

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's Communications Director Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a closer look at the different

city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Breakroom. Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director for the City of St

Augustine. This week, we are back in studio with Amy

Skinner. She is the City's
Planning and Building Director.

We were talking last time about
mobility-oriented development.

Why this is a good option for
the city, a land category use,

a compatible zoning district.

We ran out of time. So, Amy, I

want to just jump right back
in. Welcome back. AMY: Thank you.

Excellent. Let's. Let's do it. MELISSA:
Yeah. Let's do it. So, if you

missed it last time, we were
talking about mobility-oriented

development. Specifically, we
were talking about a piece of

property that we have at the
corner of US -1 and King

Street, but it's not just about

that property in and of itself.

It's about a planning tool, a
mobility-oriented development

land use category. Take it
away. AMY: You know, that's correct.

We're trying to kind of
look at the big picture and
when we updated the
comprehensive plan, we talked
about compact development.

We've talked about kind of

recognizing that the city has
maybe areas that aren't

functioning to their their
highest ability that we needed

to encourage a diverse economy,
that we're talking about

infield development, compact
development, you know,

redevelopment of certain areas.

So, the intent is to, you know,

really kind of overall, I

guess, encourage the reuse of

property, kind of. It's more

sustainable to redevelop

existing properties that are

within the city that, you know,

help us with our

infrastructure, help us in

mobility as part of that

infrastructure, to kind of

concentrate development, so that

we're more efficient, more

sustainable, and things like

that. So, we're trying to

promote walkable, compact,

mixed-use projects. Projects

that have residential and

commercial components that give

people an option to live close
to where they work or close to

transit where they can get to,
easily to places that offer, you

know, jobs and economic
opportunity. If people live

close in or if they don't have
to use a vehicle and that does

reduce their cost of living,
because they're not having to,

you know, commute. And it
adds value to your time. If

you're commuting, it adds a
whole day to your week.

And stress and all that. So the
exciting part about St

Augustine is it's so unique and
that we have opportunities for really

kind of creating a compact

urban development. MELISSA: And we want

this, in case people missed our
last one, I want to just make

sure that we're clear. The
reason why this particular

parcel is being discussed for
this mobility-oriented

development is this transit
line using the rail system.

With JTA. AMY: Yes. So that the
region has to look at

alternative forms of
transportation. I -95

cannot be the only option to
get through this area. US -1

can't be the only option. They
have right of way that is a, you

know, for the railroad tracks.
It's a logical thing to promote

commuter rail. The commuter rail is, they know they, as I

understand, it they need like 1300 feet. So basically we're

looking at the turn where the rail turns west by US - 1 all

the way to Palmer Street. So the potential of having a transit

station there or a rail commuter rail station there

could benefit all the properties that are between, you

know, West King Street, Palmer Street, and US - 1 because

they'll have potentially access to rail on the backside. Also,

you know, there's talk about that the trail, the bicycle

trail. Coming in. From the county, behind that

area. So, it kind of creates an

an opportunity for those

properties to have front and

backside options. MELISSA: And when you

talk about the development of

the property, and this could be

this location, it could be some

other parcel of property around,

even if there wasn't a rail,

when you're talking a transit

center. You're also

talking a parking garage,

possibly retail, restaurants, housing. AMY: Once we once we

create this land use category,

really we when the cities

talked about the peripheral

parking garages, maybe one, you

know, out on Anastasia Boulevard,

north of town. There's potential

that we can tailor other zoning

districts for other areas that

talk about, as you said, other

mobility options. You have

potential for circulators,

peripheral parking garages, we

want, we want walkability and

bike-ability and bike safety

and pedestrian safe throughout

the entire city. And when you

can reduce traffic or keep it

to local traffic on the roads,

then then it's safer for

everyone, including pedestrians

and bikes. MELISSA: And this MOD,

again, this mobility-oriented

development, we don't have this

in our code now. I think that's

the other thing that people

need to understand is... if I

want to build a house, I go
find a place where I'm allowed

to build a house. It's zoned
residential. I want to

build an office building, I go
find a place that's zoned to

build an office building and I
it. If I wanted to bring in a

bike, excuse me, a bus stop or
a bus station or a rail center

or a transportation type. AMY: Hub.
MELISSA: Hub. Yeah. I can't do

that right now. Cuz that
there is no land use category.

So, that's really the other
thing that is important for
folks to understand why we're
having this conversation. AMY: And

the updated comprehensive plan
is supposed to plan out to 2040.

And so at the time, we were
focused on getting our mobility

plan adopted. So, we have a
mobility plan that sets the

groundwork for this. And so the,
these this amendment to the comp

plan is kind of a follow up to
that. It's another tool that

the city can use as an option
to encourage alternative forms

of mobility. And there are lots
of fears, you know, I guess

associated with it, you know. I
think people are worried about

neighborhood character, you know,
whether it's going to cause

more traffic congestion, whether
it leads to gentrification, and

you know, people getting priced
out of areas, you know. The

hope is that we don't have
unintended consequences, but

that we promote the development
of all the areas in the city

kind of equally and that people
have access to transportation

and community in a sense of
place in all areas of the

city, where they can kind of
live well, and it's more

livable, and we maintain
the character. You know,

typically, the benefits are, you
know, where we're trying to

promote pedestrian and bicycle
friendly environments. We're

trying to support local

businesses, increase property

values, and, you know, kind of
combat urban sprawls. Just more

sustainable if we develop sort
of from the inside out.

And when we don't... MELISSA: We we
control it. AMY: We control it. MELISSA: If

you're just now tuning in,
you're listening to The Break

Room. I'm speaking with Amy
Skinner this week. We're

talking about mobility-oriented
development. It's a good

planning tool for the city. And
we're talking about how we put

that to good use and why it's
important to the city. Amy,

you were just talking about, you
know, livability, and I just

want to point out to folks.

Part of this need or desire to

create this category of land

use is because we really try to

follow those principles that

are in our vision plan and

one of those is livability,

maintaining that certain

quality of life. I think we

feel overrun by

overdevelopment. You were

mentioning on our last

conversation about, you know,

the county is infilling as

opposed to us. We're not urban

sprawl. We're we're urban in-sprawl, if that's such a word.

And like said, it's that sense

of place, we want people to be

able to afford to live here. And

part of the development of that

or any other type of hub,

like you were talking about, is

we don't want, we also are

afraid of this idea of these

big buildings. We don't want to

be Daytona Beach, we don't

want to be Disney, we don't

want to be Miami. So part of

that is, keeping in mind that

when these projects come come

to us. AMY: Right and you know there

is a matter of scale, excuse me.

There, the reality is for these

developments to work, you need

a certain amount of density,

which requires a certain amount

of height, because we have

smaller pieces of property. But

if you concentrate development

where it's more efficient, it's
better for our infrastructure.

It, there's a certain amount
of density that is needed to

justify other forms of
transportation. You can't have

a circulator if it's basically
running empty all the time.

You know, it's just it's
not sustainable. But, you

know, we want to try to
encourage a balance of jobs,

housing options, amenities, and
again, that comes with a

certain amount of density. And
if we all use it and if there's

more people to use it, then
it's safer, it's, it's more

accessible, it's, you know. MELISSA: And
it's better. And it's resident

centric. I think that's the

other thing is I think, the

other that I hope we're

conveying to our listeners is

these are planning tools

solutions to help us. AMY: Yes. MELISSA: To

help make it so that, let's say

you do live in the Shores or

you live out somewhere outside

of downtown. What do we hear

all the time? I don't ever go

downtown. It's too busy. I

can't find a place to park.

If we can create these

transportation hubs. It's not

just about, that's not about

tourism. That's about making

our quality of life better. You

mentioned the circulator, the downtown

circulator, where that's

going to be in place. And I know

X has talked about the

potential of that expanding to

the island, expanding to this

particular location we're

talking about. AMY: Some things are

kind of a leap of faith. I

mean, we try our best.

We're, I I you know, idealistic

maybe. Maybe there

are unintended consequences, but

if we don't take the

opportunity and take and try to

take advantage of the

opportunity and as I've said,

control our own destiny. And

where as locals, as people,

residents that live here, then,

if we can get those people that
come in from the beach or come

in from the south or the
northwest part of the county,

get them off the roads. Let
them, you know, take a shuttle,

take a... MELISSA: Enjoy downtown. AMY: Enjoy
downtown, then that frees up

some of the space, shall we
say, space downtown for locals

that know where to park, know
where to go, what know what

they're doing, they're having
routines, where they like to

get ice cream or whatever. You
know, so that helps us, you

know, with our public spaces
and with our preserving our

neighborhoods, and you know,
just encouraging social

interactions where we can
take advantage of that. MELISSA: Have a

better quality of life. Right.

Yeah. Well, we we are out of

time again. I will say one
thing real quick. Think of this

as renovating your kitchen. You
and I talked about this. You

can only change the color of
your cabinets and resurface

your countertops so many times.
And eventually someday comes

this, the day comes where you
say I really just need to blow

out that back wall and put a
patio back there and really

embrace this space. And that
renovation takes a long time.

You're not really sure what

it's going to look like and

then all of a sudden a year

after the fact you look back

and you go, wow I'm really glad

I did that. So let's let's hope

that this is one of those where

it's a great leap of faith.

There's going to be a lot of

change. And hopefully when all

is said and done we look at it

and we go, oh that wasn't so bad

and that really looks nice and

it makes a positive change. AMY: And

that's the truth. I mean, cities

evolve over time. You know,

we're seeing an opportunity

with this commuter rail. We're

hoping that it, you know,

encourages our economy and the

public health and saves our environment and we can work

within our own community and and make it work. MELISSA: Great. Well

thank you for coming again to talk about mobility oriented

development. Check it out on our website. We've got a web

page dedicated to it. CityStAug.com/MOD.

We have information there.

We're putting together a white

sheet flyer for that. We're going to try to get together a

public service announcement, little little information video

so all kinds of information on MOD, what it is, why it's

important to the City of St Augustine. If you missed part

of this broadcast and want to
go back and listen from the

beginning, you can now find us
on your favorite podcast. Look

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Thanks for tuning in. Until

next time. ANNOUNCER: You've been
listening to The Break Room, a

weekly program addressing
projects and programs offered

by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's

Communications Director,

Melissa Wissel, has in-depth

conversations with the people

who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The

Break Room is produced by

Communication Specialist for

the of St Augustine, Cindy

Walker. See you at this time

next week for another edition

of The Break Room.