



**Minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Community Development Authority,
Common Council and Plan & Architectural Review Commission of the City of
Whitewater, Walworth and Jefferson Counties, Wisconsin**

February 9, 2022

The special meeting of the **Joint Meeting of the Community Development Authority, Common Council, and Plan and Architectural Review Commission** was called to order by Council President Lynn Binnie at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held virtually. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY MEMBERS PRESENT:** Allen, Smith, Aranda, Gleason, Singer; **COMMON COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** McCormick, Schreiber, Brown, Binnie, Majkrzak, Allen, Smith; **PLAN AND ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:** Binnie, Stone, Stanek, Hicks, Parker.

Vandewalle & Associates of Madison, Wisconsin was commissioned by the City to complete a City of Whitewater Housing Report. The purpose of the report was to provide an understanding of the existing housing crisis and to identify gaps and needs. Highlights of the report were:

- *Only 30% of the City's existing housing stock is owner-occupied.
- *On average, only seven new, single-family homes have been constructed per year in the past decade.
- *The older population in the City is increasing, and more than half of owner-occupied units are headed by someone over 55 years old.
- *35% of all housing units are occupied by a single person.
- *There is aging housing stock, with a lack of turnover.
- *There are low vacancy rates for owner-occupied units and a low existing, owner-occupied supply.
- *The median price for homes sold has increased by 17% the past two years.
- *There is enrollment decline in the Whitewater Unified School District and UW-W.
- *Zoning options to accommodate diverse new housing types are lacking (i.e. higher density, zero lot lines and infill).
- *A shortage of developers exists in Jefferson and Walworth Counties.
- *Better municipal partnerships are needed with developers. Municipal incentives are encouraged.
- *There is a shortage of missing middle housing (1-4 unit) for key demographics.

The study also indicated that nearly half of the City's households can afford a monthly housing cost of \$1,250 or more (30% of a \$50,000 annual income). Vandewalle indicated there is additional demand for houses that cost between \$200,000 - \$299,999, and that their projected demand indicates there is a need for 200 – 340 new housing units over the next decade. Based on 2019 figures, the median cost of rent was \$774 per month and the median cost of owner-

occupied housing units with a mortgage was \$1,440. In 2019, the City's median household income was \$36,176, with a per capita income of \$17,542. Both figures are much lower than the state and county's average due to the large student population in Whitewater. It was also noted that as of 2017, 48% of the City's households were cost burdened, meaning they spend greater than 30% of their average income on housing related costs. This figure is higher than averages for Jefferson and Walworth Counties and the State of Wisconsin overall. This indicates that many Whitewater residents are struggling to pay their rent or mortgage, and are forced to make choices related to other expenses in order to afford their housing costs.

In 2021, Vandewalle held interviews with local realtors, city staff, and Chamber of Commerce representatives. The following points were expressed:

*People interested in a single family owner occupied home in the City today are mostly first time home buyers or people looking to downsize. Opportunities in the \$200,000-\$300,000 range are being sought. People interested in a rental occupied home are mostly young professionals seeking a 1-2 bedroom unit that is clean, quiet, affordable and well kept, not located within a predominantly college student rental area.

*Issues with the condition of the housing stock were noted, requiring that buyers must put a significant investment into the property to make it livable long term.

*The price of rental units today is oriented toward college students, where multiple roommates split the rent to drive down their costs. However, a family on one income has trouble paying those rents.

Vandewalle's report indicated that the top overall priority for addressing the current housing situation is to increase the supply of single family housing units in the community through new units and rehabilitation of existing, aging housing stock. They recommend developing an action plan on how

to combat the existing housing issues. The City was encouraged to leverage the available resources, tools, and incentives the City can offer, and be a proactive partner to make new housing happen.

Recommendations included the allowance of smaller single-family housing; create and adopt new zoning districts; develop new and update existing Neighborhood Plans; permanently establish a Whitewater Housing Committee; set goals for the future that clearly define the number of housing units that need to be added to the community by a given year; and proactively work with landowners and pursue developer recruitment.

A public input session will be planned. It was moved by Allen and seconded by Majkrzak to adjourn the Common Council meeting. Motion carried by unanimous vote. It was moved by Gleason and seconded by Smith to adjourn the Community Development Authority meeting. Motion carried by unanimous vote. It was moved by Hicks and seconded by Stone to adjourn the Plan and

Architectural Review Commission meeting. Motion carried by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele R. Smith, Clerk