

**ST. MARY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD
LAFAYETTE, INDIANA
AN AMENDMENT TO
THE ADOPTED LAND USE PLAN**

**THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TIPPECANOE COUNTY
VOLUME 2: THE LAND USE PLAN
ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 16, 1981**

**PREPARED FOR THE MEMBERS OF
THE ST. MARY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
BY THE STAFF OF
THE AREA PLAN COMMISSION OF TIPPECANOE COUNTY**

AUGUST 1996, REVISED

**ADOPTED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAFAYETTE
ON OCTOBER 7TH, 1996**

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INTRODUCTION

Members of the St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood Association (HNA) have expressed concern in recent years over changes in the local land use pattern. Discussions during the group's meetings led the Association to seek help from the Lafayette City Council.

On May 1, 1995, the City Council adopted Resolution 95-20. This document requested the Area Plan Commission of Tippecanoe County "study the area and hold appropriate hearings to evaluate the property" within the St. Mary's Neighborhood. The Resolution set study area boundaries at the triangle formed by Main Street, South Street and the railroad tracks.

APC Assistant Director Bernie Gulker and Current Planner Kathy Lind met informally with two representatives from the St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood Association on October 5, 1995. A meeting was then planned for November 16th to discuss current conditions, and to establish a joint action plan. At the meeting in November, the planners presented:

- an updated map showing current land use within the neighborhood;
- an updated map representing existing building conditions within the neighborhood; and
- current zoning patterns.

Members assigned themselves research tasks regarding:

- the condition and availability of utilities;
- the condition of neighborhood streets and sidewalks;
- the status of government-funded neighborhood reinvestments and programs; and
- institutional expansion.

The planners agreed to help the St. Mary's HNA establish neighborhood goals and develop a land use plan based on those goals and the assembled data, and to discuss other actions the HNA might take in its own behalf.

The land use plan embodied in this report, serves as a development guide for the neighborhood. Planning staff has written it as a proposed amendment to the *Land Use Element* of the adopted *Comprehensive Plan for Tippecanoe County*. The Area Plan Commission and the Lafayette City Council must hold public hearings on this amendment prior to its adoption.

Following adoption, this plan should at least serve as a policy guide to the City Council, the City Engineers' Office and the Lafayette Division of the Area Board of Zoning Appeals. It is up to the members of the St. Mary's HNA to monitor the activities of these groups, and provide them input when necessary. This ongoing partnership between the St. Mary's HNA, City Hall and APC will result in other neighborhood revitalization strategies, also designed to achieve the established goals.

And, If requested by the City Council, a rezoning of the St. Mary's Neighborhood based on this plan can readily be heard and adopted.

DEFINING PROBLEMS AND SETTING GOALS

Problem identification is the first and most basic step in this neighborhood planning process. Before we can plan for the future in a meaningful way, we must identify the problems that need to be addressed in our planning effort.

The Area Plan Commission has long held that citizens do the best job of problem identification, and the St. Mary's HNA is blessed with an active and interested membership. As a first step, the group set a meeting for January 30, 1996 to participate in a problem identification exercise. Absentee landlords and owners of businesses located within the neighborhood were also invited to attend, though most chose not to be present. Ten citizens attended, as did two staff members: Principal Planner Michael Sanders and Current Planner Kathy Lind.

We use a technique called Nominal Group Process in situations like this. We use it because it ensures input from everyone who attends the meeting. Staff divided the participants into two subgroups. We assigned a staff member to work with each subgroup.

Participants had ten minutes to list their responses to this question:

*What do **YOU** think are the problems and challenges facing the people of the St. Mary's Neighborhood over the next 10 or 15 years?*

Within each subgroup, participants read their responses in turn, as Staff members wrote them down. This continued until all participants had expressed all items on their lists.

Still within subgroups, participants voted their choice of the five most significant responses. Then the full group reassembled, discussed and combined their "Top 5" lists, and then voted on one final list of responses. Staff tallied the ballots, reported briefly to the participants, and at a meeting on March 21, 1996, distributed to the St. Mary's HNA the results of the January meeting in written form. (A copy of these results, which include all of the responses made that evening, and how they were prioritized, is included as an appendix to this report.)

What follows is the Statement of Goals for the St. Mary's Neighborhood. Planning staff has derived these from the compilation of problems and challenges raised by participants at the January 30th session.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & ACTIONS FOR ST. MARY'S HISTORICAL NEIGHBORHOOD

These goals have been derived from the lists of problems and issues generated by participants in the January 30th Nominal Group Process. They cover the three major concerns expressed by the neighborhood: the impact of traffic, preserving and improving historical structures, and encouraging neighborliness. St. Mary's HNA reviewed, and amended these goals on April 18, 1996.

- I. **REDUCE THE IMPACT OF TRAFFIC IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD:**
 - A. Reduce the number of cars on main arteries through the neighborhood.
 - B. Reduce the speed of cars on the state highway:
 1. talk to the Lafayette Police Department about enforcing existing speed limits; and
 2. install wider sidewalks at intersections to slow down motorists who are turning, and also to encourage pedestrian travel.
 - C. Reduce the number of parked cars on streets:
 1. ask the Lafayette Division of ABZA to uphold ordinance standards regarding future parking space variances;
 2. encourage use of available off-street parking;

3. improve the condition of alleys; and
 4. provide curbs on side streets.
- II. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LAND AND STRUCTURES, AND PROMOTE A SENSE OF HISTORY:
- A. Prevent the deterioration of structures:
 1. become aware when key properties come up for sale within the neighborhood; and
 2. get NHS (Neighborhood Housing Service) involved in rehabbing existing apartments.
 - B. Preserve existing architecturally significant homes:
 1. petition for registry with the architectural review board to oversee building permits.
 - C. Keep houses from becoming solely used for businesses:
 1. downzone a portion of the neighborhood; and
 2. amend the *Comprehensive Plan* to discourage business and professional offices from locating in the neighborhood.
 - D. Prevent demolition of historic buildings to make way for new, box-like apartment buildings:
 1. downzone areas to R2 which would prohibit future apartment buildings; and
 2. ask the Lafayette Division of ABZA to uphold existing ordinance standards regarding future lot width and lot area variances.
 - E. Maintain or increase property values.
 - F. Prevent city code violations due to lack of code enforcement.
- III. ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF NEIGHBORHOOD:
- A. Promote the existance of the St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood:
 1. place historical markers at the boundaries of the neighborhood.
 - B. Get more involved with residents, (both owners and renters) business owners, and professionals working in the neighborhood.
 - C. Foster cooperation between all property owners, including business owners and St. Mary's Cathedral.
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As a first step in exploring ways to achieve some of these goals, the St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood Association hosted two City officials at its May 23rd, 1996 meeting. Present at the meeting were the Lafayette City Engineer, Opal Kuhl; and the Chief of Police for the City of Lafayette, Gene Reed. They both fielded questions from the group concerning the St. Mary's Neighborhood. Topics of conversation included speeding traffic, the historical lack of, and greater need for code enforcement, and the many changes planned by the new City administration.

GENERATING A LAND USE PLAN

With staff assistance, the St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood Association has designed a neighborhood land use plan to help achieve some more of the goals established at the January meeting.

On June 27, 1996, planning staff presented the membership with three maps, each showing an alternative neighborhood land use future. These alternatives were based on:

- current land use and building condition patterns;
- the data assembled by St. Mary's HNA members; and
- various aspects of the Goals, Objectives, and Actions as amended and adopted by the HNA.

All three alternatives exhibited basic land use elements that typify the St. Mary's Neighborhood today: areas of moderate to high density residential housing, institutional land uses, and (close to the railroad tracks and near the five points area) retail and service related uses.

What differed in the land use alternatives was not so much the types of land uses present, but rather the borders that separate them. St. Mary's HNA members have clearly defined a set of land use problems with a common thread: they feel the historic elements of the neighborhood are being threatened. They feel this threat in the increased number of cars traveling on the main arteries through the neighborhood; they also feel threatened by a lack of community involvement in their area and in particular, by a lack of City code enforcement. By far the biggest perceived threat to the historic elements of the neighborhood are owners who permit their historic buildings to deteriorate, or worse, owners who raze older buildings to build modern apartment buildings which look out of place in an historic area.

Thus in choosing amongst the alternatives, St. Mary's HNA members had to answer the following questions for themselves:

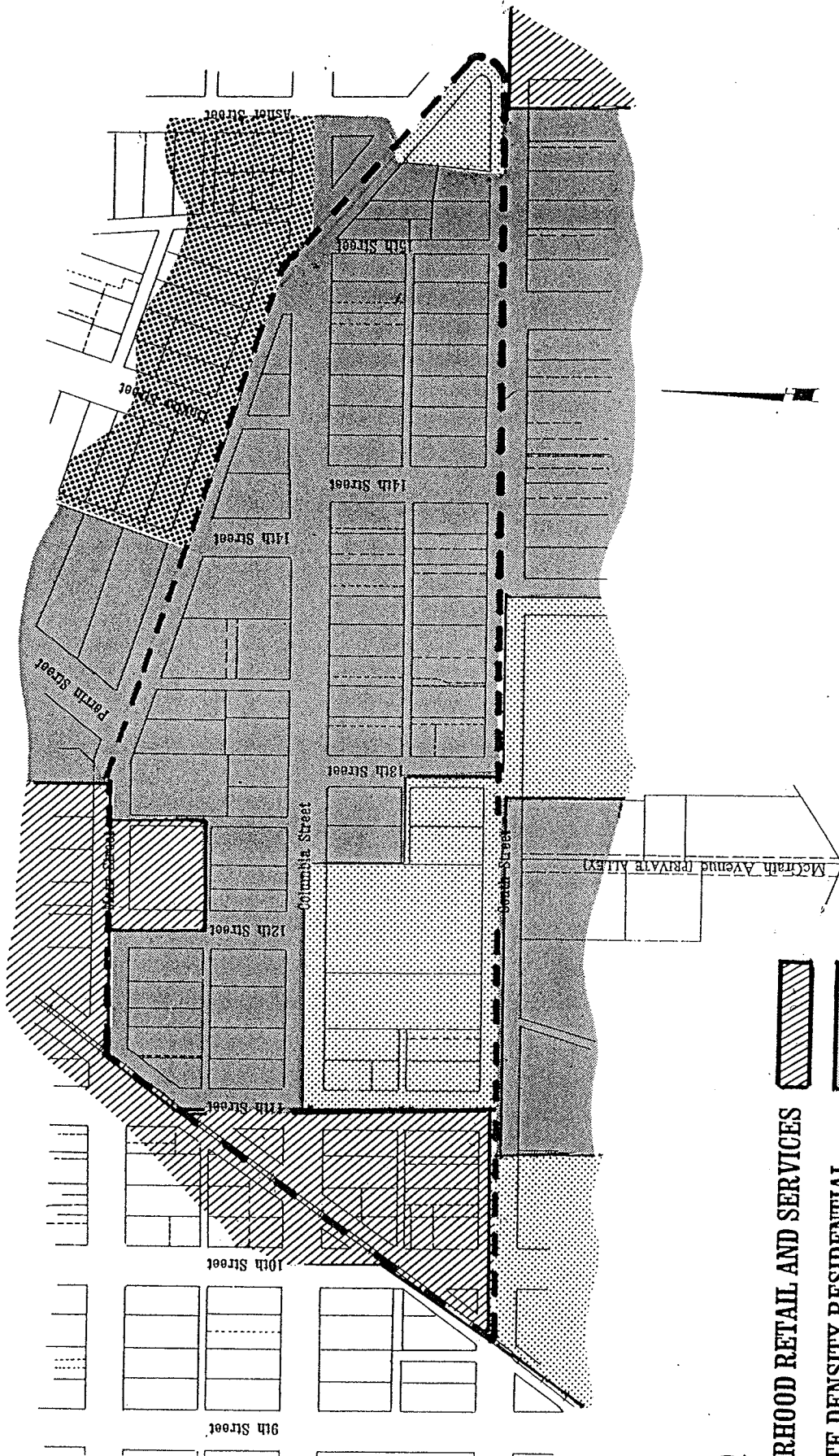
- Do we want to expand the retail and service sector currently located along both sides of the railroad tracks, or do we scale this sector back to west of the tracks leaving more area for residential in-fill?
- Do we want to entirely do away with a high density residential sector and in its place have a moderate density area which would in fact create 34 non-conforming apartment buildings?
- Or would it be better if we were to allow for a small area of higher density residential use – so that multi-family housing would still be permitted within the neighborhood – but leave most the area within the medium density residential sector?

THE PLAN

The St. Mary's HNA membership's answers to these questions led to a fourth map, which we called the Preferred Land Use Alternative. This scenario, shown on the following page, now serves in this context as an amendment to the *Land Use Element* of the adopted *Comprehensive Plan for Tippecanoe County*. It is the Land Use Plan for St. Mary's Historical Neighborhood, and its components are as follows:

- Commercial activity, in the form of neighborhood retailing, is to remain much as it is except for two small changes. It would expand beyond the railroad tracks as far east as 11th Street. The half block on the south side of Main between 11th and 12th Streets would evolve from commercial to moderate density residential.
- Institutional land uses, such as St. Mary's Cathedral and School, the Tippecanoe County Historical Association, the National Guard Armory, and the fire station at the point, would remain unchanged, and continue to anchor the neighborhood.
- A small area of higher density residential land use would remain on the north side of Main from 14th Street to where Main intersects with Columbia. This land use is typified by a mixture of single-family, two-family and multi-family housing, including small apartment complexes.
- The rest of the neighborhood, in fact the majority of the neighborhood, would evolve into a moderate density residential pattern. This would typically allow one and two-family dwellings, but no multi-family dwellings except those already existing, within this sector.

ST. MARY'S NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY



LEGEND

- NEIGHBORHOOD RETAIL AND SERVICES
- MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- HIGHER DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- MIXED USE PROJECTS THROUGH P.D. PROCESS

PREFERRED LAND USE PLAN (FUTURE)

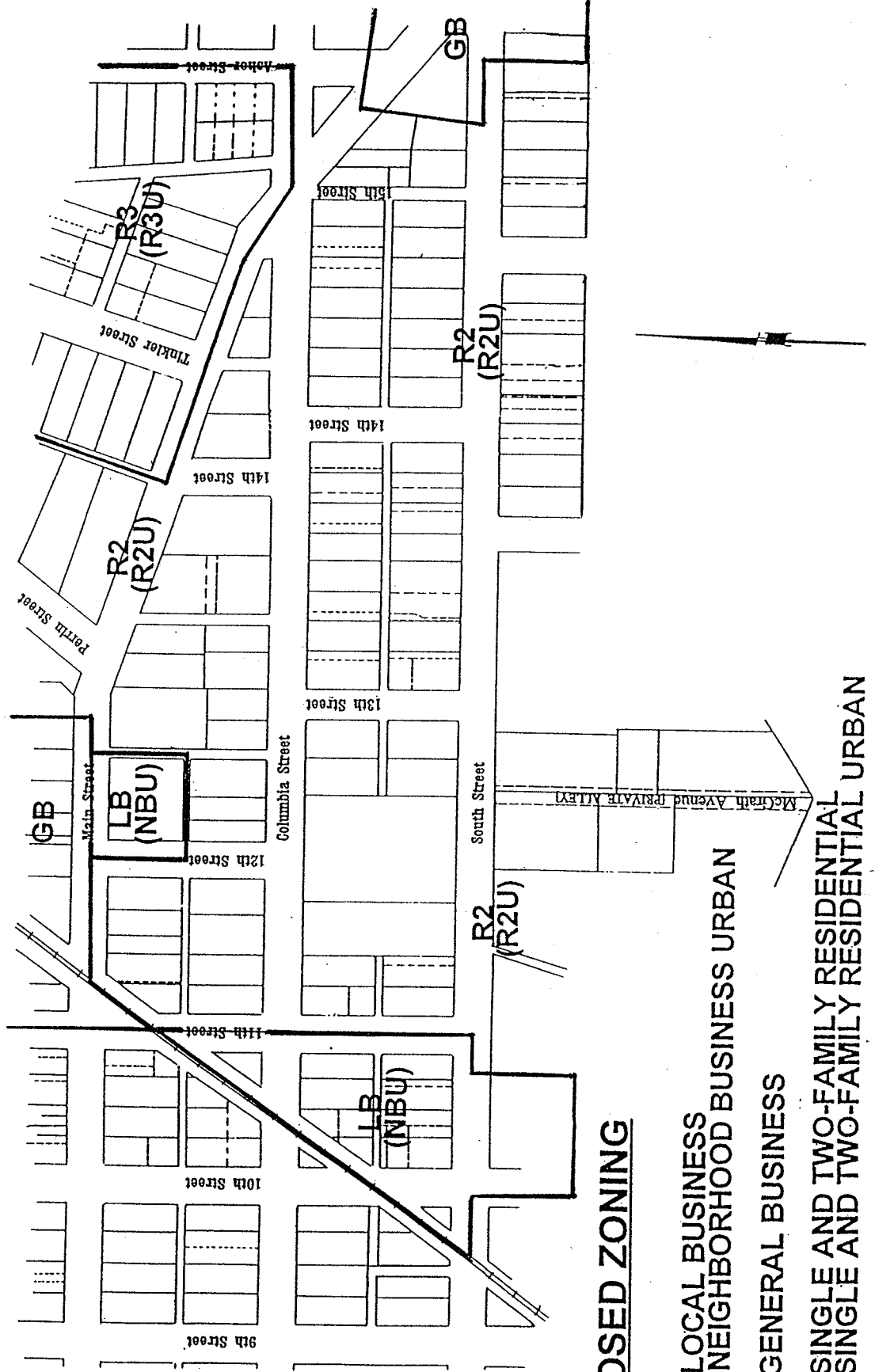
Significantly, the amendment also calls for the use of planned development zoning techniques to accommodate mixed-use projects within the neighborhood. Most members and staff agree that an owner occupied home in which the owner creates an appropriately scaled service (or perhaps retail) operation, may provide the impetus and cash needed to help restore and maintain these unique structures. The PD process will allow neighborhood input at a very early stage in the rezoning, allowing for necessary negotiation and compromise.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

As adopted, this Land Use Plan Amendment functions only as a policy guide to the City Council, local government agencies and the Lafayette Division of the Area Board of Zoning Appeals. To ensure its value, this land use plan must be implemented through a series of further actions. These include close contact between HNA members and City officials regarding traffic, speeders and code enforcement. HNA members must also work with neighbors and absentee landlords to establish communication links and a sense of neighborhood pride to help stimulate individual action.

Should the Lafayette City Council elect to request rezoning for the St. Mary's Neighborhood, the proposed zoning map on the following page would serve that purpose. This neighborhood-wide rezoning proposal was formulated by a large majority of the St. Mary's HNA with the assistance of planning staff, specifically to implement this plan by discouraging the loss of one- and two-family homes to multi-family construction. The zoning classifications shown in parentheses indicate what the proposed zoning would become upon adoption of the New Unified Zoning Ordinance and revised zoning maps, hopefully later this year.

ST. MARY'S NEIGHBORHOOD STUDY



PROPOSED ZONING

- LB) LOCAL BUSINESS
- NBU) NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS URBAN
- GB) GENERAL BUSINESS
- R2) SINGLE AND TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- R2U) SINGLE AND TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL URBAN
- R3) SINGLE, TWO-FAMILY, AND MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- R3U) SINGLE, TWO-FAMILY, AND MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL URBAN

APPENDIX

NOMINAL GROUP PROCESS ST. MARY'S HISTORICAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Round the table results for Group I (Kathy Lind, facilitator):

- A. Zoning
- B. Quality of maintenance (deterioration) of both structures and land
- C. Traffic (speed) especially down Columbia
- D. Overcrowding
- E. Parking, both on-street and off
- F. Lack of participation in neighborhood
- G. Increase in business uses (houses becoming non-residential)
- H. Lack of Enforcement (inappropriate, selective city code enforcement)
- I. Historical markers needed defining neighborhood

Round the table results for Group II (Michael Sanders, facilitator):

- A. Tearing down of old houses
- B. Foster cooperation between all property owners
- C. Increasing traffic
- D. Parking
- E. Maintaining historical integrity
- F. No new apartment buildings
- G. Foster/develop/maintain relationship with St. Mary's Church and businesses
- H. Encourage sense of neighborhood
- I. Encourage social diversity
- J. Maintain or increase property values
- K. Tree (street) care

Group I's list prioritized:

- A. Traffic (especially speeding)
- B. Zoning
- C. Lack of participation in Neighborhood
- D. Parking on street and off
- D. Lack of, inappropriate, and selective City code enforcement
- E. Quality of maintenance (Deterioration of structures)

Group II's list prioritized:

- A. Maintain or increase property values
- B. Foster cooperation between all property owners
- C. Increasing traffic (speeds, volume, noise)
- D. Maintain historical integrity
- E. No new apartment buildings
- F. Encourage sense of neighborhood

Final results with both groups prioritizing the above:

- I. Increasing traffic (speeds, volume, noise)
- II. Maintain historical integrity
- III. Maintain or increase property values
- IV. Foster cooperation between all property owners
- IV. Zoning
- V. Parking on street and off

LIST OF ST. MARY'S HNA PARTICIPANTS

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William Baugh
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Karen Mills
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Paul D. Smallidge
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Kenneth Taylor
Jane Turner

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Kathy Lind, Area Plan Commission
Joni Heide, City Forester
Opal Kuhl, City Engineer
Gene Reed, Chief of Police
Thomas G. Van Horn, Lafayette Redevelopment Department

