

Walk more here plan says

Residents, designers sketch out future of Haywood Road corridor

By John Boyanoski
Staff Writer

For most of last week, business owners, land owners and residents crowded into a vacant storefront along Haywood Road with the underlying concern of not seeing more empty storefronts crop up.

It was part of a master plan process that ended Wednesday night when a host of designers and architects unveiled potential ideas for what a future "uptown" version of Haywood Road might look like.

The basic concept is to make Haywood and the surrounding thoroughfares such as Congaree Road, Orchard Park and Halton Road into a walker and cyclist friendly area where people do more than just shop at one store or eat at a restaurant and then head home.

The actual master plan won't be completed until June, said Greg Strait, an economic development analyst for the city. The plan,

which is being done by Greenville-based Clark Patterson Lee, will come from the ideas generated at this week's meeting.

City Council will have to approve the plan and any funding that may go along with it.

One of the key designs was to create nightlife destinations such as an outdoor amphitheater, interconnected parks or some other kind of attraction that would get people to come and enjoy the corridor, said William Eubanks, a designer with the Charleston-based Urban Edge Studio, which was one of the groups that worked on the plan.

However, Eubanks said Haywood is a big challenge because it is so built-out and there isn't a lot of need for redevelopment, which makes it somewhat out of the norm for a master plan process.

Cities normally do master plans for blighted areas.

But that is the reason businesses have been pushing the city for the past few years to commission the study, Strait said. They don't want to become a blighted area.

Haywood has long been the city's commercial retail hub, but with added emphasis on downtown; a planned Pleasantburg Drive revitalization and the continued push for new retail along

Woodruff Road, business leaders in this corridor wanted to create a game plan for continued success, he said.

There was a general feeling that the corridor was starting to show wear and they wanted to find a way to differentiate from places such as Woodruff Road and downtown.

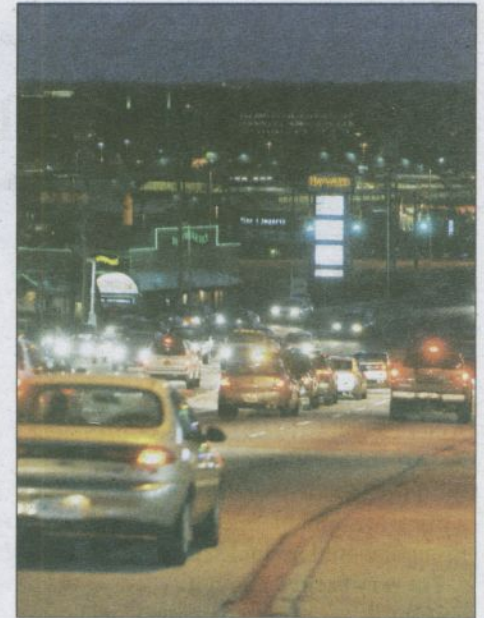
The Haywood Corridor has many building blocks including one of the state's largest indoor malls, the Fluor campus and more than 25,000 cars traveling through it each day.

Because there are not a lot of dilapidated buildings or public land, there isn't a lot of opportunity for mass redevelopments such as parks, college campuses and reuse of old structures, Eubanks said.

The design meetings were held in one of the shopping centers this week. A large aerial photo of the Haywood Corridor from Laurens to Pelham Road hung in the front window while smaller maps showing various sections were taped to the walls inside.

People wrote down goals on white pieces of paper that hung from the wall. Some of the ideas posted were better landscaping, more trees, sidewalks, a trolley line, incubator space, better signage and underground utilities.

One struggling point this week was what to brand the corridor when compared to



Michelle Mogavero/Staff

Business owners spent most of last week giving input for the Haywood Road master plan.

the rest of the city.

Two ideas that gained a lot of praise were ideas to brand Haywood as the "green" area of the city while another was to push the idea of being the business friendly area. That plan involved creating a system where if someone shopped at one Haywood store, they would get coupons for other ones.

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