

INTRODUCTION



Overview

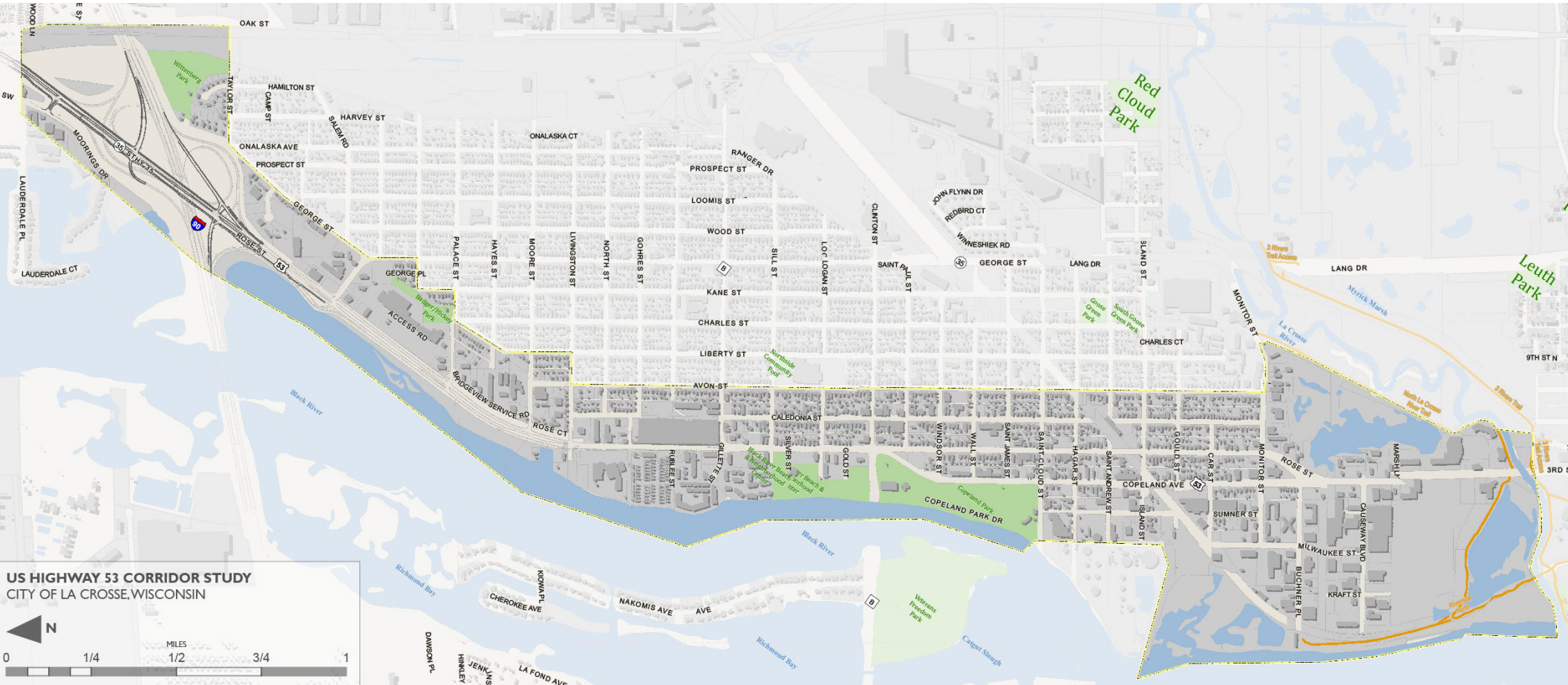
The Highway 53 Corridor Master Plan represents a truly unique opportunity to shape the future of the gateway corridor through North La Crosse. Numerous redevelopment opportunities located at key corridor nodes, as well as a strategy to guide redevelopment in a manner that is sustainable, livable, economically viable and responsive to the community's vision for the corridor are illustrated in this Plan. Through the use of strategic land use shifts, this plan focuses on enhancing visitor experiences by creating nodal attractions, better traffic flow and access to transit and amenities, and further building the anticipation of the downtown destination and removing blight.

Community character is often defined by small projects in which the whole is truly richer than the sum of its parts. The design principles recommended in this Plan will foster incremental improvements that will shape Highway 53 into a more cohesive marketplace and focus of community activity.

Hwy 53 from I-90-Exit 3 is a primary gateway into the City of La Crosse and the development of a master plan has been a high priority for many years. This Corridor is also part of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway that runs from Northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The resulting Highway 53 Master Plan documents the process, community engagement, final recommendations, and suggested tactics and strategies for implementation.

Study Area

The Highway 53 Master Plan study area boundary follows U.S. Highway (USH 53) from north of Interstate Highway 90 Exit 3 to the La Crosse River, a distance of approximately 3.8 miles. The boundary extends a few blocks to the east and west of the main highway.



Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to create a strategy to manage future growth within the Corridor in a manner that will foster an attractive destination with strong businesses in a sustainable economic setting, vibrant neighborhoods, and beautiful places featuring gateway experiences with streets that are safe, comfortable, and convenient for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and movers of freight. This Plan is intended to provide the framework necessary for land use, redevelopment, and transportation decisions of this Corridor for the next 15-20 years.

To this end, the Plan:

- ✓ Offers a guide for growth that is flexible and will respond to fluctuating market conditions.
- ✓ Ensures that potential growth of private redevelopment and improvements to the public realm will be orderly, predictable, sustainable, and integrated.
- ✓ Responds to the shared vision desired by the community.
- ✓ Creates a distinctive entrance to the Corridor and Downtown La Crosse.
- ✓ Maximizes the potential for market synergy and reinforces urban design, redevelopment, and economic development objectives.
- ✓ Will improve the experience within the Corridor by creating pedestrian-friendly public realm and by strengthening the connections with nearby points of interest.
- ✓ Promotes design excellence in all aspects of the corridor.
- ✓ Outlines implementation strategies for amenities and infrastructure improvements.

Key Terms

Several key terms are used throughout this Plan to describe specific or unique concepts and/or ideas that are not typically used in everyday language. Those key terms are defined:

Best Management Practice (BMP)

A tactic or combination of tactics that is determined to be an effective and practicable means of accomplishing desired goals or outcomes.

Business Improvement District

A defined area within which businesses are required to pay an additional tax (or levy) in order to fund projects within the district's boundaries.

Floodplain

Any land area susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters from any source.

Floodway

The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to flood discharge.

Green Infrastructure

Stormwater BMPs that protect, restore, or mimic the natural water cycle.

Master Plan

A comprehensive or far-reaching plan of action.

Pulse Node

Area of high-intensity, mixed-use residential and commercial development at primary corridor intersections. These pulse nodes will be linked by a continuous transportation corridor with improved streetscape and residential uses. Different levels of activity will promote pedestrian activity and business vitality along the corridor and create a rhythm of development, which helps to segment the linear corridor into distinct areas that will now be inter-connected to create a greater sense of place.

Stakeholder

A person, business, or other organization with an interest or concern regarding the Master Plan and study area.

Zoning Code

A set of municipal regulations that control the physical development of land and the kinds of uses to which each individual property may be placed.

Project Structure

The creation of the Highway 53 Corridor Master Plan was a collaborative effort between the City of La Crosse, Northside and community stakeholders. The Project Team collaborated with the following teams to advise project staff and manage the planning process.

Highway 53 Corridor Master Plan Steering Committee (Steering Committee) made pivotal decisions and commented on major project deliverables. The Steering Committee comprised elected officials from the City of La Crosse, business owners, business organization leaders, and neighborhood residents.

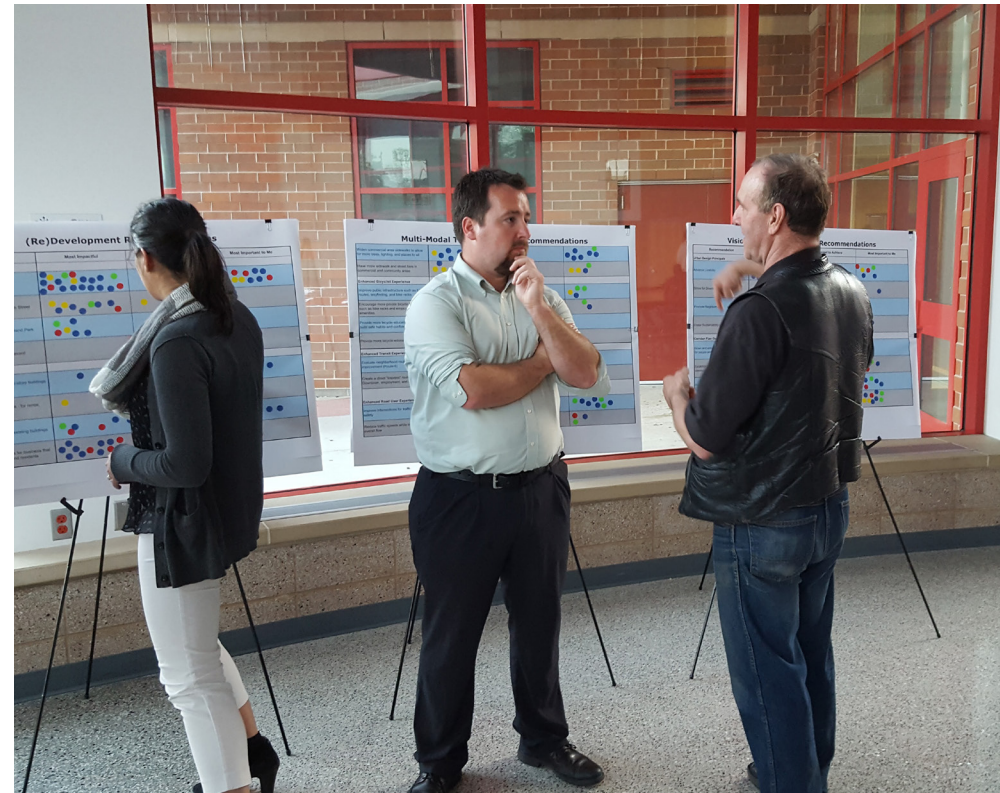
Project Management Team (PMT) coordinated day-to-day project activities and is comprised of the City of La Crosse Planning and Development Department Staff.

Community Engagement

In addition to regular public meetings with the Steering Committee, the Project Management Team engaged the community by:

- ✓ Hosting three public workshops.
- ✓ Hosting one open house.
- ✓ Holding focus groups for input on various plan elements.
- ✓ Assembling business owners for stakeholder meetings.
- ✓ Attending community meetings and events, including: neighborhood meetings for the Northside Logan and Lower Northside Depot Neighborhoods and Lights Over North La Crosse.

More details and outcomes from the community engagement activities can be found in the Community Engagement Section of the Plan.



Project Schedule

SEPTEMBER 2016

Planning Began
Inventory and Analysis of
assets and needs

MARCH 2017 - APRIL 2017

Community reviewed and commented
on redevelopment recommendations for
identified pulse nodes.

NOVEMBER 2017

Plan was drafted for
review.

DECEMBER 2016 -
FEBRUARY 2017

Project Team worked with community to
develop design options
Decisions on redevelopment
recommendations for identified pulse
nodes were made.

MAY 2017

Preferred Corridor framework was
determined

Detailed recommendations for
Pulse Node A @ George Street
were Developed.

MARCH 2018

Final Plan released.

How To Use This Master Plan

The following design guidelines serve as a tool for evaluating redevelopment proposals and making decisions about public and private investments along Highway 53. They will ensure that incremental site design and architectural, streetscape, and roadway projects contribute to the desirable image for the Northside of La Crosse. Illustrations and photographs are included within this plan to communicate the intent and character of the principles and guidelines.

Public Sector

- ✓ This document should be adopted as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan, which will require submittal from the City Plan Commission.
- ✓ Any recommended changes to the Zoning Code should be codified and incorporated into the Zoning District Standards.
- ✓ City departments should refer to the concept designs as a basis from which to develop more detailed special area studies and implementation strategies.
- ✓ City departments should refer to objectives and recommendations in this manual to coordinate, design, and budget for Capital Improvements (CIP).
- ✓ The Planning & Development, Engineering, and Fire Departments should refer to the guidelines when reviewing individual development proposals. Each proposed development or renovation should reinforce the principles and comply with the guidelines.
- ✓ The City should consider the formulation or assignment of a board, commission, or committee to ensure that all development proposals within the Highway 53 Corridor comply with design guidelines.
- ✓ The City should consider a public/private partnership with a Business Improvement District (BID) or a nonprofit development corporation to assist with future management and implementation.
- ✓ A stand-alone document that summarizes the primary objectives and guidelines should be prepared and made available to prospective developers.
- ✓ The public should have access this Master Plan from the City's Official website.
- ✓ Elected leaders should thoroughly understand this Master Plan and use its guidance and recommendations throughout the intended life of the plan when making policy decisions to ensure the successful incremental implementation of the Master Plan.

Private Sector

- ✓ Developers should refer to this Master Plan in order to understand the community's overall goals and determine how potential development fits into the context of the corridor in which the project is proposed. Pertinent chapters in this plan may be copied in order to provide interested parties a summary of the objectives and guidelines for each district.
- ✓ Developers should refer to the Site Planning and Design Guidelines to understand the design intent and the minimum standards for quality expected.
- ✓ Developers, business owners, and other stakeholders should communicate their knowledge and of this Master Plan and their proposal's compatibility with this Master Plan to neighborhood associations, City staff, elected officials, the community, and other stakeholders to gain support for their proposals.
- ✓ Non-Profits should review this plan to find commonalities, overlaps, and adjacencies to their mission. Once identified, non-profits should reach out to the City and other organizations with responsibilities to interact and collaborate on common goals to achieve efficiency.
- ✓ Philanthropists / Foundations should review this plan to find commonalities, overlaps, and adjacencies to their mission. They should consider financial support of any recommendations in this plan that make a good fit, and prioritize the ones that most closely achieve their mission to gain efficiency.
- ✓ Neighborhood Associations should review this plan to find commonalities, overlaps, and adjacencies to their plans and goals. They should work with City Council members, City staff, and other stakeholders to prioritize common goals.