

Committee will consider Crossroads parking

By Jim Davis. Kansas City Business Journal: August 29, 2006.

A Kansas City Council committee on Wednesday will consider a plan to ease off-street parking requirements in the Crossroads, whose growing popularity has put on-street parking at a premium.

The new rules, under discussion since the spring of 2005, would ease parking standards for restaurants and stores.

A move to include affordable housing in the ordinance has brought disagreement.

Dale Schulte, the leading provider of affordable housing in Downtown, wants the release for a building he plans to convert in the Crossroads. Schulte, who declined to identify the building, said the city hasn't required him to provide parking for his other projects.

Schulte asked for the Crossroads clearance at the Aug. 9 meeting of the City Council's Planning, Zoning and Economic Development Committee. The committee's hearing on the parking ordinance will resume on Wednesday. A council hearing could come the following day.

Troy Nash, the committee's chairman, said he thought Schulte's request was reasonable.

"We want to send the message to the (affordable housing) market that we're not going to burden you with undue regulations," Nash said.

But City Councilman Jim Glover, who sponsored the original ordinance to ease Crossroads parking rules, said he thought Schulte ought to seek a specific variance, not a general exemption.

"You're not helping people who receive affordable housing if you don't provide them parking," Glover said.

Tom Levitt, a Crossroads property owner and secretary of the Crossroads Community Association, said he thought the proposal needed more study.

"The wholesale nature of this exemption was shocking and over broad," Levitt said. Levitt said he admires Schulte's work but is frustrated that his request wasn't first considered by the city's Board of Zoning Adjustment. A zoning variance hearing would have provided another chance for public input, he said.

"We're not against affordable housing, but we think there ought to be a deliberate discussion about parking that's associated with it," Levitt said. "And the developers should bear the cost."

Current parking rules in the Crossroads require one off-street space for each 400 square feet of retail space. Restaurants need one space per 75 square feet and bars one per 50 square feet.

The proposed modification would give retailers an exemption on their first 4,000 square feet. Restaurants would get a 2,000-square-foot exemption.

The new rules are expected to take effect late this year or early in 2007, after public hearings.

The proposed ordinance says the Crossroads runs south from Truman Road to the Kansas City Terminal Railway Co. tracks. The eastern boundary is Troost Avenue. On the west, the boundary follows Broadway from Truman Road to Southwest Boulevard and Interstate 35 from Southwest Boulevard to the railroad tracks.