

Public Input Meeting

The University Heights Comprehensive Plan Amendment Public Input Meeting was held on January 26th, 2010, at the University Athletic Club. Approximately 60 University Heights residents attended the meeting (according to the sign-in sheet). The meeting began with an overview of the existing University Heights Comprehensive Plan. JCCOG staff discussed why a comprehensive plan amendment may be necessary and then conducted a public input exercise. Below is a summary of common written responses received during the public input exercise, as well as a summary of dialog captured through notes taken by JCCOG staff.

1) What do you like most about living in UH?

- Quality of Life
- Character of the neighborhoods
 - Single family homes
- Housing stock has maintained value
- Safe neighborhoods
- Ernest Horn School
- Quiet
- Small-town feel
- Walkable community
- Good bus service
- Short commute to services/amenities
- Stable community (in terms of development)
- Influx of young families
- Green space - wildlife
- The people
- Knowing community members' voices can be heard
- Sense of independence
- Lack of government
- Lower taxes
- That it is not like Iowa City
 - In general
 - In terms of zoning
- Recognition of existing property owners
- That there is no commercial development or activity
- That there are regulations in place regarding rentals and unrelated tenants
- Lack of traffic
- UH has it all – accessibility, parks, recreation, schools – its good for all ages

2) What do you like least about living in UH?

- No neighborhood grocery store
- No common meeting places
- Traffic

- Potential widening of Melrose due to potential of more commercial property – further increasing traffic
- No alternative housing options for the aging population
- Rental housing
 - Concentration of rentals east of Sunset
 - No codes/enforcement to control maintenance of rental housing
 - Not enough funds for inspectors
 - Expansion of rental property with new development
- Not much diversity
- Lack of strong connections
- Inconsistent and lack of a community plan
- Noise
- Football season
- Fire response time from Coralville
- All 3 scenarios outlined for Comprehensive Plan amendment
- Uncertainty about future plans for UH
- Current commercial site (Taste on Melrose) is a revolving door
- That UH City Council would even consider proposed development
- Concern that council members will not represent majority of citizens

3) Do you feel UH should be concerned with losing or gaining taxable property/tax base?

- Raise property taxes
- Pat Bauer said tax base is not a concern
- This question plays to people's fears
- Development should not be considered out of concern for tax base
- Tax base needs to be increased
- Tax base is not a concern
- Don't want to lose services – city must remain financially stable
- Must choose developments carefully

4) If the Athletic Club and St. Andrew Church properties are occupied by tax exempt entities, where should UH look to increase the tax base?

- Development on Melrose (where higher traffic already exists)
- Development east of Olive Ct along railroad tracks
- Triangle property by railroad
- Conserve Swisher tract as green space/park
- Further develop area near Taste on Melrose
- High density on edge of town (near bridge)
- Upgrade area properties to increase tax base
- Increase assessed values of homes
- Turn St. Andrew property into residential
- For any new development – must guarantee adjacent property owners are protected against any loss in property values

5) What types of commercial businesses are/are not appropriate for UH?

Appropriate:

- Coffee shop
- Deli
- Bakery
- Small grocer
- Professional offices (law firm/insurance/doctor/dentist)
- Book store
- Restaurant
- Fitness center
- Space for a farmers market
- Must somehow serve/benefit residents

Not Appropriate:

- Large grocery store
- Chain stores
- Bars
- Liquor Stores
- Gas station/convenience store
- Laundry mat
- Anything that is TIF'd

6) What are the issues concerning structures with any proposed redevelopment of the St. Andrew Church Property?

- Keeping with the community aesthetics
- Building aesthetics
- Mass, height, and scale
- Light pollution
- Noise
- Density
- Parking
- Loss of trees/greenspace
- Negative environmental impact
- Storefront in front of building and parking should be in back/out of sight
- Adequate buffering
- The Landing in Coralville is a good model
- Needs to have good bike access
- Increased traffic
- University Heights must be proactive and negotiate compliance of community wishes in proposed development for both developers and the University

7) What are the externalities that should be of concern with any proposed redevelopment of the St. Andrew Church property?

- Congestion/traffic
- Pollution
 - Noise
 - Light
 - Air
- Signage
- Obstruction of views for existing properties in close proximity to new development
- Condos becoming rentals in new development
- Put in by-laws to prevent condos from becoming rentals
- Density
- Loss of green space/eco system
- Pedestrians at risk
- Noise from balconies
- Impact on snow removal for property owners across the street
- Street Widening
- Filling in the ravine
- Businesses that stay open late

8) What are the transportation issues concerning any proposed redevelopment of the St. Andrew Church property?

- Congestion
- Noise
- Increased traffic on side streets
- The need to widen Melrose Ave (especially in front of St. Andrew Church property)
- Illegal turns near the St. Andrew Church property
- Buses are already over capacity
- Parking must be buffered from adjacent properties
 - Located behind the buildings
- Safety concerns
- Stoplight on Melrose Ave and Sunset St will need improvement
- No need to change the design of the Melrose Ave/Sunset St intersection
- Better signage on Melrose Ave

9) What public benefits/elements should be captured during a redevelopment of the St. Andrew Church property?

- Open Space
 - Park/playground
- Transit Stop
- Landscaping
- Trees along Melrose Ave and Sunset St
- Trails
- Sidewalks

- Bike Parking
- Benches
- Multipurpose room for the community
- Convert church building into town hall, police department, and community center
- Redevelopment should enhance the neighboring properties
- Maintain the sensitive areas outlined in the 2003 comprehensive plan
- Evaluate each proposal on its own merit

10) What other input regarding the Athletic Club and St. Andrew Church properties would you like to provide that has not yet been discussed?

- Development needs to be thought through very carefully
- No tax incentives for the developer
 - Allowing TIFs will not result in lower taxes for residents
- Any increase in tax revenue that might be generated by the two properties will require additional city expenditures
- Prepare environmental impact statements for any redevelopment
- Prepare development criteria for Athletic Club and seek compliance from the UI
- UI should have to follow all regulations applicable to all other UH property owners
- If the St. Andrew Church property is rezoned, it will be more attractive for the UI to buy
- Ensure that any rezoning of the St. Andrew Church property is not followed by a sale to the UI at the rezoned level of permissible use
- Could allow duplexes along Melrose Ave
- Need to focus on a true comprehensive plan instead of focusing on a single development
- Update to comprehensive plan should include historic preservation
- Need to commit to preserve the sensitive areas if filling in the ravine and building a road
- Would like to see St. Andrew Church remain in UH
- If the point of the developments is to enable UH to continue, then why should they be allowed to destroy what most citizens cherish about UH