

# City of Whitefish

## Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Steering Committee

**Date:** Tuesday, Sept. 13

**Time:** 3:00 AM – 5:00 PM

**Location:** Whitefish City Hall

**In Attendance:** Andy Feury, Pam Barberis, Rebecca Norton, Tim Hinderman, Tom Tornow, Reeves Stanwood, Mary Pearson, Toby Scott, Dave Taylor, Craig Workman, Karin Hilding, Wendy Compton-Ring, Maria Butts, Kate McMahon, Christine Richman, Ryan Mitchell, B.J. Grieve, (By Phone: Jim Skinner, MDT & Brianna Whitaker, MDT)

### Discussion Items:

#### 1. Overview & Planning Process

- Kate McMahon from Applied Communications is the lead consultant and introduced the other members of the team – Christine Richman from GBSRichman Consulting and Ryan Mitchell from Peccia & Associates. The Steering Committee members and city staff introduced themselves.
- Kate McMahon reviewed a PowerPoint with an overview of the project. The need for a Corridor Plan was noted in the 2007 Growth Policy.
- The Committee noted that in other relevant planning documents that should be reviewed include the neighborhood plans for Iron Horse and Big Mountain Resort as well as any the conservation easement in the area.
- Kate McMahon reviewed the planning process. It was noted that the Corridor Plan will be adopted as an amendment to the Growth Policy.
- The Steering Committee agreed to have regular meetings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 3:00 pm. In November, the meeting will be on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday to avoid conflicts with election day. Meeting dates through the end of the year are Oct. 11, Nov. 15 and Dec. 13.
- The Committee agreed to conduct the meetings at different locations in the corridor to encourage participation from residents and businesses in the study area. Toby Scott volunteered to assist with scheduling a meeting at Mountain Harbor community room for November. Kate will check with the Tap House for the November meeting.
- The Committee discussed conducting a community meeting to get input for either late October or early November. The consultant will check with the Lodge at Whitefish Lake about the possibility of hosting the meeting at that location.
- Kate McMahon reviewed some base maps regarding land use and zoning. She noted there is significant amount of land that has the potential for redevelopment of the 20-year planning horizon. It was noted that Joe Gregory owned a number of large vacant parcels in the corridor. B.J. Grieve from WGM noted that the firm was representing Joe Gregory and would be involved in future meetings.

- The Committee expressed a concern with the U.S. Highway 93 West – Corridor Plan there was conflict between the residents and the commercial interests. They hoped the process for Wisconsin Ave. would produce more of a consensus.

## 2. Transportation & Infrastructure

- Ryan Mitchell reviewed the transportation issues in the corridor. Wisconsin Ave. is the main north-south corridor and experiences congestion and delay. The Transportation Plan recommends some improvements such as turn lanes and these will be reviewed as part of the planning process.
- The current multi-use bike path crosses Wisconsin Ave. at several locations which creates some safety issues. It would be preferable to have the path on just one side of the street.
- The S.N.O.W Bus and Eagle transit makes stops along the corridor.
- There is an aging water line in Wisconsin Avenue that will need to be upgraded.
- The Viking Lift Station located just north of Crestwood Drive is at 50% capacity. There is a potential bottleneck where the sewer line goes under the railroad track.

## 3. Economic Performance Analysis

- Christine reviewed the economic performance data related to overall city/county trends on tourism and visitor spending. She reviewed specific data to the corridor related to land use, population, housing and employment data.
- The Committee asked how much of the increase in employment since 2000 was related to the Lodge at Whitefish Lake.
- It was noted that with the new distillery and bar and other eating establishments, the corridor has seen an increase in pedestrian traffic.
- There was discussion that the corridor should have more of a linkage with downtown. The corridor can take some of the pressure off of downtown. The Downtown Master Plan should be consulted regarding improvements to the pedestrian trail and viaduct. It was recommended to coordinate with MDT on more landscaping in the right-of-way by the viaduct.

## 4. Opportunities and Issues

- The corridor is walking distance to downtown which is a big advantage.
- There are different segments to the corridor. High density residential and mix of commercial on the south end with medium density and resort residential in the middle. There is lower density and higher income residential development on the northern part of the corridor.
- The corridor has been attracting entrepreneurs and new business such as the brewery.
- Businesses have parking as opposed to the downtown which has a parking shortage.
- The commercial is small scale neighborhood oriented and this scale and feel should be maintained. The commercial should be local business that serves the corridor.
- Do not want a continuous commercial strip along the corridor. The roadway is narrow and does not have the capacity to handle the type of commercial development along U.S. 93 South.
- Traffic is increasing in the corridor. It will be important to coordinate with Big Mountain Resort since their plans will influence future traffic volumes in the corridor.
- Pedestrian crossings are a safety concern. There is a lack of turn lanes.
- Refer to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan regarding emergency access to Big Mountain.

- There was discussion about a stop light at Big Mountain Road and Wisconsin versus a round-about. This will require additional traffic analysis from MDT to determine the best solution.
- There was discussion about traffic at Reservoir Road intersection and the increase in traffic that will occur once the new trailhead for Haskill Basin is constructed. This would require further analysis by MDT to determine if additional traffic control measures are needed.

#### 5. Next Steps

- Develop an on-line community survey to be reviewed by the Committee at the next meeting. Once the survey is finalized the link can be posted on the City's web site.
- Develop a list serve of interested parties to receive meeting notices and updates on the plan.
- Check into reserving meeting space for the next Steering Committee meeting and the Community meeting.
- Discuss format for community meeting at next Steering Committee meeting.
- Post PDF of PowerPoint to the City web site. Planning updates will be posted to the City website.