

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE  
*AD HOC* PORT WASHINGTON ROAD  
DESIGN STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The City of Mequon has spent a great deal of time over the past two years reviewing North Port Washington Road. One critical element that has not yet been undertaken is architectural and streetscape design standards for the corridor.

I hope and expect that, over the next several years, there will be redevelopment of existing properties and, with the prospect of new zoning north of Highland Road, there will be some development of that portion of the corridor.

I believe that standards the City adopts need to be practical; however, they also need to ensure that new construction enhances the value of the corridor and surrounding properties. In my opinion, there have been some buildings approved that do not enhance that value.

Further, in my opinion, there should be some harmony among the buildings constructed. They do not all need to look alike, but they should fit together. Too many commercial corridors end up being a hodge-podge of developments that, standing alone, might be fine but together lack a sense of continuity, place or community.

Mequon can and should strive to be better.

Standards should enhance value and make people want to locate to the corridor. They should send a clear message to developers of the City's expectations so the building and site plan approval process is not, and does not appear to be, arbitrary. In my experience, most developers can work within reasonable standards provided the standards are clear and understandable at the beginning of the development process. Standards should then be consistently applied.

The following are several of my suggestions:

- Buildings should incorporate the elements of the best of what already exists. For example, much of the brick and stone already in the corridor is warm and darker. Those parts of the corridor with color continuity are more attractive.
- The area south of Liebau Road should be a vibrant commercial area, while respecting the existing residential areas. The area north of Highland Road, however, will be largely residential; therefore, the standards for non-residential buildings, particularly for the limited uses on the west side of the road, should be compatible in design and compatible with residential uses.
- Building design and elements should stand the test of time so that, in a decade or so, they do not look dated.
- Buildings should be usable and desirable even if the user or use changes. Communities have learned the hard way, from buildings like Kohl's grocery stores and Pizza Huts, that buildings designed as billboards for the current user end up as

eyesores in the future. They are not easily reused so the replacement uses are often less desirable or undesirable.

I also recommend some uniform, enhanced standards for streetlights, parking lot lights, benches and other non-building elements that would tie the area together. Currently, the streetscaping and corridor is disjointed, gray and uninviting. Required elements should not be impractical but some standards would add to the overall area.

I therefore am establishing the *ad hoc* Port Washington Road Design Standards Committee (the "Committee"). I am attempting to populate it with critical thinking, experienced people who will speak-up. I want the Committee, process and recommendations to be member-driven, rather than city staff-driven.

Staff should be involved to provide technical information to ensure that the result is consistent with other standards (e.g., zoning, engineering). However, I do not want the Committee to rubber-stamp staff's preferences; otherwise, we do not need the Committee.

The Committee should form written recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Committee should keep in mind that the recommendations will be reviewed by both the Planning Commission and the Common Council. Politics and popular preferences will ultimately play a role in the standards finally adopted. Still, the Planning Commission, the Common Council and the public should have the benefit of professional recommendations from people who understand development. I request that the recommendations be accompanied by photos or illustrations to make them easier to understand.

Respecting the time of the Committee's members, I would ask the Committee to do its work in a limited time. I suggest four meetings over a two-month period. The Committee should set its own schedule; however, it will need to comply with Open Meeting requirements.

I appoint the following:

Scott Welsh	Joe Kleiman
Andrew Petzold	Matt Iwinski
Steve Peterman	Sigrid Dynek
Leif Nesheim	Fred Bersch

I will serve as Chair but will be a non-voting member. The Committee shall appoint an Acting Chair to serve in my absence.

Dated September 16, 2021.



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John M. Wirth  
Mayor, City of Mequon