

West Side Sub-Area Workshop

St. Charles Comprehensive Plan

Thursday, September 28, 2011

On Thursday September 28, 2011, a community workshop was held at the Kane County Circuit Clerk Building, to allow the community a chance to voice their concerns about the area of St. Charles to the West 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 11 categories. A brief summary of each category and their respective comments follows:

Utilities and Infrastructure

Concern was expressed about flooding near the new big box development along Randall Road as well as the age of the gas lines throughout the city and claims that numerous gas leaks have occurred as a result of the aging infrastructure.

Gateway/Urban Design

Residents would like to see more prominent gateways at the entrance to the city as well as a more unified design character throughout the city.

Visual Blight

There were complaints about the property at the corner of Prairie and 77th being an eyesore and the east-side of intersection of Randall and Main. Improving the appearance of the City's alleys was also identified as a concern.

Applied Composites

There was concern over the density of the proposed Kensington Homes development. It was expressed that the density is too high and that the appearance and quality of the proposed construction could impact nearby property values.

Housing/Land Use

Issues related to housing and land use drew numerous comments from residents. They are concerned about the high amount of low income/high density housing on the west side of the city and would like to prevent further expansion of this type of use in the future. More than once residents mentioned overcrowding as a problem in these multi-family areas (one commenter also mentioned small single-family homes in relation to overcrowding). Residents who responded do not want to see more residential development on the old St. Charles Mall site. Underlying many of these comments is a concern that transient and low income residents have become too numerous and that property values and schools will suffer or have suffered. In addition, a rise in crime was cited as a concern in conjunction with a changing population.

Vacancy

Residents are concerned about lot vacancy as well as storefront vacancy. One resident mentioned the idea of re-purposing the abandoned railroad spur for development.

St. Charles Mall Site

Another prominent issue during this workshop was the fate of the former St. Charles Mall site, currently abandoned. Residents do not want to see more housing on this site, as was eluded to in the previous comments regarding housing and land use. Residents would like to see good planning and architectural design on the site, with reasonable parking requirements. A comment suggest to see a pocket park on the site.

Pedestrian Trail/Parks

The abandoned railroad track spur was listed as a possible redevelopment site for a park or trail. Residents would like to see a complete network of sidewalks in the community as well as additional bike lanes and running trails. Other projects mentioned include a new recreational facility, keeping the riverfront open on First between Main and Illinois, creating walking or biking access along Randall Road, and the addition of a bike path connecting the Fox River Trail with the Western Trail to Sycamore.

Growth/Annexation

There was a desire to see the “donut holes” of unincorporated land throughout the city annexed, as these areas benefit from the proximity to the City as well as number of City services without paying taxes. Another comment mentioned the possibility of growth in order to increase the tax base.

Economic Development

This issue came up throughout the workshop in various forms. Residents would like to see the city grow economically, but not at the expense of those things that make St. Charles unique.

Enforcement

Residents are concerned about code enforcement since no law is valuable if it is not enforced. While the idea was not elaborated upon in any detail, in previous meetings residents have voiced an interest in better enforcement of residential ordinances to prevent overcrowding in residential areas.

Transportation

Many of the participants are concerned about traffic. They specifically mentioned traffic around schools on 7th Street, Prairie Street, Randall Road, Main Street, 15th and West Main, 1st and West Main and Illinois Street, and Prairie and Katherine. In addition, the disconnected and incomplete sidewalk network was also cited.