the City's grant program, and a number of events (walking tours, the Merchants and Music Festival).

- Successes and challenges found in some of the districts include:

Town Center:

- > Streetscape improvements installed, new clock tower
- > Doesn't have the buildings needed to expand the commercial base for a sustainable town center.
- > A number of the buildings are not ADA compliant and have other code deficiencies such as no sprinkler system
- > Approximately half of the buildings in the District are houses. There are a number of issues with houses: they are generally set back too far from the sidewalk to create the traditional "main street" feel, and it is hard to retrofit houses into retail space.

Midway District:

- > The façade improvement grant money was instrumental in building façade improvements, but there is no money left.
- > Streetscape improvements installed
- > 1011 and 1013 have been improved and tenants secured
- > The city is working with the Army Corp of Engineers on adaptive reuse options for the Stables Building, which overlooks the soccer field

Highland Plaza

- > Good complement of stores and restaurants. With offices
- > Good parking
- > Easily accessible

Fort Thomas Plaza

- > The city has been trying to attract a hotel to support the number of military events that occur.
- > A hotel is proposed

discussion items:

Alexandria Pike (US 27)

- Existing conditions: there are 4 areas along Alexandria Pike where non-single-family zoning is concentrated
 - > Fort Thomas Plaza northwest of I-475
 - > Just south/east of I-475 where Highway commercial and industrial zoning
 - > Between Marsh Building Products and S Ft Thomas Ave
 - > Between the Sonsrena Apartments and the city's southern boundary

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- In the single-family zoned areas, there are a number of community facilities (churches, school, cemetery, meaning the presence of single-family homes is even less than the zoning would indicate.
- Issues raised by committee members:
 - > Needs redevelopment - Corridor's role/function has changed with the construction of I-475
 - > Needs an identity
 - > It is a major gateway into the city – needs to be improved, properties need to look inviting
 - > U-Haul business should have a privacy fence to screen the trucks –
 - > Consider rezoning portions of the corridor
 - > Based on the character of US 27, appropriate uses to encourage along the corridor include:
 - hotel
 - offices (there are a number of parcels already zoned for PO Professional Office, which is used as a transitional zone and uses are not as intrusive as commercial)
 - multi-family
 - > Inappropriate uses:
 - not conducive to retail – encourage retail to locate in the existing established retail districts to reduce the potential for
 - not heavy industry
 - commercial uses with extensive outdoor storage
- A majority of committee members agreed that more office zoning along Alexandria Pike was desirable.

Economic Development Priorities

- Highest priority is the CBD, need to address potential for redevelopment; there are issues with the existing buildings due to their age and layout; new construction is needed to attract more business, which will attract new residents
- Need steady customers to support businesses – currently 60% to 70% of customers come from out-of-town
- Make sure that the various business districts are structured to complement each other rather than compete
- Improve the visual appearance of the gateways into Town Center and Midway
- Foster economic development activities related to recreation uses
- Maintain a good balance, recognizing that Fort Thomas is a bedroom community
- Concern that there is low demand for office space, could allow both multi-family and offices in the same district as they can look similar
- Consider ways to attract younger adults who want an urban setting – Fort Thomas should be able to attract younger adults because of its proximity to downtown Cincinnati which makes for an easy commute. However, younger people care more about the place for its livability (research shows young professionals look for places that provide the lifestyles they seek, extolling “quality of place”), not so much about shopping
- Need to articulate what the City wants – so that developers have some idea of the possibilities/what is acceptable
- People want places to sit, drink, socialize

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Concerns about New Development

- Most Families Choose To Live In Fort Thomas Because Of Its Hometown Feel And Schools
- How Much Traffic Will New Development Generate?
- Need To Be Sure New Development Is Viable

Zoning Code Issues

- Code Provisions Are Old
- Limits Opportunities
- Cumbersome To Administer, Rigid List Of Permitted Uses – Businesses Are Not The Same As When The Code Was Written
- Consider More Of A Performance Based Code, Where Uses Can Be Considered Based On The Context And The Use's Impact On The Surroundings
- Need To Provide Enough Guidance So Developers Know What The City Wants, What's Acceptable

Comments on Redevelopment in Town Center as depicted in Mark Thurnauer's two sketches showing what new three story buildings placed at the sidewalk could look like. The two sketches were displayed on 24" x 36" sheets

- A majority of committee members felt new development with three-story buildings (retail on the first floor and offices or apartments on the upper floors) was appropriate for the Town Center
- If this type of new development were to be proposed for the Town Center, issues to be addressed include:
 - > New construction should occur in phases – on a limited scale to ensure expansion in retail floor area happens in sustainable increments
 - > New buildings should be well designed and compatible with/have similar characteristics of the existing historic character
 - > Will need to ensure parking is adequate, well-lighted, attractive, and with adequate signage. Consider changes to the parking, put parking in the rear, and evaluate on-street parallel parking.
 - > Make sure the buildings are situated close to the sidewalk, but with enough space for outdoor dining
 - > Be sure to consider the impact of new, taller buildings on the residential neighborhood behind.

upcoming meetings:

Monday, March 12, 7-9pm, next Land Use & Zoning Committee meeting. City Council Room, 2nd floor City Building.

Monday, April 9, 7-9pm, next Land Use & Zoning Committee meeting. City Council Room, 2nd floor City Building.

Monday, May 14, 7-9pm, next Land Use & Zoning Committee meeting. City Council Room, 2nd floor City Building.

2/12/18 meeting materials

Attachments – Materials Distributed at the 2/12/18 Land Use & Zoning committee meeting

- Comments on Public Forum (January 24, 2018), (see pages 6-8 for comments from meeting, and separate attachment for the meeting presentation)
- updated business related survey results (pages 9-11)
- Discussion of potential/draft economic development strategies (see pages 12-14)

2/12/18 meeting materials

Comments from 1/24/18 Public Forum

QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES/CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland Place should NOT be zoned as multi-family! Or two-family • Negative impact on surrounding streets • Sustainable Businesses
NEIGHBORHOOD AND HOUSING ISSUES/CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our schools are already at capacity and can't support more residents/students • Need more first floor living for older people who want to move out of their two story home • Like idea of infill housing and utilizing upper levels of retail and business district for more housing (mixed use developments)
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES/CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Tree Canopy • TREES are invaluable
BUSINESS DISTRICTS / ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding nonresidential zones along Alexandria Pike- South End • Why is Highland Plaza not listed? • I totally agree! I frequent those businesses on a regular basis • Where's Highland Plaza? Busy area and viable! • Need a cluster of "shoppable" businesses (a single shop cannot draw consistently) • Govt. can create environment for business, but should not recruit • Create a development cooperation • Assist property owners and develop to recruit • The South Gateway Business District needs to be recognized in this plan • Expand upon professional office zoning at corner of Alex Pike and Ft. Thomas • Like idea of infill housing and utilizing upper levels of retail and business district for more housing (mixed use developments) • Need for address funding of infrastructure to support private investments in our business districts (from Funding board) • In/out has to be better for out of comm (from Regional Collaboration board) • Would love to see more or better restaurants! Bar opportunity at the Inverness business district (from Regional Collaboration board)
CBD - APPROPRIATE THEMES/NICHE TO MAKE CBD UNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive Businesses • PARKING?? • Family oriented dining, after game, services

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Comments from 1/24/18 Public Forum

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widen and better maintain sidewalks along arterial and commercial streets (for walkers and cyclists)
MIDWAY - APPROPRIATE THEMES/NICHE TO MAKE IT UNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment District? • Attract similar businesses • Fun, live music, Tower Park visitors for food, beer, ice cream • Would love to not only see reservoirs not only open up, but have Midway "Look over the reservoir"
CBD AND MIDWAY DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those are all appropriate styles • Townhomes senior living offices? (not likely) • Build at the sidewalk • CBD- Traditional non-multi family housing! • Need to make CBD a two-side district (Businesses on both sides of street) to create a sense of place

RESULTS FROM THE BUILDING PREFERENCE SURVEY:

Do you agree or disagree that the following types of buildings are appropriate for redevelopment in the CBD and/or the Midway Business Districts?



Traditional 2-3 story buildings close to the sidewalk, mixed uses, shopping and restaurants on first floor, offices and residential on upper floors

	CBD	Midway District
Neutral to Strongly Agree	17 (94%)	18 (100%)
Count	18	18

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Four story mixed use buildings, shopping and restaurants on first floor, offices and residential on upper floors

	CBD	Midway District
Neutral to Strongly Agree	5 (28%)	4 (24%)
Count	18	17



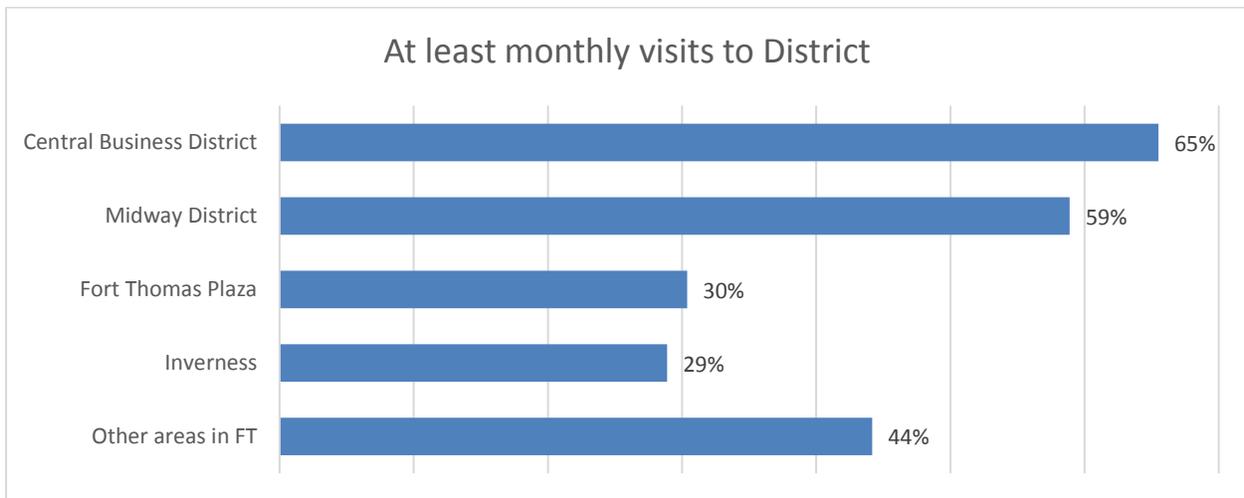
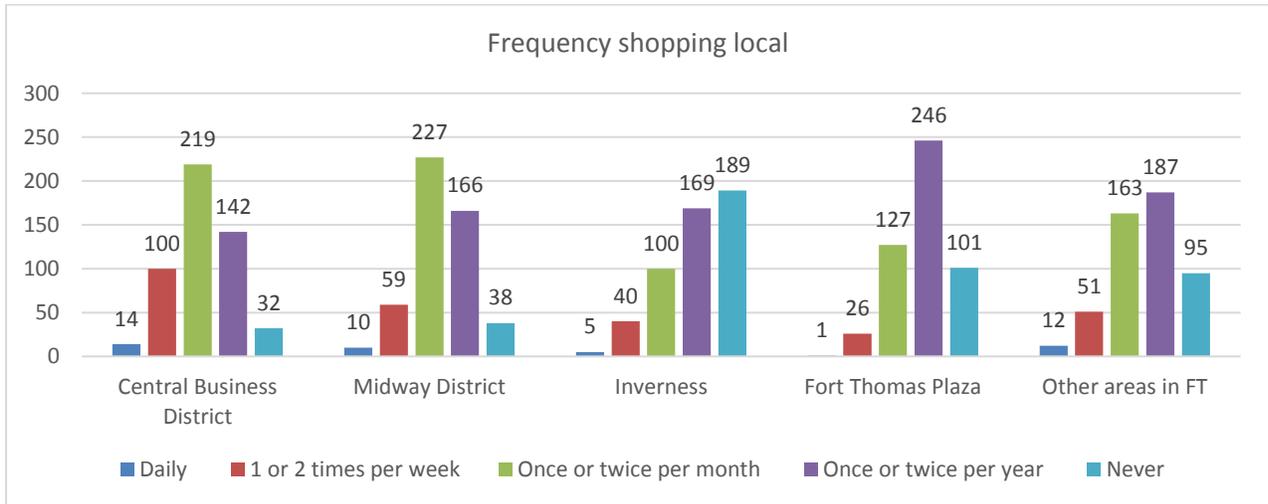
Townhouses/condos – 2-3 story buildings, in/adjacent to business district

	CBD	Midway District
Neutral to Strongly Agree	8 (44%)	7 (41%)
Count	18	17

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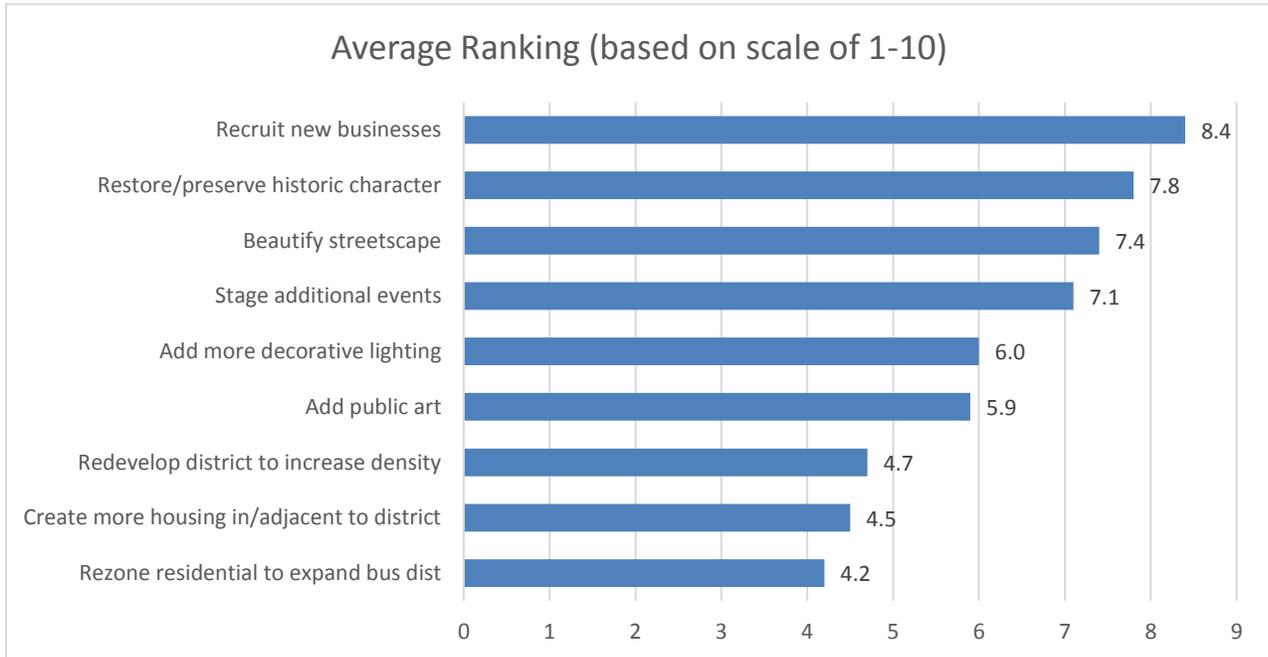
SURVEY UPDATE – business related questions

1. How often do you shop in the following business districts? (800 responses)

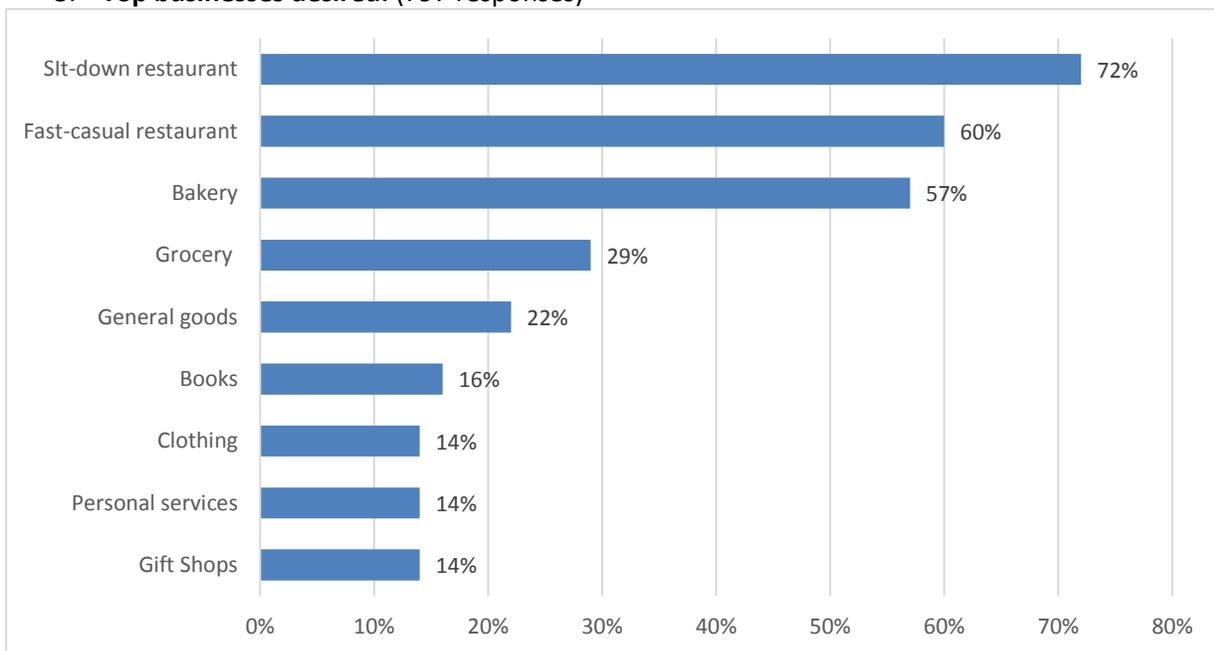


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2. **Activities the city take to enhance the business districts – responses are ranked below (800 responses)**

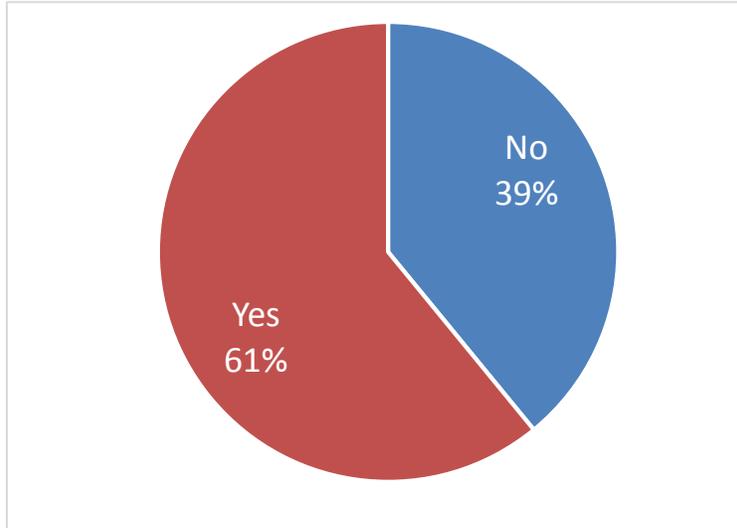


3. **Top businesses desired: (797 responses)**



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- 4. **The majority believe more parking is needed.**
(801 responses)



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DRAFT STRATEGIES

Business Districts and Economic Well-being

1. Create and maintain vibrant mixed-use districts that are central gathering places for their surrounding neighborhoods, building on each one's assets and unique character.
 - a. Promote infill development and redevelopment in the business districts, as a sustainable form of development that enhances a walkable environment and uses existing infrastructure.
 - b. Preserve the historic character of existing retail districts. Consider the merits of establishing National Register historic district designations where warranted.
 - c. Maintain and enhance the traditional walkable "Main Street" character with buildings close to the street, in areas where the character already exists.
 - i. Revise/update the existing zoning regulations to incorporate more form-based regulations to ensure all new development/redevelopment contributes to the character: minimum two stories, buildings built at are within 5-10 feet of the sidewalk, require a certain amount of display windows area on the first floor, require entrances to be oriented to the street, etc.
 - ii. Expand the design guidelines to apply to all areas where a traditional main street character exists.
 - d. Consider creating themed business districts -each with its own character and purpose, and unique market focus.
 - i. Identify the different needs and customers that patronize the districts
 - ii. Develop a strategy for creating the niche.
 - iii. Use public art as a way to enhance the themes.
 - iv. For Midway, continue to leverage the district's history
 - v. At the same time, utilize a common element to tie all of the business districts together so that customers know they are in Fort Thomas.
 - e. Enhance off-street parking areas to reduce the perception of a lack of parking:
 - i. Create a parking district to manage the number of spaces for the whole district (the zoning code already recognizes that the CBD and GC districts have properties where on-site parking is not possible and allows the Planning Commission to waive the parking requirement)

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- ii. improve wayfinding signage so it is easy to find the off-street parking lots while driving through the district
- iii. improve the aesthetic appeal of the parking lots with landscaping, lighting and other amenities so they are pleasant, safe and inviting
- iv. improve the walkways/connections between the parking lots and the stores so that customers have a pleasant and safe walking to their destination
- f. Develop appropriate strategies for enhancing retail areas that are not designated Renaissance districts, in order to address their different needs.
- g. Improve the public realm, based on the type of retail district
 - i. Beautify the streetscape
 - ii. Improve sidewalks and crosswalks
 - iii. Add street furniture
 - iv. Add decorative lighting
- 2. Ensure commercial/nonresidential properties in Fort Thomas are maximized to their fullest potential, as well as resilient and adaptable to change.
 - a. Evaluate the zoning requirements to identify any standards that could unnecessarily hinder development or expansion of existing nonresidential uses.
 - b. Consider creating development design guidelines/standards for all nonresidential districts that foster enhanced building design and site design (i.e. off-street parking, adequate ingress egress, landscaping, and minimal adverse environmental effects).
- 3. Promote a healthy economy with a stable and diversified employment base.
 - a. Foster economic growth and enhancement in all nonresidential areas of the city
 - i. Conduct periodic market studies to monitor changes in economic trends and forecasts.
 - ii. Expand business assistance programs
 - b. Consider the merits of expanding the nonresidential zoning (primarily for offices, mixed uses) along Alexandria Pike between I-471 and I-275.
 - c. Foster low-impact, home based businesses.*
 - d. Encourage businesses that meet the essential day-to-day needs of residents.

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- e. Create a shop local campaign
 - f. Create a development cooperation that can spearhead redevelopment efforts.
 - g. Prepare and conduct a coordinated marketing/branding effort – so each business district is easily recognizable, and market Fort Thomas to the types of commercial and service activities that appear to have the greatest potential for success and stability in the region.
 - h. Coordinate with neighboring communities to maximize regional economic development efforts.
 - i. Consider hosting additional events, especially those that will help enhance the location’s niche/theme.
4. Ensure nonresidential infill development is appropriate for its location and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- a. Pay particular attention to the edges of the business districts to adequately buffer the adjacent single-family neighborhood
 - b. Evaluate the permitted uses in each district based on the location characteristics and revise if needed to ensure uses do not have a negative impact on surrounding residential areas.
5. Ensure that nonresidential development and redevelopment promotes and enhances the “city in a park” environment.
- a. Consider requiring a minimum amount of tree planting and maximum impervious surface*