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Variety of Zoning in Vicinity of Boise River Street Complicates Maintaining Standards in Residences

Editor's Note: The River Street area of Boise is an area of mixed residential and industrial uses. The Statesman in a previous article examined the neighborhood's early history. The following is the second in a three-part series covering past, present and future situations in the area. Today's report deals with present conditions:

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There are homes in the River Street area where residents maintain a "pride of ownership" equal to any area of the city, but incidents of deterioration also exist, Planning Director Arlo R. Nelson says.

The River Street area is generally described as that part of the city bounded by Americana and Capitol boulevards, Front Street and the Boise River. It was developed in 1890 as a residential neighborhood and its Riverside Park was an entertainment, cultural and recreational center for the city.

But in the late 1920s, the houses began showing signs of age and commercial and industrial uses were encroaching on the medium-priced homes. According to the 1932 city zoning laws, the area was given an unrestricted classification whereby all types of uses permitted in other zones were allowed in the River Street area.

The present zoning ordinance places the area mostly in a limited industrial zone, but there are some patches of commercial zoning.

Residents Choose Area

The neighborhood cannot be thought of as an area that "people don't like," Nelson said. In fact, some residents choose to live there because it is within walking distance of the downtown shopping area.

Some of the residents have lived in the area a good part of their lives and do not choose to move elsewhere.

Others may live there because it is one of the city's few areas where low-cost housing is available. A local real estate agent who owns property in the neighborhood estimated that monthly charges for homes in the area are about \$25 to \$30 and that \$80 monthly charges would be rare.

A State Department of Public Assistance survey conducted for The Idaho Daily Statesman revealed that a number of the people in this neighborhood have had an opportunity to move elsewhere but prefer to live in the River Street area.

Homes Deteriorated

The Planning Department, in a preliminary survey, found that some residential structures in this neighborhood were "blighted and probably deteriorated beyond practical repair." The department noted that housing code inspections have not been made in the neighborhood and the report suggested that no inspections be made until decisions are made on the future of the residential area in the neighborhood.

housing code counselor added. "A search of county records in a two-block area of the Riverside Park Addition revealed that there is about 30 per cent owner occupancy. This leaves a 70 per cent absent ownership ratio which tends to lend itself to a situation that invites deterioration and dilapidation," Howard said.

A drive through the area reveals signs on homes stating—"for sale, business site, prime site for commercial purposes," vacant spots where homes have been torn down and homes in stages of demolition.

One of the problems associated with the area is that during the demolition process some residents remove scrap materials to their property, creating another unsightly situation in the neighborhood, one official stated.

Depots Predominate

The predominant land uses within this neighborhood are wholesaling and trucking depots concentrated generally in the eastern half of the area and along the railroad tracks on the northern side, the Planning Department noted. Residential uses

are sandwiched between the railroad and the new U.S. Post Office and K mart shopping center. The railroad switching yards are located along the northern boundary of this neighborhood and constitute a major barrier between this neighborhood and downtown development, the Planning Department said.

Streets cross the railroad yard and the barrier constitutes a hazard to pedestrians more than to automobile traffic, the department added in its preliminary survey.

The street pattern with its many angular intersections is not conducive to warehousing development, but is adequate for the residential area it was designed for, Nelson said.

Much of the pavement on the streets in the area is in need of repair and some sections of the streets contain gravel and dust oil, the Public Works Department reported. Most of the street foundations surveyed either met all requirements or were at least standard.

Curbing Needed

At least half of the streets in

the neighborhood have curbs and sidewalks, but 5,670 feet of curbing either needs to be installed or repaired, the Public Works Department estimated.

Trees grow on parking strips along about half the streets surveyed, the department reported. The area for 40 years was placed in an unrestricted zone which allowed all types of uses.

The area was relegated to warehousing, Nelson said. It was on the periphery of the city as late as 1938, but in 1948 when residential development occurred on the bench, this area became "inside" the city.

By 1958, Americana Boulevard was constructed and the River Street area became enclosed by industry. It was not possible for this residential area to be tied in with other living areas and it became isolated, Nelson declared. Revitalization, taking advantage of Ann Morrison Park across the river, is needed for this area and the community will have to make a commitment if this end is to be achieved, Nelson said.

(NEXT: Possible revitalization alternatives). * * *



THE SKELETON is all that remains of parts of the residential area of the River Street neighborhood. Large trees, green and wide park strips, curbs and paved streets are evidences of a vital neighborhood in years gone by. The residential area has been isolated from other single-family dwelling areas and is surrounded by warehouses and other commercial uses.