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CITY OF ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Dear Citizens of Rockford:

Two years ago, the City of Rockford, in cooperation with the State of Illinois Department of Transportation, set out to develop a plan and vision for improving the West State Street Corridor from the Rock River to Meridian Road. West State Street is our western entry into the Rockford community, and it is vital that we have a transportation corridor that is efficient to travel for vehicles, public transit, and pedestrians. In addition, it is important that this western entry is attractive and inviting for the traveler visiting Rockford. It is also important that this entry is attractive for the businesses and neighborhoods which are adjacent to this four-mile stretch of roadway.

I am pleased to present to the City Council and citizens of Rockford the West State Street Corridor Study Framework Plan. This Plan reviews the history and existing conditions of this corridor as it relates to zoning, land use, image and character, transportation and economic development, exploring both the issues and opportunities which are before this community. From these issues and opportunities, and considerable public outreach through citizen and business interviews, public surveys, and public meetings, a framework plan has been developed. This Framework Plan could not have been developed without the time, effort, and input that was provided by the West State Street Corridor Steering Committee, in addition to the assistance of our city staff, consulting team, and the citizens of Rockford. I would like to thank the following West State Street Corridor Steering Committee members:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Gerald Albert, Lewis Lemon Neighborhood Group
Sonny Crudop, Business Owner
Lottie Flowers, Orchard Hill/Washington Park Neighborhood Group
Dick Goral, Alderman, 7th Ward
Ron Graw, Resident
Pearl Hawks, Winnebago County Board Member
Amy Hill, Winnebago County Board Member
Elizabeth Kinsinger, Community Development Department
Barry Long, Rockford Housing Authority
Joe Martin, Oakwood Community Outreach
Linda McNeely, Alderman, 13th Ward
Jim Peterson, Winnebago County Board Member/NW Comm. Ctr.
Jim Ryan, Public Works Department
Will Rodgers, Crusader Clinic
John Schmit, Business Owner
Roger Sexton, Southwest Ideas for Today & Tomorrow
Geoff Smith, Illinois Department of Transportation-District 2
Bob Soltau, Illinois Department of Transportation-Springfield
Rick Strader, Rockford Park District
Reggie Taylor, Winnebago County Board Member
Ann Thompson, Hoban Avenue Neighborhood Group
Linda Tripp, Franz Park Neighborhood Group
Al Werner, Downtown River District
Lavonne Williams, Business Owner
Mark Williams, House of Refuge Church
Joe Vanderwerff, Winnebago County Highway Department

Together, we will work towards implementation of the West State Street Corridor Framework Plan.

Sincerely,

CITY OF ROCKFORD

Douglas P. Scott
Mayor



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Traffic Engineering:

Wight and Company

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Gary Anderson, A.I.A.

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Economic Development:

Real Estate Planning Group

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About the Logo

The logo designed for the West State Street corridor study represents several of the issues from the study area. The yellow line represents West State Street; the grid of colored squares represents the surrounding community comprised of different land uses and the street grid; the bright colors and bold text represent the hope and enthusiasm many West Side residents have for this corridor improvement project.



FOREWORD

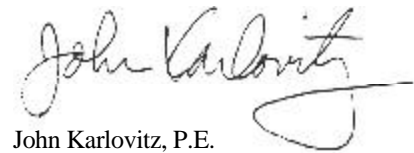
This report contains the key findings and recommendations of the Business Route 20 / West State Street Corridor Study. The intent of the study is to establish basic design concepts and guidelines for inclusion into the Phase One engineering study currently being conducted by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). It is believed that this plan will strengthen the overall image and sense of community for the West Side of Rockford and adjacent portions of Winnebago County.

The study contains a degree of flexibility that will allow for unforeseen changes, yet it remains specific enough to move directly into detailed design and construction projects as funding sources become available.

The feasibility of the designs contained in this study was greatly improved by the many hours given by representatives from the Steering Committee, staff and officials from the City of Rockford and Winnebago County, and the citizens of the surrounding neighborhoods. Their input at each step of the design process has

been the guiding source for both concepts and standards. The cooperation and contribution of the many people involved is greatly appreciated. It is our hope that the momentum gained through this process will be maintained and that the support of those who have been involved will continue as the plans are turned into reality.

Respectfully submitted,



John Karlovitz, P.E.
Wight and Company



Frank Clements, FASLA
Wolff Clements and Associates

September 3, 2002

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

The proposed Business Route 20 / West State Street realignment and improvement will require considerable effort by the City of Rockford and Winnebago County to work jointly to make this more than a simple road construction project. There is a real opportunity to seize the moment and address several long-standing social and environmental ills that face the West Side community. Design and planning cannot solve social problems, but they can provide a hospitable environment in which those

problems can be resolved. With this in mind, it is essential that the ideas represented in this report not be viewed as an end in themselves. Rather, other aspects of local government such as social services, economic development, police and fire protection, and parks and recreation, will have to be involved in a significant and meaningful way. “Business as usual” will relegate this plan to a marginal existence that becomes another instance of “what might have been” for the West Side. But the concerted effort of both

public and private entities will have the potential to affect meaningful change and improve the quality of life for West Side residents and, by extension, for all of Rockford and Winnebago County.



The West State Street corridor study extends from Meridian Road in the west to Rockton Avenue in the east.

The following points from the findings summarize the existing situation along the corridor:

- The history of rezoning, speculation, and the roadway designation change from U.S. 20 to Business U.S. 20 along West State Street has left the corridor weak as a social, economic, and architectural core for the community.
 - There are many vacant, boarded-up, and city-owned properties along the corridor which provide opportunities for improvement.
 - The architectural character of the corridor is of inconsistent quality, but there are bright spots upon which to build.
 - Zoning codes and land use standards must be publicized and enforced.
 - The right-of-way width varies considerably along the length of the corridor which makes it difficult for a single solution to be designed.
 - Utilities must be extended to the west to encourage business expansion.
- Several economic redevelopment and incentive programs are in place along the corridor. These must be coordinated by a single entity for maximum gain.
 - Some significant changes to the corridor are in advanced stages of planning. These, along with the corridor improvements envisioned by this study, will help restore the vitality and pride that has been missing for so many years.
 - Types of businesses most often mentioned as being needed in the corridor are: Financial institutions, laundromats, major grocery store chains, child care facilities, medical services and YMCA-type fitness facilities.

The City and County must both put their efforts into improving the corridor. This project will succeed or fail on their abilities to work for the collective good of the region's citizens.

In addition, businesses must not view these efforts with ambivalence. They must band together into a vocal, involved and committed association. An improved corridor is good for all businesses.

Finally, there is a lot of interest within the community for improving West State Street. This interest must be focused and concentrated into achievable projects that can be done in an acceptable time frame. This places a priority on well-conceived and financed projects that demonstrate an ability to improve the neighborhoods of Rockford's west side.



