



Executive Summary

WEST FLORISSANT AVENUE GREAT STREETS MASTER PLAN



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This document summarizes the recommendations of the West Florissant Great Streets demonstration project sponsored by East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the Cities of Dellwood and Ferguson, and St. Louis County. The planning process commenced in November 2013 and concluded June 30, 2014.

West Florissant Avenue, in North St. Louis County, has long been a street that serves motorized vehicles well. In recent years there has been increasing need to do more than that – local communities along this corridor need also to be able to walk, bus, and bike, and many see the corridor as their only central place for shopping, meeting neighbors, and economic development.

The project aimed to re-imagine West Florissant Avenue to help improve economic conditions, create an attractive sense of place, and help vehicles, bicyclists and people move safely through the corridor.

The project proposes a wide range of improvements to the avenue between the Buzz Westfall Plaza Shopping Center to the south and Interstate 270 to the north.

The project embraced as its guide and sought to achieve in full the eight principles of the St. Louis Great Streets Initiative, which include:

1. Great Streets are great places
2. Great Streets integrate land use and transportation planning
3. Great Streets accommodate all users and all modes
4. Great Streets are economically vibrant
5. Great Streets are environmentally responsible
6. Great Streets rely on current thinking
7. Great Streets are measurable
8. Great Streets develop collaboratively

OVERALL CORRIDOR GOALS

The plan vision forms the basis for corridor-wide goals and strategies. The corridor goals are more specific outcomes desired for the future, and the strategies are general approaches used to achieve the goals and vision.

A VISION FOR WEST FLORISSANT AVENUE...

West Florissant Avenue connects neighborhoods, institutions, parks and town center areas with safe and attractive linkages for pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and transit.

The design of the street brings a cohesive image and identity to Dellwood and Ferguson. Civic places and walkable areas define the heart of the community.

This Great Street offers a healthy lifestyle not solely dependent on cars and benefits from rich sustainable landscapes and natural features. The street’s future development is the reflection of strong collaboration among Dellwood, Ferguson, and St. Louis County.

CORRIDOR GOALS

A. MOBILITY, ACCESS AND SAFETY

Create a community that is connected, safe, and accessible for all users, including those moving to, through, and within the West Florissant Avenue Corridor

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support existing residents and attract businesses that better serve them through goods, services and economic opportunity

C. COMMUNITY PLACES

Design *Places* where people want to gather and connect

D. IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Provide places that create a distinctive and marketable community image and identity

E. SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Implement best practices in sustainable, resource-conserving development including transportation, building and redevelopment, and public gathering areas

CORRIDOR STRATEGIES

A1. Maximize the efficient use of space along the corridor to accommodate all users and mode shifts
 A2. Include practical and amenable pedestrian facilities (particularly at crossings)
 A3. Enhance green links like Maline and Hudson Creeks

A4. Employ access management to improve congestion and create continuity in walking
 A5. Enhance personal safety by creating a more vibrant and welcoming urban setting



B1. Target public investment where it is most catalytic
 B2. Invest in the public realm to improve the image and marketability of West Florissant Avenue
 B3. Capitalize on investments in transit to improve access to jobs and services and attract new business

B4. Encourage redevelopment of aging / obsolete properties / land uses
 B5. Seek institutional, corporate, and foundation partners to advance joint goals
 B6. Bolster property values through smart investment



C1. Develop town center meeting places at the heart of the pedestrian and shopping activity
 C2. Create and enhance civic places, green spaces, and the activities that enliven them

C3. Improve access to corridor destinations from surrounding neighborhoods



D1. Reduce paved areas and visible parking in targeted areas
 D2. Beautify through green infrastructure, natural spaces and green linkages
 D3. Encourage complimentary land uses

D4. Design branded elements like streetscape amenities and gateways that define the corridor
 D5. Provide guidance for more attractive development, including building siting, signage and façade design



E1. Encourage a more walkable and transit-based community that helps lower exhaust emissions and enhance public health
 E2. Collect and treat stormwater to reduce pollution entering streams
 E3. Use trees and vegetation to create a more attractive place to live

E4. Reduce paved areas to reduce heat island effect
 E5. Look for opportunities to reduce light and noise pollution
 E6. Provide guidance and clarify roles for effective maintenance
 E7. Reduce load on utility, electrical, stormwater infrastructure and reduce maintenance.



PROCESS FOR EVALUATING ALTERNATIVES

In order to arrive at a final concept, a process of reviewing and refining ideas must take place with the public and key stakeholders. This process of reviewing and redrafting concepts is called alternatives analysis, and immediately preceded the development of the Master Plan. The consultant team spent several weeks evaluating a vision statement, goals and concepts that met the expectations of the community for the West Florissant Avenue project. Specifically, the analysis included evaluation of five concept categories:

- Overall Vision, Goals and Strategies
- Specific corridor segment visions and strategies addressing land use, identity and image, as well as mobility and access
- Toolbox of techniques to apply in the corridor re-design, encompassing multi-modal transportation, green spaces, lighting, sustainability, infrastructure and utilities, parking, zoning, and placemaking.
- Specific economic development concepts for two key segments
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) access scenarios

The team led a process that included three Community Advisory Committee meetings as well as two rounds of public workshops that helped to set priorities that defined a vision, goals and strategies, and that in later meetings helped vet specific design proposals. Electronic polling was used to approve the vision, goals, and toolbox of design proposals, and again to vote on specific design alternatives (see appendix for full results). Working sessions with the Technical Advisory Committee were also held, and open houses with merchants and property owners opened up discussions about the concepts. The team also presented scenarios that would improve access from the corridor to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that Metro is planning for the corridor.

In all public meetings, there was very strong consensus on both broad and specific proposals.

The Vision Framework, presented in Chapter Four, divides the corridor into five separate segments for further study and design recommendations. Each corridor segment was presented separately with its own vision statement and strategies. Key proposals dealing with future land use were approved and helped set the framework for concept design.

Specifically, the team identified that segments 3 and 5 were ripe for major redevelopment, and which were the subject of further concept development as described below under section 3.2.4, Economic Development Concepts. It was agreed that the remaining three segments (1, 2 and 4) would retain their basic existing character. Segment 1 (North Gateway) has been recently redeveloped as a regional retail center and is likely to hold that course for the foreseeable future. Segments 2 (Green Boulevard) and 4 (Residential Avenue) are largely residential or institutional and participants agreed their character should remain more passive and green. Additional segment strategies for mobility and identity-image were also approved through the CAC and public meetings, and were therefore used to structure the recommendations in the Master Plan.

NORTH GATEWAY, CORRIDOR SEGMENT 1

The North Gateway, which runs from the I-270 interchange in the north to just south of Keelen Avenue, is a major economic development hub. The area is characterized by highway-serving big-box retail, including a successful Wal-Mart. A new transit center, planned for the northeast corner of the North Gateway, will be a major new regional hub. Few significant land use changes are expected in this segment.

North Gateway Vision: A regional retail center that draws customers to West Florissant Avenue from surrounding communities

A dedicated multi-use path on the east side and widened west sidewalk significantly improves non-motorized access. A new green median is used in the center turn lane, while still providing a high-quality pedestrian refuge. A green buffer helps protect pedestrians and cyclists from traffic along both sides of the street. In the long term, evolving standards, maintenance capabilities, and technologies may allow the addition of more trees and wider buffers, although this will strictly depend on leadership and collaboration from the cities of Ferguson and Dellwood, and on the outcomes of MoDOT's study of the I-270 interchange and Metro's design of Bus Rapid Transit on the corridor.



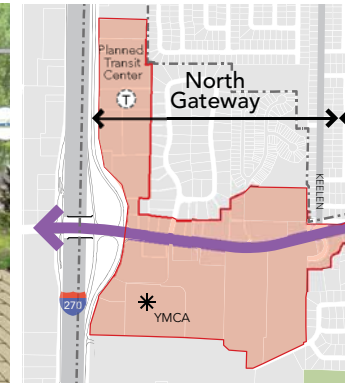
Existing condition



Near-term goal



Long-term vision



Location



Plan view of near-term goal

GREEN BOULEVARD, CORRIDOR SEGMENT 2

Greenery, a creek crossing, and large front lawns are the most attractive and recognizable features of Corridor Segment 2, the Green Boulevard, which stretches from just south of Keelen Avenue to Stein Ave. Views down the avenue here from the hilltops are quite beautiful, and leave a lasting impression about the community and its heritage.

This segment is bisected by the Hudson Creek riparian corridor, an underutilized natural resource that could connect Bon Oak Park to the north and Hudson Park to the south.

Green Boulevard Vision: The Green Boulevard segment is envisioned as an attractive green roadway connecting neighborhood institutions and parks.

West Florissant Avenue can serve as a major green nexus for the neighborhood, rather than simply a wide road for cars. If a greenway along Hudson Creek were developed, running west to Hudson Park, this would create a greenway connector of neighborhood open spaces. Zoning and land use regulations should reinforce the green community character of the Green Boulevard, limit commercial development, and redirect retail to existing nodes.



Existing condition



Near-term goal



Long-term vision



Location



Plan view of near-term goal

DELLWOOD TOWN CENTER, CORRIDOR SEGMENT 3

The intersection of West Florissant Avenue at Chambers Road, in Dellwood, is an important central site that has regional access and convenient connections to downtown Ferguson. Dellwood City Hall, Dellwood Park and the Recreation Center are major civic assets in this area, and Dellwood Crossing is one of the most successful retail centers along the corridor. However, older retail is struggling and Springwood Plaza has been vacant and unproductive for several years. Small, shallow commercial parcels are conducive to redevelopment on a small scale, and are therefore friendly to local developers, rather than larger traditional developers.

Dellwood Town Center Vision: A walkable and friendly town center that is the heart of Dellwood

Major streetscape improvements will enhance attractiveness of this segment, help establish it as the heart of the City of Dellwood, and greatly improve access to this hub through transit, biking and walking. Building on the Bus Rapid Transit station that is proposed for Chambers Road, the intersection can attract development to create a transit-oriented urban center that has a distinct local identity.



Existing condition



Near-term goal



Long-term vision



Plan view of near-term goal



Location

RESIDENTIAL AVENUE, CORRIDOR SEGMENT 4

Corridor Segment 4, which ranges from west of Highmont to Maline Creek, has a purely residential character. This has a major impact on the design of the roadway, which shrinks in size to four lanes with wide green buffers and sidewalks under the shade of trees. The multi-use path becomes a major neighborhood amenity for the residents along this stretch.

Residential Avenue Vision: A verdant residential corridor that will be enhanced by natural areas and Maline Creek

Although already an attractive stretch of road, the corridor will become even greener and, with a center planted median, significantly more scenic. The Residential Avenue segment should support and complement the quiet residential neighborhood through which it passes, and design should help minimize the impact of noise and lights and maximize aesthetics. Here, West Florissant should be designed as a calm residential street that is safe and pleasant to live along. The overall green character of this neighborhood will be reinforced through the addition of stormwater plantings, a green median, street trees, and a multi-use pathway.



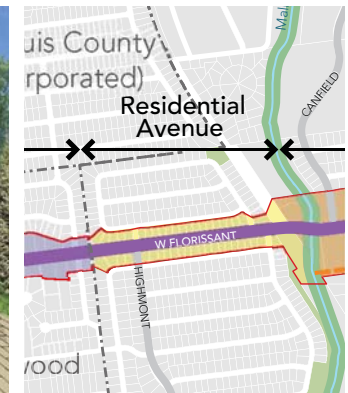
Existing condition



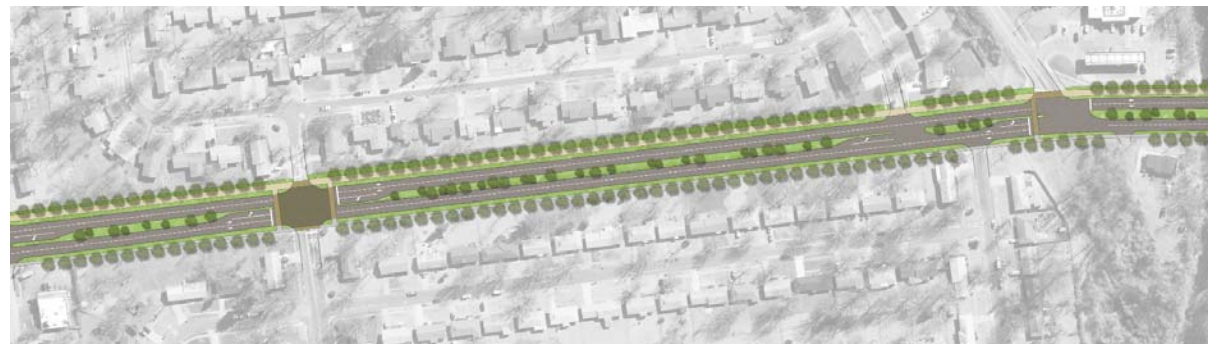
Near-term goal



Long-term vision



Location



Plan view of near-term goal

SOUTH GATEWAY, CORRIDOR SEGMENT 5

The South Gateway, which ranges from Maline Creek to the southern border of the project study area at the rail line south of Ferguson, is strip commercial most of the way. Considerable opportunity for continued economic development exists in this area, which is well-suited to redevelopment because of its large and deep parcels.

South Gateway Vision: A neighborhood node that will be distinguished by sustainable practices that promote a healthy creek environment and high quality of life for residents and visitors.

New retail and office uses can define a street wall and create a vibrant place with active street life. Maline Creek can be a wonderful setting for gracious and carefully-designed apartments and townhouses. This housing could be integrated into and themed to the Maline Creek Greenway, which would be attractive to potential residents buying or renting in either the mixed-income and senior housing market, which have both been identified as a niche opportunity in the study area.



Existing condition



Near-term goal



Long-term vision



Location



Plan view of near-term goal

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation chapter of the Master Plan defines the “how-to” steps for phasing the public investments that will in turn leverage catalytic private developments in the corridor. This phasing framework creates a solid foundation from which to base logical decisions and to allocate limited resources.

To achieve the overall vision and goals, it is important to stress that:

- Land use vision sets the goal. It is the land use plan that most clearly paints the picture of what residents, businesses, and owners say they want for the future of their community
- The transportation system, utilities, and environmental measures are tools by which we design to help achieve and serve that vision
- Zoning is an instrument over which Dellwood and Ferguson have immediate control and one of the highest priorities will be to make necessary adjustments
- The economic development strategy gives the vision long term viability and is primary to project success

- Funding and financing recommendations are essential to implementation in both the short and long terms
- Implementation of the Master Plan will require many years of dedicated effort by the two cities in partnership with St. Louis County. Creation of a quasi-independent implementing agent (e.g. a redevelopment corporation or business improvement district) is crucial to success.

A key finding of the market analysis was that there are already more retail spaces (and probably more retail businesses) along the corridor than the population can support. While retail redevelopment is a key strategy used in the Master Plan, it should be clear that this is “replacement retail,” not new retail, so the intent is to upgrade and rebuild two key focus retail areas, Segments 3 and 5, and consolidate the existing corridor retail in those locations. For the strategy to work, retail should be discouraged from locating in other zones. This means that Ferguson and Dellwood should be vigilant that zoning and permitting in other zones (Segment 2 is a good example), does not allow additional commercial development.

PHASING

Project construction should start at the south end, where there is high potential for redevelopment projects such as new housing, retail and mixed use projects. Thus investing public funds in this zone first follows a strategy that looks to catalyze private investment as soon as possible. Maline Creek is also planned to be reconstructed, so developers will be attracted to the critical mass of activity which will result in an appealing place for housing to be developed. Putting the South Gateway into construction in the first phase will also help create a rationale for the street design and use of medians and access management, simply because these street treatments are already in place immediately to the south, at Buzz-Westfall Plaza. The I-270 interchange project may also affect future strategizing about phasing and timing.

MAINTENANCE

How a higher level of maintenance is to be provided is a critical question, since the County is not in a position to do extra maintenance of horticulture, pedestrian lighting, or the multi-use path, to name three examples. Through mechanisms such as a special tax district (e.g. CID or TDD) an ongoing funding stream can be created to help finance these maintenance costs.