

WEST FAIRBANKS AVENUE

September 1, 2012

**ULI
Technical
Assistance
Panel
Recommen
dations**

About the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

Founded in 1936, ULI has members in 95 countries worldwide, representing the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. ULI is committed to:

- **Bringing leaders together**
- **Fostering collaboration**

- **Exploring land use and development issues**
- **Advancing policies and practices**
- **Sharing knowledge**
- **Creating a global network with local impact**

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About ULI Central Florida

ULI Central Florida is ULI at the local level. Through district council–sponsored educational forums and events, ULI Central Florida offers an unbiased, nonpartisan and open exchange of ideas impacting land use and the quality of life in Central Florida.

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1. Executive Summary

On June 18th and 19th, 2012, the Urban Land Institute, Central Florida District Council convened a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) for the purpose of advising the City of Winter Park on the land use and planning strategies that should be considered in the redevelopment of the West Fairbanks Avenue Corridor extending from U.S. 17-92 west to the interchange with Interstate 4. The ULI TAP consisted of professionals in the areas of urban design, real estate, economics and government. The Panel's work effort was divided into three segments: analysis of existing conditions; meeting with effected property owners; and, preparation of recommended, redevelopment strategies. The City of Winter Park requested the panel look at strategies that would address:

- Market Demand
- Catalysts for Change
- Incentives for Redevelopment
- Urban Design/Land Use Regulation

The Challenge

The goal of the City of Winter Park is to determine the best regulatory, economic development, procedural, conceptual and visualization tools for transforming a traditional highway corridor and adjacent infill properties from their current underutilized, auto-centric condition to a new, more sustainable urban condition featuring a more compact, walkable, mixed use, identifiable place.

Summary of Recommendations

The following is a brief summary of the panel's redevelopment strategy recommendations by project objective:

Market Demand

1. Agree on a "Shared" Vision to guide future actions.
2. Let the market drive the uses and timing of redevelopment.
3. Establish a formal West Fairbanks Avenue "Main Street" organization.
4. Create a marketing and branding campaign to provide an positive identity to West Fairbanks.
5. Recognize and showcase existing businesses.

Catalysts for Change

1. Install the sanitary sewer without further delay.

2. Work with the businesses along the corridor to manage the construction process and its impact.
3. Fix the roadway by addressing access management, complete street design and streetscape.
4. Use or create new financial tools to implement the shared vision.
5. Explore additional annexation to provide continuity for implementation of the shared vision.

Incentives

1. Enhance market appeal using “Main Street” and related public/private partnership mechanisms to match and incentivize private investment.
2. Invest in public and private realm improvements that enhance streetscape appeal and reinforce brand identity for the area.
3. Brand the corridor and recognize the uniqueness of the adjacent sub-districts.
4. Make sure city policies are consistent and reinforce the shared vision for the corridor.
5. Cooperate with the Winter Park Chamber to create a business incubator atmosphere and recruit targeted businesses.
6. Use the “Main Street” program to implement business façade programs.
7. Identify opportunities where the City can assist with land assemblage.

Urban Design and Land Use Regulation

1. Use the “Shared Vision” as the context for creating design standards that are workable and reinforce the brand identity for the corridor.
2. Stick to the “Shared Vision.”
3. Create a Place.
4. Focus on streetscape improvements:
 - Make the corridor more walkable.
 - Provide pedestrian-scale decorative lighting.
 - Underground the power poles.
 - Create a gateway at I-4.
 - Create a strategy to optimize parking.
5. Lots along Karolina Ave. should be rezoned and buffered.
6. Create a corridor-wide stormwater solution.

7. Form based code approach is not appropriate for West Fairbanks Corridor.

Create the Shared Vision

In preparing the strategic recommendations for the City, the TAP recognized that there has been significant involvement of the business community in the discussion of the future of the West Fairbanks Corridor. Most of the discussion has been informal and focused on specific agendas. The business community has come together primarily to respond to what they perceive as a threat to sustaining their businesses. There is clearly an opportunity now for the City to capture the energy and interest that began with the meeting to discuss the TAP recommendations in a collaborative “Shared Visioning” process. Based on the input from both the City and the business community, it is recommended that the City consider the following steps in formulating a process for developing a Vision for the West Fairbanks Corridor:

- Establish a Vision Steering Committee.
- Steering Committee meets to establish corridor objectives and metrics for evaluating alternative vision concepts.
- Conduct a two day Vision Charrette to develop conceptual alternatives for what the corridor should look like at build-out.
- Steering Committee Meetings to evaluate and recommend the preferred alternative to the Winter Park City Council along with recommendations for implementation of the Vision over time.
- Adoption of the “Shared Vision” and Action Plan by City Council.

It is recommended the above process be approached in a compact time frame. There is no reason that this work could not take place over a 90 to 120 day time period with the City approval process requiring the additional time required by City policy. The Vision is recommended as an overlay to the existing planning and regulatory requirements along West Fairbanks. This recommendation is made in the spirit of keeping the Vision market-driven and flexible to adapt to future conditions.

How to Use These Recommendations

It is important to understand that the West Fairbanks Avenue TAP Recommendations is not intended to be a plan for addressing the redevelopment issues along the corridor. The purpose of the TAP was to bring together experts in redevelopment from real estate, government, economics, marketing and urban design for a two day, high impact, work session designed to give the City of Winter Park the benefit of their considerable experience. To that end this TAP Report should be considered as a “snapshot” of how the private market will respond to redevelopment of the West Fairbanks corridor. The TAP recommendations should be considered by the City as strategies that should be examined in more detail as they develop a long term vision and redevelopment action plan for West Fairbanks Avenue.

2. Introduction

For decades, West Fairbanks Avenue between Interstate 4 and U.S. Highway 17-92 has been the perfect venue for a collection of longstanding family-owned businesses known throughout Central Florida as one of a kind.

Businesses along this stretch of road include Skycraft Parts & Supplies, Carey-Hand Cox Parker Funeral Home, Fairbanks Diner, Linda's Winter Park Diner, Paco's Mexican Restaurant and others that have been in operation for at least a generation. Newcomer 4 Rivers Smokehouse has drawn so much traffic that the waiting lines have spread into the adjacent neighborhood, leading the owner to move into a larger location down the street. Several years ago, a medical group bought one of the few properties with both Fairbanks and Lake Killarney frontage and constructed Baltasar Lakeside Center.

It appears West Fairbanks Avenue, which carries an estimated 35,200 cars a day into and out of Winter Park, has weathered the recent global recession relatively well. While vacancies exist along the corridor, the value along the corridor seems to have remained fairly constant during the past several years.

But there's one truth about this slice of Central Florida that even the business owners there readily admit: It's not attractive.

Dozens of utility poles and a handful of billboards tower over the street, where a lack of trees and landscaping leaves a blistering hot walk in all but the coolest months. In places, the sidewalks are in disrepair, cracking and discolored, interrupted every few feet for driveways that in some cases lead to vacant buildings in need of repair or used-car lots that come and go. Zoning laws have weeded out most of the tattoo parlors and pawnshops over time, but a few remain. A vacant gas station site sits on the northwest end of the street, the first sight drivers see as they exit I-4.

The city of Winter Park, known for its affluent neighborhoods and elegant Park Avenue shopping district that includes a lush shaded green park, recognizes that this main corridor into the city, the most direct access into its downtown from I-4, does not represent what people expect to see when they think of Winter Park. In many ways, West Fairbanks Avenue is the antithesis of Park Avenue. West Fairbanks is car-oriented, visually cluttered and disjointed; Park Avenue is pedestrian-oriented, charming and well-kept.

About Winter Park

Population: approximately 28,500

Size: nearly nine square miles

Location: just north of Orlando in Orange County, Florida

Chartered: 1887 as a winter resort for wealthy Northerners seeking refuge from harsh winters

Landmark: Rollins College, the oldest college in Florida, founded in 1885, and the nation's premier liberal arts college

Attributes: active, thriving and walkable Park Avenue district, desirable neighborhoods, historic architecture, tree-lined brick streets, lakes and a broad spectrum of cultural amenities

The situation has led prestigious Rollins College, located in the heart of Winter Park at Fairbanks and Park Avenues, to begin directing visitors onto campus via a different interstate exit that takes people through a newly renovated upscale shopping district along Winter Park's Orange Avenue.

Should this be the answer? Should Winter Park treat West Fairbanks Avenue as a service entrance? Should traffic be directed away from the longstanding businesses along West Fairbanks Avenue because of its shabby appearance? Winter Park said no.

History

In recent years, a simmering distrust between the city and West Fairbanks Avenue business owners has erupted at times into a low-grade hostility. West Fairbanks Avenue business owners feel disenfranchised and neglected, and the city feels criticized and frustrated.

The primary cause lies deep underground in what was supposed to be a new city-built sanitary sewer system promised a decade ago when this stretch of property was annexed into the city from Orange County but remains to this day, a collection of private septic tanks. Installation of the sewer will make the commercial properties much more developable and valuable. The city tied the installation of the sewer with grand plans to beautify the corridor and to implement a form-based code.

The city brought in an urban design consulting firm to study the area and give advice on what it should look like in the future. The firm recommended that the city adopt a "form-based code" for West Fairbanks Avenue. The end result of imposing these new design codes would be a look so radically different from the current scenario that it was incomprehensible to the people operating the businesses that are already there.

West Fairbanks Avenue property owners balked at the form-based codes. Property and business owners said there was no way they would support a vision for West Fairbanks Avenue that didn't have them in it. Planning and zoning board members pushed back as well, saying the new jargon and new rules were too strict and too much of a departure from the city's current zoning practices.

At the center of the beautification, both figuratively and literally, were plans to install a landscaped median. Because the road is a state highway, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) design standards for medians eliminated left-turn opportunities that exist with the current center turn lane or "suicide

What is a Form-Based Code?

According to the nonprofit Form-Based Codes Institute (www.formbasedcodes.org), form-based codes foster predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. They are regulations, not mere guidelines, adopted into city or county law. Form-based codes offer a powerful alternative to conventional zoning.

Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals.

lane”. Business owners saw this as threat to their livelihoods by impeding direct access to their establishments. Residents in adjacent neighborhoods also objected due to concern for traffic cutting through their neighborhoods in order to access the businesses. The process resulted in property owners forming their own coalition as a reaction to their belief that the city was unresponsive to their concerns.

Project Objectives

The city turned to the Urban Land Institute to bring in a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to take a fresh look at the West Fairbanks Avenue issues and provide strategic advice on how to move forward. The Urban Land Institute promotes leadership in the responsible use of land and helps create and sustain thriving communities. Its local district council, ULI Central Florida, brings leaders and stakeholders together to enhance the quality of life in communities across Central Florida.

At the outset of the West Fairbanks Avenue TAP, the City established the following objectives for the panel to provide advice and recommendations on:

- I. Market Demand
 - Highest and best uses for an enhanced W. Fairbanks Ave., i.e. what does the market want?
 - Based on the lifecycle of the corridor, both near- and long-term uses.
- II. Catalysts for Change
 - Types of game-changing projects that will catalyze additional investment in redeveloping W. Fairbanks Ave.
- III. Incentives
 - Most effective incentives that the City of Winter Park can implement to enhance the market appeal including public/private partnerships.
 - Most effective physical/cosmetic enhancements that can be made to the public realm.
 - Most effective physical/cosmetic enhancements that can be made to the private realm.
- IV. Urban Design/Land Use Regulations
 - Urban design elements needed to accommodate the highest and best uses for W. Fairbanks Ave. Determine the advisability of requiring an urban form (buildings up on the frontages) as a mandatory or voluntary standard for the redevelopment along the W. Fairbanks Ave.
 - Appropriate zoning and land use regulations needed to accommodate the highest and best uses. Evaluate whether the proposed Architectural Design Standards will appropriately foster and encourage redevelopment of W. Fairbanks Ave.
 - Barriers in the current regulations that need to be address to achieve the redevelopment goals.

- The necessity for expanded parking along the north side of the W. Fairbanks Ave. corridor that would require rezoning of adjacent residential land, as an essential ingredient to promote redevelopment along that north side.

Methodology

A TAP panel composed of experts with experience in urban planning, redevelopment and market demand was assembled to deliberate and make recommendations on the objectives for West Fairbanks Avenue. The panel's challenge was to help Winter Park and its residents and business owners set a course for revitalizing the street into an attractive, vibrant and integral part of the Winter Park experience by exploring and implementing best practices from other places.

In preparation for the TAP, each panelist was provided with a [briefing book](#) compiled by the city of Winter Park and ULI that includes background information, history, demographics, photographs, maps and other relevant materials on the West Fairbanks Avenue study area (refer to map for study area). A two-day TAP workshop was held on June 18 and 19, 2012. The TAP formally kicked off with a tour of area including the study area, the neighborhoods to the north and south, Orange Ave, US 17-92 and downtown Winter Park. It was clear from the questions panelists asked that the well-manicured areas of Park Avenue, Orange Avenue, Aloma Avenue and Winter Park Village were very different indeed from what they called the “wild, wild west” areas of West Fairbanks Avenue. Everything from the landlocked neighborhood north of West Fairbanks to the eclectic collection of businesses in the light industrial area south of West Fairbanks was not like the rest of the city and obviously did not represent the Winter Park “brand”.

The first day continued with presentations from key Winter Park city leaders who explained the history, background and the anticipated improvements for this area and how things had come to be the way they are. At lunchtime, Pauline Eaton, City of Orlando Main Street coordinator gave a presentation on Orlando's efforts to revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors. In the afternoon, the panel met with a group of area business and property owners to hear their issues and concerns. At the end of the first day, panelists began to process the volumes

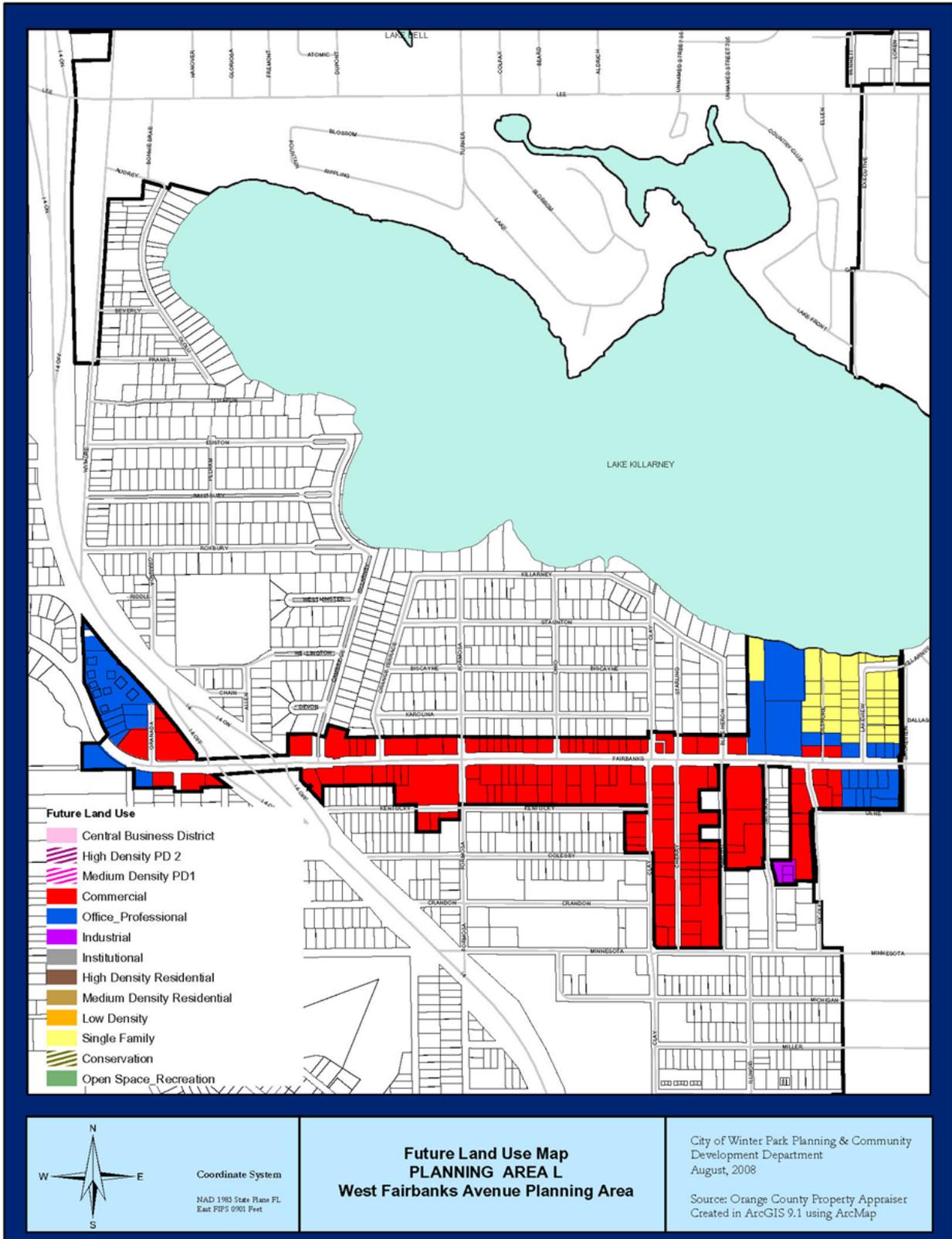
What is a TAP?

The Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panels provide expert and objective strategic advice to sponsoring organizations on complex land use and development issues. TAPs link public agencies and nonprofit organizations with seasoned real estate, planning, financing, marketing and technical experts as part of ULI's Advisory Services program which has assisted more than 500 communities worldwide since 1947.

Sponsoring organizations request the services of a TAP to study a specific issue that can be addressed by a panel of experts in one or two days. ULI assists the sponsor in refining the scope of the assignment and compiles a briefing book that is distributed to panelists. TAP members convene and view the subject site, hear from stakeholders and then deliberate on the assigned issues. At the conclusion of its work, the panel presents an oral report on its advice and recommendations and ULI compiles a final written report.

of information and began brainstorming about recommendations. They carried their conversation straight through a dinner break and then late into the evening.

By the next morning, their ideas were starting to take shape. In a matter of a few short hours, the panel created a presentation for review with the city leaders and several Fairbanks Avenue business owners. The panel reconvened after lunch and presented its final recommendations during a public meeting with elected officials and about 150 residents, business leaders, property owners and other interested parties.



3. Recommendation Strategies

The Technical Assistance Panel focused its recommendations on how the city, business owners and residents can create solutions that are mutually beneficial. The TAP did venture into “What if” territory, sketching out plans for what West Fairbanks Avenue could become but did not evaluate the city’s comprehensive plan or zoning designations for the area. In the end, the recommendations focus on an analysis of what exists today, who is involved, what is preventing forward motion, which factors could change the situation, how the parties involved can reach consensus about the area’s future, and when it might make sense to incorporate changes.

This section is organized by project objective and by panel discussion and final recommendations. Recommendations are not meant to represent an action plan but instead to offer strategic advice to the city of Winter Park and community on how to move forward.

I. Market Demand

Panel discussion

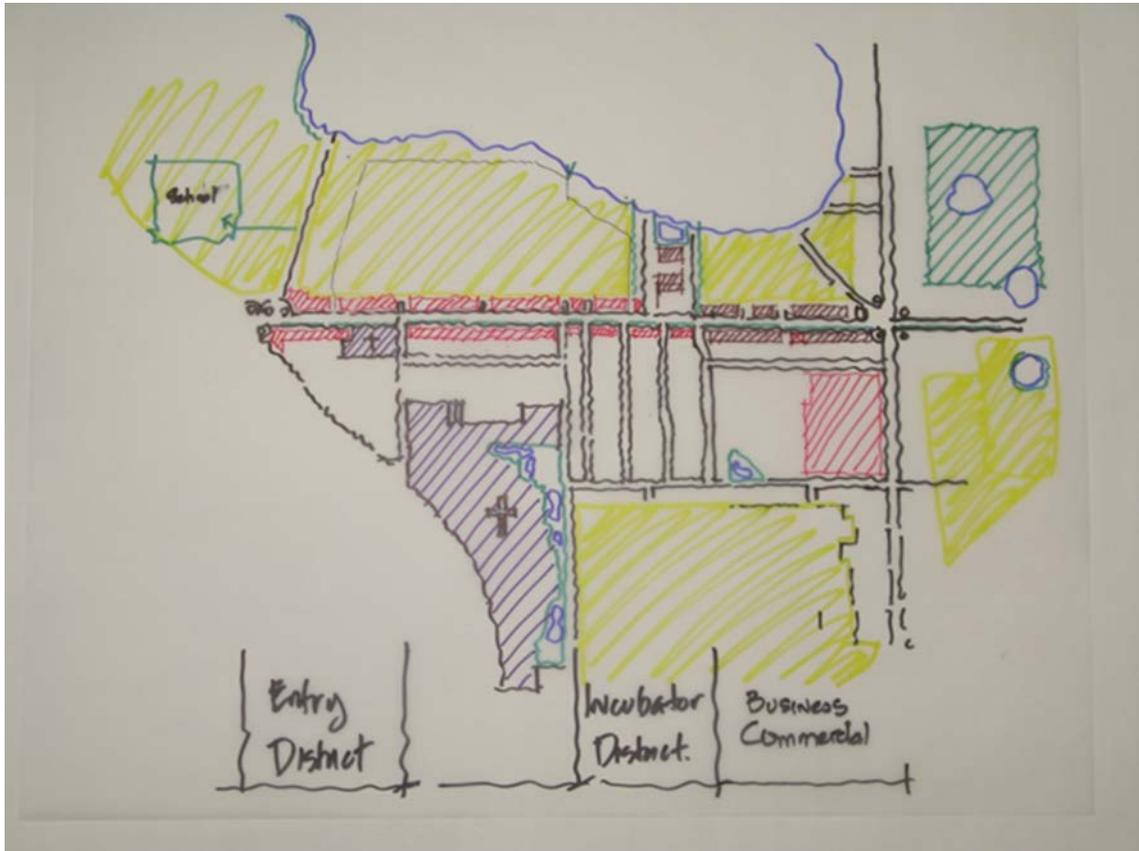
Highest and best uses for an enhanced West Fairbanks Avenue, taking into account what the market wants.

Everyone involved expressed a desire to see the area thrive, not just survive. Business success for West Fairbanks Avenue owners must be part and parcel to the overall success of Winter Park. Without a doubt, the long-stalled sanitary sewer project will open up opportunities for new businesses. In the short term, it is anticipated that highway-serving fast food chains and budget hotels will likely find the corridor attractive. That might generate major revenue for the West Fairbanks Avenue property owners but could decrease the value of adjacent neighborhood and not support the much sought Winter Park gateway image.

The panel felt that there is tremendous demand for redevelopment of the corridor with proper vision and the removal of barriers. The main attributes driving market demand are the I-4 interchange on the west side, downtown Winter Park and Rollins College destinations on the east side and higher nearby household income compared to the Orlando region as a whole. It was also noted that Fairbanks Avenue is the only continuous east-west corridor whereas Lee Road to the north and Princeton Road to the south both terminate at US 17-92. This is important because Fairbanks Avenue represents a much larger trade area due to its connectivity. It also emphasizes its importance as a transportation and transit corridor. The main barriers such as the lack of a central sanitary sewer system are discussed in further detail below are both physical and visual.

The most likely uses are commercial (retail, restaurant and hotel) and low and mid-rise office buildings in standalone or mixed use projects. The question of residential was also discussed. Although attached residential in mixed-use (residential over retail/office) or single use buildings (stacked flats or townhomes) would make for a good transition on the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue, the market demand is low in the near and medium term.

It became apparent from the analysis of the corridor that certain clusters of uses have developed over time. On the west side, there are two large churches and a school just to the north that create a civic cluster. A number of restaurants are starting to cluster in the mid-section where the street grid changes from predominantly east-west to north-south. A large medical office complex on the east side anchors a different cluster of uses. These clusters help to break down the corridor into smaller districts that can be a magnet for similar uses. The restaurant cluster could become an entertainment district. The medical office complex could expand into a medical office district.



Near-term and long-term uses based on the lifecycle of the corridor.

The market is in flux along West Fairbanks Avenue and has been for some time. A handful of property owners control most of the land and the buildings on it. Those owners have defined the corridor by the choices they make in business tenants, who opt for the location because of its combination of high visibility, affordable rent, and prestigious Winter Park address.

The city needs to respect and respond to present market conditions by working with the property owners to decide on mutually acceptable uses for the corridor. At the same time, both the city and the property owners need to be prepared for and respond to the future market demands. Longtime business owners who have cultivated their customer

bases for decades will eventually retire and pass along their operations to family members, or sell their existing businesses. What will move onto West Fairbanks Avenue to replace them? All corridors go through a life cycle and West Fairbanks is poised to begin a new upward cycle. Having a vision that is flexible to respond to new market conditions will be key to achieving results.

Recommendations

Agree on a vision. The city should work with all stakeholders on West Fairbanks Avenue to create a vision for the corridor that is flexible and embraces the local community while protecting the integrity of the corridor itself. The vision can be implemented incrementally if necessary to allow existing businesses to respond and account for the anticipated redevelopment as warranted by the market to the corridor.

Let the market drive the uses and timing. Corridors have life cycles and what worked in the past may not work in the future. This is especially true for retail. The city should provide flexible zoning to allow for multiple commercial, office and attached residential uses as discussed above. The city and property owners need to be mindful that much of one thing can lead to cannibalization of adjacent properties which can drive down rents and cause instability. The corridor will settle into what the market will bear and will gain momentum on its own pace. The city should be cautious about forcing the pace.

Establish a formal West Fairbanks Avenue organization. Business owners formed a non-formal group to speak out as one voice as a reaction to the city's redevelopment plans. Business owners are encouraged to take the next step to formal a 501(c)(6) or similar organization to plan and promote on a proactive basis. Winter Park should encourage this and go further by working with the business owners to form a Business Improvement District, a Main Street Program or similar type of organization with structure around it. This would allow the two sides to better work together to pursue funding sources that might not be available currently.

Create an identity through a marketing and branding campaign. With a new name, an effective marketing slogan and a branding campaign, organizers could attract more commerce to the area, supporting the local businesses as well as the city as a whole. It was observed that many businesses along this corridor have an "American Kitsch" flavor. This identity could be celebrated and incorporated into the corridor's branding. Logo and signage should include the city of Winter Park name in it to begin unifying the corridor into the city's identity.

Recognize and showcase existing businesses. The West Fairbanks Avenue corridor contains an incredibly unique and even quirky collection of businesses. The city should help them thrive, not just survive. In a combined effort, the city and the newly created organization should look for ways to help these small businesses grow by promoting them to Central Florida residents and in the media. Recommendations include applying for recognition and funding through American Express, the U.S. Small Business Administration, Small Business Week and other sources.

II. Catalysts for Change

Panel discussion

Types of game-changing projects that will catalyze additional investment in redeveloping West Fairbanks Avenue.

The planned and now approved \$8 million sanitary sewer installation project will be the key initial catalyst that paves the way for further economic development and revitalization of the corridor. Until 10 years ago, properties lining West Fairbanks Avenue were part of unincorporated Orange County. Owners agreed to annex their property based on a promise that Winter Park would provide a city sanitary sewer system to replace septic tanks. The current schedule shows the sewer construction to begin in the fall of 2012.

Property owners state that the delay has hurt the corridor in two ways:

- 1) It has eroded their trust in the city. The very issue of impact fees and connection fees and their implication to each property owner has created tension. Both sides have agreed to research the issue and the city will provide its clarification in writing prior to the construction of the sewer system.
- 2) It has impeded their ability to redevelop, sell and lease their properties.

In conjunction with the sewer installation, the Florida Department of Transportation will repave and restripe the subject road to include bike lanes on both sides but no other modifications such as adding medians, landscaping or changing curbs are planned at this time. Some decorative streetlighting is in the design but needs consideration to make it more compatible with a pedestrian scale.

Orlando Main Street Program

The city of Orlando has developed an innovative Main Street program to help revitalize a number of aging neighborhood commercial corridors in the city.

The program follows a four point approach:

- **Organization-** creating a formal structure with a board of directors, executive director and volunteers
- **Promotion-** getting more to visit the district
- **Design-** getting the district into top physical shape
- **Economic Restructuring-** getting the district businesses busier

The Main Street program is a great example of how public/private partnerships can foster real results. More information is available at www.cityoforlando.net/mainstreet



Potential beautification efforts that have been considered include undergrounding of overhead utility lines (a project the city has priced at between \$12 million and \$15 million), redoing the sidewalks and curbs, and adding plants to enhance the appearance and replacing the “suicide lane” along West Fairbanks Avenue with landscaped medians. These enhancements will be a catalyst for change beyond the sewer installation.

Recommendations

Install the sanitary sewer without delay. The sewer project is so essential to this corridor, for reasons of commerce as well as goodwill, that the city needs to concentrate on getting it done as soon as possible, even if it means later going back and ripping up portions of the street again to install other underground utility lines or complete any beautification efforts. Completing the job as promised will be a major step in rebuilding trust between the city and property owners.

Work with the corridor’s businesses and neighbors to manage the construction process. Stakeholders need to know what’s happening before it happens. The city needs to provide a place to go for information so the city can update hundreds of people at one time, such as through a web page or Facebook group. Create an email distribution list for contacts. Rather than relying on the property assessor’s data which doesn’t cover everyone such as tenants or neighboring residents in Orange County, push notifications to the distribution list when new information is available.

Fix the roadway. The current road design with its wide expanse of pavement, non-existent access control, limited aesthetic appeal and harsh pedestrian environment is a limiting factor. The repaving and restriping plan, while necessary to meet interim utility needs, will have very limited positive effect on the corridor (see before and after illustrations below).

The road must be enhanced with new sidewalks, landscaping, bus shelters and other street furniture, consolidation of curb cuts, undergrounding of overhead utilities, and safer and better marked crosswalks. Adding medians and brick paving in the center lane should be considered if frequent median breaks are provided. FDOT’s rigid design standards represent a real obstacle. The city and county are strongly encouraged to meet with FDOT officials at the highest levels if necessary to allow flexibility. Ultimately, the key is that the road be designed to create a vibrant and livable urban corridor that enhances real estate value, not just move cars as its sole objective.



Look for ongoing funding mechanisms. Maintaining improvements made along the corridor will take additional money. The city and the property owners can create a pipeline for this by setting up a Business Improvement District (BID) or a special assessment district for example. The corridor might qualify as a brownfield area for property owners to get tax breaks for clean-up and upgrades.

Explore additional annexation in a way that makes sense. Annex additional acreage so that West Fairbanks Avenue is no longer a thin strip of city property running through Orange County. The corridor should be integral and supportive of the surrounding neighborhoods, not a blighting influence. . The city should work with Orange County and the property owners in smoothing the boundaries, particularly along the south side to encourage the identity of the West Fairbanks corridor.

III. Incentives

Panel discussion

Most effective incentives that the city of Winter Park can implement to enhance the market appeal including public/private partnerships.

A significant amount of discussion took place regarding setting up a Business Improvement District (BID) or similar program to leverage a revenue source for common improvements. Business and property owners made clear that by themselves, they don't have the money to do more than basic maintenance and improvements. They could use incentives to work toward the improvement of the corridor while maintaining profitability. Incentives could include several types of financial assistance; "grandfather clauses" that allow existing businesses to be exempt from new code enhancements; and, grants that help property owners with certain types of upgrades.

This group did recognize that they would be willing to contribute to improvements that could benefit the corridor as long as they have a say in the discussion. The city asked for recognition of their contribution and also expressed interest in looking at options for improvements that could be jointly funded.

As one business owner put it, he spent numerous hours and thousands of dollars repainting his building and sprucing up its appearance, but there was no way he could afford to purchase a mature tree to plant there. However, he would gladly accept a tree if the city or an improvement district, with its purchasing power that comes from buying numerous plants at once, would offer to put one there for him as part of a corridor-wide beautification effort.

Most effective physical/cosmetic enhancements that can be made to the public realm.

The public domain at West Fairbanks Avenue is almost entirely consumed by the roadway itself leaving very little space to work with. This leaves only the sidewalks and the space in the middle of the road for a possible median for aesthetic enhancements. The panelists discussed the importance of beautification initiatives but emphasized the need to allow the planned sewer project to move forward. A discussion on beautification should be taken up in the near future as part of the overall visioning for West Fairbanks

Avenue.

A small park with seating on the northwest corner of West Fairbanks and U.S. 17-92 is provide but there appears to be no foot traffic aside from visitors to an adjacent Chipotle restaurant.

Most effective physical/cosmetic enhancements that can be made to the private realm.

The commercial properties along the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue are very shallow (approximately ninety feet deep). This poses a significant challenge to redevelopment. In addition, they abut single family residential lots along their rear property line. The panelists recognized the need for the commercial lots to be expanded to encompass the lot to their rear while recognizing the importance of minimizing the impact on the long-standing residential neighborhood. There is a desire to have no commercial traffic on Karolina Avenue.

Along both sides of West Fairbanks Avenue, there is little room for the businesses to give up right-of-way for public access. The city could offer incentives for owners to beautify their property with new paint, repaving of parking areas, plants, distinctive signage and other enhancements.

Although outside of the formal study area, the panel looked at the neighborhoods immediately to the north and south of West Fairbanks Avenue and makes the following recommendations.

North of Fairbanks Avenue Neighborhood

- **Consider annexing the neighborhood.** The neighborhood is in unincorporated Orange County and is landlocked except for its access to West Fairbanks Avenue. More than one resident in the neighborhood spoke in favor of annexation at the TAP public meeting.
- **Provide a place for public access to Lake Killarney.** No public access currently exists. The city should explore ways to provide a small park or pier along the lake as an amenity to the neighborhood.
- **Provide direct access to Killarney Elementary School.** Students from the neighborhood must get onto West Fairbanks to get to school because no direct access between Cambridge Blvd. and Orange Terrace Dr. exists. This is unacceptable. The city should explore establishing a road or trail connection between the roads.
- **Rezone the residential lots abutting the Fairbanks lots to commercial.** The shallowness of the commercial existing lots is a significant barrier to redevelopment. A screen wall and landscape buffer should be included between the new commercial lots and existing residences. No access to the commercial lots should be allowed from Karolina Avenue.
- **Consider eliminating some residential street connections to Fairbanks.** This will provide more privacy for the neighborhood and open more commercial property along Fairbanks.
- **Install neighborhood entry signs at entrances along Fairbanks.**

South of Fairbanks Avenue Neighborhood

- **Consider annexing the neighborhood.** The light industrial and residential areas are in unincorporated Orange County. The light industrial provides much needed inexpensive space to serve Winter Park and nearby Florida Hospital campus. Consider greater residential density to meet hospital and light industrial workforce housing needs while preserving neighborhood character.
- **Consider creating a special district.** The light industrial area could be marketed and branded as a creative arts and business incubator district. The area currently contains printing, photography, graphic design and other creative arts businesses. As the only light industrial space in Winter Park, it also hosts companies specializing in automotive repairs and customization, landscaping supplies and other types of support businesses. The marketing outreach should be directed at expanding awareness and appeal to Winter Park and Florida Hospital.
- **Work with the two large churches** in the area to enhance the green space on their properties and create quasi-public park land.
- **Take advantage of master drainage system planning** to link open space and trails.

Recommendations

Brand the corridor and recognize the uniqueness of sub-districts. This section of Fairbanks would greatly benefit from the establishment of a brand identity and marketing effort. Similar to the Orlando Main Street program, a distinctive logo would go a long way in establishing a brand identity. It is strongly suggested that the brand celebrate the unique personality of the area and include the Winter Park name.

In addition, there are unique characteristics within the corridor that can be marketed. There is an established worship district on the southwest side. There is a cluster of restaurants that could become an entertainment district.

Be consistent. It is absolutely critical that city policies be consistent from department to department and from commission to commission in order to implement a long-term vision for West Fairbanks Avenue.

Create a business incubator atmosphere. There are few places in Winter Park where businesses can find affordable rents. West Fairbanks Avenue provides that opportunity and helps diversify and complement the city's economic development goals. Use that to draw emerging businesses, from restaurants to hair salons to internet start-ups.

Recruit targeted businesses. The city along with property owners should determine targeted tenants and build-to-suit developers. This is a common practice with many retail developers to ensure the right tenant mix to better support overall sales and customer traffic. A market analysis can be valuable in identifying underserved markets within the trade area.

Implement business façade programs. The city could create or facilitate a grant program that focuses on ways of beautifying buildings beyond just repainting. Use grants as an opportunity to get existing buildings to meet new design standards.

Implement a business improvement district or similar. This would provide both much needed financing and marketing dollar to increase the corridor's appeal and competitiveness.

Identify opportunities where the city can assist with land assemblage. While this process has already begun on its own, small parcels and fragmented ownership are barriers to further development. In exchange for land assemblage assistance, property owners should work with the city to create easements for streetscape improvements and undergrounding of power lines.

Look for opportunities for the city to create public amenities. The city could purchase land or easements for public amenities such as parks, trails and landscape buffers. Combining the stormwater drainage areas into a connected public green space is a potential opportunity.

IV. Urban Design/Land Use Regulations

Panel discussion

Urban design elements needed to accommodate the highest and best uses for West Fairbanks Avenue.

The panel discussed that the city must work with property owners to create a vision for what the area might look like and then remain diligent in its implementation. The vision, driven by the present market as well as that of the future, should address several issues that are critical to the area's success. Those include:

- Improvements that create a holistic “complete street” that not only carries vehicles but also allows for pedestrians, cyclists, stormwater drainage and aesthetics. A master plan for handling the area's stormwater runoff and a master drainage system linking open space and trails is an example of this type of activity. This should also include addressing the street as a sense of place and creating a pedestrian environment that provides connection to the neighborhoods, provides shade, removes clutter and adds landscaping and lighting.
- A connected system of green space or park-type property.
- Ample parking that serves the area's present and future businesses but does not disturb residents who live behind them.
- Annexation of the residential area along Lake Killarney behind the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue.
- Creation of a possible “creative district” on the south side of West Fairbanks Avenue in the area that is now light industrial.
- Annexation of the light industrial parcels discussed above into the city.
- Installation of a “Welcome to Winter Park” sign somewhere along West Fairbanks Avenue that matches the high-quality standards of the vision.

What is a Complete Street?

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, according to the National Complete Streets Coalition (www.completestreets.org).

Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street.

The design varies according to the local area, but a complete street may include elements such as sidewalks; bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders); comfortable and accessible public transit stops; frequent and safe crossing opportunities; median islands; accessible pedestrian signals; curb extensions; narrower travel lanes; roundabouts and more.

Incomplete streets, or those designed with only cars in mind, limit transportation choices by making walking, bicycling, and taking public transportation inconvenient, unattractive, and often dangerous.

Appropriate zoning and land use regulations needed to accommodate the highest and best uses.

When West Fairbanks Avenue was annexed into Winter Park from Orange County, many of the properties deviated widely from the city's zoning codes. Some had storage trailers in front and other elements that were not allowed in other parts of the city. There was no cohesive look to the corridor, with multiple paint colors displayed, sometimes even on single buildings. During the background review of West Fairbanks Avenue, city staff noted that they have worked with business owners along the corridor to gradually implement sign requirements while understanding the concerns of the businesses in a new regulatory environment.

Unfortunately, in some cases businesses were operating without licenses and had to be removed. Additionally, city code enforcement officers were diligent about making sure properties didn't attract blighting elements to the corridor, such as a vacant property that had become a hangout for homeless. The city has brainstormed with local business owners to determine what they want along the corridor; however, property owners need to understand that the ultimate goal is for code enforcement to enhance their businesses and their district.

City staff provided the panel with a brief history of the planning and design efforts that preceded the TAP. As discussed previously, form-based codes were recommended by a consultant as a central part of the vision and beautification plans. The city planning team eventually abandoned the form-based code plan and agreed to take the best elements of it and other urban design elements and put them into an easy-to-use booklet that simplified the codes and turned them into guidelines rather than hard and fast rules.

The hybrid plan involves introducing contemporary designs over time, as buildings are replaced, that involve relocating buildings on the front of the properties and parking spaces or parking lots in back, giving West Fairbanks Avenue a more friendly and walkable feel. The new 4 Rivers Restaurant under construction incorporates this concept, placing a small spot of green lawn at the front of the property along the sidewalk.

The panel agreed with the importance of establishing and implementing a set of urban design standards to guide the redevelopment. What form that should take needs to involve more stakeholders, in particular owner along West Fairbanks Avenue as well as the city as a whole.

Barriers in the current regulations that need to be addressed to achieve the redevelopment goals.

West Fairbanks Avenue is owned and controlled by the Florida Department of Transportation so Winter Park cannot dictate the design and appearance of street signs or even the paving. The panel discussed the merits of the city taking control of the roadway. There are pros and cons to both; however, whichever way the city goes, the ultimate goals of beautifying the road must be met.

The city does, however, have jurisdiction over signage for individual businesses and could change the regulations governing those. For example, many municipalities have

restricted signage to certain sizes and heights that bring them closer to street level and sometimes included landscape enhancements.

The necessity for expanded parking along the north side of the West Fairbanks Avenue corridor.

Businesses along the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue have made do with their parking for many years. But the lack of adequate parking became painfully clear with the popularity of 4 Rivers. News accounts throughout the region showed people standing in line to buy barbecue meals at the restaurant, which offered no indoor seating and limited outdoor eating space.

The city quickly worked to post “No parking” signs along the residential streets immediately behind the restaurant, where residents had become alarmed at the amount of traffic suddenly driving into and through their secluded neighborhood. The restaurant worked with its neighbors to encourage patrons to park across the street in church parking lot during non-church hours and cross West Fairbanks Avenue at the traffic light — not the most desirable situation.

The city is looking into its options for creating adequate parking areas and a better buffer between the businesses and residences along the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue.

Recommendations

Create design standards that are workable. This city should work with the private sector to create and manage design standards and guidelines. Actively engage not only owners along the corridor but also neighbors in adjacent neighborhoods. The standards should address building orientation, parking, architectural design, bulk, landscaping and signage. The standards should celebrate the uniqueness of West Fairbanks Avenue while at the same time making it a recognizable part of Winter Park. This will be no easy task but is essential.

A main criticism of the urban design plans created to date is that they appear to scrape the landscape clean and imposes a foreign new pattern. Not only is this unlikely to occur, it creates a divisive atmosphere with existing businesses who want to stay. As one business owner stated, “We’ve seen the pictures and we don’t see ourselves in it.” Make room for sub-districts within the corridor to express their individuality.

Stick to the vision. The city should be deliberate about what it wants but also what it doesn’t want along West Fairbanks Avenue. The market is going to evolve. The sanitary sewer installation will open the area for new uses. Many uses will likely be highway-oriented such as budget motels and fast food chains. Be prepared to address this as part of the vision and put the appropriate regulations in place to carry out the vision. For example, the city could restrict uses to sit-down or carry-out restaurants-only and ban drive-through windows as a way to restrict fast food chains.

Create a Place. A primary objective of the vision and marketing plan should be to create an identifiable place that attracts people and establishes a clear and positive image. Great places have great character and diversity. Involve stakeholders in the

process. Places are as much about the people who inhabit and visit a place as it is about the physical space.

Street beautification is critical. Once a vision is established, be willing to take both incremental and large steps to implement it. The first step must be code enforcement and removal of clutter and blighting influences. Refer to the “fix the road” section above for additional recommendations.

Make the corridor more walkable. Look for ways to create a comfortable, pleasant and safe environment for pedestrians. In Florida, shade is especially important. Consider implementing a complete streets policy in conjunction with FDOT.

Provide pedestrian-scale decorative lighting. The corridor currently lacks sufficient lighting, especially for pedestrians. Consider dual lighting with an upper light for vehicles and a lower light for pedestrians. By combining the lights on the same pole, the limited public space along the corridor can be best utilized.

Underground the power poles. Right now there are dozens of them, and they overtake the appearance of the street. They detract from the character of the area. The city should continue looking for a way to put to fund the effort.

Create a Winter Park gateway at I-4. West Fairbanks Avenue is the main gateway to Winter Park. Visitor and residents should feel welcome and experience a sense of arrival. Signage should be memorable yet discrete. Pay special attention to the buildings and land uses that get built adjacent to I-4. This will set the tone for rest of the corridor.

Develop a strategy to optimize parking. This can include off-site parking, shared parking and structured parking. As properties are redeveloped, parking should be placed at the back and sides of buildings to reduce the visibility of pavement, enhance walkability and provide better storefront visibility.

Lots along Karolina Ave. should be rezoned and buffered. As discussed previously, the lots along the north side of West Fairbanks Avenue will need additional lot depth for redevelopment. Buffering such as a screen wall and attractive landscaping between the commercial and residential lots is essential to preserve and enhance the neighborhood.

Create a corridor-wide master stormwater solution. The corridor needs more retention areas to prevent runoff from polluting Lake Killarney. The city should put together a plan for finding property and turning it into green space that can double as recreational areas.

Form based code is not the appropriate tool for West Fairbanks Avenue. The proposed form based code is difficult for the average person to understand as they are used to working with a more the conventional code. Many of the same objectives can still be achieved through the adoption of design standards in conjunction with the conventional codes.

4. NEXT STEPS

It is the recommendation of the TAP that the City of Winter Park and its businesses and residents work in concert to decide what West Fairbanks Avenue ultimately will become. Will the area maintain its eclectic mix of businesses and draw visitors who want a unique experience? Will it fill in vacant spots with high-end, multistory office buildings that draw big rent for their Winter Park addresses, mirroring its parallel neighbor to the north, Lee Road? Will it become home to mid-priced chain hotels and chain fast-food restaurants that cater to highway traffic? Will it be caught between identities, acting as a gateway at odds with a city image of upscale shopping and dining, well planned parks and cultural arts centers and a nationally recognized private college?

No one group involved can or should make the decision in a vacuum. It will take a joint effort, ongoing communication, a solid plan and a commitment to stick with the plan. It will take the collaboration and imagination of people who share a passion for West Fairbanks Avenue and its future as a thriving, vibrant part of the City of Winter Park.

Appendix A: Panelists Biographies

ULI wishes to thank the following panelists for their insights and volunteer efforts on the West Fairbanks Avenue Technical Assistance Panel.

Diane Burnette

Kansas City, Missouri

Diane Burnette is the Executive Director of the Main Street Corridor Development Corporation (MainCor), Chief Administrator of the Main Street Community Improvement District, and the Managing Staff of the Penn Valley Park Conservancy. She has worked and lived in Kansas City in the area of Main Street since 1987 and began working with MainCor in 2003. She also serves as the current Community Advisor for the Kansas City chapter of the Urban Land Institute and a trustee to the Jackson County Land Trust, and she sits on the Jackson County Tax Increment Financing Commission. Along with her community and neighborhood not-for-profit work, she has an entrepreneurial spirit and formerly owned a business for 17 years.

Melina Duggal, AICP

Orlando, Florida

Melina Duggal is a Senior Principal based in the Orlando office of Robert Charles Lesser & Co. (RCLCO) Real Estate Advisors, located in Baldwin Park. She has worked for RCLCO since 1998, previously based in the firm's offices in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. She has worked on a wide range of market and financial analysis, economic development, regional growth patterns, and consumer research projects concerning real estate and urban development issues throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Prior to joining RCLCO, she worked as a community planner for a consulting firm based in Detroit, Michigan. She serves on the Executive Committee of the Central Florida Chapter of the Urban Land Institute and runs the UrbanPlan program.

Robert Karn, AIA, LEED AP

Sudbury, Massachusetts

Robert Karn is a Design Principal for Consilium Urban Design and Architecture, Based in the Boston area. He has worked on numerous urban design plans in United States, the Middle and Far East and Europe. The concentration over the last decade has been urban design, campus and civic planning for new towns in India, university campuses on the eastern seaboard and transit oriented development in the north east. Prior to locating in Boston he practiced for ten years in Germany collaborating on the reconstruction of East Germany as a consequence of the destruction of the Berlin wall. Prior to that he was the Director of Design and Planning for the Denver Partnership, a 501 C3 responsible for the development of the Downtown Area Plan 2000 which included the creation of a long-term transit and transportation strategy, comprehensive open space system utilizing Cherry Creek and extensive land use modification to stimulate downtown housing and create the LODO Historic District and guidelines. Robert Karn is also a founding member and faculty at the Center for Sustainable Urbanism who's CIAO! program immerses high school students interested in architecture and city building a summer immersion program based in Rome, Italy.

Jeffrey Oris, CEcD
Coconut Creek, Florida

Jeffrey L. Oris is the Founder and President of Planning and Redevelopment Consultants Inc. (PARC Inc.), a Coconut Creek firm providing a full range of services related to economic development, community redevelopment planning, affordable housing and economic analysis. He oversees all aspects of the firm and personally manages all projects ranging from the creation of redevelopment and corridor plans to retail market analysis to annexation and incorporation studies. Prior to forming PARC, he held a 20-year career in local government and consulting, with extensive experience providing economic development and redevelopment planning, market analysis, and grant writing and administration services. He served as Economic Development Coordinator for the city of Margate, Florida, where he was directly responsible for the attraction of more than 1,500 jobs. He is a Past President of the Florida Redevelopment Association and remains one of the group's key outreach speakers.

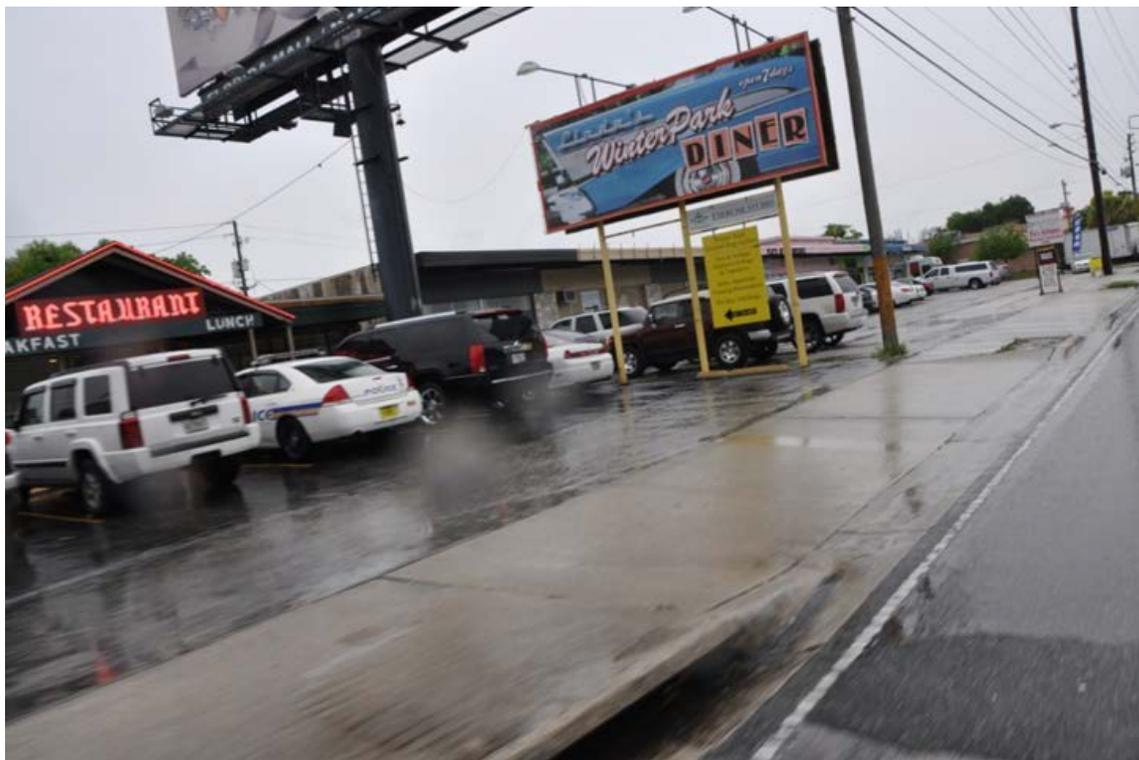
Appendix B. Photographs

West Fairbanks Avenue North –Side View





West Fairbanks Avenue South-Side View





Appendix C: Maps



Notes:

- Red dots represent location of power poles
- Asterisks indicate location of cell phone towers.
- Horizontal bars indicate location of overhead signs.
- Green indicates location of landscaping.