

Union Corners Update Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, September 13, 2005, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 2670 Milwaukee St.**

**Facilitator: Rebecca Krantz, East Isthmus Neighborhoods Planning Council
Note Taker: Ben Winter, EINPC Intern**

Purpose of meeting: To provide an update on redevelopment plans at former Rayovac & Kohls' sites, and get input from public.

A. Brief viewing of display boards - All

B. Welcome, agenda review – Rebecca Krantz, Facilitator, EINPC

Presentation of the agenda.

Rebecca – Any questions about the agenda plan?

NONE ASKED

C. Update on Union Corners project General Development Plan and development timeline – Todd McGrath, McGrath Associates

In May 2003, our associates were asked to recreate a development plan where environmental issues were a key element in this process. Lance will talk some more about that. But in a way, this project deals with many tracks. There's the environmental track... another is a constant evaluation of how the area should be configured, i.e., turning on / off Winnebago. We did get a lot of good insights from the public like a Sixth Street access. Another track: transportation, configuration tract. Now we have acquired 22 parcels, which allow us to evacuate certain areas. What we've decided to do is to come back to you with some different ideas. We have hired some associates to come up with some conceptual / architectural ideas like street location, and resolution of location of French Battery building. There are a number of interesting ideas... environmental / sustainability issues. However, we've prioritized sustainability issues. Here we are, we have many ideas for architectural ideas, and we've contacted many grocery stores.

D. Update on environmental remediation & demolition – Lance McGrath, McGrath Associates

LANCE—I'm going to touch on everything very briefly. History: Rayovac started operating 1912 / 1913 and started disposing battery waste up until 1930 and started again in WWII. When we went through the remediation process, they excavated backfilled areas mixed with battery waste, then built buildings over top it. It was a step-by-step process: What's happening to the ground water? How are we going to clean it up? At the end we must submit a closure step that needs to be approved by the DNR.

We really tried to make environmental concerns important issues and tried to recycle as much as possible. They actually recycled 87 % of the materials from the facility. They crushed and recycled all the asphalt on site. It was a pretty impressive process. Next step in December 2004 was the remediation process: 12-14 tons / 60,000 tons of battery waste. Good thing there was no traveling of waste into the groundwater. We are now almost to the point where we submit the closure step to the DNR.

Questions from participants, answers from Todd & Lance McGrath:

Q: Did you find actual batteries?

A: Yes, there were some areas where there were actual batteries. Other areas had a lot of chemical waste.

Q: Did that recycling process save you money?

A: In the end I think it did, but on the backside it's good for the environment.

Q: Did you get all the battery waste out?

A: Yes, but there is still some left close to the railroad where buried power cable makes it hard to get at. But that's really about it.

Q: Will we be able to find out about the DNR test results online?

A: We'll have copies in the office if you want to stop by. Estimated anywhere from 3-4 weeks, but it's not clear.

Q: What about ground water?

A: Three spots had ground water contamination. On GIS registry, these spots exceed certain limits, but not enough for health concerns. One was a mercury hit. None were from battery waste.

Q: Where does the waste go to?

A: Madison prairie landfill.

Q: What about the contamination of the Radiator Shop?

A: We've not acquired that just yet.

REBECCA— There's a lot of technical jargon, anyone need more explanation?

LANCE—VPLE is a DNR acronym, Voluntary Party Liability.... Tailor made for a site like this, then you can get insurance for protection from future. VOC – volatile organic compounds, lead, mercury, cadmium, manganese.

Q: What are they going to do with the Kohl's grocery store?

A: We've acquired that property, but their lease expires first week of January 2007. We'll start construction soon after that. Right now it's vacant; rent is helping with our holding costs, but could probably negotiate with them and tear it down earlier if people are concerned about it.

Q: There are many elderly people that would like to see that turn back into a grocery store.

A: Our plan is to recruit another grocery store, but not in that exact site. It's one of our highest priorities.

**E. Traffic flow & site planning – John Lichtenheld,
Traffic Engineer for Schrieber/Anderson**

John Lichtenheld is a civil engineer. He's going through our current plan and address some traffic issues etc.

JOHN— I'm one of the collaborators on this project. It has been a collaboration of professionals, City staff, etc. No one person can take credit for this project.

Overhead of map

The overall project has really not changed since the last presentation. Contains mixed use. 100,000 square feet. We've made some changes: For instance, we've now included the area between Fifth and Sixth Streets. It allows us to buffer the retail and other uses from existing residential areas. Another thing we've done is the small piece of development that's now going to be single family and will provide a buffer for Farwell Street. The boundaries of the site are now Milwaukee Street, East Washington Avenue, Fifth, and the railroad. Expanded from Sixth to Fifth Street. The grocery store is up at the corner of East Washington Avenue and Milwaukee Street ... We've changed the street configuration... We've brought Winnebago Street down and created a bowl with private parking. The main publicly owned street will direct itself through the project to Milwaukee Street. Now we can provide another buffer and put in a roundabout to help with traffic calming. Each of the buildings has their own parking lot, but the grocery store will have one as well.

Rebecca – Traffic calming is another word for slowing down traffic. People were concerned that Sixth Street would create a cut through town.

JOHN—We'd like to provide a pedestrian corridor. What we envision here is a retail center with store fronts... like downtown Middleton. Another traffic calming method is this table-top intersection like the one outside of City Hall downtown. This is an area that could have farmers' markets on the weekends. From an access standpoint, we're still looking at signalized access to Sixth and Seventh Streets; Milwaukee Street will be realigned to be more perpendicular. There are also opportunities for a plaza. Another major access point will be near the old Kohl's grocery store. There were a number of other traffic concerns like with Milwaukee and Winnebago... the City is working independently on these concerns, complementing this with other calming measures.

REBECCA—Say more about bike and pedestrians?

JOHN—Sure, we've also tried to enhance the entrance with a potential pedestrian railroad crossing [at Jackson] and by creating a bike trail along the rail corridor. This would be another feature as well. Internal / external connections.

REBECCA—This right here looks like rail stop?

JOHN—Yes, we're looking at the future, and this part, yes, is a possible rail stop.

F. Informational Questions & Answers – Public / Developers

Q: What'll happen to that triangle between Winnebago and East Washington?

A: Oh yeah, all those buildings are going to be destroyed. That's all gone.

Q: What type of development is that?

A: That would either be a site for affordable housing, or row-houses... it will unlikely be commercial.

Q: Is Farwell going to remain a dead-end?

A: Yes, there will be no vehicle access... although there will probably be a pedestrian access.

Q: How many people do you expect to live there and what are they designed for?

A: Depending on the market there's some flexibility. They would have different densities from two stories to seven. Depending on what type of grocery store, this level is three. 400-500 units... 12 ½ acre site... range of sizes... primarily owner occupied housing...

interested in doing Section 42, but our first phase would concentrate on owner occupation. [Section 42 refers to an IRS code that gives tax credits to people who build affordable housing.]

Q: Do you plan to develop or sell off these two lots [on Farwell]?

A: The idea is that we'd do some houses... There's some uncertainty and discomfort but we're getting feedback. We're looking for the corner site for grocery store.

Q: In previous plan there was direct connection between Fifth and LaFollette.

A: Were not suggesting anything for LaFollette, but City Engineering might have some different ideas. This is all driven by vacating [last part of] Winnebago, at Fifth instead of Sixth.

Q: You said that construction will start in 2007; when will it be finished?

A: Early 2007 will coincide with East Washington Avenue reconstruction. The grocery store will be complete in 2007 and will open in 2008. Two or three years later we plan to sell off the land would be normal. One of the challenges is... all the utilities are tied to the East Washington reconstruction. For example: Storm-water problems.

Q: Is the new grocery store the same size?

A: Kohl's was 20,000, new site could be 25,000. We have other site plans that don't have this configuration; this would be the best arrangement.

Q: Will all the pedestrian corridors and accesses be wheelchair accessible?

A: Yes, when we get into designing the buildings we'll do that.

Q: It's very important to people on Division Street [that the part proposed to be vacated does indeed get closed off].... concerned that signalized intersection... people would use that to go over to Atwood.

A: In our meetings with neighbors there's been a consensus that this portion of Division should be closed. LaFollette is the issue.

Q: Your website has a town square, where there's now a parking lot!

A: Most of the possible site plans have these basic elements, but they have different approaches: like a town square for instance. I think the main issue is how we're going to deal with that block and the one as you enter at Seventh St... is that a straight shot? Or a circle around? We're interested in one of these spaces be some kind of front desk to help to centralize it... to create a sense of community.

Rebecca – Do you have that drawing with the town square?

A: Yes.... It's a nice feature, but once we move the grocery store up, then everything gets squeezed. It's a land-use issue. But we still might be able to incorporate a town square.

Q: One question about the intersection at Sixth Street.

Q: Of all the plans you've considered, is there any plan that would open up traffic to Farwell?

A: Not really. It's very clear that the neighborhood didn't want that!

Todd: We're proposing a building that would be rebuilt out of the old Rayovac French Battery building... built with the materials that we've recycled... we would intend to preserve some of the elements of the old façade. We would build this in the same scale, with higher ceilings. Visually, we think this is a good solution.

Q: It looks like at Sixth and Seventh there's a right in and right out onto East Washington.... Milwaukee? ... [?]

Q: Has there been any demographical studies for the grocery store? Willy Street market has higher prices!

A: We're targeting more of an urban store from 15,000-25,000 feet.

Q: Do you think people in this area have the income for these expensive places?

A: We let the grocery stores do these demographic studies. But yes, we think that this kind of store would be able to serve these residents.

G. Viewing of displays & informal discussion (walking around) – All (15minutes)

H. Group Discussion - All

REBECCA—We have heard one issue before about that street that goes to Milwaukee. You're concerned about people cruising down Winnebago to Milwaukee?

JOHN—I'm not going to deny that there will be some of that, but one of the things we find, is that if someone tries to take a left turn onto Milwaukee, you're not going to be able to. So it will facilitate more right hand turns, [exiting the development on East Washington instead of on Milwaukee]. The idea is to keep traffic going well on East Washington so people won't cut through. Yes, there's a cut-through but it won't be convenient for them. We could also do something like the table-top, like the one in front of City Hall. We could do something like that at this intersection. They go slower on Waubesa now, with the humps.

Comment: But it still feels like they go too fast!

Comment: I feel sorry for that guy who's trying to take a left!

Comment: I was thinking about the residential area... Why would I want to live in those apartments so close to East Washington? Would people even want to live there because of all the noise?

Todd: That shouldn't be an issue because we manipulate the acoustics in our buildings. If you look at the conceptual site plans, we also have some trees to buffer the buildings as well. But the key thing is quality windows. A lot of these building will be facing the green roof courtyard as well.

Q: What's a green roof?

A: It was used recently on Fourth Ward Lofts... it's an integrated system where one supplier is responsible for all its components. You can create a really nice environment above a parking deck. One is like rolling out a blanket of sod. It also helps with the storm water management issue. We're going to try to use this not only over parking decks but on the top of roofs.

REBECCA—Basically, it's plants on top of buildings. Would there be private gardening space?

A: There could be, but the bales of sod don't need to be maintained much.

Comment: Red Letter News is a big issue. There are allegations of drug use and prostitution. Is this type of development going to attract people over to that area?

A: I don't think so! Actually we think it will detract customers. Archie, could the City make sure there's only a front door access? [If patrons had to come in the front door their business would drop]. We've looked at the Section 42, but the majority of the units will be owner-occupied. But I think we're going to have different sizes.

Q: I think affordable rental housing is a very important issue. Have you considered that at all?

A: Right, and that's something we've talked about.

Q: Will there be larger units? Because most of the condo units in Madison are small, two unit dwellings.

A: It all depends on the market; we have the ability to have a very large mix of housing. For instance—town house development. We're planning to open a marketing office in the old unpainted furniture store, hopefully by the first part of next year. If people come to us early, we can build larger units if that's what the consumers want. But they have to tell us.

Comment: I just wanted to congratulate Todd on having a place like that open up.

Q: What's the percentage of Commercial vs. Residential?

A: Depending on scenario: 80-20, 20 percent commercial.

Comment: I really appreciate you keeping these neighborhoods on the inside quiet. And I'm hoping that the City honors that, because they could change these traffic systems we have in the current plans.

A: We're proposing to maintain that cap on the right away, but also requesting that a 17 foot easement on the rail side would allow for even more of a buffer. All of our plans are to leave LaFollete as it is.....

REBECCA—we've heard from people about traffic issues... There's been an effort to create traffic calming on Milwaukee Street.... Pedestrian islands to help traffic. Update from Alder Judy Olson?

JUDY—There have been discussions about the traffic calming on Milwaukee Street. For instance: islands. But the response was mixed and verging on negative. The most basic concern was that they didn't want more traffic. They felt that "traffic calming" was placating them. So we need more discussion on this. But we have some time.

Q: Are there plans for calming on Winnebago?

JUDY—There have been discussions on this as well. We made petitions to the Committee and the plans rose to the top of the list, but because of this plan [Union Corners], that project was put on hold and will be looked at in 2006.

REBECCA—I'm going to throw up some issues and would like just a show of hands: How many would like a grocery store like the Willy Street Coop as opposed to a cheaper one? *Many showed hands for Willy, elderly showed hands for cheaper ones. It's all about price concerns.*

Comment: I think it would be nice to have more of a non-traditional store because Woodman's is so close anyways.

Comment: Well, the idea of having a grocery store in your neighborhood is to *shop* in your neighborhood!

Rebecca—Ok, let's have another vote: Who wants a grocery store in their neighborhood? *Everyone wants a grocery store, many laugh.*

Todd—With this plan, we won't be able to accommodate a conventional grocery store... it will just eat away at our site! We need to attract 20,000-30,000 square feet.

Comment: I like the art places around Winnebago Street. Will this eat into that neighborhood?

A: No, we'll make space for more art, actually, and we don't plan to move further down Winnebago.

Rebecca: Are people comfortable with taking down the French Battery building? That's one big difference with this version of the plan.

Largely agreement.

Q: Will it look the same?

A: Yes. If anyone is interested we're going to walk through. 10am Saturday meet at Unpainted Furniture.

Q: Would you be able to save some of those big trees?

A: The conflict is that turning over the road to the City... will try if possible but [not optimistic].

Comment: I took the tour of the old Rayovac building, I figure that rebuilding it would probably be less expensive than renovating it.

Q: Wasn't that building a landmark building?

A: No, it's not a landmark building.

Comment: I just want to thank you for trying to preserve the building.

Q: Are you going to preserve the French Battery?

A: Yes, we're going to conserve the façade. However, we might consider moving that façade to the other street. We'll have matching brick and energy efficient windows as well.

Comment: I have high recommendations of having more restaurants, coffee shops, neighborhood shops, a gym because our neighborhood doesn't have anything like that.

A: Oh yes, the idea of promoting common elements... like a post office, more pedestrians, etc. are a part of our plans.

I. Next steps/Timeline review - Todd McGrath

REBECCA—They are proposing their semi-final plan to the City; the probable timeline is on the agenda sheet. There is more information on their website, and email.

J. Adjourn – Rebecca Krantz

Written Meeting Evaluations & Comments:

I came expecting:

Pretty much what we did here

An update since the Saturday 2005 Spring meeting.

What I found.

& got it.

A lot of rhetoric

Information about the project

A good meeting – and it was! The best meeting I have been to on Union Corners.

Overview of plans, opportunity for input.

More dissatisfaction from neighbors – in fact – there was very little! Great!

To voice concerns... instead I came away impressed, enthused and excited. Start soon!!

It was the first one I attended & was interested in all areas.

I appreciated:

Good facilitator, snacks.

The attitude to work in the community.

Hearing all the good that's happening.

Well facilitated.

Everyone's input.

All

The numerous site options

a) The developer's concern for listening to the community & to entertain multiple options. b)

The developers commitment to preserving the French Battery company building even if it

must be recreated. c) I like the idea of the farmers market and pedestrian traffic & access.

Finally talking about the GROCERY STORE – and that it will be located where the old Kohl’s was. Open reception of ideas.

Hearing that the plan is to vacate Division Street at LaFollette Avenue. This needs to happen.

Hearing that Division Street will be vacated at LaFollette to prevent added traffic onto Division Street.

Question & answer sessions – I learned a lot.

I hope in the future:

Better location – too hot, bad acoustics (can’t hear well).

?

a) I will hear more about the developer’s commitment to mixed income housing particularly low to moderate income housing. b) That some new owner can be found to buy Red Letter News.

I’ve lived on Farwell Street all my life – and only hope I live to see all the wonderful improvements.

Be able to access updates – Internet.

We again have a grocery store in our neighborhood! I hope you can start soon! Also – please keep big trees in front of Battery Bldg as part of new park there if you can...

A grocery store – on the order of our old “Kohl’s” store – can be found to meet neighborhood needs.

Other comments:

I would support a Willy Street Coop moving in. What about Red Letter News? How will that impact the development? What about pricing for the proposed housing? We are a low to middle income community.

Pro higher density, pro pedestrian friendly, pro mass transit.

Go For It.

I would like to put in a request that some public use space be built into the project. I wonder if there are public use spaces that could also have commercial value in daytime but allow public use in the evenings?

We really need the grocery store – as lots of neighbors don’t drive. Thank you very much.

A lower profile – e.g., Knickerbocker Plaza, was more of what I anticipated. This is quite a departure and I hope it can at least fit in architecturally.

Again – Division Street is a very narrow residential street with a lot of traffic already it needs to be vacated at LaFollette Avenue.

I sure hope you can begin this project soon. It is a “breath of fresh air” for this beloved neighborhood.

Hope there will be a “founding date” or plaque on French Battery Company.

This meeting was organized by the Schenk-Atwood-Yahara Neighborhood Association and District 6 Alder Judy Olson, with public support from District 15 Alder Larry Palm and the Emerson East Neighborhood Association. The meeting was sponsored by McGrath Associates.

The East Isthmus Neighborhoods Planning Council is a coalition of the Neighborhood Associations of Carpenter-Ridgeway, Eastmorland, Eken Park, Emerson East, Hawthorne, Marquette, Mayfair Park, Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara, Tenney-Lapham, Truax, and Worthington Park; at-large representation by underrepresented East Isthmus communities; and business representation by East Isthmus business associations. EINPC provides facilitation of public input and community organizing assistance to area neighborhoods.