

Focus Group Questions
Land Use, Cultural and Natural Resources
City of Menasha
Focus Group meeting February 9, 6:00 pm

Process: The following questions were sent out to a target audience for input. People were invited to either respond via email or fax, or attend the meeting on February 9 and give input at that time. Not all questions were discussed at the meeting given time constraints.

Land Use:

Question A: Are there places in the city where there are land use conflicts? Are there areas where there needs to be an easier transition between varying land uses?

Housing next to industrial

Industrial along waterfront

Grassy areas next to residential- conflict with runoff

School- parking issues in neighborhoods

Residential next to waste water

Residential next to General Chemical

3rd Street/ Racine Street corridor- high traffic area is hard to transition to other uses due to intensity

Yes - This is most evident in the older sections of the city, where commercial/industrial properties abut residential properties. Depending on the nature of business (and appearance), this typically is detrimental to the value of the residential properties - and can lead to a decline in the entire neighborhood.

Due to the large amount of this type of conflict - ENFORCEMENT of existing ordinances is the only way to stabilize these neighborhoods (parking, zoning, site/landscape requirements, etc.) - Unfortunately, enforcement appears to only happen when a complaint is made - and not taken upon the Police Department and/or Community Development Department to enforce without notification of a violation. (Even when a complaint is made, follow up does not always happen.)

In areas along the main corridors (Racine Street, 3rd Street, etc.) where 'newer' commercial developments are occurring adjacent to existing residential properties - the use of BERMS and LANDSCAPING (trees - not just low-lying bushes) needs to be incorporated to soften the impact of these new developments. Low-height signage should be required. Parking should be designed behind or along the sides of the development, leaving the frontage landscaped (green space).

Question B: Are there desired uses in the city that don't have appropriate parcels available on which to locate? What are they (if any)?

The University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley campus (1478 Midway Road) is currently land-locked, limiting future potential development of the campus at its site. Encourage acquisition of nearby parcels when available.

The City is land-locked; therefore - there is no area for a major commercial development and/or industrial development. The current 'growth' corridor along Lake Park Road is primarily designated as residential.

Question C: When you think of land use, how do you balance private property rights with the overall community interest?

My rights end where the next person's begins and vice versa.

all parties involved should be treated with respect and treat each other with respect

A clear effective method of communication needs to be established so that various positions are understood

I do not agree with the current supreme court ruling that a city may use eminent domain to take a private residence and turn the land over to a developer for a higher tax return. I do believe the city has rights to establish limits as to what can be done to a property. For example Zoning, or a noxious weed ordinance, or not allowing broken down vehicles on yards.

I'm assuming this question refers to 'Eminent Domain'. Therefore - Eminent Domain should only be used in the rarest of cases and when all other options have been expended, and - most importantly - only when it is for a 'public use' (highway, utility line, etc.) and when the land (environmental contamination) or structure is a detriment / hazard to the community as a whole.

Eminent Domain should NEVER be used to take private property from one private property owner to be 'given' to another private property owner (Developer) merely for the purpose of generating a higher tax base - using the 'excuse' as redevelopment.

Question D: What are the driving forces that could affect our land use in Menasha over the next 20 years either positively or negatively? I.e. Trends, threats, opportunities?

Water property value increasing

Tear downs- older homes getting torn down for new housing

DNR restrictions- hard to develop with wetlands, etc restrictions

Locks reopening

Bike trail developed for more traffic

Need different housing options as community ages- one level condos desirable

Energy issues- as transportation becomes more costly we need higher density development

Higher density development usually means increase in services needed

Have a lot of big homes which are not desired any more

Snowbirds- they take the wealth in the community with them when they go south

Transportation/parking- as densities increase where do people park?
Need space for cemeteries
State mandated storm water retention systems take up space
What do you do with non conforming lots?
Struggle to keep up maintenance on older structures
City owned land along waterfront needs development plan
Increased traffic along Trestle Trail means potential of increased tourism
How do we manage loss of industry?
Potential need for new neighborhood/pocket parks
Energy costs could help revitalize downtown and pedestrian friendly neighborhoods
Aging population may be a threat or an opportunity depending on how the community chooses to respond
Tightening economy could close more industry in the city, this could allow for more opportunities for revitalization
The city will need to capture new industry to replace that which is lost. The type of industry will determine where it should be located
The decline of the industrial base will be the most prevalent impact facing the City's land use and economics in the years to come.
Industrial/manufacturing sites may be abandoned due to global positioning; leaving the City with land that would be difficult and expensive to redevelopment (environmental contamination, failing/obsolete structures, etc.).
However, the 'positive' result of this decline is that the majority of industrial / manufacturing site are located along waterfront. This gives the City the opportunity to 'redevelop' the existing structures into residential 'lofts' - such as is done in Chicago, Milwaukee and other major industrial-based cities (and has been successful in Appleton at the Fox River Mills). These former industrial sites have been converted to high-end housing, incorporating the existing stone/brick/beams and historic aesthetics into the design.

Question E: When you think of the future of Menasha's housing, which of the following would be preferable: A focus on preserving existing housing stock or a focus on redevelopment?

Preserve what you can, but some needs to be redeveloped.

In some instances, redevelopment of businesses/support services will aid in neighborhood preservation. (For example Doerings or local businesses that help elderly/handicap stay independent.)

Of course I would focus on preserving existing housing stock. By doing such we are maintaining the character and the history of Menasha. We are also being environmentally responsible. Demo ends up in landfills. Reduce **Reuse** Recycle. We can even "recycle" our older building stock by thinking of new ways to use the old. Tearing down housing to put up a strip mall that sits half empty is not wise stewardship.

A concerted effort needs to be made to preserve existing housing stock. Although many profess that the expense of lead-abatement, asbestos removal and energy efficiency outweigh the benefit - I strongly disagree. The craftsmanship and architectural details incorporated into turn-of-the-century homes cannot be duplicated in today's market. Grants and/or low-interest loans should be made available to Owner-occupied housing in an effort to convert duplexes back into single-family homes and to 'regenerate' the middle-class neighborhoods near the downtown.

Many new / young families are looking for housing that replicates the middle-class neighborhoods they grew up in: tree-lined streets, front porches, backyards for children to play, walking distance to schools, parks, downtown, etc. - Not all are looking for a no-maintenance, no yard, condominium.

However, the extensive rental stock (roughly 40%) deters many from reinvesting in these neighborhoods due to the prevalent 'transient' life-style next door, and usual lack of maintenance and aesthetic up-keep. Just one 'un-kept' rental property brings the market value of the adjacent properties down.

Preservation of these neighborhoods could be accomplished on a block-by-block basis, where Public Meetings could be held to educate the property owners to the various programs available to 'help' with reinvestment. However, the City needs to make a stronger push for receipt of State/Federal grants and - again - enforcement of existing ordinances needs to be stiffened.

Development of 'new' low and moderate-income housing should be limited to those with disabilities and the elderly (ADA-compliant).

The 'taking' of a single-family home for a 'redevelopment' project should strongly be discouraged. The City should not create a TIF District for redevelopment of waterfront residential property.

Question F: Consider land use intensity. Which of the following do you feel would benefit Menasha the most: Surface parking or parking structures? Three story building or seven story buildings in the downtown and along the waterfront?

Limit waterfront development to 3 stories or less; leave green space and areas to view river. The river is a great asset to the community and should develop to allow exposure.

7 stories may be okay downtown and near 441/Appleton Road, but would prefer lower.

Space is limited in the downtown area, may need to incorporate parking structures out of necessity, try to limit above ground exposure.

Definitely three story vs. seven story unless there is a very good reason to warrant the additional height. It is all about scale. Taller buildings also create a nasty wind tunnel. If you want a personable downtown it should be at the human scale.

When I see that current parking is filled on a regular (non holiday) day I would then start to look at a parking ramp at tax payers expense.

Surface parking is appropriate for single use buildings (single commercial properties that utilize a typical lot size). However, large commercial properties (several stories, massive land use) would be better served by construction of a parking structure to eliminate massive concrete surfaces and storm water detention issues.

The use of multiple level buildings is totally dependent upon location. If the location is in the 'heart' of the downtown (Main Street - between Racine and Tayco) a 7-story building would be appropriate. The further away from "Main Street" the lower the height of the building, so as to 'blend' with existing residential properties.

When you speak of 'waterfront' - Again, it is totally dependent upon location. If the 'waterfront' referred to is that of the Gilbert Paper Site or other industrial site along the river, multiple levels would be appropriate because multiple 'now' exist.

I am opposed to any 'waterfront' redevelopment overtaking existing residential properties and/or obstructing the view and infringement upon the neighborhood with lack of aesthetic qualities (such as what has occurred with the Headwaters project).

Question G: Should the city consider design standards for industrial districts? If so, what design standards should the city consider?

Yes, integrating alternative modes of transportation, and considering redevelopment plans in the event that the plants or businesses close

Encourage energy conservation methods or renewable energy sources

Look at vehicle access, lighting, noise, landscaping, adjoining uses, sidewalks, off-street parking, stormwater drainage and management, etc

A challenge is requiring appropriate design standards vs. competition with other municipalities for economic/industrial development. Good to have high local standards when realistic.

The City should look into annexation of property along Lake Park Road where the current Banta facility is located and create its own Industrial Park. The City should not 'wait' for neighboring communities to create a joint Industrial Park because: 1) It would be several years down the road, if ever, before being developed; and 2) The final location of the site would most likely not be located within City boundaries and would primarily benefit other communities more.

Industrial districts should have strong landscape standards to 'buffer' the site from adjoining properties (berms, trees, attractive fencing, strong emission/noise controls).

Cultural Resources:

Question A: What are some of the desirable cultural features/resources in Menasha?

Heckrodt Center

Schools- plays and concerts

UW Fox Valley- Planetarium
 Churches
 Parks
 Memorial Building
 Charitable center- Goodwill, Clothes Closet, Salvation Army
 Social services easily accessible along main transportation routes
 Library
 Lock
 Senior Center
 Historical Society
 Historical district downtown
 Old bank
 Fountains
 Arena
 Unique shops
 Marathon, other events
 New Year's Eve celebration
 Indian mounds
 Foreign languages in schools
 Nicer old brick homes that should be preserved
 We have two unique concrete bridges at Smith Park that are currently falling in the creek.
 The University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley offers the community:
 A contemporary art gallery (Aaron Bohrod Art Gallery)
 A stimulating speakers series open to the public
 Quality band performances
 Quality choral performances
 Provocative and entertaining theatre performances
 The Barlow Planetarium
 The Weis Earth Science Museum
 Film series, entertainment, college sports, etc.
 Elementary Education - Public, Parochial, Private
 Higher Learning - UW-Fox Valley, Fox Valley Technical College
 Scientific / Environmental - Barlow Planetarium, Heckrodt Wetland Preserve
 Recreational - Trestle Trail, Bike Trails, Parks (tennis, pool, softball/baseball, etc.)
 Aesthetics - Parks (Smith Park Gardens, Public waterfront)
 Historic - Historical Society, Smith Park Indian Mounds, Memorial Building, Landmarks Committee
 Cultural - Menasha Senior Center, Menasha Public Library, Artist In Residence
 Affordable Housing
 Vacant Business Property (we 'have' available commercial properties for rent/lease)

Missing:

Cultural/heritage events celebrating history
Connection between older and younger generations
Cultural Center open to all ages
Heritage Corridor concept- looking at Fox River as corridor with lock site as focal point, opportunity to do historical interpretation, make it more accessible to public
Opportunities to get younger people interested in the community history
No community focal point
Free concerts on the square
Possible sponsorship of events by local businesses
Opportunity to get on the Fox River for a scenic boat ride
No significant reason to go downtown
No group to coordinate community events
No merchants association
No newsletter that connects different groups of people
Need real gems of restaurants or stores

Question B: How can Menasha best preserve it's cultural resources?

Work with state historical society, interested citizens and schools
Utilize some of the older citizens in the area, work with senior center
Use elderly population to educate school children
Maintenance
Encourage efforts to provide high quality facilities for cultural programs and development of cultural resources.
Strengthen Landmarks Committee
Request Input From Historical Society
Commission Joint Endeavors Incorporating Various Community Groups, Institutions, Citizens
Encourage Public Participation In Decision Making

Question C: What art, educational, cultural, recreational, entertainment facilities are absent or deficient?

Milagros
Botanical garden
Cultural/heritage events celebrating history
Connection between older and younger generations
Cultural Center open to all ages
Heritage Corridor concept- looking at Fox River as corridor with lock site as focal point, opportunity to do historical interpretation, make it more accessible to public
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Need real gems of restaurants or stores
They might be absent or missing in Menasha but are present elsewhere in the valley. Adding to the number is not always a good idea. Find your own niche and develop that area of the city.
The facility at UWFox that current serves as its public performance and lecture space is woefully inadequate. The poor quality of the space affects the quality of the audience experience and the ability to attract audiences to this venue and Menasha.
Efforts are underway to raise and secure funding to construct an appropriate teaching and performance facility at the campus for use by the university and community organizations.
Strengthen Landmarks Committee
Request Input From Historical Society
Commission Joint Endeavors Incorporating Various Community Groups, Institutions, Citizens
Encourage Public Participation In Decision Making

Question D: Is enough being done to accommodate racial/ethnic diversity? If not, what can be done to remedy this?

No idea

Yes (perhaps too much emphasis is put on this subject)

Natural Resources:

Question A: What are some of the desirable environmental features in Menasha?

Water- river and lakes

Wetlands

Park system

Marina

Trails

Nature conservancy

Fishing

Good features outside of city limits as well

The water front of the river and Lake Winnebago

Tree and plant specimens are accessible and labeled at the UWFox campus for public education and enjoyment.

The Weis Earth Science Museum provides educational exhibits regarding the geology of Wisconsin, with special information specific to Menasha.

Close proximity to High Cliff State Park

Question B: Are there natural resources in Menasha that require immediate attention or protection?

Have not a clue

Public access to the water at the end of public streets (each street ending is treated differently; whereas some do not even represent public access).

The rip-rap at Jefferson Park poses a hazard.

Question C: What are the driving forces that could affect our natural resources in Menasha over the next 20 years either positively or negatively? I.e. Trends, threats, opportunities?

Increase in population means increase in pollution

Lack of necessary funding to preserve features

Pressure to sell resources

Political environment

Possible threats from outside environment when locks open (zebra mussels)

Boat traffic affects shores

Need management of development- stormwater, construction sediment

Increased discharge- both legal and illegal

Algae

Manure spills in neighboring areas

Pressure to develop without preservation of wetlands or park land

Limited land for development will encourage overbuilding along riverfront or lakeshore

Tightening of economy could force closure of some industry- could be positive or negative depending on how the city chooses to deal with it

Build, Build, New is better – Threat.

Opening of the locks (increased traffic, boating hazards, congestion).

Enforcement of ‘no wake’ along the river (erosion).

Industrial emissions.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Question A: What are some of the desirable parks, recreation, and open space features/resources in Menasha?

Public walk along the canal

Smith Park

trail system including the trestle bridge

Heckrodt

Jefferson Park.

Riverside and Smith

UWFox has tennis courts that are open to the public, and a soccer field that is utilized by university and organized youth soccer groups.

Recreational - Trestle Trail, Bike Trails, Parks (tennis, pool, softball/baseball, etc.)

Aesthetics - Parks (Smith Park Gardens, Public waterfront)
River Side Park (small park adjacent to Downtown)

Question B: How can Menasha better serve residents through our parks, recreation, and open space features/resources/programs?

Working with surrounding communities

Redundant to develop own programs

There's an opportunity for a water trail- kayak or non motorized

The marina needs to be more attractive and made a centerpiece of downtown

It's a challenge to get the money for park staff for maintenance

There need to be links between different activities

There should be a swimming area

Summer concert events

Festivals

Establishment of a 'City Band'

Signage from main corridors.

Question C: What are the driving forces that could affect our parks, recreation, and open space features/resources over the next 20 years either positively or negatively? Ie.

Trends, threats, opportunities?

Tightening budgets could threaten the preservation of park facilities and park and recreational programs.

Park Agreements with neighboring communities (Town residents use City facilities more often than City residents use Town facilities).

Budget constraints - Cut-backs in maintenance/up keep, lighting, Smith Park flower gardens, etc.

Safety enforcement (muggings, rapes)

Influx of minorities not understanding Park rules; monopolizing park areas.