

## WHITEWATER ZONING UPDATE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

The following bullets summarize comments made during the stakeholder interviews for the City of Whitewater's Zoning Update. The interviews were held November 9 and 10, 2011 and included a cross-section of public and private stakeholders in the community including: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Downtown Whitewater, Inc., banks/lenders, realtors and brokers, landlords, developers, and various neighborhood associations.

Individuals Interviewed included:

Mitch Simon  
Chancellor Telfer  
Frank Bartlett  
James Caldwell  
John Kachel  
John Tincher  
Bob Freiermuth  
Matt Kuehl  
Ed Kowalski  
Terry Larson  
Mike Kachel  
Tamara Brodnicki  
Geoff Hale

Chris Grady  
Kim Adams

About 20 residents from various neighborhoods:  
(Historic Starin Park Neighborhood Association, Parkcrest Neighborhood Association, south of campus)

The summary list of issues on the following pages is not quantitative, but qualitative, and meant to illustrate the range of topics discussed. \* *designates a possible zoning change*

## **UNIVERSITY HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION**

### *Current Location of Off-Campus Housing*

- Freshman and sophomores are required to live on-campus. The university captures about 92% of the freshman and 77% of the sophomores.
- West of campus was preferred by most groups for student housing.
- West of campus includes a variety of apartment buildings and converted single family structures to rental units.
- South of Main Street/campus includes a variety of large apartment buildings and converted single family structures to rental.
- Historic single family neighborhood immediately east of campus, Historic Starin Neighborhood, continues to experience some conversions of single family structures to rental units.

### *Low Density/Conversion Housing*

- City should provide a map of owner-occupied and rental housing units, properties with maintenance concerns, and parent-owned parcels (if available) for an analysis of clusters and neighborhood impacts.
- Residents are concerned about the conversion of single family structures to rental units and the negative impact this is having on some of the neighborhoods.
- The overlay district in the Starin neighborhood should be maintained, and enforced, to prevent no more than two unrelated individuals in the residential structures. The overlay district should be discussed to determine if appropriate for other neighborhoods. \*
- There were mixed opinions about conversions of single family structures to rental units south of campus – some support the focus of student housing in this area to preserve owner-occupied units in other areas of the City, some residents do not support conversions.
- R-2 lot requirements should be reviewed to determine if there are areas of the City where minimum lot sizes should accommodate conversion of single family structures to duplex structures. \*
- Housing south of campus is aging and has maintenance issues, this area should include a rehabilitation focus.
- There was some discussion about R-2 zoning allowing one unrelated individual per original bedroom in the housing structure – added/converted bedrooms would not be part of the bedroom count. \*

### *High Density Housing*

- There was support for higher density housing west of campus where there is minimal impact to owner-occupied housing. \*
- Density of the R-3 zoning district should be better defined in the ordinance, and required parking reviewed. Some felt the parking requirements become excessive at higher densities. \*
- When the permitted density is followed a conditional use should not be required. \*
- Prince Street could be an opportunity for increased density housing. \*

### *General*

- Approximately 60% of housing units in Whitewater are rental. (structures without owners)
- Zoning should accommodate the potential for growth, both student and non-student growth.
- Current property owners should be protected.
- Increased downtown housing for both non-student and student tenants was supported.
- Maintenance enforcement is needed – perhaps larger fines after a certain period of time.

### **NON-UNIVERSITY HOUSING**

- It is less expensive to buy similar houses/properties in adjacent communities than in Whitewater. How can Whitewater compete?
- There were mixed opinions on the availability of new housing in the \$200,000 to \$400,000 price range. Some feel the properties are available when buyers are interested in building, others feel there are not sufficient options for the \$200,000 to \$400,000 price range.
- Non-conforming lots should be reviewed to determine if lot size and width minimums should be changed to make it easier for existing home owners to invest in their properties. \*

### *Funding Ideas*

- Ideas were discussed about how to provide incentives and funding for maintaining and improving properties.
  - 0% loan for rehab, requirements may include stated length of time you need to own the property, owner-occupied, payback at sale of property
  - Weatherization grants/façade grants
  - Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NID) should be explored

### **ZONING PROCESS – REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

#### *General*

- Too much back and forth during the review/approval process which makes it take longer than in adjacent communities.
- More staff review and approvals should be allowed. \*
- Regulations should be simplified so they are easier to understand. \*
- Permitted number of unrelated individuals should be stated for each residential district in the zoning ordinance. \*
- Some current conditional uses should be permitted uses – e.g.) if number of dwelling units proposed meets the density allowed, it should be a permitted use. \*
- Overall process should be streamlined. \*
- Rules should be developed for public comments at public hearings.
- Staff responses to submittals should be provided in a timely manner to allow the applicant to respond prior to the Plan Commission meeting.

## **PLANNED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (PCD) DISTRICT**

### *General*

- General agreement that PCD should not be used to unreasonably increase density.
- PCD should be used for mixed-use projects, innovative projects, odd shaped parcels, or when site issues affect the zoning requirements.
- Increased density should be discussed as part of an existing and new district. \*

## **DOWNTOWN**

### *Parking*

- There is sufficient parking in the downtown area, but it is not always evident where it is located. Signage should direct customers to public surface lots if there is no available street parking.
- On-street parking should be for customers. Store owners and employees should work with Downtown Whitewater, Inc. to identify off-street parking for employees.
- Weekend and overnight parking should be reviewed to allow guest and visitor parking.

### *Housing*

- Additional housing downtown has helped to improve the character in recent years.
- Additional housing adjacent to the downtown area was supported by most and seen as an opportunity to bring more customers.

### *Signage*

- The signage code should be reviewed to provide more options, including: \*
  - Off-premise signs
  - Interior window signs
  - Projecting signs
  - Mural signs
  - Directional signage
- The sign review process should be streamlined to allow staff review and approval for certain requests. \*