

2nd Avenue Listening Session

2/17 Session Notes

Moderator: Anna Grider

Note Taker: Jared Islas

Introductions of each participant and what brings them to meeting (5 mins.)

Alan Thompson – landscape architect with Regan Smith and associates been in Nashville for 42 years love the character of the second avenue area

Ron Limb – own and operate Nashville downtown hostel at 1st and church. And owns the buildings that is from 1st and 2nd and church. The face of the second avenue has been severely damaged. Wants to contribute to the revitalization of downtown

David Creed – president of Creed Investment Co. We own 144 2nd Ave N. A lover of historic buildings and excited by potential to rebuilding and opening back up. The building lost all the windows and ceiling joists were broken. About \$600k worth of damage. About \$500k of lost revenue.

Clay Bailey – [Came into meeting after question 2] broad citizens interest in second avenue. Interested in historic preservation and cultural impact. I'm a history teacher and chair of Historic Commission (?)

Do you have a favorite memory/experience from the 2nd Avenue area? (10 mins.)

Alan – 2nd avenue over so many years has been the go-to for prom dates, etc. It has always been walkable and safe feeling. Great restaurants. Spaghetti Factory, melting pot, newer restaurants. It was an experience. Going to second avenue meant something. It still probably does today. It had a different vibe than Broadway. Turning the corner onto 2nd it was a whole other environment/feel. It had such a quality and a character – the built environment.

Character/ambiance of Spaghetti Factory buildings across the country and in 2nd avenue.

Ron – As a transplant to Nashville. Been running the hostel for about 10 years. Have hosted over 20k younger people form around the world. Hostel's are typically visited by younger people, recent college grads, a lot from Europe. Always told people to walk down 2nd to get to Broadway. It was such a quaint walk with lights and trees, etc. People left the hostel happy and came back the hostel happy after their nights out.

David – Broadway is about how much you can drink. 2nd avenue is a bit slowed down. Restaurants thrive there. It is distinct with the restaurants, trees, the feeling. One of the biggest risks is losing the large uninterrupted historic building facades. Improvements to the landscaping, lighting, etc. It feels safe,

picturesque. We spent \$5m renovating the building originally. Did STRs up until the beginning of the pandemic and have offices in the building. Renovating was the favorite memory.

What makes the 2nd Avenue area unique? What are key characteristics to keep in mind as we move forward (12 mins.)

Alan – It is a bigger part of the circulation system of the city. Gone from a two-way street to a one-way street and back and forth. Would potentially like to see the vehicular prominence toned down a bit and more oriented toward pedestrians. There is an opportunity to preserve things we've talked about and maybe even heighten the character. The riverside of second avenue is where all the character was. If there's a way to activate the other side of the street from an architectural standpoint. Architecture is a huge point. Opportunity to rebuild while respecting the historic character. Heighten/enhance the environment especially on the ATT side.

Ron – 2nd Ave N could be greatly improved if ATT building was moved. I have always wonder why it was there. It doesn't fit in. It is ugly and stands out in pictures of Nashville's skyline. Removing that building could do a lot more than adding anything else.

Alan – Or at the very least, activating the street level environment of that building.

David – There is a lot of retail business up and down the street. Many buildings have residential whether they are traditional apartments or STRs. I'dk if it would be great to remove all vehicle traffic. But increasing pedestrian traffic to any extent could serve retail businesses (and property owners) well. Maybe its focusing on sidewalks and landscaping. Not sure what can be done with the ATT building since it is private property. I don't think anybody thinks it is attractive. Lighting could be enhanced. From a landscape arch and streetscape perspective, second avenue should pull people down it from Broadway.

Anna – Thoughts on existing sidewalks (brick... are they slippery, etc.)

David – I've watched homeless people bend down grab bricks and throw them in the trash. It is slick when it is wet. The brick sidewalks were probably a great idea to begin with. The form and function of those bricks today has lost its appeal. I would be a huge fan of making the sidewalks look more modern. Historic buildings should always remain. But sidewalks and pedestrian experience (lighting, etc.) could be improved.

What changes could make the 2nd Avenue area a better place? (12 mins.)

Clay – So much concern about 170-176 buildings. Is there opportunity to bring servicing buildings that werent too much aligned with the character more into character of the area (ATT, ETC.). Enthused by the fact that so many people have jumped in and are attempting to make an opportunity rather than just a triage situation.

Alan – Looking at Google Street view – Might be surprised at how much changing sidewalks could impact character of the area. Is the brick have any significance? The buildings that face south on second is the

longest run. There is almost 0 activation on the 1st avenue side? Is there an opportunity to have a pedestrian corridor that connects 1st and 2nd avenue?

David – Butler's Run has a pass through their building. When it is closed, you do have to take quite the trek to get around to Riverside. I would rather have the historic buildings. Previous mayor wanted to activate the riverside. The backside of the buildings is where all the dirty things go. Many of them are 20' wide by 200' deep. There isn't much space for back of house operations. It doesn't make sense to put them on 2nd ave, so most property owners place them on 1st ave. I would love to lease out the 1st ave side to a retail, but the city would have to find a way to move back of house operations somewhere else. The topography change between 2nd and 1st.

Ron – A lot of the storefronts on 2nd or 1st provide spaces for homeless to get shelter from rain, etc. It is difficult for property owners to handle that. There should be a comprehensive approach to handle homeless especially when considering opening alleys, etc.

Alan – the character is pretty awesome. Elms along the street. It's great to have lighting. Lighting lends to safety. The street trees that were there were very well placed and very well picked.

David – the only negative on the trees is the dropping seeds. Although having the trees is one of my favorite parts of 2nd ave.

Alan – One thing that is missing that is common in other urban environments is outdoor dining. Maybe that's not the right vibe for 2nd avenue.

David – I love the idea of outdoor dining, but it would need to be fenced in to serve alcohol. It could be good to shift down to one lane of driving than to go down to one lane of on street parking. With STRs/uber on-street parking is essential.

What would you like to be able to experience in the 2nd Avenue area? Do you have any thoughts on opportunities or aspirations to consider? (12 mins.)

Clay – Places where an entire block is given over to pedestrians at certain hours would be aspirational. Opens opportunities for outdoor dining, festivals, etc. It should be experienced in the outdoors.

Alan – There's not a lot of smaller public spaces along the corridor. The corner of Commerce where the 5-story parking garage could be enhanced. Focus on ATT side and Sbarro corner that doesn't have a big impact on historic side of the street.

David – While I'm excited to see the work on vision plan, we have got to reopen the street ASAP. We've got to clean things up and open the street so people can reopen their businesses and then continue the visioning. Reopen now, enhancements within the next 12 months.

Ron – I echo all of that.

What do you think are the biggest obstacles to overcome? (12 mins.)

Alan – Infrastructure issues above and below ground. When the 1998 Tornado came through, a cathedral couldn't be rebuilt because of new setback regulations. Sometimes we can get in our own way. Hopefully that is not an issue here.

David – Three buckets of issues – private property owners wanting to rebuild, city's property (sidewalks, landscaping, etc.) has short term (clean up) and long term (future visioning). Biggest risk/obstacle is if we don't get reopened soon I can't see how these businesses will be able to continue (with pandemic + bombing). If we look up in 6 months and it still looks like a bomb went off, and vacancies start popping up, it is not going to feel good. Time is of the essence. We need to get activity again. Ultimately, we'll be okay. Next year or two is critical.

Alan – Tax decrease could be helpful

Ron – The core area where the bomb had impacts it may be good to have property's change hand. They weren't keeping up their property and might have been piggy backing off neighbors. Some property owners are severely underinsured in the area and will only get 40 cents back for every dollar.

How should this area feel in relation to the river? (10 mins.)

What did we not ask you that you would like to discuss more or learn more about? (8 mins.)

Ron – 1st ave n is the most underutilized area of the downtown. It has huge potential but needs to be integrated into the rest of the area. Also needs better homeless management, especially on 1st ave side. That has almost been a full time position.