

## Issue 21

At Vanderbilt University in 1963, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech on the qualities of an educated citizenry, where he remarked that “only an educated and informed people will be a free people, that the ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all...” In today’s busy world, it’s harder than ever to be an educated voter. Issue 21 on the November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022, ballot reads:

***Shall Section 14.06 of the Streetsboro City Charter be amended to exempt the City's Downtown District, as defined in the 2019 Master Plan and the 2021 Core Concept Plan, from the requirement for voter approval of changes to zoning district classification and density regulations?***

Issue 21 requires a voter to understand the Streetsboro City Charter, the 2019 Master Plan and the 2021 Core Concept Plan. Finding the time to read one document, let alone three, before casting a ballot would be challenging for the average resident. Mayor Broska created a short, 3-minute video to summarize Issue 21. You may access this video at: <https://youtu.be/roSqLXkWGEA>

Beyond having to understand these three documents, a voter would also have to possess some knowledge of referendum zoning. Currently, per Section 14.06 of the City Charter, any change to the zoning map (i.e. re-zoning) or change in density regulations is required to secure a vote of the electorate (and a majority of the electorate in the affected precinct in the case of a zoning map amendment) before the change can become effective. In other words, voters are allowed more say in zoning matters in Streetsboro than in most other communities.

The Core Concept Plan, Master Plan and referendum zoning all come together in Issue 21. In short, Issue 21 asks Streetsboro residents to allow City Council and the City Planning Commission to draft zoning language and create a new zoning district (i.e. re-zone) the Core Concept Plan Study Area from B-Business to an new mixed-use zoning district that would accommodate a downtown-like feel without having to go to the voters prior to the proposed changes becoming effective. As noted above, this is a departure from the existing Streetsboro City Charter but many, if not most, cities in Ohio do not have to seek approval from citizens to change zoning. A map detailing this area may be found below and includes such landmarks as University Hospitals Campus, Market Square Plaza, Big Dee’s and Liberty Corners shopping plaza. Were Issue 21 to pass, only the area covered by the Core Concept Plan will no longer be subject to referendum zoning, all other areas of the city still remain subject to referendum on any and all zoning map amendments or changes to density.

The citizens of Streetsboro have expressed a desire for creation of a downtown district in the center of the city since at least the 2014 Comprehensive Master Plan. Many citizens also regularly complain about the state of Market Square Plaza which used to be thriving and now is showing many signs of neglect, including a very bad parking lot. While many developers could be attracted to the city to implement elements of the Core Concept Plan, required referendum zoning is an obstacle for them as the developer would be forced to pay for the costs associated with educating the voters on their plans

and the uncertainty associated with the outcome of a vote of the public. Most other Ohio cities do not require the citizens to weigh in on every change to the zoning code, and developers who might otherwise be interested in giving the city and its residents something it can be proud of, move on when they hear that they have to convince 17,000 residents and not just the Planning Commission and City Council. Residents still have multiple avenues of expressing their will beyond direct voting on zoning issues, Issue 21 just improves the likelihood that a developer may one day follow through with implementing a new vision for this area of Streetsboro.

Issue 21 Q & A

**Q: What is referendum zoning?**

A: In Streetsboro, the Charter currently requires an affirmative vote of the electorate prior to all zoning map amendments or changes to density regulations before becoming effective. For reference, see below a portion of Section 14.06 of the current City Charter:

“Any ordinance approved by Council that would amend the City of Streetsboro’s zoning map by changing the zoning classification of one district classification, or part of one district classification to another, or that would amend the City of Streetsboro’s zoning regulations by changing any of the density regulations, shall be placed on the ballot at the next regular election to be voted upon by the Electorate. No ordinance amending the City of Streetsboro’s zoning map shall become effective unless approved by a majority of the Electorate voting thereon and a majority of the Electorate in each precinct in which the change is applicable. No ordinance amending the City of Streetsboro’s zoning regulations by changing density regulations shall become effective unless approved by a majority of the Electorate voting thereon.”

**Q: Will this erode the foundation of referendum zoning in Streetsboro?**

A: No, the only area that is being asked for is the geography of the Core Concept Plan (click on link to see map of the [Core Concept Plan Study Area](#)). No other areas are under consideration from being exempted from the referendum process.

**Q: Can land be added to the Core Concept Plan Study Area later to avoid referendum zoning?**

A: No, the ballot language is clear that the land covered by the 2021 Core Concept Plan is the only eligible land. City Council adopted the plan via Ordinance 2021-173 at the 11/22/21 meeting. Land cannot be added to the geographic area that Issue 21 covers.

**Q: How big is the Core Concept Plan Study Area?**

A: The Core Concept area is approximately 137 acres. Streetsboro is approximately 25 square miles, or about 16,000 acres. The Core Concept Plan Study Area is about 0.85% of the entire area of Streetsboro. The remaining 99% is still subject to referendum zoning.

**Q: Why is the Core Concept Plan Study Area the only area to be exempted from referendum zoning?**

A: The 2022 Charter Review Commission was aware of the 2019 Master Plan asking for a downtown district and the 2021 Core Concept Plan that determined a path towards redeveloping this

area. Issue 21 is the next logical step in delivering on the wishes of the citizens as previously expressed by the residents via the Master Plan.

**Q: Has a developer come forward to purchase any of the land covered by the Core Concept Plan?**

A: At the time of this writing, 10/18/2022, there are no firm committed offers for the purchase of land covered by Issue 21. While developers have previously expressed an interest, they were unable to assemble enough land, or come to terms with current owners.

**Q: What if I hear about a plan to redevelop this area and I feel strongly about it? How would I let my opinion be known without referendum zoning?**

A: All Planning Commission and City Council meetings are open to the public. If a citizen wished to express an opinion of support or opposition to any future plans for the Core Concept Plan Study Area, and referendum zoning was no longer available if Issue 21 passed, then they would be able to communicate it to anyone on the City Council or Planning Commission. Citizens may also contact the Mayor directly or speak with the staff of the City Planning and Zoning or the Economic Development Department. Multiple options exist for any citizen to take advantage of.

#### **Pros**

- Will make the land in the Core Concept Study Area more attractive to developers to bring in a downtown-like district
- Removing referendum zoning makes the will of the people for a downtown-like district much more feasible
- The Core Concept Plan reflects the desires of the community

#### **Cons**

- No guarantee that a developer will materialize or that passage of Issue 21 will cause redevelopment to occur
- While the Core Concept Plan has been adopted by City Council, no specific zoning language currently exists

#### **Conclusion**

After reading this summary of Issue 21, you may come to the conclusion that the removal of referendum zoning for the Core Concept Plan Study Area may be a good thing or a bad thing. Either way, we encourage you to make your voice heard this election day.