

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

ITEM NO. E(2)

AGENDA ITEM ABSTRACT

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, June 04, 2002

TITLE: Report: “Fast Track” Downtown Visioning Items

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING	PUBLIC HEARING: YES _ NO <u>X</u>
ATTACHMENTS: A. Resolution B. Minutes, April 10, 2002 C. Map Showing R-O-W Widths in Downtown Districts D. Draft Ordinance – Building Height	FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Patricia McGuire – 918-7327 Mike Brough – 929-3905

PURPOSE

The Board of Aldermen held a worksession on April 2, 2002 to review the report on the Downtown Visioning charrette. The Board of Aldermen identified a series of actions in follow-up, with three designated as “fast track” items. A report on the fast-track items is provided. The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached resolution setting a public hearing on text amendments related to building heights, active recreational facilities, and sidewalk widths for August 20, 2002.

INFORMATION

“New Vision for Downtown Carrboro” a charrette on the future of Carrboro’s downtown was held in mid-September 2001. Over 300 citizens participated in the two-day charrette, which was facilitated by Walkable Communities, Inc (WCI). Draft recommendations were prepared in follow-up and presented to the community in early November. A draft final report was submitted in late December and revised in early 2002 based on comments submitted by Town officials and staff. Dan Burden, of WCI returned to the community on March 21 to present the report. Mike Luger, of UNC’s Kenan-Flagler School of Business presented the “Downtown Carrboro Market Analysis” that evening as well.

On April 2, 2001, the Board of Aldermen reviewed the WCI report on the charrette and specified follow-up action, as noted in the minutes of that meeting (*Attachment B*). Fast-track items were noted in bold, and include the following:

- 1) Develop an ordinance that reflects charrette participants’ desire to have buildings four to five stories high with some variety and develop a process to sort this out.
- 2) Amenities constitute recreation.
- 3) Draft an ordinance on sidewalk width to determine where wide widths are practical and ensure that they are stroller and wheelchair-friendly; apply recommendations to what exists and determine what fits and the costs; include sidewalk design (brick trim).

Discussion of Fast-track Items

Building Height. Right-of-way widths in the downtown have been evaluated using the parcel database maintained by Orange County. Right-of-way widths on streets in non-residential zoning districts range from approximately 28 feet to 105 street. A map depicting the right-of-way widths in the downtown has been prepared and is attached *Attachment C*). The table below presents a summary of this information.

R-O-W Width (Range in Feet)	Streets	Possible Building Height Range - 1:1/1:3 Ratios (in Feet)
< 30	Brewer Lane West Carr	< 30/< 10
30-39	South Greensboro (400 Block) Old Pittsboro (100 Block)	30 – 39 /10-13
40-49	West Rosemary (700) Roberson Street South Greensboro (200 – 400) East Carr; West Main (200 Block) West Weaver West Main (400 Block)	40 - 49/ 13 - 16
50-59	East Main (100 - 300 Block) East Weaver North Greensboro (100-200 Block) South Greensboro (100 Block) West Main (100, 300, and 500 Blocks)	50 – 59/16 - 19
60 +	East Main (400 Block) West Main (600 Block)	60 +/- 20 +

“Downtown Carrboro: New Vision” recommends for communities like Carrboro “maintaining a ratio of 1:1 to 1:3 between the height of the buildings and the width of the public space. In Carrboro’s downtown, where the right-of-way is typically defined by the edge of the sidewalk, the width of the right-of-way provides guidance regarding the maximum heights that could be developed. The table above includes possible building height ranges that might be achieved with the available rights-of-way. It must be noted that additional building height would be possible if additional right-of-way could be acquired or if buildings were set back from the right-of-way. Zero setbacks are permitted from the right-of-way in the B-1(c), B-1(g), and CT zoning districts.

Both rights-of-way and depth of lots in the downtown commercial zones are fairly limited. The distance between the northernmost edge of the B2 and the southernmost edge of the B-1(g) averages about 750 feet. The distance from the top of the CT to the bottom of the B-1(g) is about 2,000 feet – less than half a mile. From east to west, Carrboro’s downtown is just under a mile in length. These limitations suggest that it would be inadvisable to establish building height limits that are dependant on the decisions and actions of multiple property owners or on assumptions regarding future decisions or actions of multiple property owners. That is, maximum building height will need to be determined based on what is known to exist, or what may be reasonably expected to occur, rather than what could be requested or encouraged of property owners. In light of other public investments that may be expected in the downtown, e.g. sidewalks, lighting, street furniture, landscaping, it is critical that a clear plan for the infrastructure limits of the downtown be established and be used as a guide for decision-making in the years to come.

An ordinance that may be considered as an alternative to existing provisions that would allow additional height in accordance with the charrette recommendations has been prepared (*Attachment D*). The proposed changes have been developed in accordance with the existing zoning district definitions and associated dimensional regulations. Other changes, particularly to the development standards and dimensional regulations of the B-2 zoning district, would be required should the community desire additional intensity. A re-evaluation of the types, locations and development parameters of the downtown districts would likely be needed in order to consider such changes.

Amenities Constitute Recreation. The Board has requested that alternative improvements, such as public art, small green spaces and benches, et cetera, be allowed to meet the active recreation facilities requirement that applies to residential development. An amendment to the Land Use Ordinance that specifies this as an option in downtown zoning districts is included in the draft ordinance (*Attachment D*).

Sidewalk Width and Construction Standards. The charrette report includes recommendations on sidewalk widths throughout Carrboro and highlights minimums for commercial areas. The report recommends that sidewalks in commercial areas be 8.0 feet or more in width. Sidewalks need to be free of obstacles, including signs, planters, landings and door openings, so that a minimum clear passage of 3 feet is provided. This standard is considered to be the minimum needed for passage. In conjunction with recommended planting or buffer areas and/or bike lanes, such sidewalk widths can only be accommodated where a right-of-way of approximately 65 feet is available.

WCI encourages establishing a street cross section that provides low-speed access to commercial areas. The proposal for Carrboro includes roundabouts, which are often either paired with two travel lanes and on-street parking. As is shown above, most of Carrboro's downtown currently includes rights-of-way of less than 60 feet in width. There are three locations in the downtown where additional right-of-way might be obtained, short of extensive redevelopment of existing buildings, and these are numbered on the map included with this report. An amendment to the Land Use Ordinance that specifies a ten-foot sidewalk width requirement, where practicable, in downtown zoning districts has been included in the draft ordinance.

ADMINISTRATION'S RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends that the Board of Aldermen adopt the resolution setting a public hearing on the draft ordinance that revises the building height, active recreational facility requirements and sidewalk widths in the downtown commercial zoning districts (*Attachment A*).