



ENGAGEWINONA

City of Winona

**IMAGINING FUTURE USES FOR MADISON
ELEMENTARY**

FINAL REPORT

Presented December 2018

December 17, 2018

Carlos Espinosa

City Planner, City of Winona

Dear Carlos, city staff, the Winona Planning Commission, and the Winona City Council:

I'm pleased to submit the final Engage Winona report gathering community input on future reuses of the Madison Elementary building and grounds. This report reflects comments from the public gathering in October and the survey, as well as changes and notes related to participants' critique of the draft report during a November gathering.

Neighborhood and community participation in this project exceeded our expectations, both in the numbers of participants and their investment in providing detailed and thoughtful comments. Neighbors are pleased to have been included in this step of the planning process.

The summary gives you a concise overview and list of top takeaways. I encourage you to spend time with the full report, which includes a deeper analysis of each potential use, as well as curated sets of participants' comments — neighbors' voices and opinions in their own words.

Thank you for the opportunity to do this work on the city's behalf! Engage Winona, as a mission-driven nonprofit, relies on projects like this to sustain its work of leading civic engagement and community-problem solving initiatives, and providing backbone support to changemaking individuals, groups and organization transforming our community.

Please reach out with comments or questions.

Sincerely,



Brian Voerding

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CITY OF WINONA IMAGINING FUTURE USES FOR MADISON ELEMENTARY

3 — Summary

6 — Uses

- 6 - Introduction
- 7 - Play area
- 8 - Community or public space
- 10 - Housing, density, rentals
- 12 - Pre-kindergarten, childcare
- 13 - School
- 14 - Green space
- 16 - Mixed-use (commercial and residential, live-work setup, etc.)
- 17 - Other institutional (religious space, etc.)
- 18 - Other uses

19 — Other themes

- 19 - Play area amenities
- 20 - Overall concerns for reuse
- 21 - Concern about property left undeveloped
- 22 - Sustainable features
- 23 - Traffic
- 24 - Maintaining historic building

25 — Critiques, concerns, changes

- 25 - Introduction
- 26 - Changes made to draft report
- 26 - Other concerns

28 — Appendix: Project summary and design

- 28 - Participants
- 28 - Event design and questions
- 29 - Survey design and questions



SUMMARY

Results

Participants were asked for ideas on future uses of the Madison building and grounds, and thoughts and concerns related to specific uses. **The most popular ideas and comments:**

- **Retain or create a play area** — it's critical to the neighborhood
- **Retain or create green space** — it's also critical to the neighborhood
- **Have some portion open to public use**, including the potential for an indoor community gathering space
- Reuse as a **childcare or pre-K facility would be highly preferable** and much-needed, as a whole or partial redevelopment
- **Consider reuse as a school**
- When it comes to housing, **owner-occupied is most preferred**
- **Rentals would be acceptable if there's no other option**, but there's a lot of concern and disagreement over the type and density
- A housing redevelopment should have **flexible designs to meet neighborhood needs**
- Neighbors are **ambivalent but open to mixed-use development** that would include commercial spaces like restaurants or retail
- Neighbors are highly anxious about the development, and would **appreciate active communication and engagement from the developer and city**

The full report is sorted by use, and includes a description, analysis, and set of key comments for each. It also includes other themes that emerged in conversations. Here's a quick look at each use and theme:

Uses

- **Play area:** By far the most desired use, and potentially compatible with lots of other uses.
- **Community or public space:** High demand for even a small community/public gathering space as part of a larger private development.
- **Housing, density, rentals:** Owner-occupied housing is most preferred. Neighbors are largely against rentals of any kind, particularly college rentals, though also understand that



rental housing is one likely option. Neighbors would be open to a range of options if designs are attentive to local needs and they have input.

- **Pre-kindergarten, childcare:** Highly desired use for many as a way to address a big and growing local need and continue supporting the child- and family-friendly neighborhood demographics.
- **School:** Many would love to see some sort of a school reopen in the space, and are frustrated by the school district's condition that it not be reused as a school, as well as a perceived lack of focus on a school as an option for a reuse.
- **Green space:** Just behind play area as the most desired use, also potentially compatible with lots of other uses.
- **Mixed-use (commercial and residential, live-work setup, etc.):** Some excitement about and openness to the idea, especially if it involves small daytime businesses; lots of concerns about neighborhood impact.
- **Other institutional (religious space, etc.):** Little discussion or interest.
- **Other uses:** Lots of creative suggestions, from a senior center to artist housing and gallery space to a culinary incubator, but no large pool of comments around any single idea.

Other themes

- **Play area amenities:** New equipment and natural features top the list.
- **Overall concerns for reuse:** By far the largest concerns relate to the desire to keep a play area and create green space, retaining some kind of public use.
- **Concern about property left undeveloped:** Concerns are very high, overall between “quite a bit” and “extremely”; ranked at 4.2 on a 1-5 scale
- **Sustainable features:** A number of comments related to wanting to see sustainable features, from solar to rain gardens to energy-efficient design.
- **Traffic:** Not a high concern given the level of traffic Madison generated; a general expectation that the city will address any concerns.
- **Maintaining historic building:** Just a few comments on a desire to redevelop the existing building and not see it torn down.

Participants

Through the public gathering held October 25, Engage Winona collected nearly **550 unique comments** from **more than 50 individuals** representing primarily neighbors of Madison, with some input from Winona residents in other neighborhoods.

Through the use of hard-copy surveys provided at the event and digital surveys sent to neighborhood residents and marketed to the Winona community, Engage Winona collected **nearly 750 unique comments** and ranked responses from **74 complete sets of responses** from Winona residents. A large majority of respondents reported living within a mile of Madison; nearly every single respondent reported living in the city of Winona (a few did not provide addresses).



Project overview and intent

Engage Winona's project with the City of Winona gathered community input from neighbors of Madison Elementary on their ideas, visions and concerns for redeveloping the site. The work was completed in October 2018. It involved a public gathering attended by more than 50 neighbors and residents, and hard-copy and digital surveys completed by nearly 75 neighbors and residents. That work resulted in more than 1,300 comments, which have been curated into this report.

This was the first step of the City of Winona's process to work with a developer on reuse of Madison Elementary. The turnout for the public gathering and the number of residents who completed surveys were above expectations, and the comments were thoughtful and focused. **The overall process was well-supported and highly successful, which speaks to the level of engagement and investment residents have in the future of the Madison Elementary site and the future of their neighborhood.**

The goal was to involve the neighborhood, and the larger Winona community, directly in the planning process early on by giving them a direct avenue to have their voices heard. As the city prepares to work with the new owner on redevelopment plans, the intent is for this report and all of the voices contained within to be integrated into the planning process — for the city and developer to see this report as the equivalent of having the opportunity to have in-depth, honest conversations with dozens of residents about their hopes and concerns for the future use of the site.

Several participants expressed concern about the value their opinions and perspectives will have in the planning process going forward, given that the decision-making authority ultimately lies with the city and developer. Future work to engage the neighborhood — active communication and updates on the process, offerings to be involved in and give input - would be highly encouraged.

The ultimate hope for this work is for the community's voices to serve as a framework that the developer and city listen closely to, and **strive to create a plan for the future use of the Madison Elementary building and grounds that meets all needs — those of the developer, the city, the neighborhood, and the community.**



USES

Introduction

All comments were sorted into primary themes based on use. Categories are listed in order of prevalence based on an *estimated* number of comments, to provide a general idea of how often each category was discussed. Recording and sorting comments is complex, and in many cases they are sorted across multiple categories, so response numbers should be understood as an *estimate* (hence the use of the tilde symbol, ~), not a hard and specific figure.

Each theme includes:

A **DESCRIPTION** of the specific use.

An **ANALYSIS** of the comments related to the specific use, both positive and negative, providing insight both on the comments and on direct observation of participants' conversations at the public gathering.

KEY COMMENTS, a hand-selected collection of the most prominent and compelling comments from participants. Responses represent the true voices and language of participants, and are selected to show the range, not prevalence, of comments on any given use



Play area (~275 comments)

Description

The retention of either the existing play area, or the creation of a new play area, with a focus on serving the neighborhood's children.

Analysis

Maintaining, expanding, or creating a play area on the Madison grounds was by far the most popular requested reuse. The need arose in almost every discussion and survey response, both directly and attached to ideas of other reuses, and always received widespread approval and agreement. Many described the play area as the most important feature of not just the site but the entire neighborhood, serving as a popular gathering space for children of all ages and families. Many also said any development that included a community-focused play area (and potentially green space and an indoor public gathering space) would offset other concerns.

Participants described the need for a play area as even more critical now that the school has closed. Many commenters focused on the fact that Madison provides the only public play area in the neighborhood, with others either too far to walk or bike to, or only accessible by crossing busy streets. Many neighborhood residents without children were as equally supportive of a play area. Ideas and visions for what a play area would look like varied widely, and were largely complementary. Many participants requested the opportunity to provide input on the planning and design of a play area if one is retained.

Key comments

- At the least, a playground - keep a place for neighborhood kids there!
- Need for a play area, green space is of great importance
- The playground is already deteriorating with the school closure, and we feel its loss greatly
- Concerned that if there is no playground, more families will move out of neighborhood
- I love having children in the neighborhood coming and going from the playground
- A need to keep a park in the neighborhood, and Madison's playground would be beneficial
- Use the existing playground equipment on 1/8 to 1/4 of the block for a nice community playground - that is desperately needed in that location
- Madison school is the only de facto green space between WSU and Cotter - bounded by Broadway, Sarnia and Huff, all busy streets for children to cross
- The biggest need in our neighborhood is to maintain a playground/park for area families
- With this property being a central area for the neighborhood the green space and playground are vital
- The play area is most important for children in the neighborhood; no other parks nearby
- The playground has been a gathering place for kids and families
- Biking, tennis, kickball, baseball, basketball, you name it, if kids play it it's been played there; this is an invaluable place for our kids



Community or public space (~225 comments)

Description

The use of all or part of the development for public or community gathering space for a wide variety of uses, from indoor meetings and classes to outdoor space.

Analysis

The desire for a redevelopment to offer some portion of space to the community to use was nearly as popular as the need for a play area. This request, participants said, both reflected the fear of losing a public space to private development, as well as a desire to serve the neighborhood's need for a gathering space, including the use as a polling place and other needs.

Many commenters suggested the idea of a multipurpose room or rooms that could be used as gathering spaces for volunteer groups, classes, and other uses — made available for any neighborhood or community resident to use. Others suggested that the Madison grounds also be kept open to public use in various forms, from simple open space to the retention of or creation of community gardens. A few commenters suggested the presence of city services in any public space, like a small branch of the public library or park and recreation programming on outdoor space.

Many commenters suggested the entire development be public, though said they realized that wouldn't appear to be feasible unless a public entity owned the building and land. Most requested that just some portion of the redevelopment be kept available for public use. Several commenters suggested that a developer specifically set aside a portion of the building and land, develop it, and then donate it to the city for the city to manage and maintain.

Key comments

- Combo public space, art, community space
- Meeting rooms for book clubs, Boy Scouts, other community groups
- Be a true community space in the evenings
- Community spaces, something for people to do besides drink. Maybe a maker space?
Community green space/gardens. Community kitchen and classroom?
- Community library/outlet of main library
- Community garden like what's at East End Rec
- A community snow park
- Integrated wellness center for the community
- Meeting space for community groups, especially in the evenings
- One wing a community or friendship center and enrichment activities in the middle
- The very best uses for Madison are public and community uses. The property was built and maintained with public funds and was designed as a public space
- Community recreation building with community outdoor space for children to play and maybe gardens



- Madison is an important public landmark in the neighborhood and must remain for community use ... by keeping Madison in control of the community, we can better ensure the wellbeing and development of Winona citizens
- This space must not be privatized—it is meant for public use ... Madison can have multiple uses a a community center with day care services for children and vulnerable adults. In addition, it can have public space for meetings, ELL and continuing education classes
- I encourage everyone to think beyond neighborhood. This has existed as a community-wide asset and should provide value-added opportunities for a broader community
- Artist residencies, spaces. Performance and display spaces for arts. Recreational spaces and programs for kids. Community gathering spaces
- Big gym with space for meetings, dances, other community events... All the many public benefits that the building offered before and after school hours



Housing, density, rentals (~200 comments)

Description

The reuse of the building and grounds for housing of any kind, particularly higher-density forms; the presence of rentals and what populations would be catered to; ways that housing could be designed to fit the neighborhood; concerns related to the overall number of buildings and units that could be constructed on the site; concerns about the number of people a development would house.

Analysis

Housing — higher-density forms of housing, not single-family homes — was resisted by most participants. Several said any housing development would significantly disrupt the neighborhood's character. Several questioned how the 30 percent rule, which limits rental properties on city blocks, would apply and asked that it not be altered for a redevelopment. Several said a development that offered a play area and green space, and potentially an indoor space, would offset some concerns.

Owner-occupied

There was widespread acceptance of reuse as owner-occupied condos or apartments, with the caveat that other non-housing uses would be more preferred. Several commenters suggested there may be a market, given the shifting and aging demographics in Winona, and a perceived need for moderately priced condos or apartments for younger individuals and couples and for retired individuals and couples. All commenters who suggested the use said owner-occupied housing would provide stability and vibrancy to the neighborhood.

Rentals

Participants were not generally accepting of redevelopment as rentals. Their comments came with significant caution and hesitance around the conditions and appearances of rental housing, the possibility of an absentee landlord, and rentals' overall potential effects on the neighborhood in terms of traffic, parking, and noise. Participants were strongly divided on what kind of rentals would be most appropriate, should that be the only use. Most suggested a mix of costs and sizes to cater to different demographics. Others suggested workforce housing. A few encouraged the development of low-income housing.

College rentals

There was widespread agreement on a use no participants wanted — college rentals. Some said they would actively fight this use. This use came with high concern about property upkeep, traffic, noise, and other issues. Many noted the density of college rentals in the neighborhood east of Madison as a reason to discourage the spread further west.

Density

The largest density concern from participants was that a developer would overhaul the site by tearing down the school and removing the asphalt, and then construct multiple buildings



like rowhouses, small apartments (4-6 units), or similar developments. That type of reuse was strongly and almost universally discouraged. Participants also had concerns about traffic, but said concerns could be met by off-street parking or the creation of an alley.

Key comments

- There's a great need for housing in our community, and it's proven that refurbishing old buildings into new use is successful
- A dense housing reuse is not in the best interest of an existing neighborhood
- Affordable, owner-occupied condos based on a co-op housing model
- Low and moderate income housing is needed, but does it fit in the neighborhood?
- Combination of higher end housing of rentals and townhomes
- Affordable, owner-occupied condos based on co-op housing model that Willowbrook uses
- Affordable multi-family housing
- Housing for all ages with varying size units and price ranges
- Housing, with caveats - not garden-variety rental. Family co-op or senior housing
- There is no clear demand for new housing in this area
- It really doesn't make sense, from a modern planning point of view, to sacrifice this property to housing. It's not needed and would scar the existing neighborhood
- Upscale housing that would attract professionals and university faculty could be a benefit, but if it is cheap, unattractive and high density, there could be safety, noise, parking issues
- Mixed-income housing. I fear a development as exclusive upper-income-level housing
- High density or student housing would not fit within the neighborhood. Low to medium density for range of age groups would likely fit but should be evaluated
- If this property goes to rental then lift the 30% rule so everyone can sell as rental
- The area is residential, so it makes sense to put more housing in the area, but I'm curious if Winona needs more apartments?
- We don't need more rentals, and that neighborhood deserves better than rentals
- Would provide much needed housing for Winona but wouldn't contribute to the neighborhood. Might create parking issues
- No low-income or workforce or student rentals. Would not fit with the makeup of the owner-occupied houses
- Our neighborhood already has a high density of students
- Housing density is important to the general character of the neighborhood and should be done in a careful way. While most of the surrounding area is single family it would make sense to increase density on this block, but structures should be designed in a way that is not overly massive or austere and blends in with the surrounding neighborhood
- Many college students would significantly change the character of the neighborhood
- Neighbors are opposed to housing density within neighborhood of single family homes
- I fear that whatever housing type is built would eventually be over-run by students, and become rundown and an eyesore and problems for the neighborhood
- I realize college kids need housing too and certainly so do working families, but I just cringe when cheap, architecturally devoid structures are built because they depreciate so quickly, and I hope to be in this neighborhood for a while!



Pre-kindergarten, childcare (~150 comments)

Description

Using all or portion of existing building for public or private pre-kindergarten or childcare.

Analysis

This was a popular idea — participants said it would support a neighborhood historically popular with young families, and now facing an uncertain future of attracting that demographic. Many focused on the significant need for childcare in Winona, and noted the location would be strong given the prevalence of neighborhood families — especially young families. Others said it was important to reuse the existing building and space much in the way it was used before it was closed.

Childcare was suggested more frequently than pre-kindergarten use. The two are presented here together because they are regularly combined as uses, were combined in the survey requesting feedback, and because participants combined them in discussions. Many noted the primary challenge to this idea is the stipulation the district put on the sale of the building — that it cannot be used in the future for a school. A few suggested this use could provide an advantage to the public schools by creating an educational pipeline to the district. Many commenters suggested a combination of housing and childcare — attract families, provide convenient childcare, and avoid too much density if the whole development were housing. Participants had no real concerns with this reuse, noting that since the use would be similar to when Madison was open, traffic and other issues would not result in significant changes.

Key comments

- Reuse as a childcare facility would be a seamless approach for what the neighborhood has grown to experience with a school.
- Pipeline to get students into public education - an early-childhood center
- A school - an early-childhood education center
- Ideally, Madison would be remodeled and reopened as a neighborhood elementary school. If that isn't possible, it should be devoted to other public purposes: early childhood education, daycare, community classes and events
- The building should not be used for residential or as resident rentals. It should be used for daycare, early childhood or community-oriented entities
- Now that the public schools have closed Madison, it should continue to be geared toward children and family. Ideally to continue to utilize some type of educational integration
- Childcare is desperately needed
- Just positive, having a daycare/early childhood center close to those in this part of town
- Several small, single person-run childcares could rent out spaces within the building
- Childcare has a documented need and is compatible with the residential setting and former use as a school



School (~150 comments)

Description

The use of the building and site as a school.

Analysis

Many participants commented that the only appropriate use of the building and site should still be as a school. They noted that the building is already designed for this use, and located in a highly family-oriented neighborhood where many chose to live in part because of the school's presence. They suggested several options, ranging from charter schools to early-childhood centers. A few comments suggested reuse, even a portion of the development, to provide classroom and recreation space to homeschooled kids. Many participants said they remained upset about the school district's decision to close and then sell Madison Elementary, and equally about the school board's stipulation that the future building owner not be allowed to open a school. They understood that this may present a significant challenge to reuse as a school, they said, but wanted to make their voices heard and make it clear that the desire for a neighborhood school is strong.

Key comments

- Use it for its original intention - a school
- The best use is as a neighborhood school - my son is sad - so sad - it closed
- Neighborhood elementary schools are the best - undo the (WAPS school board) and get rid of (the members). Start again.
- Reopened as a school would address needs of community best, attract new families
- Its best use remains a SCHOOL!
- Charter school or parochial school would be great
- Turned back into an elementary/Montessori school.
- Remove the school board's restriction and return it to a school of some kind
- Should be a school of some sort - that's what it was built for
- Completely renovate the building with green technologies, environmental education green and play spaces, bring 5th and 6th graders and K-4 to the school, create safe walking corridors for kids walking to schools
- Charter school with immersive language program and small classes
- Charter elementary school and open recreational space
- Ideally, Madison would be remodeled and reopened as a neighborhood elementary school.
- Still do not understand why it cannot be used as a private or charter school. This should be determined by the city not WAPS.
- The school was a draw. Without the school, the tendency may be for the neighborhood to decline which impacts the neighborhood, the University and downtown ... The highest and best use is still a school whether it be public, private or charter.
- School school school school school school school (*former Madison child*)



Green space (~100 comments)

Description

Space outside of a play area that would be available for public use, and may either be open space created by removing asphalt at the site or provide structured use (community gardens, etc.)

Analysis

Creating green space was nearly as important as the play area to many participants, with most suggesting a pairing of a play area with green space. The need for green space would only increase with any redevelopment, regardless of whether it was higher-density housing, childcare, or any other use, they said. Participants' desire for green space came from the same place as a desire for a play area: the fact that there are no other nearby public spaces in the neighborhood.

Many participants noted that redevelopment presented a prime opportunity to tear up asphalt and replace it with parkland or other space. Most commenters suggested using between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the block, while others suggested the creation of a smaller "pocket park" if less real estate were available. A few commenters said preserving the existing community gardens, or creating new community gardens, would be important to redevelopment. Some participants wondered whether a developer could lease or sell green space back to the city, so the city could maintain the space and potentially offer programming.

Key comments

- Keep a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ block for public green space
- Need for a play area, green space is of great importance
- Additional green space - tear up some of the concrete
- Loss of green space is my biggest concern
- Green space for the community
- Parks and rec could do pop-up activities in a green space
- The surrounding playground property should be developed as green space, playground and recreational space
- Semi-enclosed structure for picnics, parties, meetings, protection from the elements
- Keep green space for the neighborhood. Must be community oriented
- The green space on the west and east ends could be used for a community garden and play area/patio for (housing) residents
- Pair private housing and public green space
- It is important to leave green space with a playground for the neighborhood
- Green space. Green space.
- A need for green space for kids, tweens, teens, adults and seniors to meet up, play, relax and build community
- Green space: For sure! Keeps the bushes by Wabasha, Dakota - for me, more is better



- With this property being a central area for the neighborhood the green space and playground are vital
- The community garden should turn back to a large green area, lots of fun used to take place on the green space, the "garden area" was more of a neighborhood eye sore
- Not sure what is meant by "natural features" but native plantings and green space would be great
- Right now there are no parks for children on the west side. The green space is essential for the neighborhood
- A loss of green space and community building will utterly change this neighborhood
- Play area/green space: I think these are of major importance
- Play area, green space should be public and free to use by anyone
- Outdoor spaces are critical for the wellbeing of neighborhood children and families. The availability of green and play spaces are critical public health issues



Mixed-use (commercial and residential, live-work setup, etc.) (~75 comments)

Description

Creating a mixed-use development on the site that could take a variety of forms, most particularly different variations on combining commercial and residential space.

Analysis

Participants were divided on the idea of any commercial use. Many said they were generally against the idea, saying that the size of the site could mean a redevelopment that substantially changed the neighborhood's character. An equal amount of others were interested and open, especially at the idea of daytime businesses, but said they would be reluctant to support any plan without more details. Some said they would welcome small businesses into the neighborhood, with adults specifically mentioning a restaurant or a coffee shop — and kids asking for a candy store. Many others said commercial use, with lighting, traffic and other concerns, would negatively impact an otherwise predominantly residential neighborhood. Several said they would be concerned that commercial space would invite unwanted uses like bars.

Key comments

- Lower level boutique shops, flower shop, coffee house, deli. Upper level could be high end condos or more shops, eateries, art gallery. This is a fantastic and close knit neighborhood who would utilize these types of options
- There are more appropriate locations in town for mixed use commercial/residential space
- Maybe a small grocery store, bakery, small office space rental
- Only if (commercial) activities have community involvement potential
- Commercial seems silly in that space. Save it for downtown and centralize business. I hate that I live by random factories. They provide jobs, but they make my area feel less homey and inviting
- There are a number of places like this usage that are not fully filled yet, which limits the need for another
- Office building would be nice
- What kind of commercial space would fit in with the residential nature of the neighborhood? Traffic might be an issue
- Business hours would bring more people into the neighborhood but evenings and weekends could still have a quiet family focused neighborhood
- Perhaps a mix of apartments, light commercial, something to create and sustain a unique neighborhood without oversaturating and creating traffic and parking issues
- I see this bringing in more through traffic to a quiet neighborhood
- Place to shop but maybe not the best location for commercial



Other institutional (religious space, etc.)

(~25 comments)

Description

A redevelopment involving other institutional space, such as a church or other use.

Analysis

Participants offered very few comments on this use, even when explicitly asked. Most said they didn't see a need for an additional church at the size of Madison's footprint, and couldn't imagine other institutional uses. One exception, a few participants said, would be if the space were a combination of a church and attached school, which they said would be a positive development.

A few participants connected the idea of institutional use to potential for university use, and offered mixed opinions. Some said a university could turn the space into a combined educational and housing facility; others were wary of a university presence in the neighborhood.

Key comments

- Institutional, religious would be acceptable if compatible with and open to public use of remaining space
- Not religious. This serves only a select group of people and takes the property off the tax base
- We do not need more churches
- Other institutional would depend on the type and use. It would need to be evaluated for neighborhood impact
- No objections - if that's what the community needs
- I wonder what group would need that much space. I would not like to see our universities taking over this neighborhood
- Partner with WSU to make an educational area for college students and families
- Benefits are that typically, religious spaces are community minded



Other uses (~100 comments)

Description

A collection of comments on specific uses for the property that did not fall into any of the above categories.

Analysis

Comments in this category focus on specific ideas that did not sort into primary uses. Several comments suggested multiple uses to accommodate diverse needs. A small collection of comments suggested the space be repurposed into an art center, community art space, or artist housing. Others focused on public amenities other than a play area or green space — primarily a need to provide public restrooms if public use of any or all of the site is provided.

Key comments

- I would love to see it become a senior center with space for activities and gatherings
- Multiple uses, as a community center with day care services for children and vulnerable adults ... public space for meetings, ELL and continuing education classes
- Arts center, elder care, youth center - combining community uses
- An art museum outlet or school supported by the Minnesota Marine Art Museum
- Combo public space, art, community space
- Dance, art school
- Art space for artist housing, gallery space for public art
- Uses like food, fitness, arts, public green space
- Community center oriented toward youth
- An arts incubator, food coop, community space
- Mixed-use culinary incubator
- Activity outside of 9am-5pm. A welcoming space for everyone with free elements. Artist studio rentals. A service food/community space
- A community theater
- Life skills learning center. Volunteers to teach things such as sewing, vehicle repairs, basic home maintenance
- Senior center. The developer could rent to the senior center along with a childcare center
- I would love to have botanical gardens in Winona with a building that could host community events, educate about all types of gardens and include play space
- Additional indoor hockey rink
- I would love to see it become a senior center with space for scouting activities and community gatherings
- Build a Microsoft research facility and employ another 2,000 people
- A (staffed) botanical garden with outdoor play space, community gathering space
- Nonprofit offices, art and discussion space, youth activities, music, GED/ESL classes

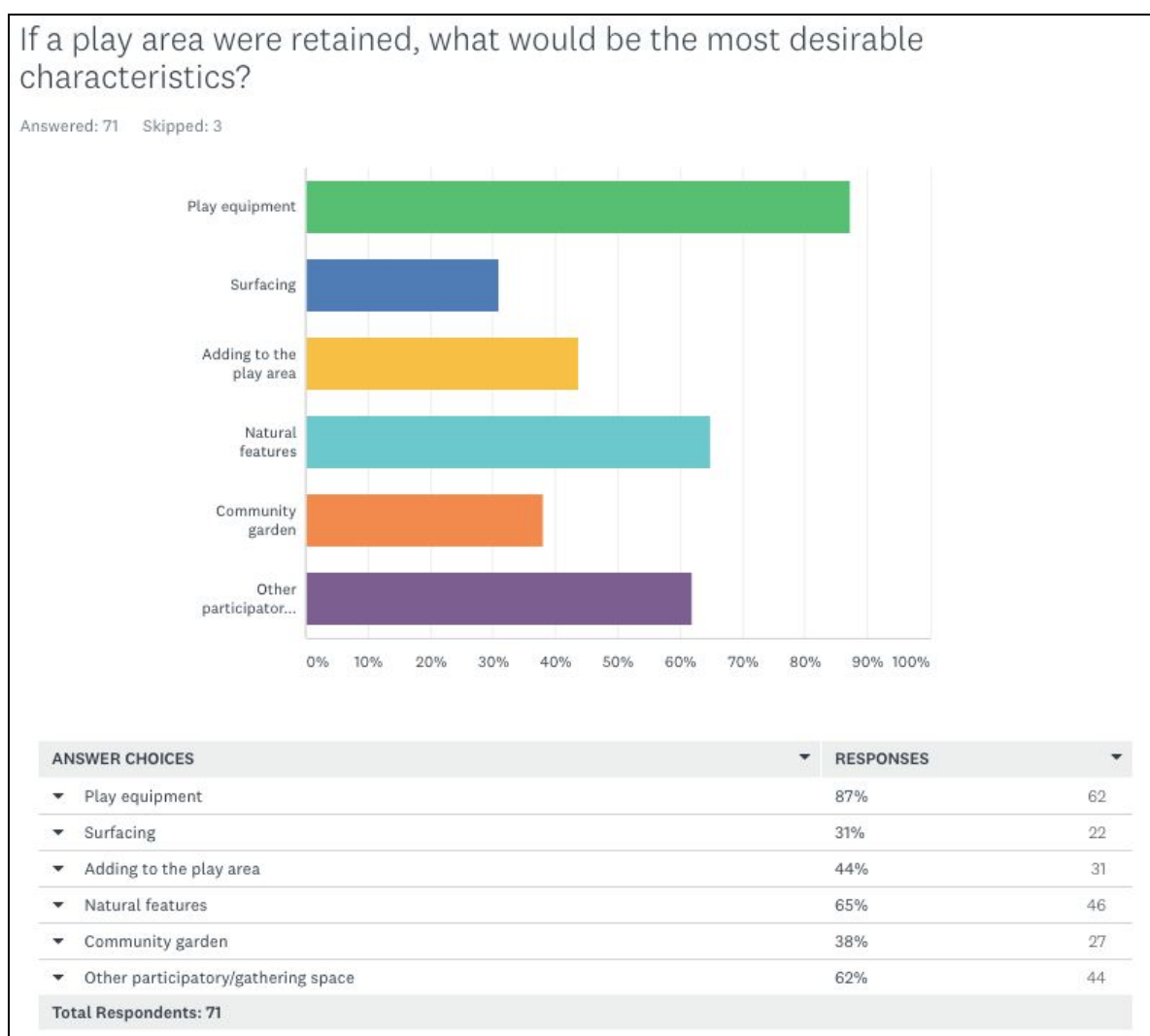


OTHER THEMES

Play area amenities

Description

Survey participants were asked about most-desired amenities if a play area were preserved:



Key comments

- Splashpad
- Nice family picnic park



- Semi-enclosed structure for picnic, parties, meetings, protection from the elements
- Benches
- Sitting areas for older people
- Native plantings and green space would be great
- The current play equipment needs to be repaired, replaced, or removed
- Blacktop is not needed; more creative and eco-friendly ways of creating playspaces
- A park design should be created through a planning charrette with the neighbors
- The garden on the east side of the building has a rain garden, butterfly garden, bird habitat as well as a irrigation system. It needs to be spruced up and maintained

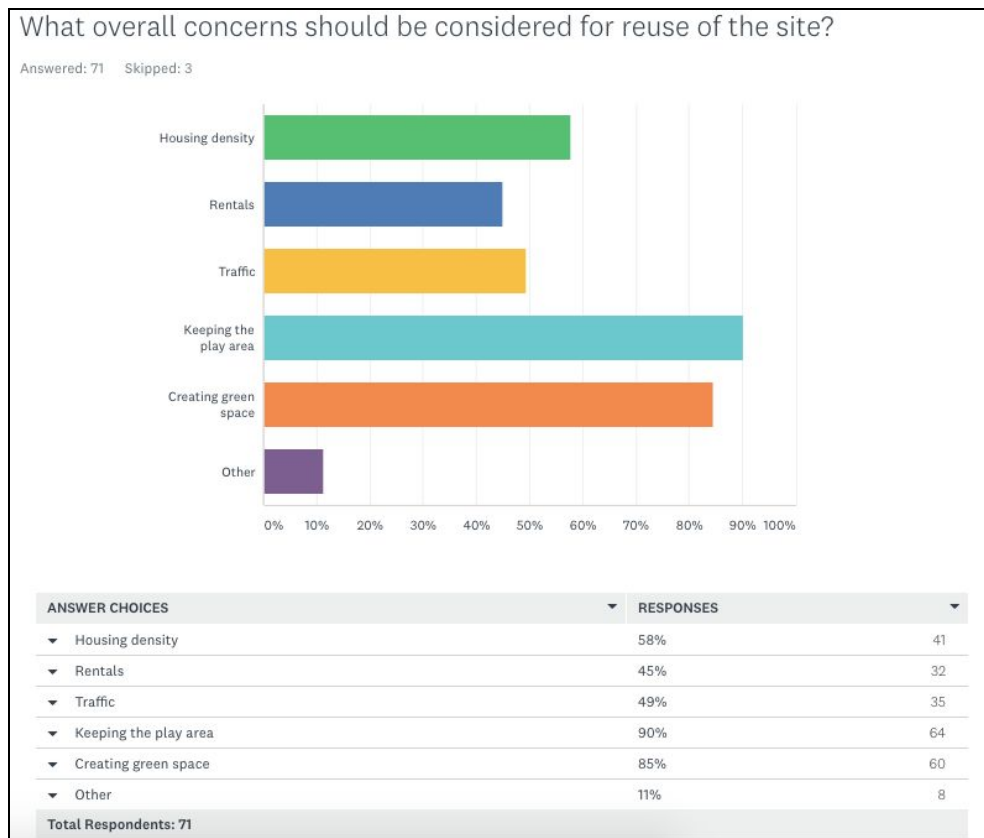
Overall concerns for reuse

Description

Survey participants were asked specifically what reuses they were most concerned about.

Analysis

By far, participants were most concerned about maintaining or creating a play area and green space, with the next-highest concern related to housing density:



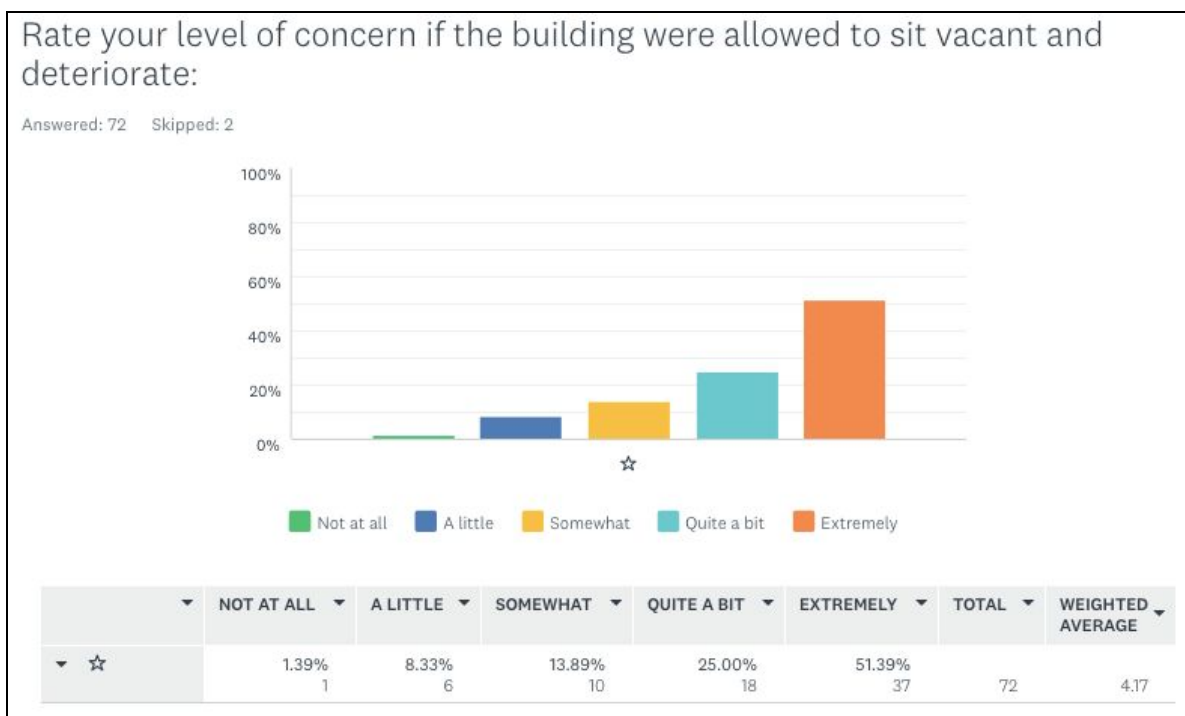
Concern about property left undeveloped

Description

One survey question specifically asked participants to rate their level of concern if the Madison Elementary building and grounds “were allowed to sit vacant and deteriorate.” This question was offered as a way to assess the importance of this option when weighed against any redevelopment plans that neighbors may be less than supportive of.

Analysis

Participants are clearly concerned — on a five-star scale, with 1 “not at all” and 5 “extremely,” neighbors’ collective level of concern was above 4, between “quite a bit” and “extremely.”



Sustainable features

Description

Sustainable features incorporated into the development, independent of use.

Analysis

Suggestions ranged from solar roof panels to energy-efficient designs to rain gardens. Related suggestions included community gardens tied to education. The comments are notable in part

because of their frequency, and in part because some commenters said sustainable features incorporated into a redevelopment plan they may not fully support would allow them to more easily accept the use.

Key comments

- Could solar be incorporated into the re-use?
- Environmental improvements are important - green roof, solar
- Green space with solar roof array
- Huge community garden for the west side of the city. Gardening classes and cooking classes using the produce. People are interested in becoming more sustainable, but they don't have the resources. If there was a space that could be provided that allowed them to try it, I feel like that would spread

Traffic

Description

Concerns about increased traffic, both driving and parking, with a redevelopment.

Analysis

Participants didn't provide many comments on traffic concerns related to any use. Several said high-density housing would create a particular need for off-street parking, but said they expected that need would be appropriately addressed through city requirements.

Many noted that the elementary was a significantly high-traffic use already, with busing and parent drop-off and pick-up traffic in the mornings and afternoons. Some expressed concerns that a mixed-use development should prioritize daytime businesses, because nighttime traffic would create a significant change in the neighborhood.

Participants mostly connected traffic to the idea of a play area or green space, noting the need for effective design to keep the space safely separated from nearby streets.

Key comments

- Don't want nighttime noise and traffic
- Additional stop signs are needed for the neighborhood to control intersections if the use changes
- Green space or play area would be an opportunity to add pedestrian features for kids' safety
- Keep play space away from traffic
- if it went to rental - parking/heavy traffic/already congested in the area
- It is a very quiet, light traffic area with lots of single family housing. Not suited for heavy traffic



- Traffic is not a huge concern being that the school was high-traffic
- Cannot handle too many more cars on the street; safety (issue) for children playing

Maintaining historic building

Description

Opportunity to redevelop the existing school building; concerns that it would be torn down.

Analysis

A few participants noted that Madison is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and expressed a preference that the existing building is redeveloped and not torn down. Overall, though, the historic nature of the building was not a significant part of any discussion or present in a large number of comments. It's not clear whether this was because it wasn't a priority, because some participants were focused on the idea of reusing the building as a school, or whether participants were making an assumption that the existing building would be redeveloped, particularly for use as housing.

Key comments

- Do not tear down - beautiful apartments could be made!
- Madison should be on the history tour
- Historic preservation is a concern
- Maintain historic integrity of the building
- Pursue historic grants, Legacy grants for re-use and development
- Maintain the tiles, structure of historic building



CRITIQUES, CONCERNS, CHANGES

Introduction

A key part of this process was creating a draft report that captured the feedback from the public gathering and the survey, then check with participants about whether the report accurately reflected their words. **More than 35 neighborhood and community residents gathered November 27 to review and critique the draft report.** The primary themes were:

- **Opposition to any kind of rentals was stronger** than the report reflected
- Questions **too strongly emphasized reuse options**, rather than being open to the possibility of continuing with the current use as a school
- **Desire to see 30 percent rental rule applied to future development** should be more prominent
- **Concerns outside the scope of this part of this process**, such as how the community as a whole is making decisions on redevelopment of significant properties in the city's core neighborhoods

Process

Most comments and critique were used to revise this final report. For transparency, this section details where changes were made. This section also includes a discussion of other topics that arose.

Changes

LETTER

- Light editing for brevity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Addition of Critiques, Concerns, Changes section

SUMMARY

Results

- Language changes to reflect concerns on rentals

Uses

- Language changes to reflect concerns on rentals

USES

Play area



- Light editing for clarity
- Reduction of key comments for brevity

Community or public space

- Addition of language on concern over losing polling place
- Editing for clarity

Housing, density, rentals

- Editing and rewrites in description and analysis sections to reflect concerns on housing
- Added concern about application of 30 percent rule to development
- Multiple language changes to reflect concerns on rentals
- Reduction of key comments for brevity

Pre-kindergarten, childcare

- Light editing for clarity, brevity

Other concerns

Questions and wording: The questions asked during the public gathering and in the survey were focused broadly on potential reuses of the Madison building and grounds, and did not restrict discussion around any use, including as a school. However, the pending purchase of the building and grounds by a private developer, combined with the public narrative around Madison's future — including the restriction the school board placed on the property that it not be reused as a school — undoubtedly influenced participants' ideas around reuse, especially when it came to the question of imagining reuses that would meet the needs of the neighborhood, community, and developer.

Estimated number of comments with each use: Some participants asked why an estimated number of comments were included with each use in the report. This was only to provide, especially to those who didn't participate in the process, a sense of how often the use was mentioned. The numbers do not suggest a ranking or prioritization. The numbers are only a rough estimate and should not be interpreted otherwise.

Broader concerns over redevelopment in core neighborhoods: The questions multiple participants raised, around how the city and community discuss and make decisions on developments in core neighborhoods, are outside the scope of the engagement piece of this reuse study. They are important questions, and are or can be addressed in other city processes and documents, including the comprehensive plan.

Key comments

- In the groups I was in, there really wasn't any indication that would have justified a finding that many people were okay with rentals, which is one of the things that appears in the



report. The only agreement to the idea of rentals was minimal, and if only that was the only thing possible. The same is true in terms of the idea that many people have housing at all as a first choice.

- (With Madison's future subject to legal processes), it became very easy to move to the idea that the property should be used for rentals or for condos or for private housing of some sort. The possible use of the property as a school got backgrounded in a significant way.
- Our group as a whole ... no one wanted to see a zone change into R-3. And no one wanted to see the lifting of the 30 percent rule. I didn't see that reflected in the report.
- The rental piece was really pretty resisted, other than limited rentals.
- Closing the school, the effect upon the neighborhood, what kind of community we're going to be left with? I think the report leaves out at least in summary that level of concern. It's hard to bring it into the process - I understand that - but it's also difficult to write a report that doesn't address some of that. I think there's a big question here of, where is Winona to go?
- Public building, public use - what about public funding? Do the individuals and entities who want to dictate uses for the property have any responsibility to provide public funding for the public use they want?
- In the groups I was in, housing was not a priority at all. But if push came to shove and that's what happened, again the owner-occupied idea (was most supported), but was definitely not a preferred use.



APPENDIX: PROJECT SUMMARY AND DESIGN

Participants

Through a public gathering held October 25, Engage Winona collected nearly **550 unique comments** from **nearly 50 individuals** representing primarily neighbors of Madison, with some input from Winona residents in other neighborhoods.

Through the use of hard-copy surveys provided at the event and digital surveys sent to neighborhood residents and offered to the Winona community, Engage Winona collected **nearly 750 unique comments** and ranked responses from **74 complete sets of responses** from Winona residents.

A large majority of respondents reported living within a mile of Madison; nearly every single respondent reported living in the city of Winona (only a few did not provide addresses). More specific demographic information was not collected, given that the only key demographic factor to determine success was having a high percentage of participants from the neighborhood.

Event design and questions

At the public gathering, Engage Winona facilitated a World Cafe-style conversation. Participants were invited through mailed invitations to immediate neighbors, and through a variety of promotion using traditional and social media. Additionally, followup email invitations were sent to neighbors. Priority was placed on inviting neighbors, and ensuring their voices were heard at the event, by giving them special NEIGHBOR nametags.

Participants were asked three questions and given about 15 minutes to respond to each, with groups of 8-12 participants convened in circles. With each new question some participants switched groups, giving them the ability to interact with other participants. Facilitators guided each group and took detailed notes on comments. Additionally, some group participants chose to take notes on available whitepads. All notes were broken down into individual comments and sorted.



The three questions asked were:

1. What types of new uses for Madison would best enhance or complement the neighborhood and improve the overall community?
2. What are your biggest concerns about the redevelopment of the building and grounds, and why?
3. Dream big: What would be an ideal plan for Madison that meets the needs of the developer, neighborhood, and community?

Survey design and questions

Engage Winona collected **74 complete and unique sets of survey responses**. Two identical surveys were designed and provided: One was given to all participants at the public gathering; the other was provided and marketed digitally to Madison neighbors and Winona community members.

Most questions were open-ended and asked for written answers; all of those comments were sorted and integrated into the themes above. Others asked for multiple-choice responses.

The survey collected basic demographic and contact information — name, address, and email — and asked participants about various uses and concerns.

The survey questions were:

1. What types of new uses for Madison would best enhance or complement the neighborhood and improve the overall community?

2. What is the biggest need in the neighborhood the space and site could fulfill?

3. These potential uses have been mentioned. Circle those you see having the largest potential benefits and issues, and describe:

- Pre-kindergarten, childcare:
- Housing:
- Mixed-use (commercial and residential, live-work setup):
- Other institutional (religious space, etc.):
- Other (describe):



4. What overall concerns should be considered for reuse of the site, and why? (Circle and explain)

- Certain kinds of housing (explain):
- Rentals:
- Traffic:
- Keeping the play area:
- Creating green space:
- Other (explain):

5. Rate your level of concern if the building were allowed to sit vacant and deteriorate:

1 (Not at all) 2 (A little) 3 (Somewhat) 4 (Quite a bit) 5 (Extremely)

6. If a play area were retained, what would be the most desirable characteristics? (Can select multiple):

Play equipment ___ Surfacing ___ Adding to the play area ___ Natural features ___ Community garden
 ___ Other participatory/gathering space ___ Other (explain) _____

7. Dream big: If money and resources were no object, what would you want to see happen with the building and site?

8. Any other information, comments, or concerns regarding reuse of the site?

