

3. Plan Foundation

This chapter builds on the research reviewed in the Plan Background chapter. It lays out some key foundational elements of the West Broadway Alive plan. These include a vision statement and set of guiding principles that were formulated to give direction to the planning effort. They also include the initial analysis of the area from a planning perspective, and the identification of a small set of themes that can be built on as we explore more detailed recommendations and strategies.

Vision and Guiding Principles

The vision and guiding principles were created as a way to clearly identify the core values and objectives that should underpin a revitalization plan for West Broadway. They also provided a way to evaluate whether the plan and planning process are moving in the right direction. Actions taken in furtherance of the West Broadway Alive plan should be consistent with the goals and objectives represented by these statements.

The Vision and Guiding Principles were drafted by the West Broadway Alive Steering Committee, and fine-tuned through presentation to the broader community at some of the community open houses.

Vision Statement

West Broadway is a multicultural place rich in history, civic engagement and the arts. The West Broadway community celebrates the Avenue as a welcoming, attractive, safe place alive with the collaboration of residents, business owners and others, promoting economic vitality for future generations.

Guiding Principles

- Improvements along West Broadway will help to build a unified character and identity to the corridor with improved physical environments, better functioning business districts and diverse residential developments.
- Linkages and approaches to West Broadway are highly important. New development and streetscape improvements will make West Broadway feel closer and easier to get to.
- Public art, façade improvements and other design features will create an outlet for community expression while unifying the street aesthetically.
- The West Broadway community welcomes new development and expects that it exhibit high-quality construction and design. New development will complement the best elements of the existing historic character of West Broadway and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The West Broadway community values and supports local businesses. New businesses are welcome as well, particularly those that add to a healthy mix of goods and services available in North Minneapolis.
- Housing growth is essential because it contributes to the economic viability of West Broadway. New development

will create options, adding to the area's supply of middle income and upscale housing while providing some affordable living opportunities, including ownership and well-managed rental units. New housing will meet the needs of residents in various life stages.

Initial Planning Analysis

The West Broadway corridor offers a kaleidoscope of environments. Historic buildings still stand along parts of the corridor, but in most places the original architecture has been replaced with various types of new development. The resulting style and scale of development is unpredictable. The street frontage is defined by a building wall in some areas, and large parking lots in others. Some aesthetic improvements have been made, but the corridor could still be described as chaotic from an overall visual perspective.

Connections to anchoring features are also weak. The important connection to the Mississippi River on the east end of the corridor is disrupted by unsightly industrial businesses and bars, as well as a bare-bones freeway style bridge over Interstate 94. The connection to Theodore Wirth Parkway on the west end is nearly invisible.

And yet, progress is being made on West Broadway. There is some high quality new development. Certain area institutions, both long-established and new, are thriving, and adding to the collection of north Minneapolis attractions. Some improvements have been made to the visual environment.

Layer analysis

To understand this confusing picture, the consultant team did an initial planning analysis of West Broadway. This relied on the research in the preceding chapter, and a visual and computer inventory of West Broadway features and conditions. It created an inventory of map layers, each of which was focused on a different aspect of the corridor environment. These included the street network, building footprints, commercial properties, parking lots, natural features parks, and important intersecting streets and transit routes. From this work, corridor strengths and weaknesses were identified and mapped.

Strengths and Weaknesses

West Broadway strengths include major park features at both its east and west ends. Theodore Wirth Park is a significant city park that is located at the western edge of the study area. It is traversed by Theodore Wirth Parkway, which along with Victory Memorial Drive is North Minneapolis's part of the Grand Round. These parkway streets are part of the city's bicycle network, and are important park amenities in their own right. At the other end of West Broadway lies the Mississippi River and the Mississippi River Parkway. At the time this plan was written, an extension of the parkway trail system along the Mississippi River Parkway was under construction. This extends the trail system from Plymouth Avenue past West Broadway to around 23rd Avenue. Other improvements include landscaping along the river, and adding stormwater retention features and public art.



Transportation & Transit



Park Features



Strengths

North Commons Park is a tremendous community asset in the West Broadway corridor area. It occupies nine city blocks, and has much to offer including a water park in its northeast corner. It is only a half block from West Broadway, but it is not readily visible from the street. Making a visible connection or gateway to North Commons Park from West Broadway is a recommendation that came out of this plan as discussed in Chapter 8, Case Studies.

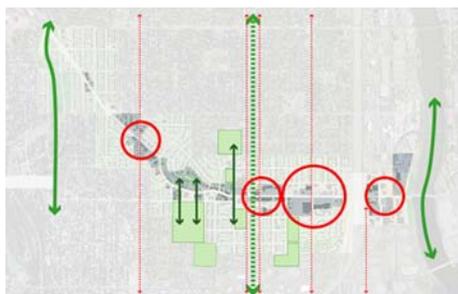
Other strengths of the West Broadway corridor include its historic storefront buildings, particularly the intact three block stretch between Aldrich and Fremont Avenues. The concentration of commercial businesses in the commercial core, and at Penn Avenue, is an asset to the area. Cub Foods represents a commercial anchor around which the retail market can be strengthened. Arts organizations, like the Capri Theater, Hollywood School of Dance, and Juxtaposition Arts are engaging youth and calling attention to this part of Minneapolis. Visual improvements include the streetscaping that was installed from Girard Avenue to the City Limits, banners in the Hawthorne Crossings area, painted trash receptacles, sculptures and murals.



Weaknesses

Weaknesses of the corridor area could begin with noting that the environment is not very comfortable for pedestrians. Sidewalks tend to be narrow. Landscaping and fencing is pretty uneven. Outdoor public spaces are lacking. Loiterers and panhandlers frequent some of the commercial areas.

There is transit on West Broadway, but more frequent service and connections to Northeast Minneapolis are lacking. One way traffic on Emerson and Fremont complicates access to West Broadway, and makes it difficult to get to parking at the rear of some businesses. The barriers to connecting the commercial districts to the Mississippi River make it difficult to capitalize on that tremendous asset. There are marginal businesses and vacant properties.



Planning Framework

Planning Framework.

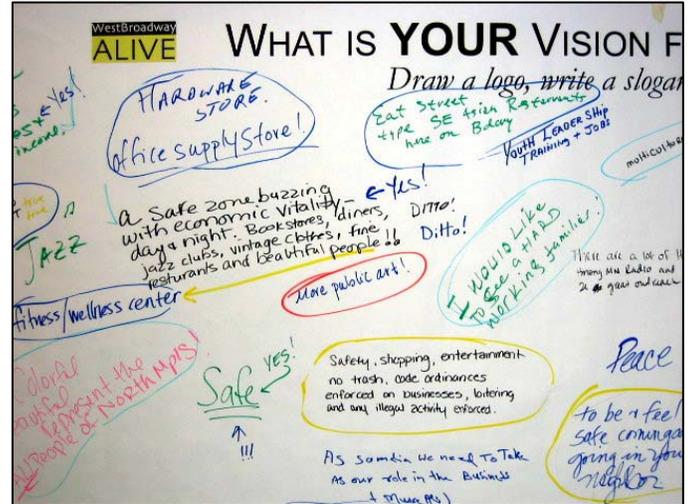
A final step in the planning analysis was to capture in symbolic form some of the major attributes of the corridor that should be kept in mind as more detailed work proceeded. The Planning Framework map was created for this purpose. It highlights the focuses of commercial activity, important connecting streets, and some of the nearby park and natural amenities to which connections can be strengthened.

Overarching and District Themes

The initial planning analysis resulted in a good understanding of key characteristics of the West Broadway *physical* environment. The overarching and district themes are a way to capture important elements of West Broadway's *identity* that can be built upon in the future.

Overarching Themes

The Overarching Themes are elements of West Broadway's identity that don't relate to particular parts of West Broadway. They reflect the personality and character of West Broadway as a whole. To explore this question, the public and business community were asked questions such as: What do you like about West Broadway? What is your vision for West Broadway? Write a slogan or draw a logo for West Broadway. What themes or branding should be considered for West Broadway?



This exercise yielded four themes that to some extent characterize the corridor already, but that should be strengthened through improvements to the corridor and through marketing. They can be thought of as aspects of West Broadway's identity. It is anticipated that future actions taken to brand West Broadway would utilize these as a starting point. The four overarching themes are the following:



- **Main Street.** West Broadway is useful, comfortable and attractive to people in surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Activity Center/Destination.** West Broadway's commercial offerings and entertainment opportunities attract people from outside the immediate area.
- **Art and Design.** West Broadway is home to an assortment of strong visual and performing arts organizations and venues, and offers a unique, exciting, and artistic visual environment.
- **Cultural Diversity.** West Broadway is alive with people from a diversity of cultural backgrounds, and it reflects that heritage in its commercial venues and visual environment.

District Themes

While the West Broadway corridor is in clear need of visual and marketing elements that strengthen the street’s sense of unity and connectedness, a plan for West Broadway also needs to acknowledge the reality that different sections of the

corridor serve different roles. For example, some parts of West Broadway are more residential in character, and that character should be strengthened. Again, some of the commercial areas are more neighborhood-oriented while others draw from a broader market area.

The consulting team, with input from City staff, the Steering Committee and the broader public, spent some time considering the existing and desired identity of the various street sections. Through this process, six street sections were identified as follows:



- West Gateway
- Penn/Broadway
- The Curve
- Hawthorn Crossings/ Historic Storefronts
- Broadway/Lyndale
- River Gateway

Taken together, the Hawthorn Crossings/Historic Storefronts district and the Broadway/Lyndale district are referred to in this plan as West Broadway’s “Commercial Core”.

These districts were given individual consideration concerning their character and identity. As a result, they are each characterized in terms of their desired land use, scale of development, market area, potential marketing labels, and visual characteristics. These recommendations are captured in the map at left, with a larger version of the map in the appendix. This analysis provides a starting point for considering more detailed development guidance for these areas in future chapters of this plan.