

Appendix A: Stakeholder Interview Summary

A.1 Methodology

MSA Project Manager Jason Valerius and City of Fitchburg Director of Economic Development Mike Zimmerman conducted 20 interviews during the month of February, 2016. All of the interviewees were associated with a property or business in the study area in some way, and most of the interviews were conducted on-site in the planning area, either at Fire Station #2 or at the interviewees' place of business. Interviewees received, prior to the meeting, a copy of the questionnaire that was used as a guideline for discussion during the interview. The questions, and interviews, sought information about the size and uses of existing buildings, remodeling or redevelopment plans, anticipated impacts of the Verona Road construction project, and experiences with crime, city utilities and city zoning and building regulations.

A.2 Participants

The interview process included the following participants:

<u>Name(s)</u>	<u>Business</u>	<u>Addresses(es)</u>
Dale Benjamin	Benjamin Plumbing	5380, 5396, 5400 King James Way
Bill Thielman, Dan Kelly	Knights of Columbus	5256 Verona Road
Kristin Cihla	BMO Harris Bank	5250 Verona Road
Tom Weigand	True Coffee Roasters	5352 King James Way
Paul Cannarella	A1 Furniture	5302 Verona Road
Robert Shea	Wingra Stone	2975 Kapec Road
Tim Walton, Katie Van Altena	Mounds Pet Food Warehouse	5350 King James Way
Dan Bertler	PDQ/Supreme Structures	5280 Williamsburg Way, 6202 McKee Road
Ron Frey	Touch of Class	5270 Williamsburg Way
Cindy Yaggi	Verona Road Business Coalition	-
Paul Nachreiner	AMS	5380 King James Way
Bo Palenske	Roughin it in Style	5262 Verona Road
Robert and Judy Glinert	-	Kapec Road – 2 vacant lots
Toni Prestigiaco	-	5270 Williamsburg Way
Kim Rufenacht, Jennifer Felsheim	Madison Swim Academy	5200 Anton Drive
David Lombardo	-	King James Way – 2 vacant lots
Breten Kuznacic	New Fountains Apartments	5401 Williamsburg Way
Brad Stevens	Stevens Design	5356 King James Way
Bill Kohl	MadPower Training	5364 Verona Road
Bonnie Zweibel	Willow Run Condominiums	Williamsburg Way Court

A.3 Findings

The interviews generated useful data about existing structures and revealed a wide range of viewpoints and plans for the future. This summary compiles the interview feedback by topic, sometimes in general terms and sometimes in very specific detail. It is important to note that these viewpoints represent only a portion of property owners in the planning area – we spoke with approximately half of the business owners and half of the property owners in the project area.

Building Size and Use: We asked all of the interviewees about their buildings and businesses. This information is aggregated with other data in the report on existing conditions.

Employment: The interviews present a partial picture of employment in the study area. We spoke with 13 of the 31 businesses in the study area, and one of the two apartment complex managers. Among those businesses we spoke to, average employment is roughly ten people, and the estimated average number of full-time equivalents is five, reflecting the fact that these are mostly service and retail businesses and roughly two-thirds of the employees in the area are part-time. A couple of the retail businesses mentioned difficulty finding and retaining part-time employees, but this was not otherwise a common concern. Several employers indicated a willingness to work with the City to promote job openings to residents of the Jamestown Neighborhood.

Activity and Traffic: We spoke to most of the retail and service businesses in the planning area, and we asked several questions related to the volume and timing of customer and delivery traffic. Regarding delivery truck traffic, most businesses reported only a handful of deliveries per day or week. The retail use with the greatest volume of deliveries is Mounds Pet Food Warehouse, which can have 8-10 semi-truck deliveries on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The only potential concern with regard to delivery traffic is that some sites do not have space for trucks to turn around, requiring semis to block traffic while backing into the site. This includes A-1 Furniture (2-4 trucks per day, projected), Roughin' it in Style (5 trucks per week) and True Coffee Roasters (3-5 trucks per week).

The greatest generator of truck traffic in the study area is the Wingra Redi-Mix plant, which can have 20-50 mixer trucks operating per day, each making up to 5 or 6 trips per day. At peak production this is up to about 300 round trips per day.

Customer traffic also varies quite a bit among the various businesses. The largest traffic generators are the two PDQ stores. Based on a traffic study provided by PDQ, the Williamsburg Way store generates about 50 trips in the morning peak hour, and likely about 500 per day, while the Highway PD/Kapec store generates about 100 trips in the evening peak hour, and likely about 1,000 trips per day. The next busiest business is Mounds Pet Food Warehouse, which can generate about 400 trips per day during the weekend, and about 75% of that on weekdays. The furniture stores generally have about 20-100 visitors per day, depending on the day and the store.

Operating hours and the timing of traffic vary also, though most of the businesses open between 8:00 and 9:00 in the morning, and closing times range from 6:00 to 9:00 in the evening. The PDQs are both open 19 hours per day, from 5:00 AM to 12:00 AM. Wingra Redi-Mix has an irregular and sometimes 24-hour operating schedule tied to the needs of its customers. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation and its contractors have shifted more construction to nighttime hours to minimize traffic disruptions, requiring the mixing and delivery of concrete throughout the night.

Parking. We asked each business about their parking needs and capacity. Almost all of the existing businesses indicated no problems or concerns with their supply of parking. The notable exception was the Madison Swim Academy, which experiences an acute parking shortage when they are transitioning between busy evening sessions, typically between 5:00 and 5:30. They currently have 40 parking spaces and would like an additional 20, especially because on-street parking near their entrance will disappear when Anton Drive is reconfigured in 2017. They will likely be able to add some parking spaces on land that becomes available when the road is shifting to the south.

It should be noted that parking was a topic of debate with the proposed office building at the corner of Verona Road and McKee Road under development by Dale Benjamin. The City ultimately agreed to cover the cost of underground parking, through Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), to enable a three-story building on that small site that would be taller than and visible from the Verona Road overpass at McKee Road.

Alternative modes of transportation. Most employees and customers of businesses in the area arrive by personal vehicle – there are very few who arrive by bike, bus, or on foot. However there are some exceptions to this generalization. Some of the PDQ customers are neighborhood residents who walk to the stores. This appears to be more prominent at the Williamsburg Way location. MadPower Training reported having some clients who live within walking distance, especially the apartments on Anton Drive, and do walk to their site. Mad Power also has clients who bike to and from the site, for transportation or exercise, and noted that Anton Drive is not particularly safe for biking right now.

The New Fountains Apartments manager noted regular use of the Metro bus system by tenants and other nearby residents, and he suggested the addition of bus shelters to better accommodate those users.

Carriage Street. We spoke with both MadPower Training and A-1 Furniture about the future disposition of Carriage Street once its connection to Verona Road is cut off. Both businesses indicated a preference to maintain the road in its current form, because neither believes they need extra parking and both of their sites are currently configured to have their primary access from that street.

MadPower Training also noted that it can be difficult to turn out of Carriage Street onto Anton Drive, especially left turns, due to two factors: Anton Drive crests just north of the intersection reduces visibility in that direction, and parked vehicles on the east side of Anton Drive reduce visibility in both directions.

Impact of the Verona Road improvement project. Businesses in the study area anticipate some negative impacts, both from the construction process and the form of the completed improvements. All anticipate some challenges to maintain customer traffic during construction, though most expect those challenges to be modest and manageable. The experience with Phase 1 of the project, which improved the area near the beltline, was generally positive, as interviewees saw few major traffic delays and little reduction in customer traffic. There are some exceptions to this, including at least one business that expects to discontinue the retail aspects of its business, and another that may be affected by the noise of construction occurring very close to its building. Several new investments are planned to occur before construction begins, including the construction of the new three-story office building at the corner of Verona Road and McKee Road, and the opening of the A-1 Furniture store.

The more important aspect of the Verona Road project is the permanent impact it will have due to the changes in design, including new bridges, changes in elevation, and reduced access in several locations. Again, concern ranged from minimal to strong. Visibility will change the least for those businesses near Carriage Street, and it will change the most for businesses to the north, where the highway will be sunk below the current grade, and to the south, where it will rise above the current grade. Businesses in one-story buildings on King James Way expect to have severe visibility constraints and several believe that change will reduce their revenue and competitiveness. In one case, the building has already transitioned, probably permanently, from retail use to wholesale/office use because retailers showed no interest once they learned about the design of the highway.

The important changes in access include the closure of Carriage Street, the elimination of outbound left turns and crossing movements at Kapec and McKee, and exit/offramp configurations that move the decision point for exiting the highway further away from each exit. The closure of carriage Street is not anticipated by business owners to have a significant impact on success in the corridor, though interviewees agreed with the idea that it will be important to have good building design and signage on the Anton Drive and King James Way street frontages, so that people can easily find businesses they see from the highway after exiting and driving into the neighborhood. The changes at the intersection of Kapec Road and McKee Road are generally perceived to be only a mild nuisance that is unlikely to have a significant effect on business success in the area, especially because it will still be just as easy to get into the area from McKee, and only a bit further to get out again toward Verona Road via the McKee/Fitchrona intersection. The likely exception to this generalization is PDQ, which, as a convenience use that thrives on proximity to the highway, may consider relocating once it loses that convenient route back to the highway at McKee. Finally, most interviewees were already aware of and not especially concerned about the change in exit/offramp configuration. It is anticipated that convenience destinations will have the benefit of navigational signs from the highway. Other uses, such as the pet and furniture stores, need highway visibility but generally do not rely on customers stopping in the first time they see the store from the highway.

Undeveloped Parcels. There are currently five ready-to-build parcels between Kapec Road and King James Way, all planned and zoned for commercial use. We spoke with the owners of four of these parcels (two groups each owning two parcels), and learned that there are no specific plans or interests for these parcels. Both owners have been holding the parcels for about 10 years, since shortly before the beginning of the Great Recession, and are open to any sale or development opportunity that allows a reasonable return on their investment. (Note: US commercial property prices rose about 50% between 2004 and 2008, and then returned to 2004 prices in 2009.) Both parcels

groups had been the subject of development proposals pre-recession (an indoor tennis facility and a full-service carwash).

The northern two parcels on this block have been altered this year in preparation for the planned reconfiguration of Kapec Road – they have each gotten smaller. The western of these two lots, owned by the Glinert family, is now a bit too small to sell or develop on its own and it should be considered in concert with the adjoining lot to the south, also owned by the Glinerts.

The Wingra Stone quarry is an undeveloped parcel that has been identified in the City’s comprehensive plan as future residential. Wingra Stone had no immediate plans to develop any portion of the quarry, but this has changed as a result of the Wisconsin DOT decision to extend Fitchrona Road through the property. Wingra expects to continue operating the concrete plant on the portion of their site south and east of the new road. The lands to the north and west of this new road are expected to be available for development within five years, which is the time anticipated to wrap up quarrying activities, bring in fill as necessary, and compact that fill to support development. Wingra is open to a variety of possible uses of the land, with the understanding that it should be compatible with the concrete plant.

Redevelopment plans. Most of the existing businesses and property owners plan to continue operating in their current buildings without significant changes or additions. An obvious exception is the two Benjamin Plumbing parcels near the corner of McKee Road and Verona Road, both of which are planned for redevelopment over the next few years. Dale Benjamin noted an interest in eventually redeveloping his third building also (5380 King James Way), but there are no current plans to do so. We also heard from Toni Prestigiacomo about her family’s desire to explore redevelopment of their parcel at the corner of Williamsburg Way and Verona Road. They want to maintain their current tenants but recognize that the building is aging and the Verona Road changes are an opportunity to consider reconfiguring their site.

Preferences for other new uses. We asked all current property owners about their preferences for the future use of other lands and sites in the study area. Responses were consistent across all interviewees – more commercial uses, especially retail and service businesses, are good for everyone. Residents, as represented by New Fountains Apartments and Willow Run Condominiums, appreciate the current consumer-oriented uses such as the BMO Harris bank, MadPower Training, and Picasso’s Pizza, and they would be happy to see more such uses, including more restaurants. The same is true for Dale Benjamin at the other end of the study area, as he anticipates the needs and wants of future office tenants. The current retail and service businesses owners would be happy with just about any new uses that bring more consumers into the area. All interviewees agreed that additional storage uses would not be good for the neighborhood. Opinions were mixed regarding the future use of Fire Station #2. Some would like to see the property sold for commercial use, while others were open to the idea of some sort of civic use that would bring more people to the site.

Signage. Most business owners were already aware that the city adopted new, flexible sign regulations for the Verona Road corridor to help businesses adapt to the changing roadway design. Most of the properties are losing an existing sign as the highway project takes additional right-of-way, and will be seeking approval for replacement signs. We spoke with everyone about the importance of adequate signage along Anton Drive and King James Way. Several businesses that aren't changing their signs noted that they are already at the maximum allowed sign area with their existing signs, and that this could prevent additional signs along the west property frontage. Mike Z. directed everyone likely to need a new sign in some way to contact Susan Badtke at the City Planning Department.

Crime, vandalism and public safety. We asked all interviewees about their experience with crime and safety in the study area, and we heard very few concerns. Everyone noted the prominent presence of Fitchburg Police, including the frequent use of private parking lots by officers who wait or do work in their cars while on duty. This presence is uniformly appreciated. We heard only a couple reports of vandalism, mostly at the south end of the planning area along King James Way. No one identified this as a recurrent or important problem. The most notable concerns were expressed by New Fountains Apartments, where residents experienced a notable uptick in break-ins and thefts in the last quarter of 2015. We also heard concerns about the behavior of PDQ customers, including loitering near the store and litter problems along the route between PDQ and the Jamestown neighborhood.

Utilities. Based on these interviews, public and private utility infrastructure in the planning area is in excellent condition. We asked everyone about their experience with municipal water and wastewater service, stormwater management, private energy and telecommunications services. Everything seems to be working well. One interviewee remembered King James Way filling up with water to the curbs during a heavy rain, but there were no reports of flooding or other stormwater damage. The general conclusion is that infrastructure in the area is generally less than 50 years old and has been adequately maintained.