

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

U.S. 301/GALL BOULEVARD CORRIDOR FORM-BASED CODE

BACKGROUND

In December 2014 and January 2015, the project team conducted interviews with 10 community stakeholders to learn about perceptions of the City's land development regulations and the current initiative to transform the U.S. 301/Gall Boulevard corridor into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use district. Stakeholders interviewed included local residents, business owners, professionals from design, engineering, finance, real estate, and land development industries, and City officials. The interview responses summarized in this report will assist the project team in drafting new land development regulations and infrastructure standards customized to the U.S. 301/Gall Boulevard corridor vision.

WHAT WE HEARD

The project team designed the interview questionnaire (attached) to achieve two main objectives:

- To assess the ability of the current Zephyrhills Land Development Code to effectively guide new development/redevelopment as envisioned in the U.S. 301/Gall Boulevard Corridor Regulating Plan; and
- To identify community aspirations and concerns about the corridor initiative to inform the creation of land development regulations and infrastructure standards for the corridor.

Key themes that emerged from the interview responses are summarized below and listed by topic in the DESIRES/ASPIRATIONS and CONCERNS tables on the following pages.

Current Regulations and Preferred Urban Form

All interviewees had an understanding of the basic purpose and content of the Zephyrhills Land Development Code (LDC). No one indicated any issues with the LDC, including the administrative provisions (permitting process). Those using the LDC regularly thought it to be less complicated than in other communities. There was consensus that the LDC is not equipped to shape the 'form' of new development and public infrastructure (e.g., streetscape) within the corridor as envisioned in the Regulating Plan. The LDC's prescriptive requirements for building setbacks, perimeter landscaping, land uses, and development density/intensity were viewed as being counter to the desired form. Many expressed that 'form-based' regulations (versus the conventional regulations in LDC) offer certainty and predictability in development outcomes—factors that would appeal to property owners considering whether to invest in their properties.

Opportunities, Needs, and Hurdles

Opportunity is out there. Those interviewed felt that potential exists to realize the corridor vision but only if there are concerted efforts over the long-term to create a suitable setting for private investment. The paraphrased comments below and in the following tables illustrate these sentiments:

- *Millennials and boomers want to live in vibrant, urban places. Zephyrhills does not have this option.*
- *The results of this effort will benefit my grandchildren. We plant a tree so others can enjoy the shade.*
- *I hate to be told what I have to do with my property but the truth is the corridor looks terrible.*
- *Some property owners care about their properties while others do not. The ones that do not bring the whole area down.*
- *Public investments like the fire station and library are important to changing the tempo of the corridor.*

Brand

- A distinct brand identity for the corridor
 - Establish a focus group to generate ideas
 - Theme ideas: water, healthy living, aviation

Community Awareness and Support

- Incremental progress/results to dispel myths about what the community can achieve
- Broad awareness of the initiative and related components/activities so the information gets out to economic development interests
- A strong digital presence (e.g., website, social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram)
- Provide images (renderings) of the corridor aspirations at entry points
- Pride in community, a new attitude about how things should look, and the right regulations to back it up
- “Good Neighbor” awards for owners that improve commercial properties (e.g., hang a blue ribbon, letter sent from the Mayor, utility bill message)

Aesthetic Character

- Buildings need to positively contribute to the aesthetic quality of the area to protect public and private investments
- Required architectural form basics (e.g., window size and spacing)
- Buildings built to the street edge like on 5th Ave
- Strong edges along sidewalks (e.g., building frontages, fencing, and knee-walls)
- Improvements to historic buildings
- Look and feel of Cambridge, MA
 - Apartments for young and older adults
 - Attractive to “artsy” types
 - Affordable, small-scale retail space for small businesses
 - Community gardens
- Courtyards
- Direct automobile-oriented uses to outside or at periphery of Plan Area, such as the Suburban District (see Regulating Plan)
- Transform both sides of the street so effect is meaningful

- Could see six stories in a few years
- Start with lower buildings and build taller ones when the market is right
- Use of building ‘stepbacks’ that make taller buildings blend in
- Some buildings just need “TLC” and sprucing up, especially on side streets
- Bury aerial wires to traffic signals

Land Use

- Sight-seeing, shopping, dining opportunities that a visitor could comfortably access by foot that would consume a full day
- Entertainment
- Nightlife
- Residential (e.g., apartments and units attractive to higher wage workers)
- Retail
- Open space (e.g., community gardens)

Transportation

- Vibrancy through walkability within the corridor and connectivity to citywide assets:
 - Pedestrian ways and crossings
 - Trolley bus
- Put emphasis on pedestrians (one-mile long corridor is a walkable distance)
- A pedestrian overpass over U.S. 301
- Quality transit (e.g., train, trolley, or rapid bus in dedicated lanes)
- Accessibility by bicycle
 - Attractive to serious and casual cyclists
 - Links to cycling routes in northeast Pasco (serious cyclists prefer 50-mile routes)

Development Code

- Graphic depiction of development regulations
- Architectural review board to help ensure consistent application of FBC and protection of public and private investments in the Plan Area
- Development regulations need to address both sides of the street for the intended effect to be meaningful



Public Investments

- Public infrastructure investments are important to change the tempo of the corridor
- Develop a 20-year step-by-step development program for infrastructure improvements and development incentives and regularly report progress
- Start improvements at the three-block area on south U.S. 301 include parking lot at Village Inn
- Enlist support of legislators to find funding for implementation
- Leverage improvements through public-private partnerships

Beyond the Corridor Desires/Aspirations

- Strategic focus on three areas in the city: Community Redevelopment Area, Zephyrhills Airport, and Zephyrhills Industrial Park
 - Potential for development node at S.R. 56 and U.S. 301 is likely to stimulate redevelopment of south U.S. 301
 - Need low-cost, right-size retail space in downtown for small businesses
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Moving the Vision Forward Over Build-Out Timeframe

- To build and sustain momentum, progress must be visible
- Need champions to 'beat the drum'

Community Consciousness

- Limited thinking that major accomplishments are out of reach to the Zephyrhills community
- Mindset that property owners should be able to build what they want to build and less concern about how other property owners are affected
- Perception by business owners that customers are not concerned about appearances

Aesthetic Character

- Unkempt commercial properties that negatively influence the whole area
- Negative impact from wider one-way streets
- New buildings that are ruined aesthetically by architectural scale mistakes (e.g., window dimensions and placement)
- Automobile-oriented businesses (e.g., drive-through restaurants) will require higher-quality design to be compatible
- Unattractive buildings (e.g., metal buildings and dead landscaping)
- Three-story buildings might be too tall
- Before people invest in their properties, they will want to know that other owners will do the same
- Potential conflicts between business hours of operation and nearby residences in a mixed use environment

Transportation

- Psychological barrier to walking/biking across U.S. 301
- Pedestrian connectivity/safety in light of U.S. 301 traffic
- Much improvement is needed to make the area pedestrian-friendly
- Few bicyclists are seen in the area

Parking/Circulation

- How new code will address existing, poorly-designed parking lots (i.e., arrangement of drive aisles and parking spaces)
- Requirement for buildings close to the sidewalks at odds with preferences by national retailers (e.g., fast food restaurants with drive-throughs)
- Sufficient, proximate on-street parking will be critical if drive-through operations are limited or prohibited

Security

- Outdoor lighting regulations to ensure rear yard parking areas are adequately illuminated

Form-Based Development Code

- Learning curve for new regulations

Public Investments

- Timely commitment of fiscal resources for public infrastructure (e.g., streetscaping to 'set the table' for redevelopment)
- Costs will be higher in the future

Beyond the Corridor Concerns

- Blighted development on south U.S. 301
- Affordable housing for families in Zephyrhills
- Strategic planning that does not account for demographic trends
- Downtown will die if we do not enliven the areas around it
- Traffic counts are decreasing on 5th Avenue
- Not enough people walking and browsing in downtown
- Not the right mix of businesses in downtown (not enough retail)
- Lack of contribution to downtown by large property owners