

Comprehensive Plan Update  
Aldermanic District 3 Neighborhood Meeting Summary

October 23th, 2014 – 6:30 PM  
University of Wisconsin Stevens Point  
College of Natural Resources (TNR Building – Room 122)  
800 Reserve Street, Stevens Point, WI 54481

PRESENT: Community Development Director Michael Ostrowski, Associate Planner Kyle Kearns, Community Development Department Intern Kelly Strombom, District 3 Alderperson Michael O'Meara, Plan Commissioner Dave Cooper, Carl Rasmussen, Brandi Makuski, Josh Raether, Neil Prendergast, Chelsey Ehlers, Elizabeth Deitelhoff, George Acker, Perry Pazdernik, Jim Cuddy, Justin Johnson, Cindy Nebel, Tori Jennings, Becky Wadleigh, Rick Whipp, Ann Whipp, Garrett Ryan, Lindsey Ryan, Joseph Hoover, Samantha Bickford, and Brady Stodola.

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Meeting Summary:

Community Development Director Michael Ostrowski and Associate Planner Kyle Kearns provided a brief presentation where they described the city's comprehensive plan update project and visioning tactics to establish an overall vision for the community. This included describing the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis (SWOT) to assist in gaining critical public feedback and input. Staff proceeded to provide examples of feedback and input which pertained to a small area or neighborhood, or to the entire community, citing that an overall vision is derived from an examination of the entire community.

A questionnaire was provided, of which can be obtained online, which included nine questions for participants and attendees to answer freely or use as a guiding document when providing input and feedback. Staff then led discussion amongst three small groups using the questionnaire as a guide. Responses to the questionnaire and feedback gathered by staff from public comment and conversation within the small groups have been summarized below for each question.

QUESTIONS & RESPONSES FROM QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. What do you see as the community's major strengths and assets?
  - Diversity of parks – we have parks for all ages
  - Pent up demand and energy to be a part of the vision of change
  - Downtown development – diversity, opening up of streets, and increase in parking
  - Green Circle Trail
  - UWSP in the neighborhood – diversity, programming, culture, and arts
  - Good businesses
  - Diversity is improving because of UWSP and current businesses
  - People get involved with local issues
  - Wisconsin River – it adds recreational opportunities
  - Surrounding agriculture
  - Lots of space
  - Good water and wastewater treatment
  - High rankings amongst polls rating best City's in the nation
  - Outdoor recreational opportunities
  - Downtown daily farmer's market
  - Free community events: weekly, monthly & annually
  - Theater – Sentry, university, parks

- Stevens Point Area Coop
- Public transit opportunities – bus routes
- Responsive City Hall – can talk to local officials
- Small community, small town feel, close knit
- Good mix of people
- Family friendly-Many activities for the whole family
- Good environmental awareness
- Good community (County and City) to grow old in
- Progressive
- City is the right scale to allow people to have a voice
- Positive contact with students through arts and entertainment

2. What do you see as the community's major weaknesses or liabilities?

- Wisconsin River is underutilized in terms of development
- Contaminated soils downtown
- Communication between UWSP, the City, and residents within the neighborhood
- Implementation of good ideas – always have an excuse on why things cannot be implemented
- Emerson School site
- Water Street and its blockage of the Wisconsin River from the downtown
- Upkeep of rental housing.
- Misuse or over occupancy of rental housing
- Lack of one bedroom student housing
- Denials of off campus housing, competition would drive up standards
- Lobbying power of the landlord association – they have veto power
- Expensive and low quality student housing options. Everything close to the campus is expensive or low quality. Other campuses have better options. We need higher standards.
- Food and restaurant options
- Arts and culture
- Limited entertainment
- Division Street gateway – bad aesthetics and improvements
- Home inspections across the City
- Lack of university advertisement of public events and collaboration
- Constrained geography regarding growth – west = river & floodplain – south = municipalities – east & north = Town of Hull
- Limited options and degrading student housing
- Slum lord issue
- Home stock is poor and not diverse enough for all income groups
- Many homes in disrepair in the City-blighting of the community, losing value
- Laws for rentals should be enforced
- Students don't have a voice in poor rental situations
- Lack in activities for students during off school hours and vacations
- Need more cost effective public transportation
- Establish better mass transit to larger cities for students(ex. Badger bus line)
- Lack of development for jobs and UWSP students
- Should be more community partnerships with UWSP, Sentry and Skyward for working with students

- Entertainment and summer activities needed to keep students in Stevens Point
- Lack of a public theater, civic theater
- Lack a public space for advertising public events
- Lack of a downtown hardware store and grocery store
- Lack of safe infrastructure for biking and walking throughout the city
- Lack of ethnic diversity
- Elderly housing should be centralized for walkability to grocery stores and other amenities

3. What do you see as the community's major opportunities

- Connect Wisconsin River with the downtown
- Reach out to other cultures to increase diversity
- Continue working on aesthetic improvements
- Work on area, creativity, landscaping
- Historic homes - Expanding Historic Districts
- Vitality of downtown
- Create a downtown link to UWSP and Old Main Neighborhood Association
- Program for rental conversion to single family
- Mixture of student housing
- Improvement of laws and ordinances that enforce multiple-family dwellings
- Jobs, development, and expanding businesses.
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing on several streets around the university
- Improved safety and ordinances on historic buildings
- Increase in police force and those on duty
- Bus routes and timings
- Working to keep students and families in the community and attracting others
- Designation of people to inspect in each neighborhood annually
- Get students involved in their neighborhoods
- Adoption of the County's Bike/Pedestrian plan
- Build good housing for students and they may want to stay in the community
- Build more multiuse buildings that have housing, shops and restaurants all in one
- Division street needs a facelift geared towards UWSP students
- Make UWSP more visible as part of the community and as a public green space
- Market family friendly home ownership
- Mid-State Technical College moving opens up more traffic and opportunities for development in the downtown area
- Identify barriers to limited walkability/bankability

4. What do you see as the community's major threats?

- Conversion of single family homes to rentals.
- Instability of the paper industry
- Restrictions on healthcare
- Railroad – potential for a catastrophe to occur – are proper safety and planning mechanism in place
- Housing, if opportunities remain stagnant, especially around the university
- Street racing of vehicle on local roads

5. What is your dream for our community?

- Small town feeling to a certain extent
- Downtown revitalization, farmers market, events. Downtown is the crown jewel
- Growth with a purpose
- Small pocket events and neighborhoods
- Quality development as opposed to quantity
- Entertainment in neighborhoods
- Art show on former Emerson School site
- Partner with UWSP to improve the relationship of owners and students – get to know your neighbors
- Everson School site to be developed or improved, including adding bathrooms.
- Infill residential and commercial development, combating blight, and adding commercial development
- Development around the university catering to the areas characteristics and students, including the creation of jobs and residential accommodations
- Bicycle routes in downtown and to and from key areas of the City, such as the university and industrial or retail parks
- Beatification of the area around and in the university campus
- Adding single family housing
- Increased quality of life
- Adding life to the downtown area through arts, and entertainment
- Modernize the riverfront area and utilize its potential though beaches, concerts, restaurants
- Revitalize vacant and unused parcels of land – Lullaby site & Emerson School site
- Emerson school area needs a basketball court redo, and programming of community events
- Maintain the cost of living by creating jobs that pay a living wage
- Increase walk/pedestrian activity to stop reliance on vehicles
- Build a convention center and market Stevens Point as the “Meeting Place” for Wisconsin because we are the center most point in the state
- Create a shuttle service to and from airports
- Invest in buildings to maintain the historic feel of Stevens Point

6. What kind of community do we want to create?

- Safe, walkable, and comfortable – this is important to parents of students at UWSP.
- Better Division Street with additional development
- Remove slum lords
- Enforcement of student housing and inspections
- Combat price increases for residential rentals when living standards do not increase
- Create agencies that aid in welcoming new diverse groups (Hmong, Hispanic, etc.)
- Celebrate different cultures in Stevens Point with workshops, handouts, and marketing
- Safe, unique and affordable

7. What would you like to see change?

- More mixed-use buildings, especially on Division Street – replicating downtown
- Improve street lighting to improve safety
- Safer biking and walking – create bike lanes and educate about the rules of the road for bikers
- Less cars

- More bike parking, including covered structures for the winter
- Bike lane from UWSP to the downtown (e.g. Inner City Green Circle)
- Increase bike crossings
- Safer options to cross Division Street
- Aesthetic improvements on Division Street which should also help calm traffic
- UWSP's attitude towards parking – stop creating so much parking, build up, not out
- Stronger enforcement of ordinances
- Required licenses for residential rental units of any size
- More living options for students near campus at lower costs and good quality
- Adopt a chronic nuisance ordinance
- Education from the university's student government association addressing off-campus living
- Portage County bike/pedestrian plan
- Bridge across the Plover River (Hofmeister Dr. to Golla Rd) to create connectivity to Hwy 10 businesses
- Change Division from Northpoint Drive to 4<sup>th</sup> Ave to make it more vibrant and geared towards students
- Have a zero setback on Division with parking in the back
- Develop a business incentive to attract new businesses
- Lower rents in business spaces so its affordable for new business owners
- Change zoning on 1<sup>st</sup> block of Main to allow development (Division to Main Street)
- Make downtown businesses approachable for all generations
- Do a better job enforcing decent student housing
- Create a student housing standard

8. What would success look like?

- Activities for children
- Guest speakers in the city at different locations
- Getting Farmshed started
- Keep library downtown
- Housing around campus that students want to live in
- Make an entrance to the City from the north – Division Street, which currently is ugly
- Increased building enforcement in historic neighborhoods
- Unusual things going on to get young people involved
- Downtown incubator – grow businesses
- Bike path/trail from UWSP to downtown
- Continuous entertainment and activities
- Greater utilization of former Emerson School site
- Increased activities
- Investment in properties
- Fixing homes around campus
- Blight clearance and improvement of residential housing in the central city
- Children stay in Stevens Point for their entire life
- Cultural events
- People walking everywhere

9. Any other additional comments or feedback?

- Spruce up Division Street
- Draw additional businesses like the micro winery
- Bring in businesses like Chipotle, Pot Belly's, and Pier One
- Increase development on Division Street and the Lullabye property
- More historic districts
- Add mixed use development in strategic areas and neighborhood around the city