

Crozet Downtown Zoning Community Meeting #2

Crozet Fire Station

May 24, 2007

SUMMARY OF CM#2

New zoning for downtown Crozet will address issues that directly affect how properties develop or redevelop. The intention is for this to happen in a way that conforms to the Master Plan vision for downtown. The Crozet community has communicated the desire to have a user-friendly document that is more appropriate and flexible in terms of use, parking, and streetscape requirements. The approach should move away from the suburban county-wide zoning to one more suitable for a historic village. Lower building setbacks, increased height, and parking required at the rear of buildings regulate the form of development by reorienting activity to the street front and the pedestrian. With the regulations on building and lot form, Crozetians caution that variety is still needed and should be allowed for Crozet to continue in its independent, eclectic spirit. In addition to developing a more compact urban form, new zoning can create more building square footage by reducing setbacks, allowing greater height, and reducing on-site parking requirements. These, in combination with more allowable uses, can generate more economic activity for downtown.

Public concern has been voiced for many key issues that are not directly part of this rezoning process. While required parking numbers and locations for privately owned parcels will be regulated by the zoning, public parking is not explicitly addressed in these regulations. Many Crozetians have proposed the idea of central parking locations, but they have not offered suggestions for how this would be paid. Funding mechanisms should be explored, such as Tax Increment Financing or Special Service Districts. New zoning is only one element of Downtown's sustainable future. Using public-private partnerships to fund necessary infrastructure improvements could be essential to moving the master plan vision forward after this process is complete.

INITIAL QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FOLLOWING PRESENTATION

1. *What happens with existing buildings and existing agreements and contracts on properties?*

These remain in effect, and existing zoning does not override these. If property owners want to change their property once new zoning is in place, then the principle is that the improvements will simply need to move toward conformity with the new zoning.

2. *What is the baseline data on parking and wasn't this Downtown Zoning project intended to increase parking?*

A map was included in CM1 and posted at this meeting showing a complete inventory of existing parking spaces on all properties in Crozet. The total number of spaces noted in this survey is 719. Parking was noted as a component of the Downtown Zoning project.

3. *What will this new zoning get us in terms of increased parking for downtown?*

The private sector has a strong self-interest in providing parking for their uses. They will need to comply with zoning requirements, but often their own uses will drive the parking numbers that they need to accommodate on site. Examples in

urban settings will be shown at future meetings. It was noted that in urban settings, there is more activity (pedestrian, bike, etc.) with proportionate less impact in terms of traffic and parking as compared with suburban, dispersed, and single-use approaches to zoning.

4. Crozet Downtown Association has noted that you cannot build the Master Plan under the current zoning. The goal of this effort is not to increase parking, but rather to allow downtown to build out according to the Master Plan's principles.

COMMENTS FROM BREAKOUT GROUPS

What do you want to see in downtown Crozet and how can it be achieved through these specific strategies to zoning issues?

TABLE 1: Building Setbacks + Building Height

- Downtown should feel and look like a downtown. It should have a more urban feel (similar to the downtown mall)
- Downtown should feel COZY and designated area should be a central location
- Walkability tied to available parking – pedestrians should have sidewalks – safe space to walk
- Zero setbacks BUT have flexibility of regulations to allow for things like sidewalk cafes or challenging topography. Setback example = OXO on water street, Charlottesville
- Sidewalk seating (like public benches - not just café seating) very important, especially to seniors.
- Maximum setbacks are a good idea as long as flexibility is provided
- Setbacks allow for “outdoor rooms”
- Side setbacks (buffers) between commercial and residential makes it almost impossible to develop on 150' lot
- Side setbacks could allow for small pedestrian or vehicular alleyways at intervals. Minimums and maximum provisions for these as well
- Possibility of having zero lot lines (buildings pushed together with party wall)
- Important to allow for porches/overhangs in commercial area (this is different than residential allowances)
- Mix of use and the variance of type – provides for affordability as well
- Uniformity of height vs. a variance of height to allow for sunlight plus an eclectic feel of downtown
- 2-3 stories could be typical building height, with 4 stories as the exception
- 2 stories on the street front, then allow a setback to go taller (over 3 stories). This prevents a canyon effect + allows lots of light on street
- Height maximums are the restrictions that should be set, not minimum -2 story minimum may not be necessary.
- 2 story minimum discourages national chains
- Don't want the same zoning everywhere. Crozet is not homogenous.
- Don't want Crozet to appear over-planned
- Sloping sites affect building height – need to check on the existing rules for where building height is measured.

Other issues from this group

- Central parking area, park once then walk. One for east, one for west areas of downtown? – TIF district?
- Architectural Review Board – need local control.

TABLE 2:

Parking Setbacks

- Current configuration of parking setback less than building setback is undesirable. Want buildings up front, parking in back
- No huge blacktop areas
- What are the VDOT regulations? Impact on downtown?
- RR issue? Can Crozet get a new RR bridge? – **county to answer**
- Shared parking – shared agreements inspire cooperation
- Off-site parking
- General flexibility needed
- Parking issue is partly zoning, partly management
- Need downtown PUBLIC parking
- Fox property with satellite, shared parking could be an option? Missing sidewalk on south side of Jarman's Gap makes this option difficult.
- Other properties to provide shared parking? – tie in with greenway/stream buffer for access to it
- Downtown Charlottesville exists with no parking required for projects downtown
- Is it possible to stage zoning to insure sufficient parking? How?
- Need parking first before development
- "Where's the parking" needs to be answered.
- Developers need to offer parking to attract new business or expand existing businesses.
- "chicken and egg" – parking vs. additional development, which comes first?
- Ex: Blue Goose with 80 spaces but still restricted to build needed space
- Potential congestion problems due inadequate parking (circling drivers looking for parking)
- Lower setbacks on both parking and building (e.g. Charlottesville)
- "No Parking" or excessive parking requirements (5 spaces/1,000 sf) are not helpful. Ex: Train Depot with no parking is problematic
- New Library parking should be more than adequate, possible to build a parking structure with it
- Physical capacity/traffic volume on Crozet Avenue? What is the build out going to do?
- Don't want traffic light at Dairy Queen. Can't have gridlock.
- Farmer's Market etc. on Saturday AM already has too much traffic
- Blind curve at community garage
- Infrastructure too slow to come, need a "breakthrough",
- Possibility of creating a TIF district (Tax Increment Financing) = break through for the chicken and egg phenomenon.
- Traffic speed? Currently people drive too fast. Limit is 25 mph. Solutions = parallel parking, speed bumps.

Lighting, Landscape, Signage

- Timing on Phase II Main Street?
- Landscaping is important, especially in front at streets
- Trees, flowers, low maintenance
- Street trees and planters in front
- Decent trash cans, chained to sidewalk (people are throwing trash everywhere)
- Challenges of unincorporated village – there is no maintenance
- Signs need to be more prominent for businesses, but need restrictions, this is not Route 29.

- Neon not appealing. NO DQ or BP signs - too big
- Look to Downtown Charlottesville's approach
- Sign poles – everyone gets equal playing field on signs
- Neon okay in windows inside.
- Need lights under RR bridge, affects parking on either side. Unsafe to cross at night.
- Lighting – allow for spillover lighting between businesses. How to protect residential areas from excessive lighting? What are restrictions to lighting?

Other topics

- Uses/density – more space for offices
- Buffer employment
- Mountains are key to Crozet, need to be considered in the building height issue
- 6-8 stories too much

TABLE 3: Uses, Affordable Housing, Buffers

- Infrastructure issues
- Light rail to Charlottesville
- Utilities underground – public/private opportunities
- New Roads
- Downtown extents - need to know boundaries to answer this question. The area shown for Downtown on the Crozet Master Plan land use map is too big
- The area shown in Blue/Pink on map on the Zoning Map of Downtown is sufficient. There was a 60/40 split among the group regarding this.
- Focus on real downtown 1st then move on to residential
- Uses – eliminate RR as barrier to residential walkable community
- Restaurants, pharmacy, hardware store, flowers/nursery garden store
- Centralized parking one place
- Park / open space with benches
- Gathering places – provide places to read (Fabulous Foods seating)
- Need business model, incentivize redevelopment
- Build-out issues, work with other commercial areas, Crozet is unique
- Self-sufficient – avoid trips out of town
- Coffee, restaurants
- Don't forget offices upstairs too
- RR issue – possible air rights, build up and over the tracks?
- RR is a positive because it can keep big trucks out of downtown
- Different character on north and south side of tracks
- Maintain character
- Residential by right
- Diversity and mix across entire downtown, vitality (e.g. researcher R&D beside grocery store with apartments upstairs).
- Franchise businesses (e.g. Taco Bell) – how much diversity do we want?
- Industrial behind shopping center
- Light manufacturing by special use permit?
- Diversity that creates flavor
- Residential/Housing – above or in place of retail?
- Elderly
- Starr Hill/Music Today area – provide employee housing?
- More affordable housing needed, and don't threaten or destroy existing housing with zoning changes

Other Issues

- Traffic capacity as downtown evolves?
- Flexibility and creative approaches to parking
- Timing and commitment – finding the balance
- Focus “downtown” on red area (CT-6).
- Phasing as an option

COMMENTS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

Building setbacks

- Allow buildings to sidewalk – no minimum. Make max. setback of 10 feet to retain “cozy” walkability.
- Zero to front property line, zero to side, stepbacks for stories above third floor, but allow porches and cafes. Allow sidewalks to parking.
- Reduce to current building code (BOCA) or international codes.
- Setback requirements so that design is less restrictive between non-similar zoning districts and parcels including mixed-used buildings.

Building height

- 3 stories max @ street with upper stories to 5 max with setbacks (preferable scale 2-4 stories)
- Don’t block views of mountains!
- 3 stories typical / 4 with special use permit
- Per Master Plan - adjust street and other setbacks to be consistent with Neighborhood Model and the Crozet Master Plan.

Buffers

- No less than alley-width between major commercial and residential areas, but allowing for residents over commercial/office spaces. Mixed use necessary for viability.
- Develop downtown first before spreading to buffer areas
- Necessary between uses—residential and commercial. Screen parking lots from streets.
- Consider encroachments into stream buffer with bmp.

Parking setbacks

- Some on-street parking, the rest behind the buildings
- Some on street, mainly concentrated behind street fronts
- Reduce to 5 feet or less to allow for design flexibility. Parking off site should be allowed. Community/shared parking lots should be evaluated.

Lighting, Landscape & Signage

- Some subdued street lighting focused downward
- Encourage some plantings
- Small but visible signs
- Underground utilities
- Should not be too heavy-handed

Affordable Housing

- Don’t block views of mountains with 6 story buildings.

- Don't worry about this issue too much. Allowing apartments over stores will generate this.
- Affordable Housing is needed.

Downtown Uses, Businesses & Services

- There is no need to limit them.
- Object is to make downtown attractive to anyone who thinks they have a successful business to offer.
- Back off from threatening current residential areas. If new downtown zoning needs to expand in the future, it will.
- Invigorate uses allowed by reference to building code requirements. The definition of downtown should be able to accommodate the 20 year buildout. The Downtown Zone size needs to complement and maintain the Downtown CT5 & CT6 zones of the Crozet Master Plan. This is also important to support the surrounding R-6 zoning on the edge of downtown.

Attendance

Camille Phillips
 Mac Lafferty
 Sandy Wilcox
 Cliff Fox
 Cole Sandridge
 Jennie + Koby More
 Patty Scurl
 Joyce Shifflet
 Betty Rauch
 Kurt + Eleanor Kroeger
 John Mikalson
 Barbara Brumback
 Lenny + Jessie Tosto
 Tim F Jost Tolson
 Sara Maupin
 Mary Jane Ritchie
 Ross Stevens
 Nancy Fleischman
 Agnes Anderson
 Ann Mallek
 Meg West
 Heather Penny
 Gwen Smith
 David Wayland
 Jim+Earlene Ward
 Fabienne Swanson
 John Riley
 Tom + Jackie Loach