

Uptown Haymount

by JEFF THOMPSON

About 50 people were present at the Fellowship Hall of Highland Presbyterian Church for a community meeting some knew nothing about until they got there. The City of Fayetteville's Planning Division organized the session as a follow-up to some brainstorming about the future of Haymount over the summer. Urban Designer Eloise Sahlstrom told the group she wanted to hear ideas from Haymount residents and business people about their hopes and concerns for the future of the community.

Haymount was named for a prominent 18th century citizen of Fayetteville, John Hay, whose estate was named Hay Mount. Hay Street bears his name. In 1789, Hay was made one of the original trustees of the University of North Carolina.

Sahlstrom and Fayetteville Planning Director Scott Shuford said ideas from residents would help the city better understand key planning issues that are critical to the future of Haymount.

"How do you envision Haymount 20 years from now?" Sahlstrom asked. An hour later, the responses gleaned from a dozen or so roundtable discussions were varied, but there were some common concerns. Many residents are disappointed that older houses are being torn down and replaced with newer homes that don't always match the traditional character of the neighborhood. Parking in the five points business area has always been a problem. Some bemoaned the lack of sidewalks in some areas. The retail community is varied but residents would like to see a small, mom and pop grocery, which they believe the community would support. What they don't want is a big box supermarket.



City planners came up with the idea of "Uptown Haymount" as a way of branding the historic area. "One hundred-year-old homes could qualify for the National Register of Historic Places," said Sahlstrom.

She displayed a map of century-old homes and others known to be 75-years-old. She told the gathering that the study conducted by the city is especially timely and pertinent given a number of factors, including the recent destruction by fire of the Haymont Grill. Many are still wondering if it will be rebuilt. She also pointed to talk of building a Civil War History Center at Arsenal Park. As envisioned, the center would replace the Museum of the Cape Fear, and once built would be operated and maintained by the state.

Some of those in attendance said they had no idea what the meeting was all about but had heard about it by word-of-mouth from neighbors. They were the same longtime residents who recently persuaded the Fayetteville City Council not to allow conversion of an historic ante bellum house on Morganton Road known as Fair Oaks into a private school. City officials describe the community as "very neighborly" and self-protective. A follow up meeting is planned for Nov. 3.

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