



WEST MAIN STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City of Sun Prairie

Mayor Joe Chase

Common Council

John Bogle

Michael Bruhn

Bill Clausius

Jonathan J. Freund

Hariah H. Hutkowski

Karen Riggi

Richard Wanless

Zach Weber (President)

Planning & Economic Development Department

Scott Kugler, Director

Paul Larson

Beth Krebs

Regina Butler

Project Steering Committees

Steve Bartlett

Robert Bloom

Mary Kay Brooks

Peter Curran

Reed Ellingson

Tom Hanley

Matt Harms

Tom Hebl

Rachael Johnson

Dan McIlroy

Robert Meyer

Nate Pederson

Joe Powelka

Jaquie Rice

Chris Schultz

Kristi Tuschen

Knute Viland

Stan Wagner

Bill Wambach

Peggy Weber

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1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The City of Sun Prairie is situated in one of the fastest growing areas of Wisconsin. Sun Prairie has attracted a substantial amount of residential growth in recent years, with a noticeable increase since the late 1990s. These trends are expected to continue as long as economic conditions continue to be favorable for residential growth. The City is also starting to see more interest from commercial and office developers mainly fueled by growth in the community and the pending construction of a new interchange within the Westside Neighborhood along Highway 151 at County Trunk Highway C and Reiner Road.

The subject of this study is the West Main Street Corridor, which is a major thoroughfare extending from U.S. Highway 151 to North Street, a distance of approximately 1.75

miles (fig. 1.1). The West Main Street Corridor has historically served as the primary entryway into Sun Prairie from Highway 151. It consists of primarily older commercial

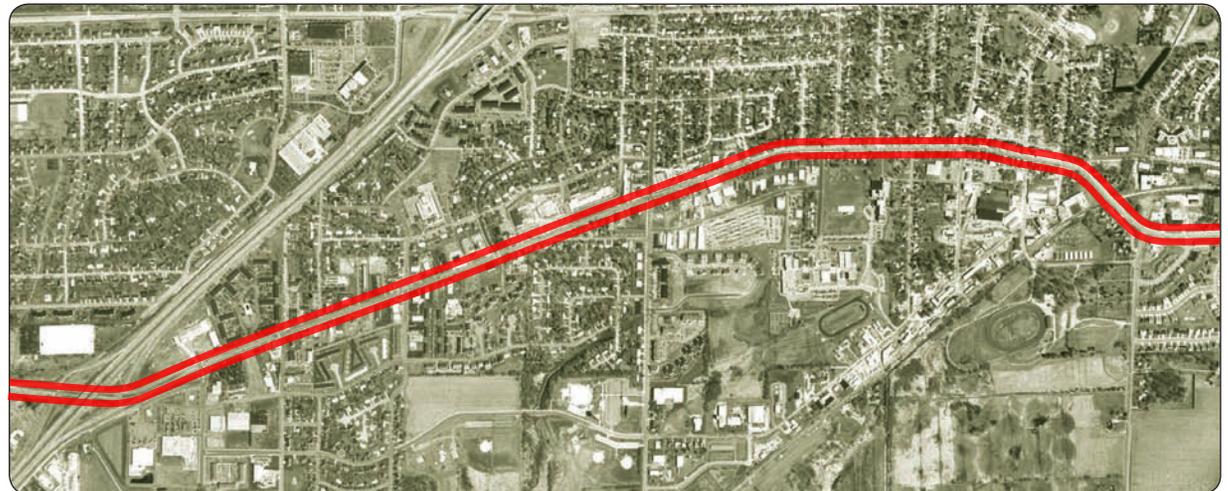


fig. 1.1 West Main Street Corridor

strip development with some large format retail near the Highway 151 and West Main Street interchange. The character of the corridor makes several transitions. The west end of the corridor, near the Highway 151 interchange, includes many large format retail stores. The central area includes businesses that typically attract customers traveling by car, such as retail shops, offices, professional services, and restaurants. The east end is a more residential and pedestrian-oriented composition near the downtown. The majority of commercial uses along the corridor reflect automobile and thoroughfare-oriented development based upon suburban development standards. However there have been some recent redevelopments approved or occurring along the corridor that reflect a more urban development standard.

The City is pursuing an aggressive downtown redevelopment program immediately east of the study area, and is anticipating substantial growth in retail, office and residential use within its Westside Neighborhood (immediately west of the study area) in the coming years. Given the investment in these adjacent areas, there is concern about the future of the aging commercial “strip”

that lies between. The West Main Street Corridor also faces challenges as a result of increasing traffic volumes due to growth in the community, limited opportunities for right-of-way expansion, a plethora of existing non-conforming development sites, and a past history of poor access management standards in place over the period that the strip developed. This project is about developing a vision for the future of this corridor and a plan with implementation strategies to help achieve that vision.

In Summer of 2005, the City of Sun Prairie engaged the services of Planning and Design Institute, Inc. (PDI) of Milwaukee, WI to prepare a plan for the Corridor. This

document both describes the components of the plan and reviews the public participation process by which the team received input from the citizens of Sun Prairie.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA

The West Main Street Corridor is a complex 1.75 mile stretch of various uses and forms of development. As a regionally-significant corridor, West Main Street will fulfill a crucial role as a connector between areas of new mixed-use development on the westside and the revitalized downtown core.

While the intent of the plan is to create a singular image and integrated plan for the Corridor, it was recognized early in the



fig. 1.2 Planning study areas of the West Main Street Corridor



fig. 1.3 Existing corridor character

planning process that three distinct identity areas could be identified (fig. 1.2). Each zone has its own unique set of issues, challenges, and opportunities. Due to this, the early planning process focused on each of the three areas individually while still maintaining a holistic approach to the corridor. To facilitate public participation, three separate steering committees were established for each of the study areas to steward planning efforts. The three study areas are West, Central, and East, and are briefly described below. The study areas are more fully outlined in the analysis section, Chapter 4.

West Study Area

The West study area lies between the Highway 151 interchange and Clarmar Drive. This zone is important in that it contains several large-scale businesses, is a traffic entry point

into the City from Highway 151, and offers the first impression to visitors of the City.

Central Study Area

The Central study area comprises an area that stretches from Clarmar Drive eastward to Bird Street. This is a diverse zone, with a mix of business types, architectural styles, and site layouts. The zone primarily consists of older commercial strip development with services dependent on customers traveling by car.

East Study Area

The East study area is located between Bird Street and South Street and acts as a transitional area which shares some characteristics with the downtown. Residential uses mingle with commercial parcels, with some businesses utilizing former residential structures.

Four Distinct Districts

The thorough work of the steering committees led to the project area ultimately being divided into four distinct districts for the Regulating Plan presented in Chapter 7 of this document. The districts include the Highway Development District, the Mixed-Use Arterial District, the Mixed-Use Main Street District, and the

Residential Main Street District. For each of these districts, the Regulating Plan for the West Main Street Corridor describes allowable uses, circulation, parking, landscape, and building and scale.

1.3 SUMMARY OF PROJECT SCOPE

The project was organized into several main components. A public input process paralleled plan development to allow public oversight to occur at each stage of the process.

Collect and Analyze Background Data

The planning effort began with the preparation of a project base map to document all existing conditions along the corridor. Site visits were conducted to observe activity usage, traffic



fig. 1.4 Existing corridor character

behavior, and physical conditions. Previous and related studies and plans were collected and analyzed to determine the impact of the plans' recommendations on the West Main Street Corridor. Meetings were also held with consulting engineers to view preliminary plans for roadway expansion.

Identify and Analyze Key Issues and Opportunities

A set of key issues was identified to guide the planning process after a thorough review of background material, a listening session with the public, and meetings with stakeholders. Each study area was analyzed to note existing and potential strengths and weaknesses in terms of social and economic activity, vehicular access and parking, pedestrian access, physical form and character, and landscape/streetscape character.

Prepare Corridor Concept Plans

Concept plans were prepared for each of the three study areas of the corridor based upon the identification of "properties susceptible to change." A proposal and road design concept was then developed. The corridor concepts were presented to the public for review.

Prepare Corridor Master Plan

After receiving input, the planners revised the concepts to create a master plan illustration describing the physical manifestation of potential planning outcomes. In addition, a regulating plan was prepared to specifically guide the development process.

Implementation Plan and Action Steps

A list of key activities was created along with a discussion of economic development tools for utilization in implementing the corridor vision. All steps were summarized into a master plan document for official review.

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PREVIOUS AND CURRENT RELATED PLANS

2.1 PRIOR PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Sun Prairie has engaged in an ambitious planning process over the past decade to promote orderly development within the City. Several of these plans directly or indirectly impact the future condition of the West Main Street Corridor. Following is a summary of four completed or on-going planning efforts and how each plan affects the West Main Street Corridor. After each existing plan, an italicized statement follows which describes how the West Main Street Corridor Plan interfaces with the existing plan. The plans include *City of Sun Prairie Master Plan 2020* (October 10, 2000), *The Westside Neighborhood Plan: Land Use and Transportation Study* (February 4, 2004), *City*

of Sun Prairie Business Revitalization Plan (March 13, 2001), and *Downtown Phase II Master Plan* (December 21, 2004).

City of Sun Prairie Master Plan 2020

This plan identifies and addresses issues associated with urban growth and development in the City and its environs. The plan includes policies for guiding the physical development of the City, focusing on land use, transportation, community facilities, urban services, community image, and parks and open space.

The following list and comments represent relevant plan objectives that apply to the West Main Street Corridor project.

- Encourage “infill development” on vacant parcels in built-up areas of the community in order to maximize the efficient use of existing public services and facilities
- Encourage new development projects that will contribute to the City’s tax rate

The Corridor Plan identifies infill redevelopment opportunities and processes which provide a means to increase economic value to the City by encouraging more intensive and viable uses for properties.

- Ensure that various land uses in the same neighborhood are complementary and compatible through site plan, landscape plan, and design reviews

- Continue to implement high quality landscaping, signage and building design standards in employment and commercial districts
- Require high quality building, landscaping, and signage design along key entry corridors into the City

Specific site, architectural, and landscape guidelines will be a product of the Corridor Plan. The intent is to create coherent and complementary development patterns to occur as redevelopment occurs along the West Main Street Corridor.

- Discourage the development of unplanned, strip commercial land uses
- Encourage the development of compact, highly planned mixed-use activity centers that include shopping, employment, housing, and recreational opportunities

The Corridor Plan will encourage a clustering and infill concept of development along the corridor to create activity nodes that provide services to both the community at large as well as local residential neighborhoods.

- Encourage development of higher-density housing near retail-oriented business districts

- Encourage infill development on vacant or underutilized lands in the City's existing business districts

In the Corridor Plan, housing will be proposed for certain locations along the corridor, in the form of compact townhouse development or second floor residential over retail. Several parcels along the corridor that are underutilized have the potential to be redeveloped with a greater intensity of use.

- Whenever possible, coordinate transportation system improvements with land developments
- Plan for the eventual improvement of major transportation corridors that would serve both existing and future development areas
- Provide safe and convenient motor vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian access between neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, governmental facilities and recreational facilities

The Corridor Plan will present a balanced approach that recognizes West Main Street as a significant vehicular access route across the City, while also emphasizing the importance of pedestrian accommodation and quality streetscaping as important considerations in

encouraging redevelopment that maximizes the creation of value for the City.

The Westside Neighborhood Plan: Land Use and Transportation Study

Completed in 2004, the plan proposes a series of new residential neighborhoods anchored by a community core that is intended to create a dual anchor with the City's existing downtown (fig. 2.1). West Main Street is extended to connect to this new core providing a direct link to the downtown. The plan contains a number of components that impact the West Main Street Corridor:

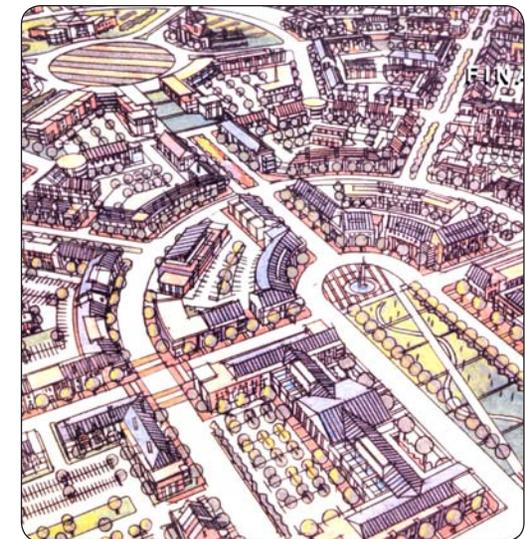


fig. 2.1 Proposed town center : West Side Plan

- Because the new core will contain a large amount of commercial space there is a possibility that the new core will pull businesses away from the existing commercial areas. Therefore, commercial centers should complement one another rather than compete. It is anticipated that the increased residential population will create business opportunities throughout the City.
- One of the major commercial components of the Westside Plan will be developed along West Main Street, approximately one mile from the current terminus of the West Main Street Corridor which is at the Main Street/Highway 151 intersection. The new development will feature buildings that directly front the street with building facades set back 5-10 feet, giving the development an urban character. This is in contrast with much of the existing West Main Street Corridor which mostly has an auto-oriented strip form of development. With two urban anchors on either side, the West Main corridor is in danger of standing out as an anomaly in its current condition. Redevelopment efforts along the existing West Main Street corridor must recognize the need to create an image and form that

integrates with the two commercial anchors at either end and acts as a connection between them.

- The new commercial west side core will connect to the existing Main Street corridor via a landscape feature extending west from the Highway 151 interchange to the intersection of Main and Thompson Road where a “Gateway Square” is proposed. A corresponding landscape feature should be provided just east of the Highway 151 interchange to provide a sense of “gateway” for the existing corridor. The new gateway is an important component of the West Main Street Corridor plan as this area gives a first impression to those arriving in Sun Prairie.
- The Westside Plan also proposed further residential and commercial development south and east of the Highway 151 intersection. An extension of Thompson Road is proposed along with a new interchange at Highway 151. This future development, along with Smith’s Crossing, will add residents to the area south of the West Main Street Corridor. This will likely bring more traffic to O’Keeffe Avenue, and consequently the intersection of O’Keeffe Avenue and West Main Street.

City of Sun Prairie Business District Revitalization Plan

Adopted in 2001, this plan was the springboard for the redevelopment of portions of the downtown, including what is now called Cannery Square (fig 2.2). At the time the plan was created, the City was facing the challenge of deciding what to do with a number of parcels in the downtown. Several industrial businesses had recently closed operations and the Main Street district was experiencing a number of vacancies followed by the challenge of updating its image and market mix. The plan offered recommendations



fig. 2.2 Redevelopment proposal : Business District Revitalization Plan

addressing opportunities for commercial and residential development, retail niche strategies, cultural and historic preservation, and generally improving the physical and economic viability of the Downtown. The plan has led to several success stories as redevelopment has begun partly as the result of City efforts to purchase and control property to ensure orderly development. New commercial activity and downtown residential development has occurred. In addition, a new public space has become a community focal point. The Business District Plan impacts the West Main Street corridor in the following manner:

- The plan has strengthened the vitality of the downtown, creating a destination attraction in which the character of place is as important to the retail environment as the actual uses. The district relies on pedestrian friendly architecture, building placement, and streetscape to create an overall pleasant image for the customer. While the West Main Street corridor is not the downtown, it must complement and seem integrated with the emerging character of the downtown. This can be achieved by encouraging development

along the corridor that features 1) well designed buildings with pedestrian friendly features, 2) ample landscape, and 3) parking lots located in the rear or sides of the lot, which is in contrast to many existing conditions where the overall curbside image is that of parking lots with buildings set back from the street.

- The Business District plan indicates the importance of the West Main Street Corridor in creating a sense of gateway or entrance into Sun Prairie and its role in leading visitors downtown. The plan recommends a prominent entryway for people traveling from the west. The entry way can be achieved through signage, a comprehensive streetscape program, appropriate building orientation, and the creation and implementation of design guidelines for the corridor.

Downtown Phase II Master Plan

The Phase II plan (fig. 2.3) builds on the foundation established in the 2001 Master Plan. The Phase II Plan outlines the next series of redevelopment efforts and offers additional recommendations for streetscape enhancements for an area just to the east of Cannery Square. The Phase II Plan will impact

the West Main Street Corridor by continuing the trends outlined above in which the Downtown will become a district of small scale residential and commercial areas that create a unique mix of development based upon its historic character. The plan also outlines a wayfinding signage system that could be utilized along the West Main Street Corridor to help direct visitors to various attractions within the community.



fig. 2.3 Downtown Phase II Masterplan

3

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC PROCESS AND CITIZEN INPUT

3.1 PROCESS

The West Main Street Corridor Plan process included a number of different events and meetings in order to gather input as planning proceeded. Several types of public involvement were built into the process.

Steering Committees

Three separate steering committees were formed to provide focused and sustained input throughout the planning process, each covering one of the three planning study areas. The committees were staffed by business and property owners, tenants, and residents who are located in the specific study areas. Each committee also included at least one member who brought a more community-

wide perspective to the discussions. The role of steering committee members was to offer insight on what the key challenges and opportunities were for corridor districts, to review and help revise plan concepts, and to help craft the agendas for public meetings. City staff and, in some cases, elected officials were also present for the meetings. Citizen members of the three steering committees included:

West: U.S. Highway 151 to Clarmar Drive

Chris Schultz, Matt Harms, Peggy Weber, Stan Wagner, Mary Kay Brooks, Steve Bartlett, Bill Wambach

Central: Clarmar Drive to Bird Street

Kristi Tuschen, Nate Pederson, Tom Hebl, Rachael Johnson, Jaquie Rice, Peter Curran, Joe Powelka

East: Bird Street to Downtown

Knute Viland, Dan McIlroy, Reed Ellingson, Tom Hanley, Robert Bloom, Robert Meyer

The agenda and activities of the meetings are summarized below:

Steering Committee Meeting 1

September 22, 2005: This meeting was an introduction to the project and was intended primarily as a “listening session” to allow

the consultants and city staff to gather input from the committee members on the important issues facing the respective areas. The agenda included an introduction to team members, review of the scope and schedule of the study, and discussion of key issues concerning both the entire corridor and the respective study area.

Steering Committee Meeting 2

November 10, 2005: The primary objective was to receive committee input and review a preliminary design concept. A colored concept plan was presented by PDI for discussion while suggested changes were sketched out for incorporation into the next draft of the plan. Participants were also briefed on the results of the October 19 public meeting.

Steering Committee Meeting 3

March 9, 2006: The steering committees met to review the structure of the design guidelines and regulating plan. They also discussed project implementation issues.

Public Meetings

A series of public meetings were conducted in order to bring project proposals to a wide public audience. Invitations to the meetings

included notices in newspapers, the City's website, and notices mailed by City Staff directly to business owners and property owners along and surrounding the corridor. Information about the meetings and the resulting materials were posted on the city web site.

Public Meeting 1

October 19, 2005 : The meeting was both an introduction to the project and a "listening session" in which the consultant and city staff could hear input from the general public concerning important issues facing the area. A design preference survey was conducted as part of the evening's events. PDI also presented an analysis of current conditions along the corridor as well as a draft list of corridor planning goals.

Public Meeting 2

January 26, 2006: The second public meeting featured the review of the design preference survey results and the presentation of preliminary design concepts for public input.

Public Meeting 3

April 20, 2006 : This meeting focused upon the proposed regulating plan for block

development and design guidance.

Presentation to the Sun Prairie Chamber of Commerce

April 20, 2006 : This presentation featured a general project overview to a key stakeholder organization.

Project Management Team Meetings

During the planning process, the consultants met with the City of Sun Prairie Project Management Team (PMT) at various intervals to report on project progress and to receive input regarding plan components. The PMT is composed of several city department heads and administration, and is responsible for implementation and decision making for several adopted City plans.

Individual Stakeholder Interviews

Several meetings were held with a number of individual corridor stakeholders, including business and property owners, to focus on site-specific issues of concern to the stakeholders. Many of these discussions resulted in the owners' future plans being incorporated into the planning document. A meeting was also held with school district officials to discuss site-related issues for the high school and the impact of potential changes that would result

from pending referendums.

3.2 DESIGN PREFERENCE SURVEY

During the first public meeting, a design preference survey was conducted in order to gauge community opinions on the character of various forms of development. The results of the survey are included in the Appendix, and helped guide the development of the corridor plan.

3.3 KEY ISSUES AND GOALS

As the planning began, several overall project goals were outlined and discussed during the public input process. These discussions helped verify the plan's goals and concepts. Goals discussed are listed below:

- Maximize creation of economic value for the City
- Achieve a vision that addresses the needs of property owners and tenants along the corridor, adjacent neighboring areas, and the community as a whole
- Achieve a balance between vehicular, pedestrian, aesthetic and redevelopment needs within the corridor
- Develop an overall integrative strategy for

the corridor while recognizing the need for specific planning initiatives that address each corridor district

- Investigate potential for streetscape/landscape features to improve image and reinvestment incentives. Create a more accommodating and attractive environment for pedestrians
- Improve circulation of vehicular access between parcels

