

MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TO: City Manager

SUBJECT: Alley Vacation Request Between 22nd and 23rd Streets North of 9th Avenue

Date: December 28, 2012

The City has received a request from three residential property owners to vacate the east/west alley between 22nd Street and 23rd Street and between 7th Avenue and 9th Avenue (see attached letter). This gravel right-of-way is signed as 8th Avenue, but the right-of-way is only 15 feet wide and operates as an alley. The letter is signed by three of the four residents adjacent to the subject east/west alley (Jim and Mary Ann Kuehnel, 807 22nd Street, Eric and Roelens, 754 23rd Street, and Karolyn Williams, 816 23rd Street). It cites safety, noise, vehicle speeding and maintenance as reasons for their request to vacate the alley and have the area become private property. There were similar request by residents in 1986 and 2001 that were denied by the City Council.

Analysis of Impact:

Staff contacted the Public Works, Fire and Police Departments for an analysis of the request. At the writing of this report staff has heard back from Police and Fire. Both Department Officials have no objection to the vacation request. Chief Venhuizen also provided a list of police calls for service in the block area since 2009. He indicated in an e-mail that there “were a handful of complaints of reckless driving and traffic stops”, but he could not confirm they were “specific to the alleyway” (see attached e-mail and map).

Staff also sent letters to Mid-American Energy and AT & T Telephone. No comments have been received yet. In the staff report from 2001 it was indicated that Mid-American Energy has residential gas and electric street light facilities within the alley right-of-way that will require an easement for maintenance. The light is still in place and it appears the residential facilities are also.

Staff also contacted 31 property owners along the east/ west alley proposed to be vacated and along the north/south alley that intersects the subject alley and extends from 7th Avenue on the north to 9th Avenue on the south and the properties. Staff has received one letter (see attached letter from Chuck and Diane Oestreich, 816 22nd Street), one e-mail (see attached e-mail from Alan & Brenda Carmen, 741 22nd Street) and two telephone calls objecting to the vacation request. The two telephone calls objecting to the vacation request were received from Ms. Sandy Young, 824 23rd Street and Ms. Sue Gerard, 738 23rd Street. These two area residents also indicate that they want to maintain the convenient mid-block alley access to their residences.

Staff believes that vacation of right-of-way that is used by the public should only be vacated if there is a public benefit and strong support from the neighborhood. The three adjacent property owners have identified their support based on traffic and nuisance problems, but other neighbors object to the request because they use the public right-of-way as a mid-block access (vehicle and pedestrian) to this long city block (nearly 1,000 feet long between 7th and 9th Avenues). These residents believe that closing the alley would result in more traffic and congestion on the north/south alley. Staff agrees and believes that vacating the alley would result in an inconvenience for area residents. Pedestrian traffic through private property would also probably increase if the request were allowed.

Recommendation:

That the request be denied because it would eliminate a mid-block public access for this long block and would be detrimental to the neighborhood.

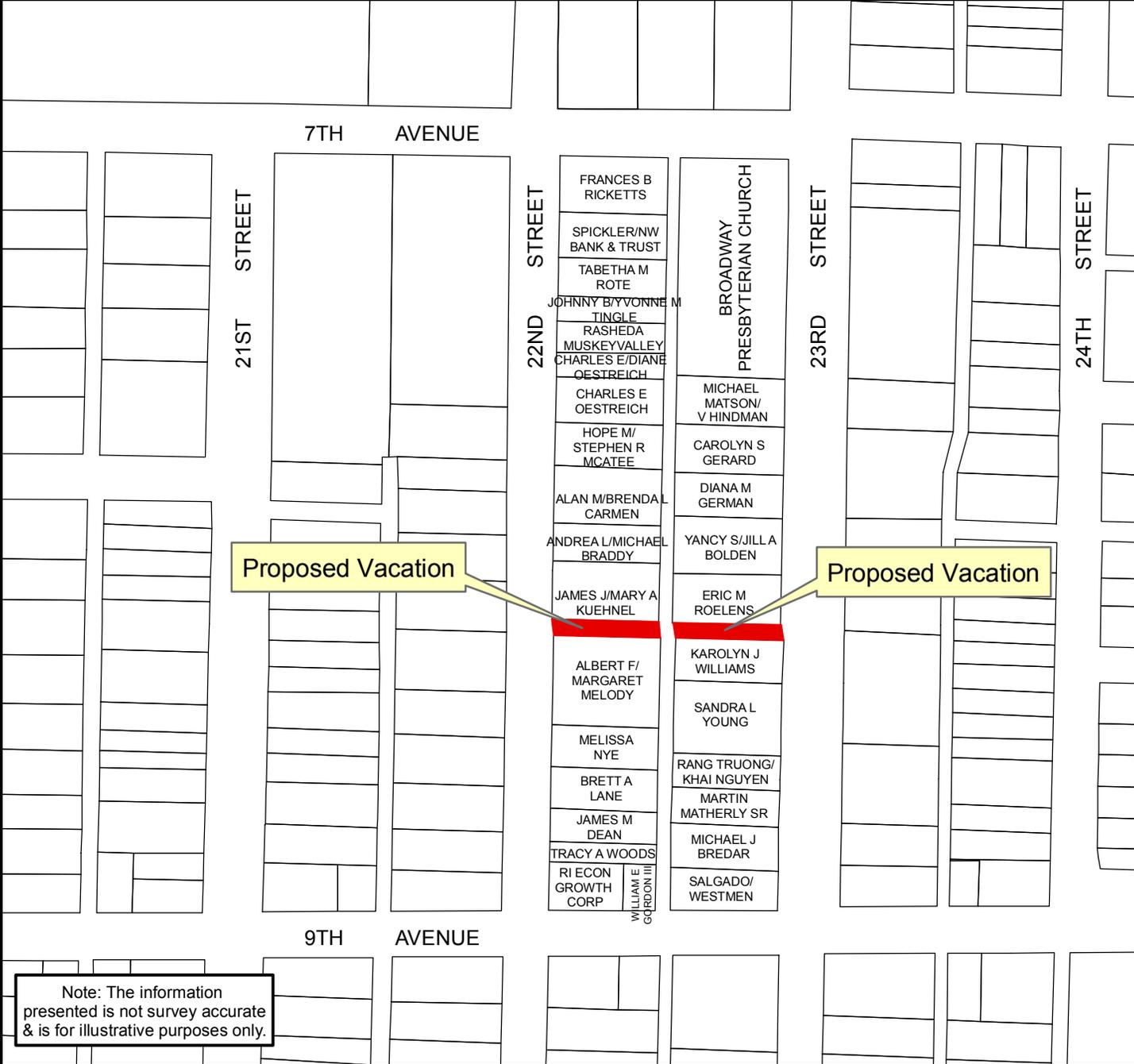
Submitted by: Alan Fries, Urban Planner II

Ben Griffith, Planning and Redevelopment Administrator

Jeff Eder, Community and Economic Development Director

Approved: Thomas Thomas, City Manager

VACATION LOCATION MAP



VACATION LOCATION MAP

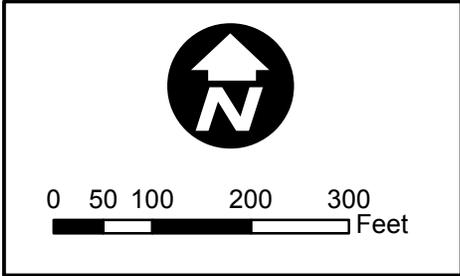
Approx. 8th Ave./22-23 St.

Legend

Subject Property

DR. BY: K. G. D.

APPR. BY: B.G./A.F.



City of Rock Island

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
 Planning and Redevelopment

ROCK ISLAND ILLINOIS

Note: The information presented is not survey accurate & is for illustrative purposes only.

VACATION LOCATION MAP



Note: The information presented is not survey accurate & is for illustrative purposes only.

VACATION LOCATION AERIAL MAP

Approx. 8th Ave./22-23 St.

Legend

 Subject Property

DR. BY: K. G. D.

APPR. BY: B.G./A.F.



0 50 100 200 300 Feet

City of Rock Island

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Planning and Redevelopment





Alan Fries <fries.alan@rigov.org>

Alley Vacation Request

1 message

Jeff VenHuizen <venhuizen.jeff@rigov.org>

Fri, Dec 14, 2012 at 3:13 PM

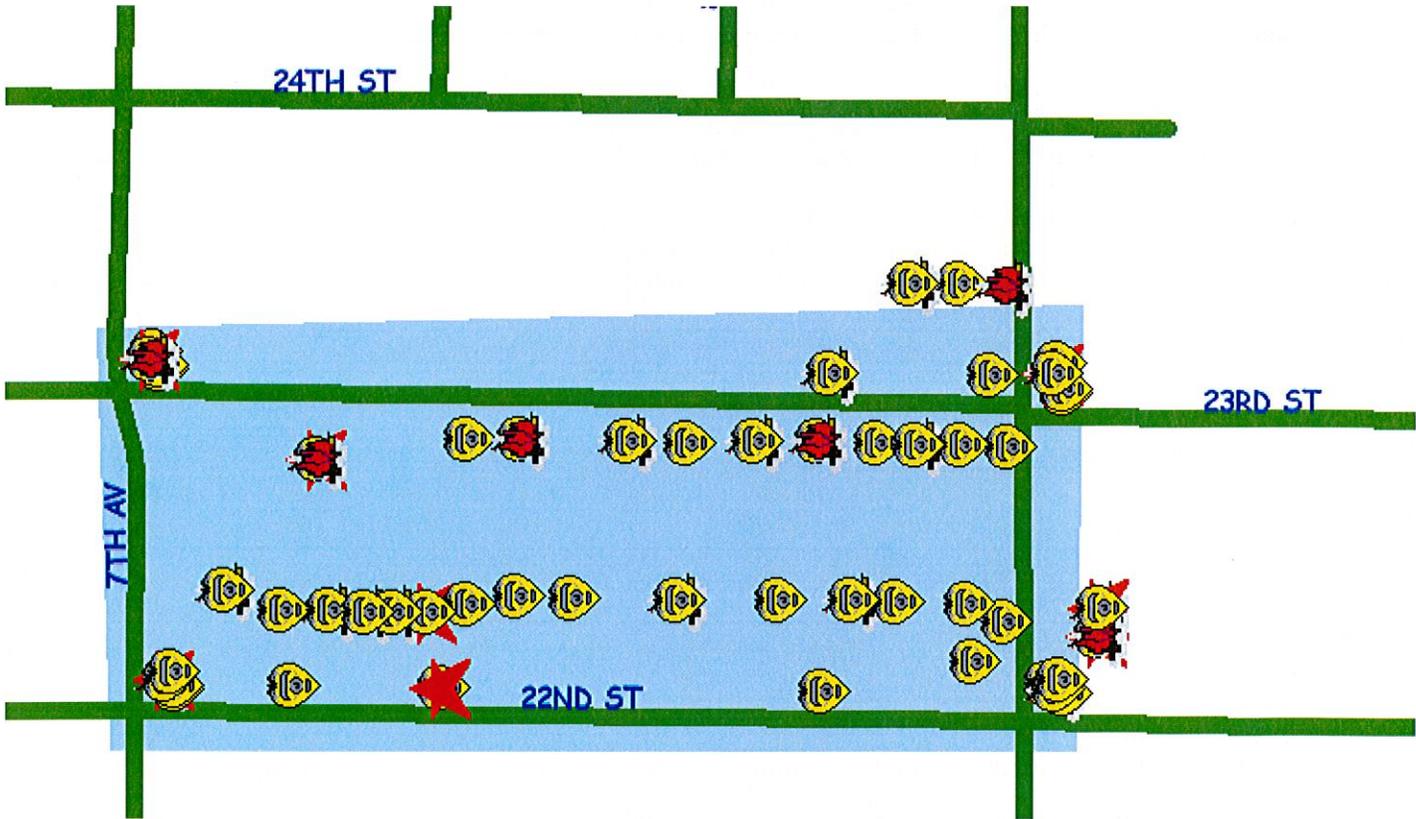
To: Alan Fries <fries.alan@rigov.org>

I will sending over a packet of calls for service from 2009 to present so that you can gauge the types and natures of calls for service. You will see that there are a handful of complaints of reckless driving and traffic stops, but I cannot say that they are specific to the alleyway. Attached is a map of the area searched for calls for service for a three year period.

Typically, if there is a complaint of speeding in a neighborhood, Officers will request that we put out the speed sentry device that covertly monitors speed and vehicle counts so that we can assess the true nature of the problem. If there is a problem, we will then assign radar details as necessary. I am not aware of any specific complaints nor have we ever put out the speed sentry device in that neighborhood or alleyway.

As a side note, I would probably be somewhat reluctant to put that device in an alleyway where it could be easily damaged or stolen. It is more reserved for main thoroughfares where it would not be quite as easy to vandalize. If you need anything else, please let me know.

Jeff



The home owners of
22nd and 23rd Street
At 8th Avenue
Rock Island, IL. 61201

To Whom It May Concern:
City of Rock Island

We would like the City of Rock Island to address the subject of the 8th Avenue alley, between, 22nd and 23rd Street. We the residents of all four corners, agree on looking into the matter of closing or abandoning, the 8th Avenue access.

The neighbors, all of which the alley boarders, their homes, are not happy with the element of people whom use the alley for a short cut. These people are not residents to this block. We are also concerned about the amount of traffic and the speed of such.

Three of the homes, have small children, and four have dogs. At times, these people do not feel save leaving dogs and children unattended, in their own yards. Some of us have almost been hit a couple of times, buy neighbors, who are used to racing around to the back alley. Since there is no stop sign, they do not slow down. Many of the cars using the access are not residents, and are not aware of people coming and going from their yards.

We all have to maintain the area, picking up the garbage left behind. We also mow and cut back weeds. If the alley was abandoned, we could include the area with our own yard maintenance.

The house at 816 23rd, boarders the alley by a couple of feet and the front porch wall is directly on the alley. At all times of the day and night vibrations are felt from vehicles, driving so close to the house. The alley was built for horse and buggies, and small autos, such as a model T. In this day and age so many people drive large trucks and SUV's, clearly not made for this alley.

The traffic noise, wakes up some of the home owners, who work at night, and sleep during the day! Not to mention, small children, napping.

The surface of the alley is medium size gravel, which adds to the noise. In the 8 or 9 years at this location, the city has only applied gravel twice, that we can remember, and one of those times they used, broken concrete pieces. If the alley was abandoned, no maintenance would be required, thus saving the Home owners the aggravation of contacting the city for repairs.

The city does not do snow removal! I have paid to have the alley plowed, mostly because my garage faces this alley, and I can not get my car in and out.

To sum it up, all of the neighbors, who have homes, bordering the 8th Ave. alley; think it to be dangerous, to their families and their property. If you notice, this is the ONLY block in the district that has the open alley on 8th Avenue. If the other streets do not have the access, WE DO NOT NEED THIS ONE!

Jim + Mary Ann Kuehnel
807-22nd St RI.
786-0671

Eric & Linda Bellens.
754 23rd St RI
786-3386

Karolyn Williams
816-23rd St - 709-235-0963

816 22nd Street
Rock Island IL 61201
December 18, 2012

To:
Planning & Redevelopment: Alan Fries, Ben Griffith
RIFD Chief James Fobert
RIPD Chief Jeffrey VenHuizen
Alderman Jason Jones

We are very opposed to the requested closing of the east-west alley between 22nd 23rd Streets at approximately 8th Avenue for several reasons.

This alley is important for neighborhood safety because there is a fire hydrant at each end of the alley. When there was a fire on 23rd Street circa 1985, RIFD extended fire hoses down the alley from the hydrant on 22nd Street. This easy access would also be of great benefit if there was a fire on 22nd Street, where, in addition to the alley hydrant, the next closest hydrant to many homes is on the other side of 9th Avenue. If either of the hydrants at the alley exits were unavailable for some reason (blockage, snow, etc.), at least one of the hydrants along with hoses through the alley could provide water for fire suppression.

A second safety factor to consider in keeping this alley open is for police protection. The alley gives our police maneuverability that could mean increased response time in an emergency. We have observed squad cars using the alley.

A third factor is the convenience of this alley for many of us. It is an important neighborhood link that provides pedestrian and vehicle connectivity and cohesiveness to 22nd and 23rd Streets. Many of us – children and adults – have friends on the “other” of the two streets and this alley provides easy access. This is especially important for young folks because the sidewalks at the far stretches of 7th and 9th Avenues are very close to the street with a minimal boulevard. Another reason is that many residents on these two streets use the alley car turn-around so they can end up in the right direction when parking in front of their house.

We live at the 22nd Street end of the alley and observe the alley and its traffic on an ongoing basis. We have observed no overall increase in traffic, either pedestrian or vehicle, over the past five decades. There may have been a slight increase this year when 24th Street was closed, and especially when part of 7th Avenue was also closed briefly during the Lincoln demolition. However we believe that it is beneficial to have such outlet options as this and other alleys provide. Nearly everyone who uses this alley is a local resident.

The block between 7th and 9th Avenues is exceptionally long and offers no outlet other than on busy streets with sidewalks close to the street. That alone is enough to argue for alley retention. The fact that the alley is gravel is not a basis to close it – there are other gravel alleys in the city. If gravel is an issue, we have no objection to paving this alley.

In conclusion, the alley in question is an important factor in both fire and police protection, and is a safe and useful neighborhood amenity. It was there 100 years before any of the adjacent current owners, so its use is not a surprise.

This alley is much too important to be privatized.

Sincerely,
Chuck and Diane Oestreich

Chuck Oestreich
Diane Oestreich



8th Avenue Vacation Request

1 message

abcarmen@mchsi.com <abcarmen@mchsi.com>

Wed, Jan 2, 2013 at 12:02 AM

To: Alan Fries <fries.alan@rigov.org>

Alan - First, thanks for the opportunity to comment on the proposed vacation of 8th Avenue between 22nd and 23rd Streets and also to incorporate this email into the staff report and recommendation to the City Council.

Second, my wife, Brenda, and I have lived at 741 22nd Street for nearly 30 years and recall at least two prior requests to vacate the same right-of-way. In both of these instances, I was compelled to declare a conflict of interest and recuse myself from participating in the staff recommendation or City Council discussion due to my position as Planning and Redevelopment Administrator and as an affected property owner. Given my recent retirement, that is no longer the case.

We feel strongly that the requested vacation benefits a few property owners to the detriment of many others (about 25) on the remainder of this very long block. There are very good reasons that this "avenue," that functions as a cross alley, was made part of the original subdivision in the 19th Century. They include:

- Providing a safe alternate outlet for traffic as there is no other cross avenue between 7th and 9th Avenues;
- Ease of pedestrian and vehicular access to either 22nd or 23rd Streets;
- Promoting a walkable and accessible neighborhood
- Promoting public safety - there is a fire hydrant near 8th Avenue on 22nd Street that has been used several times. The Fire DEpartment has used 8th Avenue to run hose and personnel to respond to emergency situations.

The intersection of the north/south alley with the east/west alley, by its very nature, promotes traffic safety and traffic calming given the limited site distances. People are naturally careful approaching this intersection. We know of no crashes that have occurred there.

If the alley vacation request were approved, the adjoining property owners could block off the current roght-of-way and eliminate public access and compromise public safety. In our minds, there is only a private and limited benefit, with no compelling public benefit to vacate 8th Avenue/alley.

Please share this information with the City Council. I intend to be at the January 7th meeting should the Council have any questions.

Should you have any questions, I can be reached at 309/373-1422 or you can respond to this email.

Respectfully,

Alan

Alan and Brenda Carmen

741 22nd Street