

DEVELOPMENT & PRESERVATION – Consensus Highlights

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS / POTENTIAL HISTORIC OVERLAY

- Whether or not to pursue an historic overlay was talked about a lot, but there was not really any consensus around the subject. Many residents were for it, and many were wary of it, if not against it. Those who support it voiced the need for regulations to protect/preserve the historic nature of neighborhood. Those against it wanted to know more about what it meant, what they could actually limit, and how the decisions would be made. Many of those in opposition argued that there's already too much regulation around new development. Others suggested the focus should be on incentivizing redevelopment of perceived "run down" homes and apartments instead of adding additional restrictions.
- Most people agreed with the statement that "too many historic buildings are being torn down." However, the most significant issue seemed to be around "new infill housing out of scale and character with existing homes." The core concern seems to be more about the character/scale of NEW homes over "preservation" in and of itself.
- A common theme seemed to be that - historic or not – stakeholders seem to want tighter zoning restrictions on single family homes, to protect their quality of life first, the character of the neighborhood second.

TREES – REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT

- Although many residents are concerned about removal of mature trees, they seem to be more concerned about HOW and WHAT trees are replaced. Many suggested the need for tree planting guidelines for the overall neighborhood.
- Potential next step could be to work with Greenspace Focus Group to develop "Tree Planting Guidelines" as part of the overall master plan.

FUTURE COMMERCIAL / MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

- "Not enough mixed use development along major streets" had the most red dots, while "development regulations along major commercial streets not strict enough" had very few dots total. "Mixed-use" had a negative connotation to some participants with the interest in small local business, grocers, cafés, etc.
- Large contingency voiced desire for more neighborhood-oriented retail, restaurants and bars. (Planning team should reach out to existing n'hood commercial to get their thoughts – L&M Market, Urban Cannibals, etc.)
- Many stakeholders celebrated success over "defeating" Quiktrip development along Ponce. Many people voiced desire for more strict development regulations along Ponce. Perhaps no need at all for C-1 Districts – all should be Mixed-Use?
- Overall, Residents seemed much more interested in creating more neighborhood-oriented stores and restaurants, but didn't necessarily always make the connection that new mixed-use development along the edges would be a way to achieve that.

HEALTHY LIVING & SAFETY – Consensus Highlights

LIGHTING AND VISIBILITY

- There was extremely strong consensus around the notion that the community as a whole needs to be better-lit at night to promote safety. Some participants acknowledged that some areas have improved lately but almost everyone agreed that more needs to be done and there are still many very dark areas.
- Potential solutions offered include installing additional lights, having a more regularized system of replacing fixtures that are not working and limbing-up tree canopies in places where they block existing lights.
- There was much less consensus on whether the notion of increased lighting should be extended to private properties. Most recognized that increased lighting would be a benefit – especially in private alleys – but not everyone agreed it should be a focus or mandated or be the responsibility of private owners to increase safety.

COMMUNITY POLICING / SURVEILLANCE EFFORTS

- There was very broad agreement that the neighborhood currently lacks adequate community policing efforts. However, there is some disagreement of what “community policing” means with some participants saying it should be the sole responsibility of the Atlanta Police Department while others voicing opinions that everyone shares in the responsibility.
- There were split opinions on whether increased community based efforts should be volunteer-based versus funded through MNA or similar. Some felt that volunteer efforts can be a bit onerous and are not always sustainable.
- The idea of installing security cameras was generally agreed upon by a 3 to 1 margin but was not universal. Some did voice the concern of creating a “big brother” atmosphere. Those in favor of cameras noted that it could be done at relatively low cost and could be effective even if used in limited locations (i.e. Grady High School, community entries, along major corridors).

COMMUNITY EDUCATION & EFFORTS ON HEALTHY LIVING

- There was not consensus around the notion that more community education and/or incentives were needed. While many stakeholders had no issues with the notion of community education/incentives they simply did not feel like it was worth focusing on when there are more pressing issues. Some felt like the level of awareness in the community is already very high and additional education efforts would be unnecessary.
- The idea of expanding local food options and/or creating community gardens was met with mixed responses. Some felt that community gardens would be a welcome addition to the community while others felt like it could lead to challenges with safety and maintenance.

CIRCULATION & INFRASTRUCTURE – Consensus Highlights

SIDEWALKS & PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

- The poor condition of neighborhood sidewalks was perhaps THE most commonly agreed-upon issue throughout the entire workshop. Almost all agreed that fixing sidewalks is a fundamental and critical issue that needs to be addressed through this Master Plan.
- Many pointed to the challenge of safely crossing streets - especially the major corridors. Existing crosswalks are inadequate or misaligned; large storm water drain inlets/facilities at some street corners make it difficult/scary to cross.
- Some participants mentioned the unsightly appearance of many sidewalks due to trash and debris.

VEHICULAR SPEEDING, CUT THROUGH TRAFFIC & ONE-WAY STREETS

- Non-residential cut through traffic was universally recognized as a major concern including impacts such as traffic congestion, high speeds and pedestrian safety.
- Suggested improvements included speed humps, better signage on speed limits and more stop signs (many people mentioned the latter along Argonne specifically).
- The idea of converting one-way streets to two way was met with mixed opinions. Some felt that two-way streets slow speeds and improve pedestrian safety while others felt that one-way streets improve traffic flow and ease congestion.

STORMWATER FLOODING

- Excessive water runoff and flooding during storms was seen to be a major problem by most participants. Numerous specific locations were cited including low points on Glendale, 7th and Myrtle, Charles Allen (between 7th and 8th), Greenwood and 10th near the Children's School.
- Many existing sewer drains are too clogged from runoff and need to be cleared.

PARKING

- Non-resident parking on some neighborhood streets is seen as an issue but not all agree with a uniform solution. Some point to better signage and enforcement, some point to having more relaxed standards so as not to be punitive to residents and non-residents alike.
- The most-discussed element of parking revolved around how to handle parking during large-scale events and festivals. Many felt that the City does an inadequate job of having clear, enforceable parking plans in place for many events and that emergency access is sometimes impacted.
- Additional parking challenges were cited having to do with commercial businesses along Ponce De Leon which leads to overflow and valet parking on neighborhood streets.

SIGNAGE

- While many commented on lack of adequate signage and wayfinding – including stop signs, parking signs and bike signage – most felt that the issue was not a very high priority in this planning effort.

GREENSPACE – Consensus Highlights

COMMUNITY PARKSPACE

- The lack of small community pocket parks was heavily discussed and participants agreed that we should find opportunities for new open spaces (even if small). Potential opportunities discussed included converting residential lots as well as formalizing the landscape “islands” around Greenwood and Vedado.
- The level of improvements and/or landscaping for potential new pocket parks was not very consensual. Some felt that playgrounds and decorative landscaping would be a large improvement while others were concerned over the cost and ongoing maintenance issues that could arise. There was also disagreement over the extent to which pocket parks should be maintained and improved by volunteers versus more formalized effort by the City.

VISUAL APPEARANCE & LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE

- Many described the appearance of public sidewalks, medians and yards as “hodge podge” and cited issues with inconsistent landscape materials, overgrown lots and trash.
- As with park space, there was disagreement over who should ultimately pay and be responsible for long term maintenance.
- Many were concerned with the loss of large trees due to new development. In addition, many trees are “overgrown” and need to be pruned/limbed.

EVENTS

- The statement “Nearby Events/Festivals are Extremely Disruptive” was perhaps the most divisive issue addressed at the workshop. Many pointed to issues of parking, traffic, destroyed landscaping and noise adding significant negative impacts on the quality of life. However, just as many (if not more) participants indicated that the events are a large part of why they live in Midtown and think that they are a major asset – despite the above challenges.
- Most people on both sides of this debate agreed that there could be some level of operational improvements including tighter control on traffic and parking.