

North Downtown Planning Community Meeting – May 18, 2016

In response to concerns about the increased development on the north edge of Downtown Evanston, the Evanston City Council directed staff to start a planning process that would guide new potential development in the neighborhoods north of downtown. Two community meetings were planned to obtain feedback on any quality of life concerns and the appropriate scale of new development in the area.



On May 18, 2016, the City of Evanston convened the first of the two community meetings for the north downtown planning area. The meeting was attended by approximately 75 residents, community stakeholders, aldermen and staff. The goal of the first meeting was to gather feedback for the north downtown planning boundary and major themes that the community would want the area plan to focus on.

After a brief presentation by staff, attendees were asked to participate in roundtable discussions on the following issues/themes:

- North Downtown Boundary
- What land uses and building densities are appropriate for the area?
- What transit improvements are needed?
- What improvements to alternative transportation modes are needed?
- Is there adequate recreational space in the area?
- What type/amount of affordable housing is needed in the area?
- What other quality of life issues are present and how can they best be addressed?

Discussions at tables touched on topics ranging from zoning enforcement and area density preferences to retail needs and traffic calming. Following a 45-minute discussion, each table formulated a major theme or a recommendation that the north downtown plan should address. The following is a summary of the feedback received:

- Focus density at Foster/Maple (10 stories) with neighborhood–serving retail to support existing retail in downtown Evanston
- Keep existing zoning as is and enforce it
- Maintain building heights and densities within local neighborhood context
- Provide affordable housing with mixed-use shops that provide services to seniors and residents
- Maintain local character; 3 floors maximum height limit; provide more parking (including accessible spaces)
- Encourage more entertainment options
- Enable zoning regulations for parking use in combination with improved housing inspections
- Many attendees agreed that North Downtown Boundary should be Maple Avenue on the west, Foster Street on the north, Sherman Avenue on the east and Emerson Street on the south
- Provide mixed-use developments with residential on top levels; maintain local neighborhood character and encourage single family ownership
- Require taller buildings to have larger setbacks and provide more parking
- Provide additional parking options and enhance on-street parking enforcement;
- Allow for more single family housing
- Add/Improve bike parking & viaduct investments and install traffic calming mechanisms
- Allow for density by transit, aging in place, more affordable housing and investment in commercial uses

Several tables also drew specific boundary recommendations for the proposed north downtown planning area. Maps showing these proposed boundaries, along with specific roundtable notes, can be viewed on the North Downtown Planning page on the City’s website at www.cityofevanston.org/northdowntownplanning.

Next Steps

A second Community Meeting will be held on June 15, 2016. Staff will present a summary of the feedback received up to date, present boundary options proposed at the May meeting and seek feedback on development scale, type of uses and building materials/design preferences for new development within the north downtown planning boundary area.