Central City Master Plan

Neighborhoods

Overview

Waukesha’s Central City neighborhoods hold considerable value given their proximity to the Downtown. During the last several decades, adjacency to an urban core was sometimes viewed in negative terms, especially in contrast to the attraction of newer suburbs. However, as new, younger households are formed in today’s marketplace, the range of life-styles, household types, and desirable residential areas has become more diverse.

While some new families still seek the conventional suburban home (many areas throughout southeastern Wisconsin can satisfy that demand), an ever-increasing number of younger individuals and households now search for a unique form of older, traditional urban neighborhood. This recognized demographic group, sometimes called “Generation Y”, usually wants a more socially interesting neighborhood, a single-family home within walking distance to schools and activities, closer to family and friends, and with proximity to a successful local business district. This new trend is clearly evident in many of large metropolitan areas (such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St. Paul).

This pattern is also emerging in some of Waukesha’s Central City neighborhoods, even though the prevalence of these traditional neighborhoods is still small compared to many of the suburban-style housing areas. The desire to locate in the Central City neighborhoods is likely to continue, especially in areas with major institutions such as Carroll University and Waukesha Memorial Hospital. As this trend continues to grow, it will be important for Waukesha to facilitate the ongoing transformation of traditional residential areas into diverse neighborhoods which offer stable, long-term value.

Goals & Urban Design

Figure 55. Waukesha Neighborhood Street

Figure 56. Central City Waukesha Neighborhood Goals
GOAL #4: CENTRAL CITY REHABILITATION

Assist the revitalization of Central City neighborhoods, especially as a source of stable, family-oriented housing and robust social and economic activity.

Local Neighborhood Streets
Urban neighborhoods are known and remembered for the quality of their streets. The image of the neighborhood will improve with focused, coordinated programs that bring visible reinvestment to residential streets and mixed-use areas. Along with an improved physical image, “quality of life” measures that reduce nuisances and hazards should be continued.

Civic Buildings, Parks and Public places
The main symbols of each neighborhood – civic buildings, parks, and public places – must also be maintained and improved. These “centers” generate activity and help define the area. Activity generators include not only public facilities, but also, commercial nodes and privately owned buildings and places.

Local Institutions and Organizations
The City should continue to engage local organizations in a combined effort to improve neighborhoods including: public and private schools, religious institutions, resident groups, Waukesha Memorial Hospital (Figure 59 on page 48), Madison Street Neighbors, Carroll University (Figure 58 on page 48), La Casa de Esperanza, WCTC, the YMCA, UW-Extension and other local groups. These larger institutions and businesses can be further integrated with their local residential neighborhoods.

Residential Property Improvement
Programs should continue to address improvements in residential structures, especially single-family homes and duplexes. These programs should target maintenance, improvements, and rehabilitation of existing structures – both exterior changes that raise the overall image of the neighborhood as well as improvements that protect long term value.

Social services
Encourage a wider dispersal of some social services to diminish the negative images associated with concentrated social services.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL #4

1. Continue and Expand Support for Community-Based Organizations
Consider programs that will increase the capacity of local neighborhood groups to improve their own neighborhoods.
1.1 This should include continuation of the types of programs fostered by UW-Extension.
1.2 Additional programs could be modeled after comparable efforts in other cities.

2. Create and Continue Programs with Local Institutions
Continue to encourage and incentivize programs by local institutions and businesses that support Central City neighborhood residents and businesses including:
2.1 Mortgage assistance for employees
2.2 Job training for residents
2.3 Tuition assistance for residents
2.4 Matching local job-seekers with job openings and skill sets
2.5 Incentives for suppliers and vendors to remain, expand, or locate in Central City areas

3. Increase Visible Reinvestments
Increase programs that bring visible reinvestment to residential areas including:
3.1 Community organizing activities undertaken by UW-Extension and other County and State agencies.
3.2 Active community policing and neighborhood watch programs.

3.3 Urban gardening and community farming initiatives. This could be enhanced by mapping the vacant parcels and offering use of these parcels to neighbors or block residents (maintenance of many of these parcels is currently a City expense.)
3.4 Landlord education programs.
3.5 Proactive code enforcement and property maintenance programs.

4. Initiate Targeted Clusters for Mixed-use Neighborhood Centers
Initiate targeted “cluster” investments combining multiple private and public sector expenditures along main corridors into the Central City that act as highly visible catalysts to attract more investment.

As part of this activity, the City should map existing patterns of residential properties that are “at-risk,” including properties that are tax delinquent, in default (or highly likely to default,) vacant, or in need of major repairs. Use these maps as a basis for strategies for redevelopment, clustering, or rehabilitation strategies.

5. Maintain, Improve, and Rehabilitate Residential Structures
5.1 Consider implementing a “time of sale” or “time of lease” code enforcement process that would require sellers or landlords to improve buildings when a new use or occupant occurs. This can be limited in scope or character to ensure that the economic burden on land and property owners is manageable. Funding for this type of program could be created through new fees.
5.2 Code enforcement and compliance programs would also be targeted toward rental units when upkeep and maintenance are major issues. It might be appropriate in such circumstances to provide additional financial assistance to non-owner occupied units that...
are owned by persons who live in the same neighborhood as the specific property.

5.3 New conversions of single family to two-family or multi-family units should be discouraged unless (a) they are located in specific areas designated for increased density or (b) the City adopts design codes to insure that such conversions will produce higher quality residential units. Consider modifying the Zoning Code to achieve this outcome.

5.4 Where feasible rehabilitate apartment structures built after 1950 that are in need of improvement, but which may not have much historic value.

5.5 Encourage the use of sustainable construction techniques and green energy in building and site improvements.

6. In Single Family Areas Limit Redevelopment to Small Parcels

There are many cases in which small sites, one or two properties, should be redeveloped rather than larger-scale projects. Incremental change is often a much better way to ensure long term value and continuity. To encourage smaller projects the City should:

6.1 Avoid unnecessary assembly of several parcels into one larger parcel just to create a larger single building rather than multiple structures.

6.2 Relocate families and businesses in an incremental manner to avoid negative social outcomes.

6.3 Phase redevelopment to avoid major impacts on local property values.

6.4 Use small projects to foster business for small scale home builders.

6.5 Encourage the use of sustainable construction techniques and green energy in building and site redevelopment.

7. Support Local Home Ownership in Traditional Neighborhoods

7.1 Support retention and conversion to owner-occupied units within single-family neighborhoods. Allow only limited amounts of high-quality rentals for properly designed and maintained units.

7.2 Use design guidelines to ensure higher quality construction and rehabilitation of both historic and non-historic districts as a means to conserve neighborhood character.

7.3 Consider creating distinct single-family and duplex zoning districts around the Central City.

7.4 Prohibit inappropriate conversion of single-family homes into duplexes or multi-family units in primarily single-family neighborhoods.

7.5 Work with local real estate professionals to create and market neighborhoods as desirable places to live. Consider developing marketing materials for brokers that describe the positive aspects of each neighborhood.

8. Change Regulations that Limit Loans for Owner-Based Improvements

Current income limits for public loan programs should be eliminated so that all homeowners (including condominium owners) can increase their investment in their property. To the extent that loan funds are limited, priority should be given to those who qualify using the current income limits.

9. Support Historic Preservation

9.1 Encourage and actively incentivize the restoration and preservation of important historic buildings throughout the Central City neighborhoods.

9.2 Within each neighborhood there should be specific properties, streets, and subareas that are designated for different levels of...
12. Consider Dispersal of Social Services
Encourage a wider dispersal of some social services to diminish the negative images associated with concentrated social services:
12.1 Ensure that the user’s ability to access services is not negatively affected.
12.2 Consider locating social services adjacent to public or institutional buildings to create a feeling of stability and shared responsibility.
12.3 Discourage a concentration of “half-way” or boarding houses in any one area.

10. Upgrade and Maintain Infrastructure
Consider increasing long term capital and operating expenditures for maintenance and upgrades to Central City infrastructure including: street lighting, plantings, street pavement, sidewalk and bike trail repair, graffiti removal from public areas, public transit services with attractive bus stops and shelters, business signage, and other streetscape amenities. Explore options for reducing the negative impact of rail operations on the Central City.

11. Consider Alternative Funding Sources to Support Neighborhood Improvements
11.1 Initiate Neighborhood Improvement Districts (NIDs) as a basis for sustaining and improving neighborhood parks and amenities.
11.2 Explore additional state and federal grants and programs to fund neighborhood improvements.

Figure 58. Carroll University
Figure 59. Waukesha Memorial Hospital
GOAL #5: NORTHWEST NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Continue Revitalization of Central City Neighborhoods northwest of the Downtown.

The Central City neighborhoods northwest of Downtown contain subareas, each with a unique blend of residential streets, activity centers, historic structures, major and minor businesses and major institutions. Reinvestment in these areas should be focused in clusters along the primary circulation corridors and more visible activity centers.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL #5

1. **Make St. Paul and North the Major Entry Sequence**

Redesign St. Paul Avenue/North Street as the major entrance into the Downtown. Enhance the landscaped entrance boulevard as indicated and where indicated in Figure 64 and shown in Figure 82 on page 66. The redesign should consider an analysis of the turning movements required by local residents to enter and exit North Street and St. Paul Avenue. In addition, potential stormwater and flooding issues should be evaluated in the residential pocket northwest of St. Paul and Barstow.

2. **Improve Isolated Residential Pockets**

Given the unique topography and development pattern in this area there are several small residential pockets of single-family homes. These pockets may require special attention to encourage residential improvements. The few blocks of small homes in the southeastern corner of this area along St. Paul Avenue and North Street (Area G in Figure 64) should be selected as a higher priority for improvement because this area is a highly visible entry into the Downtown.

3. **Continue Implementation of Redevelopment District Plan #8**

Continue to implement the recommendations in Redevelopment District Plan #8 for the revitalization of the area along the northwest side of St. Paul Avenue, between Washington St. and Fairview (the Prairie Point Redevelopment Site). As indicated in the Redevelopment District Plan, this should include mixed uses including commercial and multi-family units with appropriate parking access and architectural character.

4. **Continue Coordination with Waukesha Memorial Hospital**

Work with Waukesha Memorial Hospital to lessen impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.

Figure 64. Goal 5 - Neighborhood Character and Opportunity
5. Create a Subarea Plan for the Waukesha Memorial Area and Dopp Park

Create a subarea master plan for the Waukesha Memorial area and Dopp Park (Figure 66) that addresses neighborhood concerns and opportunities, including: traffic circulation; parking; walk to work programs; closure of Dopp Street to accommodate Waukesha Memorial Hospital operations; landscape; architectural character; incentives for employee home buyers (e.g. mortgage assistance, down payments).

6. Initiate Traffic Calming

Initiate new traffic calming improvements in order to maintain the residential quality of life in key areas. Most notable, traffic calming should be initiated along Madison Street.

7. Further Discussion of City Hall Options

Consider alternative options for the City Hall (Figure 65) area, if future policies and programs lead to alternative City Hall locations. These options should include both costs and values to ensure a feasible and effective economic decision.
GOAL #6: SOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Continue Revitalization of Central City Neighborhoods south of the Downtown.

The Central City neighborhoods south of Downtown also contain subareas, each with a different blend of residential and commercial streets, activities, major and minor businesses and a variety of institutions. Here too, reinvestment should be focused in clusters along the primary circulation corridors and more visible activity centers. The implementation of this goal is based largely on the components of the Redevelopment District Plan #8.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL #6

1. Improve West Avenue and Grand Avenue
   1.1 Consider improvements to West Avenue to help stabilize property values.
   1.2 Consider streetscape improvements to Grand Avenue.

2. Initiate Traffic Calming
   Initiate new traffic calming improvements in order to:
   2.1 Slow traffic on College and Newhall Avenues.
   2.2 Improve pedestrian crossings on near campus streets (e.g. East and Wright), including mid-block traffic signals.

3. Connect the Riverwalk to the Neighborhood
   Connect the Riverwalk from Downtown to Bethesda Park.

4. Connect the Bike Trail Systems to Downtown
   As the “rails-to-trails” plan for new bikeways is developed, the bike paths should facilitate connections into Downtown in ways that will support local business, commuter routes, and linkages to major activity nodes. Grand Avenue should be considered as a primary route for bicycle entry into Downtown.

5. Continue Coordination with Carroll University
   Continue to work with Carroll University to:
   5.1 Improve the neighborhood while facilitating campus growth.
   5.2 Provide housing opportunities for students and staff. Require rigorous maintenance and upkeep of student housing in residential neighborhoods.
   5.3 Encourage capital investment in the neighborhood and expansion of programs and facilities in the Downtown or Central City.

Figure 67. Goal 6 - Neighborhood Character and Opportunity
5.4 Encourage partnerships with local businesses for programs and events that attract additional residents and customers to the Downtown.

6. Continue Implementation of Redevelopment District Plan #8

Continue to implement the recommendations in Redevelopment District Plan #8:

6.1 Revitalize the area bounded by Williams Street, Maple Avenue, Grand Avenue and College Avenue south (see Area A in Redevelopment District Plan #8 for defined boundaries) including commercial development that would lead to a visible, active traditional urban shopping and living area that is more pedestrian friendly with adequate parking and architectural character.

6.2 Continue residential revitalization, including new multi-family development, to parts of the area south of Downtown bounded by Dunbar Avenue on the north, Prairie Avenue on the west, West Avenue on the east, and Marshall, Hamilton and Elizabeth Streets on the south (see Area B in Redevelopment District Plan #8 for defined boundaries).

6.3 Continue to promote residential redevelopment in several parts of the district (defined as four distinct subareas identified within Area C in Redevelopment District Plan #8). These should include a variety of single family residential structures, owner-occupied multi-family units (if the market will support such structures), and preservation of the existing historic landmarks noted in Redevelopment District Plan #8. The Central City neighborhoods east of Downtown also contains diverse subareas, with varied residential and commercial streets, activity centers, businesses and institutions. Reinvestment should focus on key nodes along the primary circulation corridors and more visible activity centers. The implementation of this goal is based largely on the components of the Redevelopment District Plans #6 and #7.
GOAL #7: EAST NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

Continue Revitalization of Central City Neighborhoods east of the Downtown

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL #7

1. Improve White Rock Avenue, Main Street, Broadway, and Arcadian Avenue as Gateways

Redevelopment activities should focus on the major gateways into the Downtown, especially White Rock Avenue and Main Street. In addition, stormwater and flooding issues should be evaluated around the Whiterock subarea in the northwest section of this neighborhood district.

2. Connect the Bike Trail Systems to Downtown

As the “rails-to-trails” plan for new bikeways is developed, the bike paths should facilitate connections into Downtown in ways that will support local business, commuter routes, and linkages to major activity nodes. Lincoln Avenue should be considered as a primary route for bicycle entry into Downtown.

3. Relocate the Post Office and Assemble Property

Relocate the post office to allow assemblage of property that would, in turn, facilitate a new, feasible, and attractive landmark project. An illustration of options is shown in the Urban Design section of this chapter.

4. Continue Coordination with Local Organizations and Institutions

Continue to work with local organizations and institutions to improve the neighborhood including:

4.1 Expansion of WCTC to increase services to the Central City and customized job training to match employer needs.

4.2 Facility improvements to WCTC that would create strong landmark features signaling revitalization.

4.3 Expansion of YMCA programs for the community.

4.4 Continued programs with La Casa de Esperanza to strengthen community services.
5. **Continue Seeking Coordination with Railroad Officials**
   Continue to work with railroad officials to limit impact on traffic flow through neighborhood.

6. **Continue Implementation of Redevelopment District Plans #6 and #7**
   Continue to implement the recommendations in Redevelopment District Plans #6 and #7:

   6.1 Continue to promote mixed-use, office, and residential structures in the historic depot redevelopment area. Within this context, redevelopment should strive for mixed-use buildings with ground floor retail uses and upper floor uses, shared parking, reliance on mass transit, conservation of historic structures, and multi-family residential units (preferably with street-level entries to each unit). Illustrations of these concepts are shown in the Urban Design section of this chapter.

   6.2 Consider improvements to traffic flow including conversion of both Broadway and Park Avenue to two-way traffic.

   6.3 Streetscape and wayfinding improvements should be installed as part of the redevelopment efforts in the district.
2. Support and Strengthen the Social and Economic Function of Neighborhood Centers

Each neighborhood should have some form of strong central feature which provides a local identify and landmark.

2.1 Neighborhood centers should include a small park, civic building (such as a school, public works facility, fire or police station) day-care center, small retail node, or neighborhood main street.

2.2 Neighborhood centers should include some form of public amenity. This can be a small plaza or park. It can also be the design of a building as a visual landmark for the neighborhood.

3. Neighborhood Institutions

Waukesha’s Central City neighborhoods include several high-value social and cultural institutions including both major campuses such as Carroll University and Waukesha Memorial Hospital, as well as smaller facilities as the Waukesha County Technical College and the YMCA. Urban design principles should be used to improve the compatibility of such institutions with local residential areas.

3.1 Institutional edges should be made attractive through the use of ornamental fencing and street amenities (rather than unwelcoming buffers or security fences).

3.2 Architectural features of institutional buildings should complement the character of the surrounding streets (not in terms of building mass, but in terms of details, entries, windows, and other architectural elements).

3.3 Outdoor public and semi-public places for institutions should be designed to serve the neighborhood residents as well as the institutional users.
Neighborhood Sites
1. St. Paul/Prairie Point Site
2. Hillside/City Hall Site
3. White Rock Site
4. Historic Depot Site
5. Jackson Court/Pine Point Site
St. Paul Avenue should become the seam that knits the Downtown to the Northwest neighborhood area. Currently St. Paul contains a series of uses, structures, and visual features that do not present a coherent pattern. Persons driving or walking along St. Paul experience a corridor reminiscent of older so-called transition areas often called a “no-man’s land”. The topography and lack of redevelopment further add to the ambiguous identity of this corridor.

St. Paul, however, includes major arterial entrances to the Downtown, from both the east and the west. The importance of these arterial entrances is discussed further in the next chapter. This area also contains land that can link Downtown (and the River front) to the residential area abutting Waukesha Memorial Hospital.

This urban design is labeled “Prairie Point” to reflect its location at the north end of Prairie Avenue (Figure 73). The design creates a continuous edge of new structures that make the corridor more visually appealing (and therefore valuable) for entering and leaving the Downtown. New buildings line both sides of St. Paul, along with a simple, but continuous streetscape of trees and improved intersections.

At the east end of this design concept a potential roundabout provides a key landmark at the apex of the ‘Downtown Triangle.’ Roundabouts serve many functions, not just safety. In this case, the roundabout creates a defining landmark – it is the gateway that helps everyone remember how the various districts and neighborhoods interconnect.

Moving west from the roundabout, the design concept includes improvement to pedestrian paths that link to the Riverwalk along the north bank, the trails on the south side of the River, and the potential pedestrian and bicycle links to Bethesda Park and the trails to the east and west.
These buildings are simple one-story commercial structures that line the sidewalk and include parking in the rear. Two street intersections in this area have decorative pavement, signaling drivers that pedestrians are present and slowing traffic as vehicles approach the roundabout and Downtown.

Along the north side of St. Paul, there are numerous opportunities for residential development. This design envisions a few small multifamily apartments along St. Paul with a larger area devoted to townhouses between St. Paul and Dopp Park. This combination of housing creates a stronger residential area that adds to the visual quality of the district. An alternate plan might include small one-story commercial buildings that line the street with parking to the rear and the side.

In this version of the design, the north end of Prairie Avenue creates a T-intersection with St. Paul, following the current street alignments. A superior alternative, which might be more difficult to implement, would extend Prairie Avenue northward, linking to the street east of Dopp Park. This option may require additional road costs but it would create a better street pattern that provides better access to Waukesha Memorial Hospital and raises value by tying the Dopp Park area to St. Paul and the riverfront.

**HILLSIDE/CITY HALL SITE**

During the work for this study, public discussions occurred regarding the future of the City Hall facility. Any decision to improve or relocate the City Hall is a larger public policy question outside the scope of this report. If, however, such options are evaluated, it might be helpful to understand how the City Hall site, and surrounding properties, could be redeveloped and added value might be created for the neighborhood.

The current site offers high-value views of the Downtown and the region. Although it is perched on the hillside, the current City Hall does not take full advantage of these views. Consequently, a