

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



Goals + Objectives

Goal #1: Grow and enhance the Corridor as a location for people and businesses.

Plan for and capitalize on development and redevelopment opportunities associated with the revitalization of the Corridor for the community and businesses. Encourage partnerships among public, private, non-profit, philanthropic, property owners, and all people to make the Corridor competitive with other major activity centers in the region on the basis of livability and economic viability.

Goal #2: Establishing a land use pattern that promotes community.

Guide new development and redevelopment in a manner that strengthens “pulse” nodes and activity centers, improves quality of life, and conserves natural features to meet the long-term needs of the community.

Goal #3: Improve all modes of transportation along the Corridor.

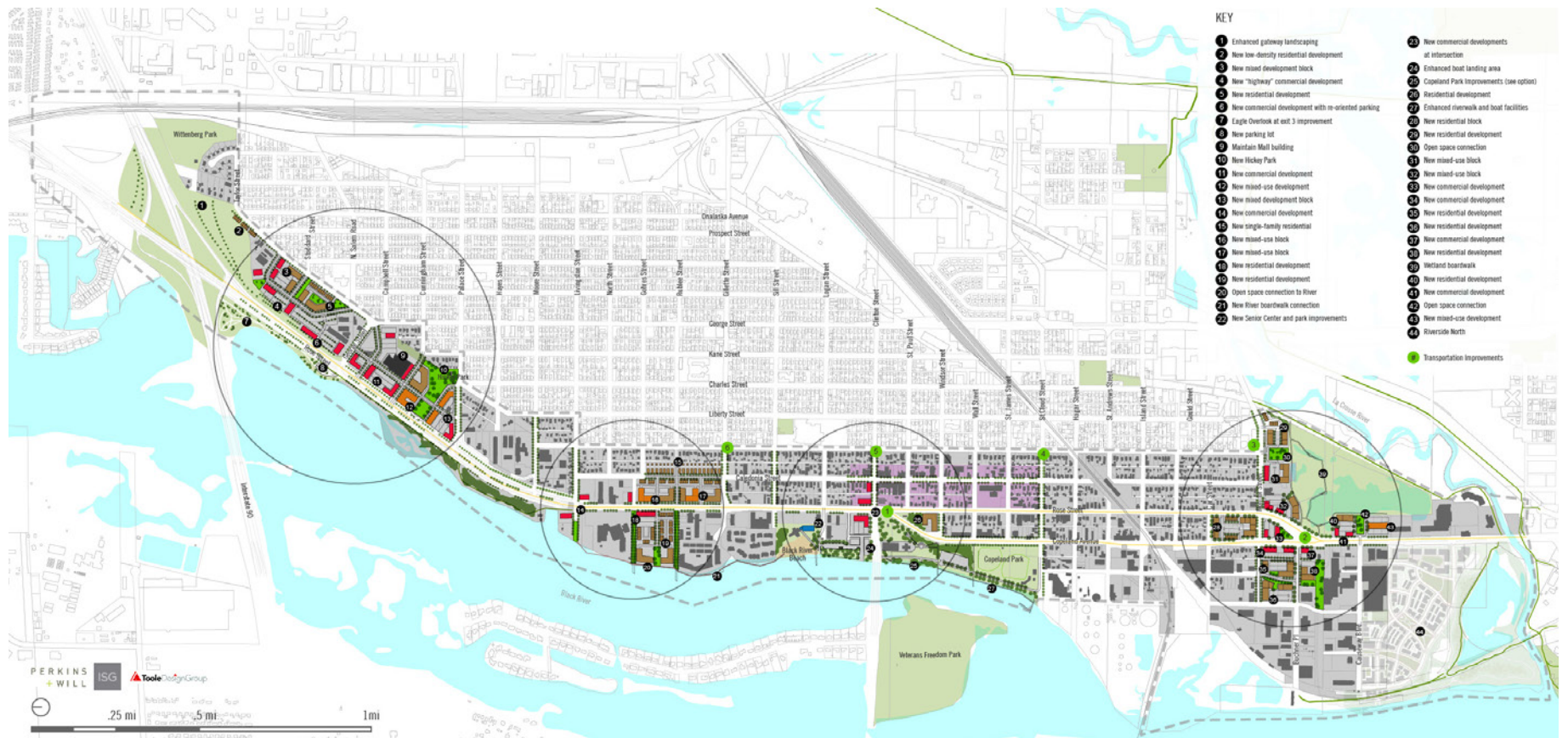
Seek opportunities to encourage and facilitate the expansion of all multi-modal transportation facilities to improve mobility for all people to all places.

Goal #4: Create an enhanced gateway to the City of La Crosse

Reinforce Highway 53 as the gateway into the City of La Crosse to create an aesthetically attractive corridor that projects a positive image of La Crosse.

Vision Statement

“Put the Highway 53 Corridor and adjacent neighborhoods on the path to be an even greater place to live, work, and play for all people through balanced strategies.”



Enhanced Connectivity



Enhanced Wayfinding



Enhanced Pedestrian Experience



Landscape Enhancement



Enhanced Development (Commercial, Residential, Mixed Use)



Strengthen Built Form (Guidelines, Facades, Ordinance)

Pulse Node Development

Four pulse nodes on Highway 53 were identified for this planning study, intersections at George Street, Rublee Street, Clinton Street and Monitor Street. These intersections were analyzed for redevelopment opportunities, bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements and enhancements to access and circulation. This section describes the redevelopment scenarios identified for each of the four pulse nodes. All scenarios are thought to be long term, taking up to 20 years to see the recommended changes. Whether the scenarios are pursued is dependent on the ability to purchase land from willing sellers.

The plan recommends the consolidation of existing services, retail, and office space around transit-served intersections to create pulse nodes which are defined as areas of high-intensity, mixed-use, residential, and commercial development at primary corridor intersections. The pulse nodes shall be friendly, attractive, walkable and differ from each other in overall scale, character, and function. It also envisioned that the stretches between the nodes will be comprised of existing commercial uses and other low intensity land uses or open space.

Private investment in the corridor can be spurred by an attractive destination with a strong sense of place, human scale, architectural cohesion, and vibrant neighborhoods. Scale, character, massing, and ethos of the Corridor's buildings contribute significantly to these elements. A project initiative is to promote sustainable design excellence in new development to allow new buildings architecturally fit into the surroundings, achieve energy and water efficiency, and respond to neighborhood transitions with building massing.



Pulse Node A: Highway 53 @ George Street

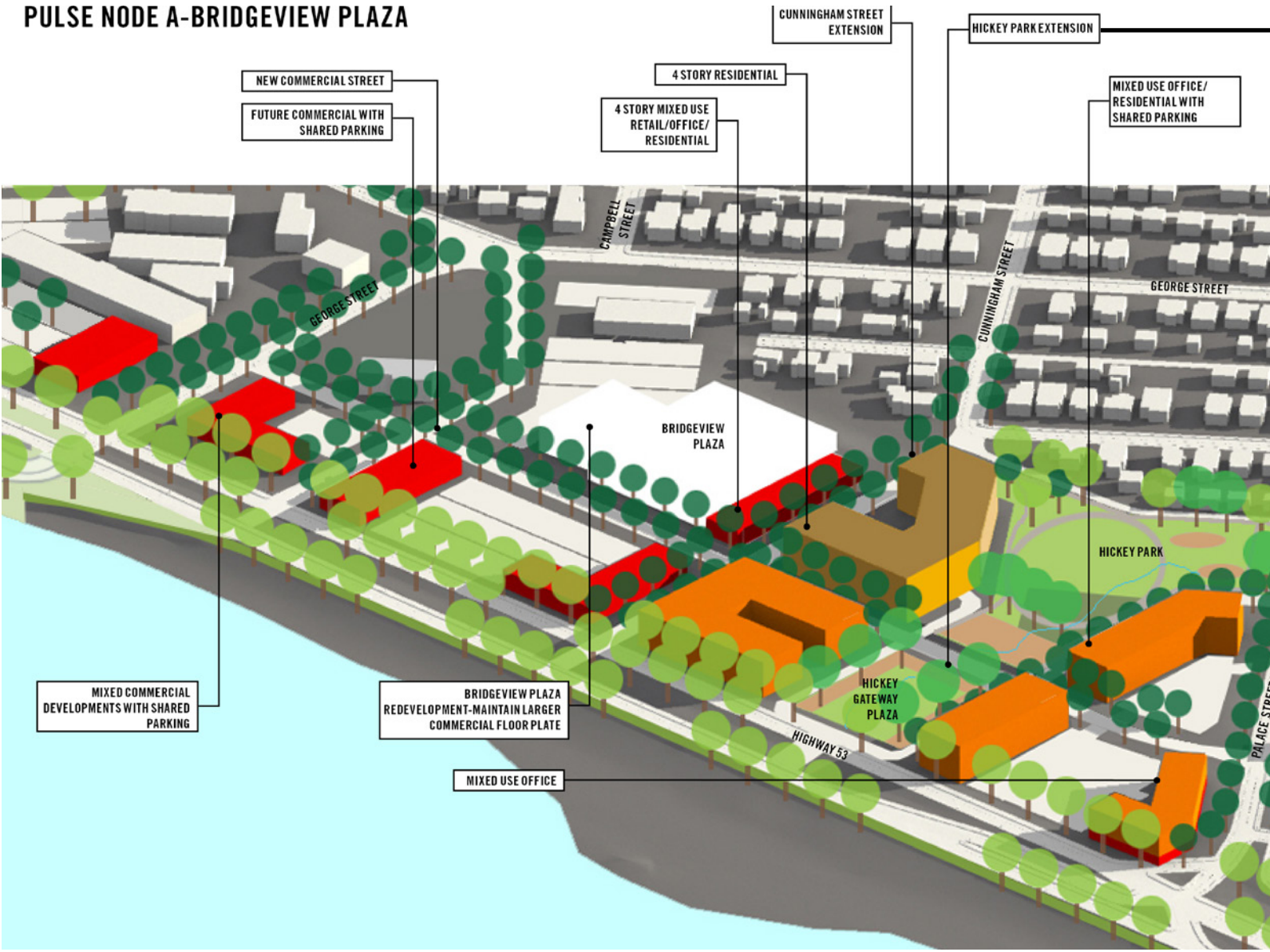
This node presents a great opportunity to create a mixed-use node by providing additional housing choices, restaurants, and businesses to serve surrounding residential neighborhoods. The pulse node is divided into two distinct redevelopment areas; the area north of George Street, and the area south of George Street, Bridgeview Plaza (area south of George Street).

- Create internal "ring road" by extending Salem Road from the neighborhood through redevelopment area to Taylor Street.
- Provide enhanced streetscape and public realm amenities.
- Create new mixed-use development area.
- Provide mixed residential (affordable, market rate and assisted senior living) multi-story buildings.
- Provide open spaces to the public, connected to residential developments.
- Provide mixed commercial buildings with shared parking opportunities.
- Extend Cunningham Street from the neighborhood out to Highway 53.
- Provide enhanced streetscape and public realm amenities.
- Create new mixed-use development area on the Bridgeview Plaza site.
- Provide mixed-use and multi-story buildings with first floor uses that activate the street.
- Create new mixed-use developments to enhance the street network and expanded Hickey Park.
- Extend Hickey Park thru mixed-use development site and connect to Highway 53.
- Provide expanded neighborhood recreation amenities and programming.
- Provide flexible space to host a variety of recreational and community festivals.
- Provide local street network (with on-street parking) around Hickey Park.
- Remove the southern portion of Bridgeview Plaza building and re-purpose northern portion for commercial uses.
- Define new north to south commercial street by connecting George and Palace street to allow for enhanced connectivity within the mixed-use development area.





PULSE NODE A-BRIDGEVIEW PLAZA



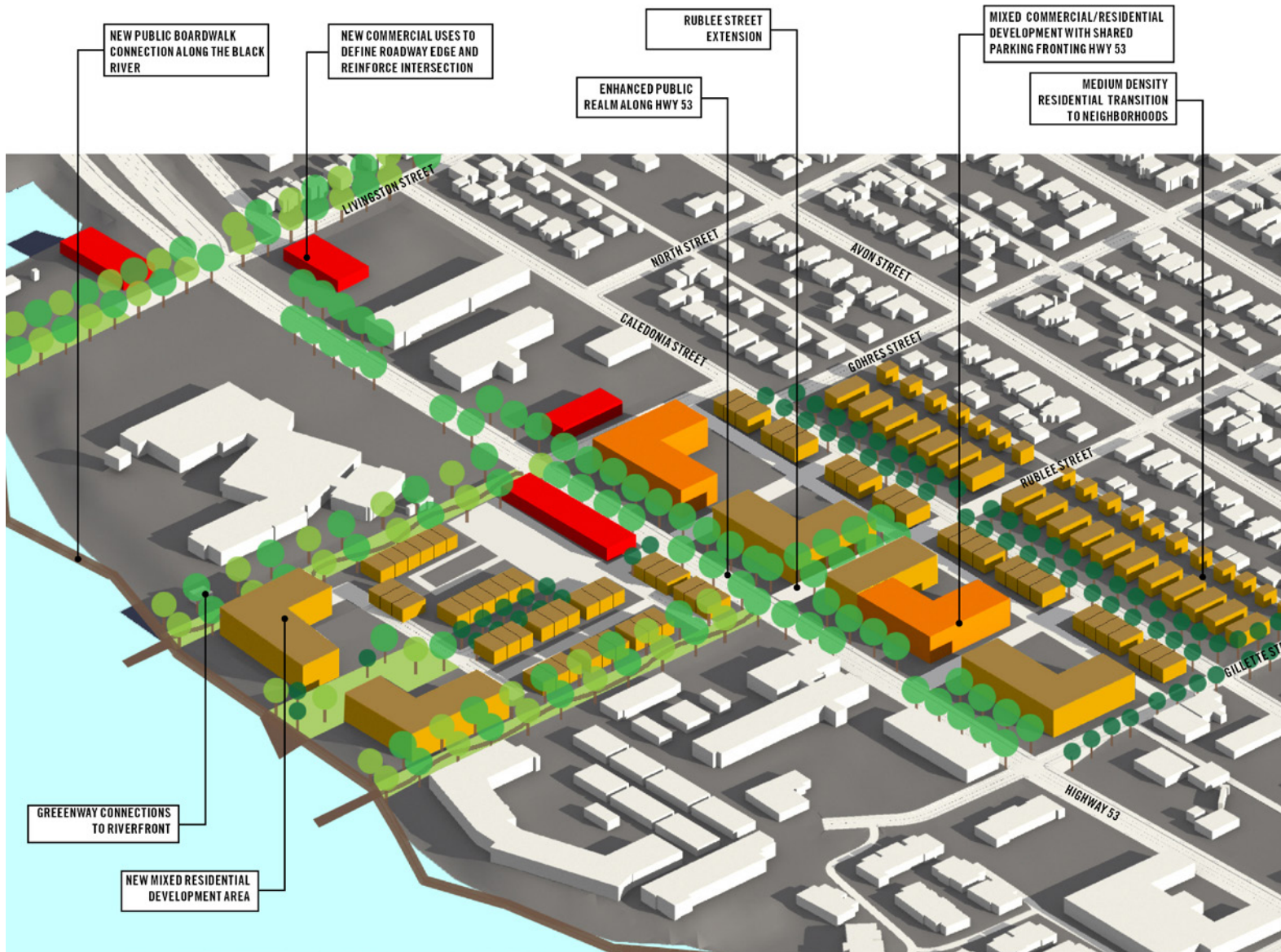


Pulse Node B: Highway 53 @ Rublee Street

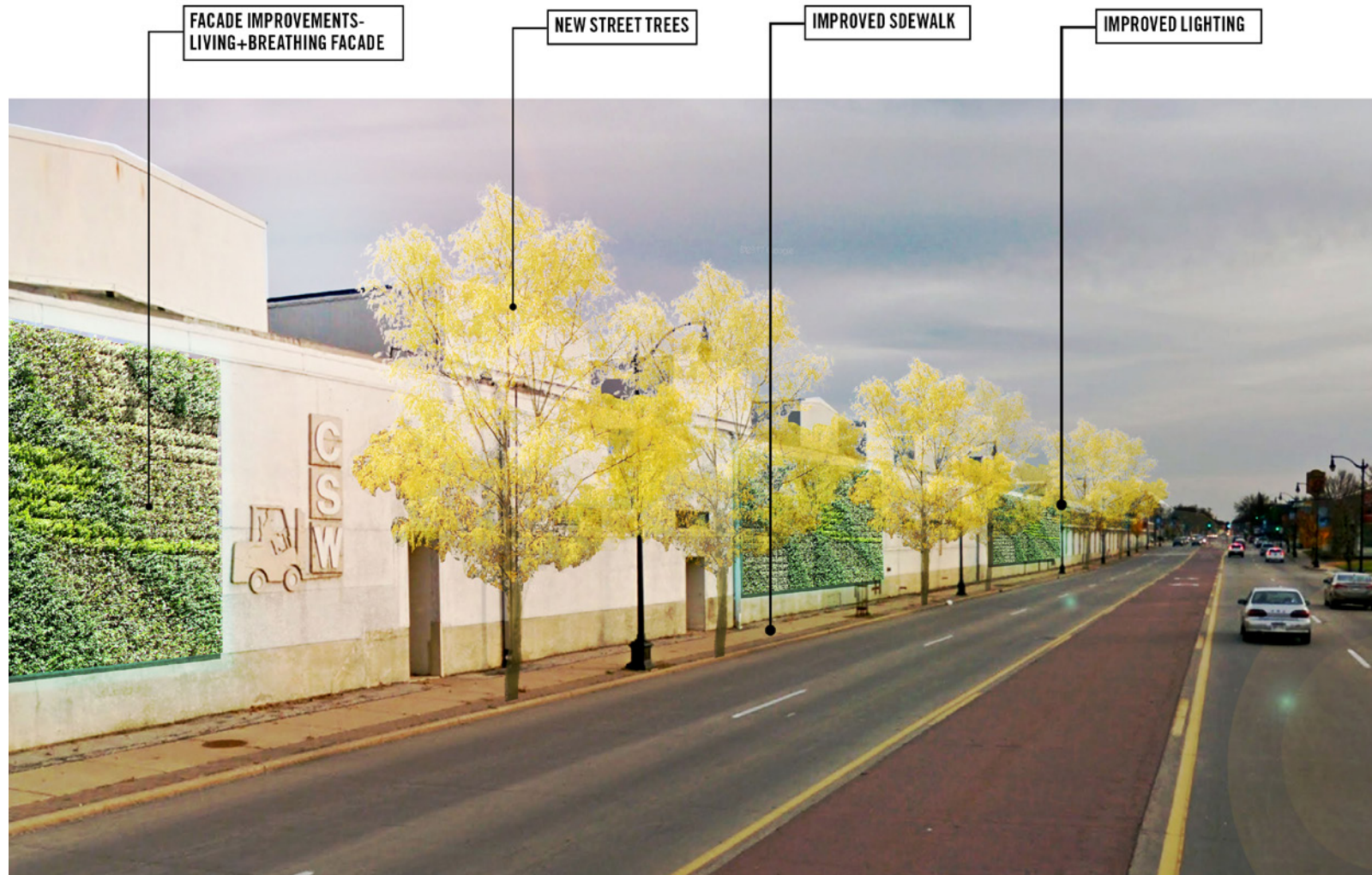
This node has the long-term opportunity to evolve into a mixed-use urban village providing more housing choices and neighborhood scaled businesses that serve the immediate neighborhoods.

- Create new mixed-use development areas within the pulse node.
- Provide mixed-use and multi-story buildings with first floor uses that activate the street on the east side of Highway 53.
- Provide transitional residential densities along Caledonia Street adjacent to existing single-family housing.
- Provide mixed-use and multi-story buildings with first floor uses that activate the street on the west side of Highway 53.
- Provide mixed residential housing along Black River.
- Provide commercial uses fronting Highway 53 with shared parking opportunities.
- Provide mixed commercial buildings with shared parking opportunities at the Livingston Intersection.
- Extend Rublee Street from the neighborhood out to Highway 53.
- Provide enhanced streetscape and public realm amenities.
- Provide "green" links from Highway 53 to the River along Livingston Street, Gohres Street, and Rublee Street.
- Incorporate new boardwalk access to the Riverfront.
- Create boardwalk from Livingston Street to Black River Beach House.





CENTRAL STATES WAREHOUSE-FACADE IMPROVEMENTS



CENTRAL STATES WAREHOUSE-FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

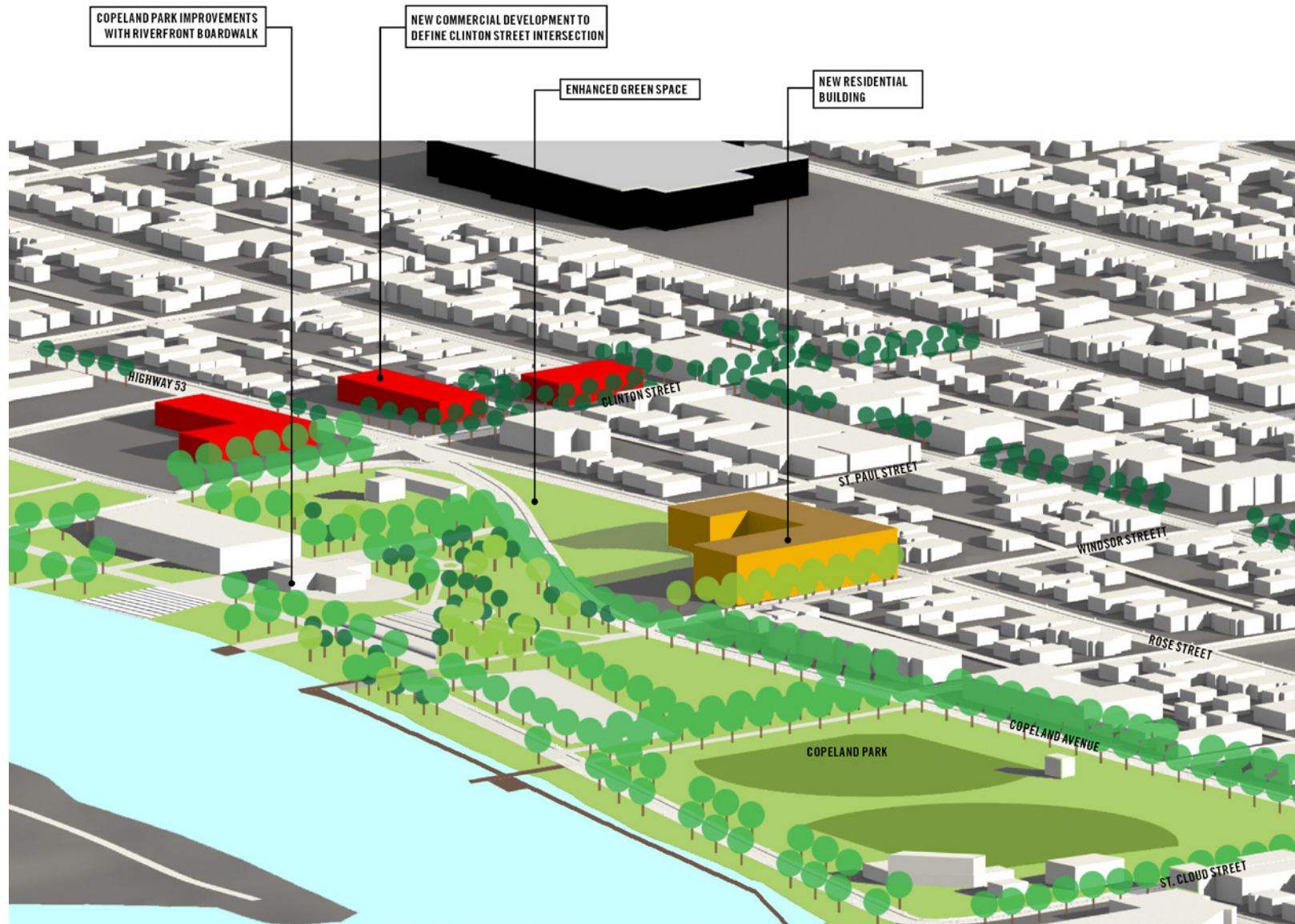


Pulse Node C: Highway 53 @ Clinton Street

This node is at the primary Black River crossing in North La Crosse. This node is characterized by direct access to the Black River and Copeland Park. The intersection of Highway 53 and Clinton Street contains separate commercial uses in the three opposite corners. UPTOWNE/Old Town North has the long-term opportunity to evolve into a mixed-use urban village providing more housing choices and neighborhood scaled businesses that serve the immediate neighborhoods.

- Incorporate recommendations from UPTOWNE Summit report.
- Create new redevelopment opportunities at the Clinton Street intersection.
- Provide a residential multi-story building in the triangle parcel fronting Windsor Street.
- Provide underground parking and enhanced pedestrian facilities along Windsor Street.
- Provide mixed commercial buildings with shared parking opportunities at the Windsor Street intersection.
- Improve connection from Copeland Park to public boat landing and Black River Beach House.
- Improve overall connectivity from adjacent neighborhoods to Copeland Park.
- Improve pedestrian crossings of Rose Street and Copeland Avenue.
- Improve Copeland Park.
- Provide enhanced river connectivity from the park.
- Upgrade park recreational amenities and provide more flexible recreational/program space.
- Improve pedestrian circulation and access adjacent to public boat landing located on North Clinton Street.
- Expand Black River Beach House to include a Senior Center.
- Improve landscaping and connectivity to beach area.
- Provide mid-block curb extensions and crosswalk in 1200 block of Caledonia Street.
- Require removal of 4 parking spaces allowing for the addition of nice bike parking on both sides of street.
- Install sidewalk curb extensions: corner of Caledonia @ Clinton, corner of Caledonia @ St. Paul, and corner of Caledonia @ Windsor.





Pulse Node D: Highway 53 @ Monitor Street

This node is the southern end of the change between one-way and two-way streets. This node is characterized by confusing street layouts and a struggling “no-man’s land” between the one-way streets. The area contains a mix of several commercial uses. If the street layout were improved, opportunities for commercial uses with better access and visibility could be achieved, and medium to high density residential uses could make use of the waterfront areas.

- Create new mixed-use development areas
- Provide multi-story mixed-residential and commercial buildings on South Monitor Street, east of Rose Street.
- Provide transitional residential densities along Monitor Street adjacent to existing single-family housing.
- Provide green space linking development opportunity sites with access to wetland boardwalk trails.
- Provide multi-story mixed-residential buildings on North Monitor Street between Rose Street and Copeland Avenue.
- Provide transitional residential densities along Rose Street adjacent to existing single-family housing.
- Provide mixed commercial buildings with shared parking opportunities at the intersection of Rose Street and Copeland Avenue.
- Provide multi-story mixed-residential on South Monitor Street, west of Copeland Avenue.
- Provide multi-story mixed-residential and commercial buildings on the east side of Highway 53, across from Causeway Boulevard.
- Provide green space linking development opportunity sites with access to wetland boardwalk trails.
- Extend Milwaukee Street from Monitor Street to Buchner Place.
- Provide enhanced streetscape and public realm amenities.
- Improve streetscape and public realm amenities along Buchner Place.
- Provide new boardwalk system in wetland area east of Highway 53.
- Improve greenspace connection south of Buchner Place to link Kraft Street and Highway 53.





Neighborhood Considerations in Pulse Node Development Situations

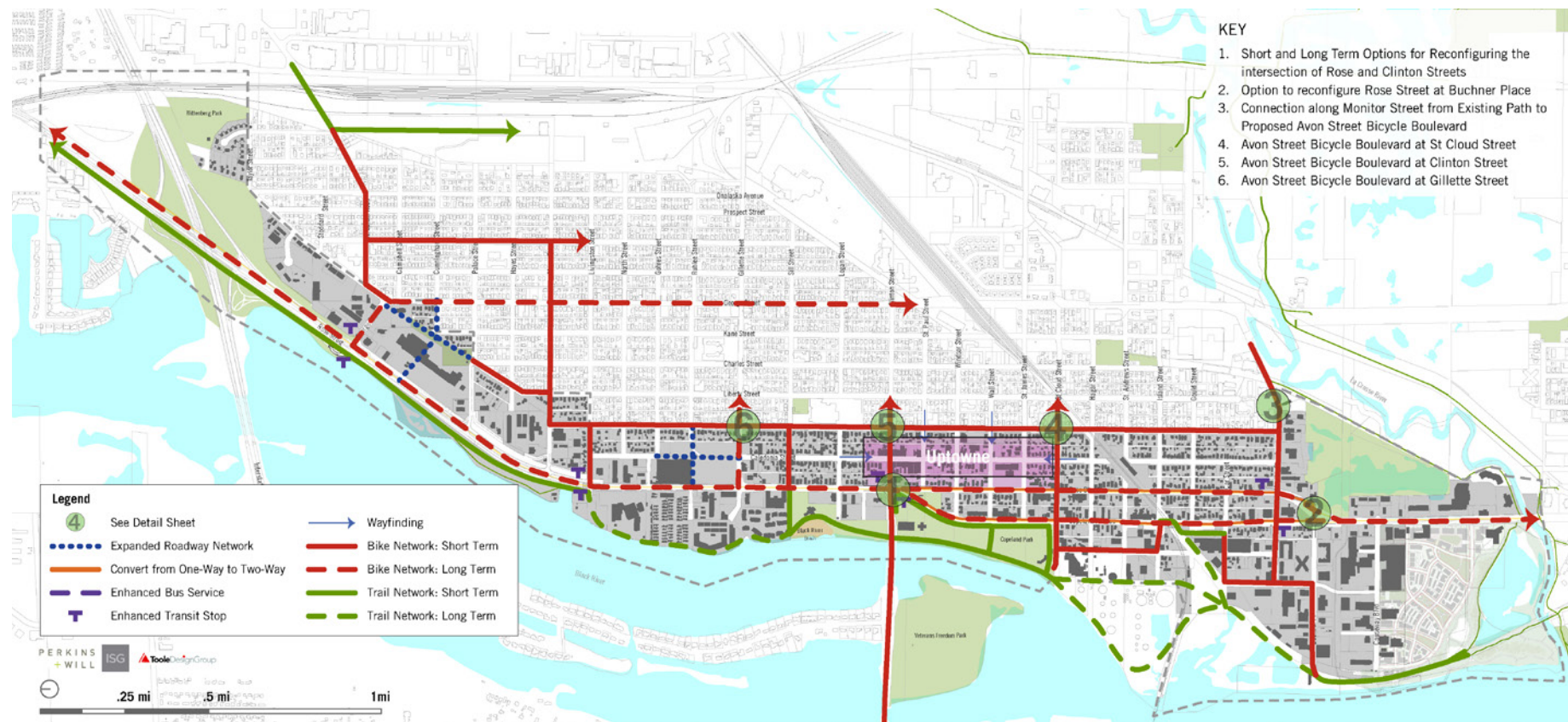
The pulse node theory of development also requires careful consideration of development and improvement opportunities in the areas between the higher intensity nodes. These areas act as critical connections and transitions to allow for each high intensity node to be unique. It allows travelers within the Corridor a sense of reprieve, and establishes the discovery of the next unique area with the intention of increasing the energy and attachment to the community.

Low to mid-rise offices, low to mid density multi-family developments, and neighborhood scale retail should be encouraged adjacent to the highway in these areas. Lower density single-family re-development and preservation should be encouraged within the outer boundaries and adjacent to the Corridor. Open space and recreational areas should be located in appropriate areas and include undeveloped lands or areas where these amenities are simply desired or needed.



Multi-Modal Recommendations

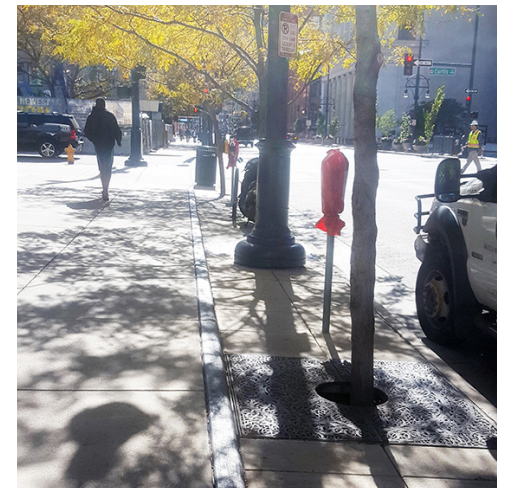
Walking, biking and transit are critical transportation modes in corridors such as Highway 53 and a major component of a livable community. Following are recommendations to promote safe and inviting pedestrian, bicycle, and transit experiences by creating or strengthening connections to nearby bicycle facilities, neighboring points of interests, shopping, the Black River, trails and open space.



Pedestrian Experience Enhancement Strategies

- Provide a minimum of 6-foot wide sidewalks (8 feet is preferred) throughout the Corridor where feasible.
- Eliminate sidewalk obstructions and gaps.
- Replace failed sidewalk and trail pavements.
- Improve snow removal expectations and enforcement.
- Improve pedestrian cross walks (could be more artistic crosswalks) to enhance safety at high volume locations.
- Install sidewalk curb extensions on adjacent side streets to decrease crosswalk distances, moderate vehicular speeds, provide increased sidewalk space, and define on-street parking bays.
- Extend pedestrian lights along the Highway 53 corridor.
- Incorporate streetscape elements such as monuments, public art, kiosks, and benches to create a more inviting and comfortable sidewalk environment and promote activity.
- Provide pedestrian scale wayfinding and signage.
- Consider times and locations to program “open streets”.
- Provide improved visual and physical connection to the Black River.

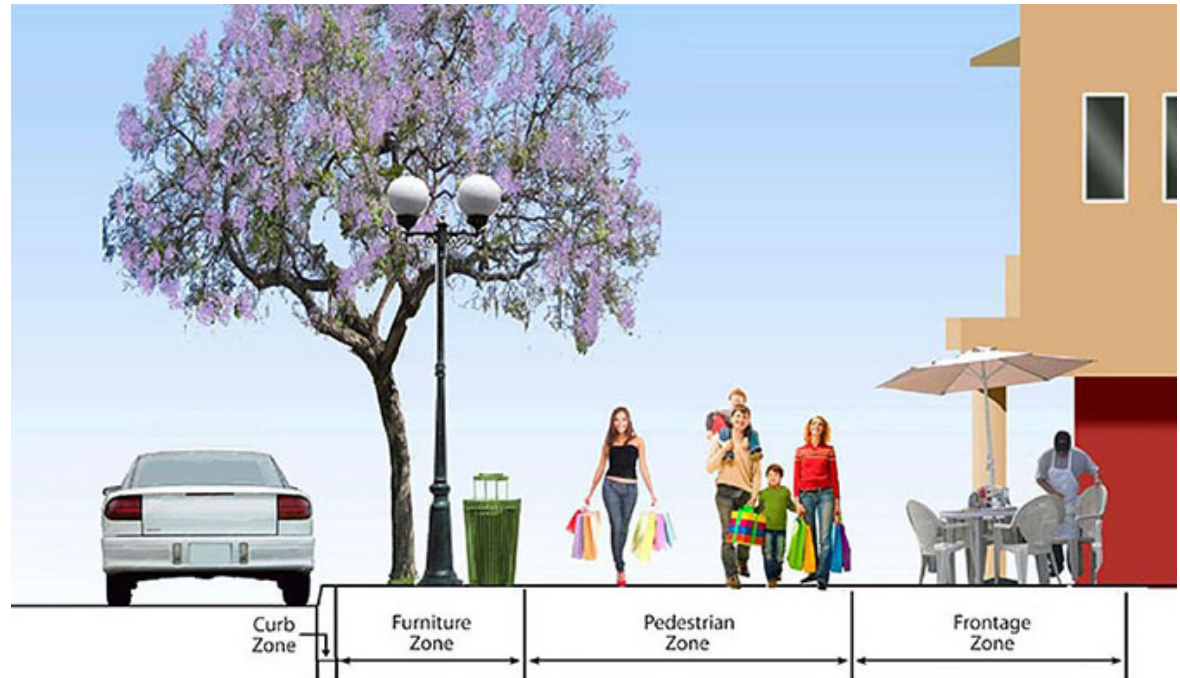




Sidewalk Enhancement Strategies

While sidewalks function as part of the transportation system, they also play a crucial role in urban design by enhancing the social and economic characteristics of a district while improving public health.

The Sidewalk Zone design includes four zones - Curb, Furniture, Pedestrian, and Frontage - which vary in width and character depending on adjacent land use, right-of-way, and intended function. The Pedestrian Zone system also provides an approach to support pedestrian activity and to balance the space needed for functions and objects while maintaining an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant pedestrian access route. The zone system should be applied to the sidewalk space and if adequate space is not available, careful consideration will need to be given to the design and programming of the space, with a priority on meeting accessibility and safety needs.



Curb Zone

This zone separates the pedestrian from the vehicular traffic. The buffer provides a physical barrier and also provides space for getting in and out of a parked car (where on-street parking exists).

Furniture Zone

This zone provides space for trees, benches, newspaper boxes, utility poles, hydrants, trash receptacles, signs, street lights, and snow storage.

Pedestrian Zone

This zone needs to be well defined and meet ADA standards, and maintained at all times. The recommended minimum width is 6 feet, but 5 feet can be acceptable.

Frontage Zone

This zone is at the edge of the walk zone adjacent to the property line to provide a safe and comfortable buffer from opening doors, walls, fences, and doorways.

Sidewalk Installation in Existing Areas

While the City of La Crosse has a policy requiring the installation of sidewalks when new development occurs, installing sidewalks in established neighborhoods can be a challenge due to funding constraints and concerns over maintenance responsibility by abutting property owners. In 2006, the La Crosse City Council passed a resolution that established priorities for sidewalk installation when a major street or development project is not occurring:

- 1** Install sidewalks on routes to schools and leading to city bus stops.
- 2** Install sidewalks adjacent to or along any worn path in grass or dirt on city property.
- 3** Install sidewalks on all arterial and collector streets.
- 4** Fill in sidewalks where blocks have partial sidewalks.
- 5** Install sidewalks on streets where no sidewalks exist on their side of the block only where more than fifty (50) percent of the owners request the sidewalk.

The 2012 La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan identified areas without sidewalks within the City, and ranked them as first, second, or third priority for sidewalk installation.

First Priority Locations

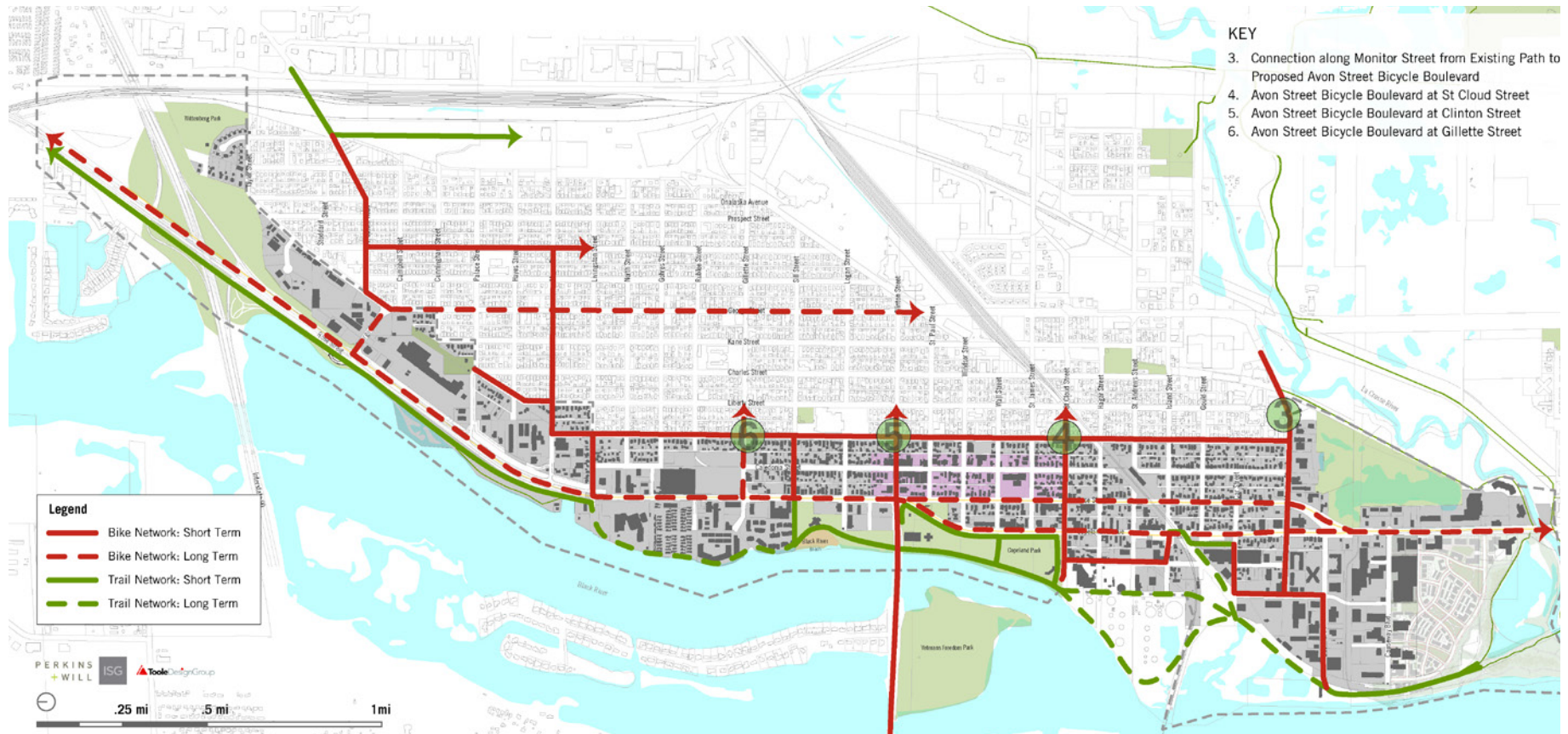
None within the study area

Second Priority Locations

West George Street
Ruble Street
Rose Street
Clinton Street
Sumner Street
Saint Cloud Street
Hagar Street

Third Priority Locations

Numerous locations throughout the study area



Bicyclist Experience Enhancement Strategies

- Eliminate barriers.
- Create frequent safe crossing opportunities.
- Encourage and facilitate classes to educate current and potential bicyclists and build confidence in the accessibility, reliability, and safety of the system.
- Work with community partners to encourage bicycling as a larger mode share by providing bicycling facilities in public and private locations and bicycling equipment to disenfranchised groups.
- Add public bike racks and other amenities near destinations such as schools, transit stops, employers, multifamily housing, shopping, and other biking locations.
- Continue comprehensive bicycle system planning.
- Install more bikeways to grow towards completing the network.

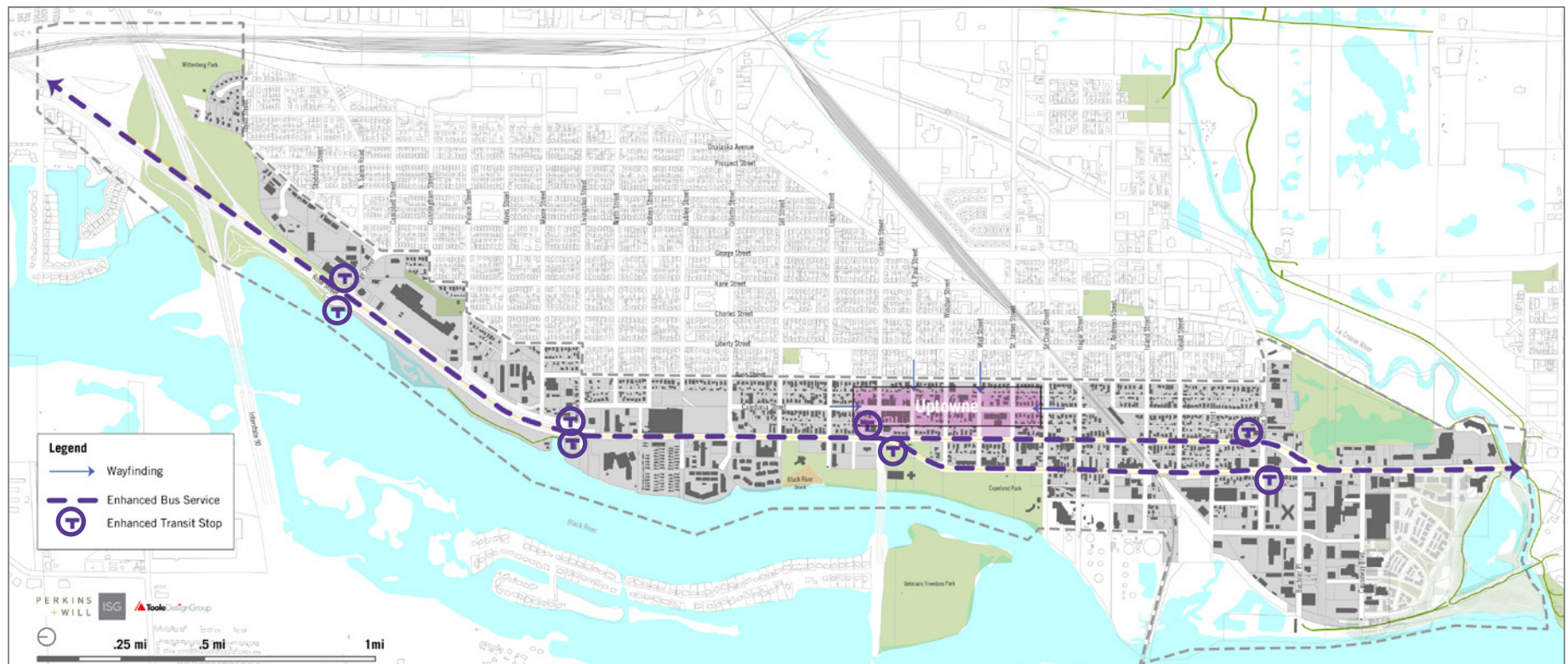
Encourage Private Bicycle Infrastructure

- Require functional bike racks, bike corrals, lockers, and/or indoor parking in new re-developments and assist existing private developments in obtaining them.
- Encourage employers to provide amenities such as employee showers and shared bicycle fleets.
- Expand the city's wayfinding system to Highway 53 and highlight access to the parallel and perpendicular bicycle routes.



Transit User Experience Enhancement Strategies

Transit stops are among the most active pedestrian gathering spaces and can provide identifying elements within the streetscape. Stops should be designed to be more comfortable and dignified to attract new users and better serve existing users. Bus stops along the Highway 53 Corridor should be well connected to the sidewalk network and bicycle facilities to allow convenient connections to neighborhoods, commercial nodes, the Black River, places of employment, and shopping centers.



- Encourage/Facilitate Transit Oriented Development (TOD)
- Create a direct “express” route to shopping, Downtown, employment, and services to encourage transit oriented development along the route and make transit a more attractive option for users.
- Work with developers, employers, and institutions to increase the transit mode share.
- Enhance the stops with the use of new shelters, kiosks, monument signs, decorative paving, newspaper corrals, and public art. New and relocated transit stops should be located in active and visible places to maximize personal security.
- Evaluate neighborhood routes for improvement.
- Consider implantation of the Route 6 modifications from the LAPC Great River Transit Enhancement Plan 2015-2025.

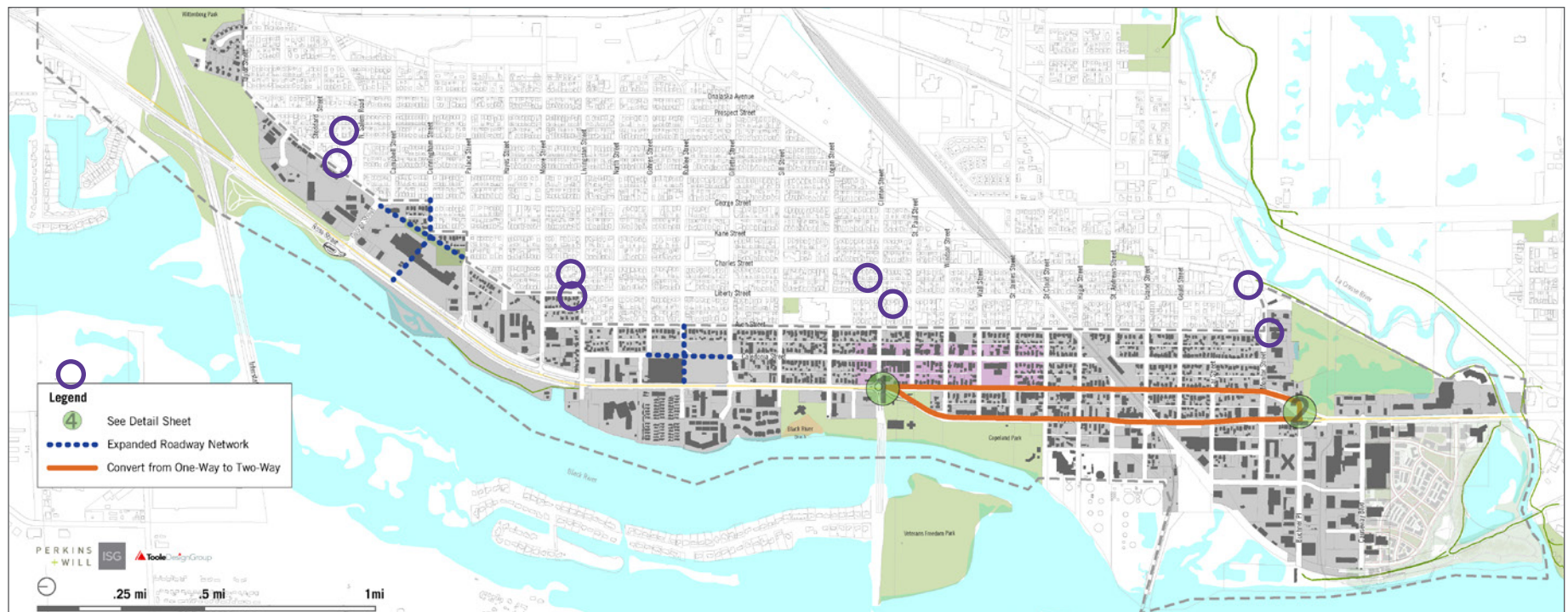
Connectivity Enhancement Strategies

- Improve connectivity from adjacent neighborhoods to Copeland Park.
- Improve bike routes and trails connecting existing trails and bike lanes.
- Install Avon Street Bike Boulevard.
- Install additional Bike lanes (per bike plan and new recommendations).
- Define future traffic calming opportunities.
- Create detailed maps of safe routes to destinations for bicycling and pedestrians along the corridor.
- Create boulevards to serve as a buffer from traffic, planting spaces for trees, and space for snow removal.
- Improve intersections to provide safe and accessible areas for pedestrian and bicycle crossings. Improvements could include enhanced crosswalks, signalization, signage, and design techniques that encourage drivers to operate at an appropriate speed.
- Conduct a corridor wide traffic study along Highway 53 to address speeding, safety, and enhanced connectivity routes.
- Use signs/wayfinding strategies to direct multi-modal traffic between neighborhoods and the River and highlight access to the parallel and perpendicular bicycle routes.
- Create safe and visible connections between Highway 53 and alternative bicycle routes.
- Provide centralized, easy to access bicycle parking (such as on-street bicycle corrals) at convenient locations for bicyclists to park their bikes and walk to places along Highway 53 within designated pulse nodes.
- Improve transit stops and shelters locations along the Corridor
- Include additional lighting and covered shelters at each transit location.

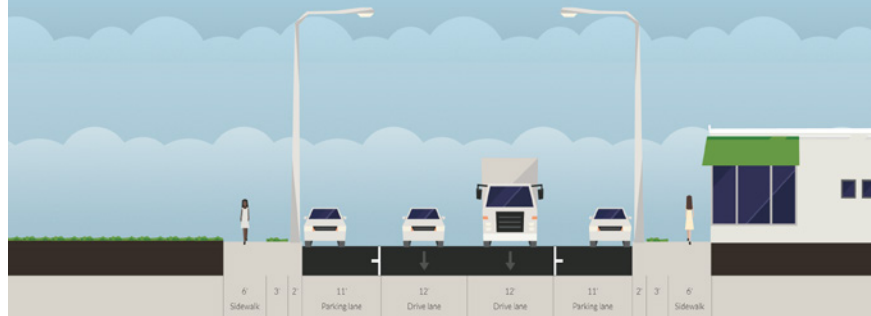


Roadway User Experience Enhancement Strategies

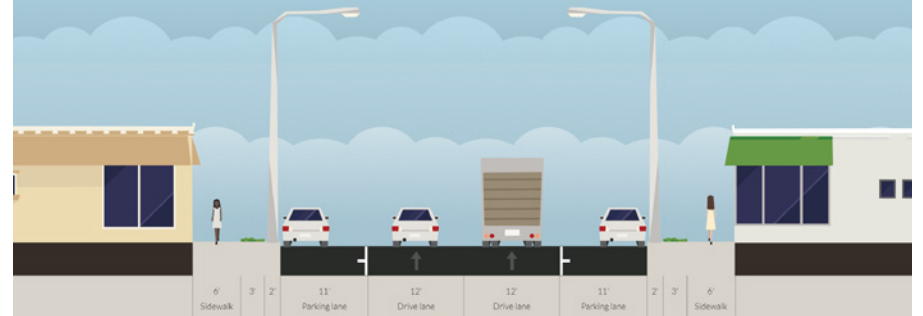
The following graphic illustrates short and long term options for reconfiguring the intersection of Rose and Clinton Streets, an option to reconfigure Rose Street at Buchner Place, and areas where the roadway network could be expanded to reestablish the grid system and allow for better circulation should redevelopment provide the opportunity. Redevelopment of the roadway system should be considered when redevelopment occurs and as bridges and roadways need to be replaced and/or updated. Should Rose and Clinton Streets be redeveloped the idea of shifting the majority of the traffic to one of the streets vs. equally distributing the traffic as it is today should be considered. By shifting traffic to one of the streets it could allow for better neighborhood and commercial development along this section of the corridor, allow for better connection and relationship to the river and park system, promote multi-modal transportation and increase pedestrian safety.



Copeland Avenue (USH 53 South) (Existing)



Rose Street (USH 53 North) (Existing)



Copeland Avenue (USH 53 South) (Conceptual)



Rose Street (USH 53 North) (Conceptual)



Intersection Design Enhancement Strategies

The many intersections of Highway 53 Corridor's have the opportunity to blend safety and aesthetics for its users and the environment. Following are recommendations for making these intersections more safe and easily accessible for those walking, biking, and driving.



Paving and Crossing Treatments

A hierarchy of crossing treatments should be applied to intersections based on the location and the volume of pedestrians and bicyclists. Special intersection paving treatments can break the visual uniformity of streets, highlight pedestrian and bicycle crossings as an extension of the public realm, and announce key locations. The hierarchy and appropriate locations include the following applications:

- Standard Markings — All crossings should be identified with parallel lines.
- Enhanced Markings — Ladder striping should be added for crossings of streets in the edge and edge zone.
- Special intersection paving treatments include integrated colors, textures, and scoring patterns. A red or dark gray or other appropriate color may be applied to the paving in crosswalks.

Advanced Stop Bar Markings

Stop bar markings extend across all approach lanes to indicate where vehicles must stop in compliance with a pedestrian crosswalk at an intersection. These markings reduce vehicle encroachment into the crosswalk and improve visibility of pedestrians.

- Advance stop bars should be considered at all primary signal-controlled intersections with marked crosswalks. The opportunity to locate the stop bars a maximum of 10 feet from the crosswalk locations should be considered at all primary signal-controlled intersections.



Curb Extensions/Bump-Outs

Curb extensions (also called bump-outs) should extend the sidewalk into the parking lane to narrow the roadway and provide additional pedestrian space at intersections along secondary cross-streets. Curb extensions can be used at both street corners and mid block. Curb extensions often are no larger than the crosswalk width, but can be widened to increase pedestrian visibility or to create public spaces, landscaped areas, or transit waiting areas. When on-street parking is provided, curb extensions should be provided at intersections where they do not interfere with bus pull-offs.



Accessible and Countdown Pedestrian Signals

Accessible pedestrian signals (APS) provide information in non-visual format (such as audible tones, verbal messages, and/or vibrating surfaces). Pedestrian countdown signals tell the time remaining to clear the crosswalk before the signal change.

Urban Design Recommendations

A series of urban design principles and a design concept were defined early in the planning process to inform the development of designs and recommendations and to assist in the prioritization of potential implementation strategies and projects.



PRINCIPLE #1: Advance Livability

Design to heighten the human experience and connection to the sense of place. Create enhanced connections between neighborhoods, businesses, recreation, and natural surroundings.



PRINCIPLE #2: Strive for Diversity

Encourage diverse uses, buildings, and environments to promote exclusivity and access.



PRINCIPLE #3: Promote Neighborhoods

Enhance the neighborhood character, access to the Black River, and create a memorable gateway to the City. Relate new developments to the physical scale and character of the neighborhoods. Create a corridor that residents and visitors can understand and easily navigate by creating memorable landmarks, destinations, aesthetics, and sense of place.



PRINCIPLE #4: Foster Sustainability + Resiliency

Create a social, economical, and environmentally sustainable corridor for the future.

Pulse Node Concept in Design

The pulse node 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. 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 that will now be inter-connected to create a greater sense of place.



Landscaping + Streetscape Enhancement Strategies

- Improve riparian landscape edge along the Black River.
- Enhance landscape character throughout the corridor to reinforce as a gateway to the City.
- Plant additional trees along Highway 53 and adjacent streets to improve overall character.
- Screen existing and new at-grade parking lots with vegetation such as hedges and trees.
- Consider parking lot screens as potential zones for stormwater treatment and infiltration.
- Consider enhancing sidewalks and crossing treatments.
- Devote space to street furniture.
- Devote space to outdoor places such as cafes and small parks.
- Implement stormwater management best practices to improve stormwater, enhance aesthetics, and connect people to the urban ecosystem.
- Consider options for using landscaping to implement permanent and temporary traffic calming measures.
- Consider the addition of ornamental lighting, public art, kiosks, and visitors' guides and determine which community partners could take ownership.
- Develop a maintenance plan and sustainable funding source to maintain public landscaping and streetscape elements.



Stormwater BMP Enhancement Strategies

- Develop an area plan that promotes sustainability, resiliency, efficiency, and cost effectiveness of the current and future stormwater management systems.
- Focus BMPs towards street and land development design strategies that implement effective and easy to maintain systems that have minimal land area impacts and serve multiple purposes such as improving aesthetics and providing buffers for active transportation.
- Form partnerships with businesses, community organizations, large property owners, and environmental groups to operate, maintain, and promote healthy stormwater systems.
- Develop performance measures that show the value of investments and efforts that go beyond current requirements.
- Consider adoption of the Urban Street Stormwater Guide from the National Association of City Transportation Officials.



Wayfinding Enhancement Strategies

- Prepare a corridor wide wayfinding plan that is cohesive, unique to each context, multi-purpose, and contains several scales (cars, pedestrians, visitors).
- The designs of elements, directing people to key destinations and transit stops along the Highway 53 Corridor should be integrated into streetscape elements (e.g. light poles, transit shelters, monuments, signs) and reinforce a desired streetscape theme.
- Since there are no dedicated bike facilities recommended on Highway 53, wayfinding to alternate bikeways is particularly important.



Gateway Monument Enhancement Strategies

- Gateway monuments are typically larger structures that denote an entrance into a special area, neighborhood or district. These monuments should function as a major visual element that can be designed to reinforce a desired character or image of a district or neighborhood.
- Gateway monuments should be located within the amenity area of the public realm. The primary locations within the study area recommended for gateway monuments include:
 - Gateway Corridor area off of I-90.
 - Intersection of Clinton Street and Highway 53 at Copeland Park.
 - UPTOWNE (located at Clinton and Rose Street).
 - Split of Rose Street and Copeland Avenue near the intersection of Monitor Street.
 - Entrance to Downtown near the La Crosse River.



Utilities + Advertising Signs Enhancement Strategies

- To limit the number of utility poles that obstruct the pedestrian environment and to improve the aesthetics of the corridor, it is recommended that the overhead utilities be buried whenever possible.
- All signs shall meet the City's sign ordinance.
- Outdoor advertising signs shall be removed and eliminated as the opportunity exists to improve the aesthetics of the corridor.

Development Enhancement Strategies (commercial, residential, mixed use)

- Strengthen the Built Form (guidelines, facades, zoning ordinance).
- Create and adhere to City guidelines and standards for site design, building massing, façade treatments, building materials, signs, and sustainable design practices.
- Create mixed-use, multi-story buildings with first floor uses that activate the street.
- Plan new construction in relation to the surrounding buildings using common elements from the façade and architecture of neighboring buildings (as appropriate). This will create a harmonious feel to the streetscape.
- Positively relate new construction to the street with building elements yet not infringe on the streetscape. Appropriate building setbacks will depend on building use.
- Design the first level (street level) to have a human scale with attention to items including the building entries, first floor storefronts, lighting, signage, and windows.
- Consider building setback from the sidewalk to provide a broader area for pedestrian activities. Where existing sidewalks are less than 10 feet wide, set buildings back a minimum of four feet (within the frontage zone) to create wider sidewalks for outdoor seating and streetscape elements.
- Encourage the reuse of positive contributing buildings where possible rather than new construction.
- Incorporate existing historical or character enhancing elements into redevelopment.
- Highlight major building entries.
- Create a sense of security by having building windows look onto the street.
- New developments should treat appropriate rainfall events on site by, for example, infiltrating rainwater in ponds, swales and rain gardens or storing it for reuse in cisterns.
- Use LED or other energy-efficient lighting for new development projects.
- Consider solar-powered LED lighting to light exterior spaces.
- Provide space for organic composting and residential uses on-site or nearby.
- Encourage constructing and renovating buildings to meet Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards of silver or better.

IMPLEMENTATION



Overview

Implementation of the Corridor Plan requires proactive leadership and collaboration of public agencies at multiple jurisdictional levels, including the City of La Crosse and the Northside Community.

Implementation of the plan is also dependent on the full support and participation of landowners, residents, businesses, and the development community. A concerted effort has been made throughout this plan to involve a broad cross-section of the community. Business owners, neighborhood residents, and community leaders have provided input and guidance. Their participation has improved the study and their continued participation and support will be critical in sustaining the community's vision for the Corridor over time. Even with a strong commitment, it will take several years before many of these recommendations take full shape. The magnitude of redevelopment may seem daunting, however change is constant and the vision for the Corridor will be the product of individual site redevelopments and street improvements. Every project is important and should help build toward the long-term vision. The City has an important role to play in this process, but the success of this effort will not be possible without the full support and participation of landowners and development community.

The public improvements associated with the Highway 53 Corridor Plan will act as a catalyst for reinvestment and represent a positive step toward ensuring a vibrant long-term business climate and livability for the Corridor. This section includes actions that should be considered to integrate the improvements into an ongoing and community building strategy and to gain the most benefit from streetscape and other public improvements.

Redevelopment Approach

Key points listed below should be considered as the community begins the redevelopment process for the Highway 53 Corridor:

- **COMPREHENSIVE.** A single project cannot revitalize the corridor. Only an ongoing series of initiatives can build community support and create lasting progress.
- **INCREMENTAL.** Small projects make a big difference and they demonstrate that “things are happening.” Large projects can set the tone and establish precedence.
- **SELF- HELP.** Local leadership can breed long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.
- **PUBLIC+PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP.** The redevelopment program needs support and expertise of both the public and private sectors. For an effective partnership, each piece must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the other.
- **IDENTIFYING+CAPITALIZING EXISTING ASSETS.** One of the projects key objectives is to recognize and make the best use of the Corridor’s unique offerings. Local assets provide the solid foundation for a successful redevelopment initiative.
- **QUALITY.** From streetscape and storefront design to promotional campaigns and special events, quality must be the primary goal.
- **CHANGE.** Changing community attitudes and habits is essential to bring about a corridor renaissance. A carefully planned program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.
- **ACTION-ORIENTED.** Frequent, visible changes in the look and activities of the commercial district will reinforce the perception of positive change. Small but dramatic improvements accomplished early in the process will remind the community that the revitalization effort is underway.
- **INTERIM STRATEGIES.** Pilot-to-Permanent or Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC).

Determine which community partners could assist with programming, community events, and grass-roots improvements. Examples include, but are not limited to temporary wayfinding signs, parklets, moveable planters, additional/relocated pavement marking, and open street events.

Redevelopment Sites

At the four identified pulse nodes, this plan calls for reinvestment in Corridor-wide pedestrian improvements, alternate routing for people biking and walking, and improvements to critical crossings along Highway 53. The Steering Committee recommends beginning with a project that has the greatest potential for the convergence of investment in infrastructure and buildings, both public and private. Pulse Node A: George Street intersection has the greatest potential for this convergence.

Pulse Node A: Bridgeview Plaza Economic Analysis

The Bridgeview Plaza Property has been identified as a potential opportunity for redevelopment of types and scales that could impact market perceptions of North La Crosse and invite subsequent investment in the area. A high quality redevelopment concept has been developed and illustrated for the site, representing one plausible change scenario. Tangible Consulting Services have evaluated the redevelopment concept from a financial perspective and the findings are the subject of this memorandum.

The development concept represents an ambitious redevelopment of the property. It creates a storefront retail corridor of special character and it offers new public park/plaza spaces. The place-making characteristics of the project would result in maximizing the residential and commercial rents that could be achieved in this particular part of the City—with the caveat that development in this location is pioneering, and thus will not bring the level of returns that would be achieved in parts of the city that are already seen as highly desirable locations.

Findings

The analysis finds that the development concept is challenging but potentially achievable and requires significant public sector financial support. Utilizing a range of assumptions, our model estimated the total development cost to be around \$100 million, when all aspects of the project are accounted for. A developer, with typical financing, could support roughly 77% of these costs. This yields a financial gap of around 23% of project costs.

A good share of these costs could potentially be derived from capitalizing the future property taxes that the development would generate using a tax increment financing mechanism. Tax increment financing is an advantageous first choice for addressing a development financial gap such as this, since it doesn't add to the tax burden on La Crosse citizens or compete with the funding of other city needs. But the analysis suggests that tax increment financing will not be sufficient to meet the financial need. Additional public financial resources would need to be identified and employed to advance the project.

Project performance is highly sensitive to the rents that can be achieved by the development. Those rents can't be projected with a high degree of accuracy, because the prospective project is quite unique in its location, and in the context that would be built around it. There are no other developments in the City of La Crosse that are close comparisons. If future rental costs for the apartment component of the project turns out to be \$1.65 per square foot instead of \$1.75, the public contribution to the project would increase to 26% of project costs. By the same token, if future rents are \$1.85 per square foot, the public financial support that would be 20% of project costs.

Analysis

This analysis evaluated:

- The cost of the project
- The return of the project (in the form of the operating income that would be generated), and
- The amount of development costs that would be supported by a lender and the developer
- The projected rents that the project generates, after deducting operating costs, were used to estimate both the lender contribution and the developer contribution to the project. The estimated financial gap is simply the part of the total estimated project cost that exceeds the lender and developer contributions.

In reality, a project like this proceeds in multiple phases. To make it manageable, this analysis considered the development as a whole, so that total costs were incurred at a single point in time, and rents from all seven buildings were available after the project was completed.

Assumptions

The findings of this analysis are dependent on the accuracy of a wide range of assumptions, which are detailed in the last page. There will be errors in the assumptions, since a) the time available to gather information on each variable was not unlimited, and b) it is impossible to make perfect assumptions about costs, market conditions, developer or lender behavior, or what the future will hold. This analysis worked to avoid a pattern of errors, which would have the effect of producing an overly optimistic or pessimistic assessment of the financial viability of the development concept.

Development Costs:

Acquisition and Site Preparation	\$5,400,000
Development Cost—Streets and Parks	\$1,800,000
Development Cost—Seven Buildings	\$93,400,000
Total Development Cost	\$100,600,000

For the buildings, cost estimates were derived for construction (hard) costs, soft costs, and developer fees of each component (retail, office, or residential) of each of the seven proposed buildings.

Operating Income:

Residential Gross Rent	\$7,140,000
Retail Gross Rent	\$660,000
Office Gross Rent	\$1,450,000
Total Annual Gross Rent	\$9,300,000

Rental income was also estimated for each component of each of the seven buildings, based on the estimated rent per square foot for residential, office and retail areas in the buildings. The seven buildings combined were estimated to produce around \$9.3 million per year in rents, given typical vacancy rates.

Net Operating Income:

Residential Net Operating Income	\$4,020,000
Retail Net Operating Income	\$650,000
Office Net Operating Income	\$990,000
Total Net Operating Income	\$5,700,000

The net operating income was derived by estimating operating expenses for each of the three development types. After deducting for operating expenses, the annual net operating income (NOI) for all seven buildings is estimated to be around \$5.7 million.

Project Finance:

NOI	\$5,700,000
Debt Service Coverage Ratio	÷ 1.25
Debt Service	\$4,530,000
Development Loan	\$69,600,000

The net operating income provides a basis for estimating the size of a loan that project would receive from a lender. This analysis used assumptions for the lender's debt service coverage ratio and loan terms that are somewhat conservative, based on current lending norms. But in the timeframe of this project they could still prove to be overly optimistic, which would result in a greater financial gap

The equity that a developer would bring to the project is based on a wide range of considerations, including financial return. A developer has choices about where to invest his or her resources and a financial cushion will be built into the project because new development is inherently risky. A key financial metric for developers is the projected cash flow of the development after the debt service has been paid (cash flow after financing). The developer's investment in a project (equity) will be partly based on the project's projected cash flow after financing.

NOI	\$5,700,000
Debt Service	-\$4,530,000
Cash Flow after Financing	\$1,130,000

Given an estimated 15% ratio between developer equity and its annual return, as measured by its cash flow after financing:

Developer Equity	\$7,550,000
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The estimated financial gap that the development faces is simply the remaining project cost, after the development equity and loan amount are accounted for. The financial gap represents around 23% of total project costs.

Total Development Cost	\$100,600,000
Developer Equity	- \$7,550,000
Loan Amount	- \$69,600,000
Financial Gap	\$23,400,000

Short Term Recommendations

It is important to establish short-term design steps for organizational and planning tools to implement the redevelopment recommendations, which include the following:

Build Design Standards into the Zoning Ordinance

Build design standards into the zoning ordinance for the most effective and legally sound strategy. If design objectives can be visualized and defined in quantifiable terms, they can be expressed in the form of standards that can be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance. Definitive standards developed in response to reasonable goals and objectives are better for developers, less likely to be legally challenged, and more defensible in the event of legal challenges. This approach would be easiest to administer by the planning staff in the long term. However, in the short term, the formation and authorization of a separate design review committee will work with City Staff to review redevelopment proposals.

There are limitations to the results that can be achieved through zoning. Design standards help achieve a degree of continuity through an area and certainly prevent development that is truly incongruous and incompatible. However, it is also true that good taste cannot be legislated. Although zoning can help a community establish a level of quality and prevent discordant development, it cannot guarantee that development will be aesthetically pleasing.

Site Plan Review

In order for the City to effectively implement the design guidelines recommended by the Task Force and consultants, the City should empower itself to guide development by bolstering the newly adopted Site Plan Permit process for all development along the Highway 53 Corridor. The SPR “ensures developments conform to City goals, plans and regulations; preserves and enhances the natural environment; protects existing uses; enhances the economic, residential and institutional communities; grows the City tax base and beautifies the city.” Some of the factors considered in the SPR process are: consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Design Guidelines adopted by the City, building setback and build-to requirements, consistent facades, minimum glass requirements, sign controls, minimized curb cuts, parking lot location and buffering, landscape and lighting plans, stormwater management plans, parking requirements and drive-throughs.

Develop a Corridor Wayfinding Plan

Wayfinding signs should be installed throughout the Corridor for those driving, walking, and bicycling to assist with finding destinations. Wayfinding should focus on two specific areas: highlighting destinations off of Highway 53 (for example, the UPTOWNE/Old Towne North business district), and highlighting destinations on Highway 53 for people who are walking or bicycling on a parallel neighborhood street. A wayfinding plan could focus specifically on this Corridor or could address the wayfinding more broadly of North of La Crosse.

Organization and Promotion

Currently, no civic organization and/or public bodies are involved in the management, promotion, and/or development of the Highway 53 Corridor. Organizing a diverse group of people to achieve the work tasks, build public/private partnerships, foster ongoing leadership, and provide a unified voice for the area will be the key to whether this plan succeeds or fails.

This section outlines a strategy for organizing interested residents and business owners into an effective advisory group whose mission is to see that redevelopment is implemented according to the goals and objectives of the plan, to act as an advocacy group for the corridor, and to coordinate promotional campaigns and small projects.

Corridor - Wide Ongoing Activities

Simultaneously with the phases identified above, the Project Team will undertake the following ongoing activities.

Coordinate Objectives with City Departments

The planning and engineering departments from both the County and City should refer to this document when considering development proposals along the Highway 53 Corridor. Developers should work with City and County Staff and refer to the plan when generating design concepts to better understand how their property fits into the Corridor Plan and expectations for public/private facilities. Proposed developments should follow the design recommendations in this Plan.

Develop a Financial Plan

The harsh reality of this Plan is that without viable financing, many of the recommendations will not be implemented. Therefore, it is imperative that the City of La Crosse and La Crosse County, along with the local business community, research and develop practical financing options to facilitate real change. Financing projects can be done by qualifying for grant money, borrowing, or bonding. The City and County should create a master schedule outlining when grant cycles start and are awarded and their relationship to agency capital budget cycles. The funding strategy should be flexible to take advantage of any unexpected opportunities.

Assemble Land

Pursue the acquisition of tax forfeit, foreclosed, or for sale properties identified as necessary to pursue the redevelopment vision created in this plan for the Highway 53 pulse nodes and could be acquired by the City of La Crosse or La Crosse County. Either entity will be cognizant of the Corridor Plan and the additional right-of-way needs at these intersections.

Help People Bike to the Highway 53 Corridor

Demand for bicycling is expected to increase along and adjacent to the Corridor, especially as redevelopment occurs. While dedicated bikeways are not recommended on Highway 53, additional destinations and anticipated increase in bicycling will generate demand to and along the Highway 53 corridor. Several steps can help people bike through and to the corridor.

- Create a wayfinding system for directing bicycle traffic to the defined pulse nodes along Highway 53. While the wayfinding should direct people to nearby destinations, it should also direct people from the alternative routes to destinations on Highway 53.
- Identify treatments connecting the alternative routes to Highway 53, especially at the four pulse nodes studied in this plan. Many of the people who bike on Highway 53 are trying to reach destinations on Highway 53. Creating safe connections to the corridor will mitigate the additional time, inconvenience, and decreased safety of directing people off Highway 53.
- Ensure that as the Corridor is improved adequate secure bicycle parking is provided at visible, safe and convenient locations.

Develop a Private Investment Incentive Fund

Create an incentive program that recognizes businesses making voluntary aesthetic improvements. Supplements such as painting and landscaping can visually enhance the appeal of an area and are encouraged.

Redevelopment Tools and Resources

Public Capital Improvement Programs

- Architectural and Engineering Analysis (A&E) Program
- Redevelopment Authority
- Sale of City owned properties
- City of La Crosse CIP
- Intergovernmental Revenue Sharing
- Lease revenues from City owned properties
- WisDOT Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA)
- La Crosse Area Development Corporation (LADCO)
- La Crosse Industrial Park Corporation (LIPCO)
- La Crosse County Economic Development Fund (LCEDF)
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC)
- Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA)

Public + Private Partnership Programs

- La Crosse Promise
- Challenge grants
- City Special Service Districts
- Community benefit agreements
- Parking Benefit District
- La Crosse Neighborhood Development Corporation (LNDC)
- Land Trusts
- Business Improvement Districts
- Transfer of Development Rights
- Business lending or micro-lending
- Crowd Sourced Development Equity
- Corporate sponsorship
- Philanthropic endowment
- Pre-disaster relief

Community Foundations

- La Crosse Community Foundation
- Robert & Eleanor Franke Charitable Foundation

Federal Programs

- FEMA Pilot Projects
- EPA assessment and clean-up grants
- Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Congressional Line Item Budget

Federal Transit Program

- Urbanized Area Formula grants
- Capital investment grants & loans
- Transit Enhancement Activity program

Property Tax Programs

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts
- Tax abatement
- Special assessments
- State and Federal Historic Tax credits
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) – probably available through WHEDA)
- Community Development Financial Institutions Fund - New Markets Tax Credit Program

Housing Programs

- Employer assisted Housing
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
- Housing Improvement District
- Ownership Workforce Housing Fund
- Rental Affordable Housing Trust Fund

Grant Programs

- Floodplain Grant Program
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- DOT/HUD Partnership for Sustainable Communities, Community Challenge Planning Grant

Loan Programs

- Upper Floor Renovation Loan program
- Small Business Development Loan (SBDL)
- La Crosse County Micro Lending Fund

Non-Funding Tools

- Zoning change
- Form based code
- Strategic placement of new infrastructure
- Code enforcement
- Design guidelines
- Land assembly
- Site preparation such as demolition, grading, platting, rezoning
- Land write-down



US HIGHWAY 53 CORRIDOR STUDY

CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN