



Tampa Homeowners an Association of Neighborhoods

March 9, 2012

Honorable Bob Buckhorn
306 E. Jackson Street
Tampa, FL 33602

Re: THAN's comments on the ECC's recommendations

Dear Mayor Buckhorn:

On behalf of THAN I want to thank you for allowing us to provide you our comments on the final report of The Mayor's Economic Competitiveness Committee (ECC).

First let me say THAN applauds you in your efforts to make Tampa more development "friendly". Neighborhoods realize a vibrant business community not only adds to our tax base, but provides the goods and services our citizens need and enjoy. Tampa is a great place to live and we stand beside you in making our City a good place to do business.

A select committee, empowered by THAN's membership, representing neighborhood interests citywide met several times and reviewed the entire ECC's final report. After the committee's thorough review THAN finds most recommendations reasonable and productive. However, there were a few that we either have questions about, need further clarification on, or as written we cannot support. Our comments are as follows:

ECC Recommendations and THAN's comments

#1 Create a Single Comprehensive Construction Technical Standard

- THAN agrees and supports the "consolidation" of the current codes into one chapter. However, THAN would like to be advised as to how any "conflicts" will be decided and be a part of those discussions.

#2 Consolidate Land Development Code and Establish a Single Authority

- THAN supports the concepts in the recommendation. However, we believe that this new authority must be transparent and all decisions and interpretations must be thoroughly documented. Additionally, it is important that any officially registered neighborhood that may be impacted by any decision and interpretation made by this new authority should be consulted prior to any final action. And once a decision or interpretation is made the impacted neighborhood leadership be so advised. Further, THAN urges a detailed job description for this position be written, qualifications for the position be determined, and the parameters of his or her jurisdiction and powers be detailed. Lastly, we are unclear as to what the appeal process will be, if any, for this new authority's decisions – directly to court, to City Council or to an appropriate board i.e. VRB, Historic Preservation, Barrio Latino.

#3 Vest Entitlements Earlier in the Process

- THAN would need to review the process once it is drafted and would wish to provide feedback before any process is implemented.

#4 *Create Flexible Codes*

- Generally, THAN is unclear how the ECC is defining “flexible codes”: One person’s flexibility can lead to another person’s fear. However looking at the 17 bullets listed THAN has the following comments:
 - ✓ THAN supports the recommendations pertaining to the Central Business District as long as the Downtown Partnership and any downtown residential groups are included in the discussions and final recommendations.
 - ✓ THAN strongly opposes reverting RO, RO-1 and CN to Euclidean districts. Given these districts abut residential neighborhoods; it is essential they be site plan controlled.
 - ✓ THAN would need more information regarding the rationale and benefit of “matching” zoning code and future land use categories.
 - ✓ THAN opposes reducing side setbacks in RM Districts to 5’ without further information and justification.
 - ✓ THAN would not object to the allowed use of PVC fencing as long there were maintenance requirements imposed and any PVC fences not meeting those requirements would be subject to a code enforcement action.
 - ✓ THAN would support reducing drive aisle widths from 26’ to 24’ as long as the reduced aisle width met federal and state transportation requirements and did not have an unintended consequence of reducing pervious surface or eliminating any tree or landscaping requirements.
 - ✓ THAN would need more information on how flexibility for change of use or reuse would be applied. There would be a need for specific criteria adopted so there would be consistency and fairness applied. THAN should be involved in this discussion and allowed to comment on any final decisions made. It would also be THAN’s recommendation that any flexibility process for change of use or reuse be approved by City Council.
 - ✓ THAN supports form based codes however, it would be difficult to address parking standards without a full neighborhood review.

#5 *Expand Administrative Approvals / Waivers*

- THAN understands the development community’s desire to allow for more administrative approvals in an attempt to shorten review times and costs. However, before THAN could support an expansion of administrative approvals and waivers we would need to review what the “new” process would be and the criteria that would be set up in order to grant such administrative approvals or waivers. At the very least, THAN would be looking for a notification process to any “impacted” neighborhood. We are open to the recommendation but given recent changes that have allowed for more administrative approvals, THAN would like to be involved in the writing of any new rules.

#6 *Modify Chapter 21 – Storm water Code*

- Stormwater runoff has been, and will continue to be, a major concern for neighborhoods. Flooding streets in and around neighborhoods, flooded yards and properties, impact not only the quality of neighborhood life but also our property values. Publishing the “redline list” is a reasonable request. However, any modifications to the 51% rule will require serious discussion with THAN’s and our city’s neighborhoods input. We would request the City proceed very cautiously.

#7 *Modify Chapter 22 – Streets and Sidewalks*

- THAN appreciates the often times non-rational sidewalk requirement for new construction that can lead to sidewalks to nowhere. However, sidewalks are important to neighborhood safety and quality of life. THAN welcomes the review of the present requirements and would like to be involved in those discussions and final decision.

#8 Modify Chapters 17.5, 22, 25 – Transportation Codes

- Like stormwater, transportation issues will always remain a concern for neighborhoods. Cut through traffic, higher traffic counts, and speeding are issues that neighborhoods literally deal with each and every day. We respectfully disagree with the statement written in the ECC's recommendation that "...congestion should be a welcomed part of vibrancy and economic competitiveness." To the contrary, THAN believes traffic congestion negatively impacts growth and economic development as well as the quality of life for our citizens who live and work in Tampa. THAN has always supported a multi-faceted approach that would lesson congestion on and around our neighborhood streets. Any modifications to these codes must be thoroughly discussed with THAN and the city's neighborhood leaders to obtain a better understanding of the rationale and any potential impacts.

#9 Modify Chapter 13 – Tree and Landscape Code

- At this time, THAN cannot support the recommendation within this section. THAN and its members have a long history of working with the city on tree and landscape codes. Trees not only bring beauty and environmental benefits to our city but they add value to our properties and make our neighborhoods desirable places to live and to raise our families. Presently, a university study is being prepared that will give the city and its residents a better understanding of the impact trees have on our entire city. It would be foolish and a waste of taxpayers' dollars to make any changes to the code without seeing, digesting and discussing the report's findings. THAN fought and compromised on our current tree and landscaping code and believe, while it is not perfect, it supports the desires of our residents to nurture and save our grand and protected trees and keep Tampa nationally recognized as a tree friendly city. THAN applauds and supports the city staff's efforts to be reasonable in managing the code and sees no reason to change the process or procedures used in administering Chapter 13. Further, THAN wants to be involved in any and all discussions relating to any changes to the code and internal procedures prior to any City Council or administration actions.

#10 Create Alternative Designs and Code Requirements for Solid Waste Standards (Chapters 26 and 27)

- THAN would like to be included in any discussions that would revise or write these new design requirements and/or new codes.

#11 Consolidate Code Enforcement Standards into a Single Document (Chapter 19)

- THAN is unsure of the goal and rationale for this recommendation and would need further clarification. Code Enforcement is another issue that impacts all of our neighborhoods and it is imperative neighborhood leaders be a part of these discussions.

#12 Purchase and install a New Comprehensive Permitting System

- THAN wholeheartedly supports this recommendation and applauds the committee's insistence that the City utilize the most recent technology and programs to better streamline and track the City's permitting process. THAN realizes it will be a costly change and would hope that a proportion of the permitting fees could go to the initial cost and maintenance of the system.

#13 Utilize Latest Business Support Technology

- THAN supports this recommendation and its intent.

#14 Develop and Provide a More User Friendly Website

- THAN supports this recommendation as well and we offer our assistance in working out any redesign that would help aid our citizens and neighborhood leaders.

#15 Maintain Addressing Function with Permitting Service

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#16 Provide “One-Stop Shop” Process Strategy

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#17 Develop Service Goals and Performance Standards Metrics

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#18 Enhance Site Plan Review Process

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#19 Focus on Cost Efficient Changes

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#20 Establish Expedited Review Services

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#21 Provide Pre-Application Consulting / Review Services

- THAN supports the intent of the recommendation, however there is a concern that without establishing some parameters this “service” could be misused through multiple “free” informal or “unofficial” reviews costing valuable staff time and therefore taxpayers’ dollars. Consideration should be given to the number of times this service could be used by a potential petitioner on the same project before invoking a charge.

#22 Provide Outreach, Training, and Education to Customers

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent and should include the general public and neighborhood leaders.

#23 Map All Workflow Processes

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#24 Improve Commercial Site Plan Review Process

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#25 Improve Fire Marshall Review and Coordination

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent as long as all national, state and local fire regulations are not compromised.

#26 Improve Water and Wastewater Service Application Review Process

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#27 Develop Standard Operating Procedures

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#28 Outsource Plan Reviews

- THAN understands the general intent of this recommendation however, THAN cannot support this recommendation at this time. While State legislation does allow for jurisdictions to turn over the plan review process to third party plan reviewers, THAN believes without a strong audit procedure process, and close monitoring, there is concern some building code requirements could be misinterpreted or overlooked. We also believe unfortunately, the volume of permits is not at a level that would warrant third party plan reviewers at this time.

#29 Fee Review

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent as long as THAN would have input into the review process and any final decisions, especially as it relates to impact fees.

#30 Establish Permanent Stakeholder Advisory Group

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent as long as neighborhood representation would be included in the group's membership. Neighborhoods are stakeholders. THAN would also like to have the opportunity to provide input on the make-up, responsibilities, governance rules and jurisdiction of the group.

#31 Reorganize City Department and Staff

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent.

#32 Assign Case Manager / Ombudsman to Projects

- THAN understands the potential need for a Case Manager who could serve as a single point of contact to help with the flow and production of building permits. However, THAN would have to see in more detail the job description, qualifications and jurisdiction of the Case Manager before we could offer our support. THAN also needs more clarification of the "Ombudsman" position as well. Under the traditional definition of an "Ombudsman" it is unclear what their duties or purpose would be.

#33 Improve City Staff Training

- THAN supports the recommendation and its intent as long as the costs are reasonable and a portion of those costs are paid for out of permit and development fees.

It is our hope that you will find our comments helpful as you work to implement the ECC's recommendations. As you are aware, THAN is available any time to assist you and your administration in bettering our community by all of us playing our part and participating.

We look forward to meeting with you to discuss our comments in detail and if you should you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jerry Frankhouser
President

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