



Reimagine Downtown DeForest: Open House Results

January 12, 2022

COMPREHENSIVE AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATES

Overview

On January 12, 2022, the Village of DeForest conducted an open house associated with updates to its Comprehensive and Redevelopment Plans. There were 24 community members in attendance (not including Village staff) at a 4:15 p.m. presentation, 10 community members at a 6:15 p.m. presentation, and 10 community members who participated in exercises but did not attend a presentation.

This open house was intended to have community members assist the Village in preparing a new plan for DeForest's Downtown, generally outlined on the map to the right. Participants were able to get questions answered and participate in interactive exercises to spur ideas and concerns. The following are participant responses, data, information, from each exercise.



Exercise 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Participants used post-it notes to identify the following Downtown strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

STRENGTHS

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Parks & trails | • Village Staff and workers |
| • Downtown events (Dragon Art Fair, Brews & Bites, Movie Night) | • DeForest's willingness to invest in building redevelopment and infrastructure |
| • Small-town friendly feel | • Fireman's Park |
| • Fireman's Park | • Library |
| • Fireman's Park and municipal buildings | • Fireman's Park and Library |
| • Swimming | • The Poppyseed, retail and coffee |

WEAKNESSES

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Not enough small business and retail; too many offices | • Village continues to tear down historical buildings – no character left |
| • No sidewalk/walking on Highway V | • No historical downtown |
| • Too close to Madison for viable shopping | • No classic downtown/4 corners |
| • Retail space and other businesses | • No sidewalk on Highway V |
| • More shops need downtown to attract residents, similar to Waunakee & Sun Prairie | • Too many splash pads. Need an indoor pool/outdoor aquatic center. |



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- Need to work in helping elderly people: not plowing driveways in, real estate taxes are out of reach to those getting older and are living on fixed incomes, perhaps provide kids or adults to lend a hand shoveling
- Nothing to draw weekend/day visitors
- Coffee shop where you can sit and gather – remember Grasshopper
- Not enough prime patio space/outdoor seating, no “trendy” and affordable rental space for events, not enough available space for new businesses
- Lack of community identity
- Need more “places to do things”

OPPORTUNITIES

- Brewery near bike path and Main Street
- Allow home owners flexibility
- Utilize the river, restaurants, bars, with river patio/view
- Holum Ed Center become an art center
- Public swimming pool
- Work with small businesses
- Utilize current natural assets
- Liquor mart, car wash, body shop – all three look unpleasant on Main by “V”, relocate them
- Increase property values
- Condos and retail where HEC is
- Holum Education Center – community fitness center? Pool/aquatic?
- Parts of Holum Center (gym) for teens/kids
- Lower income elderly housing
- To keep the small village feel
- Holum center – Boys & Girls Club

THREATS

- Lower income housing, crime migration from Madison
- No historical value, lack of character
- Disenfranchise current “good” residents with bad plan
- Teenagers with nothing to do
- Lack of “theme”/brand
- Village is not overly friendly to actually help small businesses
- Retain historic homes
- High value in “Old DeForest” mindset, aka people’s last names
- Disjointed commercial areas

Exercise #2: Visual Preference Survey

18 participants or small groups participated in a visual preference survey contained 30 images of buildings and uses that *could* feasibly be in the Downtown in the future. Participants graded each image on the on the design of the building shown, the density/scale of the building, and the use/occupancy of the building on an A, B, C, D, F scale. The form contained a section to write any comments about the building, including where in the Downtown the building(s) shown in the image may fit.

In order to quantitatively analyze the data, the grading scale (A, B, C, D, F) was weighted, so that A equals 5, B equals 4, C equals 3, D equals 2, and F equals 1. This weighted average grade is shown for each criterion for each image below, as well as any comments about the image.



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1

Design Grade:
3.8
Density/Scale Grade:
4.1 (3rd highest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5
Comments: "okay
design; no retail"



2

Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5
Comments: "looks too
hodge-podge; Holum
Center"



3

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.4

Comments: "much nicer looking than 1&2;
no retail space, provide more housing
options other than single-family"



4

Design Grade:
2.8 (3rd lowest)
Density/Scale Grade:
3.3
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.9 (3rd lowest)

Comments: "feels more
like home; bring building
to street, safer sidewalks"



5

Design Grade:
3.3
Density/Scale Grade:
3.3
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.4

Comments: "too many different designs; no
retail space; need more downtown
apartments"



6

Design Grade:
3.9
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9

Comments: "private is a plus – good mix
with other housing and retail options; more
variety in living is good"





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7

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5



Comments: "okay – not the greatest design; private entrance, garage is a plus; too much concrete facing street. Move garages to back. Need bike lanes."

8

Design Grade:
3.1
Density/Scale Grade:
2.9 (2nd lowest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.8 (2nd lowest)



Comments: "no retail/business space; could fit a lot in a small area; higher density, street trees, sidewalks, provide on street parking"

9

Design Grade:
2.5 (lowest)
Density/Scale Grade:
2.6 (lowest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.8 (lowest)



Comments: "too boxy, visually unappealing"

10

Design Grade:
3.8
Density/Scale Grade:
4.0
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.1 (3rd highest)



Comments: "doesn't look like a restaurant building; rooftop is a plus; multi-use and multi-story = good"

11

Design Grade:
3.1
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.8



Comments: "locate buildings to emphasize safe sidewalks and alternative modes of travel. Multi-story!"

12

Design Grade:
4.2 (3rd highest)
Density/Scale Grade:
4.1 (2nd highest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.8



Comments: "museum and or attractions to draw development and visitors. Learning opportunities/education"



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13

Design Grade:
3.6
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5



Comments: "I appreciate the old homes being saved; has character; too many stairs; keep as single-family, move restaurant to mixed-use or walkable area"

14

Design Grade:
3.3
Density/Scale Grade:
3.1
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.2



Comments: "already enough Kwik Trips"

15

Design Grade:
3.3
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5



Comments: "OK to repurpose; barren streetscape"

16

Design Grade:
2.9
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "don't care for the building façade; no outdoor seating; Town Square; love the idea of brewery/cidery downtown; mixed-use opportunity here, outdoor seating needed"

17

Design Grade:
4.4 (2nd highest)
Density/Scale Grade:
4.0
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.2 (2nd highest)



Comments: "new, fresh – love the look and possibilities; no outdoor seating, rooftop would be a plus; Holum Center; love the idea of brewery/cidery downtown"

18

Design Grade:
3.2
Density/Scale Grade:
3.3
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.3



Comments: "no retail; create conditions for healthy street trees"



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19

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "Strip mall – okay but not special; no housing; love the updated strip mall; stores should be placed to create pedestrian experience"

20

Design Grade:
2.8
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5



Comments: "retail/housing = good; like mixed-use!; move parking to side to create downtown feel, good mixture of business types"

21

Design Grade:
3.8
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.0



Comments: "I like the look; something to do; no way; bike racks are good!"

22

Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "too busy as event space?; event space is a plus; ugly; love the brewery idea"

23

Design Grade:
4.1
Density/Scale Grade:
3.7
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.0



Comments: "love the more industrial look, prefer 22 though; outdoor seating and '3rd space' for residences and businesses"

24

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.7



Comments: "ok – don't care for the design; provide space for an urban forest"



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25

Design Grade:
2.7 (2nd lowest)
Density/Scale Grade:
2.9 (3rd lowest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.0



Comments: "Don't care for the design; enough bank locations; should be mixed-use"

26

Design Grade:
4.5 (highest)
Density/Scale Grade:
4.3 (highest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.2 (highest)



Comments: "Keep the architecture/buildings!; awesome idea; may have to do a lot of this"

27

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "move buildings to street and parking in back for downtown experience"

28

Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.5
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.6



Comments: "Like the design!; need high density options, more units to bring prices down. Need more 3 bed apartments"

29

Design Grade:
3.6
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "Like the rooftop! Like the design; mixed-use good – medium density"

30

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.2
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.2



Comments: "Love all the windows; great that they placed large office building just off 'Main Street' – gets density downtown without damaging 'small-town' downtown experience"



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Exercise #3: Mapping your Downtown

There were seven small groups or individuals that completed the mapping exercise, using different color and size “Monopoly” pieces to signify potential future buildings and land uses across Downtown DeForest. The following is a key of uses that participants could map:

- Red = commercial service, retail, restaurants, coffee shops, etc.
- Orange = offices, healthcare
- Yellow = housing like duplexes, townhouses, apartments, condos
- Gray = light assembly, craft beverage producer, small contractor
- White = mixed use buildings with commercial, office, residential
- Blue = public, institutional buildings (e.g., education, religious, centers)
- Green = your choice if not listed above!

The following pages show results from each small group or individual that participated:

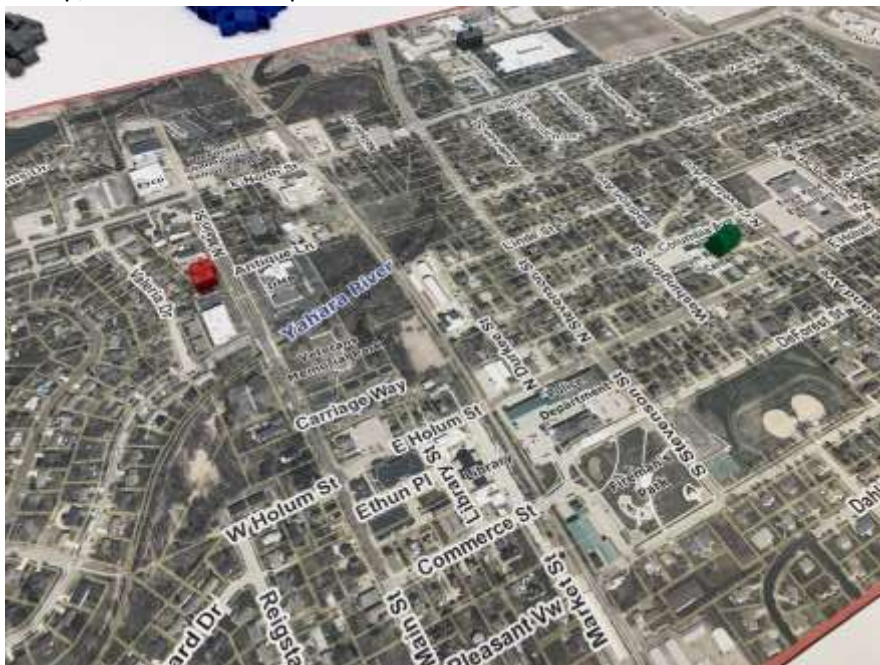


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Group/Individual #1 Map:



Group/Individual #2 Map:



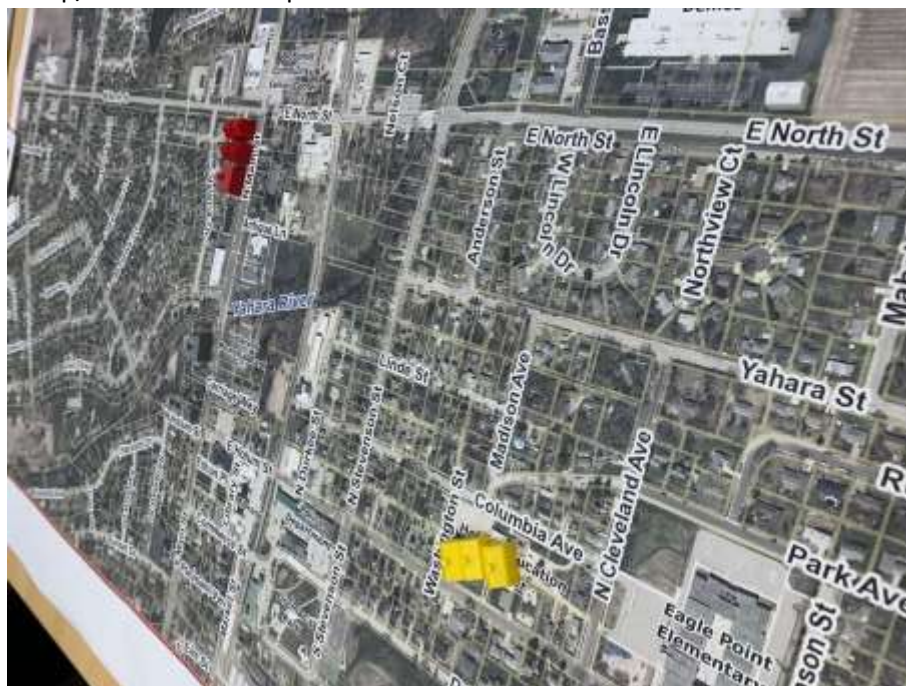


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Group/Individual #3 Map:



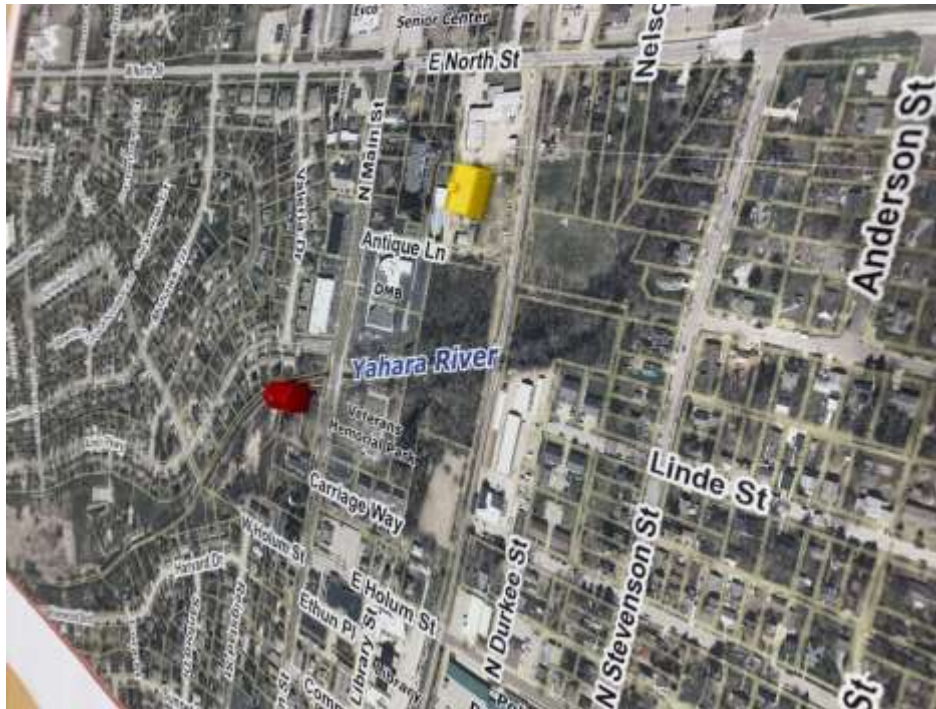
Group/Individual #4 Map:



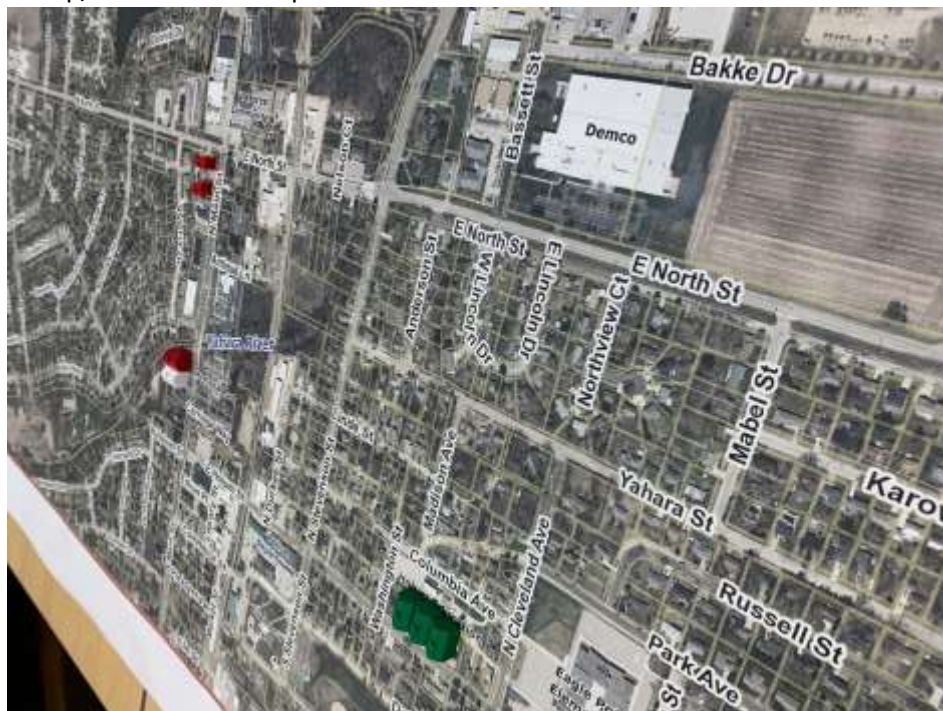


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Group/Individual #5 Map:



Group/Individual #6 Map:





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Group/Individual #7 Map (received after meeting by meeting participant):



Participants shared the following verbal comments at the mapping exercise station:

- It would be hard to have more residential on North Street in its current state—it is not pedestrian-friendly.
- Seek out riverfront dining opportunities.
- Attempt to find better homes in the Village for auto-service uses.
- Widen North Street and include a bike path/sidewalks.
- Could the gym in Holum Education Center (HEC) be put to a community recreational use?
- How about a Boys and Girls Club or similar in the HEC? The Village needs more things for teens and tweens to do.
- Could the HEC be repurposed as a multi-tenant antique mall, resale shop, or similar?
- Where is the downtown? Need to better define it and connect the northern to southern parts on the map.



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- We need more shops to bring people downtown? There are not enough reasons for people to come downtown now.
- Encourage reinvestment in the bowling alley; it's a good downtown use but could benefit from an upgrade.
- While outside of the mapped area, consider mixed use redevelopment of the commercial/vacant sites on Murray and Main Streets.
- Minimize removal of green space in the process of redeveloping the downtown.
- With the splash pad, library, and other kid-friendly activities downtown, we need an ice cream shop.
- Make sure not to forget about redevelopment in the Pick and Save area.
- Bring in restaurant uses with deliberate and attractively-sited outdoor seating.
- Site a brewpub or employment along the Yahara River.
- Better "bridge" lands north and south of River in the downtown area to encourage movement between them.
- Bring in more green spaces downtown.
- Don't do a pool in Fireman's Park.
- More restaurants, like another bar & grill or a supper club.
- Want better accessibility from the community/region to the downtown. Removing Holum Street access to Highway 51 hurt.
- Need multiple places to go; limited continuity in the downtown today.
- Need comfortable, aesthetically pleasing outdoor dining (rooftop?).
- Bring in some trendy rental housing to attract a millennial/generation Z group (who will spend money downtown).
- DeForest Professional Building site redevelopment should be a priority, ideally including outdoor dining along the path and river.
- Repurpose the Holum Education Center (HEC) as a recreation center (New Richmond example).
- The HEC site could be more than one thing in the future—maybe housing, plus multitenant shopping space in existing building.
- Revitalize the strip centers on Main Street.
- Redevelop liquor store site on corner of North and Main.
- Reuse the DeForest Professional Building site for commercial and/or mixed use development.
- Attract a Goodwill Store and/or recreational facility (e.g., Anytime Fitness or Burn Bootcamp) to corner of North and Main or in one of the strip malls.
- Need a brewery downtown.
- Need sidewalk along North Street.
- Attract coffee shop with indoor place to gather and extended operating hours.



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Exercise #4: Written Comments

There were 11 comment forms completed by participants during and after the open house. Responses to each question are combined below:

1. *What excites you most about the planning and future of DeForest's Downtown area?*
 - a. That the Village is getting input and ideas from the community. Also, more businesses downtown.
 - b. New things to see and do, cleaned up image.
 - c. Possible to make a place to go for retail and food. Multi-use building.
 - d. That I have a voice in the planning. Making our Village more inviting to residents and visitors.
 - e. We wish to enhance our downtown. We have no downtown and looking at other communities that have been spread out in several directions.
 - f. Change is good.
 - g. The possibilities and great job DeForest has done already.
2. *What concerns you most about the planning and future of DeForest's Downtown area?*
 - a. Losing my property.
 - b. Displaced residents/businesses, poor choice of development.
 - c. Building apartments only, single homes, and big box retail.
 - d. That I won't have a voice as a resident in the planning. That drastic changes will be done. That each piece being done will not blend with the rest of the Village.
 - e. I do not want to see low-income housing anywhere in the area of the Holum Center, nor including it.
 - f. My property on Antique Lane.
 - g. Higher taxes.
 - h. Taking away homes in the Downtown area.
3. *Please share any other thoughts about this planning effort or open house:*
 - a. Would love to see community fitness/aquatic center/brewery/cidery, thrift store – Goodwill or Saint Vinnies are run the best.
 - b. Good info, glad to see this shared. Looking forward to some changes.
 - c. I just hope they plan it right because you get to do this once.
 - d. We all need change but not hastily.
 - e. Thank you for organizing and hosting it, and I feel confident with all the input the redevelopment plan is seeking.
 - f. The Question and Response hand out answered a lot of questions and worries I had.
 - g. I enjoyed Mark's presentation but I wish there was a slide on the area being talked about. What I mean is an actual picture or pictures of what the whole area looks like now. There were some pictures in the vestibule but a slide or two in the presentation might have also been helpful.
 - h. I watched the slides of different buildings and styles. There were 30 of them. I think that was too many. 15 may have been better and 25 seconds vs 20 seconds. So many of the



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slides were similar to others so if you really liked one but another similar one came along it was hard to decide if it was an A,B, or C. There was a lot to fill out in 20 seconds. I even watched it twice!

- i. I liked the sticky note section. It was a good opportunity to give a short answer on four different catch words.
- j. The monopoly board was interesting. It was difficult to put the right size building where you thought it should go because each color had three or four things they could represent and it really, I felt, didn't represent what I thought should be in that particular place or area. I much preferred the way we did it at the meetings that were held in August/September. At those meetings we were able to be more precise by naming each spot or area.
- k. We need a new microbrewery in DeForest—we regularly travel to nearby communities for these; would be better to stay in-town for this.