

New Urbanism' taking shape downtown

Proposed project includes retail, large residential space with terrace and pool

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Top: The lot next to The Heritage House on North Main Street where a proposed mixed-use development with retail and residential is slated to go. Colleen Creamer/The Herald **Bottom:** A rendering from Manous Design shows a proposed project for downtown that includes three retail spaces and a living area with terrace. Manous design

A mixed-use development that includes retail and a high-end living unit with a terrace that overlooks Main Street might be coming to downtown.

The development went before the city of Dickson Board of Zoning Appeals Tuesday for discussion. **Michael Manous**, president of Manous Design in Lebanon, presented the project to the board at its monthly meeting on behalf of developers **Jana** and **Anthony Curcio**. The Curcios moved to Dickson from Washington, D.C. in 2010. Anthony Curcio was raised in Dickson and the family wanted a place where they could shop, live and go to church. The family has been active in downtown redevelopment. Anthony's father owns Ace Diner on Main Street.

New Urbanism, which has become popular across the United States, was developed as an urban design in the 1980s. It promotes mixed use, walkable, compact, communities composed of housing, work places, shops, entertainment, schools, parks, and civic facilities.

So far, those desiring to live atop retail — and only atop retail — can easily do so, but they have to ask for what is called a variance or special exception from the Board of Zoning Appeals. “It’s allowed but you have to ask for it,” said city Planning Director **Jason Pilkinton**. “Right off the bat, they know they are going to ask for that.”

The board enthusiastically endorsed the development with provisions, but said the developers would have to either implement either the variance or the special exception. In question with the Curcio project is that some living space is on the first floor behind the commercial space and some living space is on the second floor, depending upon if looking from the front or back due to the lot sloping downward in back. “This lot is unique in that the front faces Main Street as it tapers off in the rear of the property at the alley so it would be on the second floor from the alley side,” said Pilkinton

The building will be three levels with 3,700 square feet of residential space. Manous said the building’s wrap-around facade that guards the terrace matches the height and design of downtown’s historic buildings.

“We have tried to do period lighting, awnings, those types of things to continue that nice sense of scale.” he said. “Obviously the architectural detail of the building is subject to change as we go on, but we would obviously try and manage the historic character of the buildings that are associated there.”

Bryan Collins of Greater Nashville Regional Council, who is Dickson County’s regional planner, said when he heard that Manous was on the project he knew that the board was getting ready to “see by far the best presentation you have even seen in your life.” “It’s a great concept,” Collins said. “There are a lot of variables as far as the use for the Board of Zoning Appeals. There are also some variables that will actually go to the Planning Commission.”

The board suggested a work session before they meet next month to see what language might be added to zoning code to handle further queries on whether first floor residency could be added with a simple request for a variance or special exception. This would have to be approved by city of council.

“I entertain the fact that this discussion will go before the Planning Commission, and if they think that’s a good idea then we can change the language that street-level residential use mixed-occupancy could be a special exception through the Board of Zoning Appeals,” Pilkinton said.

The building could change the face of downtown and likely further the idea of downtown becoming part of the New Urbanism movement. Pilkinton said he had been getting queries from potential developers on whether there could be commercial in front and residential directly in back of it.