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New Bay View plan to address affordable and "missing middle" housing

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Milwaukee's Department of City Development is in the midst of crafting a new plan that would set the agenda for future development in the popular Bay View neighborhood.

In the last 12 months, the city's planning staff conducted three community meetings and recently wrapped up an online survey designed to gather neighbors' feedback.

"Housing has absolutely emerged as one of the most important issues residents are interested in," said city of Milwaukee senior planner Monica Wauck Smith. "One thing we've been really trying to take a look at is ... both housing options and affordability of housing."



SEAN RYAN

Housing has emerged as one of the most important issues Bay View residents are interested in, city of Milwaukee senior planner Monica Wauck Smith said.

Residents want newer housing options with modern amenities, Smith said. There's also support for "missing middle" housing, which straddles single-family homes and large apartment buildings, she said. It could include townhomes and accessory dwelling units such as above-garage or backyard units.

On the affordable housing front, Bay View is underserved by programs such as low-income housing tax credits compared with the rest of Milwaukee, Smith said.

There are concerns some residents could get priced out of the neighborhood as housing prices rise, Smith said. The median household income in Bay View is more than \$10,000 to \$20,000 higher than in the city, county and south suburbs, according to DCD.

The city has identified three focus sites for potential future new development: The city-owned former Army Reserve property and two privately-owned parcels, one currently occupied by a BMO Harris Bank branch and another on Chase Avenue.

The BMO Harris site has previously attracted development proposals — including apartment plans from Milwaukee's F Street Group in 2018 — but residents objected to the density. The plan DCD is drafting is an attempt to "get ahead" of future proposals for that site by collecting feedback from residents about what they'd like to see there, Smith said.

In addition to housing, the plan will also include recommendations for transportation, and business and economic development, among other topics.

Before the end of the year, the department plans to publish a draft plan and conduct a final neighborhood meeting, Smith said. Then it would require public hearings with the city's plan commission and the zoning, neighborhoods and development committee before it could go to the Common Council for approval.

If adopted, the city's planning staff would use the final plan as a guide when evaluating development proposals, Smith said.

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