



Issues Identified at the January Meeting of the Eau Claire Neighborhood Summit

The following items were identified as “issues” by participants in the Eau Claire Neighborhood Summit Meeting #1 held on January 14, 2016.

Some of the items were framed as actions or solutions rather than questions. In either case, they all convey a sense of which subjects are of concern to the members of the Summit committee and to the others who attended the meeting. The responses have been group by Committee Members and Other Residents.

Issues Identified by Committee Members

Housing Generally

- Funding for home improvements
- Home upkeep
- Deteriorating housing stock
- Neighborhood curb appeal
- Lack of affordable housing
- Too much concentration of renters and owner-occupied. A better mix is desirable.
- Quality, safe and affordable housing for our university population
- Rehab or redevelop old houses
- Encourage redevelopment and find ways to mix new and old structures
- Find funding sources to purchase old house to rehab or demolish and sell to re-build
- How to create an ongoing organization to keep project going
- Repair and upkeep
- Replace housing stock that cannot be fixed
- Beautification of homes (awards for this)
- Older housing is not being rehabbed and replaced
- Too much concern about density. If the city grows and density remains the same, we will have serious sprawl. There are benefits and efficiencies to higher densities.
- Down-zoning when it is not appropriate
- Make it easier and less expensive to tear down old and replace with a better quality house
- Micro or tiny housing – why not in Eau Claire
- Can or should the City require a certain percentage of new development apartments to be allocated to people of low to moderate income?
- Historic preservation of houses
- Finding folks who will invest in older homes
- Improving image of older neighborhoods and the housing that they are in – that is, not be known as “student slum” but rather “university neighborhood and home owners”
- Preserving older home as affordable alternatives, not just big beauties but the smaller worked-owned homes
- Identifying homes that should be preserved

Owner-Occupied Housing

- More home ownership
- Single-family home ownership decline
- We need to educate home owners about grant programs to improve properties
- Reduction in owner occupancy
- Encourage owner-occupied housing
- Home ownership is more important than building
- Help for lower-income folks to buy a home.
- Help for lower incomes to “own” an apartment in a multi-unit building
- Help prevent foreclosures
- Increase home ownership for people who are experiencing low or moderate income
- Decline in home ownership
- There is limited support for low-income individual and families to buy a first home

Rental Housing

- Re-zoning to limited multi-family units
- Rental registration and inspection. Move away from total complain-driven system.
- How does down-zoning affect rent prices
- Landlord licensing (staff paid for by fees)
- We need more low-income rental and homes but we need to hold tenants more accountable to caring for the property
- Properties need to be upgraded by landlords in certain neighborhoods
- There seems to be an unwillingness to inconvenience landlords to benefit neighborhoods and tenants
- Landlord registration
- No inspection of rental properties and no effective regulation of landlords
- We do not need rental house registration – just another cost
- Implement a “rental registration program”
- There is no process for registering and inspecting rental housing
- There is no incentive for a landlord to maintain property
- Profiteering landlords who make lots of money but don’t maintain their properties
- No regular inspections of rental properties
- Health and safety in rental housing

City Facilities, Services or Regulation

- Parking on the street
- Current enforcement
- Citizen invest in upgrading housing and the City immediately raises taxes instead of having a program that encourages these improvements
- Neighborhoods need to reach out and get to know your police officers
- Eau Claire does not enforce quality of life ordinances nearly as diligently as similar cities in Wisconsin
- Continue connecting neighborhoods with safe pedestrian and bicycling trails
- The new transit center is a great idea
- Lack of regulations about outdoor fires.
- Need better pick-up of leaves

- Street parking – how many cars per house
- Neighbors having to be the cops to get anything done
- Walkable and bike-able neighborhoods
- Walking and bicycling opportunities
- City need to pick up abandoned furniture on the boulevards; often when folks move
- Property upkeep and Code enforcement
- The downtown area is becoming more desirable, but there are too many landlords in that area that are not improving their properties because they are still getting renters
- Tolerance of or pleading down of property crimes
- We need mandatory garbage service for all rental property owners

Development

- Establish a non-profit neighborhood development corporation
- Gentrification of low-income and minority neighborhoods
- Mixed-use development
- Identifying areas of the neighborhood to work on rebuilding
- Lack of grocery stores in neighborhoods
- Lack of some retail availability such as groceries and hardware
- A number of cities are donating foreclosed properties or properties that are in need of serious repair to non-profit agencies that do rehab work. Those organizations also tear down the buildings and build new. If the City of Eau Claire could help obtain and donate vacant or other properties to places like Habitat for Humanity and the Housing Authority, new houses could be built. This would create new housing, hone ownership, curb appeal and generate tax revenue.

Social or Economic Issues

- Transitory nature of the population leads to lack of continuity and no connection between neighbors
- Lack of pride both in neighborhood and as individual households
- Low-income on-going problem: too many service jobs or part-time jobs
- Can or should addressing neighborhood issues capitalize on cultural assets (music, art, etc.)? There are creative and innovative ideas that address affordable housing, such as ideas found in the report, “The Mastering of a Music City,” and other music-city initiatives that are; including housing and re-purposing of older buildings.
- Poverty and low wages in these neighborhoods

Nuisances

- Owners should pick up after their pets
- Lack of storage for “toys.” There are lots of garages with multiple cars and other toys.
- Alcohol and binge drinking
- Garbage, beer cans, broken bottles – demoralizing

Others

- Keeping blight at bay
- Neighborhood rehab
- Neighborhood signage – establish each association’s identity in the community
- Lack of identity of neighborhoods (signs)
- Partner with agriculture locally to develop neighborhood farmers market style retail

- Beautification awards – monthly for renovation
- Supporting and recognizing great renters – if we are moving to a higher rental community

Issues identified by Other People in Attendance

Housing

- Encourage owner-occupied housing
- Housing quality is declining
- Redevelopment must occur
- Rental property desirability among all generations and the trend to renting versus owning
- What is the goal or purpose behind rental registration?
- Adopt rental registration
- Find ways to make housing affordable for home owners in these neighborhoods
- With two new schools in our older neighborhoods, we need to figure out how to get more families into the neighborhoods
- How to promote reinvestment and more owner-occupied housing in the older neighborhoods.
- Interest in rehabbing older homes
- Property improvements to encourage or improve increase in value and interest for buyers
- I love the work of those involved in turning run-down houses into affordable housing.

City Facilities, Services or Regulation

- Alley maintenance
- Rental signs in older neighborhoods for student rental are allowed to be displayed for 6 to 8 months. Why? This deteriorates the character of the neighborhood. Other signs must be removed within a much shorter time.
- Code enforcement / annual inspections
- Need accountability of the property owner; licensing might be a great start.
- Information is needed about what is possible, what help is available and who could do the rehabilitation work
- Ten-foot weeds in the neighboring yard (called the Health Department multiple times but got no results)
- Can one find results after a police call on a situation that they took control of?
- Three sofas on the first four houses on the south side of the block
- I believe that snow removal in alleys is important, especially when trying to attract and help home owners. Requiring home owners or renters (ha!) to clear the alleys after a snow will potentially drive owners (especially older owners) out of older neighborhoods where alley access is the only access to the property. Also, important for emergency vehicle not have access.
- Garbage issues
- Maintain cooperation with neighborhoods, the university, the Health Department and the police
- Alleys
- Snow is left on the sidewalks, then it freezes
- Summer back yard fires that result in smoke in our house

Development

- Create a neighborhood development corporation
- We are home owners in the Randall Park Neighborhood. We have an old, beautiful house that we don't want to see turned into a rental. We will be trying to sell in the near future, but I am afraid that we won't be able to sell. We want to sell because of the noise and transience of the neighborhood. It is tiring.

Others

- Encourage more block parties