

Regent Street - South Campus Neighborhood Plan

Focus Groups –Round #1

Results

Focus Group: Residents of Adjacent Neighborhoods

6:30 pm March 14, 2007

Quality of Life

- Lots of amenities
- Good location – close to campus
- Not enough green space
 - Not enough *improved* open space
 - Park Street and Spring Street as example of unimproved space
 - Area needs a large park
- Not enough street trees
 - Plant them between buildings where there's not enough room on street
- Need more cultural amenities – art gallery, music shop, youth programs branch of public library
- Deteriorating quality of homes and university buildings
- Lack of parking

Transportation / Circulation

- Pedestrian / bike circulation problems
 - Charter/Orchard need better pedestrian crossing
 - No N-S bike connections – Could be Mills or Randall
 - Need better street crossings at intersections
 - Bike path sometimes unsafe – renegotiate intersection S of Camp Randall
 - Mill St. corridor (major route for people walking to work) has parking lot, run down housing, coal plant
 - Bad vision at bike intersections
- 24/7 street parking
- Regent needs left turn lanes
- Bus system inadequate
 - Inefficient for short trips
 - Need bus that travels S to W
 - Bus service infrequent in evening

Parking

- City of Madison standards good – hopefully old parking will be redeveloped
- Off-street parking okay in some areas
- Remove rush hour parking restriction – keep parking at all times
- Better use of parking spaces needed
 - Need more shared parking
 - Better parking needed

Neighborhood Character / Design

- Present Character
 - No distinction from Vilas to Greenbush (not a problem)
 - Condition of student housing in poor condition
 - Local park has no pride, worn down
 - Like the “not too clean” appearance
 - Feels a little bare, abandoned
 - Lacks human quality, presence
 - Area has no prescribed character
 - Regent compared to Monroe is Downscale vs. Upscale
 - UW buildings seem foreign – “faceless” buildings
 - McDonalds – poor site development
- Future Character
 - Good time to make Regent St. boundary between campus/residential
 - Maintain building massing and height
 - Increase density to make more viable business area
 - Like the Randall/Regent mixed-use building
 - Need lighting standards
 - Need trees to hide utility lines
 - Need something to soften streetscape
 - Avoid seas of parking on future developments
 - New setbacks on Regent would be good – minimal
 - Future development at Josie’s
 - Height is a concern
 - Mixed use, no retail
 - Very visible location
 - Keep façade similar to Workmen’s Club
 - Make a statement as you enter neighborhood
 - Anchor point at Monroe/Regent intersection – scale should signal “residential”

Business Mix / Land Use

- Need better mix of housing in Spring St. area – condos for young ownership
- Consider retirement housing as option within Campus area
- Current Business Mix
 - Retail has different selection & flavor than Monroe
 - Not geared toward non-student demographic
 - Lack of diversity of retail
 - Need area residents shopping on Regent
 - Not enough visibility/volume to support business
 - Beneficial to have small business/family owned/independent
- Future businesses mix
 - More small shops, specialty retail
 - Area needs grocery store
 - Trader Joe’s too crowded, too specialty
 - Need dry cleaner, laundromat
 - Expand Fraboni’s
 - Auto repair shouldn’t be here
 - No more bars
 - Restaurants other than fast food

- Need urgent care facilities in downtown area
- Businesses not particularly attractive, but don't want to lose them to "upscale" development, would be a loss of character

Focus Group: Local Business Owners

6:30 pm March 14, 2007

Business Climate

- Students are great customers. Summer is a little less, but they are still around
- The students are a large base of spending
- Higher-end restaurants do not depend on the students that much
 - Some depend on business people, non-student residents, and deliveries
 - Everyone sees a drop over the summer in business when school is closed
- Many businesses are only almost entirely student dependent. Summers are difficult.
- Some voiced opinion that Regent St doesn't need any change in the mix of businesses and services.
 - Might break it in the attempt to fix it
 - Name might change, but will be the same type of business
- Auto related business has about 10% of business to students
 - Almost left because of hassles of dealing with city on environmental cleanup and other issues (driveways)
- All but one own their buildings, other leases
- One football-related store pays rent year-round but only opens 6 football days a year, was able to pay high rent based on the business from just football days
- Non-sports related businesses see football days as 6 days a year where their properties are useless
- Area can support more business. Not just bars, anything serving food, sporting goods stores, more bike shops can be supported
- Non-student residents won't patronize anything associated with students

Traffic and Circulation

- Upset City and neighbors think everybody should ride bikes
- Bike path at Monroe and Regent had no influence on sales
 - Was an increase in bikes, but they go right on by just like cars, without stopping
- Pedestrian crossings of Regent Street are not a major issue
 - Traffic lights allow pedestrians to cross Regent St.
- Need ways to stop commercial traffic on Regent from harming residential areas to south
- People only consider Regent St as a way to get from Point A to Point B
 - Must address parking and how to get people driving by to stop
- Sidewalks are not big enough
 - People go on street or private property
 - Streets become impassable
 - People park in the residential neighborhoods
- Need safety improvements for bikes and pedestrians
- Traffic congestion is always a problem

Parking

- First thing customers ask on phone is "Do you have parking?"
- Conflict between increasing traffic levels and providing parking
- Need a parking ramp in the area
- Any development without the correct infrastructure and parking will make matters worse
- 2 hour parking limit has not been adequately enforced

Owner-Occupied Housing Opportunities

- Want more customers but afraid of more owner-occupied housing.
 - Would rather have students

Problems with Doing Business in Area

- Business too much conflict with neighboring areas
 - Neighbors dictate development
 - Neighbors won't support anything that cash-flows
 - Neighbors will tell you what you can sell, what you will look like
 - Different businesses deal with different rules because they deal with different neighborhood associations
- Local residents don't want anybody with an alcohol license
 - Many problems in the area wrongfully attributed to bars. Noise, trash, foot traffic, beer cans, even blocks away are blamed on bars
 - Any outdoor events or proposals get neighbors from blocks away signing a petition against
- Neighbors to the south are against students and the impact of athletics
 - Neighbors will not support anything that supports athletics
 - Do not see opportunities for students and non-student locals to mix
 - Neighbors don't want more student housing
- City is unsupportive to local business
 - Police not working to reduce crime in area.
 - Police won't send officers for non-violent offenses like vandalism
 - Feel like they're paying taxes for city services, but can't utilize services
 - City gives too much power to neighborhood associations
 - City has been supportive of businesses verbally, but not in action
 - Your business can follow ordinances, but if a neighbor is objecting the rules don't apply
 - No set of rules that anyone sticks to.
 - City's zoning code is out of date so everyone needs to do PUDs
 - Allows too much interpretation and room for City and neighbors to stop anything
- Some businesses feel unwanted or targeted
 - City doesn't want anything automobile-related or that generates vehicle traffic.
 - Non-favored businesses encounter more obstacles to operating and expanding their businesses

Future of the Planning Area

- Not sure if wholesale redevelopment is needed
- Need a parking ramp in the area
- Role of area already established with sports facilities on each end of area.
- Everything on Regent Street should be retail or offices at street level, not housing
 - Should include provisions for parking
- More student housing desired
 - Need a buffer to keep students out of neighboring areas
- Transitions from residential areas to commercial on Regent Street too fast
- More leadership is needed. City, mayor and Plan Commission must tell the neighborhood what they recommend for the neighborhood and force the plan before anything will happen.

Focus Group: Developers & Landlords

5:00 pm March 14, 2007

General Trends and Opportunities

- Overlapping demand between university, hospital, sporting events creates exciting opportunities
- Mixed-use nature of neighborhood adds value
- Area surrounded by 3 major institutions (UW, Meriter, St. Mary's) it should be a great area for around the clock activity, athletics to serve as a filler over the weekend
- Opportunity for restoration and redevelopment of higher quality existing structures
- Prime development opportunities exist north of Regent St.
 - Overlaps with property the University is planning for
- Influence of Meriter is important
 - Hospital is currently landlocked
 - New ambitious director
 - Likely to grow across Park Street and Regent Street
 - Meriter's mission is to eliminate all double-rooms, so they will need space
 - Few people who work at Meriter live in the area
- Opportunities for more partnerships with the university
 - Institutes of Discovery will bring more opportunities
 - University Square seen as a successful partnership
 - Half of the planning area is outlined by their plan
- Aging demographic of neighbors, change is difficult for them

Concerns / Issues

- Existing industrial uses of university and Madison Gas are unappealing
 - Somebody should hold the University's feet to the fire on these uses.
- UW can build whatever they see fit, not beholden to demands of streetscape experience
- Perception is that it is a highly congested area, unless you are on the periphery, project boundaries are the high-access streets
- Challenge of assembling properties
- Power plant is a weakness
- Monroe Commons is discouraging, providing little return, chewing through equity
- University plans deter private development
 - People are waiting for the university to buy their property, does not put the developers in a strong position
 - Politics mean that comp plans are often thrown out the window
 - In the 1960's the university did a sketch plan that extended all the way south to Regent St.
 - If the school started using eminent domain in their planning area it would definitely have a negative impact on development
 - Current state of school finances makes it difficult to purchase property
 - University can't compete with the private sector in acquiring private property
- Current owners want too much for their property, more than the developers see the value to be
 - May have to wait for market to reach level where it becomes more appealing

Traffic and Circulation

- Park Street serves as a release valve for traffic to the south
 - Provides opportunity for denser development closer to Park Street on Regent.
- Opportunities for connectivity between Regent Street and back into the university that are not being maximized
 - Chance for improved pedestrian experience

Parking Issues

- Public parking would benefit the developer and if done in the right manner would develop the neighborhood
- Need creative parking solutions, that don't necessarily mandate a certain number of stalls per acre
- Lack of off street parking causes problems with cars stopping/parking/unloading on the streets. West Dayton and West Johnson would be major problems.
- Possibility of structured parking
 - Not optimistic that City would build a ramp in area, wouldn't see it as their responsibility
 - Feel the UW will likely supply any structured parking in the area
 - City should contribute to UW projects to provide or expand public parking
 - Don't feel private parking structures are viable, demand not great enough
 - Difficult to do underground parking in the area
 - Water table is only 8-10 feet below surface
 - Granger has underground parking and is constantly pumping water
 - Above grade parking is possibility
 - Chicago model: parking above, and more development above that
 - Cost of above grade parking is less, but unless you conceal it, it's a blight on neighborhood
 - Only the University is able to do parking like the UW Welcome center
- Demand for Parking
 - Need research and analysis to provide appropriate amount of parking
 - Amazing how many people don't have cars
 - Demand for parking has decreased in last 3-5 years
 - Vacancies have increased
 - Ability to increase rents has dropped
 - Softening market south of Regent for housing
 - Students like mingling with each other in denser development, elevator, etc. Would rather have social amenities of a high-rise
 - The bike paths have greatly improved and may be responsible for the decline in demand
 - Estimate 40% of people living on campus walk or bike to work/school
 - Developers pander too much to people who have cars, people will figure out how to make it work or won't live there.
 - Dissenting opinion e-mailed: parking more needed than some developers say.
 - Developers say most apartment occupants (students) do not have cars, which is incorrect
 - Apartments should not be allowed the same density as the UW buildings
 - Majority of the UW building occupants use public transportation where as the apartment occupants will have cars
 - Some local rental parking has a waiting list @ \$125 per month

- Latest apartment building on West Dayton and Charter has caused traffic problems since it has opened

Housing Market

- Students have become more demanding for housing
 - Want more up-scale development, amenities
 - Want more high quality/high-density housing
 - Places pressure on older stock
- Interest in Student condominiums is moving toward more traditional rental housing, with the parking to support
- Student housing currently over-supplied
- Many opportunities between University and a block north of Regent for denser housing
- Student housing south of Regent Street
 - Not much growth in student housing demand
 - Demand is less than around State St., has greater social opportunities
 - Cater to older students are tired of the “frat house community”
 - See For Rent Signs in Vilas and areas where you never used to see them
 - Market still not ready for owners-occupied conversions.
 - Landlords have tried to reduce supply but they don’t sell
 - Still more profitable to deal with vacancies than sell for what people are willing to buy
 - Owner-occupied 2 flats and 3 flats could be an opportunity
- Non-student housing
 - See opportunity for more non-student rentals and condominiums
 - Nothing over \$289,000 at this time, luxury condo market downtown makes developers think twice
 - Would provide more stability in the central core of the neighborhood, north of Regent
 - Would keep the neighborhood a vibrant place year-round
 - Best if incomes were mixed, beyond just rental stock, provide for owner-occupants
 - Appealing to some people to live in the vibrant university community
 - Could be a tough marketing pitch (a specific niche)
 - Interesting project would be a mixed owner-occupant and student housing building
 - Professors and other workers at UW and hospitals could be market.

Commercial (office / retail) Market

- Dominated by Meriter, University and St Mary’s
 - What fills in and serves those uses?
- Office Market
 - Future office demand could be created by Institutes of Discovery
 - Will be a terrific magnet
 - Might create a demand for private lab space / office space
 - Would need at least a 15,000 sq foot floor plan
 - Do not see office demand in the area beyond small general offices as part of mixed developments
 - Demand for office space around Regent Street is soft currently
 - Little demand for commercial space on Regent Street compared to State Street
 - Problem is the overbuilding in the downtown office market over the past 5 years
 - Developers have not gotten their target rent, have reduced rents in order to fill new developments

- Need at least \$1.60 per square foot to be feasible
 - Only temporary problem
- Retail Market
 - Mixed use corridor along Regent with housing above would be appealing
 - Business climate will be improved by increased density and spending power
 - Students have as much spending power as owner-occupants
 - New employees will expand demand for commercial uses
 - Many of the businesses on Regent Street do not need to be there
 - Not the highest and best use of existing facilities
 - Opportunity along Regent Street to bring development down to storefront scale, retail experience
 - Need a proper business mix for first floor commercial uses
 - Requires developers with the patience to wait for tenants who add to the attraction of walking the area

Urban Design

- Current Character
 - Currently does not have a lot of identity, serves as a thoroughfare
 - There are a lot of missing teeth, surface lots, underutilized property
 - Useful for tailgating, making money
 - Preserve scale of Greenbush and Italian club, the seed has been planted
 - Continue character of what is there
 - Good example neighborhoods for area include Wrigleyville, Boston, Uptown Apartments in Denver

Heights and Densities

- There is a scale that has already been established with large buildings to the east, north and west
- Neighbors will want walking neighborhoods, be able to walk to a vibrant business district, this requires density
 - More density opens up the opportunity for many other uses to serve it
 - Enhances the living environment and increases property values
- Mid-Rise development appropriate north of Regent Street and closer to Park Street on Regent Street
 - Density necessary to make most private projects work
 - Loosely defined as 8 to 12 stories
 - There are sites in the area that justify mid-rise development
 - In recent decades the standards have risen for architecture and development
 - Mid-rise development would be more than acceptable, it is desirable
 - A mid-rise done properly can be pleasing and blend in
- Lean toward a discussion of appropriate setbacks and street frontages instead of a discussion of limiting heights and density, these can solve the concerns of many
- Cost of structured parking and demands would require mid-rise development
- Areas of Regent Street and south of Regent Street, closest to neighborhoods should stay in the 3 to 4 story range

How Would Redevelopment Occur?

- Current owners want too much for their property, more than the developers see the value to be
 - May have to wait for market to reach level where it becomes more appealing
 - Current owners are still making money, and have little incentive to redevelop
- Mixed use proposals will get farther in this environment
- TIF may be needed for redevelopment to occur
 - Significant municipal services in this area will need to be upgraded in doing new development in this area
 - Storm sewer, streets, utilities, streetscaping, etc...
 - If City will not use TIF for infrastructure improvements, they will special assess them to the developer and make projects infeasible
- Nothing will happen without changing the economic demographics, more non-student residents
- Developers and City need to more clearly show the vision, “a confused mind always says no”
- Combination of housing and commercial drive each other
- Create a redevelopment district in the core of the neighborhood with city power
 - Use CDA powers and UW partnerships
 - Use power to tell people that city wants to see redevelopment
 - Park Street has worked well
- Neighborhoods to the south don't want development beyond neighborhood scale
 - Show them it will increase their property values and quality of life
 - New development will help pull students out of their neighborhood
 - A developer education group to show neighborhoods how development can work and address their concerns would help
 - City must provide leadership
- Need a complete database of all properties on Regent Street with dimensions

Focus Group: Student Residents

5:00 pm March 14, 2007

Quality of Life

- Pockets of deteriorated neighborhoods
- Pedestrian un-friendly
 - Problems crossing Regent
 - Transportation awkward, particularly E-W
- Too much trash in area
 - Maybe educate students living off-campus
- Area too noisy
- Greenbush Pizza – promote history of area
- Football crowd – everyone wants a big parking area
- Lack of street trees
- Vilas Zoo/Park is amenity
- Area generally lacks open space

Transportation / Circulation

- Pedestrian un-friendly
 - Problems crossing Regent
- Transportation awkward, particularly E-W
- Regent-Park intersection important for flow between campus and south
- Bus system easy to navigate
- Look at making Regent more biker-friendly
- Campus Master Plan – make Randall more pedestrian friendly
Transit hub at Union South – bike station, trolley stop
- Traffic circle possibility at Monroe Node? – DuPont Circle!?
- Traffic circles in D.C. and Sweden as example
- Randall more bike and pedestrian friendly
- Trouble getting onto Regent from side streets
 - Difficult to see around building corners
- Possible back alley corridor as bike route?
- Bus schedule at bus shelters
- Bus system good – esp. student bus running in area
- Good economic development near University – welcome center
- Good to have more shared parking
- Traffic patterns by foot need adjusting! Union South may have 24 hr. study!
- Traffic speeds an issue on all streets
- Need way finding and consistency on bike trail

Parking

- Minimal bike parking
 - Need racks along path
- Car travel is no worse than rest of campus
- Need more small parking lots

Crime and Safety

- Bike path unsafe at night – part of path goes behind buildings
- Park St. busy and well lit, safer at night
- Higher buildings have less eyes on street
- Need more buildings that encourage people to be outside
- Need more 24-hour business on Regent
- Need better bike trail treatment – safety.
- Cars don't equate safety? – people on street = good + lighting

Urban Design

- *Guided eclectic* for future design consistency
- Need guidelines to unify area
- Need more buildings which interact with streets, safety, bring people out to building fronts
- Street trees needed – especially on Regent
- Too much consistency = not good wayfinding
- Inconsistency from one end to the other
 - Historical area on east – spotty on west
- Need to draw attention away from coal plant
- Park St. bridge-opportunity for mural
- Green roof possible for new development – green infrastructure
- McDonald's needs neighborhood character

Business Mix / Land Use

- Mix Single Family units with student units in all areas
- Current Univ. Fleet site as possible green space?
- Business Mix
 - Bars not as fun, too many adults
 - Needs more cafes
 - Needs more anchors
 - Need convenience store
 - Need outdoor markets
 - Need more convenience store areas and ATMs
 - More diverse food scene needed
 - Farmer's market potential at new Union South development in the future
 - Need outdoor destinations on Regent
 - Market of St. Joseph in Barcelona as good example
 - Club in Bennett's or Ideal Body Shop
 - More human-scale places to make up for auto shops
 - Josie's building good site for trademark bus – bar, club
 - Could be a good “hang out” area – coffee chops, Indie Coffee Theatres, bookstores

Other Areas Which Could Serve as Precedents

- Ann Arbor – more restaurants and bars
- Don't want to see high-rise apartments – impact on surrounding neighborhoods
 - Makes it too sterile, lack of interesting mix
- Want to see neighborhood infiltrate into campus than vice-versa
- Affordable housing for UW-employees
- Providence – Thayer St. Brown Univ.

- Cape Cod – DuPont Circle for bike path/Regent traffic circles
- DC & Sweden – roundabout to calm traffic from highways
- Market of St. Joseph in Barcelona (outdoor market)