

Cooper wants northern exposure for Modesa

By Jim Davis. Kansas City Business Journal: November 26, 2003.

Since when is the Northland part of Kansas City's central business district?

Kansas City Councilwoman Bonnie Sue Cooper is pushing for that unorthodox interpretation as the City Council's Planning, Zoning & Economic Development Committee considers boundaries for the Missouri Downtown and Rural Economic Stimulus Act.

The act, better known as Modesa, funnels state taxes generated by new business to offset the cost of building infrastructure.

Modesa's only guidance limits boundaries to 10 percent of a city's land area.

A proposal presented to the PZ&E Committee, on which Cooper serves, extends the central business district south to 31st Street and east to Cleveland Avenue.

"How is 31st Street a part of Downtown?" Cooper asked. "How is over to Cleveland part of Downtown?"

Cooper, whose 2nd District includes the Northland, said she wants to extend Modesa's northern boundary to Vivion Road. This area would include Antioch Center and aging stores along North Oak Trafficway, she said.

If Modesa's southern border stops at Truman Road and its eastern boundary is similarly reduced, Cooper said, she would be willing to drop her proposal.

"I would not have tried to extend it north if it hadn't gone way south and east," she said. "To ignore the Northland like we don't exist -- that just doesn't seem quite fair to me."

Cooper's stance drew support from a cosponsor of Modesa legislation that passed the Missouri General Assembly in May.

Rep. Trent Skaggs, D-North Kansas City, wrote in an e-mail to The Business Journal that he had been led to believe Kansas City's Modesa district would be bounded by the Interstate highway loop around Downtown.

"If expanded beyond the loop, I would concur that it should go north of the river," Skaggs wrote. "However, that was not our intent."

Kansas City Councilman Troy Nash, who chairs the PZ&E Committee, said he wants to uphold Modesa's "spirit and intent." Nash, whose 3rd District would be included in the broader interpretation of the

central business district that his committee received, said he won't oppose Cooper's northern expansion.

The PZ&E Committee started deliberating the Modesa boundaries at its Nov. 19 meeting. Discussion continued on Nov. 24. Nash said he hopes to reach resolution at the committee's next meeting on Dec. 3.

But the committee's composition could prolong the logjam.

John Fairfield, the committee's vice chairman, represents the 2nd District. Sandra McFadden-Weaver, the committee's fourth member, is from the 3rd District.