



## COMMUNITY CONVERSATION PART II

OCTOBER 12, 2011  
6:15 P.M.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

### NOTES

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These notes have been categorized by topics within the six recommendations, What's Missing and Other.

- Vision: It is imperative the Sponsoring Organizations have a shared Vision for the Community. The notion is that Mequon-Thiensville residents do not want change needs to be challenged. Change is happening. It is either pro-active, informed and strategically guided, or It is reactive and ineffective.*

  - Smart growth requires collaboration and communication
  - Don't do another community survey
  - Maybe extend the task force in the creation of a vision
  - Insure commitment from the four sponsoring agencies
  - Need to determine what we are about
  - We need a shared vision. We can't pursue businesses and then shut them down
  - We need a unified vision among the four sponsors and the community that would allow for commercial and economic development: housing diversity and housing vibrancy
- Brand: The Sponsoring Organizations must collaborate and invest in developing a brand for the Community and create strategies to promote Community uniqueness and quality of life.*

  - We need a corporate identity
  - We need a good looking brand-we can't have an identity behind it, we need to get excitement going
  - Branding is outside what we need to do. Times are bad so wait to do this
  - Hire a public relationship firm to create a messaging campaign
  - An 80-100K firm brought up a lot of good ideas but no investment
  - 5 O's of Oconomowoc
  - Need to entice people to come here before they are 35 . We have a gap of 20-35 years olds here
  - Where would the money come from to hire a PR firm
  - Look at affiliated businesses that want to see growth and get them to invest in a communication/messaging/pre-initiative

- Some great positives are occurring for example incentives for businesses
  - Possible merge resources between Mequon and Thiensville for co-branding and resource use
3. *Communication: Communication and conversations must be significantly improved and unified to: achieve a higher level of information sharing, stimulate Community participation, develop awareness of the unique assets available and promote the Community to the outside world.*
- Use Mom's groups
  - School District is poor at communication i.e. the trimester issue ignored the public
  - Need far more coordination
  - No sense of community; we don't know our neighbors
  - Put meetings online
  - Need a town center as a gathering area to help build community
  - We are going in the right direction, communication is just beginning
  - Concern that this initiative and the conversation that has started won't last
  - School district needs to communicate more with public
  - Can our leaders initiate civil communications
  - Create a community calendar
  - Use internet, website, improve signage
4. *Schools: Threats to the historical excellence of the MTSD need to be addressed.*
- A referendum may be a short term way to preserve the educational system
  - Campaign to the public: this is what a strong school district offers all citizens
  - Other school districts are rising in quality and we have to keep our District attractive
  - Need more opportunities for "gifted" children
  - Need more rigor in the curriculum
  - The litmus test of a community is its schools
  - People move here for the schools. Kids today don't have the same education as in the past
  - Saddening when people don't care about decline in schools
  - Should not increase enrollment in the M-T school district because it would mean tax increase for all
  - 70% of the M-T population don't have children and don't want to pay to educate them
  - We should privatize K-8 and leave the high school public
  - Refreshing to see acknowledgement of problem
  - Why won't people pay more to improve schools
  - Are the high level aspirations-too broad
  - Develop alumni association to help with fundraising
5. *Housing: Improve the mix of housing options, create incentives to revitalize older homes and neighborhoods and allow the creation of new unique sub-divisions. Planned population growth policy and shifting demographics need to be addressed.*
- Bring more families in, first family housing has disappeared
  - Concern: Is first family housing a euphemism for cheap housing that would bring in "poor families with lots of kids"
  - Condo occupancy driven by school attendance
  - Need smaller lots, ½ to ¾ acre, and homes ranging from \$200,000-\$400,000
  - What is affordable housing, need to define
  - What is appealing, need to define

- Value is inferior to neighboring communities
- Mequon is not friendly for younger people
- Zoning issues may exist, resulting in lack of customers that leads to poor commercial development
- Can we really meet the needs for affordable housing
- Do not need more five acre lots-not affordable, doesn't build community
- No one is building homes because of the economy, five acre lot minimum; Jackson is an example
- Need to revitalize older homes
- Sidewalks are not realistic but bike paths and walking paths are
- Homes sell readily in Lac du Cours
- Create a Shorewood-like feel in an experimental neighborhood
- Would free Wi-Fi in the community be a draw
- None of the people in the new School of Pharmacy bought homes in Mequon
- Provide support for down payment on homes for young families
- Give tax credits (i.e. 1-2% per \$100K) for fixing up older homes
- Has M-T out-performed the greater Milwaukee areas in property values? Need data

6. *Economic Development: The City and Village must collaborate and invest to maintain the quality services they provide and place more emphasis on increasing investment and redevelopment into core economic development.*

- Why turn down business? Can we afford to be so picky
- Wisconsin state tax codes make economic/commercial development difficult.
- Need to define the kind of business you want to attract. The problem with being bookended is that you lose the tax revenue
- Policies of Mequon are subjective and we need to lay out parameters. There are lots of opportunities on the Port Washington corridor. We need to balance the needs of the people near development areas versus the desire for development
- Village of Thiensville is working on development. They want new retail and are getting city water. Have put in more sidewalks and the people want that. There is a water main on Main Street
- Fears exist about rezoning
- We need more information to understand why the IFF districts aren't succeeding
- Housing isn't the problem-it's economic development
- We need to bring in more light industry to offset the tax bill for every new student that the school District brings in
- Need more local businesses that people will want to shop
- Need a "third ward"
- Town Center is geographically misplaced
- Government officials need to be open to change (example Les Moises)
- There is a lack of encouragement by the city (passes anti business regulations)
- A meeting attended that debated the town centers demonstrated the insane rules that block development
- Mequon residents to not support local businesses
- Mequon Pavilion needs total redesigning
- We need industry
- We need a unique draw for "day tourists"
- Which business leaders live in Mequon? Can we bring their businesses to Mequon?
- Need to negotiate with new businesses, and not be reactive
- We need to face the reality that people are not eating, shopping and working here and get rid of our apathy

- We don't want to be Brookfield
- We can differentiate zoning areas and allow for different densities
- Don't expand the sewer-others say yes
- Concern about increase in traffic flow
- We want to see more businesses here, more people, more retail
- Reasonable, managed growth is needed (more in Southern Mequon)
- Offer cash incentives to get new business
- Renovate buildings to attract business
- Find places where businesses belong, invite them in, don't edge them out-avoid hodge-podge development
- Need to entice business to come here, not Germantown or Grafton
- Differences of opinion as to the future: some want it to remain the same, some want it similar to Northern suburbs of Chicago with walking spaces and restaurants
- The West side by Huntington Park offers new land to expand
- Mequon sign ordinance has put off business
- Mequon missed the boat with the big box stores
- Offer free Wi-Fi and collective office area
- There is a perception that Mequon is anti-business

### **What's Missing?**

- Market rate high quality apartments
- Thriving Port Washington Road
- The river is underutilized
- Sense of Community
- Shops that will illicit shopping in Mequon
- Formation of a Civic Association
- Prioritization
- Arts: what can we do to bring/promote arts activities in Mequon
- Industrial development is not addressed
- How are we going to empower people to get engaged
- We need to be open about our fears
- Focus more on TIF district by Thiensville to encourage East and West traffic
- Ideas about mixed housing needs to be explored more
- Need more data on housing, what young families are looking for, the 75-25 ratio, etc.
- Plan B alternatives
- Where is the energy to keep this going? Is coming together every six months enough
- How to bring people together around the report and change: there has to be an attraction for everyone in order to bring people in
- Economic modeling needed that inputs housing issues, tax base and economic development and provides a what-if analysis for all the variables proposed.

### **Other**

- How do we implement
- All aspects of the report are integrated
- We need to keep the ball rolling and not get caught up in individual agendas
- Need to talk with elected officials
- Mequon Police department is useless
- We need to have more people involved in local elections and discussing these issues

- Some elected officials don't want change
- Need more people to run for office for both city government and school board
- Was it the school district that started this process? Explanation given that it was community issues such as zoning, declining enrollment and lack of growth
- To the task force: get the report out to people, they can decide how it affects them. All issues work together
- Will recommendations move us to a more vital community
- A lot of people's aspirations are utopian. We need to prioritize. What is the ultimate desired outcome. City council is disconnected from this, communication is poor. There is a lot of concern from people
- We understand that we are at the beginning and the governmental entities are just learning about the report. We need to share the message; people will hopefully want to see their government support this
- This report is a reaction to what has happened over a long period of time
- All the alderman should have been at the meeting
- There needs to be a closer relationship between the school board and the civil government
- How many people on the task force had kids in school?—answer 12 out of 38
- The report was enlightening
- Some people have a “not in my back yard” mentality
- Detroit ignored the main boogie man in their town and they're gone. We're not Detroit, but there are similar issues
- Who is going to run for office? Can we get some elected officials to support growth
- We need citizens to communicate to the decision makers and tell them to get on board
- Liked all facets of the report: thoroughness and multitude of ideas
- We need to look at our elected official to make sure we have people in place who want change (Mequon in particular is resistant)
- Neighbors need to get out and make their voices heard at election time
- There is a silent minority of larger “ five acre lot likers”
- Don't put more density in all areas
- Report was not polarizing
- Surrounding areas have more expansion
- This report is a call to action
- All of the issues in the report are connected
- Some interest in politics due to redistricting-recognized apathy
- No desire to be part of a dying community
- Combine Mequon-Thiensville into one governmental body
- Need more crossings over the river, more bridges
- Need an off and on ramp on Highland
- Increase taxes and don't nickel and dime the recommendations
- Community is not in agreement that we have an issue
- Seventy percent of community doesn't want change
- Find a balance so that older citizens are not moved out due to taxes
- If the four organizations don't follow up it would be sad
- Thiensville has no sense of community
- Bring people back with you to the next meeting; continue to get the word out and get feedback
- Keep it going
- Take action on recommendations
- City Officials don't delay the process

- Change will require changed elective officials
- We want strong schools, thriving business meetings, etc. Our business community is struggling – 20-22% vacancies. We need public support; need you to shop locally; need our schools; need our four stakeholder groups to ensure our continued success