

# Attachment A

## **Proposal to Develop Concept Designs for South Avenue (Within the City Limits)**

### **Introduction**

Toole Design Group (TDG) proposes to develop a concept design for the South Avenue, using a collaborative design workshop or charrette. South Avenue is about 4.5 miles long. TDG proposes to develop the concept design with a team of five people during a two-part charrette.

### **Staff**

Ian Lockwood and Ken Ray have some familiarity with the City already as well as some of the issues. Consequently, they will provide the leadership on the TDG Team. Ian Lockwood, PE, is a transportation engineer and the team leader for this project. He has almost three decades of experience in advancing context-sensitive street designs for cities across North America. Ken Ray, RLA a landscape architect and urban designer. He is proficient at mapping and visual communication. He is fluent with the best practices for on-street parking, green infrastructure, street trees, and inclusive/complete streets. Due to the length and complexity of the corridor, Ian and Ken will be augmented by three more Toole Design Group employees. The firm has 100 employees in 10 offices across the country. From this large pool of talent, Ian and Ken will select the specific individuals based on the dates for the charrettes and the availability of our staff.

### **Litmus Tests for Performance: Path-as Place**

The intent is to reshape South Avenue to be more attractive to live, work, play, and invest. Toole Design Group wishes to encourage and promote a planning and design culture that is friendly to these aspirations. "Path-as place" is a term that we use to help the charrette participants to describe, plan, and design the area's "paths" (i.e., the trails, sidewalks, and streets) as places.

Path-as-place is a relatively new term, but an ancient idea; it is founded on time-tested ideas that were as relevant hundreds of years ago as they are now. In many situations, a path is a simultaneously a place. An example would be a vibrant Main Street lined with bustling shops and restaurants. A Main Street is a place where people go for social and economic exchange. It is also a path along which people move through by walking, bicycling, or driving.

Creating and contributing to place along South Avenue is TDG's goal in order to: i) create comfortable environments for people using the street and visiting the places along it; ii) attract investment; iii) increase the popularity of active transportation; iv) better connect people with each other, as well as employment, services, education, and entertainment; v) increase health and happiness; and vi) create identity and pride.

A key principle of the path-as-place philosophy is that no path is more important than its place. For example, if a street is a barrier in the community due to excessive speeding, scale, or other issues, then the street needs to change so that it no longer detracts for the community and, instead, adds value to the place. Specifically along South Avenue, the path currently detracts from the place. TDG will work

with the City and stakeholders to develop cross-section(s), intersection details, and other changes such that the street can meet its potential.

Toole Design Group wrote AASHTO design guide for bicycle facilities for the USA as well as the Complete Streets guidelines for Boston, which is now the national standard. We've written numerous other guidelines and best practices and have design many streets and paths. However, what is more important that that is that we know how to listen and collaborate. It is our intent to develop plans that are tailored specifically to the City of La Crosse and the specific needs of South Avenue in accordance with the path-as-place philosophy.

The conventional approach is to plan and design for high levels-of-service for motorists during peak hours through modelling and other approaches that maximize peak-hour car-carrying capacity. However, such conventional approaches usually devalue the place. There are several examples in and around La Crosse of this conventional approach. South Avenue is one example. Rose Street, West Avenue, the one-way pair downtown, and Losey Boulevard are other examples. TDG's approach strives for accessibility and mobility of all populations (e.g., people of all ages, incomes and abilities walking and bicycling, as well as people who drive motor vehicles and take transit) through good design, and most importantly creating great addresses and great places. We believe this is what truly adds value to an area, attracts investment and people, supports employers and employees, and results in healthy outcomes socially, economically, and environmentally.

### **Conceptual Designs via a Charrette**

TDG proposes to employ a charrette for this project, using the four D's. They include: discovery, design, discussion, and documentation. We typically conduct charrettes when there is a desire to solve a complicated design problem or series of problems while involving a diverse set of stakeholders and interests. We recognize that there is some disagreement with the State DOT as to what values should drive the design of streets within La Crosse. We will be cognizant of that throughout the process but especially at the start, during our discovery stage. The charrette will be conducted in two parts, with each part lasting four days.

The charrette is an effective means of resolving potentially contentious planning and challenging design problems. The success of the charrette is due to its inclusion of the stakeholders from the area such as the institutions, neighborhood residents, property owners, business owners, business association, historic preservation interests, developers, State officials, and City officials.

The discovery stage begins with obtaining and understanding the physical context, base mapping, past studies, stakeholders' plans and visions, and other information to prepare for the design stage of the charrette. The idea is to have the participants get up to speed, learn, discuss, and share ideas and information. The discovery stage employs stakeholder interviews. These interviews typically last about 45 minutes and are convened on-site at the early stages of the charrette to gain input, data, and information and also solicit feedback on early works in progress.

By the midpoint, the charrette transitions from the discovery stage to the design stage. The design concepts for South Avenue, along with typical cross-sections and intersection details, will be developed and refined during the design stage. Towards the end of the charrette, the focus is on the

documentation stage; reaching conclusions, preparing illustrative designs, summarizing the findings, and further detailing of individual features of the South Avenue design.

During the design and documentation stages, discussions will continue with the City and stakeholders. These discussions will provide short “feedback loops,” which help ensure that the direction of the project stays on track and that work does not have to be repeated.

### **Why a Charrette?**

The remarkable success of the charrette process is due to several of its inherent features:

- **Brevity and Finality** – The stated deadline for reaching a conclusion is a major factor in resolving difficult issues. Participants do not have the option of going back to their office to think about it for long periods of time and then get back to the process with a finding or recommendation (i.e. long feedback loops are prevented). Rather, findings and recommendations are developed collaboratively and concluded. The short feedback loops make this feasible.
- **Openness and Participation** – By its very format, the charrette invites participation and openness. Stakeholders, designers, and officials are in direct contact with each other, and resolve issues readily, rather than through protracted channels of communication. Feedback loops are frequent and efficient, leading to consensus in a shorter timeframe.
- **Understanding and Appreciation** – The charrette process rapidly sets the record straight on any incorrect perceptions (e.g. unfounded rumors about redevelopment plans, assumptions about traffic conditions that are incorrect, etc.) and provides people with correct information, well targeted ideas, and a communicative venue for discussion. Charrette participants quickly gain an appreciation of the different perspectives others bring to the table, and our team helps them to rapidly focus energies on constructive work towards solutions of lasting value.
- **Efficiency and Collaboration** – Simply assembling the level of talent (i.e., design team, City officials, stakeholders, and others) in a highly focused effort produces a high level of concentration and productivity. This is reflected in a level of production and consensus that is often astonishing to observers.
- **Community Ownership** – Because the agencies, City officials, and stakeholders were part of the charrette process; they develop ownership in the results, increasing the momentum behind the effort, and increasing the probability of a successful implementation. This is vital for the South Avenue project due to its many layers, objectives, and size.

The four D’s of a successful design charrettes can all happen in a relatively short time-frame, and are outlined in detail below. In the charrette proposed for this project, the time will be split into two parts, separated by a couple of weeks, which:

- i) Allows time for some homework to occur in between the two parts, if needed;
- ii) Allows for some adjustment of the strategy for Part 2 and its anticipated products, based on what was discovered in Part 1; and

- iii) Makes a clear distinction between the desired milestones/deadlines, which will be important to help the project keep moving forward and on schedule.

## **The Charrette**

The charrette will begin by TDG helping to develop a consensus on the vision for South Avenue so that the vision can be evolved into concept designs. We will summarize the vision in a brief statement which will describe the area and street, as they ought to be in the long run. The intent is to be able to confidently design South Avenue towards a desirable future.

A two-part charrette is proposed with each part lasting four days. The process begins with a discovery stage during which TDG does due diligence by developing a well-rounded understanding of the South Avenue corridor and its past, present and future uses. By the end of the Part 1 of the charrette, the goal is to have a consensus on two things: i) all the discovered ingredients that need to inform the design; and ii) the design direction for South Avenue, as expressed through what we call “starter ideas.” These are preliminary ideas that provide participants with the early interpretations of the vision and discoveries in a rough concept plan for South Avenue. By the end of Part 1, success will mean that we are ready to proceed with a more detailed concept design plan for South Avenue (Part 2). There is “discussion” throughout Parts 1 and 2 due to the many opportunities for collaboration and short feedback loops. Documentation occurs throughout the charrette and culminates towards the end of Part 2 as TDG prepares the charrette’s final products.

## **Charrette Preparation**

Prior to the workshops, TDG will prepare base maps, using existing GIS data and/or aerial images. We will also review any readily available previous studies, information, plans, and materials as gathered earlier to establish our basic understanding of the study area.

Certain components are not included in our scope and fee, but would be beneficial to the project. If an up-to-date survey of the area and the street do not already exist, it would benefit the project to have them done to ensure project drawings are as accurate as possible. Also, peak hour traffic counts (including bicycles and pedestrians) would be helpful at the key intersections for the weekdays and weekends (if these streets are busy on weekends). It is also helpful to have peak hour turning movement counts at key intersections. In addition to plan view mapping, topographical maps are helpful for discovering drainage issues. Any past studies related to utilities, economic development, transportation planning, or urban design would be helpful if such studies exist. TDG does not anticipate collecting any new traffic data as part of this scope.

To keep costs of the workshop down, the City will be responsible for some of the charrette logistics. The City will provide a venue in a location that is convenient to the study area where most stakeholders would find accessible (perhaps at City Hall, a library, or an empty storefront). The space should be easy for people to find and adequately large to host the meetings and for the Team to collaborate with stakeholders and do their work. Usually, a space about the size of a large classroom works well. The space will need at least 8 six-foot tables and enough chairs for the expected number of participants. The space should be capable of being darkened to show slides on a blank wall or on a large screen. The City is responsible for identifying who should participate in the charrette, scheduling the interviews and meetings, and creating and sending invitations or needed advertisements in accordance with the outline below. TDG will advise the City about the arrangements as needed.

## **Dates**

The dates for the two parts of the charrette will be scheduled during mutually convenient weeks. We recommend selecting the weeks such that stakeholders can have lots of notice. In that way, busy people can get the dates and times on their calendars before scheduling becomes more difficult later. A tentative schedule of specific charrette activities is as follows:

### **Charrette Part 1**

#### *Day 1 (Monday): Discovery/Site Visit*

The TDG will arrive as early as practicable on Day 1. We will set up the workspace at the venue. TDG Team will meet with the City for initial discussions, conduct a map review of the issues, review the project objectives, and go over the charrette schedule. Then, TDG will tour of the study area with representatives of the City. For the remainder of the day, TDG will work at the venue.

The City may wish to form an Advisory Group for the design of South Avenue. If this is the case, the Advisory Group should have a diversity of interests represented in the Group from the corridor, ranging from large institutions, to local businesses, to neighborhood leaders, to representatives of special interest groups (i.e., cycling groups), to transit folks, to agency representatives. If the City establishes an Advisory Group, then we will meet with them on Monday afternoon after meeting with the City.

From 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., there will be a public meeting to introduce the project, review the goals and objectives, and get their input. The format will be a short presentation, followed by table sessions during which people will discuss, document, and share their ideas with TDG and City staff.

#### *Days 2 and 3 (Tuesday and Wednesday): Stakeholder Interviews*

During Days 2 and 3, the TDG will conduct a series of stakeholder interviews at the venue, with each one starting on the hour. Two tables will be set up for stakeholder interviews and eight time slots will be available for each table per day. Two interviews can happen concurrently if necessary (i.e., one at each table). These interviews are for stakeholders identified by the City. Usually, there are one or two people being interviewed at a time at each table. However, if there are a number of stakeholders with the same issues or from the same entity, then up to about four or five people can be interviewed at the same time. Individuals on the Advisory Group are often stakeholders as well and will be interviewed during this time.

There will be approximately 32 slots available for stakeholder interviews to ensure there are plenty of opportunities to hear from as many stakeholders as possible. It is not required that all 32 slots be filled. The members of the TDG Team not directly involved with interviews will be doing concurrent work (while still listening to occasional interviews relevant to their tasks). The beauty of the charrette venue is that all the maps, resources, and people are available, creating significant efficiencies and resulting in effective communications. It would be best if a representative from the City attends the interviews for introduction purposes, clarifying issues, and informational purposes.

There will also be public office hours for any stakeholder or member of the public who wishes to come in and share ideas, ask questions, or just see what is going on. The office hours will be from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

#### *Day 4 (Thursday): Pin-Up for the City*

From 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, there will be a pin-up for the City and anybody that the City would like to invite (e.g., the Advisory Group if applicable). During the pin-up, TDG will review the discoveries to date and the starter ideas. This is a chance for the City and Advisory Group to refine and augment their input, react to the discoveries, and comment on the starter ideas for South Avenue. Next steps will also be covered and discussed which will inform the planning for Part 2 of the charrette.

Day 4 is a production day during which the discoveries and the input are refined and summarized. Every attempt will be made to keep the summaries as visual as feasible so that they are easy to understand. Any themes, starter ideas, and preliminary direction will be summarized. There are no meetings during the day on Thursday, except for the pin-up. However, City staff are welcome to drop in and view progress, if they desire.

From 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., there will be a second pin-up for community members so that they can see how the ideas are progressing and provide additional input.

If the venue is too small for the two public meetings in Part 1, then those meetings will need to occur at a larger venue (e.g. an auditorium, council chambers, or similar venue nearby).

## **Charrette Part 2**

### *Day 1 (Monday): Design*

The TDG Team will arrive as early as practicable on Day 1 and set up the workspace at the venue. TDG will meet with the City and recap what happened in Part 1, discuss any changes that may have occurred, and review the schedule for the week. For the remainder of the day, the charrette team will work at the venue.

### *Days 2 and 3 (Tuesday and Wednesday): Advance the Starter Ideas in Plans and Design Concepts*

On Days 2 and 3, TDG will advance the starter ideas into more detailed concept plans for South Avenue. There will also be public office hours for any stakeholder or member of the public who wishes to come in and share ideas, ask questions, or view progress. The office hours will be from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday. TDG may invite various stakeholders back to review aspects of the work.

The amount of detail in the concept design will be a function of the length of the corridor, the complexity of the challenges along the corridor, and the variety of unique challenges. The objective is to provide enough detail so that the process can move forward. Products will include a summary of the inputs and design considerations, a breakdown of the street into its various contexts, typical sections along the street, network changes that will improve conditions, typical intersection treatments, and supporting material as needed.

On Wednesday afternoon, there will be a pin-up session for the City and Advisory Group (if applicable). The work to date will be presented informally and discussed. The ideas will be kept as graphical as feasible. Next steps will also be discussed that will inform what will happen after the charrette is complete, such as private property negotiations (if needed), cost-estimating, funding, construction documents, etc.

### *Day 4 (Thursday): Develop Plan*

Day 4 is a production day during which the products are finalized. There are no meetings during the day on Thursday, except for the public presentation. However, City staff are welcome to drop in and view

progress, if they desire. . A final public meeting will be held that evening. TDG will present a summary of the discovery process, the design process, the plans, and the design concept for South Avenue. There will be time for questions, answers, and discussion.

At this point, the plans and direction should have what is known as “informed consent.” This allows subsequent steps and design refinement and construction drawings to move forward with confidence. The City, stakeholders, and others have collaborated on the products and shaped the outcomes. The ownership, energy, and support of the results will help propel the project through its next steps towards implementation. The presentation and electronic copies of all the drawings and photographs, made during the charrette, will be provided to the City immediately after the presentation.

### *Summary Memorandum*

Following the charrette, the TDG team will prepare a brief memorandum summarizing the charrette recommendations, and providing next steps for the City. TDG will prepare and submit a draft memorandum, receive input, and incorporate necessary revisions into a final summary memorandum.

### **Professional Fees and Expenses**

The fees and expenses are outlined in Attachment B. As you will see, the vast majority of the time is to collaboratively advance the plans at the charrette. There is a small amount of time at the start to produce the right base maps and to coordinate with the City. There is also a small amount of time after the charrette to package up the plans and designs from the charrette and to prepare a memo to summarize the rationale for the design decisions and include anything that cannot be captured in the drawings. The intent is position the City with a design concept so that they can move deliberately towards the next steps which would include subsequent work with the property owners and other agencies, cost estimating, construction drawings, permitting, funding, and implementation. If the City would prefer a full report, then we would alter our time assumptions and be happy to prepare one.

### **Research Component**

TDG proposes to conduct a parallel research component, the results of which would be delivered concurrently with the street design-related products for the South Avenue project. If the City develops and supports a nonconventional, pro-community, and pro-business street design for South Avenue (or any other street in the future), then it is highly likely that the Wisconsin DOT will respond with something like “Where is your data, guidelines, evidence or other supporting material for your nonconventional design?” If historic patterns are any indication for the future and there is no supporting material, then the DOT will dismiss the nonconventional design out-of-hand and promote a conventional approach and design instead. For the South Avenue project, it is likely that the nonconventional design will get pushback in four topic areas, including:

- 1) 10-foot lanes (i.e., lanes narrower than 12 feet);
- 2) Slower design, posted, and operating speeds;
- 3) Separated bicycle facilities; and
- 4) Reducing or eliminating reliance on level of service (LOS) for motorists during peak hours as a decision criteria for the design changes.

A fifth topic area could be the “role of traffic demand forecasting for ‘design’ years.” This is somewhat related to the LOS topic because the conventional practice is to use computerized forecasting

techniques to produce the traffic volumes that would then be used in LOS calculations for a design year 20 to 25 years into the future. This raises the issue of the utility/wisdom of using computerized traffic demand forecasting models, at a regional scale, for planning purposes on a local (corridor-level) scale. The forecasting topic would be covered somewhat during Topic 4's research effort and may not need an independent effort.

A sixth topic area, "no right turn lanes," was also suggested for a research effort but this will be covered somewhat by the slower speed research and will definitely be considered, through a design lens, during the design project itself at the various intersections along the corridor. If the City wishes to adopt a no-right-turn-lane policy for the entire city, then this topic may deserve an independent research effort. TDG would support such a general policy. If the City needs the research so that such a policy would have more legs, then the research would be worthwhile as an additional topic.

Toole Design Group will prepare memoranda that address the first four topic areas, explaining the background research and rationale in support of our recommendations with regard to these topics. We will find quantitative and qualitative material and case studies. Commensurate with our budget, we will collect as much of the best and latest real science is on these topics as feasible. We summarize and articulate our findings and conclusions in an easy to understand, dispassionate, and objective way. We propose that the final products will be four "white papers," one for each topic, approximately five to seven pages long. The papers would be in two parts. Part 1, the largest part, would be the research. Part 2 would a brief narrative on how the topic is directly applicable to South Avenue and, in general, La Crosse.

The four topics are not equally challenging from a research perspective; so we anticipate pooling the effort so that more time can be applied to the more difficult topics such that, at the end of the process, we will produce four equally good research memoranda.

As for the schedule, we propose to submit the four draft research memoranda at the same time as the draft products for the South Avenue project, receive comments on the drafts from the City at the same time, and then submit the final versions at the same time as well.