



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 14-0193, **Version:** 1

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### **TITLE:**

Discussion of Possible Community Conversation on Options for Downtown Development

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this item is for the Board of Aldermen to consider a possible strategy for engaging property owners and the community on development options for the area bounded by Center, Short, W. Weaver and N. Greensboro Streets.

**DEPARTMENT:** Mayor's Office; Planning

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** Mayor Lavelle - 919-918-7310; Patricia McGuire - 919-918-7327-  
[pmcguire@townofcarrboro.org](mailto:pmcguire@townofcarrboro.org)

**INFORMATION:** Board members are aware that the presence of an active application for land use permits that involve quasi-judicial procedures limits their ability to communicate with parties interested in the applications. All land use permits are inherently sensitive since they involve personal matters - financial, aesthetic, historical, and aspirational. Some applications are particularly complex, making the need for a base of common knowledge and identification of the broad range of issues even greater. A recent land use development proposal and requested rezoning of a key, high-profile location in the downtown is especially emblematic. Since that project has not reached a conclusion, ongoing uncertainty about the future of this crucial location in downtown continues to generate questions amongst the community and of staff and members of the Board of Aldermen.

The quasi-judicial nature of the decision associated with this particular proposal has limited the conversation, the open sharing of information, and the opportunity to seek a satisfactory outcome for most. Following a recent meeting on this matter, an idea emerged. This idea is to test a community conversation process. In this process, the community, the property owners, and town officials would meet to evaluate and explore the area and try to develop a shared vision, if possible, or at a minimum, a set of clear ideas and values for how we might proceed. This idea has come to light recently and staff has not developed a full proposal. However, a couple of possible methods have been identified and are listed below.

- 1) Schedule a community workshop or facilitated session to allow outreach and education, evaluation of current plans and regulations, exploration of goals, values, and desired design considerations of all interested parties.
- 2) Explore a form-based code development for this small area of downtown. Would involve development of a regulating plan, development standards for the streetscape as well as the properties, and administrative implementation components.

Possible outcomes could be a modified or new zoning district, or changes in procedure (e.g. concept plan requirements or other). Staff recognizes that there may be similar situations elsewhere and is offering this topic

for a discussion so the Board may gauge its interest in pursuing a process that would allow interested parties to exchange information. Should this approach sound appealing, staff is prepared to develop the proposal in more detail. If there is interest, the board may wish to designate a subcommittee of its membership to work on this effort with staff.

**FISCAL & STAFF IMPACT:** Fiscal and staff impact is to be determined based on the outcome of a discussion on this topic.

**RECOMMENDATION:** It is recommended that the Board discuss the concept and direct staff on any follow-up. A draft resolution (Attachment A) provides an opportunity to specify any desired next steps.