

# Community Meeting #1 | SUMMARY

On September 17, 2019, the City of Milwaukee, with its community partners at the Dominican Center, Metcalfe Park Community Bridges, and Walnut Way kicked off the Fond du Lac and North Area Plan Update with a community meeting at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society. The meeting was well attended with over 140 residents and stakeholders taking part. The purpose of the meeting was for the community to voice their vision for the future to city staff. Following a brief presentation by city staff, the community partners led residents through a discussion, asking residents to think about their neighborhood's strength and opportunities, their own aspirations for its future, and the best way to measure progress. Several topics and themes emerged, and are documented below. These will help set the goals for the study moving forward. Many of the issues important to residents were shared across the different neighborhoods in the study area.

## Community Strength

When asked about the strengths they saw in their community, residents repeatedly mentioned other residents, especially long-time residents and homeowners who are viewed as anchors of the community. Residents stressed that people are engaged in the community and show up to make their voice heard as a united neighborhood. There is a feeling that people are working together more than ever before. The strength of the community organizations bears witness to the sense of community.

*"We come together when something happens."*

## Public Spaces

Several opportunities for improving park space and the public realm emerged. Quality park space is an asset to neighborhood, while parks in disrepair can detract. For example, the newly-rehabbed Moody Park, which is just outside the study area but used by many residents, is an example of how improving a park can provide people with community space and recreational opportunities previously lacking. On the other hand, residents in Metcalfe Park commented that Butterfly Park did not feel safe because of the hill with tall trees that blocks visibility into the park.

Residents suggested a skating rink, a skateboard park and a community center as new amenities that would be well-used by area residents.

*"Why don't we have a skate park? Suburbs like Wauwatosa do."*



## Safety and Youth

Safety is a major issue in the neighborhood, with many people saying that they did not feel safe in their own neighborhood, hampering their ability to accomplish basic daily tasks such as walking to the bus stop, going to the store, meeting people in the neighborhood, as well as generally contributing to their overall stress levels. Some said that safety issues were getting worse, while others say there has been an improvement.

Many people attributed the safety issues to a lack of opportunities, both recreational and job-related, for youth. Residents want to see more outdoor activities, urban agricultural, housing rehab programs to help youth stay out of trouble and to learn valuable skills.

*"Teenagers just hang out on the street because they have nothing to do. More activities are needed."*

## Housing and Neighborhoods

Residents from every neighborhood within the study area said that increasing homeownership rates is important to the well-being of the community. Homeowners, often older residents, are seen as a stabilizing influence in the neighborhood. There is a general preference for single-family homes because there is a feeling that would attract home owners who will take pride in their home. Absentee landlords may not maintain a home the same way an owner-occupant would. Abandoned building are also prevalent, which detracts from the overall character and safety of the neighborhood.

There were a number of comments that the City's housing programs, while helpful, have too-stringent requirements or are too confusing to be widely used. Residents also want to see the three City-owned subdivisions in the study area developed.

While the consensus was that residents wanted to see great stability in their neighborhood in terms of increased homeownership rates and commercial amenities, there are strong concerns that current residents are at danger of being displaced if housing costs rise too much. Many people, particularly renters, are already burdened by the cost of housing. A need for affordable housing options was identified.

*"There are too many slumlords."*

*"We need more single family homes."*

## Transportation, Infrastructure & Connectivity

Quality of life issues, such as increasing the number of street trees, filling potholes, addressing reckless driving, and repaving streets were the most often-cited issues that residents wanted the City to address.

Several residents called for safer biking facilities; for example, bike lanes that were protected by the parking lane, especially on busier streets.

*"The scooters are nice but they're expensive."*

*"Fix the potholes!"*

## Economic Development and Commercial Corridors

There is a lot of excitement around new commercial developments, including the pop up retail stores, which are being supported through LISC's Brew City Match. Local establishments such as Taste Twist, Tandem, and Coffee Makes You Black are popular options in the Lindsay Heights neighborhood.

At the same time, many people expressed dissatisfaction with the current retail offerings and noted the many vacant storefronts, especially along Center Street and North 27th Street. Residents want to see more restaurant options and office centers for local professionals.

*"North Avenue has new development. Now we need to see more development on Center Street."*

*"There's nowhere to walk to."*