

Friday, September 30, 2011. Tuscaloosa Department of Transportation upstairs conference room.

Meeting of Code Studio (Lee Einsweiler) and members of business community chosen with the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce.

Present:

Lee Einsweiler (Code Studio)

Aaron Ross (urban designer and planner at BNIM)

David Cusimano (A&M Oil Co. - Chevron that was at corner of McFarland & 15th)

Carly Patton (Patton Realty - was on McFarland near Full Moon BBQ)

Brandon Clark (Bill Lunceford Construction - don't have property *in* tornado zone, but bordering)

Brian Winters (attorney present on behalf of the Taco Casa owner)

John Carney (Express Oil Change which was on 15th and Dr. Hillard Dr. His business is currently in the permitting stage.)

Ward McFarland (no property in the zone; just here to learn)

Laurie Johns & Howard Speight (Citizens' Advisory Committee)

Amelia Webber (Northport Gazette)

? (H&W Drugs which was on 15th Street in the Forest Lake area)

John McConnell (Planning Director)

Nancy Graves (Planning staff)

Chad Christian (City Drainage Engineer)

Time line: they hope to have the **Commercial** code in place before Thanksgiving. The Council probably won't take up the **Residential** code until the start of next year.

Passed around a map of the area being rezoned and pointed out that the mixed-use areas are colored red and darkest orange.

David Cusimano (Chevron) spoke first. Under the current code you divide the square footage by 120 to get the number of parking spaces required. This kind of business doesn't need this much parking. He argues that he should be allowed to include the pump spaces in that total number. The only way to address this currently is through a special exception granted by the Zoning Board of Adjustments.

Lee Einsweiler: This can be cured through the code. There are several parking plans in the new code and the **STAFF** has discretion to allow different ones so there will be no need to get an exception. Are you having issues with landscaping?

David Cusimano (Chevron): We are a corner lot so we need consideration regarding requirements of tall plantings and we HAVE TO HAVE A SIGN!

John McConnell: We have never talked about signs! (in ongoing talks between Cusimano and the Planning Department...)

David Cusimano: Trees and signage could conflict.

Lee Einsweiler: We are not working on signage in this code; it is not included in our contract.

David Cusimano: Signs on the canopy are important.

Lee Einsweiler: What about lighting?

David Cusimano: We will go with LED lighting.

Lee Einsweiler: the Staff is going to have to deal with this (signage) at some point.

John Carney (Express Oil Change): His business category - oil change/auto repair - is prohibited! He argues that he is in the Auto *Maintenance* business, not repair. As for landscaping, he doesn't have room. He has proposed that the City vacate a lot behind his business that he has been maintaining anyway. Then he talked about the nature of the bordering residential area. He stated, "College residential is not residential; it is commercial." "There were homes back there but they were rental homes. They were not single-family use." (!!!!!!!) (Wow!) He continued about the walking trail, "That green on the map is a scary color to me."

Lee Einsweiler: Gave an example of an NTB (National Tire and Battery) where you drive into one side of the building and there are separate bays inside to change oil, etc., then you drive out of the opposite side. He asked Carney if he could do something like that.

Carney: (Didn't answer that question.) Where the curb cuts go will impact him. He did have one right at the corner which he acknowledges was dangerous. "All I want to do is maintain my status as a 15th Street store. Don't want to exit customers on 15th Street.

Lee Einsweiler: Asked John McConnell if Tuscaloosa has que-ing standards.

John McConnell: We will have to ask the Traffic Engineer. Going back to the category of Express Oil Change. Current code doesn't have Auto *Maintenance* as a defined use. He would categorize it as general business.

Lee Einsweiler: Many codes split the automobile business into two categories: ones that keep vehicles overnight and ones that don't.

Carney: We don't usually have cars overnight. We have no outdoor storage. (Did have underground storage tanks but those have been pulled.) The supply tanks will be downstairs in the pit which will take away an eyesore and create more space.

Cusimano: The sidewalk/greenpath has him and Carney in a big quandary.

John McConnell acknowledged that he understood what he was talking about: will require

additional R-O-W (right of way).

Cusimano: Will need less setback.

Lee Einsweiler: Zero setback is ok in mixed use areas. This is the traditional setback pattern. The Recovery area is not the suburbs. It is not exactly like downtown, but it's not the suburbs. In this area, instead of setbacks, we use architecture to create compatibility.

H&W Drugs: We had an alley behind our store and we got deliveries there, but behind the alley it was residential.

Lee Einsweiler: Alleys are the best! Should the extent of the business area be deeper? (More than one-deep off of 15th - into n'hood) A pharmacy could be fine. The plan does call for the area to be more walkable so the building could be pulled up to the front (near 15th street).

H&W Drugs: She is not on a corner lot so access is her concern.

Lee Einsweiler: the best access would be the alley. The problem with 15th Street is that it has become so large and has too many curb cuts. The City wants to work at access management.

Carly Patton: Concerned about setback and parking and the flood way. The City is working to reduce the scale of the flood way.

Lee Einsweiler: You are just going to have to wait out the FEMA determination or pay for your own study and they are quite expensive. There may be an opportunity to sell to a land aggregation.

John McConnell: The City is paying \$80K for study.

Carly Patton: Not at all interested in selling. She is also concerned about the crosswalk.

John McConnell: That has been moved to 13th Street. The City is moving forward on a substantial grant for pedestrian crossings. The greenway will move with the flood way determination.

Chad Christian (City engineering staff): Joe Robinson (City Engineer) can approve a "no rise" locally. Krispy Kreme did one; they hired their own hydrologist which probably cost 5 figures. The map revision is going to be of great benefit to Ms. Patton. The Time line is months, not years.

Carly Patton: "I'm beginning to feel encouraged."

Brandon Clark (Lunceford): No property *in* the recovery zone, but does have some adjacent.

Lee Einsweiler: If you like what you see (in the new code) you can request to be included in its jurisdiction.

Then Lee began a discussion of building height in the mixed use area. Five stories is a common maximum because of construction methods. Three stories will be the minimum in the areas colored dark red on the map.

Cusimano: We were told that if we need more land, just go buy it, but we couldn't because the price went up exorbitantly. (Subject changed to parking again.)

Lee Einsweiler: About parking maximums and minimums: Parking *maximums* are to work against "Big Box" tendencies to build more than needed and then fill up the excess parking with retail (think Lowes and Home Depot - outside buildings, pallets of roofing, etc.).

About on-street parking: if there is no on-street parking you just can't do great little mixed use development. Then he described how, on roads like 15th Street and even McFarland Blvd., which is a Federal highway, on-street parking can be created. He showed photos of the same.