

# Community Meeting #2 | SUMMARY

The Second Community meeting was a series of three open houses in late February 2020. Two were held at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society—one in the afternoon and one in the evening to accommodate different schedules—and one was held at the St. Ann Center. Based on discussions at the first community meeting, city staff and its partners at the Dominican Center, Metcalfe Park Community Bridges, and Walnut Way shared information and gathered suggestions on four different topics: transportation, commercial corridors, parks and open space, and housing and neighborhoods. The open house format, combined with a short survey at each station, encouraged in-depth conversations with residents, which are summarized below. Additionally, the Department of City Development launched an online survey to provide an opportunity to provide feedback for people not able to participate in one of the three meetings.

## Transportation

Reckless driving—specifically, speeding, not yielding to pedestrians, and inattentive driving—is experienced on a daily basis, negatively affecting residents’ everyday lives. Speeding along the major arterials and collectors, and even on local streets, is widespread. Intersections that were noted as particularly dangerous were 35th Street and North Avenue, 17th and Walnut Streets, Fond du Lac Avenue and Walnut Street, and Lisbon Avenue and 27th Street. Residents overwhelmingly said that they would be willing to experience longer travel times in exchange for safer streets.

Residents are very interested in ways to reduce speeding and to make biking and walking more pleasant, goals that often go hand in hand. Protected bike lanes (between the curb and parking lane) are a popular improvement option that is seen as safer than the typical painted bike lane. Improving crosswalks with more visible markings and curb extensions were other well-received solutions. Traffic circles at local intersections were not considered a good option.

Milwaukee County bus service is well-used in the area, and, not surprisingly, residents want to maintain and improve service within the area. There was interest in expanding the streetcar from downtown to Fond du Lac Avenue, as well as having BublR stations in the area.

## Commercial Corridors

Residents want quality and convenient shopping options. In particular, residents are eager to see places that are owned and patronized by people from the area. At the same time, residents understand the challenging environment for retail in local commercial corridors. With internet shopping increasing and the evolving



requirements for physical space, commercial corridors in their neighborhoods and across the country are facing vacant storefronts. Residents were open to businesses other than typical retail going into storefronts. Examples given were small offices, data centers, and garden centers.

When asked where they wanted to see restaurants, retail or person services, grocery or food markets, and other types of commercial activity, residents marked areas throughout the study area, but there were corridors and nodes that emerged as favorites. The intersection of Fond du Lac and North, as well as stretches of both streets radiating from the intersection were seen as particularly attractive places for business, with residents saying they would like to see a wide range of commercial activity in those areas. Center Street is also viewed as an opportunity for more commercial uses. Beyond these corridors, nodes that were frequently noted were Lisbon Avenue near 27th Street and at major intersections along 17th and Walnut Streets.

## **Parks and Open Space**

Residents want park space that can be used by young and old residents alike. Dog parks—there are none in the area—were supported as were basketball courts, which are not well-distributed throughout the area. Walking trails and picnic areas were other popular ideas.

Programming at parks is an unmet demand. Cooking or fitness classes were mentioned as ways to draw residents. Despite a decent number and distribution of parks in the project area, access to parks is hampered by busy streets. 35th Street was noted many times as a barrier for residents in the eastern part of Metcalfe Park trying to get to Butterfly Park or the playfields behind Metcalfe School. Speeding along Brown Street was also mentioned as a barrier to Johnson Park. The many vacant lots near 20th and Clarke were noted as a potential opportunity to provide new park space in an area where there is no nearby park.

Beyond park space, residents noted that they enjoyed the outdoors by spending time outside at home and walking in their neighborhood. This speaks to a need to find opportunities to beautify the public realm and to make streets safer for pedestrians.

## **Housing and Neighborhoods**

When asked about housing priorities, people identified increasing owner occupancy rates as the top priority, consistent with feedback throughout the planning process. Rehabbing existing housing was also a top priority. Creating affordable new rental housing was ranked third, and demolishing vacant buildings and seeing property values increase were lower priorities.

In terms of housing types, residents generally preferred single family and townhome style housing, with somewhat less support for multifamily. Affordable multi-family rental housing was considered more desirable than market-rate housing, likely a result of the high number of rent burdened households in the plan area.

The City's program to sell vacant lots to neighbors for a dollar is very popular. This may be because the residents already know the neighbor and feel a level of comfort in knowing the lot will not become a nuisance. More passive uses for vacant lots such as community gardens or greenspace are also popular, however some residents expressed concerns over the maintenance of community gardens.