



TWNA Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2024, 7:00 p.m. UWEC Flesch Welcome Center, 2nd Floor

Call to Order: Chair Susan Miller, 7:00 PM

Roll Call not taken, this was not a Steering Committee Meeting.

64 community members present including most of Steering Committee.

Liasons: Jake Wrasse, UW-EC and Jeremy Gragert, Outgoing City Council, Aaron Brewster, incoming City Council, Andrew Werthmann, City Council, and Katherine Schneider from the County Board. (ECPD not able to attend)

1. Welcome: Chair Susan Miller, Susan opened the meeting and reminded participants it is being recorded.
2. Sharon Hildebrand the Treasurer gave the report that we have a balance of \$3,101.92. Sharon also spoke about our 2 biggest fundraiser and the need for help from the neighborhood. The 1st opportunity to help is on **Sunday April 28th**. It's the Eau Claire Marathon and a portion of the race goes through our neighborhood. Please go on the Marathon website and volunteer for the many opportunities they have available. The most important thing to remember is under volunteers to scroll down and put TWNA in the space for organization. We receive \$500.00 from the Marathon for volunteering. The 2nd opportunity to help is on **Sunday August 4th from 2:00 - 5:00pm**. This is our neighborhood Home Tour and we are in a real need for homes to tour! You can decide how much or how little of your home we are allowed to view. We do the research and will have Docent and a Guide to share information. Please consider opening your home for us. It was a successful fundraiser last year and we are hopeful it will be again. Contact Eileen Immerman at 3rdwardeauclaire@gmail.com.
3. The rest of the meeting was devoted to questions and answers from City Representatives that were generated at the informational meeting in March.

The city was represented by Ned Noel, City Planning Manager, Aaron Petrie, Associate City Planning Manager and Aaron White, Community Development Director.

There were 6 questions that were submitted by TWNA residents after listening to proposed City Zoning information..

Questions for City Leaders regarding Century Code update

1. Currently properties within the central, core neighborhoods are zoned individually R1 or R2. If an R1 property is to be changes to an R2 there is a permitting process involved that is made public. With the new zones of NR and UR if a property's current use is single family what will the process be if the use is changed to multi family? How will the process include the neighbors' input?

The core neighborhoods have a variety of zoning not only R-1 and R-2, but R-M, R-3, R-4 and CBD are the other zones. When a rezoning occurs, by law a public hearing is required at the Plan Commission and City Council allowing the public to speak. This rezoning needs to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the future land use map.

If there is a single-family existing house in the proposed new NR district, and they want to convert it or add on or replace with a new structure, the property must meet all zoning requirements such as lot size, setbacks, height, impervious surface, parking, landscaping, any design/historic requirements, and building and fire codes. If they can meet these rules, then they could by-right obtain a building permit. The proposed zoning code update will help ensure that any infill respects the physical characteristics of the neighborhood. The question regarding how neighbor input was processed wasn't answered.

2. Enforcement of zoning codes is essential to assuring compliance and enhancing quality of life in the central core neighborhoods. What plans for enforcing the new ordinances does the city have going forward? Are there any plans to add housing inspectors? Has the city considered a permitting process for landlords which would fund these positions?

A new Neighborhood Services Division has been created to help centralized and improve enforcement with additional staff support. They work with City Planning on zoning violations. They would hire more staff and monitor exterior upkeep and safety. The Eau Claire City-County Health Department has their Housing Inspections program which deals with physical problems and health and safety code violations, whether rental or owner. They maintain a contact database for follow-up. These services should be adequate to meet the needs across the city.

3. Downzoning was completed in the Eastside and Third Ward within the last 20 years. The Third Ward Neighborhood Plan addresses maintaining the current density of the neighborhood. The proposed ordinance will upzone these areas allowing increased density and supporting the conversion of single family homes to multifamily homes. How does the emphasis on increased density in these neighborhoods reflect the efforts of residents to maintain current housing usage?

The downzonings driven by resident groups/associations and enacted by past city councils created many non-conformities (over 2,800 to existing properties). These actions excluded housing choices and discouraged reinvestments. Housing stock is only getting older, in some cases reaching 150 years. For a variety of reasons, housing costs have escalated tremendously since COVID. Householder size continues to decrease in the state and in our older neighborhoods. Baby boomers are aging in place longer, causing shortage of supply for perspective homebuyers. Homeownership levels are not increasing as what the downzoning sought to encourage. Householder preferences have changed to desire a wider range of choices and living options than just a detached single-family house. The composition of these neighborhoods is already diverse, hence the non-conformity issue downzoning created. The proposed new GR and NR districts seeks to strike a balance in reducing non-conformities and adding "gentle density" dwelling types (1-4 units) that already exist and can fit in to the lower density areas (as analyzed by visualization tests). As noted, conversions of single-family structures would still need to meet all applicable zoning, building and fire codes, and in many cases, this would not be economical. Yes, there will be change, but the desired outcome is to produce a mixture of housing types (as already present in these older areas) that are lower in housing density typology and to direct the medium to high density to those areas that are appropriately zoned.

4. *Areas of the proposed zoning changes are designated historic districts by the state of Wisconsin. How will the historic character be maintained with proposed increased density and changes in the use of properties? Examples: accommodation of increased parking needs, multiple entrances, water run off from potential parking areas, high outdoor use, etc.*

The introduction of gentle density (1-4 units) should not disrespect the prevailing physical design of older neighborhoods. Inferior housing designs introduced in the 1970s should not be repeated and was one reason a commitment to preservation developed. **Local Historic Districts designated by the City protect private properties and this will not change.** Special approval is needed for additions, demolitions for new structures, and other qualifying exterior work. It is a common misconception, but both State and National Districts do not actually protect private landmarked properties, that is, unless they seek tax credits. For older areas outside of local historic districts, design standards will be important. This could include elements such as garage design/location, roof style, number of doors and locations, landscape screening of parking over a certain number of stalls, external materials, porches/entry way feature, run-off/green infrastructure, etc.

5. *Affordable housing is a concern throughout the country at present. Home ownership represents an avenue to building equity and financial independence. How do these zoning changes address the issues surrounding housing affordability? Are there any plans to provide incentives for rehabilitation of distressed properties in the central core neighborhoods?*

Yes, by allowing a wider range of housing options, there are better zoning incentives to attract more opportunities to build wealth. There are different ways to create equity in real estate and the notion of owning a detached one-unit house is not the only way. For example, a young family may not be able to afford a mortgage without the rental income coming from their duplex. An owner of a single-family house could now utilize an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) for their adult child with disability or their aging parents and/or in-laws. With smaller lots being allowed, a property owner could now subdivide their larger lot to earn income and make room for a new single-family house owner. If located on a busier collector road, an owner could utilize a live-work unit to reduce business costs.

6. *Downtown is both the densest part of the city, the least green, the least sustainable, and the least biodiverse, with a high percentage of impervious surfaces and one of the lowest tree canopy percentages in the city. The Third Ward is the greenest neighborhood in Eau Claire, with the highest percentage of tree canopy in the city. The city's tree canopy percentages have been decreasing steadily for years due to dying ash trees and aggressive development that removes significant carbon-sequestering trees, while the percentage of impervious surfaces increases. How will the City increase the percentage of tree canopy, significant trees, and impervious surfaces in the Core neighborhoods while also increasing density? Can you show us that plan?*

Impervious surface limits will stay relatively the same across zoning districts. As part of the Century Code Update the City is reviewing/creating codes regarding stormwater, erosion control, floodplain, shoreland-wetland, landscaping, tree preservation, and other natural resource considerations. DNR state statutes will still need to be followed on stormwater management. **These draft codes will be available later this Spring. (May Meeting of ZPAC)**

Please remember - Comments or concerns – Email 3rdwardeauclaire@gmail.com

Further info: Website Thirdwardeauclaire.org, or our [Facebook page](#)

Jackie Tollefson,

Jackie Tollefson, Secretary TWNA