

REVITALIZATION OF A CORRIDOR

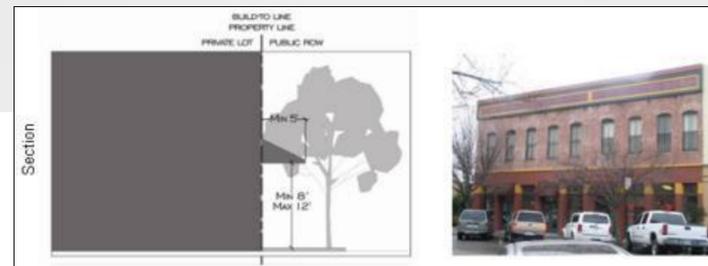
A Victim of Sprawl

The first businesses on North Gus Thomasson Road date back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Property was built to accommodate the growing use of the automobile and the migration of the nuclear family from urban centers to the suburbs. With the passing of time, the character of the street has changed from a vibrant commercial area serving the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods to a commuter corridor with aging buildings and uses in constant transition. Capital investment in the form of new construction has shifted to the new edge of the urban area. These symptoms are not true for every property, of course, but the overall appearance and function of the street is indicative of a distressed corridor that was shaped by urban sprawl and now lies victim to it.



Start with a Vision

There is no "silver bullet" when it comes to revitalizing a distressed commercial corridor. In all cases it begins with public reinvestment, such as the Thomasson Square Project. It must include new housing opportunities, a determined group of residents and businesses, and years of hard work. Above all, it needs a vision for the future. That vision is embodied in the North Gus Thomasson Code adopted by the City Council in 2008.



The North Gus Thomasson Revitalization Code is called a form-based code. That means more attention is given to the design and orientation of buildings to the street, rather than the separation of land uses. Instead of having buildings set back from the street to accommodate fields of parking, the Code provides for all new and expanded buildings to be located at the front property line. Parking shifts to the side or rear of buildings. The Code encourages the co-location of uses in the same building, commonly referred to as mixed-use development.

What is Sprawl Repair?

The North Gus Thomasson Code allows buildings and properties to remain in their present state until they are substantially modified or the existing use is vacated. At that time, the property must be retrofitted to conform with the Code. Owners have options for retrofitting. They may demolish the existing structure and build new. Or they may expand the existing structure to meet the form-based code requirements in a process known as sprawl repair.



DPZ Architects: *The Sprawl Repair Manual*

Studies in Sarasota County, Florida, and Asheville, North Carolina, show that mixed-use developments have significantly greater property values on a per acre basis than any other retail, office or residential land use. Even the lowest density mixed-use project in the study had more than 10 times the value of a Wal-Mart Supercenter and nearly 5 times greater than a high-end retail mall.