

## Meeting Minutes

By: John Slack	Date:	September 25, 2016
Meeting Date: September 7, 2016	Project Name:	City of La Crosse Highway 53 Corridor Study
Meeting Time: 10:00-5:00	Project Number:	
Meeting Location: City of La Crosse	Attendees:	
Next Meeting Date: TBD	Cc:	

### Discussion

Item No.	Description	Responsibility	Status
1	Meeting minutes from Steering Committee Kick-off	JS	Complete

### Exercise 1 – Brain writing the Opportunities and Threats

For this exercise we will ask each participant to identify the opportunities and threats for the project.

- Please identify the top ten opportunities along the Highway 53 corridor
- Please identify the top ten threats along the Highway 53 corridor
- Prioritization – Place five dots next to the most important opportunities and threats along the corridor.

### Summary of Opportunities

- (5)- Riverside north redevelopment as a linkage between downtown, Black River and Northside neighborhoods
- (4)- improve and grow retail in old town/Uptown
- (4)-more public access to the water from the corridor and neighborhoods (mentioned three other times)
- (3)- Riverside north
- (3)- commuter traffic
- (2)- Flood plain issues
- (2)- Engagement of local business and developers

*The foregoing constitutes our understanding of matters discussed and conclusions reached. Other participants are requested to review these items and advise the originator in writing of any errors or omissions.*

- (2)- locate welcome center at Highway 3 exit
- (2)- Caledonia Street, Copeland Park, Black River Beach is best land with commercial water-use connection
- (1)- underutilized mix of land uses at key locations (Exit 3 and Bridgeview Plaza) (mention two other times)
- (1)- need for major bike and pedestrian routes and facilities – enhance connections
- (1)- the river and the great river road
- (1)- revitalize N. La Crosse economy
- (1)- exit 3 WisDOT project
- (1)- upgrade use property both residential and commercial
- (1)- address flood issues
- (1)- increase ease of multi-modal use .....bikes, pedestrians, cars and trucks
- (1)- Tifs
- (1)- Riverfront property develop land for housing
- (1)- transportation
- (1)- Copeland park Brand Northside neighborhoods
- Historic area
- Riverfront residential
- Create a brand for this City entrance
- Improve Copeland park
- Bring together north and south La Crosse as one CITY
- Unite businesses, residents, and the community around a shared vision
- Meet needs based on how people want to engage with the north-side.....outdoor restaurants, grocery store. Etc.
- Property value opportunities
- Enhance River along Rose Street – clear understory brush
- Bridgewater Plaza – build new
- Improve landscape
- Clear junk cars
- Move industrial businesses
- Paint and fix-up
- Create destinations where people want to go
- Fix limitations (floodplain)
- Shift in desire to move back to “the City”
- Commercial nodes – Rose/George/Bridgeview plaza – Gillette/Rose – Old Towne/Uptown – Copeland Park – Riverside North – Three Rivers Plaza
- Create sense of place for the north side
- Create a better use for the area north of Kwik Trip and the interstate between George Street and I-90
- Enhance entrance to City (more inviting)
- Use of the water/River
- Walk-bike friendly

- Opportunity for growth
- Growth on the north-side
- Input for citizens
- Make citizens feel as they are part of the plan
- Industry
- Depot
- Shift to bike friendly
- Development possibilities
- New school
- City willing to invest
- Increase economic vitality
- Increase land values
- Increase visitor experience
- Unify beauty of the area
- Re-purpose existing buildings
- Identify hidden strengths and capitalize on them

#### Summary of Threats

- (8)- flood issues (mentioned six times)
- (6)- apathy or disillusionment of merchants
- (5) – lack of balance between regional traffic and neighborhood livability
- (4)- decreasing property investment
- (3)- widely varied zoning
- (2)- Loss of businesses (mentioned three other times)
- (2)- Planning needs of developers
- (2)- community push back
- (2)- Crime and drugs
- (1)- Dangerous bike and ped conditions
- (1)- serves as a barrier
- (1)- brownfields and environmental issues
- (1)- high cost of demolition to clear land Economic viability of plans
- (1)- Underutilized use at Hwy exit 3
- (1)- Scared of change
- (1)- What's best for the future
- (1)-Loss of tax base
- (1)- Resident moving if we do not improve housing stock
- (1)- Properties that are maxed out for improvements
  - – warehouse buildings along the corridor
- City Council support for zoning changes
- Changes to traffic patterns
- Can impact other areas

- Doing nothing
- Not funding a balance over the road serving multiple purposes
- Continuing to use the road as a thruway between I-90 and Downtown
- Decreasing home ownership
- Not accommodating for nature
- Funding gaps when Federal and State funds are used
- Lack of standards
- Poor mix of uses
- Few reasons to stop
- Old housing stock
- WisDOT no help
- Fill needed
- Weak neighborhood association
- Lack of food options
- Loss of water/ river use (mentioned one other time)
- More traffic (mentioned one other time)
- Citizens not feeling we did the right thing
- Not buying into plan (mentioned two other times)
- Loss of tourism – image/ease of use
- Investment in risky locations
- Old houses along the route
- Alienation of different sectors of business
- Speed of traffic
- Division of the City or impression of division
- Split Highway from Clinton to Monitor

## Exercise 2 – Visioning

Please answer the following questions. We will ask for participants to share their answers with the group. We will also collect the written responses to document the exercise.

**Question 1: What is unique about the Highway 53 corridor and what aspects of the corridor should be enhanced and/or maintained?**

### Question 1 Responses

- Use of river. Look at the option of Bridgeview plaza and north of Kwik Trip. Hold owner accountable.
- River
  - View shed
  - Large local and commuter consumer base

- Exit 3 WIS Dot project
- Uptown!
- Approximately 100 acres of underutilized property
- Bike/ped/walk/paddle/motor boat/drive – multi-modal travel
- Highway 53 is the Great River Road – a national scenic byway. It also includes a vibrant mix of commercial, industrial, residential and recreational uses – with the historic northside “downtown” known as Old Towne North or Uptown.
- Major entrance to La Crosse. Develop the land that is not being used. Important opportunity because of the River and DOT project with sidewalks and bike trails
- enhance gateway,
  - grow economic areas,
  - create improved housing,
  - enhance traffic flow and incorporate bike lanes,
  - and create a visitor destination at Eagle watch with local information available
- The highway 53 corridor is the major gateway to the center of the City. It all needs to be enhanced and is vital to the continued success of the Downtown and offers the opportunity to brand and strengthen the neighborhoods of North La Crosse.
  - Add development, housing, access to the waterfront and branded events for the uptown area.
  - We are all stronger together when we are together.

**Question 2: What is problematic along the corridor and needs improvement?**

- there are too many underutilized uses and buildings/structures that are in poor condition. And public access to the river is blocked in some locations, preventing full enjoyment and recreational opportunities.
- Floodplain. Hold owner accountable for property.
- Run down properties
  - Absentee or un-interested property owners
  - Zoning continuity
  - Perception of the corridor/neighborhoods
  - Flood plain
  - Need to open up river and view shed – more accessible
- Need for new businesses. Need to remove or move auto salvage business.
- areas of blight
  - traffic flow
  - bike lanes
  - boat docks for visitors
- Many problems with mixed-use, run down housing, businesses in need of support.

- Need of a positive identity for this side of the City.
- Bridging the gap and image of Division.
- Split highway from Clinton to Monitor.
- Opening area up and over to Uptown area.

**Question 3: What would substantial positive change (short term implementation or improvements) look like in five years along the Highway 53 corridor?**

- Making entry way into the City more inviting and beautifying the area. Why giving the public a say in the project?
- Large land assemblage and redevelopment
  - River “parkway”
  - Bridgeview plaza – redo or demolish and re-build
  - Up Towne – vibrant and bustling
  - Copeland Park – redo and beautiful
  - Substantial residential and commercial redevelopment in highly visible places
  - Change public perception of the corridor
- Investments in removing homes and some businesses that are in the flood plain and build new. This will add to the tax base.
- if flood issues were addressed
  - improved bus and residential will create a higher tax base and increase area vitality
- Removal of warehouse building
  - New sites being developed
  - New welcoming branded area near Exit 3
  - Use of River and upgraded look to Bridgeview Plaza
  - Northside farmers market
  - Development started in Riverside North
  - New branded image to Uptown
  - Improved pathways to Uptown
- a couple of short-term changes would be significant including the development of a recreational trail/access along the entire river front as well as a major redevelopment of the Bridgeview Plaza/George/West George area.

**Question 4: If a robust and realistic plan for the corridor was implemented, what would the corridor look like in 20 years?**

- Growth in both the public and private sector. A destination for families and visitors.

- A fully redeveloped area with bustling residential, commercial river access, multi-modal transportation, with social/economic and personnel prosperity.
- Hopefully in 20 years there will be new shops and restaurants and housing that will be a must stop place for community and visitors
- A mix of bus, residential and outdoor enhanced areas for all to enjoy.
  - creating strategic community value
- New urban living along the River or within walking distance
  - New hotels and tourism
  - All hotels improved
  - River walk along the River
  - Riverside North realized
  - Access from River to Downtown
  - Riverside North and black beach area
  - Full utilization of the River
  - Improved neighborhood
  - A sense of Northside pride and image
- changes in Q3 plus significant new development on the Riverside North site, enhanced neighborhood serving commercial areas and many opportunities for connections to the water and recreation.

**Question 5: What one thing would you change about the Highway 53 corridor?**

- Removal of undesirable building along the corridor
  - Warehouses, trailer park
  - Houses that need to be revitalized to open up these properties to new development.
- hard to pick one thing, but Bridgeview Plaza could be a huge key project for stakeholders and be a great destination stop
- Floodplain
- Everything! This is a true opportunity that may never happen again. We have the chance and responsibility of making a historic change to the City of La Crosse.
- Image
- reorient this highway into an urban street with multiple access points for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians – enhance the connections to the neighborhood streets and change the scale to a pedestrian focus.

**Corridor Tour Comments**

- Stop 1

- great tax base with condos/waterfront
- move heavy industrial
- define opportunities for enhanced connections to water's edge – remove boat houses
- great homes
- hodge-podge zoning
- need more coordinated landuse
  
- Stop 2
  - Develop area behind Walgreens
  - Underutilized commercial
  - Reinhart property
  - Gateway to the community....need to develop as such
  - Circulation and access in the area will be changing based on HWY 53 interchange work.
  
- Stop 3
  - Opportunity to improve Bridgewater plaza
  - Utilize TIF
  - Area is an eye sore
  - This area could be a great mixed-use district with stronger connections to the River
  - Trails along the River? Access to and/or views of River
  - Park on SE side of plaza is underutilized and could be improved
  - Some areas lack sidewalks
  
- Stop 4
  - Good steward
  - Major improvement with new building
  - Ick!
  - This area needs help. Drive by area
  - Diverse mix of landuses that is not coordinated and creates a negative image for the City



- Enhance connections to the corridor from the neighborhoods
  - Street transitions from rural divided highway to urban five lane section
  
- Stop 5
  - Need to be cleaned up
  - Prune trees
  - Visually unappealing but highly utilized (only refrigerated storage in La Crosse)
  - Major redevelopment opportunity
  - Poorly defined public realm- not walkable
  
- Stop 6
  - Need lighting at the school and Muse theater
  - Avon street
  - Neutral...it is what it is
  - Understanding connections from the neighborhood will be important
  
- Stop 7
  - Good start but need improved businesses
  - Character worth capitalizing on
  - Difficulty crossing highway
  - Need stronger connections and wayfinding to the corridor
  - ADA issues with some curb ramps (likely true throughout corridor)
  - Commercial node with little bicycle parking
  
- Stop 8
  - Build new shelter
  - Asset worth maximizing destination
  - Community asset...need to enhance image, connections and Riverfront access
  
- Stop 9

- Serves its purpose
  - Could be expensive to move
  - How do we work with this area to improve character and expand business opportunities?
  - Enhance entry into this area from Hwy 53
- Stop 10
  - Expensive to relocate
  - Brick portion of property has redevelopment opportunity – brew pub proposal contingent on tax credits
- Stop 11
  - Good access to trails
  - Encourages car use
  - Asset
  - Good example of how things could work
  - Better development style than much of the corridor, but could still be improved
- Stop 12
  - Ick
  - Highly underutilized
  - No sense of destination
  - Opportunity area for redevelopment...near water with strong connections
  - A lot of properties in flood plain, which makes them expensive to redevelop
- Stop 13
  - Depot is a gem
  - Opportunities for supportive housing
  - Need sense of destination
  - Could be good node with a few more active uses

- Stop 14
  - Pulse node intersection
  - City-owned historic building – actively trying to get it registered in order to access tax credits