

CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN
CITY PLAN COMMISSION
REPORT
June 1, 2021

Ø **AGENDA ITEM – 21-0675 (Jack Zabrowski)**

AN ORDINANCE to amend Subsection 115-110 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse transferring certain property from the Washburn Residential District to the Traditional Neighborhood District allowing for an apartment building at 1106-1108 King St.

Ø **ROUTING:** J&A 6/1/2021

Ø **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

This zoning change request was initially on the June 1, 2021 City Plan Commission (CPC) agenda, the CPC denied the application, the following day the Judiciary and Administrative Committee (J&A) denied the application. Following the denials, on June 8th the applicant requested a referral from the Common Council. On June 10th the Common Council recommended referral. Following the above meetings, the applicant met with the Washburn Neighborhood Association and hired a facilitator to convene a combined meeting with Washburn and Downtown Neighborhood Associations. Another referral was requested and granted on July 9th and August 12th respectively.

The applicant initially proposed a three and half story building with 16 single bedroom units upon four floors of occupied space. He has since reduced the number to 12 single bedrooms on three floors. The building has been modified into an L-shape from a square, having three units on each floor facing 11th St. and one unit on each floor facing King St. The revised building has a better form with prairie style architecture, close proximity to the street and screening of the parking lot. The 12-spot surface parking lot is on the eastern portion and will be accessed from King St. The parcel is 11,020 square feet or 0.253 acres. The applicant is not anticipating or requesting any waivers at this time.

1106-08 King St. is currently zoned Washburn Residential district. The parcel is vacant and previously had one rental property that sustained fire damage and was removed. The adjacent buildings are one to two and a half stories in height. The surrounding zoning is primarily Washburn Residential with Public, Semi-Public across King St. The surrounding uses are; office, residential, and commercial, multi-family apartments.

Public feedback attests to the fact that conversion from owner-occupied homes to renter-occupied continues is a concern in the Washburn Neighborhood. 59% of the total property value in the Washburn Neighborhood is renter-occupied and 41% owner-occupied, the second highest percentage of rentals of any neighborhood in La Crosse. In three years, 2013-16 the number of owner-occupied homes decreased from 172 to 145. The aversion to renter occupied homes is and will continue to be a problem in La Crosse and the Washburn Neighborhood.

In 2019, the Association of Retired Persons (AARP) recognized the Washburn Neighborhood

“As one of the best places to live in the country.” The Washburn and Downtown neighborhoods have worked hard to become more walkable, bikeable, and livable by; calming traffic on Cass and 8th Streets., completing the City’s first Neighborhood Greenway on King St. and implementing pedestrian lighting. This investment has created an excellent opportunity to complete most tasks of daily living by bicycling or walking, within a 15-minute walk are: restaurants, fitness facilities, three higher education institutions, two healthcare providers, transit stops, three parks, a pharmacy, a food Co-op, four schools and Downtown La Crosse.

We as a City are facing declining school (elementary, secondary, post-secondary) enrollments, nearly flat population growth and a migration of single and multi-family housing development to the suburbs. La Crosse needs to grow and encourage dense family-friendly urban infill development all while not increasing the burden, as voiced by neighbors, of increase cars and traffic. Urban infill development has the added benefit of a smaller environmental impact than suburban development; reducing or eliminating work commutes time and distances thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions, preserving farmland and greenspace, and protecting water quality. A housing demand analysis was conducted as part of the Imagine 2040 plan, “The demand analysis shows potential for 700-1,000 units over 20 years, primarily in larger developments in downtown.”(Imagine 2040). Ignoring these issues and pushing dense multi-family housing to the suburbs only exacerbates the negative impacts of development and promotes suburban sprawl.

Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is not the best zoning category for this development as it is intended for larger mixed-use developments. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is defined by Wisconsin’s Model Ordinance; as “a compact, mixed use neighborhood where residential, commercial and civic buildings are within close proximity to each other. It is a planning concept that is based on traditional small town and city neighborhood development principles. Traditional neighborhood development is, in part, a reaction to the often-inefficient use of land and infrastructure and lack of a sense of community in many newer developments.” (Ohm 2001) “TND is intended to be used on urban infill sites of 10 acres or more.” (Ohm 2001)

In summary, the Washburn neighborhood has been recognized as one of the best places to live and improving in many ways, predicted demand for housing units suggests future growth. The proposed location has access to many amenities and services that make urban living appealing. Urban infill has environmental benefits opposed to suburban sprawl development. Development of affordable, dense, family-friendly housing is needed in La Crosse to encourage growth; however, we must not disregard; our adopted plans, negative community feedback and TND zoning district; intent and density guidelines.

Ø **GENERAL LOCATION:**

The south-east corner of the intersection of King St. and 11th St.

Ø **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

N/A

Ø CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:

The Future Land Use map in Confluence, our Comprehensive plan designates this parcel as Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND). The TND district provides for a mix of housing types and densities along with small-scale retail and service businesses. Some commercial buildings may have businesses on the ground level and housing (or office) above. This designation encompasses existing traditional neighborhoods as well as high-amenity or high-activity locations near downtown and major institutions.

Traditional Neighborhood Development pg. 4A-6 Confluence

Guidelines and Criteria

Minimum Density: 4 dwellings per acre

Maximum Density: 15 dwellings per acre

The parcel at 1106-08 King St. is **0.253 acres**. Using the maximum ratio prescribed by our Comprehensive Plan's TND zoning district guidelines this would allow **4** dwellings in contrast with the 12 currently proposed. The applicant is proposing a density of 47 units per acre. The proposed density of this development would not be consistent with our Comprehensive plan as the maximum number of dwellings recommended therein is 15 units per acre. The proposed parcel is 0.253 acres and would equate to only 4 dwellings per acre using the prescribed ratio. **12 units at this location would not be consistent with our Comprehensive Plan's TND density guidelines and intent of the TND zoning.**

The Washburn Neighborhood plan states, "While the overall goal is a reduction in the number of rental properties, encouraging larger, high-density rental properties can work to retain density. The main issues to consider for these properties will be their location, their design, and provisions for parking." The Imagine 2040 plan has prescribed that high-density housing in Washburn should be located at 4th and Jackson Streets. The City's Planning and Development Department staff are in the planning and design phases of this development.

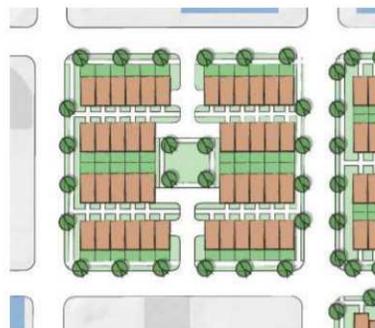
The recently completed

Imagine 2040 plan, that includes the Washburn, Downtown and Goosetown Neighborhoods recommends townhomes at 1106-08 King St. site (Figure 1) at a density of 14 units per acre (Figure 2).



Figure 1 Imagine 2040 Plan pg. 64

Each intensity scenario is shown as demonstrations of redevelopment that can be applied to an entire block or partial area. The shaded area of the diagram represents how a portion (quarter or half) can be applied to a redevelopment area.



Medium-High Intensity Housing Development

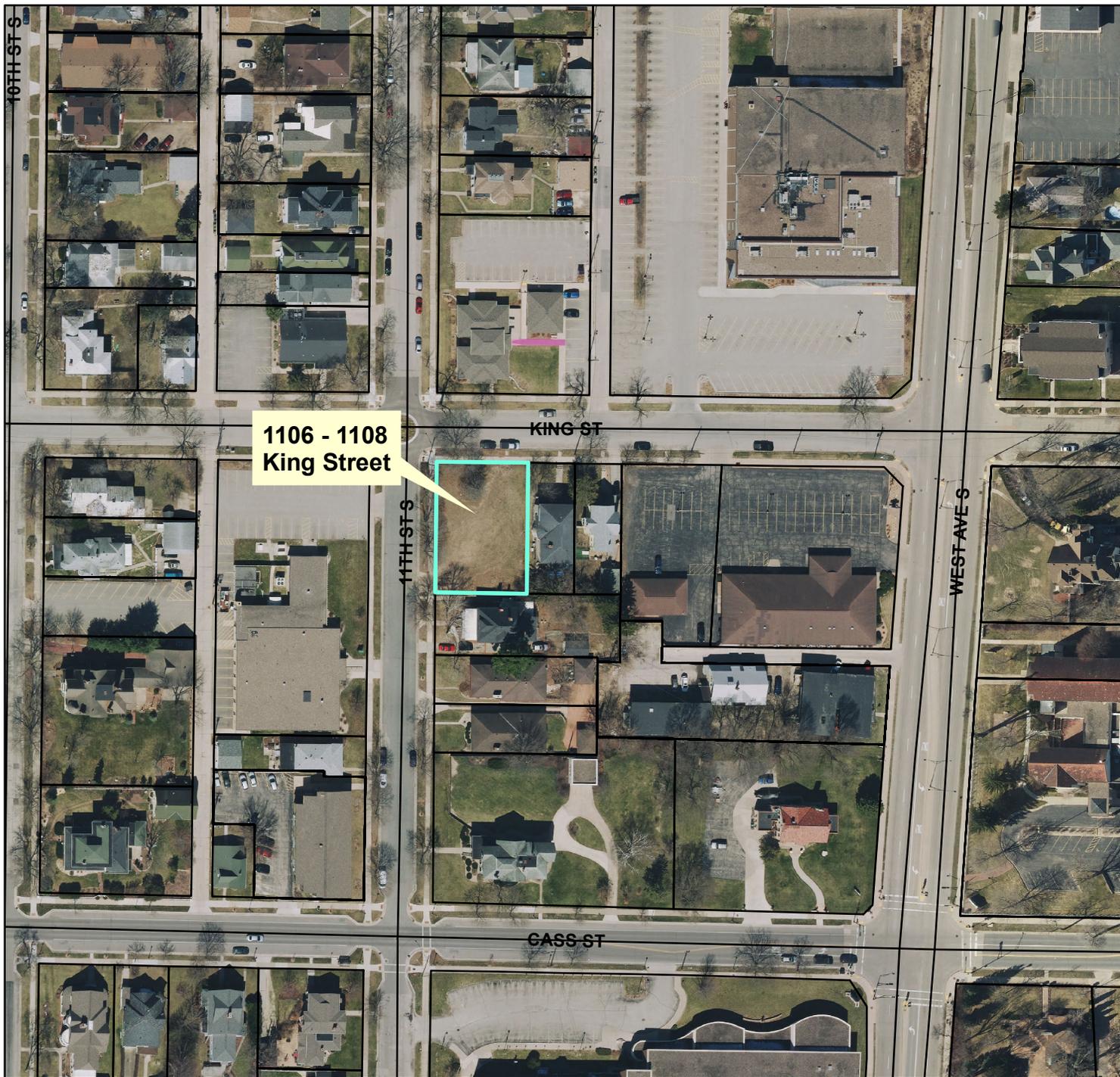
Density: -14 DUA

Townhome or rowhomes with shared common space provide currently unavailable housing types that can be built in a full-block or half-block or even quarter block configurations.

Figure 2 Imagine 2040 pg. 67

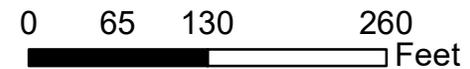
Ø PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:

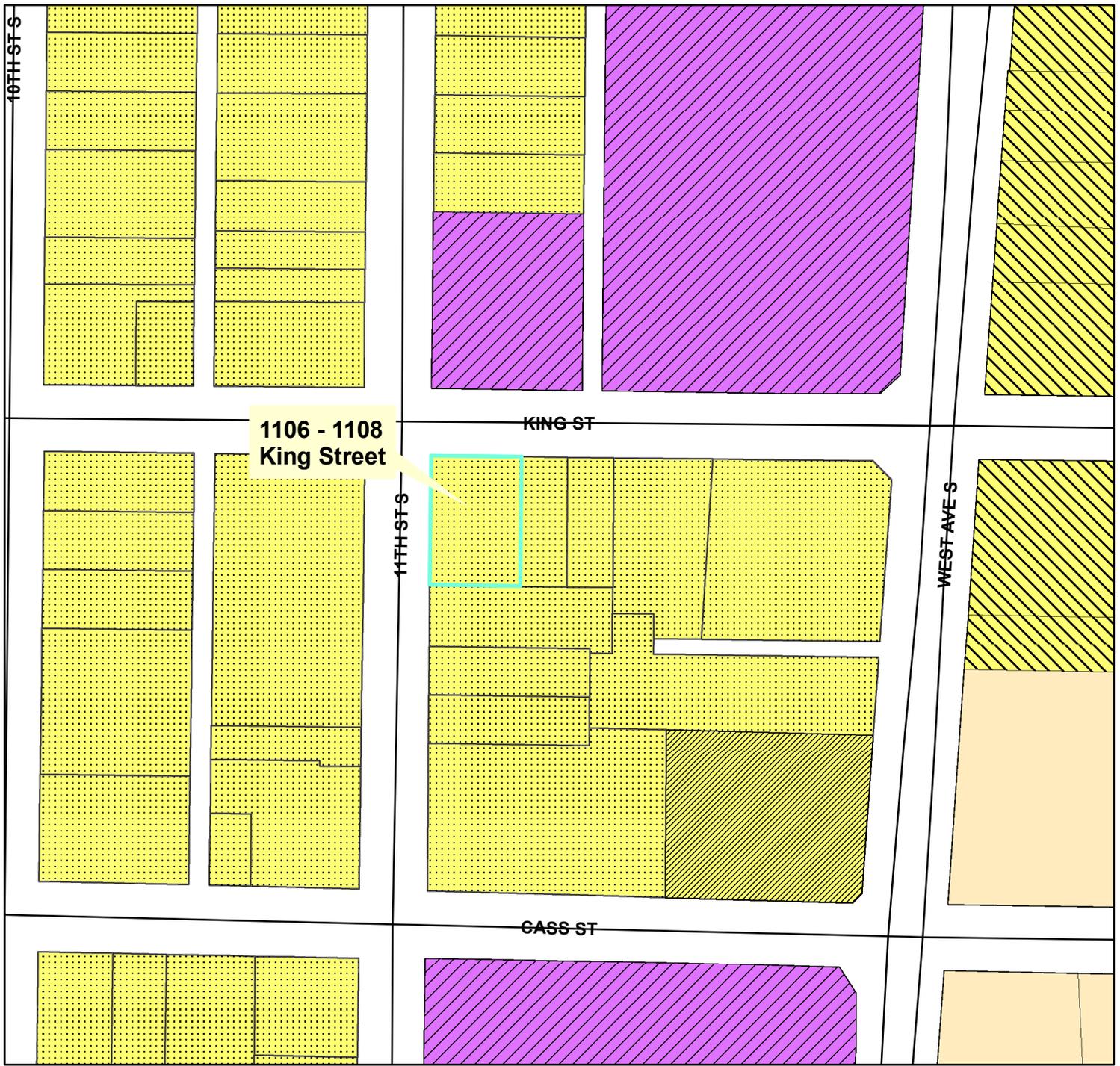
La Crosse is losing ground on development and population growth to the surrounding areas. This challenge is exacerbated by a declining housing stock and a housing crisis caused by increased construction costs and dwindling supply of homes for sale. The development of affordable, medium to high-density housing is of the utmost importance; however, we must not disregard; the zoning district guidelines in our Comprehensive Plan, recommendations from the Washburn Neighborhood plan and Imagine 2040 plan. Due to the conflict with these adopted plans, conflict with TND zoning district intent and negative Neighborhood Association, and community feedback **Planning Staff recommends denial of this item.**



BASIC ZONING DISTRICTS

-  R1 - SINGLE FAMILY
-  R2 - RESIDENCE
-  WR - WASHBURN RES
-  R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE
-  R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTI
-  R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING
-  R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE
-  PD- PLANNED DEVELOP
-  TND - TRAD NEIGH DEV.
-  C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS
-  C2 - COMMERCIAL
-  C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS
-  M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
-  M2 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
-  PS - PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
-  PL - PARKING LOT
-  UT - PUBLIC UTILITY
-  CON - CONSERVANCY
-  FW - FLOODWAY
-  A1 - AGRICULTURAL
-  EA - EXCLUSIVE AG
-  City Limits
-  SUBJECT PROPERTY





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