

November 26, 2014

The Honorable Dan Devine and  
Members of the Common Council  
West Allis City Hall  
West Allis, Wisconsin

Dear Mayor Devine and Common Council Members:

The National Avenue Corridor is an important corridor to our community. Generally considered as the area between S. 68 St. and S. 95 St. along W. National Avenue, it has a vital and uniquely important blend of traditional commercial and residential uses. The corridor offers diverse neighborhood goods and services from unique restaurants, professional services, and civic offices or facilities.

The Corridor has seen much positive movement with recent public and private investments that include Heritage Senior Community, West Allis Skate Park, West Allis Veterinarian Clinic, Butch's Steakhouse and more. However, a number of concerns have been shared by Alderpersons, public officials and business community members that the corridor is in need of vision, plan and specialized programs to attract continued investment and new businesses to the community. A plan to address filling vacant storefronts or repositioning of commercial properties, to develop creative solutions to in-fill vacant lots, form a neighborhood identity, promote continued investment in the corridor while addressing concerns of blight and disinvestment, etc.

In addition, in 2018, the roadway of W. National Avenue, in the areas between S. 70 St. to S. 76 St. and S. 92 to S. 95 St., will be reconstructed by the state of Wisconsin. In order to consider the reconstruction and incorporate more pedestrian friendly amenities and complete street aspects into the reconstruction project, a plan is needed by March of 2015.

Based on these concerns and consultations with Alderpersons of the districts involved and a number of stake holders in the corridor, the Department of Development prepared a request for qualifications for professional consultant services. The proposed work would include the following:

1. Market study to analyze real estate conditions.
2. Market analysis which creates recommendations and strategies to attract, support, and retain businesses in the area.
3. Complete street design, including streetscape components and design elements to improve the neighborhood. Assume a full reconstruction of the right of way is going to take place.
4. An analysis of what types of businesses the area is in need of and the best way to attract such businesses.
5. Solutions to combat vacancy, blighted structures, disinvestment and foreclosure.
6. Potential (re)development opportunities.
7. Creating a neighborhood vision, rebranding and marketability of the neighborhood to the residents of the City of West Allis.

8. Zoning recommendations including but not limited to housing, commercial development, and design standards.
9. Existing transportation conditions and recommendations for improvement of motor, public and pedestrian connections.
10. Parks and public spaces, and how these can be expanded, improved and connected to the neighborhood.
11. Potential funding sources to support the strategies and recommendations presented in the Plan.
12. Formation of a work or action plan to achieve various benchmarks and objectives.
13. An indication of how the success of this plan should be measured.
14. Completion of the studies and plan are due by March 15, 2015.

Based on review of proposals and interviews of various firms, the Department of Development and Engineering Department selected GRAEF. The firm has a strong Milwaukee presence and has been involved in a number of corridor plans throughout the region. The estimated cost for consulting services to prepare the plan is \$168,862. The incurred costs for the plan will be supported with funds from First-Ring Industrial Redevelopment Enterprise, Inc – the City of West Allis' community development entity for new market tax credits. For your convenience, attached are two documents that highlight what will be delivered as a product to the City as well as a detailed breakdown of the costs involved in the project.

Overall, the City's goal for the plan is to create a document which looks at everything from the future design of the right of way, to the reasons for investment and disinvestment of the neighborhood and which identifies a coordinated approach to spur future development in the area. The City would like to use this document to help lead a coordinated approach to the continued, positive development of National Avenue as an integral part of West Allis and the Milwaukee metropolitan region, based on the insights and participation of people with the greatest stake in its future – its businesses and residents. We will look to the plan as a tool for implementation and revitalization of the corridor.

If you have comments or input regarding the plan to be commissioned, please feel free to email or call my office.

Sincerely,

John F. Stibal  
Director, Department of Development

JFS:bjb

Enclosures