The Collaborative Place-making Approach: Increasing Public Support for Density

by

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I. ABSTRACT

As urban neighborhoods in many cities revitalize, planners pushing for increased density often come into conflict with local stakeholders who are wary of increased density in their neighborhoods. In order to obtain public support for increased density, planners must first ensure that plans protect neighborhood quality. This paper hypothesizes that one way to reach the twin goals of increased density and preserved neighborhood quality is through a collaborative place-making approach to planning.

The collaborative place-making approach utilizes collaborative planning tools like charrettes that allow the public to tailor density to the context of their neighborhood. This approach also frames the planning process around the idea of place-making. Place-making improves public perceptions of density by focusing on creating a great place. This paper hypothesizes that collaborative planning and a place-making frame may make the public more comfortable with density.

After a discussion of the collaborative place-making approach, this paper evaluates a case-study where the approach was used by planners: the Durham Ninth Street plan. The case study finds that the collaborative place-making approach was successful in increasing public support for density. Furthermore, giving the public a role in developing the plan through collaborative planning is the most important factor in obtaining public support for density.
II. INTRODUCTION

A. Density’s Comeback

In recent years, many American urban neighborhoods have experienced a comeback. Across the country, once stagnant downtowns, inner-ring suburbs, and commercial corridors are seeing new development in the form of higher-density apartments, townhouses, and mixed-use projects. After a long hiatus, people are rediscovering the benefits of urban living.

This renewed demand for urban living has dovetailed with another trend: the promotion of compact, high-density cities by urban planners and policy-makers. Cities see many advantages in high-density environments, from creating 24-hour neighborhoods and attracting the creative class to curbing sprawl and promoting mass transit.

Cities also a renewed interest in cultivating their sense of place. Cities are finding that there is great value, both real and perceived, in being known as a fun place to be, an interesting place to be. Much urban revitalization has followed the principles of New Urbanism, with its emphasis on attractive public spaces, mixed uses, and walkable neighborhoods—all of which requires a critical mass of density.

B. Opposition to Density

Current residents of revitalizing urban areas, however, are often wary of increased density in their neighborhoods. Images of traffic congestion, gentrification, and towering apartment buildings come to mind whenever the “d” word is uttered. Neighborhood groups often oppose development projects and planning efforts that would increase density in their community (Fulton 1986).
At the same time, collaborative planning processes have gained currency, giving the public more influence over planning in their communities—and over density in their own neighborhoods (Innes 1996). Thus if the public perceives density as denigrating to the quality of their neighborhoods, they have more influence to derail densification efforts, canceling the benefits of density to the city as a whole. The question is, then, how can planners guide the planning processes so that both city goals of increased density and neighborhood goals of a preserved quality of life are met?

C. Outline of Paper

This paper hypothesizes that one way to reach both neighborhood and city goals around density is through a collaborative place-making approach to planning. This approach involves the following two elements:

1. **Collaborative planning.** Collaborative planning empowers the public to play a significant role in deciding the appropriate density for their neighborhood, potentially resulting in more public support for density than traditional top-down planning methods.

2. **Framing through place-making.** Planners may be able to improve the public’s perception of density by framing the planning process in a compelling way. This paper will look specifically at a place-making frame that highlights the positive effects of density by focusing on how density can create a great place.

This paper hypothesizes that, by allowing the public to collaborate on the right location, intensity, and design of higher density development, while at the same time improving public perceptions of density through a place-making frame, the collaborative place-making approach may increase public support for higher density.
In order to implement a collaborative place-making approach, planners must utilize planning tools that are supportive of both collaborative planning and framing. This paper will look specifically at four tools:

- **Small-area planning**
- **Charrettes**
- **Form-based codes**
- **Place-making**

The structure of this paper will be as follows. First, an overview of collaborative planning, and then an overview of framing, will be given. Each section will include a description of how specific planning tools—small-area planning, charrettes, form-based codes, and place-making—can implement collaborative planning and framing within the planning process. The purpose of this section is to describe how the collaborative place-making approach works theoretically.

Then, the paper will evaluate a case study of the Durham Ninth Street plan, which utilized the collaborative place-making approach in an attempt to meet both city goals of increased density and neighborhood goals of a preserved quality of life. The case study will evaluate the success of the collaborative place-making approach in increasing public support for density while preserving neighborhood quality in the minds of stakeholders.
III. COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

A. *The Emerging Collaborative Paradigm*

The dynamics of democratic governance have changed since the Urban Renewal era, when governments often developed and implemented plans with minimal input from the affected stakeholders. Today, citizen groups are better able to leverage the resources, information, and networks to influence public decision-making. As a result, collaborative relationships between the government and the public are becoming more common (Innes 1999). As one resident told the mayor of Lakewood, CO, “what we’ve got here is a parent-child relationship between the government and the people. What we need is an adult-adult relationship.” (Leighninger, 2007)

In response to the call for more directly democratic planning, many governments have incorporated collaborative planning processes. These processes strive to partner with the public in every aspect of the decision, look to the public for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions, and incorporate the public’s recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible (IAP2, 2007).

The flexibility of collaborative processes offers an advantage over traditional public processes. In a collaborative process, stakeholders are encouraged to work together to develop options, build consensus, and find mutually beneficial solutions to problems (Innes 1999). Conversely, the rigid format of a traditional public hearing tends to encourage confrontation and limit creative solutions (Susskind, 1999). Public hearings are merely a *consultation* with the public instead of a *collaboration*. These formats are increasingly incompatible with public expectations of involvement in governmental decision-making.
Research has demonstrated the benefits of collaborative public participation processes in planning. For instance, more inclusive public decision-making processes create plans that are more legitimate, equitable, effective, and affordable due to fewer legal challenges and greater public support (Innes 2004; Godschalk, 1994). In environmental planning processes, more intensive public processes have been demonstrated to lead to substantively better outcomes (Beierle and Cayford, 2002). Similarly, greater stakeholder involvement in the creation of comprehensive plans increases the chance that the plan is implemented (Burby, 2003).

B. Collaborating on Density

How can the benefits of collaborative planning be transferred to gaining public support for increased density? When used as collaborative planning tools, small-area planning, charrettes, and form-based codes have characteristics that can make the public more comfortable with density.

Manageable scale. Small-area planning on a neighborhood, corridor, or district scale allows for a high level of engagement with local stakeholders. Planners and the public can design on a block-by-block level, tailoring the plan to the unique conditions of the neighborhood. Conversely, city-wide plans cannot easily reach this level of detail. By fine-tuning the location and intensity of density, small-area planning may help make the public more comfortable with density.

Structured public input. Charrettes offer an effective structure for obtaining public input and translating it into a workable plan. A charrette is a public workshop that brings together stakeholders and planners to collaborate on a plan. Although charrettes can take many different forms, their key components—presentations by planners and
designers to ensure that information is shared by all, small-group sessions that allow individuals to actively participate, and a final plan that incorporates everyone’s input—are designed to facilitate collaboration and consensus (Lennertz, 2003). Charrettes make the public’s impact on the plan visible, helping to avoid the perception that the government is forcing a neighborhood to increase density.

Simple planning tools. If the public is to participate in planning they must comprehend the instruments at hand. However, traditional zoning is considered difficult for the average person to grasp. Form-based codes, on the other hand, use images to communicate intent, and have been promoted as easier for the public to understand. Form-based codes regulate the form of buildings rather than the use (Local Government Commission, 2007). Thus, when used as a collaborative planning tool, they give the public greater control over the look and feel of development, potentially making them more comfortable with higher levels of density.

By combining these tools, planners can develop a collaborative planning process that gives the public more control over density. These tools work well in concert; the local scale of small-area planning encourages local stakeholders to participate in a charrette since the plan will directly affects their neighborhood. At the charrette, form-based codes allow the public to design a plan that details the appropriate location, intensity, and design of density. By promoting an “adult-adult” relationship with the public, collaborative planning has the potential to increase public support for plans that increase density.
IV. FRAMING THE DENSITY DEBATE

A. Guiding Collaboration through Framing

The collaborative planning processes described above place more power in the hands of the public than have traditional planning processes. While this can advance the goals of the local community, it also has the potential of blocking larger city or region-wide goals of increased density. As some theorists have noted, pure public decision-making may result in a “tyranny of the majority” that results in undesirable consequences. To prevent this, these theorists hold that experts, such as planners, should retain a significant role in the decision-making process (Pelletier et al. 1999).

In the debate over increased density, the role of planners is to perform a balancing act. Planners must empower the local community while still seeking to accomplish city goals of increased density. Planners can accomplish this balancing act through an effective framing of the plan. This section of the paper will describe how a place-making frame can be used to increase public support for density while still empowering the public through a collaborative planning process.¹

B. Overview of Frames and Framing

Originating in the field of communication theory, frames are cognitive structures that people use to simplify complex situations. In the same way that a picture frame crops out some objects in order to focus on others, people use mental frames to focus on certain concepts while giving less attention to others (Kaufman 1999). Frames are often

¹ Of course, before a government inserts itself into the future of a neighborhood by advocating for higher density, it should be sure that higher density is beneficial to the city as a whole. Specifically, the city’s comprehensive plan should provide a data-driven argument backed by public participation for increasing density in the specified locale. Once this ethical criteria is met, planners can play an important role in guiding the planning process through framing the plan.
determined by past experiences that are recalled in new situations. Frames can determine whether new information is embraced or dismissed.

The act of framing, then, is crafting a frame for the purpose of influencing how others perceive a situation. Framing often takes the form of a narrative—a story that compels people to view a situation through a certain frame (Kaufman 2001).

Framing is a feature of our everyday conversations and arguments, often occurring unconsciously. A greater awareness of frames can help planners understand its effects on planning. Planners should realize the importance of framing plans through the creation of a compelling narrative. If planners fail to actively frame plans, the public may see the frame through a more negative frame created through the media, word-of-mouth, or the previous frames of stakeholders.

C. Frames and Planning

Sanda Kaufman has done pioneering work on the role of frames in planning. In one study, Kaufman focused on the frames of stakeholders involved in a dispute over the siting of a landfill (Kaufman 1999). In this situation, stakeholders adopted strong frames (No waste in our backyards!) because the dispute revolved around a single, clear-cut issue. Stakeholder groups were set against one another, and the strength of their frames diminished their willingness to accept information that contradicted their positions. Here, planners had to play a mediating role between monolithic opposing sides, making it difficult for planners to take a leadership role in actively framing the planning process.

The dynamics of small-area planning, however, allow planners to more actively frame the planning process. Small-area planning involves a multitude of complex issues and uncertain outcomes. Because of this, stakeholders may be less organized around
strong positions, and their positions may be in less opposition to one another. The
complexity and uncertainty of small-area planning gives planners the opportunity to take
a strong leadership role in framing the plan.

If done carefully, framing can act as a vehicle for stakeholders to coalesce around
a shared goal. A compelling frame supported by the right planning tools can provide a
conceptual framework for the planning process—a guiding principle that sets the
parameters of the debate. Framing can prevent the complexity and uncertainty of
planning from derailing the process.

The Seattle Urban Village Strategy (see next page) offers one instance where
collaborative planning and framing were used to increase public support for density.
Seattle framed the planning process around the idea of creating better neighborhoods. In
the next section, this paper will describe a similar way to frame the density debate to
increase public support for density: place-making.

D. Framing Density through Place-making

The concept of place-making recognizes that high-quality public places contribute
great value to the community. Place-making is similar to the principles of New
Urbanism in its emphasis on the public realm, the streetscape, a mixture of uses, and
walkable destinations. In practice, place-making puts the focus on the details that create
the place: wide sidewalks, a mix of uses and activities, and buildings that create well-
defined spaces.

Place-making also emphasizes the uniqueness of each place, and the importance
of tailoring places to the needs of the local public. These qualities make place-making
work well with the collaborative planning tools described before:
Example of Collaborative Planning and Framing:
The Seattle Urban Village Strategy

The city of Seattle’s *urban village* strategy provides one example of how collaborative neighborhood planning and framing can be used to make the public more comfortable with higher density.

In 1994, Seattle’s comprehensive plan outlined a plan to accommodate 60,000 new residents within Seattle by 2014. The plan identified thirty-four *urban villages* where density should be increased. At first, Seattle’s powerful neighborhood organizations opposed the idea of increasing density. They felt that the plan was a top-down mandate that would undermine their community fabric (Diers, 2002).

Instead of forcing density onto neighborhoods, the city gave neighborhoods the responsibility to collaborate with planners on a neighborhood plan. The plans used the Comprehensive Plan’s target population growth numbers as a reference, while retaining the option to advocate for a lower-density target population. In 1999, thirty-seven neighborhood plans were approved. Each had either met or exceeded their targeted population growth numbers. Many neighborhoods approved multi-family housing, mixed-use development, or a reduction in parking requirements.

**Collaboration.** The successful buy-in of Seattle’s neighborhood organization was attributed to the way in which the community was empowered to develop their own strategies tailored to the unique character of each neighborhood. They collaborated on the appropriate location and intensity of density. Although the collaborative approach involved a heavy workload at the beginning of the process, the payoffs will hopefully come in the form of reduced opposition to high-density development proposals.

**Framing.** The Seattle strategy framed the plan as a neighborhood-led process that would make the neighborhoods better places. The neighborhood plans included carrots for the neighborhoods: libraries, parks, and community centers. Seattle earmarked funding for these projects, encouraging citizens to see the planning process as a chance to envision a better community. They were able to identify and prioritize those projects most important to the neighborhood. The plans were also framed around the targeted population growth numbers, which set parameters for the planning process while allowing for flexibility within the parameters. The neighborhoods could take ownership over the density issue by deciding for themselves where and how increased density was most appropriate.
Small-area planning. Place-making must be undertaken at the neighborhood level in order to apply the necessary attention to detail and address the concerns and desires of local stakeholders.

Charrettes. The local public is best able to decide what makes a great place for their neighborhood. The wisdom of local experience is essential to creating a great place, and can be captured by bringing stakeholders together to collaborate at a charrette.

Form-based codes. Form-based codes offer a means by which communities can create and regulate a place. Form-based codes control the relationship of buildings to one another and to the street, creating a well-defined public realm and an attractive pedestrian environment. Since form-based codes use pictures more than words, the public can better visualize how building form will affect an area’s sense of place. A place-making frame can increase public support for density by focusing on the positive aspects of higher density that are often overlooked. Without place-making, the idea of four-story buildings in a neighborhood could induce fears of traffic congestion and overshadowed houses. Conversely, a place-making frame revisions four-story buildings as a traditional Main Street row of shops and dwellings. Ideally, it becomes a place of entertainment and life, a place of which the community can be proud.

Of course, framing density through place-making will not allay all fears of density’s impacts. But place-making offers a conceptual framework that can guide the collaborative planning process towards the goals of increased density and preserved neighborhood quality. If participants buy into the idea of creating a great place, they may realize that a certain amount of density is conducive to creating a great public space and craft form-based codes that allow for a higher level of density.
A place-making frame can also help the plan avoid getting bogged down in the multitude of issues that concern different stakeholders. While these issues (economics, gentrification, traffic) must be addressed and taken into account, they can also derail the planning process by blocking consensus and sparking conflict over potential consequences that are difficult to discern. However, if people can agree on what type of buildings and density will define a great public place, the other issues are more likely to fall into place.

E. The Collaborative Place-making Approach

A collaborative place-making approach involves a combination of tools that work together to increase public support for higher density. Small-area planning, charrettes, and form-based codes allow planners to collaborate with the public, and a place-making frame can improve the public’s perception of density by focusing on the positive aspects of density. The approach balances empowering the public to make decisions for their community with effective guidance of the process by planners. If skillfully crafted, this collaborative place-making approach could result in a plan that achieves the dual goals of increasing density and preserving neighborhood quality.
V. CASE STUDY OF THE COLLABORATIVE PLACE-MAKING APPROACH:

THE DURHAM 9TH STREET PLAN

A. Methodology of Case Study

In order to evaluate the hypothetical benefits of the collaborative place-making approach, this paper completed a case-study of the Ninth Street Plan in Durham, NC. The Ninth Street Plan included each of the tools mentioned above: small-area planning, a charrette, form-based codes and a place-making frame by planners. It also shared the twin goals of increasing density while preserving the quality of the neighborhood. This makes the Ninth Street plan a good opportunity to test the ability of the collaborative place-making approach in achieving these goals.

Eleven interviews were conducted with stakeholders who attended the charrette for the Ninth Street plan (see Appendix C). The interviews collected participant opinions on the charrette, form-based codes, the place-making frame, and the overall plan (see Appendix D). Interviewees included two planners, one designer (who led the charrette), six residents, one merchant, and one commercial property owner (see Appendix B). Residents were the most willing to be interviewed, while merchants and property owners were more difficult to contact. Residents were also more involved in the charrette; about forty residents participated compared to only eleven merchants and property owners. Some observations included in this paper were also taken from public comments made at the charrette or public meetings.

The shortcoming of the 9th Street plan, for the purposes of this paper, is that as of March 2007 the plan has not been finished. Originally, a draft of the plan was supposed to be finished in January of 2007, but this date was pushed back. A draft plan was
presented on March 22, 2007 but the plan would be refined further. Thus, interviews with participants had to be conducted in January and February of 2007, before participants had seen the draft plan.

Still, this paper can evaluate whether the tools of the collaborative place-making approach—small-area planning, charrettes, form-based codes, and a place-making frame—were able to increase public support for density. It will also evaluate whether the public felt that, in its incomplete stages, the Ninth Street plan was successful in preserving the quality of the neighborhood. Finally, this paper will discuss the successes and shortcomings of the collaborative place-making approach as used with the Ninth Street plan, and what this reveals about the advantages and shortcomings of the collaborative place-making approach.

B. Introduction to 9th Street

Adjacent to Duke University, Ninth Street is today one of Durham’s most popular commercial areas. The area was largely vacant until the 1980s, when a few local businesses began a revitalization of the area. Today, the historic buildings and local businesses of Ninth Street give the area a unique flavor, described one resident as “quintessentially Duham.”

Today, two elements define the character of Ninth Street. The first is the row of historic one and two-story commercial buildings on the street’s eastern side that house independent restaurants and shops. The second is the historic Erwin Mill that sits on a rise on the street’s western side, converted into fashionable apartments.

Surrounding the heart of Ninth Street are several large undeveloped parcels, scattered businesses, strip-style development, single-family homes, and apartment
buildings. Most of these buildings are between one and two stories tall. Exceptions to this include one large three-story apartment complex, and the ten-story Erwin Tower.

Within walking distance of Ninth Street are several well-established neighborhoods, including Old West Durham, Trinity Heights, and Watts-Hillandale. These neighborhoods have active neighborhood associations. Residents described the population as politically liberal and middle to upper-middle class. 37% of the adult population has a bachelor’s degree or higher (U.S. Census 2000).

Within the Ninth Street area, there is both opportunity and market demand for new residential and commercial development. The area also includes the site of a potential future commuter train station. With these factors in mind, the Durham comprehensive plan identified Ninth Street as an area where density should be increased.

C. Participant Views of Ninth Street

This section summarizes the views of eight public participants (residents, a merchant, and a property owner) towards Ninth Street—both as it is now and what they want it to be in the future. These views provide background on how participants approached the Ninth Street planning process. They also provide evidence on how the collaborative place-making approach may have influenced the public’s support for density.

Positive qualities of Ninth Street. Residents of the surrounding neighborhoods have a strong connection to Ninth Street. As one resident put it, the street has many “self-appointed protectors” who consider Ninth Street the “living room” of the community. When asked what they like about Ninth Street, participants consistently
praised the area’s eclectic personality, variety of locally-owned shops, and walkable streets.

**Needed improvements.** Responses on needed improvements to Ninth Street varied. They included missing sidewalk connections, sidewalks too narrow for outdoor café-seating, crime, and outdated infrastructure. Several participants were also concerned over the lack of support from Durham and Duke University for the area’s eclecticism and independence. Most participants felt that the parking lots on Ninth Street should be developed to improve the streetscape, while merchants on 9th Street expressed concern over a lack of parking.

**Fears for Ninth Street’s future.** The most common fear voiced by participants was a loss of Ninth Street’s local and “funky” character to “suburbanization.” They worried that historic buildings and local businesses would be replaced with new, more expensive buildings and chain stores. The top priority for many was to protect the historic commercial buildings and the mill from redevelopment.

Some also fear that the Ninth Street plan will catalyze new development. According to one planner, “the prosperity on Ninth Street is relatively new, and people are worried that new development will change things.” A secondary fear was that a lack of public investment would lead to the area’s decay and eventual vacancy.

**Building heights.** Most participants considered three to four story buildings appropriate for most of the Ninth Street area. Several said that building heights should be placed in the context of current buildings; taller buildings may be appropriate in some areas as long as the transition to shorter buildings is smooth. The property owner interviewed felt that eight to nine story buildings should be allowed.
**Pedestrian vs. automotive access to Ninth Street.** While most participants recognized that both forms of transportation should be accommodated, more than half (5/8) felt that pedestrian access should be emphasized. Most felt that surface parking should be limited.

Two participants remembered a moment at the charrette when a planner asked, “does anyone have trouble parking around 9th Street?” Nobody raised their hand, proving to some that parking is not a problem. Three respondents felt that cars and pedestrians should be equally accommodated, with the merchant concerned that a lack of parking could become a problem for local businesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Query</th>
<th>Compiled Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Heights</td>
<td>Five responses for 3 to 4 stories; One responses for 8 stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ped vs. Auto Access</td>
<td>5/8 prefer emphasis on pedestrian access; 3/8 prefer equal emphasis on both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial reaction to plan</td>
<td>(scale of 1 to 5) 4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2007</td>
<td>(scale of 1 to 5) 4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Initial reaction to the plan.** Participants were asked to rank their initial reaction to the Ninth Street plan before the charrette on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most positive reaction. The average response was a 4.4. This positive reaction was largely due a feeling that Ninth Street needed both financial and planning attention from the city. People wanted to ensure that future development would not disrupt the existing character of Ninth Street.

The initial reaction of some participants to the plan was more cautious. They were concerned that the plan might try to “fix what’s not broke” about Ninth Street; that
the plan’s motive was to make the area more upscale; or that form-based codes were an inappropriate tool.

**Support for plan as of January 2007.** Although they had not yet seen the final draft of the plan, participants were asked to score their current support for the plan on the same scale. The average response was a 4.2. The reason that this score was lower than the initial reaction score (4.4) can mostly be attributed to the fact that “the jury was still out” on the plan.

**D. The Place-making Approach**

This section examines the place-making frame utilized by planners in the Ninth Street plan. First, I asked planners to describe the message they conveyed to the public about the Ninth Street plan. This section then examines how participants responded to the place-making frame in order to evaluate its effects on improving perceptions of density, and on public support for the plan.

**Planners.** Planners presented the Ninth Street Plan as an idea that had been brewing for a long time. During the 1990s, the Durham Board of Commissioners promised to do a plan for Ninth Street. Furthermore, the Triangle Transit Authority encouraged local governments to prepare for mass transit by establishing guidelines to increased density around future transit stops. Ninth Street was one of the targeted densification areas.

However, planners believed that density guidelines could not be implemented without first going ‘to the local community to see what they wanted.” A planner remarked that “planners have been responsible for the destruction of many communities” by imposing regulations incompatible with the local context. With the high potential for
development around Ninth Street, it was important for the community to have a collaborative role in planning.

In approaching the Ninth Street plan, planners knew that “the idea of increasing density would be politically unpalatable to a lot of people.” So, planners decided to avoid talking about density and instead “focus on the form and the street,” “creating a good pedestrian environment,” and on “keeping the existing character of 9th Street as whole as possible.” As one planner said,

The way we try to frame it is that “development is coming anyways, multi-family living in an urban area is a very popular thing to do now, the market is there for it, and most of that land is privately owned. If they want to develop it, they are going to develop it. So lets try to put in something that will fit in as best as possible.”

In trying to preserve the sense of place on Ninth Street, planners returned to an idea of place-making largely abandoned by the profession since the early 20th century. Looked at this way, public opposition to development is rarely caused by density. Rather, “the problem is design.” Planners hoped that people would accept density if “it will make the streets come alive and turn it into a very nice destination.” By focusing on design instead of density, planners hoped that conflict over density could be avoided.

Planners also concentrated on the fact that existing zoning on Ninth Street allowed for ten story buildings in many areas, and did not regulate the appearance or pedestrian-friendliness of the buildings. Their place-making approach would actually ensure that development was more compatible with its surroundings by limiting density to more acceptable levels and ensuring that the design contributed to creating a great place.

**Participant views of place-making frame.** In many ways, participants viewed the planners’ message similarly to how the planners described it. According to one resident, Lindquist
“the planners communicated that Ninth Street was a special part of the city that requires a unique approach.” In general, participants got the message that new development was inevitable and needed to be guided with a plan.

However, in response to an open-ended question about how planners framed the plan, no participants specifically mentioned place-making. The DAD designer was not surprised; he felt that the two-day charrette was too brief for the place-making message to be clearly communicated to the public. One planner agreed that place-making was not the key to public support for the plan. More important was “the public having a hand in developing the rules” to guide development in their community.

On the other hand, when participants were asked directly about the place-making focus of the plan, the response was very positive. Everyone agreed that creating great places was important to people around Ninth Street. According to one participant, “the whole idea of viewscapes and focal points at the end of the street was excellent.” Several mentioned that place-making was a good organizing principle for the plan because it “herded” everyone in the same direction. People also felt that the community was comfortable with a certain level of density as long as it did not disrupt the existing character of Ninth Street, as evidenced by the general acceptance of three to four story buildings.

One participant expressed concern, however, that the focus on place-making was disingenuous because certain concepts promoted by planners would not make Ninth Street a great place, like garages in front of townhouses (see Appendix A, Figure 1). Two other participants, while supportive of the focus on place-making, still worried that the plan would encourage redevelopment of the historic buildings on Ninth Street, disrupting the character of the area. Overall, the place-making approach was popular
with residents but could not totally assuage fears that the plan might negatively affect the area.

E. The Charrette Process

Charrette Overview. The Ninth Street planning charrette was held in September of 2006 on a Friday evening and all day Saturday. At the beginning of the charrette the planning director told participants that they would try a new planning approach: form-based codes. He emphasized that if people did not like form-based codes, they could scrap it and go back to more traditional zoning tools. Several participants said that they appreciated this expression of flexibility.

An architect with the pro-bono group Durham Area Designers led the charrette. He began by giving a presentation to familiarize participants with form-based codes. He also gave global examples of design and building form to illustrate the art of place-making.

Then, participants broke up into small groups to discuss their opinions on appropriate building types, building heights, lot configuration (locating the building and parking in regards to the streetscape), special locations, and uses. Each small group drew up a plan and presented it to the entire group.

After the charrette, designers and planners combined the small-group plans into a draft master plan, which was presented at a November meeting (see Appendix A, Figure 5). At the meeting, planners emphasized that they would continue to refine the plan and work on drafting a final plan, which would be presented in late January of 2007. This meeting was pushed back until March 22, 2007.
**Planners.** After looking at the plans produced at the charrette, planners were struck by the public consensus on the level of density appropriate for Ninth Street, and how similar it was to what planners thought appropriate. Participants had generally decided on three to four story building heights in most areas, with variations in some areas according to the context.

Planners emphasized the importance of the public arriving at these conclusions for themselves. They believed that if planners had proposed the same plan without public buy-in and input, it would not have been positively received. As one planner remarked, “people like to be asked, and they like to see that their suggestions are incorporated in the final plan.”

Planners also said the charrette helped to build consensus through the sharing of information. For example, many participants wanted to preserve an undeveloped parcel near Ninth Street as a park. However, Durham Parks and Recreation would not buy the parcel, and planners could not legally zone it as open space. Once charrette participants understood these facts, six out of eight small-group plans placed development on the site. The charrette was “a way to get people to say, ‘ok, we can’t get exactly what we want, but here is something that we can live with.’”

The charrette also resulted in what planners felt was a substantively better plan. For example, based on participant feedback the boundaries of the planning area were adjusted to better respond to those areas that needed planning and exclude those that did not.

One planner noted that the charrette could have been improved by encouraging more of the plan’s opponents to attend. The planner believed that opponents’ arguments are better off engaged in a public forum than left unanswered.
Participants. Overall, participants gave the charrette positive reviews. Examples of praise included that form-based codes were clearly presented, the small-group format was effective, planners did a good job of moving the process along, and the charrette was well organized. Both participants and planners recognized that those who attended the charrette were a generally pro-planning crowd.

However, even participants who voiced concerns over the plan’s potential outcome felt that the charrette was an overall positive experience. They appreciated the chance to hear the viewpoints of other stakeholders in the community. One neighborhood leader felt that the charrette let developers “see the support for keeping Ninth Street local, while also realizing that we will support dense infill projects.” One property owner, while concerned that residents would influence the Ninth Street plan to limit his building heights, still felt that the charrette was a positive experience. Overwhelmingly, participants felt that public participation was genuine; that the charrette “was not a staged event.”

Participants also expressed concerns with the charrette. One felt that the charrette should have given more weight to neighborhood organizations, rather than focusing on individuals. Due to their large constituencies, these groups have considerable political pull and their support for the plan is crucial. Therefore, the participant felt that the charrette should have engaged neighborhood organizations to ensure that their concerns were addressed.

On the other hand, one merchant felt that those more “tuned in” to the process might have undue influence on the final plan. The merchant noted that holding the charrette on a Saturday was like telling merchants, “don’t bother coming.”
Another concern mentioned by several participants was that planners did not adequately explain what happens to the plan after the charrette. How would the ideas generated at the charrette be turned into a final plan? In the past, many participants had poor experiences with planning. They were concerned that the Ninth Street plan would be similarly corrupted during the post-charrette political process. Participants wanted the planners to provide greater transparency so that they could monitor the plan’s progress.

Another concern involved the use of images at the charrette. Two participants said that planners made a mistake in showing Sketchup images of potential new development on Ninth Street in the place of historic buildings (see Appendix A, Figures 2, 3, and 4). This change was threatening to many people, and contributed to the suspicion that planners sought to make the area more upscale rather than preserve its existing “funky” character.

Also, two participants expressed concern that the Durham Area Designers “communicated a certain level of ownership over the plan and the feeling that there were right or wrong answers in regards to building heights.” These participants worried that DAD’s focus might be more on design than on translating the public’s desires into a plan.

F. Form-Based Codes

Planners. Planners knew that by using form-based codes on Ninth Street, they were charting unknown waters. Rather than trying to locate commercial and residential uses, planners were asking people to think about the “look and feel of development and how it works to create a place.” This was a totally different approach from traditional zoning that made some people uncomfortable. Still, planners felt that many in the community were supportive of form-based codes. Planners also felt that form-based
codes offered a “basic framework” to gather public input and guide the public towards realistic decisions. As one planner said:

“We didn’t want to go in with a blank slate because if you do that, people will have unrealistic wishes. They’ll say they want a community center or a park, but this is privately owned land that somebody wants to make a profit on, so form-based codes offered a basic framework that we could go in with and start from there.”

At the charrette, participants were asked to decide on the types of buildings that should be developed around Ninth Street. The final plan, derived from the small group plans, included “storefronts”, “commercial block buildings”, “townhouses”, and “towers.” (see Appendix A, Figure 1) They also decided on the specific locations for each building type (see Appendix A, Figure 5).

Planners felt that the response to form-based codes at the charrette was very positive, since it allowed people to directly craft regulations for the area. However, they worried that the opponents of form-based codes who did not attend the charrette would sway public opinion. Planners felt that more people were questioning form-based codes at the November public meeting. However, at the March 2007 meeting, although some people disagreed with how form-based codes were used, it appeared that the majority accepted the concept of form-based codes for Ninth Street.

**Participants.** Seven out of eight participants were mostly supportive of form-based codes. As one participant said, “there was a willingness to try it at the charrette because it creates certainty as to what the buildings will look like.” Another participant said, “form-based codes work well because people are ok with higher density as long as it is limited.”
However, several participants felt that the public lacked an understanding of form-based codes. Even though form-based codes are supposedly easier to understand, some members of the public were well-versed in traditional zoning. One participant felt that this new form of zoning impeded public oversight of the plan; that form-based codes could be used to “put one over” on the community.

Another concern from this participant was that form-based codes would not regulate use. Apparently, this is a concern that is shared by several residents who do not want businesses dispersed throughout residential areas. Also, some participants worried that form-based codes will spur redevelopment that tears down historic buildings, whereas traditional zoning has not so far.

Another concern voiced by a participant was that the building type images created by DAD were “ugly.” This demonstrated the danger of using simple images to model form-based codes, because the public may take those images as a representation of what will actually be built.
V. CONCLUSION

A. Evaluation of the Collaborative Place-making Approach

The Ninth Street plan used a collaborative place-making approach in order to reach the twin goals of increased public support for density and preservation of neighborhood quality. This section will evaluate the extent to which it reached those goals, and why it was or was not an effective approach.

Increased public support for density. The Ninth Street plan, if finalized in its present form, would significantly increase the capacity for density in the Ninth Street area. In most of the Ninth Street area, the plan sets maximum building heights at two to four stories, with six or eight stories in some areas. This is a significantly higher level of density than currently exists around Ninth Street. The public expressed support for this level of density in interviews and through their input at the charrette.

The most important factor in obtaining public support for increased density was the collaborative planning process. As one planner said, “more than anything people want a hand in developing the rules” that guide development so that they can tailor density to the context of their neighborhood and place higher density at the proper locations and intensities.

Despite the paramount importance of collaborative planning, the place-making frame still played a role in obtaining public support for increased density by improving the public’s perception of density. As we have seen, the idea of place-making was very popular with participants. Many seem to have bought in to the idea that buildings could define an inviting public space. In many cases, this seems to have influenced the building heights that charrette participants included in form-based codes.
Alone, a place-making frame would not have done much to increase public support for density. Most participants had specific concerns that could not be ameliorated by the idea that Ninth Street would be a great place. However, place-making in combination with collaborative planning was a very effective approach. It offered a conceptual framework that allowed for public collaboration but guided it towards a realistic end.

**Preservation of neighborhood quality.** Because of its nebulous nature, it is more difficult to judge the success of the collaborative place-making approach in protecting the quality of the Ninth Street neighborhood. Clearly, some public participants were concerned that the plan would harm Ninth Street’s character by displacing historic buildings and local businesses. Some worried that form-based codes would allow commercial uses in residential areas. Some worried that the plan would result in the neighborhood becoming more “upscale” and less “funky.”

The uncertain and complex nature of planning made it impossible for the Ninth Street plan to completely dispel these concerns. As a land use plan, it could not control the economics of the area. However, collaborative planning tools allowed participants to address the most important concerns, like the preservation of the block of historic commercial buildings, to the maximum extent possible.

The small scale of the small-area plan allowed the public and planners to spend time on this important detail. The charrette provided a forum for participants to express that they wanted the plan to include mechanisms that would discourage property owners from replacing these buildings with new higher-rent development. Form-based codes allowed participants to limit building heights in those areas to two-stories, discouraging redevelopment.
The place-making frame also helped overcome neighborhood quality concerns by emphasizing that the plan would preserve the pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use, eclectic character of the area. Even though some members of the public held some reservations, the focus on creating a great place at Ninth Street helped the public trust that planners were concerned with preserving the quality of the neighborhood. The place-making frame kept the process moving forward and avoided crippling conflict over these concerns.

A. Shortcomings of the Approach.

The most significant shortcoming of the collaborative place-making approach is the sensitivity of collaborating with the public and communicating effectively. Due to the long history of top-down governmental decision-making, the public often distrusts the motives of planners. Using new planning tools, like form-based codes, increases the potential for misunderstandings and distrust. This distrust may lead the public to use the power gained in collaborative planning to make the planning process difficult. To avoid conflict, planners must devote much time to thoughtful communication with the public: anticipating and responding to their concerns, explaining complex planning concepts, combating misinformation and avoiding misperceptions.

Despite overall effective communication between planners and the public, the Ninth Street plan exhibited instances where poor communication led to conflict. For example, the power of images sometimes led the public to distrust planners. Planners had created 3-d models of potential future development in the place of the historic commercial buildings on Ninth Street (see Appendix A, Figure 3 and 4). To planners, these images communicated the idea of how form-based codes would work. However, to
some members of the public, these images communicated a threatening change to their neighborhood. When these images were published in the Durham newspaper, some members of the public felt that planners were trying to “scare” the public into supporting the Ninth Street plan. This example illustrates how careful planners must be when collaborating with the public. Something as simple as an image can increase public distrust of planners.

Once planners have given the public a certain measure of control through collaborative planning, the public will demand that they follow through with a transparent planning process. This is no easy task for planners, but essential to establishing the trust necessary to make collaborative planning work.

B. Advantages of the Approach

In the Ninth Street plan, the major advantage of using the collaborative place-making approach was that it fit the local context. The neighborhoods surrounding Ninth Street contain many well-educated and involved citizens. They have strong neighborhood organizations accustomed to advocating for their interests. Collaborative planning allowed this involved and knowledgeable public to be an asset to the planning process, rather than a formidable political encumbrance to the plan’s implementation. Thus, collaborative planning was the most effective way to secure public support for the Ninth Street plan.

The place-making frame of the Ninth Street plan was also a good fit because the public already viewed Ninth Street as a great place. They appreciated the historic buildings, eclectic local businesses, and pedestrian-friendly environment of the area. The public was predisposed to favor a place-making approach. For instance, many charrette
participants emphasized the importance of pedestrian access, so they were willing to try form-based codes and its focus on wider sidewalks and building types that promote a good pedestrian environment.

Another key advantage of the collaborative place-making approach is that it builds a constituency in support of higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places. In the Ninth Street plan, the charrette gave supporters of these ideas an opportunity to contribute to the planning process. Planners, architects, and students who live in the neighborhood were able to contribute. Conversely, traditional planning processes often lack a venue where the pro-density public can contribute to the plan, and opponents to density become the only public voices heard by politicians. Thus, collaboratively-developed plans may create a base of public support that makes them more politically resilient to the inevitable attacks from opponents.

The collaborative place-making approach offers a conceptual framework that can help planners increase public support for density while preserving neighborhood quality. It provides a balance between empowering the local public and guiding the plan towards larger goals.

D. Implications for Further Research

The Ninth Street plan was a hospitable atmosphere for the collaborative place-making approach. It would be interesting to see how a collaborative place-making approach would work in a less accommodating environment: one with a less amenable public, in an area not already viewed as a great place. In that situation, planners would have to reframe the public’s views of the area in order to accommodate a place-making approach.
This study was also imperfect in that it could not measure whether dense development projects were eventually approved in the study area. Further research could look into how collaborative planning and place-making have led to actual increases in density around the country.
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APPENDIX A: IMAGES FROM THE NINTH STREET PLAN

Figure 1: Building Types included in the Ninth Street plan’s Form-Based Codes

- Townhouse
- Commercial Block
- Store Front
- Stacked Flats
- Tower

Figure 2: Sketchup 3-d image of Ninth Street as it looks in 2007.

Figure 3: Potential development under current zoning regulations on Ninth Street.
Figure 4: Potential development with form-based codes on Ninth Street

Figure 5: The regulating plan for the Ninth Street plan. Shows the location of various building types and how the boundaries were changed per the public’s suggestions.
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Planners:

xxxxx (Durham Planning Director)
xxxxx (Durham Planning Department)
xxxxxx (Durham Area Designers)

Public Participants:

xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (resident)
xxxxxxxx (merchant)
xxxxxxxx (property owner)
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Survey questions for public participants

These first questions will ask what you think about 9th Street as it is today, and then how you think 9th Street should develop in the future.

1. When you think about 9th street as it is today, what do you like about it?
2. In your opinion, does 9th street have any problems or issues that need to be addressed? What are they?
3. When you think about the future of 9th street, what is your worst fear for what it could become?
4. These next questions will ask your opinion on how the 9th Street area should be developed in the future. In answering these questions, think more about the area surrounding the 9th street commercial block, because everyone seems to agree that the historic block should be preserved.
   • In general, what building heights do you think are appropriate for the 9th Street area? Comparables are Station 9, the tall building, present 9th street commercial?
   • For these next four questions, answer on a scale of 1 to 5. On the issue of transportation, in your opinion, how important is automobile access to 9th street, through easy, plentiful parking and auto-oriented roads? 1 is not important at all, 5 is very important.
   • How important is it to make the 9th street area pedestrian friendly, with wide sidewalks, crosswalks, and on-street parking? 1 is not important at all, 5 is very important.

The rest of the questions will be about the 9th street planning process, including the charrette that was held in September and the meeting in November that presented the results of the charrette.

1. Thinking back to this summer and fall, how did you first hear about the 9th street plan?
2. What was your initial reaction to the 9th Street plan when you first heard about it, did you initially have a positive or negative reaction? Rate this on a scale of 1-10. 1 is Absolutely Not A Good Idea, and 10 is Its about time!
3. These next few questions are open-ended, so just answer with whatever comes to mind. Thinking back to the charrette, and the planner’s presentations, or any conversations you have had with the planners, what impression did you get of the basic message that the planners wanted to convey about the 9th street plan?
4. Going back to your experience at the charrette, what comes to mind that you liked about the charrette, in terms of the focus, the presentations, the agenda, the atmosphere, the participants or anything else?
5. What do you think could have been better about the charrette?
6. Charrettes in general are very different from the traditional way of creating a plan because it allows the public to play a large role in the creation of the plan. Before
or during the charrette, were you skeptical that the public would have a large role in creating the actual plan?

7. The 9th Street plan is likely going to use form-based codes, which allow the regulation of building form. After your experience with form-based codes at the charrette, do you agree with the use of form-based codes for 9th Street?

8. Why do you feel that way about form-based codes?

9. At the charrette or in conversations with planners, do you think that the planners and designers did a good job of presenting form-based codes in a clear and understandable way? Yes, somewhat, or no.

10. One major focus of the charrette and form-based codes was to design good public spaces and create a great place on 9th Street. What do you think of this focus on public spaces?

11. Do you think that people are willing to accept higher levels of density if they know that it will result in attractive, well-designed public spaces? Why do you think that?

12. These two questions are about your impressions of other participants opinions on the plan. In talking with other people about the plan and hearing their opinions, what is your sense on the level of support out there for the plan?

13. Have you observed anyone whose involvement with the 9th street plan has changed their opinions, either positively or negatively, on the plan, form-based codes, higher density, or planning in general?

14. Have you gotten anything interesting or useful out of the 9th street planning process, such as information about the neighborhood, planning, the viewpoints of other people, or better lines of communication?

15. Thinking back to your initial reaction to the 9th Street plan before the charrette, how do you feel about the plan now? Do you feel differently at all? Rate on a scale of 1-10.

B. Survey questions for planners:

1. What story did the planning department want to tell with the Ninth Street planning process?

2. How did form-based codes and the charrette frame the planning process?

3. How have people received the idea of form-based codes? How has that changed over time?

4. How has the focus on the public realm and creation of a great space affected the plan? Has this approach helped the planning process?

5. Do you think that focusing on the positive aspects of density has improved people’s opinion of density?

6. Is there an advantage to hiring out the designer role, as an advocate for the public realm to keep the planning department more neutral?

7. How have images been used during the charrette or other parts of the plan, and how effective has that strategy been? Are there any other particularly effective ways of communicating your message that have been used?
8. Do you think that the use of form-based codes and a charrette makes people more comfortable with higher density by allowing them to see what development will look like, rather than imagining worst-case development?

9. Who are the major stakeholders, who was most involved or vocal about the project? Is there any consistency among groups?

10. Is there differences in the groups views on density, the public realm, form-based codes and the charrette process?

11. How well-informed were various stakeholders of various aspects of the plan? I.e., the economics, the regulatory environment, and the design possibilities of the plan? What effect has any misinformation among stakeholders had?

12. Did you observe changes in viewpoint or positions among any participants during the process?

13. Did you adjust any part of the process in response to feedback, and if so why?

14. How successful was the charrette process in addressing participant concerns? Compared to other planning approaches that might have been used?

15. Did the high level of involvement of participants in creating form-based codes at the charrette increase support of the plan and its chances of implementation?

16. What has most contributed to the successes of this process? Conversely, what has contributed to the biggest problems with the process?
APPENDIX D: COMPILED INTERVIEW RESPONSES

*Note: Since many of these interviews were transcribed over the phone, any spelling and grammar mistakes are the fault of the transcriber. The “R”, “D”, or “M” in front of some responses denote either “resident”, “developer”, or “merchant”.

1. What do you like about 9th Street?
   - R--One of the last locally owned shopping districts in the triangle and it has eclectic environment because of local ownership
   - R--Diversity, ecleticness, independence, and possibly also the reputation, at a meeting in western north carolina people talked about how great 9th street was.
   - R--I live two blocks from 9th Street, I am a homeowner there because its about the only place in Durham where you can walk to places, there is a mix of businesses with a local flavor, good sidewalk conditions and there are specific businesses that we have come to know and we frequent.
   - R--9th street allows you to make connections to people in a way that’s not possible in other places because you are walking around and running into people. There are many different people doing different things, its not like running into people in the grocery store where everyone is there for the same reason. The guy who sleeps behind the store, I had a conversation with him, and that would never happen in most other places.
   - M--9th Stret is fairly unique and has its own personality, its not too trendy, and there are a lot of individually owned, unique retail establishments
   - R--There are a variety of stores and a variety of services and they are all right there within walking distance from where I live.
   - Locally owned businesses not shiny corporate chains, and the fact that I can walk to it and it’s a downtown feel and a diversity of different stores, and separates it from 9th street.
   - Ninth street taught us that if you can get a few businesses together you can successfully change a business street that was originally developed for millworkers by getting together a few businesses that can support each other and help the places in between. 9th street in 1983 was a remarkable mixture of old businesses and new businesses.

2. Problems, issues, changes that need to be made?
   - R--There needs to be streetfront development on the west side of 9th street, more contiguous sidewalks, and some buildings may need to become taller on 9th street, I don’t feel that attached to the buildings as they are.
   - M--Parking is an issue for merchants, safety, having lighting and enough accessibility and walking zones. The utility poles are above ground and ugly, the infrastructure is old.
   - R--Big picture challenges and smaller more immediate challenges—lack of sidewalk between 9th and Broad, four people have been hit there. Replace the
eight cobra street lights with acorn lights that would make for a better atmosphere. The other is to establish the green space that would be a buffer on Green Street.

- R--Wish it had more universal support from the city and the university, supporting its eclecticism and independence
- More sidewalk seating for a café style around the sidewalks, the other side of the street be developed instead of a parking lot. More investment in giving it character with old timey street lights, having durham really invest like they did downtown pumping in resources to make it attractive

3. What is your fear for the future of ninth street?
- R--Worry that it would become part of the establishment and lose its individuality
- I think that it would be bad if it became like streets of southpoint with big money and big chains.
- R--Bigger picture is with the plan affecting the shops and the mill. How can you have a small area plan that encourages economic development that we want to see while protecting our historic buildings. DAD showed a slide with all of the 9th street buildings gone. That would tear apart the living room of our neighborhood. Replacing this would tear out the soul of the street. I’m tired of making suggestions because the planning director doesn’t take it so I’m putting the ball in his court. We are not a typical neighborhood association because we let a lot of density come in.
- R--The fear is that it will be developed in a crappy way so that the personal flavor is lost and it gets suburbanized. The vacant land is particularly concerning because it could be developed in typical strip mall fashion. Another fear is that the businesses could all get homogenized or every store becomes a restaurant. Some people have the fear that someone could buy up a lot of the property, demolish it all and then build some monstrosity, but I don’t think that is especially likely.
- M--Fear is that the older buildings would not be maintained and that it would be deserted
- R--Fear is that we will not see greater investment in Durham and that it would decay and the storefronts would be vacant. Also worried that the train station won’t happen and that will hurt 9th Street. Not worried about it becoming dense and more upscale.

4. Comments on building heights……
- Nothing higher than 3 stories, from the charrette I learned that to secure its future uniqueness, how do you do that? You want to protect that, but I think that the system they are encouraging secures a foundation of ordinances or codes that allow for creativity within a framework
- At first we thought 5,6,7,8, but then someone said we don’t want the focal point to shift to the west from 9th street, but at the same time we don’t want to lose the shops on 9th street. That’s the dilemma, there has to be a careful balance.
- Four stories would be good to have retail downstairs and have residential stuff mixed in. Its hard to visualize for me, but you have to have a wide
enough street because the streets are narrow and buildings are so tall. Maybe three stories

- Building heights should match what is there right now. You don’t want 4 to 6 stories without big dead places where the message is uncertain. We can have higher density in other areas near Erwin square but it has to respect the context of 9th street.

- Another thing is the question of transection. It is appropriate for the neighborhoods, the way that the residential moves into the commercial used to be very good and now that has been somewhat changed by development with 9th street north and doesn’t make a successful transection. With this form based codes we have to preserve this successful transection. We were told when we last met that they will work on these things and come back and have more variations that will be more site specific and more sensitive. Right now.

- D—Building heights is a loaded question. I’d like to have eight or nine story residential apartments over retail. You are talking 175 or 200 units. That has little or no impact on ninth street except to stabilize the current merchants on 9th street. This is allowed by zoning. Density brings up the bar for everyone, it makes old west durham neighborhood more valuable because it brings more amenities.

5. Comments on pedestrian access versus auto access…..

- pedestrian access is more important, Steve Gaddis, raise your hand and tell me if you couldn’t find a parking space, no one could raise their hand. Parking might be tight but I’ve never been able to find a spot. That won’t prevent people from going. There are streets without sidewalks. Duke has a responsibility there too.

- Transportation—it’s not a contest, I would put pedestrian first though, a slightly parking starved area is a good thing, we need to make a good pedestrian environment. And make it an unattractive area for big box development regulatory wise. This where the use based component in necessary so that we can concentrate parking where parking is needed. And how can you provide for parking if there is a mixture of uses everywhere? You have to carefully select where there is a mixture of uses. But I would be against a notion of rigid formulas that every building has to have its own parking. One of the great things about 9th street is its principal market is people who live close by, so streetscapes are extremely important, and they do not want to walk by huge parking lots and poor streetscapes. You will walk long distances if the things you walk past are human in scale.

- Both because one reason we bought a house is the location, and we can walk wherever we need to go. I am a proponent of alternative transportation, but if you do add a lot of development than you have to make sure there is enough.

- We should maximize pedestrian access to the point of not supporting a public parking deck on 9th street, for a private developer that’s fine. For one thing, they asked at the charrette who has trouble finding a parking space. We dismiss the fact that there are parking problems.

- M—(there is no trade off between pedestrian and auto access)
6. Initial reaction to the plan?
   - It was concern about the plan, because 9th street was so unique.
   - But I was concerned about the notion of form based codes, I don’t want to experiment too much with ninth street.

   Why is this happening now, and who is behind it. Then we learned that Duke was paying for it. Making 9th street upscale seems to be the goal, they paid $225,000. The fact that they showed at the end the drawing where 9th street was replaced by new buildings gave evidence to that.
   - M-4—I thought it was a good idea, having the charrette on a Saturday is like saying to merchants, we don’t want you to come.
   - Initial reaction was a 5. Because if the city doesn’t put there money where there mouth is, then revitalization won’t happen. They have to believe in supporting the local developer, otherwise the bigger developers will come in and put in the strip malls and they can afford to buy huge lots. But infill like 9th street the developer is going to do what is best for himself, and the city has to support the developer so the city should be sure to do underground lines for the 9th street area, pay for the sidewalks, do the landscaping, rather than say. If you give incentives to the developer, than I can do a nicer building and charge cheaper rents. And the city would get more property taxes every year. What they’ve done in downtown durham is to put in parking garages to help the developers. But where is my money its not equal.

7. What was the planner’s message?
   - They did explain that there is a formal method of a plan, the form-based codes was a key part, they did not propose that it had to happen.
   - I really got the impression that it was not a staged event, I really felt that the planning department in durham were really interested in people’s feedback, a genuine desire to get people’s input and that would be incorporated. What was unclear was how the plan would be carried out and the time frame because the city can’t mandate how property owners change their property. But I had a hard time of connecting the great exercises with reality, because of the multiple property owners involved.
   - I approve with what the city planners state their goals are. What duke said that about keeping a look and successful transactions, and keeping what we like and shaping future development. He is an intelligent person with an artistic flair. His eye’s are on that prize but his approaches may be to abstract. But I am concerned that the designers aren’t necessarily committed to the goals and more interested in designing and less interested in a regulatory environment that achieves goals. They tend to design for a two dimensional world instead of a three d world.
   - They framed it by saying that John Schelp took Frank Duke around and said we needed to do a plan. But a couple weeks after the charrette, they put a thing in the paper that said this is what could happen, but that was a red herring, and that was a typical underhanded move that frank was doing to get his way. We need more effort by planning staff to make this work.
The planners communicated that 9th Street was a special part of the city that requires a unique approach, which is where form-based codes can step in. They also made it clear that they were very open to the idea of heavy community involvement in the plan. And they said that form-based codes are a good path to creating certainty around future development on 9th street.

The planners said that the plan will not actually result in development, it will only guide what development occurs.

The planners explained that the plan was overdue, and that we needed to create a cohesive plan for 9th street, and we needed to get input from the people. Development and infill are going to happen regardless, so we need to control it. There was also an emphasis on form-based codes.

8. Thoughts about the charrette...........

There was a high level of support for planning among the people who showed up at the charrette, and in the neighborhoods surrounding 9th street there are many people who support planning in general.

Well-presented with form-based codes, it was good for us who aren’t planners to understand what we should think about. A very participatory process that was inclusive. It can be difficult in citizen input I don’t think it was representative of the area that would be impacted, but it takes the resources and time to lay the groundwork for trust. It wasn’t very diverse in who came to the charrette. I thought that one exercise on Friday night was done a little too early in the process, we didn’t know enough to make those decisions at that point.

At the charrette the groups were isolated from each other and might not have the same idea of what happened as another table. So you have to trust that the designers will bring it together. It was bad to have only individuals at the charrette, you should have had organizations represented. There are five organized groups in the area, very politically active area. We should have invited the representatives of these organizations to participate in the process, because that is going to happen anyway, when the larger organizations disapprove of what happened. That was a misstep but the people who were proposing this were hoping that they could avoid this process, but you can’t. To me a charrette works best when it is ten people instead of 100 people so that everyone can work together.

D--They did an excellent job of moving it forward and keeping people on task and making people think. They gave us the feedback but what is happening with it right now? So there is a meeting, is the next step going to be. I was afraid that the planners would listen too much and make it slow so they couldn’t move fast, and they have moved faster than I anticipated

The community has to watch this and for the community to deal with the form-based codes. It’s much more complicated than regular zoning which has happened for four generations. That’s patronizing to say that it’s easier for people to understand than regular zoning.

They did explain that there is a formal method of a plan, the form-based codes was a key part, they did not propose that it had to happen. My concern was
that at my table at the charrette, but I did feel like the students were innocently steering things, the parking really presented a problem and our heads really butted because they wanted to make sure everyone was aware of different options, and it diluted what the table was presenting, because the students brought up something that a business owner would have liked.

- The charrette was very well organized, the length of time was a huge devotion of time and it was great that the presenters and participants were willing to go through it, the presenters were more than happy to answer any questions they had. The sharing of the small group presentations was great.
- The charrette was wonderful, DAD did a great job with their volunteer time. I’m more worried about the small-area plan at the end of the journey. As we speak, the developers are working very hard to make changes on the plan. The concern is that the public process was kumbaya at the beginning but now there is all of this pressure coming onto frank duke. This is not a redevelopment process. The Gap on Franklin street remodeled their building and now it can’t be used for smaller shops.
- The planners did not do as good of a job communicating how the public could expect change to happen. They did not lay out the process of what will happen from here, or how people could stay involved with the plan over time. Also, DAD tended to communicate a certain level of ownership over the plan and the feeling that their were right or wrong answers in regards to building heights and building scales.
- The renderings they showed of potential new development on 9th Street was not as effective because that was a later change, and it was not what you’d see on currently vacant property. They showed what could be more threatening change in people’s minds, which could cause more uncomfortable feelings toward the plan. They should have showed pictures or renderings of what could happen in the vacant lots, because that is where change is likely to happen first.
- The charrette was good. I liked the planner’s initial expression of flexibility, that this is an open process with all options on the table. And the food was very good.
- Some people were confused that they would actually create the plan in actual development, but I thought that the planners did a good job of making the distinction between the plan and development.

9. What did your small group emphasize at the charrette?
- My concern was that at my table at the charrette, the students were presenting alternatives that steered things in a certain direction, but I did feel like the students were innocently steering things, the parking really presented a problem and our heads really butted because they wanted to make sure everyone was aware of different options, and it diluted what the table was presenting, because the students brought up something that a business owner would have liked. We wanted to make clear that as we progress in 9th street that at the same time we want it to be itself and eclectic. The second concern was parking.

10. Did you feel more optimistic or pessimistic that the results of the charrette would create the final plan?
- Optimistic because Steve Gaddis has a wonderful reputation, and he’s done a number of good things. Frank Duke has been one of the best things to happen to Durham in a long time. The planners are going to make damn sure that he’s not biased.
- I’m skeptical, but we have a record of affecting change. This is not Duke’s playground.
- Not sure that the planners instilled confidence in the public that the plan would be implemented as it was developed at the charrette. The process becomes very fuzzy for those who don’t know about planning. Many of my neighbors have been involved with past planning efforts that were failures, so they are cautious of what could happen.
- M--I felt that the public would be able to participate in the plan, but that those who were more involved and more in tune with what was going on might be listened to a little more.

11. How do you and others feel about using form-based codes at 9th Street?
- People like form-based codes in general, but we don’t want to lose what we have. With a handful of exceptions most people are supportive of it. The concern is that you can allow any use. We might be more supportive if some uses are limited.
- I don’t know what the alternative is, but I liked it a lot, and on the other hand I scoff at the planned neighborhoods and it leaves room for the public space.
- I’m waiting for the next iteration of the draft, and some of the forms I didn’t like at all. The townhouse form but their version of it was bad because it was all garages and steps.
- Also I didn’t like the idea that we would allow business on the lower level. And that we would have that many businesses defused through such a large area would be too much and the businesses would not support each other. If we diffuse businesses through such a large area by allowing all of these little things to go in the bottom then you would have an unstable residential area that will always be subject to change, and I am against the idea of having garages at pedestrian level. I don’t trust the idea that we can regulate with form only. The current zoning in the area is a horrible mismatch because it permits an inappropriate intensification in 9th street. Frank Duke was asked first off to come and preserve what had come to happen by accident.
- What they drew were ugly, and no one would want to hang out in that kind of place. They like the step back idea, but that is not something people will like. Its not blade runner.

- What has always been missing from traditional zoning is a form based component because that is what most of what people object to is the design of the building. I don’t think that we should throw out what went before.

- Frank’s response to that was form based codes. I worry that form-based will encourage development while the current zoning has not, so we could be introducing a lot of people on the streets as pedestrian friendly. And have a garage every fifty feet is not the way to do it.
• What I would also like to see is something that encourages a preservation of historical forms, and encourages compatibility of new development with the old. We’d like to preserve it the way it is and have infill match it. And in the area around it we have small single family homes. My criticism is that they promote much higher buildings that will ruin the current form landscape.

• D--Form-based codes are a good way of doing it when there’s a lot of development. Makes sense for downtown Durham but not for suburban areas. There trying to take the next revitalization of Durham and put it in 9th street. The overlay in downtown says do what you want to with height restrictions and setbacks are basically out the window. Why not try to impose a stricter form based code therefor , because that is happening right now with development. Why not start there? For 9th street, Use the input but base it on what is going to be good for the area. They fought station nine even though they were below the zoning. The policymakers should say that we want higher density hear. What could happen is that these buildings are torn down in 15 years and replaced with taller buildings because there will be a demand for higher density. Your variance process should not happen to get the building up to the sidewalk.

• D--So then they went to 9th Street because there assumption now is that you will tear down these older buildings and build it back up with form-based codes. Everything kind of matches. Right now everything can go up to 90 feet , but now they want to go down to four or five stories or 45 feet. Why in the world as a developer would I ever want to do that. For future developers it makes a whole lot of sense, but for a current developer it doesn’t make a whole lot of sense because I am going to be the guinea pig. So its not going to speed It up for me. So its good for the long term. And the residents who are making these decisions aren’t going to be hear twenty years from now.

• Form based codes work well because people are ok with higher density as long as they know its limited, even if people who are directly adjacent to density in their own neighborhood might oppose it.

• Form-based codes—by the end of the meeting people were more on board than on the beginning, but I’m not sure if they are totally clear on what it is.

• A lot of people didn’t know what form-based codes were so that was good . And none of us had looked at the big picture so that was good. There is a lot of interest in the plan but we have to find the balance. And we don’t want to shift the focus to the west. The developers did not realize that they could not do it. We’d like to see more residential than commercial.

• Most of the public are completely oblivious as to what form-based codes are, and this is because they don’t understand traditional zoning either.

• At the charrette there was a willingness to try it among participants because it creates certainty as to what buildings will look like. A few people out there that I know of are totally against form-based codes because they are very
concerned about use in places, and keeping incompatible uses separated. Over time, he may be able to sway some people.

- M--Form-based codes—they are fine, you see them with mixed use and they could help to create public places and improve the safety by having more people living and working around 9th street
- For some people it was hard to let go of the idea of use in zoning. Zoning can be such an intangible thing for people to understand.

12. Were the presentations on form-based codes and examples of design helpful and understandable?

- They did a good job at the charrette in communicating how form-based codes, but they over relied on images of Europe.
- Presentation was good on form-based codes, the walk-through pictures of 9th street was very helpful in orienting people.
- The renderings they showed of potential new development on 9th Street was not as effective because that was a later change, and it was not what you’d see on currently vacant property. They showed what could be more threatening change in people’s minds, which could cause more uncomfortable feelings toward the plan. They should have showed pictures or renderings of what could happen in the vacant lots, because that is where change is likely to happen first.
- The presentation was made more difficult for people to relate to because so many of the examples were from other countries. I was disappointed that the examples of building form were not completed at the November meeting.

13. Was the focus on creating good public spaces good, or should they have focused on something else?

- It offered a good principle of organization for the plan
- A good way to focus the charrette. I think that people are comfortable with a moderate increase and more density. I think that a more dense 9th street would be welcomed
- What you do to convince people of density is to say that you are a partner here and the higher the density is, the more property values go up. What they need to understand is that this is going to make your property values go up. That’s how you convince them all. What they are doing is, how about every time you renovate your house I tell you if its ok. The demographics say that the average income is low around 9th street so you cannot get anyone regional or national in there, unless they believe in the concept of Duke university. The people who are supporting the high end restaurants are not living in old west durham.
- Creating a public space is a very difficult thing to do, we have created many plazas that are not successful and durham is still doing it with horrible design. Its entirely dependent on requiring certain uses to reside beside them. Other hand, streetscapes and sidewalks with form based codes you can have a successful pedestrian space. But you still have to have control over the use in order to create a public realm. It has to be the right retail uses , or people are not going to want to walk there.
Not a good focus because the premise was false, the townhouse form would have garages that was bad. So did the people who were saying it really believe it. Planning for that is much more complicated than drawing some pictures.

I think so, because you have to herd us in some way or everyone would go different ways because there are a lot of educated opinionated people. It was still quite general, but reined us in to a certain extent.

It was excellent the whole idea of viewscapes and focal points at the end of the street, and the erwin mill building can be the focal point. Or a neighborhood church. The other important thing would be to break up the erwin into blocks.

I think that having good public spaces are important to most people in Durham.

Absolutely people care about creating great places, it gets a lot of self-appointed protectors for the area.

14. How do the different stakeholder groups feel about the plan?

Tenants and Owners have disagreements, there is a tension over parking and between shops were some are in and out visits, and others are you hang out. So that means parking limits are a tension. And also restaurants take up a lot of the parking at their peak times. And then there is a tension over a shop that has parking and those that don’t because people don’t want to walk back to their cars at night alone. Employees are parking on ninth street some of the owners want a parking deck.

D--John schlep has said that they want to keep those older buildings there. But as a city, the market drives what is going to be there. The neighborhoods should not try to run the government because there won’t be any more than one coffeeshop one bookstore and one bar. They will cut out all competition and want to get all development out of their neighborhood. They are anit-development. People see an opportunity around duke, they speculate and say that I can get rents higher and getting the kind of tenant that can afford it because the risks are higher because costs are higher. You are not gonna get local retailers because that’s gone out of the window, they want to pull for the local guy. But the local guy is the guy who wasn’t smart enough to be the big guy. All the charrette is the ninth street people speaking out of one side of your mouth and not knowing the consequences. For the people of 9th street to say that the green space should remain as a park is like saying that we should take your backyard and turning it into a park. But you had a group of eight people that didn’t want it. Why are the great cities pleasant places to be, because of density and money and sports, and there are some closed minded people that won’t be happy until you show them exactly what you want it to be. They don’t like change. They would like to have a Panera Bread but they don’t want the density to support it.

M--Merchants are going to be fine with increased residential and commercial density.

I think that most of the property owners are on the same page, with Terry Sanford being the possible exception.
15. Have you observed anyone who has changed their opinion on the plan after participating in the charrette?
- It gained more popularity than it lost after the charrette, but there are still non-believers out there. I’m not sure myself, because it’s difficult to wrap my head around it. The non-believers don’t like the knowns, the structure, fundamentally are opposed to structure, rules and governmental regulations. In general, we have too much rules in this country.

16. Did you get anything else out of the charrette like info about the neighborhood, planning, or better lines of communication?
- We have a planning dept that is willing to think outside the box and really include the citizens. That is a great thing, and I think Durham is great with this kind of thing.
- I think it was good to have a little more contact with Eddie Belk and George Stanziale, who said its just a collection of odd things what’s so special about that. But they now see the support for keeping 9th street local, so the charrette was good for those guys to see the neighborhood’s position, and that we will support a dense infill project. If you look at Erwin Square back in 1985 it was a bloody bloody fight, but that has changed and there is better collaboration and the neighborhood association supporting them. We want buildings in the front and parking in the back is important.
- The charrette was interesting in hearing the perspective of business owners and property owners, and see their opinions. It was also good to see longtime residents coming out and voicing their opinions on the long-term interests of the area.
- M--The best part of the charrette was hearing about other people’s perspectives
- Learned more about the neighborhood and the history of buildings. Found out who owns what stores, that we have a strong neighborhood association, and it was good to see the perspectives of owners and developers.
- D--I think that anytime you have a meeting like that it opens up communications even more.

18. How do you feel about the process now, rate it from 1 to 5.
- I’d probably give myself a 4 now, because I have been impressed with our city officials.
- The jury is out because I haven’t seen the final product.
- 3 right now with an expectation of being at 5 before we are done.
- 3 is what I feel now, and that’s not because of a lack of orchestration from Durham, but it could be a five if you are more consistent with what they want around 9th street, and the neighborhoods are making the decisions instead of planners and economically thinking. Make everything match as far as glazing but don’t limit the height restrictions. Density is good. The reason why people want to be in NY is because its dense.