CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

Planning and Zoning Board Workshop Meeting
January 24, 2006

The Planning and Zoning Board met in a workshop session at 2:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 24, 2006, in The Alcazar Room at City Hall, St. Augustine, Florida. The meeting was called to order, and the following were present.

1. ROLL CALL

Roxanne Horvath
Carl Blow
Bill Leary
Deltra Long
John Valdes

Absent:

Gerald Dixon
Leanna Freeman

City Staff:

Mark Knight, Director, Planning and Building Department
David Birchim, Planning Manager
Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary

Also present:

Commissioner Don Crichlow
Gina Burrell, Resident
Kathy Schrimacher, Resident
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Resident

2. PRESENTATION BY PROSSER HALLOCK CONCERNING FORM BASED ZONING

Lynn Buffington, Prosser-Hallock, introduced Fred Jones and Jody Roth, who were members of the team. He said they were asked to find out what Form-Based Zoning could do for the City. He said they reviewed the City's current Code and then applied new zoning in different areas of the City. He noted the following information to the board members:

- Neighborhood study area included St. Augustine uptown, Flagler Model Land, Lincolnville and Davis Shores
- Older neighborhoods needed to be protected from commercial encroachment
- Anastasia Boulevard was heavily commercial along the street
- The PZB had reviewed a large amount of variances and exceptions which was indicative of a weak Code
- The Code was not very strong in being able to put the hammer down to deny a change request
- Form-Based Zoning emphasized the appearance of buildings
- Public realm included the right-of-way which moved people through a neighborhood
- Porches were considered semi-public ground
- New construction should be in the context of an existing neighborhood
- Commercial property did not allow a public realm
- They had been asked not to review the City's gateways which was difficult

because corridors related to other areas of the City
- US 1 was a critical area
- Value in property would force a change in use
- The San Sebastian Project developers had proposed exactly what the City should want to be done which included addressing the edge of the street and the public realm
- The SSP developers had defined the parks and created a destination
- FDOT was currently being restructured with a new chapter completion date of March 2006
- Parallel parking provided a barrier and comfort for pedestrians
- Form-Based Zoning was oriented toward public participation
- Existing City Code emphasized regulation of use
- Current Code involved exceptions being the rule
- Elements of the existing Code included; separation of key daily activities, streets designed for vehicles rather than pedestrians, lack of convenient and cost-effective transit, excessive land consumption and fear of density
- Form-Based Zoning standards included; build-to-lines to replace setbacks, regulated plan to map intensity, form and character rather than simple land uses, frontage type requirements relating buildings to one another, land uses and density being subject to the desired outcome
- Form-Based Zoning was "founded on the idea that a community's physical form is its most intrinsic and enduring characteristic"
- Utility capacities were available with Form-Based Zoning

Commissioner Crichlow advised that the City had adopted an ordinance to allow the height of buildings to increase as one moved the structure further back on a lot.

Mr. Valdes suggested that Form-Based Zoning was an attempt to turn back the clock when people were more important than vehicles.

Commissioner Crichlow questioned whether the community should be more diverse by including different types of residential appearances. He voiced concern that Form-Based Zoning would attempt to convert an area such as Davis Shores to an appearance similar to downtown.

Mr. Buffington suggested that conversion would not happen but the zoning would help to strengthen a neighborhood with its distinction.

Mr. Valdes said the City had seen out-of-context structures being built in many areas of the community.

Mr. Leary questioned whether Form-Based Zoning recognized the differences and prohibited them from changing.

Mr. Buffington affirmed that to be correct. He stated that it would strengthen the neighborhoods and offer a better quality of life to its citizens.

Mr. Leary asked if one of the goals involved the creation of a mixed use corridor with a grocery store at every corner.

Mr. Buffington advised that existing neighborhoods might not offer the opportunity for a commercial area. He stated that, although it was idealistic, he would like to provide a walking neighborhood in every area of the City.

Mr. Valdes noted that the City currently had many great commercial destination areas such as King Street, Castillo Drive and San Marco Avenue. He suggested that many opportunities existed within the City such as Anastasia Boulevard between the Bridge of Lions and the Alligator Farm.

Mr. Buffington explained that it was not a quick fix project but long term and people and things changed over time.

Mr. Valdes said he liked the on-going project at the San Sebastian property and said he could not wait to see how the project would help the King /Riberia Street corridors.

Commissioner Crichlow explained that the developer of the San Sebastian project was going to turn their backs to Lorida Street (currently San Sebastian Street) and focus more toward the interior but the City Commission had to sell them the idea of opening up the development toward the street to become a destination for local citizens. He stated that the current zoning did not control density. He suggested that density could triple which would change the character of an area. He asked how Form-Based Zoning would change that anomaly.

Mr. Buffington affirmed that it could. He explained that an alley could be used as a buffer in order to make the transition from commercial to residential. He said the desire was to maintain the same scale of buildings in an area.

Mr. Valdes advised that one concern was more houses being constructed on less property. He said the board wanted to retain the fabric of a neighborhood by disallowing that from occurring.

Mr. Blow noted that people were replacing one large 5,000 square foot house with four 3,000 square foot houses on the same property.

Mr. Valdes said the board wanted to keep what had existed on a property in order to protect existing character of a neighborhood. He stated that he did not want the Lincolnville area to appear like the Davis Shores area because they were both unique in their own way.

Mr. Blow noted that people were constructing two-story houses in Lincolnville where one-story shot-gun houses stood. He said the City should consider more public green space.

Mr. Valdes asked if Prosser-Hallock planned to address more residential areas.
Mr. Buffington advised that the issue was very political but Form-Based Zoning would do what the board wanted it to accomplish.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Long, Mr. Buffington noted that very few alleys existed in the city.

Commissioner Crichlow suggested that the City would like to see more thought put into

the residential areas such as Davis Shores and Nelmar. He agreed that the character of a neighborhood needed to be maintained.

Mr. Valdes suggested that architectural review should be a large part of Form-Based Zoning.

Ms. Horvath noted that it would be a "tough sell" because several years earlier the HARB had attempted to present a program to Lincolnville residents, who were completely against the idea.

Mr. Valdes stated that it was all in how it was packaged. He said most people were afraid of the HARB due to the strict guidelines involved; however, developers with PUD's would be more acceptable to architectural guidelines.

Mr. Buffington stated that the guidelines could be as simple as to include roof pitch. He noted that some neighborhoods already had a type of Form-Based Zoning in place. He said areas needed to be revitalized starting from the interior going toward the exterior. He advised that the City was dealing with nine square miles of land with a vast number of houses on the land.

Mr. Leary noted that a change had occurred in the City during the mid 1970's when the Code was adopted. He said most of the property in the City was considered non-conforming which the board struggled with. He questioned whether Form-Based Zoning would avoid the issue of conforming and non-conforming property.

Mr. Buffington said people needed to decide on the size and character they desired in an area or neighborhood. He stated that Form-Based Zoning changed all the time but it would take time for people to adjust with those changes while they took affect.

Mr. Valdes noted that Form-Based Zoning could be adopted by a neighborhood. He suggested that Davis Shores would be somewhat difficult due to the way the area was platted and developed. He stated that not all neighborhoods would agree to allow Form-Based Zoning.

Mr. Buffington advised that people would know what to expect in each neighborhood. He noted that some people wanted to purchase a house in an overlay zone neighborhood. He said he would not eliminate the old Zoning Code.

In response to an inquiry from Ms. Horvath, Mr. Buffington suggested that a workshop meeting could be used for individual neighborhoods in order to explain and vote on whether they desired Form-Based Zoning.

Mr. Valdes stated that the current residents in a neighborhood should be able to choose the appearance of their area and neighborhood.

Mr. Buffington suggested that people attending the workshop would voice their opinions but the PZB and City Commission would decide the architectural standards for a neighborhood.

Mr. Valdes stated that another option could be a mailing such as how staff handled the PZB applications.

Mr. Buffington advised that a person could construct a contemporary building and maintain the needed elements to remain within the character of a neighborhood.

Mr. Blow asked how landscaping would fit in with Form-Based Zoning.

Mr. Buffington explained that it involved the review of public realm while looking at a neighborhood.

Mr. Blow noted that Prosser-Hallock seemed to be looking at public spaces, right-of-ways, etc. and the PZB handled private property issues.

Ms. Horvath said the board was always faced with tree canopy and related issues.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Leary, Mr. Buffington advised that issues needed to be addressed in many of the City's neighborhoods. He pointed out that Davis Shores had more internal issues to review.

Mr. Valdes suggested that the CPSA should get involved to assist Prosser-Hallock with making presentations of Form-Based Zoning to the neighborhood associations.

Mr. Leary suggested that it was time that the City learned whether a certain neighborhood desired to begin Form-Based Zoning in their area.

Mr. Birchim advised that one active Neighborhood Association with a substantial membership and organization was the Abbott Tract. He added that the land boundaries were very specific in the Abbott Tract subdivision.

Mr. Valdes suggested that Form-Based Zoning should be presented to the public as soon as possible.

Ms. Long noted that one issue Mayor Gardner had firmly stayed on was the organization of Neighborhood Associations in the community. She suggested that neighborhoods not currently with an Association should consider organizing such an association.

Mr. Leary stated that the board was eager for Prosser-Hallock to take the next step with Form-Based Zoning.

Mr. Valdes and Ms. Horvath agreed that the issue needed to be presented to the public early because the issue was very important.

Mr. Buffington said the City wanted something that would create a better quality of life for its residents.

Mr. Valdes said he desired to be able to walk down more streets in the City than just St. George Street and San Marco Avenue. He asked that they emphasize and put more thought into the residential core in order to protect the existing architecture from encroachment of other styles. He stated that he would like the idea presented at a public forum prior to it being poisoned by rumor.

Dick Prosser agreed that getting the public involved was a positive approach in order to provide a clear message to citizens. He affirmed that negative reactions would also occur because not everyone wanted or liked change. He noted that it took three years to close St. George Street to pedestrian traffic

only. He said exceptions could be included with the rules; however, the best goal for a better chance of success would be to present Form-Based Zoning as a whole and create exceptions after the public voiced opinions during the public presentations. He stated that they had read through the minutes and notes of the Aggregation Task Force Committee and had obtained a sense of the opposition to the proposed ordinance.

Mr. Blow noted that density was a large element of the aggregation proposal. He suggested that the City needed something in the Code to protect the quality of life in the City.

Mr. Valdes stated that the proposed aggregation ordinance was so complicated that the committee members could not explain it for the public to understand.

Mr. Prosser noted that it was also a property rights issue. He said aggregation was, at times, appropriate in some instances.

Mr. Leary suggested that they first attempt to explain Form-Based Zoning to a relatively small audience.

Mr. Buffington noted that they would use graphics with the public during presentations which would help to further explain the difference in zoning.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Blow, Mr. Buffington noted that Alexandria, Virginia had experienced a change to Form-Based Zoning. He said Los Angeles had many small pockets of the same zoning.

Ms. Horvath thanked Prosser-Hallock for the presentation on Form-Based Zoning.

3. BOARD DISCUSSION CONCERNING LOT DESIGN AND PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION PLAT APPROVAL

It was noted that the issue would be discussed at a future meeting.

4. BOARD DISCUSSION CONCERNING LIMITING THE NUMBER OF AGENDA ITEMS AT REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF BOARD MEETINGS PER MONTH OR CHANGING THE STARTING TIME FOR REGULAR BOARD MEETINGS IN ORDER TO AVOID OVERLY LENGTHY MEETINGS

Mr. Knight advised that fees charged for the cost of an application and case before the PZB covered most hard-cost expenses and some personnel.
Mr. Blow stated that some applicant had not completed due diligence or an applicant did not attend the hearing on the matter which caused the board to table an application. He suggested that the applicant could be required to pay another fee if an application was tabled. He said limiting the agenda would cause more problems.

Mr. Valdes referred to Ms. Porter's letter to the board members and stated that if he had additional costs involved with his private construction business, it would be added to his clients' bill.

Mr. Knight advised that he would provide general analysis to the board at the next meeting. He suggested that the board might need to hold two meetings each month due to the amount of applications.

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:54 PM.

Roxanne Horvath, PZB Chairperson

Pam Halterman, Recording Secretary