

Takoma Junction discussion group

December 15, 2009 – Meeting summary

Location: Kohn residence

Attending: Kay Daniels-Cohen, Scott Gilkeson, Seth Grimes, Roz Grigsby, Sam Kittner, Diana Kohn, Howard Kohn, Lorraine Pearsall, Dan Robinson, Roger Schlegel, Bruce Williams, Josh Wright

NEW BUSINESS VISIBILITY

A) Fill empty storefronts

- Lorraine, Roz & Kay will pursue meetings with Tommy Oliff & Karl Kessler. What can we offer to help them upgrade their properties (e.g. façade improvement funds), and how else can we help them find good tenants?

B) Create a temporary weekly marketplace/festival on the City lot

- Does anyone know of any towns where such ideas are succeeding? Sam, what about Cumberland, Westminster, other Main Street towns?
- Diana will talk to Arts & Humanities about crafts vendors. Can someone talk to Erwin about vendors from the Crossroads? Roger, do you have a more complete vision for this?

C) Assuming services are more viable than retail, what services would gain consumer support?

- Roger/Howard will talk to CHEER folks (Maria Markham & Bruce Baker) about conducting focus groups, to include residents who live in apartments.
- Dan/Seth – does the 2007 consumer survey shed any light on this?

D) Enhance amenities

- What can be done to improve the gazebo park? (more discussion needed)

PEDESTRIAN & TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

A) We need our own plan to give to SHA

- Let's start with the plan Jim DiLuigi drafted for changes to crosswalks, signage, timing of signals, bus stops. Kay will get it from Jim.

B) Parking

- It would help to have street signs to direct motorists to the City lot and a nice-looking portal sign that says “public parking.” This goes to the Council and Staff.
- Can anything be done to make better use of the parking lots behind the Carroll Ave. strip?

SUMMARY OF “WHAT’S ALREADY KNOWN”

- Bruce will send an electronic copy of the 1990’s Junction design report.
- Roz/Seth will re-send links to 2007 OTBA consumer survey, 2007-8 restaurant pledge response, 2009 market analysis.
- Roger, do you have written notes from the Woodland Avenue discussion?
- Bruce is looking for the old Takoma Community Development Corporation (TCDC) papers.
- Kay will ferret out written materials from her SS Carroll archives.
- Roger/Kay/Howard will attempt to summarize key findings from some of the abovementioned reports.
- Dan/Seth, can you summarize key findings from consumer survey?

WORK PLAN FOR STAFF

We need to develop a more specific set of questions and/or requests

- How can the City help set up a marketplace/festival on the City lot?
- Where can we find money for “public parking” signs for the City lot?
- How do we involve the City in presenting a plan to SHA?

A FIVE-YEAR PLAN for THE JUNCTION

- A) Transform the City lot – a potential “game changer.”
- B) Consider converting the two houses at Carroll and Philadelphia to commercial use (they are zoned C-1)
- C) Look at additional properties that could be converted to other uses – Healy Surgeons, Auto Clinic, Letter Shop, Citgo gas station.
- D) Consider expanding the Co-op in the direction of Sycamore Ave.
- E) Involve County planners and ED experts
- F) Consider setting up a CDC or Development Syndicate.
- G) Investigate a series of questions:
 - Should the City lot be developed or should most of it be retained for parking?
 - What are the Co-op's needs and hopes?
 - Should the City be a partner in development?
 - Is underground or on-roof or behind-building parking feasible and desirable?