Issue Identification Workshop – December 2, 2009

6:00   Introduction to Workshop

6:10   Overview of Project

6:20   Image Dialogue

Which images represent the vision you want for your community, and why?

Which images represent the vision you DO NOT want for your community, and why?

6:50   Image Preference & Map Survey

People are given 4 sets of dots: 5 large blue, 5 large red dots, 5 small blue dots, 5 small red dots. One the wall are (1) one large map of the study area and (2) one set of images that were used in the image dialogue, printed out to 11 x 17 with substantial white space borders. People use the LARGE BLUE dots to "vote" for the images that BEST represent the vision that want for the future of the community and the LARGE RED dots to vote for the images that do NOT represent the vision they want for the community. People use the SMALL dots to identify on the map the parts of the study area that most love (SMALL BLUE) and the parts of the study area they most dislike or that most need repair (SMALL RED).

7:05   Policy Dialogue

What needs to change to prevent the vision you do not want and support the vision you do want?

7:20   Zoning Reform Implementation Options / FBC – Transect Presentation

7:40   Image Preference & Map Survey Results – Brief Overview

8:00   Thank you!

8:00   Steering Committee Debrief

Image Analysis

Highest Rated Images: It's no surprise that the highest rated images can be directly tied to "green." This is uniformly true in conducting an image preference survey. Interestingly enough, it caused a mediocre 1960's house to rate highly and the notes indicated it was due to the yard and trees. It's also no surprise that the majority of the rural images rated quite high. The notes relative to the farming images supported a strong interest in protecting Fitchburg's rural heritage. Historic neighborhoods and TNDs rated well if they had ample landscaping, and not so well without it. It's quite obvious that only a few participants were responding strictly to the urbanity.

Lowest Rated Images: Once again, it's no shock that the poorest ratings were tied directly to automotive uses, strip centers, large parking lots, and poor maintenance. Within the negative list, people reacted negatively to images strictly due to architectural style and color, items that will likely be outside the scope of the form-based code.

Split Opinions: The images that are the most revealing tend to be those that elicit strong mixed opinions. The most notable in this category was the image of the Kinsale Place mixed-use block. The negative comments were largely related to the architecture, particularly the colors and the post-modern style. The positive comments were all related to the urbanity, particularly the mixed-use, the parking in the rear, and the shallow setback. The next closest in strong mixed opinion was the image of Hatchery Hill. The positive opinions were largely regarding the mixed use, and the negative ones were relative to the parking lot, the building design and the traffic.

Conclusion: The general feedback received in the responses lead to the conclusion that the frontages, particularly the public frontages are critical for citizen approval. Adequate terrace width will be critical, even in T5. Additionally, the importance of educating the public regarding the inclusion of T3 will be the highest priority. It seems there's a pervasive assumption that large lot, single-family detached is not a part of a Form-Based Code. It's critical to make it very clear one of the benefits of a Transect-based code is the inclusion of all intensities. Finally, it's quite clear that a portion of the community doesn't understand the FBC is being used as an implementation device for the Comprehensive Plan. A portion doesn't really know what is in the Comp Plan, and another portion opposes the Plan. Therefore, the implementation strategy for where the SmartCode is mandatory vs. floating zone will have to be carefully crafted to ensure broad-based support.