

Third Ward Neighborhood Plan Update

Steering Committee

Meeting #1 NOTES

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, Red Cedar Room (basement)

400 Eau Claire St, Eau Claire, WI 54701

Attendance:

Steering Committee members Peter Hable, Ann Francis, Peggy O'Halloran, Peggy Osthelder, Amy Pleski, Steve Ronstrom, Kevin Rosenberg, Gloria Song; City staff Ned Noel; Others, none.

Agenda

1. Introductions

Mr. Noel gave ground rules for conducting a successful meeting, and then asked members to make introductions and to share why their neighborhood is a meaningful place. Members had lived in the Third Ward for less than a year to up to almost 30 years. They liked the history, architectural character, quality and diversity of housing, proximity to downtown, the YMCA, the university and tech college, that there is nature, green space, trails, and that it is a very walkable place. Minutes from the previous Third Ward Neighborhood Plan Task Force were passed out. Mr. Noel noted the earlier group outlined 10 issues and can serve as a base to work from.

2. Neighborhood Planning in Eau Claire

Mr. Noel explained neighborhood plans are 10-15 year guides for neighborhoods and the City to identify problems and to develop cooperative strategies to help stabilize and promote the revitalization of the neighborhood. Main clients include the neighborhood and City. He explained the process to develop a plan with key areas including: forming a steering committee, identifying issues, engaging the public/residents, developing goals and strategies, and writing the plan. Both the Plan Commission and City Council must approve after public hearings and then the plan is adopted as a component of the City's master plan or Comprehensive Plan. The process takes about a year and is funded and led by the City.

3. Brief Demographic Background

Mr. Noel shared some demographics. There are approximately 1,227 housing units in the neighborhood. About 40% of Third Ward's housing is older than 1939, 50% built between 1940 and 1969, and 10% from 1970 to 2012. Rental Occupancy has hovered around 60% for the last 4 decades. Generally, Third Ward has less outward housing structural defects than other central city neighborhoods. Per ESRI, Inc.'s Community Analyst census data, using the most current household (HH) demographics, the Median HH Income was \$35,325, Average HH Income \$57,838, Poverty Status was at 37% (or 467 of 1,263 HH), HH size 2.22, and Median Age was 24.5. Race was 94% white with no other race above 2%. For transportation, those who bicycled were 2%, walked 18%, used transit 2.5%, drove-alone 70%, carpooled 4.2%, and worked at home 2.65%.

Members asked for better data on rental and ownership of housing and to then examine the various blocks with higher rates. They also stated the plan should consider different age groups and how that relates to occupancy tenure and income issues. Mr. Noel stated census data may provide more detailed insights at the block level but he will pull City Assessment data to compare rental and owner properties.

4. Neighborhood Engagement Strategies

Several options were discussed on how to make sure there is meaningful engagement of residents for input gathering. Members were in agreement that a mailed flyer listing options would be most useful. Mr. Noel will share an example from another neighborhood. Specific strategies preferred were deploying an electronic survey (with hard copies available), holding focus groups and office hours, and reaching out to the schools.

5. What are the key success factors for Third Ward?

Members stated that the plan needs to be actionable and not sit on the shelf. Previous successes of the 2001 plan should be listed to understand what was done and what to continue. Larger goals, new ideas and strategies should be prioritized, for example through an implementation impact matrix. The plan should respond to specific geographic areas so that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The northern section of the neighborhood is different in density and occupancy tenure than the southern. There was concern though for segregating the different parts and instead to seek flexibility. There was discussion also about how to support the small business cluster at Washington Street and Farwell Street. Members voiced that it is very important to be committed to maintaining and or improving ownership rates while being realistic that student and other renters will choose the neighborhood because of its proximity to UWEC and downtown.

6. Existing Issues

Member concerns related to making the neighborhood a place of visual and hands-on interest, that the architectural legacy and character of the housing needs to be protected, and that redevelopment, especially near the downtown be tasteful and respectful in scale and density to what is existing. As for public spaces and infrastructure, parks like Demmler Park should be enhanced, a direct and safe bike path should be provided to downtown. There was discussion on how parking and traffic issues need to be addressed better. For example, a time limit or permit program for residents-only could be options that some members had seen in other

college cities. Finally, there was concern about the aging population and how to help them 'age in place'; whether by allowing accessory dwelling units or by other community-supported means.

7. Plan Next Meeting

Members agreed to hold the next meeting in late October and to focus on issue identification and prioritization. They wished to wait to hear from specific experts on topics such as parking and traffic, the University's plans, Health Department's new rental registration program, policing matters, etc. until after the issues meeting.

Submitted by Ned Noel, Associate Planner, City of Eau Claire