

Third Ward Neighborhood Plan Update

Steering Committee

Meeting #2 NOTES

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

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

North Conference Room, City Hall (North Wing, 2nd Floor)

203 S. Farwell St., Eau Claire, WI 54701

Attendance:

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

Agenda

1. Welcome & Updates

Attendees introduced themselves. Mr. Noel stated there are no updates from the Harding Avenue and Jefferson Street study but the City Traffic Engineer should be communicating the results to the neighborhood soon.

2. Review of Last Plan

Mr. Noel provided an audit review of the 2001 plan. While many projects in the plan were completed, some were not and others had mixed results. The biggest accomplishments were a residential down-zoning from R-2 to R-1 to promote home ownership, enacting a rental registration program (launches 2018) for housing/property upkeep, discouraging UWEC campus growth into the neighborhood, reconstructing Water Street Bridge, Thorp Commons and Summit Avenue, and maintaining an active neighborhood association. Outstanding concerns were rental rates, lack of program funding for home ownership/improvements, traffic, parking, safety, and UWEC's campus plans.

3. Map Review

A 2016 occupancy map was reviewed. Members noted how there are more rental parcels compared to the 1999 map in the existing plan. Other plan maps, such as land use and zoning

were compared in discussing the issue and why the residential down-zoning of the high density area was not completed. Mr. Noel explained that that issue is complex and would have to be studied parcel by parcel in order to determine if rezoning makes sense. For example, down zoning to Residential Mixed (RM) may produce unintended real estate consequences with apartments becoming non-conforming.

The proposed map update to the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian plan was also reviewed. Members generally agreed that bike lanes or sharrows on State Street by the university is problematic. Wilson Street was seen as a good alternative for on-street bicycling.

4. Issue Identification

a. Land Use

Members discussed down-zoning of the northern higher density area. Density often leads to more rentals, traffic and parking concerns. Consensus was reached to study the area for the best solution(s) as a policy statement in the plan update. Members agreed to preserve the R-1 existing zoning areas to keep status quo and also to improve the neighborhood commercial corner. In general, there was frustration on the part of the neighborhood with the lack of clear plans the university has for campus development and how it will affect the neighborhood. There was speculation that UWEC may create more parking along State Street since they own the three historic houses, but since the houses are landmarked they cannot be torn down.

b. Transportation

Members agreed UWEC needs to not rely on the adjacent neighborhoods to meet their parking needs and correction to handle this responsibility is needed. The transit deal for students does not seem to be working or other bike and carpooling initiatives. Further, adjustments made by the City so students do not park near driveways have only pushed parking deeper into the neighborhood. Traffic generated by seeking parking stalls and peak congestion were major concerns. The Third Ward does contain major connections through the neighborhood but some use local streets as shortcuts. State Street pedestrian safety/crossing concerns was brought up and needs to be improved since some of the existing measures- such as the middle lane island refuge zone- is confusing to motorists and pedestrians.

c. Public Services

Neighborhood parks were noted as adequate but could be improved such as Kappus Park. Putnam Park was discussed but no changes were suggested.

d. Quality of Life

Members asked how the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood's Neighborhood Development Corporation is progressing. Mr. Noel stated they formed a board of directors and are now looking to target a block or two for reinvestments. NeighborWorks America® was cited as a resource that could help with an example home owner improvement program. A member was familiar with it in Lincoln, Nebraska. Something like this organization could also help neighborhoods with grant writing experience and running home improvements loan programs.

5. Neighborhood Engagement Strategies

Members agreed to launch the survey and other major engagement strategies after the holidays. They also wanted staff to meet with the university to seek out answers to their development plans.

6. Plan Next Meeting

No definite next meeting date was set, but it will most likely occur after survey results are collected. The approximately time frame will be in February.

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