

“Meaningful Neighborhood Input in the Development Process”

A Committee Update and Plan to Move Forward

The Meaningful Neighborhood Input Committee’s efforts are at a point where it needs to both expand its scope and thus increase the number of people involved and move at a quicker pace. Some aspects are approaching a critical timeframe.

Meaningful Neighborhood Objectives:

“Meaningful Neighborhood Input” means providing the community, and specifically affected neighborhood(s) to have an opportunity to be involved in the pre-design phase, pre-site plan submission phase and subsequent checkpoints throughout the approval process of any proposed development in or affecting their neighborhood with the purpose of:

- Encouraging the site plan elements will at a minimum maintain and ideally add value to their properties/residences/neighborhood.
- Preserve and as appropriate enhance the residential components of their neighborhood.

Key Concept: The City of Sarasota has divided our city boundaries into more than 50 neighborhoods and thus every development project is done within an existing “city defined neighborhood”, and depending on location of that development, it may abut one or more adjoining neighborhoods.

Approach:

The Meaningful Neighborhood Input committee knew from the onset that to be successful, we needed to go at this from 3 different angles with the goal of having those perspectives merge into an updated process, each can endorse and support. Lou Costa, then CCNA Chair called the project a “**3-legged stool**”: the **Neighborhood** (Residents), the **Developers** (Property Owners) and the **City** (Staff and Commissioners).

The committee has a good understanding of the neighborhood component and confidence that we can successfully work with developers. Our initial priority was to gain confidence that the city staff would be open to discussions.

Refining Focus:

Initially, we discussed changing code to set up a process that mandated developers work with residents, but soon realized that although that was an admirable goal, we did not have sufficient support from the City for that process. We did not approach the developer community on this concept. Instead, Meaningful Input divided our focus on “short term” and “long term” pieces. Short term was working on elements that did not require code changes. We met with Development Services and then Planning staff

trying to identify where in a development timeline is an appropriate and efficient time for “meaningful neighborhood input”. Once we finish the short-term pieces our intent is to evaluate which, if any, could benefit from changes in the Zoning Code process and/or take some of the applicable provisions of the Laurel Park Overlay District and make them citywide.

Staff Quickly Came Onboard:

The committee spent considerable time examining the processes with staff including a request for a flow chart of the development process, both from Development Services and from Planning. Once we were able to explain to staff the deficiencies we saw in the existing process, i.e., way too many confrontational points, staff was **very much on board to discuss and work with us on process changes**. See the attached addendum for more specifics on those changes.

Community Direction

There was never a question from either the committee or staff that allowing “meaningful neighborhood input” early in the development process would result in both a smoother process and in many situations improve the quality of the development.

Key Concept: Code, be it be State or local, has a timeclock built into it. Most likely in recognition that the property owner has a right to develop their property within the local comp plan and zoning code provisions and the municipality cannot artificially hold up the process. **THE CLOCK IS TICKING.** Ideally, true “meaningful neighborhood (or public) input needs to take place pre-site plan submission **“before the clock starts ticking”**”.

Restating this, the community needs to create a climate where either:

- The developer community with a project idea seeks out the neighborhood leadership to work with them on those elements of the project garnering input on the potential impact and the design elements that may enhance the neighborhood, or
- The neighborhood leadership identifies a need for development and seeks out a developer to fulfill that need. Such as Lido Key Residents Association and St. Armands Residents Association finding a property/owner developer that will build a grocery store on the keys.

Moving Forward

With the City clearly on board, the Meaningful Neighborhood Input Committee can now focus in earnest on the other two legs of stool, the Neighborhoods and the Developer Community. “Before the clock starts ticking” may sound like a significant change in the process, but it is not completely foreign to Sarasota. Several developers and several neighborhoods already have pieces of this practice in place. As we move forward the committee next needs to engage the leadership of those neighborhoods and those participating developers to garner, if they feel that process provides “meaningful neighborhood input” and “makes for a better development” and if it does, how we can move that process into neighborhoods city wide.

The Immediate Needs

Two significant things are driving the need for our committee to move ahead at **a much quicker pace**.

1. Both Development Services and Planning **have already begun to implement changes** in process and procedures to make “meaningful neighborhood input” easier and more effective. We need to educate and bring neighborhoods leaders into the process for these changes to be effective.
2. With the significance of the ZTA’s now before the community, particularly those affecting the corridors, **there is some urgency** that the neighborhoods understand and are ready to provide “meaningful input” in an effective manner. This also means that we need to increase our dialogue with the Development Community.

Expanding the Committee:

The CCNA Board has approved the expansion of the committee in recognition of “the 3-legged stool” components. Each component will have a Vice Chair(s). Each is charged with building their team using available CCNA Board members, CCNA Member Neighborhood Leaders and others as needs dictate. **Jim Ludwig** will continue as overall committee chair and will also involve one or more of our City Commissioners in an advisory role.

Leg 1: Development Community: Carl Shoffstall, (Vice Chair) is charged with recruiting both a CCNA Member Neighborhood leader from a neighborhood successfully working with developers and recruit representatives from various subparts of the development community (not just a developer) to serve on that committee.

Leg 2: Neighborhood Community: Ron Kashden and Eileen Normile (Co-Vice Chairs) will recruit several neighborhood leaders and include **Nancy Kelly** on an advisory basis. This is the most critical committee to get organized and functioning, ASAP.

Leg 3: City and Commissioners - Joanne Gonet and Jim Ludwig will Co-Chair and include **Norm Dumaine** in an advisory role and will recruit a staff member familiar with Case Planning from Development Services and someone from Planning to work with the committee on an advisory basis.

The Goal for Each Leg:

Leg 1: Developers

The goal is to identify and recognize those parts of the development community that understand the benefits of, will support and encourage a “meaningful neighborhood input” process with their peers.

Leg 2: Neighborhood Community

The immediate goal is to evaluate the readiness of each neighborhood to facilitate “meaningful neighborhood input” and develop a program to organize, educate, train and otherwise assist those that are not.

As a secondary goal, it is important to establish a framework that “unorganized” neighborhood residents can be included, i.e., in working with the City help facilitate the formation of neighborhood associations in all City neighborhoods or setting up a way for existing neighborhood associations to “adopt” a non-organized adjacent neighborhood’s residents until that neighborhood is organized.

Leg 3: Work with City:

The goal is to continue to work with both Development Services and Planning to find additional ways to enhance “meaningful neighborhood input” and augment the changes they have already put in place, so they are readily visible, easy to understand and follow, and are both effective and efficient.

Working together we are making this happen!

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Ludwig, Chair
Meaningful Neighborhood Input Committee

Addendum #1 - Specifics

Development Services has recently identified things they have done, because of discussions they have had with the “meaningful neighborhood input” committee. **The change in the role of the Case Planner is huge.**

Email from Lucia 4/3/2023, identifying the changes Development Services has made:

- Staff has created flow charts for the most common Development Applications that explain the review process and applicable Zoning Code standards.
- The Case Planners are emailing the Notice of Filing, Development Review Committee comments and decision letters to the designated Neighborhood Association president. Upon an application being deemed complete, the Notice of Filing are mailed out to property owners within 500 feet of the subject site. The goal is to have the Neighborhood Association president be able to know who the Case Planner is, have contact information for the Case Planner and be able to inform the association of projects in the event that the mailings are missed. The Case Planners are the neighborhood contact person in the City for questions and concerns on development applications. The Case Planners take into consideration all concerns and comments and review projects according to applicable Codes and criteria. All public comments are put into the official file. Members of the public may contact the Case Planners at any time during the review process.
- A contact email address is being added to the Notice of Filing and decision letters in order to increase methods of communication. A phone number is currently included.
- Suggested ideas for improvements:
 - o Look at the language/format on the Notice of Filing to see if there is room for improvement.
 - o Explore options on improving searching for applications on edocs.
 - o Consider having the Development Review Case Planner’s formally address Community Workshop minutes during the technical review of development applications.
 - o Explore adding a link to the application material on the Notice of Filing

Planning reached out to CCNA following the contentious Comp Plan changes last year asking to work together as we move forward on the Zoning Text Amendments, with the focus on providing a process for “meaningful neighborhood input”. We met with Steve, Ryan and Briana to discuss process issues in late October and talked about “meaningful input” prior to any public workshops, ideas on format and timing of those workshops, and several other ideas.

Email from Steve on 10/27/2022

I thought it was an excellent meeting, and I think we’re off to a really good start. I’d like to approach this effort as if we’re one big team, and we really look forward to working with you and CCNA on this. Development Services and Planning are meeting with IT today to go over their findings and ideas on 3-D modeling. I agree it’s a great opportunity for everyone to truly visualize what’s being proposed when it comes to development projects and future planning efforts.

We met again following the Thanksgiving holiday and honed on specifics. Planning outlined a timeline and plan for “meaningful public input”. We discussed how that would be disseminated and also agreed we would each put up a website with information prior to the sessions (which we did and still are maintaining).

Email from Steve Cover: Tuesday November 29, 2022

Topics Discussed:

- There are two planned phases to implement the attainable housing Comprehensive Plan amendments (22-PA-04) that City Commission approved in November 2022.
 - Phase 1 will include implementing a density bonus within the downtown for developers when attainable housing is provided on site.
 - Phase 2 will include implementing the new Urban Mixed-Use Future Land Use classifications along commercial corridors and centers that will have a density bonus when attainable housing is provided on site. This will require creating brand new zone districts, with work expected to begin mid-2023.
- During phase 1, large public outreach efforts will begin in January 2023 and with follow-up in March 2023.
- All property owners in Downtown Bayfront (DTB), Downtown Core (DTC), Downtown Edge (DTE), and Downtown Neighborhood Edge (DTNE) zone districts will receive notice of public workshops for the downtown Zoning Text Amendment initiative.
- There will be additional public outreach efforts from the Planning Department to individual associations within the downtown as well (such associations include: Downtown Sarasota Condo Association (DSCA), Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA), Sarasota Downtown Improvement District (DID) and others.)

(continued)

- The public meetings will include a PowerPoint presentation from Planning staff with topics such as:
 - What was approved by City Commission (Comprehensive Plan amendment)
 - How does the approved Comprehensive Plan amendment relate to the downtown attainable housing ZTA
 - What is attainable housing and Area Median Income (AMI)
 - Who benefits from attainable housing
 - What is the benefit of having attainable housing citywide and within a downtown
 - The public meetings will also look to garner feedback and input from the community and residents.
- Public education before and during the outreach was emphasized; flyers could be helpful.
- After public outreach efforts, an application for a ZTA regarding downtown attainable housing will be filed.

The Planning Department will work to add the ZTA, once filed, to the city website and include recordings/materials from the public meetings to the ZTA webpage.

The process of having Planning reach out to our committee has continued as they began work on additional ZTA's. On May 23rd the Committee met with Staff to discuss their upcoming work on ZTA's for clarifying the definitions of Bars, Restaurants and Nightclubs. It was a very good meeting.

Email from Ryan on 5/23/2022

Thank you again for meeting with us today on the restaurants, bars and nightclubs future zoning text amendment. I think we received some good comments as we prepare for the June 8 public meeting. I know the '99 Bottles' establishment was raised and just wanted to clarify that it was classified as a bar/tavern back in 2018 but went through the same major conditional use process as a nightclub since bars/taverns/nightclubs are all grouped together on the use table. I believe the point that was being made was that 99 Bottles does not function like a nightclub and there really is a need to better define these uses. Anyways, good to see everyone today and will talk soon.