

DRAFT

VISION

The Highway 53 Corridor through North La Crosse will become a more attractive place to live, conduct business and foster investments, while facilitating the efficient movement of citizens, visitors, and commerce within and through the City, utilizing a balanced approach of redevelopment, land use, transportation, and preservation policies.

URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Principle #1: Develop a livable design

- Design the City for people; an environment designed to accommodate the pedestrian heightens human experience and sense of place.
- Create a balanced circulation system that accommodates mobility choice.
- Ensure linkages and prioritize walking as the preferred mode of travel for trips beginning in the corridor and nearby neighborhoods, and as a defining component of well-being and a healthy quality of life.
- Create a public realm that is well connected and enclosed by attractive building frontages. The public realm should be attractive, safe, comfortable, well-maintained, welcoming and accessible to everyone.

Principle #2: Strive for land use diversity

- Encourage a compatible mix of uses at the neighborhood scale and a cohesive architectural style within the public realm and various context areas.
- Enhance social interactions by bring people together with activities and a mix of self-supporting uses that contributes to unique urban experiences.

Principle #3: Promote neighborhood compatibility and character

- Protect and enhance the existing neighborhood character and views to the black river that give the corridor a sense of identity. Reinforce this character to create a memorable gateway to the City.
- Relate new developments to the physical scale and character and ensure compatibility with the pattern of its surrounding context.
- Focus energy and resources on conserving, enhancing, and creating strong vibrant neighborhoods.
- Create a corridor that residents and visitors can understand and easily navigate. Enhance the sense of arrival by creating memorable landmarks and sense of place.

Principle #4: Create a sustainable and resilient corridor

- Create a social, economic and environmentally sustainable corridor for the future.
- Conserve and enhance the health of natural systems and areas of environmental significance.
- Create a corridor that is flexible and can adapt to change to remain vibrant over time.
- Consider the impacts of current floodplain policies, and future changes in every redevelopment decision within the corridor and surrounding floodplain.

GOALS + OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Strive for continued revitalization of the Highway 53 Corridor as a viable area for businesses and people to locate within and excel.

Objectives

- Capitalize on development and redevelopment opportunities associated with the revitalization of the corridor.
- Develop smaller scale, neighborhood retail and office uses as appropriate to provide neighborhood residents with necessary services.
- Encourage the reuse or redevelopment of those properties that, by virtue of their location, condition, or value, no longer function at their highest potential economic use.
- Encourage partnerships among the property owners, the private sector, and the public sector in order to implement proposed redevelopment projects that will achieve public goals.
- Facilitate redevelopment transitions by developing appropriate relocation plans sensitive to the needs of those whose properties will undergo reuse activities.
- Define opportunities for parcel consolidation to allow for larger mixed-use developments and shared access.
- Work creatively to provide incentives for private sector participation in redevelopment projects and programs.
- Initiate programs to improve and strengthen existing businesses, including marketing and promotion, small business loans and other financial incentives.
- Improve the investment image of the Highway 53 Corridor and utilize economic incentives to stimulate private investment.
- Make the Highway 53 Corridor competitive with other major activity centers in the region.
- Work closely with area businesses, merchants' associations, and the Chamber of Commerce to address the needs of existing businesses through the redevelopment process.
- Strive for resiliency and long-term solutions to floodplain issues when preservation, reuse and redevelopment occurs.
- Provide opportunities for people to live and work in the corridor and north side neighborhoods at any stage of their life through a mix of housing, transportation, employment, service and recreation options.

Goal 2: Preserve, protect and enhance the character of the corridor, property values and the economic viability along the corridor by establishing a land use pattern that reinforces Highway 53 as a complete community.

Objectives

- Guide new development in a manner that conserves natural features and environmentally sensitive areas and meets the long-term needs of the community.
- Develop land uses and patterns that create and strengthen “pulse” nodes and activity centers. Concentrate development at key “pulse” nodes along the corridor to create mixed-use nodes with land densities and intensities sufficient to support rapid, regional and local transit.
- Effectively use underdeveloped land along the Highway 53 Corridor and encourage mixed-use development at an appropriate scale.
- Improve quality of life along Highway 53 while protecting its adjacent neighborhoods and districts. Increase the attractiveness and stability of the residential areas by facilitating new commercial and residential development.
- Ensure appropriate and orderly transitions among differing land uses and intensities of development through the use of land use buffering strategies.
- Foster the creation of new housing of varying types and densities along the corridor to foster mixed-use walkable developments.
- Encourage land use patterns along the Highway 53 Corridor that result in a more environmentally sustainable and resilient community.
- Work with existing property owners to replace dilapidated, nonconforming structures through property assembly to enable development of higher and better uses at appropriate locations.
- Identify preservation, reuse, and redevelopment strategies that attempt to maximize resiliency and return on investment while being sensitive to current users of the space.
- Eliminate incompatible land uses that detract from the viable development of the corridor and that threaten the security or safety of the community, or otherwise undermine property values and/or deter investment.
- Prohibit undesirable uses from locating in the project area that result in negative adverse impacts upon established businesses or residential properties, or the community.
- Preserve, protect, and enhance existing property values and investment along the corridor.
- Attract pedestrian-oriented land uses such as restaurants, cafes, markets and neighborhood services. Support existing auto-oriented uses that provide valuable services to our community.
- Consider what mechanisms and strategies are needed to best implement the above objectives.

Goal 3: Improve mobility, accessibility, connectivity, sustainability and safety for all modes of transportation along the Highway 53 Corridor.

Objectives:

- Seek opportunities to encourage and facilitate the expansion of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to and along Highway 53. Where applicable, pedestrian/bicycle safety features will be integrated into transportation and land use improvements as part of applying the City's green complete streets policy.
- Improve Highway 53 to be a safer place for all pedestrians (including seniors, school children, and the disabled), bicyclists, transit riders, buses, autos, and trucks. This should include traffic calming techniques to encourage traffic to drive at safe speeds.
- Make Highway 53 safer and more convenient for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross by improving intersections and possibly adding additional mid-block crossings.
- Within and beyond the Highway 53 Corridor, strive to provide opportunities to support active living and healthy lifestyle activities such as connecting to existing local and regional path and trail systems.
- Create a streetscape that complements community character. Redesign the public realm along Highway 53 with a character and function that is more directly related to the existing and desired future character and function of the community along it.
- Reduce the number of potential conflict points along the corridor through examining the use of raised medians, shared driveways, frontage roads and/or rear access drives, and connected parking facilities.
- Pursue strategies to increase transit ridership and enhance efficiency.
- Improve sidewalks with amenities that encourage more walking.
- Improve connections and improve wayfinding and legibility to key destinations like Black River Beach Neighborhood Center, existing schools and Downtown.
- Consider how the Black River can be improved and better utilized as a transportation element in the corridor for commerce, recreation, and pleasure.

Goal 4: Enhance the visual character and identity of the Highway 53 Corridor and reinforce as a gateway to the City of La Crosse

Objectives:

- Preserve and enhance the quality of air, water, sensitive species habitat, and other natural resources along the Highway 53 Corridor to promote its long-term sustainability and that of the north La Crosse neighborhoods.
- Establish an informational and wayfinding system of signage that contributes to the overall appearance and consistency of the corridor.
- Encourage the removal of blight in the area caused by vacancies or inappropriate land use by appropriately directing reinvestment to the corridor.
- Create an aesthetically attractive corridor that projects a positive image of La Crosse.
- Preserve the existing community fabric along Highway 53 Corridor and enhance community pride.

- Improve the aesthetic quality of street design to improve the quality and condition of streetscape elements (lighting, benches, bus stops, etc.) and sidewalks. Public art and new landscaping must also contribute to this objective.
- Promote the installation of stormwater management BMP strategies in the area to improve water quality, through the use of such innovative techniques as rain gardens, vegetated bioswales, or other non-traditional detention strategies, subject to regulatory approval.
- Improve and diversify landscaping and tree canopy along the corridor with new trees that offer biodiversity and visual interest. Enhance corridor landscaping and optimize opportunities for stormwater infiltration and capture.
- Promote the rich and varied character of the Highway 53 Corridor to encourage a strong, local sense of place and attract visitation by those who currently only use it as a thoroughfare.

DESIGN CONCEPT

The pulse nodes concept serves as the underlying guideline of the redevelopment plan for the entire Highway 53 Corridor and can be envisioned as a string of high energy mixed-use and commercial areas that serve the neighborhoods and broader community. Less intense land uses and open space are located between, and provide a buffer and quieter amenities and living spaces. They are often identified based on the historic and existing patterns of the corridor and include areas around major street intersections (list intersections) and areas with great redevelopment and transit-oriented development potential (list key redevelopment areas).

The streetscape and the physical thoroughfare itself serve to reinforce and support the connection between the pulse nodes. The pulse node concept seeks to replace the present fragmented commercial and residential frontage with a series of concentrated mixed-use and commercial activity nodes. These nodes will be linked by a continuous transportation corridor with improved streetscape and residential uses along it. The different levels of activity nodes will promote pedestrian activity and business vitality along the corridor. They will also create a rhythm of development along the corridor, which helps to segment the linear corridor into distinct areas; each of these areas has the potential to develop its own sense of place.