



CHAPTER 5: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



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Because of its geographic location between USH-151 and Downtown Sun Prairie, the Central Main Street Corridor is ideally suited to capture a large share of local residents and commuters who work in Sun Prairie. The US Census data indicates an expected rise in population, number of households, and number of families through the year 2021 for Sun Prairie's primary trade area, the boundaries of which are described in detail in the Existing Market Analysis. Using insights gained from research and public engagement, these items have been divided into three major categories, with each category subdivided into issues, which are areas of concern that could produce harmful effects if not addressed, and opportunities, which are attributes that could lead to improved conditions in the Corridor if leveraged effectively.

Land Use & Design Issues

- Inconsistent building setbacks;
- Vacant and deteriorated buildings and parking lots;
- Lack of aesthetic cohesion.

The pattern of streets and the built environment lay the groundwork for a potentially vibrant area of Sun Prairie, however, the current state of land use and design in the Corridor fails to take advantage of this potential. Collector roads like W. Main Street ideally support small-scale, walkable commercial development, but the current buildings along this road are not cohesively presented. Setback greatly impacts the extent to which pedestrians traverse an area, and inconsistent setbacks in the Corridor are likely a major reason why the area does not see more foot traffic. Similarly, aesthetics also factor into the number of pedestrians passing through an area, and multiple vacant and deteriorated buildings and parking lots throughout the Corridor fail to present an inviting experience. Large lots along W. Main Street and Commercial Avenue

are particular offenders in this regard. More cohesive aesthetics and design standards would solve these issues when new development and redevelopment occurs on these lots. The MSO Standards currently adopted by the City provide an ideal toolkit to address these issues.

Land Use & Design Opportunities

- Large lots could allow for major projects;
- Corner of Main & Bird serves as de facto Corridor center;
- Walkability potential with nearby residential.

The 600 Block of Commercial Avenue accommodates multiple large lots, some of which front W. Main Street. These lots vary in size from under 1 acre to nearly 8 acres, and many could easily support a major development project such as a mid-rise multi-family residential development, or commercial project such as a brewery or entertainment venue. Different types of businesses exist on these lots, but many lots are underutilized relative to their design potential. New development or rehabilitation of these lots could see these places realize untapped economic potential. Likewise, the corner of Main & Bird serves as a de facto center of the Corridor with a natural layout that could capture pedestrians passing through the area.

Transportation Issues

- Heavy traffic;
- Excess parking along W. Main Street;
- Shortage of designated bike infrastructure;
- Non-existent transit services in the Corridor.

The Corridor's main issues regarding transportation relate to its auto-oriented nature. While a revitalized Corridor would likely retain automotive travel as its main mode of transport, the street infrastructure prioritizes cars to an excessive extent. Parking lots fronting W. Main

Street cause setbacks to be pushed away from the public realm, and cause too much of the space to be devoted toward parking. The abundance of auto-oriented infrastructure invites more cars to the Corridor, thereby exacerbating traffic problems and crowding out space for bicycles and pedestrians. Additionally, if the City wishes to redesign the Corridor to support more multi-modal activity, it will need to density the area. Transit services function best in areas where riders will not be forced to commute long distances between stops and destinations.

Transportation Opportunities

- Mass transit potential;
- Configuration of the built environment could easily accommodate more bicycles and pedestrians;
- Available space for wayfinding and other pedestrian amenities.

The Corridor currently has no transit services. However, nearby residential areas and potential new residents and visitors to the Corridor after revitalization could serve as a ready ridership for future mass transit. The Corridor is comprised of local streets and collectors exclusively, and bus services could easily serve most of the area along multiple routes. Likewise, the Corridor's location as a node in the greater Madison region's bicycle network presents a wealth of locations where existing bicycle infrastructure could be extended. Many of these opportunities could be realized in the short term through updated signage, and painting of sharrows on local streets. The Corridor also possesses a wealth of space for wayfinding and pedestrian amenities that exhibit the Corridor's unique brand. These programmatic elements could give the Corridor a unique feel and sense of place.

Economic Development Issues

- Deteriorated and unattractive buildings;
- Multiple underutilized properties;
- Lack of aesthetic cohesion.

Blighted and dilapidated structures depress the aesthetics of an area, which causes potential consumers to patronize businesses and public spaces elsewhere. The underutilized commercial properties along W. Main Street and Commercial Avenue in particular lack a uniform design theme and sense of aesthetic cohesion.

Economic Development Opportunities

- Abundance of space;
- Captive audience of residents and commuters passing through the area;
- Fiber optic infrastructure could attract technology businesses.

Despite having deteriorated structures and parking lots, many of these lots are fortunate to be configured with plenty of space to accommodate any number of new development or redevelopment proposals. These lots also enjoy the advantage of a captive audience, both of nearby residents and commuters passing through the area along collector roads. This population presents a readily available base of support for many different kinds of commercial or residential development projects. To further entice young people and educated professionals, the City could explore options such as municipal internet and network communications infrastructure that would appeal to technology businesses bringing jobs, disposable income and added tax revenue.

These are just a sample of the potential issues and opportunities facing the Corridor. The following chapters will explore these items in greater resolution, analyzing more data and compiling specific goals, objectives, and policies. The Corridor is a place with abundant potential. Staff, city officials, residents, and other stakeholders must work together to address these issues and explore options to take advantage of inherent strengths.

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