OVERVIEW

In most cities, the linkages between downtown and the surrounding region is critical to the long term vitality of the community. Many cities have a relatively simple and robust set of connections that surround the community and provide multiple entry points. Waukesha faces a unique challenge. I-94 is the major regional pathway with a high volume of traffic, destination shopping areas, and a series of complex road connections that facilitate traffic into the general urban area, but not directly into the Downtown. In addition, many of the major arterials leading into the Downtown are often perceived as unattractive and confusing.
GOAL #8: MEMORABLE PATHWAYS

Create memorable pathways linking Downtown to the surrounding areas and the region.

Although not initially included as part of this planning study, it became apparent that the long-term success of the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods is dependent on its connection to the I-94 freeway system and the surrounding region. This connection is often described by persons unfamiliar with Waukesha as relatively difficult to navigate. Waukesha can and should create easily recognized, memorable landmarks and signage that facilitate visitor movement into the Downtown area.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GOAL #8

1. Create Sequential Entry Features

Create a clear and attractive entrance experience into the Central City through a system of design features. Major components should include:

1.1 City entrance features at key nodes along major routes leading to Downtown (such as St. Paul, North, Main, Arcadian, White Rock, Broadway, Madison, East).

1.2 Design features should include enhanced lighting, signage, artwork, landmark design icons, landscaped areas and other amenities.

1.3 Create “Downtown” entrance features where pathways meet the Downtown.

2. Make St. Paul / CTH F the First New Entry Sequence

2.1 Select at least one path and build it with landmarks and memorable design features. The recommended sequence for initiating this effort is St. Paul Avenue/CTH F (“Figure 83. Highway F Arterial Corridor with Aerial Photograph” on page 67).

2.2 Reconfigure St. Paul Avenue and North Avenue as two-way streets. Create crossover or roundabout that allows St. Paul to become the main route into the Downtown (see Figure 82).

2.3 Create memorable and effective signage for “Downtown Waukesha” at key exits along I-94 so travelers can identify and remember the easiest routes to the Downtown. Add “Historic Downtown Waukesha” signage to freeway exits.

2.4 Consider advertising major Downtown events and attractions along the private freeway billboard and signage system.

LEGEND

- First Priority Arterial
- Second Priority Arterials
- Third Priority Arterials
- “Triangle” Loop
- Major Gateways

Figure 82. Goal 5 - Neighborhood Character and Opportunity
2.5 The entry sequence should include key landscape elements along the edge of the right-of-way that become memorable, positive visual features which will be recognized as motorists use this route into the Downtown.

2.6 The entry sequence should include improvements to the building facades and yards along St. Paul Avenue which need cosmetic improvements to create a more positive image. These can be incentivized through grants and loans to local homeowners. Such investments can also help improve local residential property values.

2.7 Create guidelines for landscaping and screening of major industrial and commercial sites along the corridor. Modifications to the zoning code, in the form of an overlay district or regulating plan, should also be considered as a method for long-term modification of the entry sequence.

3. Plan for Additional Entry Sequences

As implementation of the St. Paul Avenue entry sequence occurs, plan for the next significant entry sequence based on costs, opportunities, and potential socioeconomic impacts.

4. Create Landmarks to Brand the Downtown Triangle

Create a system of memorable “branding” landmarks on the edges of the Downtown triangle (see Figure 41 on page 32).

5. Identify Future Arterial Landmarks

Identify key points along pathways at which future development or redevelopment could be modified to create a memorable design feature, such as:

5.1 A remodeled building with a distinctive roof, balcony, or upgraded façade.

5.2 A new building with an attractive monument sign.

5.3 Installation of public art (by local artists).

6. Create a New Parkway

Explore the expansion of a landscaped parkway from Frame Park to the City limits and beyond to the north.