

From the Dayton Business Journal:

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How Clayton is cutting zoning time in half in a busy sector of town

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The North Main Street corridor in Clayton has never really given off a Main Street vibe that you see in towns where people enjoy walking in and out of local shops, cafes, galleries, markets and historic buildings.

Instead, Clayton's Main Street is a highly traveled commuter corridor dotted with retail strip centers and office buildings fronted by huge asphalt parking lots. There's new hope, though, that the picture of this area will change thanks to the Main Street Overlay District that was adopted in May of 2017.

"We've never really had a city center where you can say, 'This is Clayton,'" said Jennifer Barclay, city planner. "Our residents desire a more small-town feel."

A downtown vibe in the North Main Street/Old Salem Road area also will be welcome news to business owners who want more visibility and real estate developers who want more flexibility.



CITY OF CLAYTON

The city of Clayton was established in 1998, following the merger of the Village of Clayton and Randolph Township.

The overlay zoning district, “will allow developers and landowners to construct mixed-use buildings and encourage a more walkable and aesthetically pleasing environment along Main Street,” according to the city's website.

The goal is to create a more walkable corridor and “provide a variety of development options that work seamlessly with the physical character of Main Street while encouraging a mix of uses,” the city continues.

Barclay said it became clear in listening to feedback from the community that business owners want to be more easily recognized along the busy road.

“How do we get people to really shop in that area, to slow down coming and going to work,” she said. “Also, how do we give our residents that small town area they are wanting?”

The new overlay will push parking to the side or backs of any new buildings, incorporate street furniture in designs, improve lighting, add street trees and landscaping, impose architectural regulations, widen sidewalks and allow for outdoor seating at restaurants, among other things.

“It’s bringing back an older-style downtown district that residents want,” Barclay said.

Jack Kuntz, director of development, said prior to the new overlay there was a hodgepodge of zonings and the four- to six-month approval process was cumbersome. A blanket zoning code will cut approval time in half and provide clear direction on design requirements.

“What this does is strip away much of the red tape and bureaucratic mess of zoning codes,” he said.

“Developers worked with administrative staff to create this walkable business corridor. It’s attractive and makes development much easier. They can come in, purchase property and put their end user in place. There’s no longer the need to rezone and no longer the need for public hearings on everything.”

As part of a tax increment financing district, as property is developed and values increase the city can capture increased resources and invest funds into public infrastructure along North Main Street. That will help with

amenities like improved streetscapes, signage and lighting.

Kuntz said the first new building on North Main Street was given its zoning permit under the new overlay statutes in July, 2018 and the building should be completed and open for business in April.

“The new building, the North Main Veterinary Clinic, will be a great example of what the future of North Main Street will look like in the city of Clayton,” Kuntz said. “And with the city controlling two additional parcels along North Main Street, this gives us the ability to add a couple more new buildings to this corridor in the short term.”

There are 14 prohibited uses under the overlay, including massage parlors, car lots, gas stations and hookah lounges.

Kelly Gray, vice president of sales and leasing for Equity LLC in Dayton, said this type of overlay isn’t uncommon in cities trying to spur more economic development.

“It allows for a little more flexibility in the zoning and helps small business operators — along with more regional and national brands — be able to get into an area,” she said. “This is a way to build some synergy in a specific market.”

The city owns a couple parcels of land in the district that Gray is marketing. The new overlay, she said, allows for a broader scope of users that will be amenities to the community.

“Restaurants, service related, retail, office, doctors, dentists, entertainment, the whole nine yards,” Gray said. “And a goal is to push all new structures to the front so that it creates that downtown appearance.”

Main Street Overlay District

It is the purpose of the Main Street Overlay District to provide flexibility in zoning in order to create a context sensitive design with the following emphasis:

To provide a **unique main street atmosphere** where people can live, work, shop, dine and play;

To provide a **compact, walkable streetscape** with a main street appearance;

To provide a **vibrant vegetated environment** which fosters the protection and preservation of the community and improves the appearance, character, health, safety, and welfare of the community;

To provide **adequate parking** within either dedicated, shared or public locations;

To provide a balance of **safety and aesthetics** while minimizing potentially adverse impacts on surrounding development and the night sky; and

To encourage the **effective use of signage** as a means of communication while also enhancing the environment.

Source: City of Clayton