

Comprehensive Plan Update
Aldermanic District 9 Neighborhood Meeting Summary

December 17, 2014 – 6:30 PM
Portage County Annex Building – Conference Room 1 & 2 (1st Floor)
1462 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481

PRESENT: Community Development Director Michael Ostrowski, Associate Planner Kyle Kearns, Eighth District Alderperson Tony Patton, Neil Prendergast, Mary Ann Laszewski, Curtis Konopacky, Robert Link, Carl Debolt, Shirley Debolt, Tori Jennings, Garrett Ryan, Kristy Seblonka, Mathew Brown, Mary McComb, Jeff Steinweber, and Cathy Dugan.

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 within two 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?
 - Walkable and bikable community and in district
 - Quality of life and cost of living
 - Generous community – people giving
 - Family friendly – generations of kindness and generosity have been passed down
 - Main Street library
 - UWSP and Technical College
 - Sentry Insurance Company
 - The river waterway and parks along the river
 - Job growth and economic development – much better than Wisconsin Rapids
 - Central location
 - Historic districts and properties (fire station)
 - Façade grant
 - Housing stock
 - Traditional neighborhood district
 - Public parks
 - Strong support of arts and culture
 - Public transportation
 - Green Circle Trail
 - Schmeeckle Reserve

- Easy access to rural areas and natural resources - countryside
- Downtown improvement – healthy and vibrant
- Wide variety of family friendly activities, festivals, and community events
- KASH Playground
- Safety
- Drinking water
- Quaintness, home feel
- Schools
- Quality of life, low cost
- Good community food system, access to a lot of growers.
- Farmers market
- Proximity to other communities, centrally located
- Central Wisconsin Airport
- Highway 10 and I-39
- The city is on the way to other communities,
- Churches
- Historical background
- Strong Polish culture
- People are hardworking
- Library

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

- Very few living wage jobs
- Division Street (Business 51) and Hwy 10 – need multi-modal and safe thoroughfares
- City debt
- Flood zone and insurance
- High food prices
- Deteriorated multi-family housing and historic boarding homes
- Increasing cost for university events
- Developments on the City's fringes
- Unused vacant sites and buildings
- Larger historic homes converted into rentals
- Parking on lawns
- Two unrelated persons allowed to live together with not license required
- Continued loss of aesthetics in district and community
- Backyard converted into parking
- Parking enforcement on local streets
- Lack of ordinance enforcement for shoveling
- Aging infrastructure
- Land for business growth
- Berkshire Hathaway has little room to grow downtown
- Parking downtown
- Access to the Wisconsin River, too much concrete
- Angle parking downtown (some like it)
- Massive parking lots are an eyesore
- Plowing the sidewalks on the Clark Street bridge

- Railroad crossings, trains are always blocking them
- Lack of land for development
- Aging population
- Major retail is all on the east side and in the Village of Plover
- Civic engagement
- People are resistant to change

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

- Increase in low to moderate income housing – organic housing
- Sustainability initiatives
- Local food, economies and agriculture
- Public engagement
- Small businesses – opportunity to leverage existing businesses
- Improved relationship with the county
- Filling of vacant buildings (former Cops & Fox Theater)
- Growth in the East Park Commerce Center
- More responsive government
- Standards for aesthetics and house maintenance
- Incentives or assistance for maintenance and upkeep of homes for low income property owners
- Incorporation of fines for deteriorated properties
- Pocket parks within community and in the east side of the 9th district, with a pavilion
- Infill development
- Enforcement of garbage and junk
- Life guards at parks
- Reduced fees for public pool
- Increased police force, specifically officers on duty
- Combat of alcohol related problems around the UWSP campus
- Improved relations between City staff and UWSP to address problems, needs and for planning
- Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on Business Highway 51
- Improved connectivity from 9th District to downtown
- Wisconsin River; development to commercial splitting the recreation and commercial
- Parking ramp next to Shopko
- Fox Theater restoration and use
- Improved relationship with neighboring communities – agriculture in the country for more local products

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

- Too forward on growth (at all costs) – lose identity
- Debt
- Inability to maintain infrastructure in good working order
- "Dead spots" throughout the City
- Cost of energy – need to build better
- Increases in railroad blocking roads and acting as a barrier
- Business Highway 51 road reconstruction project
- Fringe development creating a lack of focus on center city and infill areas – sprawl
- Residential growth in the Village of Plover

- Exodus of UWSP students for Stevens Point to the Village of Plover
 - UWSP growth and/or lack thereof – competition among UW colleges
 - Limited relationship between UWSP and the City
 - Existing and possible increased parking within and around downtown – act as a barrier for transportation
 - Resistance to change
5. What is your dream for our community?
- Slow and steady growth
 - People with different backgrounds, populations and ages
 - Good quality of life and interaction amongst community
 - Quality of place
 - Maintaining youth after high school and college – offering jobs and activities
 - Bikable and Walkable
 - High density
 - Improved homes and neighborhoods
 - Prosperous community
 - Successful businesses
 - More public space and maintenance of existing public space
 - Maintaining connectivity
 - Increase diversity – welcoming community
 - Revitalization
6. What kind of community do we want to create?
- Fair
 - Faith, trust and respect in leaders
 - Diverse population
 - A regional market for central Wisconsin
 - Increased development of "third places," not work or home but a separate place to spend time within the community
7. What would you like to see change?
- More respectful government – fairness
 - Faith and trust in leaders
 - More Main Street parking and storefront relocation allowing business expansion
8. What would success look like?
- Decrease in poverty
 - More people wanting to live here
 - High growth and low unemployment, with high paying jobs and an increase in the median family income
 - Increase incomes
 - People want to live here
9. Any other additional comments or feedback?

- Parking lot across from Belt's needs a curb-cut for sidewalk access to avoid pedestrian access within the driveway.
- We need an indoor soccer complex