

Downtown Working Group
Meeting #1 – December 20, 2012
Town/County Conference Room 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Meeting Notes

Attendees: Jo Bacon (JB), John Vereuck (JV), Jay Deinken (JD), Mickey Brown (MB), Jim Smith (JS), Dave Harvey (DH), Bill Taylor (BT), Tom Cage (TC), Ellen Clark (EC), Jessica Morriss (JM)

Agenda Item 1: Introduction and Agenda Review

Ellen Clark provided an overview of the meeting agenda, a general description of the Downtown Working Group, and discussed the relationship between the Main Street Implementation Project and Zoning Code Update work efforts, which are both grant funded.

The overlap between the projects provides a unique opportunity to combine resources and address related issues related to land use, transportation, and design in a more efficient way.

Agenda Item 2: Work Completed to Date/Foundational Documents

Ellen Clark provided an overview of the work completed to date and the foundational documents that are related to the current work effort and will be considered by the Downtown Working Group:

- General Plan
- PAOT and PIEC Policies
- District Plans
 - Downtown Concept for Main Street
 - North Old Mammoth Road NDP
 - South Districts NDP
- DRCEDS
- Development Forecast – EPS Report
- Zoning Code Update: Progress and Direction (Dyatt & Bhatia)
- *Height and Mass Study – there was some discussion amongst the group as to whether the Height and Mass Study, which was accepted by the Planning Commission as part of their review of the Draft Commercial Zoning Chapter should be a foundational document. It was acknowledged that this is not an “adopted” document, and still subject to review or change.*

Agenda Item 3: Downtown Working Group: Draft Purpose and Objectives

Draft Purpose

The Working Group reviewed the draft purpose and made the following comments:

- JS – does surrounding include South Old Mammoth Road? We need to include this area.
- JV – We should focus on the “L-shape” (commercial corridors).

- BT – surrounding doesn't refer to boundaries, but to areas of influence.
- EC – End goal for the Working Group is to do the necessary work to help guide staff and the consultants to translate the concepts in district planning into standards and regulations that will guide development.

Based on the above input from the DWG, staff suggests clarifying the purpose statement as follows:

Develop recommendations for commercial zoning, land use, transportation and physical development standards and programs that can successfully implement the accepted District Planning concepts for the Downtown Core and ~~surrounding~~ adjacent commercial zones areas.

Objectives

Ellen Clark provided an overview of the proposed work objectives. The Working Group agreed with the outlined work objectives:

1. Use existing accepted plans and policies as the starting point - we're not going backwards or reinventing the wheel.
2. Define agreed-upon building block assumptions, evaluation method and tools to test feasibility of draft concepts based on real world conditions - physical and financial.
3. Respect and acknowledge relationship to General Plan vision and policies (PAOT, buildout, and project impact evaluation)
4. Use this analysis and findings to update and adopt commercial zoning, design and development standards, and develop effective implementation tools through the Zoning Code Update and Main Street Implementation Plan.

The following comments were made:

- EC – Objective 1: Use existing plans already developed as a starting point.
- EC – Objective 2: For example, if there's a suggestion to change residential density standards or to use a different model, such as Floor Area Ratio (FAR), we need to explain these reasons to the public/deciding bodies and have complete transparency.
- EC – Objective 3: The General Plan is the foundation that sets the community vision. We need to understand the relationship between any changes to the Commercial zoning and the General Plan. It is a key touchstone and point of reference. However, this does not mean that the GP is "unchangeable."
- EC – Objective 3: PAOT and GP are a barometer of resource impacts. If the ZCU is to remain on schedule, staying within those thresholds and constraints will be important. A significant deviation may require that the Commercial Zones component of the ZCU be placed on a separate timeline.
- TC – The resource element of the Urban Water Management Plan needs to be a consideration (impact evaluation and relation to the General Plan). It is a limiting factor.
- EC – Objective 4: Updating Commercial zoning standards. Can the standards meet the objectives defined in the Downtown Concept for Main Street?

Agenda Item 4: Work Program Outline

Ellen Clark provided an overview of the proposed work program, which is broken into two phases: Phase I – Commercial Zones Chapter Review, Analysis, and Update; Phase II – Main Street Implementation Project. The following comments were made:

- EC – Phase I will consist of working with the Working Group to review and test the commercial development zoning standards, using tools, such as modeling prototype sites to test physical feasibility. This information will also inform the financial feasibility aspect of implementation. This exercise will lead to recommended changes to the standards, which will then be used through Phase II to develop an implementation plan for Main Street.
- The Working Group suggested that a 3rd phase be added to discuss development fees and how they play into the overall financial feasibility of realizing the vision for the commercial districts.

Agenda Item 5: Commercial Zones: Key Questions

Ellen Clark provided an overview of the key questions that the Working Group will need to tackle as part of the work effort:

- Is it possible to “fill the box” based on the current and proposed zoning standards?
- Are the zoning standards responsive to today’s market, and can they respond to changing market conditions over time?
- What are the community’s minimum requirements/expectations for new development? How should those requirements be balanced against market feasibility and reasonable developer expectations for return on investment?

The following comments were made:

- MB – We currently have a toolbox of tools (General Plan, other planning documents) that do not work from a development standpoint. For example, I can’t describe to a client what they could potentially build on the old KFC site. 40 units? 80 units? Height restrictions?
- JV – Agreed. In order to figure out what a property is worth (what it can be appraised at), you need to know the zoning and what can be built. Property value dictates development decisions. Can you put 40 units on the lot? 80 units? Like the situation or not, “I want to know what my property’s worth.”
- JS – Code standards for an individual lot aren’t the only part of the equation. We need to understand the “big picture” urban context in order to get there.
- JS – Zoning typically states the maximum in development terms, not the variance (from 6 to 12). The role of zoning should be to tell us who we are, tell the developer what we want and to get out of the negotiation. “I don’t want to have to know what I can’t get.”
- DH – The Town can grant density, but what are the expectations for design, aesthetics, etc.? Currently we might not end up with the best product available but the flip side is that there has to be something flexible enough to meet with changing market demand.

- It is important to achieve place-making goals. Regulation should be compensated with flexibility. Restriction: If you develop on Main St. we may force you to put in street-front retail. Flexibility: you can do X and Y on floors 2-4.
- JS – CEO of Putnum Investments: “greatest factor to development is certainty.” This will reduce risk and we all win. We don’t have to rethink what we don’t already have (downtown) we just have to create a baseline where everybody else is and eliminate risk with it.
- JS – Reality of the situation: if we don’t draft the code right in the right zones, developers will resort to lowest common denominator, they’ll just revert back to the easy thing. So maybe it’s not just a broad commercial zone. Maybe it’s a mix of commercial, mixed use, residential, etc.
- JB – Mixed-use isn’t just lodging, it’s residential too. It’s not sustainable unless mixed-use is used full-time by the community as opposed to just visitors.
- JS – Maybe long-term rental housing / For sale / Market rate, etc.
- DH – This was thought up in the 90’s. but sustainability got overshadowed by uncertainty and value engineering. Mistake to be learned from.
- EC - How do we incentivize a developer to take on this responsibility (mixed use and residential vs. lodging)?
- JV - A developer has to assemble these clusters so we can get out of the 25’ mentality (small parcels where property owners can’t or won’t be able to build to or meet the broader concept or vision).
- BT – If we’re too flexible, we won’t do anything for anybody. Some of our best competitors (comparison resorts) have 25’ mentality (“fine grain” of storefronts and buildings). We need to know how it will work in some places and how it won’t in others and let the developers figure it out.
- TC - Ex. Napa property next to Chevron. Small lot, 15,000 sq. ft. transient lodging facility can be placed in the back, not necessarily as a vertical extension. This would be a lateral form of mixed use. Many options.
- JS – CBIZ? We need to figure out commercial zoning standards first. Then we can figure out if we need to incentivize with the CBIZ program.
- JV – Incentives have to be built into the process. For example, there’s no money to be made in retail. There has to be some trade-off.
- JS – There are build-to-own models of development which we may want to incorporate.
- BT – Parking is an issue too. It doesn’t work. We may have to think of something new like moving to a shared parking model.
- JM – The draft Parking Code includes language allowing for shared parking, offsite parking, in-lieu fees, etc, but the mechanisms are not yet in place.

Agenda Item 6: Next DWG Meeting

Meeting #2 – Monday, January 28, 2013 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM Town/County Conference Room