

Three futures foreseen for River Drive

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MOLINE – Three alternatives for the future of River Drive were offered during a three-hour open house Thursday night, with none likely to be used in whole.

Moline's River Drive Transportation and Land Use Study stretches from the Rock Island to East Moline borders, from the river to Illinois 92. It is looking at land use and transportation issues in light of developments planned on River Drive, from the new Interstate 74 bridge to the multi-building RiverTech project to the proposed Western Illinois University Quad City Riverfront campus.

A public workshop Monday by the city and urban design firm Gould Evans, Kansas City, let residents learn more about the study and help develop the plan. The 50 people attending shared their perceived strengths and weaknesses of River Drive, as well as their perceptions of a "perfect" corridor.

Additionally, the Gould Evans staff held focus groups, met with city staff and researched the corridor themselves throughout the week.

All that data was used to create the three alternatives presented Thursday. Brian Hamilton, associate vice president for Gould Evans, said the open house was designed to identify parts of each plan that may or may not work.

The first alternative allows for the mixed-use development that now exists along the corridor, while striving to make it work together. Focusing on aesthetics and visual quality, it would create design guidelines for new development. Semi-truck traffic would still be allowed on River Drive under this alternative.

The second alternative would recreate River Drive into a parkway with medians, roundabouts and grand gateways. Business and industry would still co-exist with residential areas, but due to the street amenities, all semi-traffic would be moved to 4th Avenue.

The third alternative would create four separate riverfront districts for industry, the downtown, educational institutions and residential. Semi-truck traffic would be allowed, but all traffic would move at a slower pace because of the addition of on-street parking. River Drive also would be realigned to go on railroad right-of-way, behind the planned Western Illinois University campus, to give the institution more riverfront property.

A sidewalk is planned for the south side of River Drive in all three alternatives. There also would be more pedestrian crossing signals, traffic light intersections and landscaping.

"We are still in the visioning and dreaming stage," Mr. Hamilton said.

Clare Kerofsky, Moline, said she liked how two plans had paths connecting neighborhoods on the south of the railroad tracks to River Drive and the Mississippi River.

"It is really successful and really commendable," she said. While not partial to one specific plan, she suggested having the paths follow the streams that now run into the river.

"I love what they have done," Ms. Kerofsky said. "I think Moline is doing a great thing bringing in a company to assess this."

Thursday's feedback will be refined into a plan to be finalized this summer, Mr. Hamilton said.