

Zone Tosa for All.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEMO

JUNE 21, 2021



Small Business

Families

Future Generations

The Environment

Seniors



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INTRODUCTION

Wauwatosa is filled with one-of-a-kind places—its parks, schools, neighborhoods, and business areas. But what makes our city truly unique are the people who live, work, and spend their time here. The future of our city rests on creating places for everyone—places for families and businesses to grow, young people to establish their roots, older adults to age in place, and disabled communities to thrive.

Zone Tosa for All is a planning project, led by the City of Wauwatosa and community partners, to make our zoning and land use decisions equitable for all, with the goal of:

- Supporting and encouraging local business growth
- Creating policies that allow for a range of housing options and ensure discrimination is not a barrier
- Ensuring all residents have equal access to housing, parks, and transportation
- Increasing accessibility for people with disabilities
- Creating a structure to review zoning and land use decisions through an equity framework

We recognize zoning regulations and land use policies have historically had and continue to have a disparate impact on marginalized communities. Our aim for this process is to set a new course for the future of Wauwatosa.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The engagement process allows for community members and individuals to share input and ideas from their lived experiences regarding a number of topics. In essence, the process highlights the voices and prioritizes the expertise of those most familiar with the needs of the community.

This process was structured through the following three points of engagement:

Community Conversations

Six focus group conversations took place **between April 26-27, 2021**. Focus group participants were chosen because of their unique perspectives and representation within the community. In total, **there were 33 participants**, including elected and appointed officials, residents, business owners, county representatives, school board members, members from senior and disability organizations, developers, fair housing council members, and WHEDA.

Public Workshop

A virtual public workshop was held on **June 3, 2021, from 6-7:30 p.m.** Participants engaged in conversations facilitated in **six breakout rooms created for the event**. Attendees shared their experiences and perspectives **on zoning and land use** in Wauwatosa and then contributed ideas aimed at **positively impacting the community's overall growth**.

The following themes were presented as potential discussion points for small groups:

Lack of affordable options · Negative health outcomes · Environmental Injustice · Unwelcoming attitudes to 'outsiders' · Lack of engagement · Limited access to mobility & transportation · Lack of investment in disadvantaged businesses · Gentrification & displacement

Public Survey

An online survey was created as an option for those individuals who wanted to express their individual feedback or were not able to join the public workshop. The survey included public multiple questions related to the themes discussed in the public workshop, including *how often individuals attend city meetings; reasons for attending; barriers they face to attending meetings; how they hear about the meetings; ideas for improvement*; and other recommendations. A total of 98 responses were received. Survey input is summarized on page 8.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS:

33

PARTICIPANTS JOINED
**COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS**

71

ATTENDED THE
**PUBLIC
WORKSHOP**

98

**ENGAGEMENT
SURVEY
RESPONSES**

ENGAGEMENT THEMES

Here are the overarching themes – what we’ve heard through the engagement process:

Making Wauwatosa More Welcoming

Many participants expressed the desire to create a more welcoming Wauwatosa, one in which people from different backgrounds feel welcomed *and* included. Participants openly shared their concerns about this theme by pointing out that Wauwatosa is generationally diverse but has very little racial/ethnic diversity. Participants also pointed to the idea that communities that embrace residents’ backgrounds and cultures are ultimately more economically diverse and resilient.



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Community Conversation Highlights:

- » *“I don’t think we need to get bigger. I think we need to get more diverse.”*
- » *“Sometimes there is a lack of acceptance to new families, especially families and individuals of color.”*
- » *“The ‘City of Homes’ tagline and concept is burned into a lot of peoples’ heads and is a barrier to other types of housing.”*
- » *“Milwaukee is a region that is pressed with a lot of great people, so we have to figure out how to come together.”*



© Friends of Hoyt Park

Public Workshop Highlights:

- » Economic and social resiliency stems from new and diverse people moving to Wauwatosa.
- » That begins with being more welcoming to “Tosa outsiders.”
- » Residents have the responsibility of turning the stories around for future generations. Preserving and telling the story of Wauwatosa’s history—both the good and the bad—is critical.



© Visit Milwaukee

Lack of Affordable Housing

Stakeholders indicated that there is an overall lack of affordable housing in Wauwatosa. Many participants in the community conversations and public workshop expressed concern that some community members can no longer afford to live in Wauwatosa. It was noted that these current residents are being forced to move out to more affordable areas. On the flip side, students, young families, and aging populations that would like to move to Wauwatosa are not able to because of lack of affordable options. As a result, they too are increasingly having to look outside of the city.

Community Conversation Highlights:

- » *“How is a younger, first time home-buyer going to compete with older adults who have grown their wealth? We need multiple types of housing as different options.”*
- » *“Housing costs are too high to provide affordable options to younger people and families.”*
- » *“I can’t pay the entry fee to get into Wauwatosa.”*



© Zillow, Wauwatosa

Public Workshop Highlights:

- » Many aging residents experience limitations—from affordability, to accessibility, to a diverse set of options for housing choices.
- » As housing becomes increasingly unaffordable, there is a need to build the tax base.
- » Landlords are not taking rental assistance, which makes it even more challenging for residents to find available housing within a certain budget.



© Harwood Place Senior Living

Increasing Housing Options

Many participants expressed a desire for increased housing options. In general, there was a consensus that the City needs to be creative about the types of density increases and where they should occur. In particular, there was a push for creating zoning regulations that directly address sustainability. Participants shared that “balance” is key, and that density doesn’t necessarily equate to affordability. Concerns about density near single-family homes—resulting in large buildings blocking light and increased traffic—were also raised in these discussions.

Community Conversation Highlights:

- » *“I don’t think you are going to achieve the goals we are talking about without more density.”*
- » *“I would absolutely support up-zoning. Everyone says they would support equity and inclusion but then they have the ‘buts’. There is deep-rooted hatred regarding this issue when people feel like their neighborhood is going to be impacted by that.”*
- » *“Balance is key.”*
- » *“A mixed-development that everyone could live in. Tosa is ready to embrace that, and the residents want that so badly.”*



© Synergy at the Mayfair Collection Apartments

Public Workshop Highlights:

- » There is a lack of single-story and accessible housing options adequate for seniors, disabled residents, and low-income families.
- » A fair-focused housing neighborhood program would provide housing opportunities for young families and all ages, avoiding segregation.
- » Young families are finding it increasingly harder to move into Wauwatosa. There needs to be more options and more *affordable* options.
- » The community should integrate zoning and housing plans to build a common ground.
- » Zoning strategies must focus on areas of expansion and opportunities for growth, while limiting some areas on minimum density levels.
- » This process should include minimizing lot sizes and parking requirements.



© Wauwatosa School District



Tosa Tonight, © CBS 58

Enhancing Accessibility

Mobility & transportation were important themes throughout the discussions. As many participants pointed out, a lack of public transportation options is one of the biggest challenges that Wauwatosa faces compared to other cities within close proximity. These mobility challenges are especially pronounced on the west side of the city and for disabled communities. Participants emphasized the need for this process to think about land use changes in the context of transportation.

The disability community, and its advocates, discussed accessibility challenges they face in three main areas: accessible housing, transportation, and job opportunities. They emphasized how negatively impacted by mobility barriers their lives are, preventing them from finding accessible housing and businesses. Additionally, it was noted that there is a high rate of residents living with disabilities who are either unemployed or underemployed.

Community Conversation Highlights:

- » *“Accessible, affordable, and available housing for people with disabilities and that is something that is very hard to find in Wauwatosa.”*
- » *“Geographically not the easiest place for limited mobility residents—not very ride-able or walkable.”*
- » *The aging population in Wauwatosa has limited options once they want to move out of their single-family home.*



© Wauwatosa Now, staff photo by Rory Linnane.

Public Workshop Highlights:

- » Getting around Wauwatosa via public transit is difficult due to limited frequency of routes.
- » Better transportation options for seniors and those with disabilities are needed.
- » The disability community is challenged by the lack of sidewalks.
- » The lack of transportation limits growth opportunities.
- » People want to have greater access to job opportunities.
- » More development must be accompanied by public transit investment so roads do not get even more congested.



© Milwaukee County Transit System

Empower Businesses—Especially Small Businesses

Another theme that was discussed was the idea that business investments need protection and support from the City. Many voiced that local authorities need to focus on and implement more efficient and accessible permitting solutions.



Froedter Medical College of Wisconsin, ©Visit Milwaukee



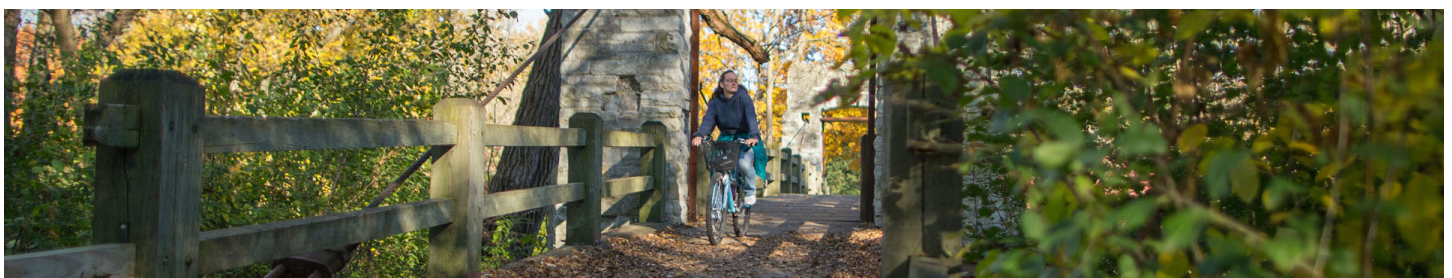
Stock House Brewing ©Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Community Conversation Highlights:

- » The Medical Campus and Mayfair are two of the largest employment centers within Wauwatosa. Because of this, the City needs to coordinate with them to understand housing needs of their employees and work to build to meet that demand in a sustainable way.
- » Home ownership incentives are needed for workers.
- » Currently, there are a number of barriers for small business owners to launch in a storefront.

Public Workshop Highlights:

- » This process should result in more opportunities for small neighborhood businesses and increase minority-owned businesses.
- » There is a need to facilitate the permitting processes for business owners when they want to implement new initiatives to overcome unexpected challenges.



Hoyt Park © Visit Milwaukee

Enhance Public Engagement

Public engagement is the crux of a more equitable land use and zoning future. Throughout our initial engagement efforts, participants contributed their thoughts to what is working and what parts of the engagement process could be improved. Highlights included the need for:

- » More education, as many people don't understand what zoning is and the power it has on impacting communities.
- » More collaboration between the City and residents.
- » Easier, more accessible ways to get involved and share input.
- » Greater outreach and intentional support to minorities so public meetings can increase community representation.
- » Residents' input and concerns are heard and included as new development projects are being designed for implementation.

Community Conversation Highlights:

- » "Public workshops needed to educate people on what zoning is and why it matters."
- » "Rather than more rules, are there other models that could inspire certain populations to participate?"
- » "The City website is a bit of a challenge to navigate."

Public Workshop Highlights:

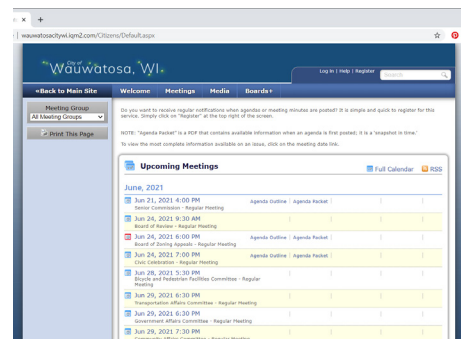
- » Zoom is a great resource to join meetings when community members can't attend in person.
- » There are very few non-native English speakers at events and meetings.
- » The City should share public meetings' agenda available sooner.
- » Long community engagement conversations generally lead to intangible results. Community members wonder if citizen input is being disregarded by local authorities (i.e. affordable housing).
- » There is a need for local authorities and community members to find common ground once points of agreement are found.
- » While community members are willing to attend public meetings, agendas are difficult to find and interpret.
- » Community members find it hard to understand why some proposals/initiatives move forward and why others do not.



Public Meeting © Milwaukee Journal Sentinel



© Wisconsin Examiner



City of Wauwatosa Online Meeting Portal

Survey Highlights:

- » 45% of respondents had not been to a City meeting in the last five years. Most (77%) had attended less than 4.
- » An overwhelming 62% of respondents have not attended meetings because they didn't know about it. Others (32%) did not attend because they found the time of the meetings inconvenient. Location of meetings and lack of childcare were also identified as barriers to attendance.
- » For those that attended, most did so to either voice support or opposition to a particular plan or project or learn about a specific development or zoning project.
- » 78% of respondents hear about City meetings and public hearings via social media; less than half from the City website; and about a quarter by word of mouth.
- » *"More social media posting about when & where meetings are happening would be helpful."*
- » *"It would be easy to amplify that these meetings are happening (and sooner)."*
- » *"I won't often be able to make live meetings. But if there could be a way to listen after the fact (at a more "mom of littles" convenient time) and still provide some feedback that would be great. Even if the meeting/feedback was open for a week after the meeting."*
- » *"Send directly to the homeowner/taxpayer of Wauwatosa via email and/or text. Not everyone is on social media or check it often."*
- » *"I would like it if meetings weren't so late at night. I would like an easy way to submit a comment on something online."*
- » *"Curating communication by topic. There is so much to keep track of, so anything that can simplify awareness and opportunities to participate is a step in the right direction."*

NEXT STEPS

The insights gained from the community outreach to date will be used to inform initial recommendations for changes to land use and zoning policy in Wauwatosa. These initial recommendations will be shared with the community for additional feedback and input in August 2021.

**LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED AT:
WAUWATOSA.NET/ZONEFORALL**

SURVEY RESULTS:

45%

ATTENDED NO COMMUNITY MEETINGS

IN THE PAST 5 YEARS

61%

CITED THE MAIN BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION AS

NOT KNOWING MEETINGS ARE HAPPENING

78%

HEARD ABOUT MEETINGS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA