

# Eau Claire Neighborhood Revitalization Summit

## Meeting Notes

February 11, 2016, 7:00 PM  
RCU Corporate Center, Community Room  
200 Riverfront Terrace, Eau Claire

1. Darryl Tufte, Director of Community Development provided a brief welcome and explained the purpose of the meeting.
2. Bill Weber, with Weber Community Planning, gave introductions for the four guest speakers.
  - a. Lucy Thompson, Principal City Planner, St. Paul Planning & Economic Development
  - b. Maria Prioletta, Director, Milwaukee Neighborhood Improvement Development Corp.
  - c. Will Sebern, Director, Layton Boulevard West Neighbors, Milwaukee
  - d. Karl Green, University of Wisconsin Extension - Community Natural Resource and Economic Development Agent and the La Crosse Neighborhood Development Corp.
3. Presentations were given about *What Are Other Cities Doing?* (Background, current local challenges and programs.)
  - a. **St. Paul's Experience**
    - Lucy Thompson provided an overview of St. Paul's neighborhood planning principles. The City takes an active role in community engagement, planning and urban design, regulation, development financing, and infrastructure investment.
    - There are 17 District Councils, each having their own board, neighborhood plan and some have a non-profit community development corporation (CDC). They are funded mostly by foundation grants and to a lesser extent by the City's declining Community Development Block Grants.
    - St. Paul has a Design Center that stimulates economic and community development through good high quality urban design.
    - Zoning regulation has become more flexible on land use categories (e.g., Traditional Neighborhood Districts) and standards have been adopted to guide urban design.
    - Neighborhood revitalization is funded by a variety of means: Tax Incremental Financing, a half-cent sales tax Neighborhood STAR program which offers matching loans and grants for improvements, housing assistance programs, funds from State and Met Council, partner CDCs, and a Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers.
    - The City also uses infrastructure investments such as roads, sidewalks, street trees, etc. as a way to improvement neighborhood conditions and encourage reinvestment.
  - b. **Milwaukee's Experience**
    - Maria Prioletta stated their priorities are increasing owner occupancy, improving older housing stock and declining resources, and addressing disinvestment and nuisance properties.
    - The Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) is housed at the City but operates as a non-profit with an independent board. It acquires properties, applies for grants, pilots new housing programs, and has lending partnerships to implement new loan products.

- The City uses strategies such as: 1) Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN) in a 3-yr. concentrated 6-12 block area that provides technical assistance to residents and forgivable loans, 2) Community Improvement Project Programming that offers matching grants for improvement projects, and 3) Tax Incremental Districts that capture residential around major projects to provide financial resources for home rehabilitation.

**c. Layton Boulevard West Neighborhoods, Milwaukee's Experience**

- Will Sebern explained the School Sisters of Saint Francis in 1995 wanted to stabilize and revitalize the Silver City, Burnham Park and Layton Park neighborhoods.
- Ninety-four percent of total investment has come since 2005 when they moved from an Asset-based vs. deficit-based approach.
- Lessons learned are listening to neighbors is paramount, strongly marketing the positives of the neighborhood to increase home-ownership, investing in the neighborhood as opposed to providing charity and leveraging opportunities to cluster impact.
- They have done this by creating a quality of life plan/vision, offering small home improvement loans for roofing and siding, forming block clubs and working on block by block projects, touting historic properties and good schools, and using a concept call Healthy Neighborhoods (a place that makes sense to invest in emotionally and financially).

**d. La Crosse's Experience**

- Karl Green explained they faced a serious problem in providing city services with continued tax base decline due to the amount of aged and lower-valued housing. The public and private sector rallied and created several programs to improve housing.
- Examples from the public sector include the formation of a City Revitalization Commission, County demolition and disposal grants, community policing, and education to the private sector about the urgent need.
- Some examples from the private sector include La Crosse Promise and Lenders Consortium which provides post-secondary scholarships to those seeking homeownership and a needed capital pool to avoid mortgage insurance and increase the lender debt/equity ratio to buy homes or redevelop.
- A La Crosse Neighborhood Development Corporation was also created with many stakeholders such as the medical community. They are still developing their mission.
- A joint La Crosse/Gunderson Health System Development Corporation created a Tax Incremental Financing district to improve housing around the hospital. Now looking for a catalyst project.
- Project ReNew was created as a volunteer service to fund home improvements and cleanups.

4. Panel discussion with Neighborhood Task Force members and guest speakers.

- There were questions about how the State bill being proposed for restricting landlord licensing might affect the ability to inspect housing. It was clarified that the bill has not yet passed. Further amendments are possible.
- It was stated the Eau Claire City-County Health Department is meeting with stakeholders to possibly devise a program that would keep within law and meet the

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- objective of providing quality housing. Mr. Green stated La Crosse created a landlord license program over two years ago.
- Questions came on how Tax Incremental Financing can work to include housing. Ms. Prioretta stated by law after a district is paid off it can be extended one-year to fund 75% affordable housing anywhere in the city. Mr. Green stated La Crosse extended a half mile radius outside of their airport TIF to do similar.
  - Ms. Thompson answered a question on how St. Paul's District Councils work. She said they all have boards that forward recommendations on projects and plans. Elected City Council members-covering seven wards-represent the interests of the various districts.
  - There were questions about how to zone to allow for more commercial flexibility inside residential neighborhoods. Ms. Thompson stated St. Paul's development is mostly patterned off the streetcar so it faces less distance and separation of uses. Yet, they have amended their code to create Traditional Neighborhood Districts and mixed use zoning to accommodate both residential and commercial in compatible ways. They promote good urban design, walking and biking, while de-emphasizing the automobile's footprint. Walkable urbanism has a very prominent focus in their planning method. They are also planning with the 8-80 Cities concept in mind, where neighborhoods should have options for young and old.
  - There was a question regarding Milwaukee's rental housing and how they are trying to improve it. Ms. Prioretta stated the City created a new Targeted Investment Neighborhood (TIN) west of downtown to try to improve rentals. Other strategies suggested were landlord compacts or rent discounts so tenants maintain property.
  - Concern was raised about the financial difficulty to reinvest in older areas. Buying and clearing property for redevelopment adds a lot of expense before constructing new. Mr. Green stated La Crosse's demolition and disposals grants are a way to help overcome this barrier. It covers surveying and lateral costs as well. He is also seeing a consolidation in property management firms in the community and that may help.
  - A question about promoting neighborhood identity and marketing was raised. Mr. Sebern stated Milwaukee has created signs and logos for each neighborhood. It is very important to listen to the residents before creating branding and marketing material. They have promoted the Layton Boulevard West Neighborhoods and its housing via videos and family-friendly events. He stated the best scenario for maintaining healthy neighborhoods is people owning homes and landlords living near their rentals.
  - There was a question about allowing housing cooperatives in neighborhoods. Ms. Thompson stated there are a few instances in St. Paul she knows of where it works well with artists and senior living arrangements. In her experience they can help neighborhoods because they are usually working cooperatively and for a communal benefit. St. Paul is also looking at "aging in community" strategies as a way to keep people connected to their neighborhood.
5. Mr. Tufte thanked attendees and guest speakers for their time and gave closing remarks. The meeting ended at approximately 9:30 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 10 at 7 p.m.