

The Urban Design Working Group held its first meeting on May 4, 2010 and discussed topics including walkability, transportation and parking issues, aesthetic and physical character of neighborhoods and neighborhood business districts. The Working Group discussed possible joint meetings with other Working Groups to discuss specific topics. The Working Group members also presented comments about the overall attitude of Cincinnatians toward their city. There was not a lengthy discussion about this, but a few of the comments mentioned a “culture of arrogance” at City Hall, “defending [Cincinnati] as the great city it has always been,” and an attitude of getting things done rather than just apologizing for perceived short-comings. If this issue arises in other Working Groups, there may be an opportunity to explore whether and how the Plan can address this issue.

The first theme in the Working Group is walkability. Several comments dealt with building streetscapes at a pedestrian or “human” scale. Walkability has been a theme in many other Working Group meetings including Transportation and Transit and Housing and Neighborhood Development. There may be an opportunity for a separate meeting with other Working Groups to discuss improving the walkability of Cincinnati’s neighborhoods. Comments related to walkability included focusing on the design of Neighborhood Business Districts, Form-Based Codes, and streetscapes. Another aspect of walkability involves designing attractive streets for pedestrian use, including design standards for buildings, comfortable and inviting street furniture, right-of-way construction materials, and attractive signage.

Another theme from the Working Group meeting is the design of transportation related infrastructure including parking structures and lots, transportation patterns and methods, and traffic calming. Several comments suggested improved access to bicycle racks and increased safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The Working Group was also concerned with traffic patterns and their impact on neighborhood health, including the effect of one-way streets, especially in Neighborhood Business Districts. The Working Group suggested that two-way streets slow automobile traffic while encouraging pedestrian traffic. There are other ways to calm traffic that the group will explore in future meetings. This group is also interested in exploring innovative methods of

reducing auto-dependence and encouraging alternative forms of transportation for pedestrians and bicyclists, possibly by supporting car and bicycle sharing programs. Ultimately, it seems the group wants to encourage non-automobile modes of transportation through methods ranging from design to economic incentives.

Urban design deals with the aesthetic and physical character of the City. The Working Group will discuss methods for preserving and enhancing the character of Cincinnati's neighborhoods through urban design. One member of this group suggested developing design standards that maintain the character of some neighborhoods and develop character of others. Form-Based Codes, property maintenance requirements, and infill design codes were discussed as a means to maintain the architectural and physical character of neighborhoods. Another concern expressed involved the size of Neighborhood Business Districts. A possible collaboration between the Working Group and the Economic Development and Business Retention Working Group may be necessary to fully evaluate this idea.