

# **East Side Sub-Area Workshop**

**St. Charles Comprehensive Plan  
Thursday, September 22, 2011**

On Thursday September 22, 2011, a community workshop was held at the St. John Neumann Church to allow the community a chance to voice their concerns about the area of St. Charles to the East of the Fox River. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to place labels on a map indicating areas of concern and then follow up with a description on an index card. Following this opening exercise, residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders participated in a discussion about the exercise. This document summarizes the meeting.

## **Index Card Comments**

Residents were asked to write comments about the labels they placed on the map on index cards. These cards have been broken down into 15 categories. A brief summary of each category and their respective comments follows:

### **Charlestowne Mall Site**

The Charlestowne Mall is a major concern for residents. Residents believe there is an opportunity to either redevelop/repurpose the mall site or at the very least to refresh the retail offerings to create a more competitive and upscale shopping destination. Residents suggested they would like to see stores such as the Cheesecake Factory, Apple Store, Nordstrom's and so on. Residents are not just concerned with the mall itself however. They also mention the corridor surrounding the mall, the vacant Borders and plaza across the street from the mall, and mall property that is currently empty or surface parking as potential redevelopment sites. A few residents mentioned the desire to keep the indoor waling opportunity the mall provides.

### **Growth/Annexation**

A few residents mentioned growth and/or annexation is a concern. One resident mentioned the area near Cambridge East Homes as a possible target for annexation. Others desire growth to expedite the completion of the King Edwards Avenue to Smith Road extension.

## **Vacant Land & Storefronts/Land Redevelopment**

Residents are concerned about the amount of vacant land as well as empty storefronts, particularly in the Foxfield parcel. Many residents expressed opposition to the development of the Foxfield parcel into high density multi-family development. Other comments involved development around the east side sports complex, Hoffman property, and the Tin Cup Pass shopping center.

## **Bike and Pedestrian Issues**

Some residents want to see an expansion of bike and pedestrian trails. In addition, a concern was raised about the lack of sidewalk continuity, even in front of new homes. Safety, according to one resident, should be the top priority, with attention paid to children walking to schools or the store and children playing.

## **Transportation**

Residents are concerned with transportation both in terms of private automobile traffic as well as public transit. A number of specific road projects were mentioned with the most popular suggestion being the extension of King Edward Avenue to Smith Road. Residents also suggested both that Route 64 be widened (or turn lanes added) and that truck traffic be removed, and one comment requested access between Kirk Road and downtown without using 64. As for transit, some residents expressed a desire to see an inter-city transit system and improved Pace service. Alleys were listed as having a drainage problem.

## **Land Use/Housing**

Some residents feel that there is a lack of cohesiveness or continuity between areas of the city because there are such a range of built forms including strip malls, car dealerships, and different types of businesses. Others want to avoid high density housing and there was also a concern about the price of housing in St. Charles.

## **Urban Design/Placemaking**

Residents are concerned about the aesthetic qualities of St. Charles and the removal of visual blight. Again here the issue of disconnected appearance came up. Gateways were a major issue, with a number of residents wishing to create a better identity for the City through signage or other gateway markings. Residents are concerned that the east side has no prominent center or meeting space. Parks with public events or other destination points were mentioned as possible solutions.

## **Economic Development**

Business opportunities and economic growth were primary concerns at the workshop. Residents listed things like commercial vitality, green technology, and warehouse/industrial growth as primary concerns. Economic development comments run throughout the discussion though—and certainly many of the previous topics contain economic development components. One resident listed the sales tax as being too high. Also, the proportion of tax revenue allocated to schools is too high according to this resident.