

La Plaza Vieja Land Use and Neighborhood Character Workshop
Meeting Notes
Wednesday, January 22, 2015

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Presentation on Common Land Use Terminology
3. Break out groups – The participants broke into 2 focus groups to discuss the existing conditions and possible future conditions different parts of the neighborhood
 - a. Neighborhood Core - north of Clay Ave.
 - b. Transition and Commercial Edge – primarily south of Clay Ave and along S. Milton Road
4. Report out – The groups reported their discussion out to the other participants

Summary of Report out

Group 1: Neighborhood Core

What makes this neighborhood a great place to live? What are the landmarks that make it unique within Flagstaff?

- Historic Value of the Neighborhood
 - Hispanic culture and families - Very rich historic value and flavor. Important.
 - Nostalgia runs deep - Many great stories about the people and vibrancy of the neighborhood could be incorporated into Historical Signage to provide a sense of nostalgia
- Social center is missing - The Armory - a place for dancing and community events. Rich musical history. Also a roller rink at one time. Also the Canyon Explorations building was once a community center. More people living there then - pre-1950's but there are fewer areas for social interaction.
- Old growth trees - One or two of the old pine trees still left
- Streets named after cities in AZ
- Small scale walkable neighborhood
- easy access to everything - central location
- Friendly and Safe atmosphere - know neighbors, people wave, people watch out for each other
- NAU students live during school and come back to stay - Not so much friction with students - easy going
- Keeping the railroad - Original residents were railroad workers - built homes from railroad ties. This aspect of history should be incorporated into new development.
- Character - shorter homes with character - "approachable"

Improvements needed:

- Some student issues though - 4 duplexes on Park Street: Don't know how to manage garbage. Many issues with beer cans, parties, etc. Only 2 story building on the block. Cheap townhomes - out of scale.
- Too many students in one unit (8 non related adults) as a result, there is not enough on-site parking
- Students going to class on north campus, park in LPV and go to NAU
- Alley not plowed behind duplexes

- Need to protect the architectural and historic integrity of the neighborhood - this will dictate size of houses and how many live within them
 - Height restriction for the neighborhood
 - Establish design and architectural standards appropriate for the neighborhood - smaller, modest homes most desirable.
 - Protect view sheds - too many have been compromised. Drury Inn not inviting - a monstrosity. Lost viewshed of historic bldgs. on campus
 - Railroad is part of LPV history - use it as a design influence. Use of historic colors, textures, and materials as a design standard. Use colors and materials in the church as an influence.
 - Design review process for LPV? Historical signage standards and signs explaining the history.
 - Clarify historic district
- Pedestrian crossing of the railroad needed – Florence – Walnut project may move forward soon.
- Community garden needed - Natural Grocers has a plan to put one on their property for residents

What is the relationship between residential core and activity centers?

- Residents may use the activity centers but not the other way around. This neighborhood is already used to the idea of Activity Centers
- Safety with road crossings - esp. Rt. 66
- **Zoning processes will safe guard the nbh. from development**
- College America could be out of scale in some places but is OK because it's on the edge
- Need to deal with the back of structures: plain graffiti, shadows, unsightly
- RT 66 a lost opportunity in Flagstaff - should be celebrated and embraced a lot more. e.g. at Route 66 and Milton

Group 2: Commercial Edge and Transition

Commercial Edge

- Difficult access for current residents because of congestion on Milton and 66.
- Most current commercial uses serve students and tourists
- It would be nice to have more that serve residents such as café's, restaurants, bike shops
- Blending commercial and residential uses
- Neighborhood scale commercial could work set back from Route 66 and Milton if it is not tall and scales appropriately from the arterial to the residential area.
- Interior neighborhood businesses are not going to get enough traffic for some services because of visibility and access issues.
- Compatibility is the key to commercial edge fitting the community needs – What are we inviting into the neighborhood?
- Concern on the urban feeling of redevelopment -"urban and ugly"
- Taller buildings take away the viewshed
- The Corner of Milton and 66 is the "entrance of the city" or the gateway of downtown.
- Maintaining the character of Flagstaff and Creation of a corridor that brings people into the downtown are reasons architecture of the edge is important.
- Make the backs of buildings look as good as the front.
 - The Route 66 should be celebrated in the commercial edge instead of hidden
 - Don't hide the neighborhood

- Building heights can hide the neighborhood from the community and vice versa.
- Community space is needed such as a commercial center

Transition

- Mixed use is the key to a vibrant and safe transition area
- No big ugly box buildings close to the residential area.
- Keep high traffic volumes on Milton and 66- less traffic will keep the scale human.
- The feel of buildings should connect to the origins of the community
- Connect Townsite to La Plaza Vieja – bike/ped access will enhance the market for neighborhood services.
- Bars and alcohol providers should be limited because of the school and transient issues.
- Design Review
 - Gabled roof forms as opposed to flat roof on commercial buildings – will make a difference for residents who look down from hillslopes on the neighborhood.
 - Color and material (texture) i.e.the Armory and the infamous "mustard house"
 - Architecture should also face the neighborhood, not just Milton and 66

Take home points

- Participants at the meeting discussed many possible solutions and found several reasons to feel that La Plaza Vieja is valued by Flagstaff, adjacent neighborhoods and business.
- The mix of uses in the area conforms to the concept of an activity center, but poor design, deterioration of renter-occupied housing and the potential for buildings that are out of scale with residential uses, threaten to erode the character of the La Plaza Vieja Community.
- The residents want a vibrant and safe commercial area and a residential area that respects the origins of the neighborhood and Flagstaff. Some of this can be achieved through better design for redevelopment projects, but the limited ability to reduce zoned building heights because of existing entitlements is a major impediment to maintaining neighborhood character.
- The relationship between traffic and the neighborhood is one of the key issues to resolve in preserving the community character.
- Enhancing and preserving the historic relevance of La Plaza Vieja should be woven into whatever solutions are developed for land use issues. It's the fabric that holds the area together.