

1

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Project Background

In 2006, the East-West Gateway Council of Governments launched the St. Louis Great Streets Initiative to expand the way people and cities think about their streets. The Initiative helps communities envision and plan for interesting, lively, and attractive streets that serve the interests of motor vehicle drivers, transit riders, bicyclists and pedestrians. The development of a Great Street not only brings interest and activity to a roadway but it often has the potential to ignite positive economic and social activity within the community.

Dorsett Road, in Maryland Heights, Missouri was selected in August 2012 for funding in the Initiative's second round of demonstration projects. A little over three miles long, Dorsett Road serves as the "Main Street" for Maryland Heights residents, workers, and visitors. While creating a street that supports and promotes all modes of travel, this project expands the vision for Dorsett Road outside the right-of-way to consider how street design choices can impact surrounding land uses and development opportunities. Making Dorsett Road a Great Street requires careful and intentional planning to support a fully functional multi-modal suburban environment that sets a framework for future development in the corridor.

Dorsett Road Great Streets Master Plan Scope

- Transportation and transit planning
- Improving pedestrian and bicycle accommodations
- Identifying opportunities for open space, parks and trails networks
- Outlining aesthetic improvements that create destinations within the corridor
- The creation of community gathering places and assets
- Economic development and land use planning

What are Great Streets?

Great Streets are representative of their places. A Great Street reflects the neighborhood through which it passes and has a scale and design appropriate to the character of the abutting properties and land uses.

Great Streets allow people to walk comfortably and safely. The pedestrian environment on, along and near the street is well designed and well-furnished. The relationship between the street and its adjacent buildings is organic, conducive to walking and inviting to people.

Great Streets contribute to the economic vitality of the City. Great Streets facilitate the interaction of people and the promotion of commerce. They serve as destinations, not just transportation channels. They are good commercial addresses and provide locational value to businesses that power the local economy.

Great Streets are functionally complete. Great Streets support balanced mobility with an appropriate provision for safe and convenient travel by all of the ground transportation modes: transit, walking, bicycling, personal motor vehicles and freight movement.

Great Streets provide mobility. Great Streets strike an appropriate balance among the three elements of modern mobility: travel, local circulation and access. The right balance varies with the function of the street and the character of its neighborhoods and surrounding properties.

Great Streets facilitate placemaking. Great Streets incorporate within them places that are memorable and interesting. These may include plazas, pocket parks, attractive intersections and corners, or simply wide sidewalks fostering an active street life.

Great Streets are green. Great Streets provide an attractive and refreshing environment by working with natural systems. They incorporate environmentally sensitive design standards and green development techniques, including generous provision of street trees and other plantings and application of modern storm water management practices.

DW Legacy® Design

Design Workshop's DW Legacy Design® process emphasizes a deliberate approach to sustainable design solutions that is comprehensive of four Legacy categories: Environment, Community, Art and Economics. All aspects of the design process and foundational thinking for the project are captured in this document. Issues associated with the project and our client's *Critical Success Factors* are defined at the outset. The design team and client defined a project *vision*, a problem statement called a *dilemma* and a design solution called a *thesis*. These steps are intended to build a strong foundational story for the project that aligns the design team and client with the same principles and goals. DW Legacy Design® metrics are employed to ensure that the project is accountable to the comprehensive Legacy goals determined at the beginning of the process.

Vision

Dorsett Road enhances Maryland Heights' position as a competitive suburb in the St. Louis metro area by attracting business, patronage, and residents who desire walkable local destinations, transit options, easy access to the St. Louis metro region, and inviting streets.

Critical Success Factors

The Design Workshop consultant team identified and confirmed the following Critical Success Factors for the Dorsett Road Great Streets Plan with the City of Maryland Heights and East-West Gateway Council of Governments. These factors outline the results that should occur for the community to consider this planning project a success.

- Community input and property-owner contributions are incorporated into the plan to create a realistic and satisfying Great Street.
- Comprehensive coordination and communication among consultants, the City of Maryland Heights, and St. Louis County produces a pre-approved plan that is ready for implementation within the next two to five years.
- The redesign of Dorsett Road reinforces the strength of businesses within the corridor and contributes to re-positioning Maryland Heights as a leading community in the St. Louis metro region.
- The Dorsett Road Great Streets Plan creates a streetscape that allows pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motor vehicle drivers to feel safe, welcome, and supported as they travel through the corridor.
- The Dorsett Road Great Streets Plan serves as a model of a "Great Street" and an example of creating successful mixed-use corridors in suburban environments.

Project Dilemma

The Dorsett Road corridor represents a typical auto-oriented suburban commercial corridor, and like many developed during the same time period, it is in a relative state of aesthetic and economic decline. The corridor suffers from vacancies, aging building facades and a generally unattractive visual environment, unsafe pedestrian conditions and underutilized parcels. Maryland Heights is in competition with surrounding St. Louis suburbs for business, residents and revenue. The area lacks a real destination to attract investors and the corridor does not allow current residents to engage with Dorsett Road in a meaningful and memorable way.

Thesis

To improve the position of Maryland Heights in the St. Louis region, appeal to investors, and retain existing residents and businesses, the City should pursue the development of Dorsett Road as a Great Street in Maryland Heights. Streetscape design and amenities must be integrated with a community and stakeholder-supported vision for changes in zoning and land use within the corridor and amongst the corridor's surrounding properties to create a Great Street and great places in Maryland Heights.



Looking west on Dorsett Road.