Core Neighborhoods Master Plan

May 8, 2020 | Progress Report to the Project Steering Committee

Since our last progress report to all of you at the beginning of April, uncertainty about when in-person meetings for this project can safely resume has not subsided. Nevertheless, April was a busy month and continued the process of adding to our understanding of issues that matter the most to residents and current conditions in the core neighborhoods.

The following is an overview of progress made during April, along with work currently underway.

Online Survey

The online survey that was open from late March through the end of April was designed to supplement the "What's Working / What's Not Working" exercise we performed with our Sub-Area Committees in February by putting a similar question before the general public. The survey asked people to identity the top three 'selling points' about their core neighborhood that are likely to attract new residents, as well as the top three 'turn-offs' that might deter people from choosing to live in the neighborhood.

Just over 300 responses were received, and our team has been working to categorize the open-ended answers for analysis and comparison. Although participants did not have a list of set responses to choose from, the answers they provided reveal a fair amount of consensus about the biggest selling points and turn-offs in individual neighborhoods, as well as those which transcend neighborhood boundaries.

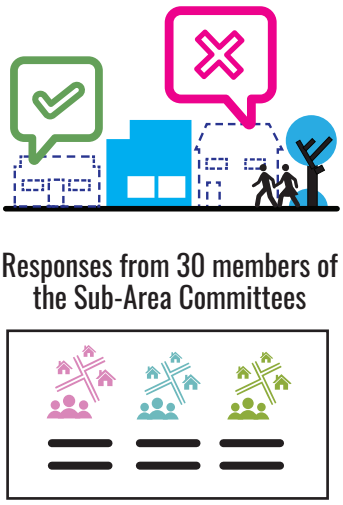
Appendix A of this progress report provides a first glimpse of the most common answers from each neighborhood and how they compare across neighborhoods. You can compare these results to the "Working / Not Working" lists developed by the Sub-Area Committees (see Appendix A from the April 3rd progress report).

Does anything stand out to you when you review these lists of the most commonly cited positive and negative attributes? **Does anything surprise you? If you have any observations you would like to share, please do so.**

Infill Development Scenarios

At the beginning of April, we distributed a short survey to Sub-Area Committee members that presented a series of hypothetical infill development scenarios. The purpose of the exercise was to give us a sense of how those committee members react when change is proposed in their neighborhood—the issues and concerns that rise to the surface and the questions that get asked. It's another way of pinpointing what matters most to people in the core neighborhoods.

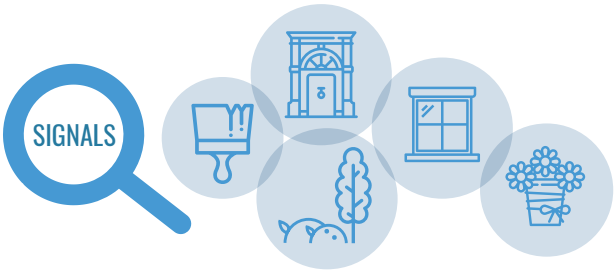
Appendix B of this progress report provides an overview of what we learned based on the responses submitted by 30 members of the Sub-Area Committees.

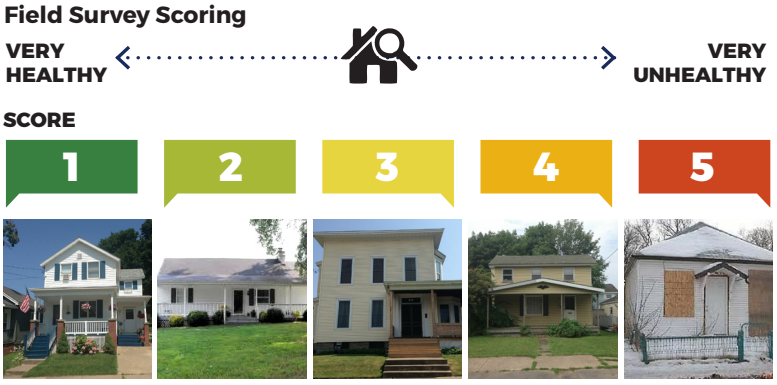


Do you think the responses align with concerns you've heard in the past when change is proposed in Fargo neighborhoods, especially in the core? Does anything surprise you? Please let us know **what you think.**

Field Survey of Residential Property Conditions

Our field survey of the 8,900 residential properties in the core neighborhoods began in April with the training of two students from NDSU and 10 volunteers from the Sub-Area Committees. The process, which will add to our base of knowledge about existing conditions and trends in the housing market, involves the scoring of each property on a simple 1-to-5 scale. How a property gets scored depends on the 'signals' that the property sends to passersby. Are there signs of conscientious upkeep and pride of ownership? Are there visible signs of deferred maintenance? What trajectory does the property appear to be on?

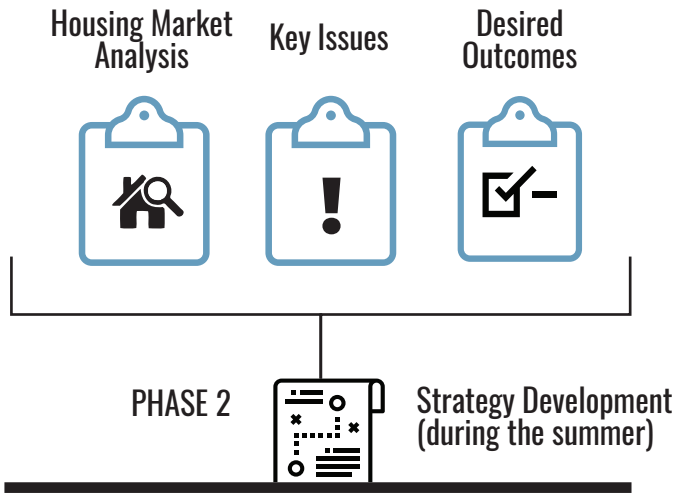




As of May 6th, over 3,000 properties in the core neighborhoods have been scored and completion of all scoring is anticipated by Memorial Day.

Housing Market Analysis

Results from the field survey are rapidly feeding into the datasets we are using to understand Fargo's housing markets and how they influence life and conditions in the core neighborhoods. **Over the course of May, findings from this analysis will be assembled alongside what has been learned so far about key issues and desired outcomes. All of this will provide a solid foundation for moving into Phase 2 of the project—starting with meetings (likely virtual) during the week of June 22nd, details forthcoming—where the focus will shift to strategy development.**



Questions?

If you have any questions about anything summarized in this progress report, or if you wish to discuss any aspect of the project, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach **Peter Lombardi**, project manager, at **plombardi@czb.org** and **(703) 548-3708x7**.

Thank you, as always, for your commitment to this project and for providing timely feedback.

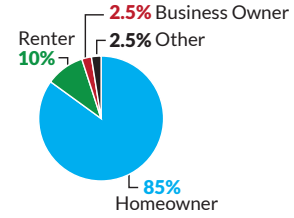
Best regards,

czb

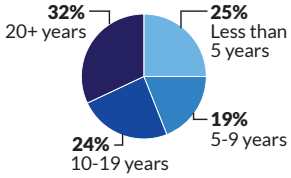
Core Neighborhoods Master Plan
Appendix A – Survey Results

The first online survey of the Core Neighborhoods Master Plan was open to the public from the end of March through the end of April. Two rounds of promotion by Fargo's Office of Communications and Public Affairs, along with peer-to-peer promotion by project committee members, garnered 303 completed surveys. Among survey participants, the vast majority were homeowners within the core neighborhoods, with an even mix of recent arrivals and longer-tenured residents.

Survey Participant Association to Core Neighborhoods



Length of Association



SELLING POINTS

Please identify three characteristics about your neighborhood and/or its housing stock that you see as the **top selling points for potential residents.**

In other words, which attributes do you think are most likely to attract people to live in your neighborhood?

	WASHINGTON		ROOSEVELT / NDSU		HORACE MANN		MADISON / UP		JEFFERSON / CARL BEN		HAWTHORNE		SOUTH HIGH / L&C		CLARA BARTON		**CORE TOTAL**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Great location; proximity to downtown and/or other assets	22	18%	19	23%	24	15%	9	33%	23	18%	45	21%	5	28%	19	11%	166	18%
Neighborhood and its homes have architectural or historic character	11	9%	7	9%	27	17%	1	4%	17	13%	52	24%	2	11%	27	15%	144	15%
Trees	14	12%	5	6%	16	10%	2	7%	12	9%	25	11%	4	22%	23	13%	101	11%
Schools	10	8%	7	9%	12	7%	3	11%	11	8%	15	7%	1	6%	24	14%	83	9%
Parks (quality and/or access)	8	7%	0	0%	11	7%	0	0%	7	5%	21	10%	0	0%	22	12%	69	7%
Peaceful and quiet	18	15%	5	6%	11	7%	2	7%	11	8%	4	2%	0	0%	12	7%	63	7%
Walkable / Bikable	6	5%	2	2%	10	6%	2	7%	11	8%	19	9%	1	6%	12	7%	63	7%
Good neighbors / neighborliness	3	3%	7	9%	13	8%	3	11%	8	6%	10	5%	2	11%	7	4%	53	6%
Affordability	5	4%	11	14%	7	4%	0	0%	5	4%	8	4%	2	11%	8	5%	46	5%
Established / mature	6	5%	6	7%	4	2%	0	0%	5	4%	1	0%	1	6%	8	5%	31	3%
Feels safe	8	7%	0	0%	3	2%	1	4%	4	3%	4	2%	0	0%	2	1%	22	2%
Well-kept / tidy	1	1%	0	0%	5	3%	0	0%	6	5%	5	2%	0	0%	7	4%	24	3%
Family-friendly environment	4	3%	1	1%	5	3%	0	0%	3	2%	4	2%	0	0%	0	0%	17	2%
Total distinct answers given	**120**		**81**		**162**		**27**		**131**		**219**		**18**		**177**		**935**	

Notes: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were subsequently categorized into groupings of similar responses. The categories presented here are those that came up five times or more in at least one neighborhood. The tally of 'total distinct answers given' includes infrequent responses not presented on this table.

Categories of answers that represent at least 10% of all answers given

TURN-OFFS

Please identify three characteristics about your neighborhood and/or its housing stock that you see as the **top turn-offs for potential residents**.

In other words, which attributes do you think are most likely to deter people from choosing to live in your neighborhood?

	WASHINGTON		ROOSEVELT / NDSU		HORACE MANN		MADISON / UP		JEFFERSON / CARL BEN		HAWTHORNE		SOUTH HIGH / L&C		CLARA BARTON		**CORE TOTAL**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**	**#**	**%**
Homes in disrepair	10	12%	11	15%	20	18%	6	18%	28	30%	26	17%	3	19%	17	15%	121	18%
Rental properties as problems	18	21%	25	35%	18	17%	4	12%	20	22%	20	13%	0	0%	4	3%	109	16%
Small and older homes (less marketable, costlier to repair)	17	20%	1	1%	13	12%	2	6%	6	6%	21	14%	1	6%	25	21%	86	13%
Streets and infrastructure issues	10	12%	3	4%	3	3%	3	9%	7	8%	16	11%	5	31%	14	12%	61	9%
Traffic / vehicle noise	4	5%	3	4%	3	3%	6	18%	2	2%	16	11%	1	6%	14	12%	49	7%
Safety / crime	1	1%	10	14%	16	15%	2	6%	0	0%	13	9%	1	6%	5	4%	48	7%
Parking and/or garages	1	1%	7	10%	9	8%	0	0%	6	6%	12	8%	0	0%	9	8%	44	6%
Housing costs and taxes	7	8%	4	6%	6	6%	1	3%	8	9%	9	6%	0	0%	7	6%	42	6%
Schools (zones or reputation)	0	0%	0	0%	3	3%	0	0%	2	2%	6	4%	1	6%	4	3%	16	2%
Total distinct answers given	**86**		**71**		**109**		**33**		**93**		**152**		**16**		**117**		**677**	

Notes: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were subsequently categorized into groupings of similar responses. The categories presented here are those that came up five times or more in at least one neighborhood. The tally of 'total distinct answers given' includes infrequent responses not presented on this table.

Categories of answers that represent at least 10% of all answers given

PRIORITY PROBLEM TO SOLVE

If you were in charge of making the neighborhood better, **what problem would you devote the most attention and resources to solving**?	WASHINGTON		ROOSEVELT / NDSU		HORACE MANN		MADISON / UP		JEFFERSON / CARL BEN		HAWTHORNE		SOUTH HIGH / L&C		CLARA BARTON		**CORE TOTAL**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Homes in need of repair and updating	5	14%	6	20%	12	27%	4	50%	15	38%	20	32%	1	17%	15	38%	78	30%
Blighted rental housing	6	17%	10	33%	12	27%	2	25%	6	15%	11	18%	0	0%	1	3%	48	18%
Streets / infrastructure in need of repair	9	26%	3	10%	1	2%	0	0%	2	5%	7	11%	4	67%	10	25%	36	14%
Crime	2	6%	2	7%	4	9%	2	25%	4	10%	3	5%	0	0%	0	0%	17	6%
Winter parking / plowing issues	3	9%	4	13%	1	2%	0	0%	1	3%	4	6%	0	0%	0	0%	13	5%
Traffic laws not followed	1	3%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	1	3%	2	3%	0	0%	7	18%	12	5%
Schools need more resources	0	0%	0	0%	3	7%	0	0%	4	10%	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	8	3%
Total distinct answers given	**35**		**30**		**44**		**8**		**39**		**62**		**6**		**40**		**264**	

Notes: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were subsequently categorized into groupings of similar responses. The categories presented here are those that came up three times or more in at least one neighborhood. The tally of 'total distinct answers given' includes infrequent responses not presented on this table.

Categories of answers that represent at least 10% of all answers given

Infill Development Scenarios

Sub-Area Committee members were presented with three infill development scenarios in early April through an online survey platform and were asked to respond to questions about each scenario, including what they liked about it, what concerned them, and what questions they would have for City staff and the Planning Commission. The following are the scenarios that were presented and analysis of the responses received from the 30 Sub-Area Committee members who completed the questions.

Scenario #1

Your 82-year-old neighbor just sold his house, which is located on a relatively large lot. The new owner, a doctor from Minneapolis who recently accepted a job at Essentia Health, plans to demolish the existing house and build a larger one to take full advantage of the size of the lot.

You see her walking the property with her architect. After you introduce yourself and offer her a quick welcome, she tells you that she just loves the neighborhood and wants to build a house very similar to the one she left in Minneapolis. Upon returning home, you quickly Google her name and find her prior address to get an idea of what she likely has in mind.

This is the photo you find:

We want to know **how you might react to this type of residential infill project** being proposed in your neighborhood.

Scenario #2

An oversized corner lot on the busiest road in your neighborhood is vacant and has been for years. It recently sold and the new property owners, a local development consortium, are taking it before the Planning Commission to request a rezoning that would allow them to build a four-plex in this traditionally single-family neighborhood.

The developers consider themselves socially aware and want the units to be affordable to households earning around 80% of the Area Median Income, which equates to households making around $40,000. Their proposal has a maximum of three stories and one parking space per unit on site. They haven't yet determined if this will be an apartment (rental) building or a condo (for sale) building.

We want to know **how you might react to this type of residential infill project** being proposed in your neighborhood.

Scenario #3

Papa Murphy's Take N' Bake Pizza has been wildly successful in a neighborhood setting in Fargo, providing both a convenient service and a setting for casual run-ins with neighbors. A new local start-up, Mama Hilga's Home Cookin', would like to replicate that success and has plans to locate in your neighborhood.

There are three lots down the street from you that are for sale and face an arterial road. One lot is vacant and the other two are unmaintained houses in relatively poor condition. The owners of the restaurant have a purchase option on all three lots and are planning to work with the City to rezone it to allow neighborhood commercial development. Their restaurant would occupy one of the three commercial tenant spaces. Before going any further, they decide to coordinate with the neighbors to let you know their plans. Prior to the meeting, they provide a rendering that captures their initial design concept:

The developers want to know **what you think about their proposed neighborhood commercial building.**

We want to know **how you might react to this type of residential infill project** being proposed in your neighborhood.

SCENARIO #1

	WASHINGTON	ROOSEVELT / NDSU	HORACE MANN	MADISON / UP	JEFFERSON / CARL BEN	HAWTHORNE	SOUTH HIGH / L&C	CLARA BARTON	CORE TOTAL
What do you like about it?	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Well-designed; attractive; good curb appeal	3	3	1	3	0	4	1	3	18
Well-maintained -- an indication of good owner/neighbor		1	3	0	2	4	1	0	11
Sign of investment and commitment to the neighborhood	1		1	0	1	3	1	0	7
Adds diversity and character to the neighborhood's housing stock	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	4
What concerns, if any, do you have?	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Exterior design doesn't fit in; might compromise atmosphere and value of neighborhood	1	1	4	2	1	3	2	1	15
Scale or size may be inappropriate	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	7
No concerns	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	5
Driveway placement and materials	2	0	0	0	1		0	1	4
Loss of torn down house (historic value or source of affordable housing)	1	0	0	1	0		0	0	2
Skepticism about constructability, lack of local builder expertise	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Codes for flood plain could make something like this difficult	0	0	0	0	0	1	0		1
What questions would you have for City staff or the Planning Commission before any approvals are granted?	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
No questions	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	8
Would design guidelines have to be waived or a variance granted for something like this? If so, on what basis?	0		2	0	0	4	0	1	7
Are the owner and architect sensitive to the scale and context of surroundings?	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	6
Do neighbors have a say?	1		1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Will the new structure match the footprint or scale of the original?	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
What is the timeframe, and will removal/construction be disruptive?	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
What impact might this have on surrounding home values?	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Will trees be lost?	0		0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Is there alley access for this property?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were then categorized into groupings of similar responses

Most common answer in a neighborhood that was given more than once

We want to know **how you might react to this type of residential infill project** being proposed in your neighborhood.

SCENARIO #2

	WASHINGTON	ROOSEVELT / NDSU	HORACE MANN	MADISON / UP	JEFFERSON / CARL BEN	HAWTHORNE	SOUTH HIGH / L&C	CLARA BARTON	CORE TOTAL
What do you like about it?	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Attractive building, good curb appeal and scale	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	2	10
It's an improvement on what's there now; make use of underutilized lots	1	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	8
Affordability	3	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	8
Diversifies housing types in neighborhood	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	4
Adds needed density and vitality	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Sign of investment and commitment to neighborhood	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Nothing to like about it	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Potential housing for young families	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Adds to the housing stock	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Might take pressure off of single-family rental conversions	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Good transitional building from arterial to single-family blocks	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
What concerns, if any, do you have?	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#	#
Not enough parking capacity	0	2	2	0	2	7	1	2	16
Site plan concerns -- height, scale, access	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	6
Not a good fit with existing neighborhood character	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	5
Concern about maintenance if its rental	1	0	2	0	1		1	0	5
No concerns	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
Ensuring affordability, or keeping it affordable over time	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Potentially rezoning without a vision	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Safety of kids given busyness of street	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Too much density	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Prefer to see mixed-uses to add more services to neighborhood	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Potentially too much parking or ugly parking	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were then categorized into groupings of similar responses

Most common answer in a neighborhood that was given more than once

What questions would you have for City staff or the Planning Commission before any approvals are granted?	WASHINGTON #	ROOSEVELT / NDSU #	HORACE MANN #	MADISON / UP #	JEFFERSON / CARL BEN #	HAWTHORNE #	SOUTH HIGH / L&C #	CLARA BARTON #	CORE TOTAL #
Will parking be adequate? Will parking/access cause traffic or other safety issues?	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	9
In what ways will the city hold the developer to their affordability goal?	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	4
Does it compromise neighborhood character? Is the developer sensitive to this?	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
No questions	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
What is the likely impact on surrounding property values and taxes?	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
How does this advance neighborhood plans/vision?	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
What is track-record of developer?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Can condos being encouraged over rentals? Will this be solidified before approval?	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
How will good maintenance be enforced if this is rental?	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Does this open the door to more of this type of development? Have we thought this through?	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
How large will the units be, and how will that influence tenant base?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Is the developer getting incentives?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Are design standards being waived?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Is neighborhood input being sought or required?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Is there and impact on sewer load?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
What are current vacancy rates for this type of housing? How will this fare?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Does this require rezoning? If so, on what basis is decision made?	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were then categorized into groupings of similar responses

Most common answer in a neighborhood that was given more than once

The developers want to know **what you think about their proposed neighborhood commercial building.**

SCENARIO #3

What do you like about it?	WASHINGTON #	ROOSEVELT / NDSU #	HORACE MANN #	MADISON / UP #	JEFFERSON / CARL BEN #	HAWTHORNE #	SOUTH HIGH / L&C #	CLARA BARTON #	CORE TOTAL #
Good design with good curb appeal; simple and modern	1	1	3	2	1	3	2	2	15
Creates a more dynamic mixture of uses within walkable area; improves neighborhood's marketability	2	0	1	1	0	4	1	0	9
Addition of local businesses serving the neighborhood	0	0	3	0	1	3	0	1	8
Removal of blighted housing	0		2	1	0	3	0	0	6
Nice scale; not too big	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	4
Nothing to like about this	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Sign of investment and confidence in neighborhood	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Serves as a buffer between a busy road and adjacent residential areas	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
What concerns, if any, do you have?	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**	**#**
Impact on traffic, vehicle access, pedestrian safety	0	0	0	1	1	5	2	0	9
The design seems too suburban, or is not sensitive to surrounding residential character	2	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	6
Potential for undesirable businesses to locate in the other slots	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	2	6
There might not be enough parking	0	0	1	1	1	2	0		5
Skepticism about demand for that many retail slots	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
No concerns	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
Not appropriate for residential neighborhood, regardless of design or the businesses involved	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Too much parking might be required but not actually needed due to local walking/biking	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Removal of residential properties	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Potential for noise from patrons	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Note: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were then categorized into groupings of similar responses

Most common answer in a neighborhood that was given more than once

What questions would you have for City staff or the Planning Commission before any approvals are granted?	WASHINGTON #	ROOSEVELT / NDSU #	HORACE MANN #	MADISON / UP #	JEFFERSON / CARL BEN #	HAWTHORNE #	SOUTH HIGH / L&C #	CLARA BARTON #	CORE TOTAL #
No questions	1	1	2	0	0	4	0	1	9
How will potential traffic and pedestrian safety issues be mitigated?	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	6
Can Mama Hilga's look at a different location? Aren't there better options?	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Can the parking plan be modified to emphasize pedestrian access?	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
What exactly will the new zoning allow? What other types of businesses might locate here?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Is the parking sufficient? How will vehicles access?	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Why can't the dilapidated houses be replaced with new housing?	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Will this be a nuisance: noise, hours of operation, etc.?	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Is the design sensitive to the surrounding property owners and meet their approval?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Will the neighborhood have a say in what businesses locate here?	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
How will this impact local property values and taxes?	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Can this be re-thought as a mixed-use development with housing included?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Note: Answers to these questions were open ended and no options were given; answers were then categorized into groupings of similar responses

Most common answer in a neighborhood that was given more than once