



NORTH FISH HATCHERY ROAD

OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS & CONCEPT PLANNING



A Dane County BUILD Project
Prepared for the City of Fitchburg Wisconsin by
Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc. and BEST Real Estate, Inc.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the City of Fitchburg received a grant from Dane County's Better Urban Infill Development (BUILD) Program and retained Schreiber/Anderson Associates and BEST Real Estate, to prepare an improvement plan and market analysis for the north Fish Hatchery Road corridor. The purpose of the plan is to assist public and private sector leadership in addressing the economics of an older commercial corridor and its role in the community while establishing a realistic program for coordinated short-term action within the context of a feasible and flexible long-term framework plan.

The North Fish Hatchery Road Improvement Plan provides a series of recommendations aimed at sustaining a healthy and economically viable entrance to the City of Fitchburg. With its location in the heart of the greater metropolitan area and Dane County, the north Fish Hatchery Road corridor presents many opportunities for new development, redevelopment and infill in a segment of the City that is extremely well served by existing infrastructure and services. The plan also addresses the many challenges associated with the redevelopment of an aging commercial corridor to attract new investment by businesses, residents and community leaders.

The primary purpose of the plan is to provide comprehensive, market-based recommendations for improvements to transportation, parking, land use and redevelopment and streetscape, wayfinding, and open space to strengthen north Fish Hatchery Road as an important community and neighborhood serving commercial corridor. The plan is intended as a tool to guide short-term and long-term investment decisions by the City, public agencies, developers, business owners, property owners and others that will minimize the impacts of uncoordinated planning decisions and parcel-by-parcel development.

II. PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS

The North Fish Hatchery Road Improvement Plan has been developed as part of a thorough public review and input process. A Steering Committee was established to coordinate the project, review consultant recommendations and solicit public input on plan recommendations. The Steering Committee included representatives from various groups along the corridor and within the larger community including: Alderpersons; the South Metropolitan Business Association, business owners, property owners, developers, residents, and Fitchburg's Economic Development Coordinator and City Planner.

Several meetings were held during the planning process to discuss the plan and solicit public input. These meetings included two community forums, four steering committee meetings, three worksessions with City Staff, one meeting with Alderpersons to discuss the extension of Post Road, one meeting with property owners to discuss development east of the corridor, one City Council Meeting, and one Plan Commission meeting including the public hearing. In addition to the public meetings, interviews were conducted with over 30 individual business owners, property owners, developers and residents during the planning process. A list of stakeholder interview highlights is included in the Appendix.

Starting in October 2003 the consultant team conducted numerous site visits to observe the study area, analyzed documents, data sources and categories of information on the study area; conducted technical and planning studies to analyze market potentials and existing infrastructure; prepared memoranda on the existing physical and market conditions and developed analyses of various market-based opportunities for north Fish Hatchery Road.

Following the technical studies which established the framework for the corridor plan, a series of land use plan recommendations were prepared and discussed extensively with the Steering Committee and City Staff. The

resulting plan recommendations are both pragmatic in terms of market realities yet visionary in terms of physical improvements which create an identity for north Fish Hatchery Road and make it an enjoyable place for residents, workers and customers. The land use plan is also flexible enough to accommodate change and beneficial future proposals which may emerge as new opportunities present themselves along the corridor.

While the plan emphasizes a long-term physical development framework, the process has also focused on short-term development actions which can produce synergistic impacts and that have the potential to reposition the corridor economy and heighten investor confidence. Many private development and redevelopment projects are already moving forward as the plan is being completed.

Three primary themes characterized the planning process. Among them the need to: improve multimodal access; establish a theme and identity which capitalizes on the corridor's location and unique amenities to attract new investment; and determine a coordinated market-based approach to land use and redevelopment along the corridor.

III. VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Vision Statement

North Fish Hatchery Road will be a dynamic entrance to the City of Fitchburg. It will continue to consist of vibrant businesses, build stronger ties to more integrated neighborhoods, improve the safety and convenience of the transportation facilities, establish viable connections to the surrounding parks and recreational spaces, enhance the attractiveness of the streetscape, buildings, signage, and landscaping, and establish a unique identity in the City and region. Residents, business people, visitors and commuters will enjoy living, shopping, and interacting with one another in this engaging place.

This project represents a joint effort between the City of Fitchburg and Dane County's Better Urban Infill Development (BUILD) Program and as such the goals for the project are two-fold. The first list details the guidelines and goals that apply to all BUILD projects. The second is a list developed by the steering committee to guide the North Fish Hatchery Road Opportunity Analysis & Concept Planning process.

Dane County B.U.I.L.D. Objectives

- Make better use of existing infrastructure.
- Locate community services, jobs and shopping in close proximity.
- Stabilize and enhance existing neighborhoods, downtowns and other business districts.
- Produce housing and jobs for low- to moderate-income people.
- Avoid converting productive farmland on urban fringes and in rural areas.
- Provide viable options to automobile trips by supporting walking, biking, and transit.
- Have the potential to clean up environmentally contaminated sites.

North Fish Hatchery Road Improvement District Goals

- Enhance the business district's economic viability and vitality.
- Provide for safe multimodal access.
- Enhance pedestrian use and safety.
- Create a visually appealing, inviting and sustainable image for the corridor.
- Unify, connect and integrate the neighborhoods with the business district.
- Preserve and enhance open space and recreation opportunities, and protect water quality in the Nevin Springs Fish and Wildlife Area.
- Promote partnerships between the municipalities, businesses and neighborhoods.

- Create a safe place – both in perception and reality.
- Create an inspiring theme and identity for the corridor celebrating the environmental character of the area and the City.

MARKET ASSESSMENT

The north Fish Hatchery Road market assessment was developed in consultation with business owners, developers, property owners and the City’s Economic Development Coordinator. The market assessment provides the basis for the land use plan and recommendations for improvements to the corridor. The assessment identified key market strengths for the study area including: convenient location; high traffic counts; land available for development combined with significant developer interest; strong daytime employment base; growing residential market area; and unique natural and cultural amenities. The assessment also identifies weaknesses in the north Fish Hatchery Road market including: lack of either visibility or identity; lack of access to and from businesses; and declining adjacent neighborhoods.

IV. LAND USE PLAN AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The land use plan recommendations are structured into general recommendations which address broad areas of improvement, specific recommendations which identify the location and description of specific improvements recommended for north Fish Hatchery Road and an overall land use plan which indicates the recommended location and mix of uses within the study area. The attached North Fish Hatchery Road Plan identifies these recommendations in greater depth. The recommendations are organized into five categories: transportation; parking; streetscape and wayfinding; land use and redevelopment; and an overall land use map and definitions.

Recommendations for Improved Access

Recommendations for improvements to multimodal circulation and access are focused on enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety while improving traffic flow and minimizing congestion. In developing recommendations for the movement of multi-modal traffic along north Fish Hatchery Road discussions were held with the City of Fitchburg’s Engineering and Public Works Department and Parks and Recreation Department. The Plan identifies a new circulation pattern consisting of: extended cross streets which utilize traffic calming to minimize adverse affects on adjacent residential; sidewalks and alleys to connect parking areas along the corridor and relieve the pressure on north Fish Hatchery Road. Further, the plan recommends minimizing curb cuts and left hand turns and creating shared parking and access drives to improve access to businesses and further relieve stress on north Fish Hatchery Road. The plan also identifies opportunities to extend pedestrian and bicycle trails to the corridor and improve intersections to create safe pedestrian crossings along the corridor.

Parking Recommendations

Parking recommendations were developed in consultation with market analysts, the City and the business community for review by the Steering Committee. Generally, businesses and residences along north Fish Hatchery Road within the study area utilize individual, privately owned parking areas. The plan recommends consolidating existing parking areas into shared parking areas with shared access drives. In the long term businesses that develop along north Fish Hatchery Road will be encouraged to incorporate rear access drives to serve multiple businesses and take local traffic off of north Fish Hatchery Road.

Streetscape and Wayfinding Recommendations

Enhancing the streetscape and visual character of the study area will be necessary to create a stronger identity for the corridor as the gateway to Fitchburg and to establish a pedestrian character on north Fish Hatchery Road and future cross streets which will better support the business district. The land use plan recommends several improvements to enhance the visual and pedestrian character of north Fish Hatchery Road including: burial of overhead utility lines; integration of the natural aesthetic of the Nine-Springs E-Way into the corridor streetscape design; coordinated streetscape amenities; a wayfinding system which will guide automobile travelers, pedestrians and bicyclists to destinations along the corridor and around the community; and gateway signage which clearly delineates the entrance into Fitchburg.

Land Use & Redevelopment Recommendations

The north Fish Hatchery Road study area contains many varied sites with great potential for infill and redevelopment. These sites offer the City an opportunity to improve the identity of the corridor and enhance the existing mix of retail, residential, office and light industrial with more neighborhood and community commercial opportunities and a greater range of housing choices. Key redevelopment areas include: a new mixed-use neighborhood and community commercial core centered around the intersection of north Fish Hatchery Road and the extended Post Road; a community gateway immediately south of Greenway Cross which will transition in the long term to well-designed mixed-use buildings that frame the corridor; and a residential /institutional mixed-use district that builds on an emerging regional medical niche in the study area.

Land Use Plan

The land use plan builds upon the framework created in the opportunity analysis, indicating in greater detail the recommended location and mix of uses along the north Fish Hatchery Road corridor. The resulting land use plan map illustrates a coordinated mix of uses intended to capitalize on the study area's unique amenities and produce a synergy between uses which improves the corridor functionally, aesthetically and economically. The land use plan is also intended to be a flexible document that can adapt to change in the marketplace and take advantage of promising future proposals.

V. DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design Guidelines for private property improvements were prepared for north Fish Hatchery Road to address how new development, redevelopment and infill can better address the street and articulate the gateway to the City of Fitchburg.

The purpose of the design guidelines is to provide clear direction for how property owners should make improvements to their building and properties to improve the visual character and safety of north Fish Hatchery Road. The guidelines seek to create a consistent building and site design along the corridor while continuing to allow each building and site to uniquely express itself. In addition, the design guidelines seek to prevent the visual and functional impact of uncoordinated design decisions.

The North Fish Hatchery Road Design Guidelines will accomplish the following goals:

- Improve the visual character of the north Fish Hatchery Road corridor to reflect its role as one of the major entrances to the City of Fitchburg and encourage high quality infill and redevelopment projects in this centrally located urban corridor.
- Design a visually pleasing, safe, and socially stimulating business district for the north side of the City.

- Improve the destination appeal, identity and long-term economic vitality of the North Fish Hatchery Road Business District in order to encourage infill and redevelopment in an urban district well served by existing infrastructure.
- Allow for self-expression, innovation, diversity and affordability in private property improvements to create an overall attractive appearance for the north Fish Hatchery Road corridor.

These design guidelines are intended to inform the creation of an urban design overlay district for the study area.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Implementation is the logical step following the adoption of the plan. Implementation requires several key components to be successful. Implementation must be done with commitment – that is, the community must undertake plan implementation with the full understanding of its complexity, the time required, and the relationship and sequence of the plan’s various elements. Implementation must be funded; the community must allocate adequate resources for staff, professional assistance, project funding, and financial leverage. Implementation requires partnerships; public and private sector individuals and organizations must come together as an implementation team. Finally, implementation must be dynamic; unanticipated redevelopment opportunities will present themselves throughout the process of planned implementation, so the implementation team must be able to assess and reprioritize on a continuous basis to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

The implementation strategy included in the plan details the steps and activities needed to implement the North Fish Hatchery Road Improvement Plan, including:

- Implementation organization
- Market Priorities
- Implementation Process and Priorities
- Business Retention & Recruitment
- Developer Recruitment
- Funding Opportunities

The stabilization of the Ridgewood Country Club Apartments was identified as critical to the redevelopment of the north Fish Hatchery Road business district.

CONCLUSION

The work undertaken during 2003 and 2004 in researching, analyzing, coordinating, and preparing this improvement plan is just the beginning. With the necessary plan and action program to in place to lead the way, the challenge to the citizens, city government and business leaders of Fitchburg is to join together to assist efforts that can ensure the successful redevelopment of an important community and regional commercial corridor.