

## meeting summary

May 14, 2018

6:30- 9:15p

CBD Walking Tour/City Building

## Land Use and Zoning Committee Meeting

attendees	Kevin Barbian	Jann Seidenfaden
	Dan Gorman	John Slawter
	Patrick Hagerty	Mark Thurnauer
	Mary Healy	Emily Bills
	Linda Malloy	Kris Hopkins
	Nancy Schneider	

### scheduling:

- Next Committee Meeting: Monday, June 11, 7:00-8:30 PM at City Building
- Public meeting: June 25, 7:00 PM at the Mess Hall

### discussion:

#### TOWN CENTER DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT

- Observations from the walking tour of Town Center District (see also Map 1):
  - > The Town Center includes an eclectic mix of buildings: older residential buildings, older traditional main street commercial buildings and newer more suburban style freestanding commercial (mostly banks) with on-site parking lots and drive-thru facilities. The district is an easy walking distance from the high school and is nestled in the center of the city.
  - > The City Building anchors the district at the north end. Constructed in 1964, renovations and improvements to the mostly 2-story building and site are being considered as part of the Community Plan by the Utilities and City-Owned Facilities Committee in order to make the building more welcoming, with public access to limited amenities (e.g. restrooms) and improved parking/site circulation.
  - > The east side of N Fort Thomas between Highland Avenue and the City Building includes retail and office buildings. Many of the buildings are older – built between 1900 and 1925 - and are located close to the sidewalk. The one newer building in this



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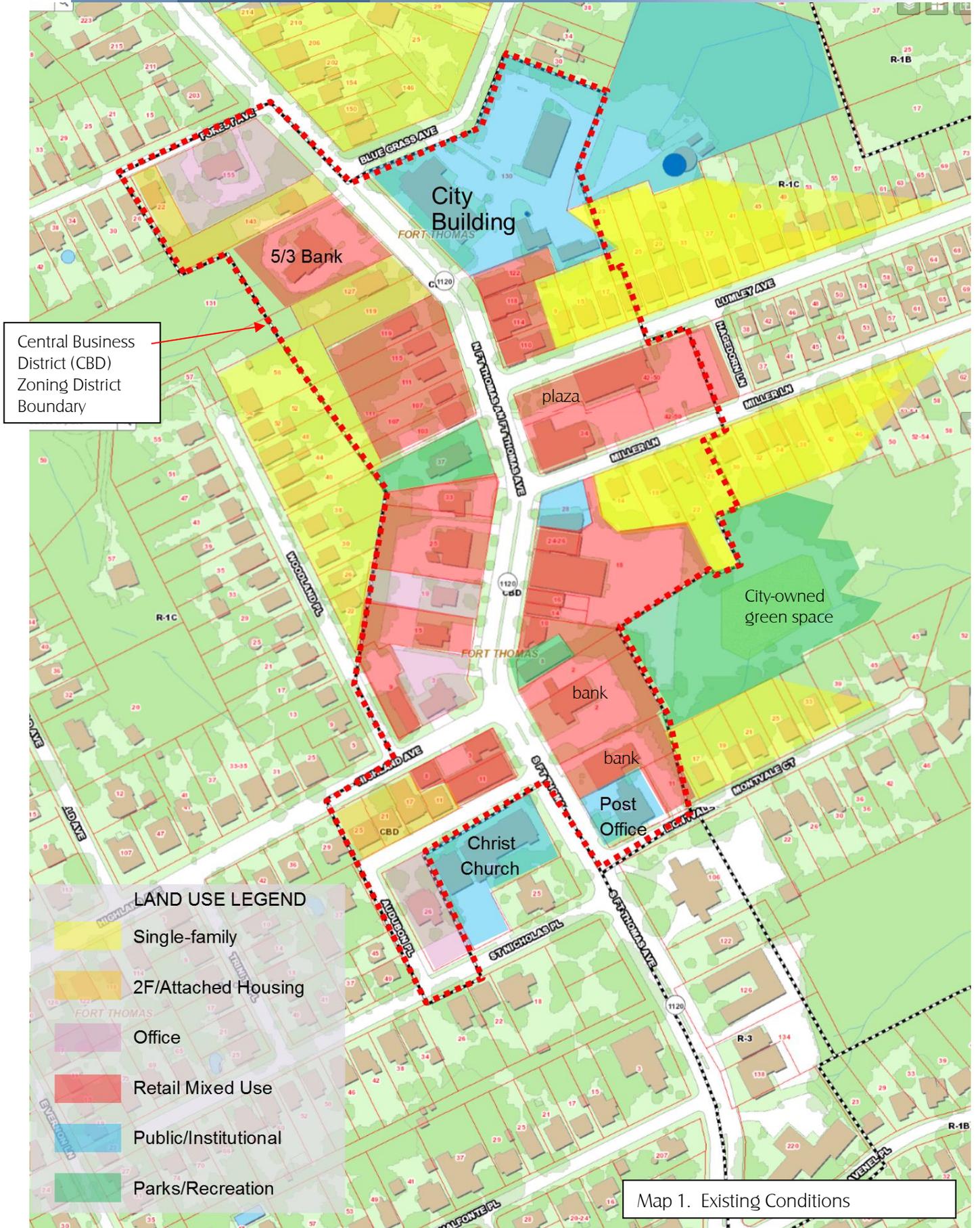
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- section of the Town Center District is the Fort Thomas Independent Schools building, built in 1989 and located at the sidewalk along N Fort Thomas Ave.
- > Most of the buildings on the west side of N Fort Thomas, north of Highland Avenue, are large three story houses built in the early 1900s, and located between 20 feet and 40 feet from the sidewalk. Some of them also sit on a hill. Most of the houses have been converted to retail, offices or restaurant uses, though a few at the northern end are still used as residences. The large lawn areas are heavily used during the popular 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade and can accommodate three and four rows of chairs. The trees in the front yards provide significant shade.
  - > A few one-story commercial/office buildings were constructed between 1950 and 1990 and are generally located 30 or more feet from the sidewalk. Most of them are banks with drive-thru facilities. These buildings are generally out of character with the traditional main street storefronts.
  - > On-street parking is available throughout the district, and additional parking is provided behind some of the older buildings, but is not generally visible from the street, and in some cases not easily accessible because of topography.
  - > In 2002, the City adopted design guidelines that apply to renovations and new construction in the Town Center. No new building construction has taken place since they were adopted.
  - > Approximately 10 years ago, the plaza at the corner of N Fort Thomas and Lumley Avenue was redesigned under a development agreement between the property owner and the city. However, there are no storefronts or building entrances that look out over the plaza. Instead, the multi-tenant strip retail center located east of the plaza faces Miller Lane.





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- > The strip center's parking lot extends eastward to Hagedorn Lane. The commercial site is flanked by six single-family houses along Miller Lane and seven along Lemley Avenue, some of which are in the CBD zoning district and others in the R-1C single-family district. Most of the houses were built before 1930. 
- > The southern boundary of the business district is anchored by the Post Office and Christ Church.
- > Circulation around the district can be challenging: Lumley and Miller Lane are a pair of one-way streets that provide access to the Convenient Market and other tenants in the strip center and can be confusing to people visiting the district for the first time. The parking lot behind The Hiland and Colonel De is not visible from N Fort Thomas Ave and the one public walkway providing access to the parking lot from N Fort Thomas has no signage. 
- > There is a large (10 acre) city-owned open space located behind the storefronts and parking lot between Montvale Court and Miller Lane. The area is a deep depression and surrounded by mature trees. The adjacent parking lot offers views out across the space. 
- > There are approximately 22 very small lots sandwiched between Lumley Avenue and Miller Lane east of Hagedorn Lane, measuring between 45 and 50 feet wide and typically 75 feet deep for a lot size of between 3,300 and 3,800 square feet. Some of the houses are separated by less than 10 feet and most have less than 20 feet of rear yard. The area is zoned R-1C, which requires a minimum area of 7,000 square feet, side yard of 8 feet and a rear yard of 30 feet, making all of these lots nonconforming. The committee observed that any type of major renovation or redevelopment to these homes will be difficult to achieve under the existing zoning. Others commented that most of the homes are well taken care of.
- > As noted during the February committee meeting, the houses along Woodland Place abut the Town Center District to the west. While most of the houses at the north end of Woodland Place are well buffered from the commercial lots because they are more than 200 feet deep, three of the houses at the southern end of the street are less than 100 feet from the existing commercial parking lot. 

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- Overall goals for the area: Continue to enhance the area as a compact, vibrant, thriving and family-friendly town center with a critical mass of storefronts and other uses where residents can go for everyday needs, including a small scale grocery and pharmacy, and with restaurants that cater to the city and nearby school employees, visitors and families, etc.
- Primary Objectives for the Town Center and vicinity: The committee discussed and generally reached consensus on the following objectives, with some additional strategies as noted.
  - > Preserve and enhance the traditional main street character of the area.
    - New construction and upgrades to existing structures should strive for a cohesive aesthetic environment, and should fit in with and embody an “older” feel rather than a modern appearance.
    - The preference is for storefronts that are viewable from the sidewalk.
    - Make sure that new development is located near the street - revise the zoning to create form-based regulations, with 2-3 story buildings and maximum building setbacks, taking into consideration the need for space along the sidewalk to accommodate crowds for big events such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade.
    - Review the design guidelines and strengthen as needed.
  - > Continue to promote a mix of uses in the area.
    - As with the Midway District, consider allowing larger homes near the district and on N 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:
    - Redevelop buildings that do not provide adequate and marketable floor area.
    - Consider extending Highland Ave east of N Fort Thomas Ave to create developable area, access to parking and to take advantage of views of the city-owned green space.
  - > Encourage new housing development within and adjacent to the district. The committee believes this area is a prime location for new housing targeting empty nesters and young professionals.
    - Encourage housing in the upper floors of existing and new retail buildings.
    - Appropriate areas for new housing include the north side of Lumley Ave abutting the City Building property, and along the south side of Miller Lane west of Hagedorn, overlooking the city-owned greenspace.

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- > Provide adequate and accessible parking with sufficient wayfinding signage throughout the Town Center District and parking areas 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.
  - Install well-designed signage appropriately placed throughout the District to direct people to public parking areas.
  - Consider providing access from Montvale Court to parking behind buildings. This will be tricky because of the topography.
- > Create a cohesive branding/image through banners, landscape treatments, decorative lighting fixtures, etc.
  - Create distinct gateways into the district
  - Use public art and other amenities to enhance the streetscape but be sure the design is respectful and reflective of the character of the area.
  - 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.

**US 27 Corridor**

- The committee again discussed the general outlook for this major corridor.
  - > It provides direct access between I-471 and the Midway District and is one area of the city where major new economic development should be encouraged.
  - > The Regional Collaboration committee has recently explored the potential to make this a "smart corridor" as a way to attract new economic development, especially given its proximity to I-275 and Northern Kentucky University.
  - > Preferred new development is high-value and high-wage jobs in order to maximize this area for the city's tax base (and not uses that have few employees and low-wage jobs).
- Desired characteristics for any new economic development include:
  - > Strive for well-designed buildings (primarily office, multi-family, and supporting uses such as restaurants) with landscaped front yards – rather than commercial buildings with parking lots in front along the street. The use is less important than the setback and form of buildings, but the uses should be clean, low-impact. Consider creating a new district that permits offices, multi-family and similar compatible uses so there is flexibility to meet market demand.
  - > Strive for good access management and pedestrian safety.
    - Ensure the corridor is safe for children to walk to Woodfill Elementary School.

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- Limit new curb cuts.
- Require new development and work with existing property owners to provide well defined access drives.
- > Better aesthetics:
  - Signs – ensure that existing and new development have well-designed signs.
  - Enhance landscaping in the front yards of commercial properties. Work with existing property owners to create landscaping along the front to screen parking areas, and create better defined access drives.
  - For new construction, require a minimum parking setback along the corridor and a minimum amount of trees, shrubs, etc.
  - Maintain and increase street trees. There are a number of mature trees that line the corridor between the I-471 interchange and the city’s southern boundary – mostly in the front yards of residential lots, not so much on commercial lots. More trees are desirable.
  - Require buffering between nonresidential and multi-family uses and single-family neighborhoods. Work with existing property owners where the buffering is lacking.
- > Prohibit outdoor storage visible from the street.
- > Monitor the area and address any drug problems that exist.

**MEMORIAL PARKWAY DEVELOPMENT SITE**

- Existing conditions:
  - > The site is zoned R-5 multi-family, is located across the street from Memorial Village apartments, and includes a total of 24 acres, 6.5 acres in Fort Thomas and the remainder in Newport.
  - > There is some question whether or not the site can support new construction, but it is likely that as technology advances, development will occur sometime in the future.
- Desired characteristics for new development
  - > Encourage a tower building that takes advantage of the views of downtown Newport and Cincinnati, and the Ohio River. The form of the new building is more important than the use – so either multi-family or office. Ensure that any residential development is targeted for smaller households – empty nesters and young professionals.
  - > Revise the zoning to enable a high-rise building but require a small footprint. This will require increasing the maximum height (currently 35 feet) (A taller building will require appropriate firefighting equipment) and adding a large minimum open space requirement.

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- > Create design guidelines that illustrate the desired features for new construction, including building features, landscaping, on-site circulation, and pedestrian access.
- > Require an adequate setback from Memorial Parkway so that the natural character of the parkway is retained.
- Ensure that new construction does not create traffic issues

### **FORT THOMAS AVENUE - Connection between Town Center and Midway Districts**

- Consider burying the utility lines along the one-mile corridor. This has already been accomplished in the business districts.