

Commercial district plan unveiled

Parking, daytrippers, noise still concern residents who live near Middle Street

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URBAN EDGE AND LS3P

Consultants presented a draft plan last week of what Sullivan's Island's commercial district could look like in the future.

SULLIVAN'S ISLAND—A series of meetings on the future of the island's commercial district came to an end Thursday with a presentation of a master plan that included increasing street parking on the town's main drag and modifying commercial land uses.

Consultants Seamon Whitesides and Associates, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Urban Edge Studio and LS3P Associates spent nine days holding meetings with residents and businesses owners to come up with a plan for the commercial district.

As the surrounding populations have grown, Sullivan's Island Middle Street has become increasingly busy with visitors to its handful of restaurants and bars. The surrounding noise and traffic has long been a problem for area residents.

The consulting team unveiled a draft of the commercial plan in a church sanctuary Thursday with about 50 people in the audience.

The plan included creating reverse angle parking on Middle Street, restricting visitors from parking on neighboring residential streets, creating an overlay district for the commercial area, drafting a noise ordinance and creating a livability court. Most of the discussion centered on parking and changing zoning.

In reverse angle parking, drivers would back into spaces at an angle so that they pull out facing the street. Open car doors would also become a buffer between children and the street.

Replacing some of the current parallel parking with reverse angle slots would increase street parking by about 50 spaces. The plan also called for barring non-residents from parking on the streets immediately north and south of the commercial zone which would decrease total visitor parking by 10 spaces.

"We are not providing a whole bunch of additional spaces on Sullivan's Island, we're just trying to get parking in the right places," said William T. Eubanks, Urban Edge Studio director.

A drawing of the commercial area also included a turn-around at the Fire Station on Middle Street so that visitors wouldn't have to enter residential neighborhoods by going around the block.

The consultant also suggested creating an overlay district similar to Mount Pleasant's Coleman Boulevard. On Sullivan's Island, the commercial area has split zoning allowing for commercial uses on a lot's half that faces Middle Street and residential purposes on the back half.

For the overlay district, consultants suggested restricting commercial uses to the front third of a lot facing Middle Street and residential uses to the back third and allowing parking in the middle.

Eubanks said this would prevent smaller businesses from using the full half of the lot, controlling their size, but also allowing for on-site parking. This way, he said, business owners would have better control of their customers as they leave and enter the parking lot, and it would cut back on noise.

One resident suggested closing all businesses at 11 p.m. to solve the noise problem.

Poe's Tavern owner Rusty Bennett said businesses were already struggling as it is. In the last year, two other business owners have called Bennett asking if he would like to buy them out.

Residents asked if the council's intent was to increase parking for day trippers, which Councilman Everett Presson refuted.

"We do not want one more single person to come to Sullivan's Island," he said.

Parking and the district's visitors have troubled residents for at least 30 years, he said.

"We are trying to solve a problem," Presson said.

However, Pat Votava, a Jasper Street resident, said splitting the lots into thirds would increase growth.

"You are, in fact, increasing parking. You are, in fact, increasing commercial density and taking away from residential space," Votava said.

In the next few months, Town Council will meet with the designers to fine-tune the \$83,985 plan and designers agreed to meet with Votava and other residents who live near the district.

Mayor Carl Smith said Thursday he was still trying to grasp the plan in its entirety.

"There are a lot of good ideas I think," he said.

More information

The full plan will be posted to: www.ls3p.com/SullivansIsland.htm.

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