

Regent Neighborhood Association

University Avenue Corridor Recommendations Open House

November 14, 2012, 7–9 p.m., Best Western InnTowner

Registered Attendees: Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, LD Oakley, Chris Petit, Ann Sydnor, Karen Christianson, Karen Mittelstadt, Marcia Vandercook, Ronnie Hess, Betsy Greene, Mary Sarnowski, Ellen Steenhauer, Joyce Knutson, Darsi Foss, Sarah Canon, Tom Hirsch, Gary Brown, Amber Klein, David Kelso, Carla Mills, Kim, Joe Baldwin, Paul McGann, Kim Genich, Willa Schmidt, Jon Miskowski, Robbie Webber, Jean Parks, Susan Hollingsworth, Jeff Schimpff, Theresa Stabo, Pat Wood, Jule S., John Jacobs

I. Welcome (7–7:10pm)

- Welcome remarks were made by RNA board members Mary Czyszczak-Lyne, LD Oakley, and Chris Petit.

II. Recommendations (7:10–7:25pm)

- LD Oakley presented a summary of the University Avenue Corridor Recommendations draft.
 - The draft recommendation document is posted on the RNA Web site:
<http://www.regentneighborhood.org/docs/UAC-Recs-110612.pdf>
- A period of general questions followed the presentation:
 - How is “façade enhancement” of existing buildings facilitated (Part 7: Corridor and Streetscape Improvements)?
 - It was noted that the city provides some grant money for façade improvements.
 - Do the setback recommendations apply to entirely commercial buildings or also mixed-use?
 - Setbacks are defined for 1) residential buildings, and 2) mixed-use and/or entirely commercial buildings.
 - Were the owners of the apartment buildings in the neighborhood consulted on the recommendations that apply to their properties; was their input sought?
 - Betsy Greene stated that some outreach was made but that additional outreach is called for.
 - Who is the final decision-maker on building façade improvements; it seems to be subjective?
 - It was stated that the impetus for façade improvements is usually a change in ownership. Existing and new owners are able to request grant money from city to assist in improvement projects.
 - The intent of the provision in the recommendation document is to move away from the visual aspects of large walls abutting the sidewalk.
 - Does the document address parking lots in front of buildings?
 - The plan discourages the creation of parking between buildings and Old University Avenue in new developments.
 - What is the process for the plan from here; where does it go next?
 - LD Oakley explained that the open house was designed to present the draft recommendations to the neighborhood for discussion and feedback.
 - The RNA board will take the feedback gathered at the open house and additional comments received via the dedicated plan e-mail account (uacplan@gmail.com) to revise the recommendations.
 - Another open house/forum will be held to present the revised recommendations.

- Once the neighborhood and RNA board has completed its work on the plan, the plan will go to the city where it will run through the city’s planning process.
- Once/if approved by the city common council, the plan will be viewed as an amendment to the city’s comprehensive plan.
- Once/if adopted by the city, how is the plan implemented?
 - Some parts of the plan (e.g., building heights and setbacks, design guidelines) come into play when/if a developer comes to the city with a development request.
 - Other parts of the plan (e.g., business development, transportation and streetscape improvements), require action by the city and/or the neighborhood. The final plan that goes to the city, which will be reviewed at the second RNA open house, will have a section on implementation of the plan.
- What is the timeline for the process moving forward?
 - After the comment period (open house and e-mail comments), the board will review and revise the recommendations document.
 - Another open house/forum will be held to review the revised plan. This will be the complete plan, as opposed to the document discussed at the open house, which was merely the “recommendations” section of the plan. The second open house/forum will likely be in 2–3 months.
 - Once the additional feedback is considered, the plan will be “finalized” from the RNA’s perspective and it will be presented to the city.
 - The city staff will review the plan and will circulate it to appropriate city agencies/boards.
 - The plan commission will make a recommendation to the city common council.
 - The city common council will vote to approve the plan.
 - The process, once the plan reaches the city, is 2–3 months.
- What is the scope of the plan? This is the University Avenue corridor only; what about other areas of the neighborhood, e.g., Farley and University?
 - The neighborhood can ask the city to address aspects of the neighborhood that fall outside of the corridor plan.

III. Small Group Discussions (7:25–7:40pm)

- Attendees broke into six (6) groups of 4–8 neighbors to discuss the following guiding questions:
 1. Introduce yourself (name, where you live, and in two sentences, what brought you to tonight's meeting).
 2. What recommendations do you favor in the list of draft recommendations, which recommendations are important to keep as they are?
 3. What recommendations do you dislike in the list of draft recommendations, which recommendations would you like to change? How would you suggest that they be changed?
- Attendees/groups were asked to note comments/ideas/feedback on each of the eight parts of the recommendations document and use Post-It notes to affix their comments to the appropriate board (eight boards, labeled with the eight parts of the plan, were located throughout the room).

IV. Clarifying Questions From Groups (7:50–8:30pm)

- Attendees brought forth questions/ideas/comments that arose during the small group discussions, namely:
 - Table 1
 - Definitely in support of area as a “destination”
 - In support of getting large vehicles/trucks out of the thoroughfare
 - Wish to maintain modest speeds on University Avenue

- Are there good ideas to be gained from the Dungeon-Monroe plan and the success of Monroe Street?
 - How can pedestrians and bikes be incorporated into the area while still maintaining reasonable vehicle traffic?
- Table 2
 - Like the “destination” aspects of the plan
 - Like movement away from tunnel/canyonization
 - Important to consider not just height, but height *and* stepback (height can be more agreeable if stepbacks are utilized)
 - Perhaps north side of the street is the area more suited to height and density
 - In Part 3: Specific Area Recommendations, Area 3: Center Block, question the comment of “No change expected.” This cannot be assumed.
 - Continued concern about traffic; if modifications are made to traffic flow/patterns/speed on University Avenue, the cars may move onto side streets in the neighborhood
 - Architectural diversity is good (e.g., in Part 3: Specific Area Recommendations, Area 5: South Side, the notation is made that “any new development should be compatible in scale, material, texture to existing buildings). This is not necessarily a good thing. Architectural diversity adds to the neighborhood.
- Table 3
 - Much agreement with the plan
 - Suggest that in Part 3: Specific Area Recommendations, Area 6: University Ridge, that height should be changed from “not higher than the peak of the First Congregational Church” to not higher than the *eaves* of the church.
 - Additional suggestion made that heights not be addressed in relation to another building but defined with specific heights.
- Table 4
 - Like the emphasis on green space, like the potential for commercial development throughout the corridor, like the focus on transportation improvements, like the focus on livability, like the encouragement of a business district
 - Want consistent bike lanes along corridor
 - Hate canyonization
 - Some thought the cul-de-sacs could take more density, though others like Paunack Place the way it is
 - Parking should be market driven
- Table 5
 - Filling empty commercial space would attract new business
 - University Avenue should be studied relative to Monroe Street
 - Question of if height restrictions will impact the mix of businesses
 - There are some apartment property owners who should be encouraged to improve the appearance and care/maintenance of their properties
- Table 6
 - Realization that some things are beyond the jurisdiction of the plan
 - Consider rail service to downtown
 - Be aware that Walnut Creek feeds into the lake; new developments should be encouraged/require to be mindful of this
 - Happy with a lot of things in the plan
 - Part 5: Transportation Improvements, Bus, comment made that UW is unlikely to resume campus bus service to the corridor

V. Three-Minute Comments (8:30–8:45pm)

- Members were encouraged to present public comments of three (3) minutes or less.
 - No public comments were made, but one additional question/comment was voiced:
 - Part 5: Transportation Improvements, Auto Traffic, the notation is made to “explore moving the truck route off of Old University Avenue.” Where would it go?
 - Realization that there are business along the corridor requiring deliveries, and also that the university and hospitals require truck access as well.
- Attendees were also invited to post comments (likes and dislikes) related to the eight parts of the plans on poster boards located throughout the room. Some posted comments were notes from the table discussions, others were individual insights/additions. Those posted comments read:
 - Part 1: Vision and Guiding Principles
 - Like: Transportation emphasis, improving zero-setback facades, leaving open for commercial in multiple locations
 - Like focus on livability, mixes of uses, and people
 - Public review process has been non-existent for 21 months (since Feb. 2011)
 - Likes: Destination, in general like sustainability and pedestrian friendly
 - Dislikes/Suggestions: Some liked, some not density and height; consider not just height but also setback-to-height ratio, don’t assume no change to area 3, really cut down on traffic
 - Part 2: Land Use, Building, and Site Specifications
 - Like: Adding more neighborhood, commercial, restaurants, etc.
 - Have city building codes require rooftop storm water collection and percolation to reduce sediment load to the lake via Walnut Creek
 - Part 3: Specific Area Recommendations
 - Change (my personal opinion): I think the cul-de-sac areas (Birge, Chamberlain, and Paunack) should allow high densities and taller buildings
 - Cul-de-sacs should allow lot assemblages; there are some crappy buildings and we could end up with something nice if we allowed lot assemblages
 - I have no problem with changes in center block; right now plans says “no change”
 - Area 6, University Edge: Building heights are the same as residential and don’t work/make sense for institutional buildings; university buildings on the edge can and should be higher
 - Some areas of north side of street should allow higher buildings; not sure exactly where, but in general, I think the north side should be more permissive
 - I like the Area 4 plan, especially preserving two-stories
 - Roof of Cong. Church: The maximum height should be to the eaves not the peak; if it is to the peak the church will be hidden
 - Part 4: Business Development ; Part 5: Transportation
 - Change: Get rid of all minimum parking requirements and allow market to decide how much is needed; additional residential parking simply attracts only people with cars
 - Form business association; this will help fill some of the empty storefronts and support the existing businesses
 - Advocate for efficient electric commuter rail in Middleton/Sun Prairie rail corridor to complement higher density
 - Work with university and city to build additional pedestrian-bicycle overpass from cul-de-sac to campus near Vet school
 - Curb cuts should not go at angle to traffic
 - Consider urban design district complimentary edges; gradual and smooth transition from University Avenue to Old University Avenue, no abrupt height changes

- Don't assume that commercial spaces will rent just because you want them to; don't force too much commercial
- I like the transportation plan and landscaping
- Don't like parking recommendations that on-site parking exceed requirements of zoning
- I have additional questions about pedestrian and biking allowances
- Keep encouraging trucks to use a different route
- Change: Encourage modest speeds; cars/trucks traveling too fast
- Like moving the truck route off
- Fill empty commercial space to attract business
- Mix of businesses and street cafes on Monroe; what makes it more walkable?
- Will height restrictions affect mix of businesses? Their buildings would support more density which will attract more people.
- Empty commercial spaces filled along corridor
- Some residential and apartment property owners should take better care of buildings and grounds, especially as you move farther east some get pretty shabby
- Part 6: Sustainability; Part 7: Streetscape Improvements
 - Question to Ask: How did Dudgeon-Monroe-Vilas create the Monroe corridor
 - Destination truck alternatives
 - Modest speed
 - Pedestrian/biking allowance
 - Off-ramps at Walnut on Campus Drive is not feasible per city engineering (not enough room)
 - Want greenspace/buffer along Campus Drive
- Part 8: Design and Sustainability Guidelines
 - Like: Pedestrian scale focus and focus on sustainability
 - Need space for local storm water infiltration
 - Keep destination

VI. Additional Comment Received by E-mail

- "I could not make this meeting, but have printed out the plan and will have some comments as I make my way through it. I have lived in the corridor for 30 years. I hope you can also make available minutes from last night's meeting? It would be interesting to see where the feedback is. The plan is largely from the homeowners and the business owners. I am a long-time renter and this constituency is rather left out. Thank you for making the plan available."

VII. Wrap-Up and Next Steps (8:45–9pm)

- LD Oakley concluded the open house with some final comments:
 - This is a human process, led by a group of neighbors
 - Encouraged all attendees to revisit Part 1: Vision and Guiding Principles, which highlights the goals/vision the recommendations hope to encourage
 - Attendees and neighbors are encouraged to send additional feedback/comments to the dedicated plan e-mail account (uacplan@gmail.com)
 - There will be another neighborhood meeting on the final document in early-mid 2013

Open House notes submitted by: Karen Mittelstadt