

Dear November 2012 Roundtable Workshop Participant,

Thank you for your participation in the November Roundtable work session with Bill Johnson that focused on the Highway #3 S. Attached are Bill's drawings reflecting the participants' ideas that will be incorporated into the evolving Framework Plan which is available on our website at [www.northfieldroundtable.org](http://www.northfieldroundtable.org).

The area of focus included Highway #3 S. Corridor (Hwy. 3 bridge to Menards). Bill immediately noted the complexity of that area with the developed set patterns for commerce reached by car, a major highway designed to move traffic, a school/neighborhood nearby on the east, and the hidden asset (the river) on the west. The challenge was to identify possible ways to enhance the area to make it welcoming, attractive, safe, bike friendly, walkable, and meaningful, while also respecting and maintaining its function.

Based on the input from participants the previous day, Bill summarized their ideas on Saturday, some of which are reported below in themes of connections, destinations and the river. He noted, however, that the "Summary is not so much a solution as a target" that can be pursued gradually but purposefully. "You don't have to solve it all at once if you have a strong framework because the pieces will come up with their own timing". More details of the ideas can be found on the website.

**Connections:** Connecting east and west across the highway is fundamental to this area as is the case between 5<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets. Running near the highway is a natural system, the river. The highway system should accommodate and allow the people living nearby to enjoy the river and provide easy pedestrian access to the commerce on the west side. This primary target of connectivity inherently involves crossings as well as lateral loops. Potential locations of east-west crossings were identified.

Some of the ideas provided by Bill and participants included the following:

- Add traffic calming techniques such as roundabouts, plantings, green areas for refuge, vertical features on the landscape (trees, views of hills, grain elevators(?))
- Turn the little incidental pieces of left-over land into green areas.
- Provide physical transparency, e.g., ability to see through things as opposed to things that block the view. The ability to see through to the river at some places along the highway is an important factor in making visual connectivity.
- Add three or four locations for controlled intersections at strategic connecting points.
- Give the intersection at Heritage Drive an identity as the major unique and distinctive place for crossing the highway. It is more interesting because of the centrality of the neighborhood on the east and because the area on the west is of major interest with a government center and a drive leading to the river.
- Provide places for biking and walking systems for both E-W and N-S transportation movement to enhance (not replace) the current working system for shopping and sales using motorized vehicles. Complete a series of walking/biking loops as the non-motorized network.
- Add more greens at the crossing nodes to give a greater sense of crossing, since painted lines for biking and walking may not do the job alone.
- Create a "park feeling", as if driving through a park. It is a different type than a green park but provides a place where people feel at ease; it doesn't have to be a green

place. In the future think of driving down Highway 3 with less stress and allow your mission of going to purchase something to be also a moment to enjoy – a goal of Highway 3 is to relax it a bit.

**Destinations:** Identifiable places, “nodes” and destination points along the corridor create a meaningful sense of place, interest, and activity. Nodes are the points of distinction that people remember. Naming them make them identifiable and give them purpose. Some ideas included:

- Special places with amenities (e.g., benches, sculpture)<sup>1</sup>
- Small parks on otherwise unusable pieces of land
- Green areas with identity, e.g., a “Garden district” from Woodley to downtown.
- “Government Center” in area of new police facility and EMS building
- Cluster of trees along the highway vs. a row of trees. Clusters of trees become a focus point.
- Entrance to trail along river
- Special retail destinations

**River:** The river is a valuable asset; its existence along the highway makes the planning challenge of Highway #3 S. much easier. It flows gracefully and naturally along the highway in the agricultural setting. It is obscured, however, by volunteer and natural growth. We need to know it is there by opening it up at points, but all of it shouldn't be opened because it is in its natural setting. Suggestions for taking advantage of the river included:

- Consider both the highway and the river sides of buildings and lots as “fronts”
- Encourage E-W connectivity via crossings so the two entities, the nearby neighborhoods and schools, and the river, can connect; “they seek each other”. Need to allow the people living nearby to enjoy the river.
- Add physical access to river, e.g., “finger” entries into the trail along the river that connect to the river itself at occasional points – a park, a node, etc
- Make the node at Heritage Drive a trail head with connections to trail along highway and back to river, etc.
- Provide adequate signage for river access points.

In concluding the work session, Bill offered advice for accomplishing the vision for Highway 3.

- Consider Dundas in the conversation. Dundas is a kind of a destination on Highway 3 – has its own history; make it part of the ethos of the highway.
- Collaborate with developers and businesses; this is an opportunity. The developers can be encouraged to think about using their money in ways to benefit them. They can be your partners. None of them alone has enough money for a major project but together they could accomplish a lot. In the end they may not spent any more money than their efforts alone but together they could make a significant difference.
- For the effort on Highway 3, work with MnDOT and their new approach of Context Sensitive Solutions. They are up against the issue of money, etc. but they want to bring in the softer things that have to do with quality of life.

Again, thank you for your interest and ideas. We look forward to continuing this effort with you to plan well for “what could be, not what should be” in Northfield.

<sup>1</sup> Dixon Bond added an “identity sign” in the format of a Burma Shave sign that would read, “ To come this way, you must be brave. Jesse did. He had a close shave.”

## The Northfield Roundtable