

DRAKE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING MEETING
COMMERCIAL AREAS SUB-COMMITTEE
Tuesday, April 20, 2010 at 6:30pm
Godfather's Pizza, 4119 University Ave

I. Welcome and Introductions (10-15 minutes)

Amber Kobler, Neighborhood Planner, City of Des Moines Community Development

- a) Brief overview of the Drake Neighborhood Plan; How it applies to the Uptown Center
- b) Introductions – name, affiliation

II. Group Activity: SWOT Analysis

Two groups: 1) Drake Planning Committee Members, & 2) Uptown Business Owners

- a) Identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (10-15 minutes)
 - i. Uptown Shopping Center area
 - ii. Partnership / relationship with the Drake Neighborhood
- b) Discuss results (20-30 minutes)

III. Goal Setting based on SWOT results (30 minutes)

- a) Review input from online survey & relevant information from Bicycle & Trail Master Plan
- b) What are the goals related to the Uptown Shopping Center area?
 - i. How do we address weaknesses / threats?
 - ii. How can we capitalize on strengths / opportunities?
 - iii. How can Uptown & Drake partner together? How does Uptown fit into the bigger picture of commercial areas in Drake?

IV. Follow-up Discussion on Roosevelt Cultural District (*Time permitting*)

- a) Review draft of plan goals, strategies, action steps

V. Conclusion

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 18th

May Meeting Topic: Commercial areas adjacent to Drake University

Meeting Notes:

Amber Kobler, City Planner, gave a brief overview of the planning process for the Drake Neighborhood Plan, which began in January 2009. There have been several subcommittees, each focusing on a particular topic. This subcommittee is working on commercial areas in the neighborhood. The intent is not to have the Drake Neighborhood Association (DNA) dictate what goes on in the Uptown Shopping Center. Rather, the intent of the discussion at this meeting is to get input from the business and property owners to assist in the creation of overall goals for commercial areas within the Drake neighborhood.

Attendees introduced themselves and noted their affiliations. About half of the group was part of the Drake planning committee, either DNA members or Drake Area Business Association (DABA) members. The rest of the group was affiliated with the Uptown Shopping Center.

Group Activity: SWOT Analysis & Goal Setting

Attendees divided into two groups, Drake Planning Committee members and Uptown business people, and discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to the Uptown area. The two groups then discussed their results, summarized as follows:

Strengths

- Location – centralized, next to two major arterials, easy access
- Quality, mix, and variety of tenants
- Bus stops
- Serves as commercial anchor
- Several restaurant options
- Neighborhood friendly
- Neighborly feel

Weaknesses

- Traffic can be hectic
- Parking (not enough; park & ride for buses limits parking for customers)
- Right hand turn
- Lack of green space
- Limited walkability / bike-ability
- Few bike racks
- Little art / benches / places to congregate

Opportunities

- Tenants association?
- Create synergy with other surrounding commercial areas
- Businesses could come together
- Too much segregation from other areas; fill in smaller businesses between
- More streetscaping to tie areas together

Threats

- Panhandlers / homeless / dumpster divers
- Illegal garbage dumping
- Bus riders park their cars and limit spaces available to employees / customers
- Takeovers from big business chains rather than local businesses
- Risk of “anchor stores” leaving (Hy-Vee, Campbell’s)
- Street / sidewalk maintenance
- Allowing a run down look

The following suggestions were made when the group discussed the SWOT results: 1) Perhaps food-related businesses in the area could coordinate with volunteers to have leftovers picked up and delivered to a food bank; 2) A quarterly “business after hours” event may be a good first networking step; 3) The Drake Neighborhood should continue to pursue some sense of synergy among the various commercial areas. This could come in the form of variations on a theme through streetscaping.

Follow-up Discussion on Roosevelt Cultural District

The group decided to wait and discuss RCD and other goals until further in the process. They will continue to gather input from each area and then use to develop broad goals for commercial areas in Drake.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 from 6:30-8:00 pm at Woody’s Smoke Shack, and will focus on commercial around Drake University. Woody Wasson will invite all DABA members.