

**Community Based Organization and Resident Interview Summary - DRAFT**  
**Northport-Warner Park-Sherman Neighborhood Plan**  
August 20, 2008

**Interview Description**

Telephone interviews are currently being conducted of community based organizations and residents in order to learn their perspectives regarding the planning process, the six priority issues identified by the steering committee, and other issues that should be considered in the neighborhood plan.

The interview begins by giving a brief description of the planning area, history, and current process. The interviewer then describes the six priority issues and asks the interviewee for their opinion of the issues and any strategy recommendations to address the issues.

The interviewer asks if there are issues not identified by the steering committee that should be considered and - if the interviewee were in a position to change something on the North Side in the next five to ten years, what would it be.

The interviewer asks if the person would like to be included in a distribution list to receive agendas and minutes from steering committee meetings and other planning process updates, and if the interviewee would like to be further involved in the plan process such as by offering expertise or other type of support.

The interviewer may ask if neighborhood plan questionnaires could be left at or distributed through the interviewee's organization and if there are any upcoming events where a steering committee member or city staff could present plan process information.

**Number of Interviews to Date: 19**

**Organizations Interviewed:**

- Gompers Elementary (Social Worker)
- Mendota Elementary (Social Worker)
- Lakeview Elementary (Social Worker)
- The River Food Pantry
- Kennedy Heights Community Center
- Sherman United Methodist Church
- Lakeview Branch Library
- Sherman Avenue Business Owner
- Northport-Packers Neighborhood Resident
- Lakeview Hill Neighborhood Association member
- NPC member (2)
- Cherokee Resident
- Northsider (Dane County Supervisor)
- Northport Apts. Community Center
- St. Peter's Catholic Church
- Dane County Timebank
- Packers Community Learning Center
- Sherman Area Resident

**Organizations Pending Interviews:**

- 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist Church
- Lakeview Lutheran Church
- Mandrake Road Church of Christ
- Northside Christian Assembly
- St. Paul Lutheran Church
- Warner Park Community Center
- North/Eastside Senior Coalition
- Northside Business Association

## **Summary of Interview Responses**

For the most part the interviewees agreed that the six priority issues were the neighborhood's top priorities.

**Economic Development:** The most common thought was that there needs to be more employment opportunities in the area. One interviewee felt strongly that economic development should be motivated by businesses/business owners/entrepreneurs; their perspectives are vital. It is not enough to make a plan for economic development based on the impressions of general residents.

**Neighborhood Revitalization:** Most people stated that it would be good to improve the appearance and use of the Northside Town Center. I didn't sense a lot of very strong feelings around this issue.

**Creating a Safer Neighborhood:** Most people agreed it was important to focus on this issue. Multiple people stated that safety was better than years past and that it was important to keep crime under control. Multiple people focused on what might be called root issues of crime and safety, stating the importance of developing a strategy of inclusion for all residents, building community and neighbor relationships, and increasing employment and housing opportunities for low-income residents. Most people also recognized the importance of traffic safety as a priority issue, but the strongest sentiment within this issue was related to crime and safety.

**Gateway Corridor Plan:** For this issue the interviewees focused mostly on the need for more bicycle infrastructure, either adding a lane to North Sherman Avenue or creating other options, especially a trail along the rail line. People seemed to feel strongly about this. The owner of a business along N. Sherman Avenue felt very strongly that adding a bicycle lane would hurt business. Many people also mentioned the importance of having safe places for people to cross the neighborhood's busiest streets. Some bus shelter locations were also suggested.

**Neighborhood Schools:** Of all the six issues, interviewees were most in agreement on this one. All but one interviewee felt it was very important to maintain all of the area's neighborhood schools. The one person who felt it would be acceptable to give up a school considering the difficult decisions the school district must make still felt that no elementary school should have more than 400 students. The residents generally felt that the neighborhood schools were important parts of the neighborhood fabric. Interviewees felt that having neighborhood schools helps children and parents develop relationships with the schools and thereby creates a more effective educational experience. Neighborhood schools also allow families with limited transportation options to easily access the schools and build relationships. The neighborhood schools and their more effective educational experience help the neighborhood in many ways such as by potentially reducing crime and drawing new homebuyers to the area.

**Water Quality:** Most people agreed that water quality was important, but some people suggested the topic be changed to natural resource management and focus more broadly on taking care of the lake and marsh.

In addition to comments on the six priority themes, four additional but related themes seemed to repeat themselves through some of the interviews: the need for more activities for children and youth; mixed-income and low income housing; Northside transportation; Warner Park's use and development; and need for well-done public involvement in the neighborhood plan process.

## **Detailed Interview Responses**

### *Economic Development*

- Economic development and business opportunities important. Need to generate more jobs. (6)

- This would help employment situation and quality of life. It is also difficult to fundraise on the Northside.
- For employment issues, seems to be two different groups of people. 1) those with skills, basic workplace characteristics like punctuality, etc. who just need some help getting connected to employers. 2) those with barriers to basic employment who could use more support such as case management.
- Economic development needs to be motivated by the businesses, not just by people in the neighborhood who think it would be good to have certain kinds of businesses. Must consider business owner perspective. Should work with Randy Alexander and Dave Bruns on being creative with their properties.
- Consider a TIF District for Northgate.
- If we bring in new businesses who will patronize them?
- Thinks economic development is important but will require innovation. An incubator makes sense but in the past in Madison incubators have helped only a small number of people. Recommends something like a cooperative business endeavor where people can get in on the ground level of the business through sweat equity – some sensible/practical business, maybe like recycling.
- Focus on creating more employment opportunities for teenagers, not just helping them to prepare to find and hold a job, but really create jobs.
- If could affect one thing on the Northside, would say the most important would be to diversify retail businesses – this would help to keep people in the neighborhood providing for local retail demand as well as providing employment.
- What is economic development? Who does it serve? Consider this.
- Consider how these six priority issues are defined. It's a class issue.
- Too much emphasis given to middle class residents. Currently it's a one-way street. Should be a two-way street, including low-income residents.
- Need to attract more businesses to the Northside
- There should be a hotel near the airport.
- Business idea: what about a wedding venue/wedding reception place.

### *Neighborhood Revitalization*

- Northside Town Center is desolate. Would be good to fill it up. Interviewee would much rather go there than over to East Town (where currently goes for shopping).
- Northside Town Center, not so empty, not a big issue
- Neighborhood revitalization for Northside Town Center – where get the money to do redevelopment? Don't forget about the investment made there in early 2000's to fix it up.
- Need to improve the Northside Town Center. At least add some green, trees.... Also try to be creative there. Would a 4-plex movie theater be possible? Be practical but also be creative.
- Need to find a quality anchor store for the Northside Town Center – like Hilldale's Macy's. If there was a good quality anchor store that wasn't found in other parts of the city people would be drawn to the Northside. This would help other businesses. It would be a destination store.
- Neighborhood revitalization: consider how underutilized spaces (like empty stores/offices, lots) could be offered to community groups for use at low, no, or alternative cost (such as timebank dollars).
- Glad that UW Credit Union is coming into the Brennan's site.

### *Creating a Safer Neighborhood*

- Improve safety at both Woodlands Apartment. complexes. May be a management issue. (2)

- Top issue for the neighborhood is safety. Very important to work with landlords, improve landlord performance. Also need to get people more involved in their neighborhood's safety. Get people to be reporting what they see. Northside Town Center could consider hiring its own security.
- Regarding Safer Neighborhoods – there is a mix of long-time residents who feel ownership of the neighborhood and newer residents who don't have that same sense of ownership.
- A key to promoting safety broadly is employment and affordable/subsidized housing. The interviewee currently observes more crowded living environments where families are doubling and tripling up in living quarters. These high density living situations can be related to antisocial behavior.
- Safer neighborhood (not necessarily a police relations issue): work to build more authentic and meaningful neighbor relationships - and good management, good lighting.
- Adequate and meaningful response from police and government seems fine now (3)
- Northport, Kennedy Heights safety issues have spilled over into the schools, but this seems to be being controlled.
- Crime issues should be kept on top of so they do not get out of hand.
- Traffic enforcement: on Northport there is already quite a bit of enforcement. Maybe putting those signs that tell drivers how fast they are driving would help to slow traffic. Its easy to go fast on that street. Reminding people of their high speed could help to slow them down.
- Get rid of safe neighborhoods issue. Replace with youth development. Tie it to work preparedness and civics.
- Change attitudes towards young people and poor people.
- Use a strategy of inclusion for public safety.
- Approach public safety issue in a way that brings the community together; not in a way that demonizes groups or makes people afraid of each other.
- Crime is not such an issue anymore. Important now to keep it under control.
- Safety has been an issue with a number of break-ins and thefts.

### *Gateway Corridor Plan*

- Improve gateway corridors/aesthetics – a priority: helps people and the neighborhood. (3)
- Need to work on traffic control on main streets.
- Make Northside more walkable and bikeable. Need bike paths (2).
- Northside has many senior citizens. Making the Northside walkable would be good for them.
- Bike lanes are needed for Packers and Sherman. North Sherman is dangerous for bicycles.
- Gateway corridor: finish up bike paths. Don't leave a gap on Sherman.
- Bike trail along rail corridor is important. Don't put it on N. Sherman – cause too many problems reducing car traffic.
- Northport is like a highway. Fast traffic.
- Gateway: bike paths on Sherman are not acceptable for businesses. We need to make sure pedestrians and bicyclists can safely cross the road, but we can't afford to reduce traffic on Sherman. It hurts businesses.
- Where Sherman and Northport intersect, there should be no turn on red. Improve the lighting there. Make Sherman more attractive – a quiet neighborhood environment. Get rid of the trees that grow up into the power lines and then have to be cut back in ugly ways.
- Food Pantry clients need a place to cross the street, Northport, Packers: no curb, cutout, no lines. no sidewalks on Darwin, no control on intersection. (20-40% of clientele walk to the food pantry). A good thing is that there is a bus stop at the Food Pantry.
- From Kennedy Heights Community Center - bus stop only on opposite side of street (Northport-i believe) coming and going. Dangerous for kids crossing the street, especially with high-speed Northport traffic.
- Need bus shelters at N. Side Town Center for patrons going up, away from downtown.

- Improve the gateway of acceptance to diversity
- Expects there will be traffic issues/problems on Wheeler Road and North Sherman Avenue in the future.
- Need to address through-traffic and increasing traffic.
- Gateway: additional directional signage needed when coming into Madison on CV, particularly at the intersection of Wheeler and CV. It's unclear where going.
- Put 113 under ground. Connect Lakeview Hill Park and Warner Park with a green corridor crossing above the highway.
- 113 traffic has increased. Especially notable on the south side of 113.

### *Neighborhood Schools*

- Would not have problem closing Lindbergh. Supports maintaining neighborhood schools within reason. Schools should have around 300-350 students or less for elementary. Not more than 400.
- Neighborhood schools important: people move here for the neighborhood school. It fosters parent-teacher relationships. (but having 4 principals in 6 years also affects the school). People very concerned about Lindbergh closing.
- Support neighborhood schools. Smaller is better. (4)
- Support neighborhood schools and keep their standards up, good quality. This will help residents and may help to create safer neighborhoods. (2)
- Most critical issue for the Northside is neighborhood schools (keeping them and keeping them strong). Good schools attract people to a neighborhood, to live in a neighborhood. Good schools are fundamental. Security and safety issues boil down to concerns about youth. Strong schools help youth.
- Avoid closing neighborhood schools. With these closing there is a loss of a sense of community.
- Keep neighborhood schools. They are more than just schools. They're neighborhood centers. Each one has its special character.
- We can't lose them. Many children in challenged situations. They need smaller class size. Transportation to farther away schools would be an issue for them and would negatively affect parents' contact with their children's schools.
- Around Cherokee school boundaries are confusing. In the condo area kids go to three different schools: Waunakee, Madison, Deforest. Would like this situation to improve.

### *Water Quality*

- Water quality: regularly eating fish out of lake. How safe is that? Who's eating the fish? - Eaten as main source of protein.
- Considers water quality to be important.
- Focus on drinking water quality first, not lake water quality.
- Don't worry about drinking water quality, but instead worry about natural resource conservation focusing on taking care of the lake and marsh. (2)
- Water quality is important, but also look into water distribution/supply.
- Water quality seems like a city or county wide issue. Not sure what we can do about it.
- Water quality: look into current or potential well problems – especially around Cherokee. Had heard that Cherokee Park Inc. might be overusing a well. Look into this.
- Get retention basins put in around the lake.

### *Activities for Children/Youth*

- No place for kids to go. Especially middle school kids all year round. Many kids are taking care of kids. Warner Park Center isn't enough or doesn't meet this need for youth activities.
- Need community center on Lakeview side of Northport, a place where kids can go with activities into the evening.

- Need a pool (need felt by kids)– near Kennedy Heights.
- Supports the Warner Park Pool project.
- Most important issues to work on for the Northside: employment and affordable housing and engaging northside teenagers/youth. Get them involved in productive activities. The Warner Park Community Center is not providing this, or not enough of this. Maybe use empty space in Northside Town Center for youth engagement.

### *Mixed-Income Housing*

- Low income housing should be spread out throughout the neighborhood, not concentrated. Have mixed income neighborhoods.
- Kids at Emerson – many in high-risk situations. Low-income lumped together.
- Need higher priced housing, higher income residents. No more apartments. We already have a lot of housing for low-income people.
- Habitat for Humanity housing on Sherman is horrible.
- We need to help people to buy homes. Help renters to buy. This would help to keep the neighborhood schools open.
- Why not look at long-term tenants in rentals like Kennedy Heights and Packers and let them buy their apartments.
- The Habitat housing model is a good one.
- Make the Northside be a good choice for families of all income levels.
- Big concern for Northside: helping low-income people stabilize their living situation. A lot of people are struggling. Consider how apartments are managed. Are grants or other housing assistance available? A lot of neighbors are concerned about income disparity in neighborhood and problems related to crime. Assisting low-income people could help the people, improve their living situation - and might create a healthier neighborhood overall.

### *Transportation*

- Infrequent bus service to the Northside. Especially when getting into the neighborhoods. Need good transport that can help residents access jobs.
- Keep and improve the bus routes. (2)
- Light rail should service the airport.
- Northside should be known for good transportation but instead it is left out, ignored.
- Northside is a good base for trucking.
- Second most critical issue for the Northside is transportation. In future we will need inventive solutions to issues of public transportation and through-traffic. Lots of people pass through – like from Waunakee. We could use/benefit more from those people. Transportation issue linked to economic development.

### *Public Involvement in the Planning Process*

- The planning process excludes poor people.
- Need an equitable distribution of city resources
- Interviewee suggests we come in and talk with residents at the apartment complexes to get their perspectives.
- Steering Committee should consider the question: How important is the planning process? What can we expect from it? How will it be useful? Communicate this to the community. The interviewee has heard questions from residents about this.
- Interviewee feels that this neighborhood planning process effort is good and important but hopes a way can be found for this process to be taken to common neighborhood residents for discussion. This is important for the process to matter, for it to have better chances of it being implementable. Need

to generate a buzz in the community, get more buy-in and ownership. Get more voices heard and more people behind it.

- Important that community groups understand the reality of plan implementation – not to create false expectations and to help people understand the importance of community involvement and the need for the community to move implementation forward once the plan is done.

#### *Warner Park*

- Have different kinds of gatherings in Warner Park, not the big Fourth of July activity (Rhythm & Booms).
- The steering committee could consider more Warner Park use issues. The Northside may grow; how will Warner Park adapt and be used in the future?
- Would like to know about grant opportunities or other possibilities of support for Warner Park use such as the swimming pool.
- Take good care of our parks. Consider the use of Warner Park, the upgrade of its master plan. Consider how a pool will affect the park. The interviewee likes the idea of an indoor pool that seniors would use mostly during the earlier part of the day. The kids would enjoy it later in the day. Could also have an outdoor wading pool or fountains outside for kids to play in. Don't put a waterpark type pool here.
- Even better than a pool would be to fix up beaches and public lake access on the Northside (Warner Park). Would be great to be able to use it for swimming without worrying about the water quality.

#### *Other*

- Northside farmers market is great for the North Side.
- Pearce's is great for the North Side.
- Interviewee misses Brennans.
- Consider local food security: help all area residents have access to adequate, healthy, locally produced food.
- Likes that some of Cherokee Marsh was pulled away from development.
- Hopes the planning council will continue to be funded by the city.
- Northside News is very important. It keeps people in touch and helps create a sense of community.

#### *Public Involvement Opportunities*

- Packers Community Learning Center: Aug. 30, 1pm, Back-to-School Picnic. A good opportunity to talk informally with residents about the plan process, distribute brochures, and get their input. Not formal setting with microphone and stage.