Land Use and Zoning Committee Meeting

attendees

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Kevin Barbian</th>
<th>Hilary Landwehr</th>
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<tr>
<td>Megan deSola</td>
<td>Linda Malloy</td>
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<td>Dan Gorman</td>
<td>Brent Niese</td>
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<td>Pat Hagerty</td>
<td>Nancy Schneider</td>
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<td>Mary Healy</td>
<td>John Slawter</td>
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<td>Kris Hopkins</td>
<td>Kyle Stevie</td>
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<td>Patti Hudepohl</td>
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agenda overview:

• Walking tour of Midway District starting at Amory north to Pearson and south to Grandview and returning to the Amory along Cochran to

• Discussion of Midway goals and objectives; potential future land uses, and desired amenities. Handouts from the meeting are attached, starting on page 7, and include images of existing buildings/places in the area as well as examples of buildings, signs, etc. from other locations.

• **Next Committee Meeting: Monday, May 14, 6:30-9pm at City Building.** Due to the success of the walking tour around the Midway District, we’ll start off the May meeting with a walking tour of the Town Center, starting at the City Building - meet on the front steps – and then finish our discussion at the City Building.

discussion:

• **“Big Ideas” framework.** Before going on the walking tour, Kris Hopkins summarized activities happening in the vicinity of Midway and some of the “big Ideas” being discussed in some of the other committees, which overlap with discussion topics for the Land Use Committee – including renovations of houses on Alexander Circle, potential reuses for the VA Hospital and the Stables building in the event that either or both of the current uses are discontinued, and park improvements. There is considerable potential for major changes occurring in this general area, and the committee was encouraged to think about the bigger picture and how it all ties into the Midway district and its surrounding area.

• **Overall goal for the area:** Continue to enhance the area as a recreation/entertainment destination for both residents and nonresidents. This acknowledges that there are already a number of businesses, community facilities (e.g. VA Hospital), recreation attractions and special events/programming that draw people to the area, more so than any other area of the city. It is also a good location to attract nonresidents because it is located closer to the edge of the city and more easily accessible via the highway (I-471 and I-275) than Town Center and therefore will have less impact on the city as a whole.

• **Primary Objectives for Midway and vicinity:** The committee discussed and generally reached consensus on the following objectives, with some additional strategies as noted.
> Preserve the historic character and integrity of the area, and incorporate the area’s history in the design and renovations of new and existing structures. The committee noted that the area has a lot of character and is a significant part of the city’s history. The city and property owners should continue to preserve and enhance this area.

- Preserve the history of Fort Thomas with renovations and upgrades to remaining historic structures.
- Encourage facade renovations and upgrades to create a more cohesive, consistent and historically accurate appearance along the retail district. Work with property owners to beautify the buildings, and remove additions and awnings, etc that are incompatible and detract from the beauty of the original architecture.
- Make sure that new development is located at the street (revise the zoning to create form-based regulations, with maximum building setbacks)
- Continue preservation efforts of the grand architecturally significant homes.

The committee discussed the extent to which other, more modest homes should be preserved as well, such as the soldiers’ homes along Garrison. The consensus was that while it is desirable to preserve the history of these types of residences, it is not a priority.

> Promote a mix of uses in the area. There are already a number of complimentary uses in the area, and the committee agreed that this diversity helps to create a more vibrant, interesting area. Professional offices provide lunchtime restaurant patrons, entertainment venues and recreation amenities attract people to the area and housing provides the residential population to patronize and augment demand for the Midway businesses, who also help create a safe and lived-in atmosphere.

- If the VA Hospital leaves, the committee agreed that the appropriate uses include apartments, senior living, and hotel, all of which would help provide residents to enliven the area.
- If the Stables building were to be vacated by the federal government, the committee agreed that appropriate uses include those that contribute to the entertainment/recreation theme, including restaurants, cooking kitchen, brewery/beer garden, indoor market (e.g. Findlay Market) and indoor recreation.
- Consider allowing larger homes near the district and on S Fort Thomas Ave to be used for bed and breakfast to provide for their continued use. Identify appropriate locations in the city where such use could be compatible with the existing residential neighborhood – consider allowing as a conditional use in the specific (TBD) locations, with sufficient regulations related to parking to guard against the bed and breakfast becoming a nuisance.

> Increase critical mass of retail/mixed uses in the business district. Desirable locations for attracting new retail/mixed use include, in priority order (in regards to actions the city would take to attract new businesses):
- Fill vacant buildings - storefronts with retail and upper floors with residential or office uses.
- Improve and attract retail to underutilized storefronts. Upgrade storefronts as needed and attract new retail in order to fill street level storefronts with uses that promote and foster pedestrian activity. Encourage existing office and service uses that do not rely so heavily on walk-by customers to locate in upper floors.
- Encourage new infill construction within the business district (fill in the gaps), only after existing spaces are renovated and filled. The goal is to ensure that any new construction does not make it harder to fill the existing retail space.
- Redevelop noncontributing buildings that front on S Fort Thomas Ave and are within the Midway business district – such as the small, one story vinyl-sided frame buildings.
- Redevelop noncontributing buildings that front on S Fort Thomas Ave but are located at the edge of the current business district – such as the one-story white building on the VA Hospital grounds that is located within 10 feet of the wall between the hospital and the Armory.

> Increase critical mass of housing in and adjacent to the Midway business district in order to foster a livelier district.

- Encourage housing in the upper floors of existing and new retail buildings
- Encourage/foster new higher density housing along Southview designed to take advantage of the views of the reservoir and proximity to Midway District. This area includes a number of rental properties, and some structures have maintenance issues. However, the committee also noted that it is important to preserve/create some affordable housing, especially because this area is currently a section of the city where affordable units already exist. The committee also felt that if the opportunity were to arise, that it is appropriate to consider redevelopment of the entire residential area bounded by Grandview Ave, the reservoir and S Fort Thomas.

- The committee discussed the potential for redevelopment of the housing along Midway Court, but was concerned that there is not enough space to accommodate. The committee felt that increased open space and increased parking are higher priorities (see below). (Consider doing schematic to illustrate potential layouts)

> Create more public open space/ green space in and around the Midway district to provide attractive and safe places for people to linger, people watch, enjoy lunch, ice cream, etc. Options include:

- Create a public plaza behind Ft Thomas Pizza & Tavern, with attractive pedestrian connections to S. Fort Thomas Ave, designed in a way to maximize views of the reservoir and connections to the rest of the District so that the space is truly an amenity that fits with the larger area. This location would also provide a safe
place away from the street, which would be desirable for families with children. Creating such public space will need to be coordinated with improved vehicular access to the backs of the building and appropriate signage so people can find the open space.

- Create a public plaza in the front lawn of the VA Hospital, near the S Fort Thomas Ave/River Road intersection. This area is adjacent to the City’s existing plaza and small parking lot located right at the intersection. The 0.56 acres of lawn area is currently used for gardening plots and is blocked off by a wall and fence. The concept of creating more a town square in this location (which was also discussed in the 2005 Plan) would create a public gathering space that is convenient to the stores and restaurants across the street.

> Better incorporate the reservoir into the Midway District – make it more of a focal point.

- Restore access to the walking path around the reservoir. The committee reiterated the desire to restore access for residents, but noted the difficulty in convincing the NKY Water District.

- Redevelop areas to take advantage of views of the reservoir. Public open space behind restaurants along S Fort Thomas and new housing along Southview.

- Increase views of the reservoir from S Fort Thomas Ave.

- The amount of seemingly excess land owned by the NKY Water District behind stores on S. Fort Thomas Ave - for example the district’s fence is located between 70 and 100 feet from the paved area around the reservoir in most places, but is as much as 325 feet away in the corner near Midway Court. The committee noted the difficulty in trying to acquire land from the water district to increase the amount of development that could be accommodated behind the existing businesses along Fort Thomas and along Midway Court.

> Provide adequate and accessible parking with sufficient wayfinding signage throughout the Midway District and adjacent recreation area to support expanded businesses and housing.

- Evaluate the adequacy, location and connections of existing parking spaces on a district wide basis and determine need for more parking based on goals for future development in the district. The committee is concerned that parking needs to be better distributed, and easier to find so that visitors to the area can find a place to park.

- Maximize on-street parking by striping the spots that are already available for parking.

- Consider increasing the parking area behind businesses at the northern end of the district (1011 and 1013 S Fort Thomas Ave). There is some potential to acquire some land from the adjacent property owned by Cincinnati Bell (less than 1/3 of the 2.86 acre parcel is actually devoted to the Bell building, parking and driveway). Increasing the parking area would require building a retaining wall
due to the topography. Any new parking will need to be designed to ensure the retail buildings are still serviceable from the backs of the structures.

- Install well-designed signage appropriately placed throughout the District to direct people to public parking areas.
- Coordinate the need for parking in the retail/mixed use district with the parking needs for the nearby amenities. Redesign as needed to make existing parking areas more visible, accessible and therefore acceptable for use by retail/restaurant patrons.
- Improve access to existing parking spaces. Consider adding a driveway between the VA Hospital and the Amory to improve access to the parking lot (if it were to be made available for public parking). Coordinate the location of a new entrance with driveway for the retail building situated directly across the street. (1011 and 1013 S Ft Thomas Ave). This will take continued coordination and collaboration with the VA Hospital.

> Improve pedestrian and bike connections within and throughout the area to improve walkability and visual connections to entice people to linger and explore. Attractive connections are needed between the Midway district and ...

- Public parking areas – use wayfinding signs,
- Adjacent amenities, such as Tower Park, play fields, etc.
- Adjacent residential areas to entice them to walk to the district.

> Enhance safety for pedestrians

- Create a new roadway / access way between the reservoir and S Fort Thomas Ave, that would provide access to new parking new public space, and which would enable the elimination of the access drive for the parking lot behind 1045 S Fort Thomas. This driveway is located very close to the S Fort Thomas/River Road intersection and because of the narrowness between two buildings visibility is difficult. This could be turned in to an attractive walkway that would provide access to new public areas behind the buildings.

> Create a cohesive branding/image through banners, landscape treatments, decorative lighting fixtures, etc.

- Use landscaping along the sidewalks to improve appearance of parking lots (especially parking in front of buildings)
- Replicate the look of the wall around the VA Hospital to enhance the streetscape, especially within the Midway District. The committee noted that the stone wall could be expensive to replicate (meaning property owners might not be willing to spend the extra money compared to a brick wall), so at a minimum, new walls should be of a similar gray color, rather than red brick as was used at the southern end of the Midway District.
- Create distinct gateways into the district
- Continue the streetscape improvements along S Fort Thomas – with some standard treatment to link the Midway District to US 27 (1/4 mile away) and to the Town Center District (approximately 1 mile away).
- Consider adding decorative signage to Highland Ave bridge
- Use public art and other amenities to enhance the streetscape but be sure the design is respective and reflective of the historic character of the area. Stay away from trendy art/street furniture.
- Continue to plant trees in front yards to maintain and enhance the City’s tree canopy. Identify specific streets where a coordinated tree planting program can be focused.
Chapter 1 – Land Use & Zoning

Midway District and environs
Illustrating the existing zoning, and proximity to surrounding amenities such as the reservoir, the VA hospital and city recreation facilities.
Photos of Midway District (google earth)

1. Entrance to Midway area at Tower Park

2. Historic buildings in Midway District
3. Buildings at River Rd Intersection

4. Looking South at River Rd Intersection
Small Building in Midway District

Parking lot in front of Building
meeting handouts

April 17, 2018
6:00-8:30p
Midway Walking Tour/Amory

7. Office building mid-district

8. Multi-family building mid-district
9. Midway Court

10. Houses on Midway Court
11. Houses at southern end of Midway District

12. Houses along Southview next to Reservoir
13. Houses along Garrison

14. Houses along Sergeant
15. Historic Houses along Greene
16. Historic Houses along Pearson
17. View of Plaza at River Rd intersection

18. View toward parking and beyond on River Rd
Images of examples of infill housing, streetscapes, gateways and signs, and public art
Gateways/Signs

Public Art