

# Monroe Street Reconstruction

## Green Infrastructure World Café Meeting Notes September 1, 2016, HotelRED

Total participants: 30+

### Characteristics of a “Green Street”:

After a presentation of the Monroe Street Reconstruction project scope and relevant community survey results, table groups discussed the following questions (responses organized into themes by Urban Assets following the meeting):

#### **Question 1: In your opinion, what are the defining characteristics of a “green street”?**

##### **Plant Life:**

- Enough infrastructure to support the trees needed for sidewalk shade
- More inviting plant life
- Blend traffic calming with green infrastructure
- Trees (healthy, shady, stormwater trees/Silva Cells)
- Vegetation, shady street trees
- Uses plants and trees that will be adaptive to climate change
- Lots of trees
- Rain gardens
- No Y-shaped trees for better shade
- Vegetation
- Colors other than gray (concrete)
- More texture

##### **Stormwater Treatment:**

- Increased permeability
- Bio-retention
- Natural water treatment of stormwater
- Protecting Lake Wingra water quality
- Dealing with water in an environmentally responsible way
- Stormwater treatment system
- Multi-functional terraces that catch stormwater, not just a strip of grass

##### **Other Sustainable Features:**

- Does not add to pollution
- Green roofs, bus stops, demonstration area
- Controlling salt, runoff, and garbage
- Carbon offsets to offset the impacts of the reconstruction
- Street recycling

- LED lighting
- Investment in undergrounding electrical wires etc.

#### **Education and Awareness:**

- System approach to save money with good design (i.e. better bio retention could result in less/smaller pipes underground)
- Use good green design to save money
- Educational component
- Tie Monroe Street in with the Arboretum
- Signs that show how much a business recycles
- Presentations and demonstrations
- Educational component for physical and technical greening of the street to engage people

#### **Street Use:**

- Pedestrian-focused, less auto-focused
- Inviting more ways to get around (bikes, pedestrians, need to focus on what is important to move people)
- Kids on the street
- Vendors, activated spaces, seating that have people spend more time on the street
- Small-scale retail
- Ample sidewalk space for a variety of uses
- Encouraging alternative transportation (bike/ped/public transit) that reduces traffic
- Slower traffic
- Improve ease of alternative modes of transportation (especially walking)

## Potential Benefits of a “Green Street”:

### **Question 2: What are the most important potential benefits of green and sustainable infrastructure on or near Monroe Street?**

#### **Placemaking and Business Enhancement**

- Green infrastructure should be good for people, the planet, and profit
- More people on the sidewalks/vibrancy (good for businesses, good for people, feels safer, slows cars down, enjoyable experience)
- A cross section that varies based on the residential or business use of that part of the street
- Creates a destination
- Drivers can tell that they have entered a neighborhood, a place to be and not just pass through, a destination and not just a thoroughfare
- People want to participate, spending time and money
- Increases property values and the tax base
- Enhanced pedestrian safety
- Increased amount of time spent on the street (+10 mins per user?) to enhance the community and benefit businesses

- Multi-functional street that supports all modes and users
- Psychological benefits of greener aesthetics
- Benefits individual health in a more pedestrian friendly environment to encourage walking
- More pleasant experience to improve the business district
- Increased comfort of use, good for retail
- Improved public health and safety (riding bike and walking)

**Environmental:**

- Minimizes environmental impact (less road salt, less pavement, less flooding, cleaner lake)
- Improves resiliency
- Street design that promotes alternative transportation
- Shade trees, ash removal
- Reduces maintenance costs
- Cleaner Lake Wingra, improved water quality
- Larger tree canopy benefits air quality
- Improved water quality in Lake Wingra
- Protecting trees
- Cleaner air and water, healthy lake

**Traffic Calming:**

- Benefits connectivity
- Slow down traffic, calming effect
- Bump-outs on outbound side with rain gardens
- Slowed and reduced traffic
- “Bump outs” slow down traffic

**Education and Awareness:**

- Increase awareness of environmental issues, engagement in the community
- Strong and vibrant neighborhood, show leadership within the city
- A model for other reconstruction projects
- Be a model, example location for green infrastructure

## Large Group Discussion with City Staff:

Following table discussions, Phil Gaebler, City of Madison Water Resources Specialist, presented on green infrastructure opportunities and constraints related to Monroe Street. The following notes were recorded during large-group discussion after the presentation.

- Would pervious pavement work on sidewalks?
  - Possible, but necessary to vacuum pervious pavements multiple times per year
- Are there tax incentives for people to install rain gardens (in terraces and yards\_?
  - Yes, you would receive a reduction in your stormwater utility fee based on the area of treatment. Requires a lot of square footage to meet the standard.
  - During reconstruction projects, the city will install a terrace rain garden for \$100 total if your terrace is wide enough.

- If the incentives are not substantive, then this is an opportunity to change city policies re: treatments that homeowners can do (change the 4.2 inches of rain standard?)
- Street trees are very important for an enjoyable street. Focus on undergrounding in commercial districts. Improve the life span of the trees using different strategies.
  - Could Silva cells be used?
    - Used on State Street for a high price. Street trees cost \$1,500 and Silva cells cost ~\$15,000.
- Decorative plantings, would look similar to those on John Nolen (although they would not be placed in a median)
- Are there any lessons we can take from the Willy Street reconstruction?
  - Willy Street is 42 feet wide, which is Monroe's narrowest width
  - Businesses are highly dependent on parking
  - The city included some green initiatives, and there was a storm treatment pilot project that failed.
  - Pedestrian accommodations worked: crossings, overhead signage, small crossing refuge islands
  - Partial undergrounding didn't make sense.
- If street trees cause so much of the phosphorus in our lakes, would the city be able to move street trees to resident yards? (Also in cases where the terrace is not wide enough for a tree?)
  - Possible – we can look into this.
- What was learned from Johnson Street reconstruction?
  - Bumpouts and pedestrian crossings worked
  - Pedestrian level lighting was a big improvement (vs. very tall street lights)
  - LED lighting uses 1/3 the energy
- Possible to direct lighting onto the pedestrian crossings on Monroe Street? It is difficult to see and be seen crossing at night.
  - Yes, lighting will be greatly improved with the reconstruction.
- What are the city's non-negotiables?
  - None at this point. The purpose of this process, including the upcoming cross section workshop, is to identify specific community interests and then determine what elements will work best through traffic modeling and other means, to produce the final cross section/street design.
- Will traffic modeling assess the impacts of traffic rerouted into adjacent neighborhoods?
  - We will do our best. It is difficult, but can be contextualized (i.e. what would a reduction in volume on Monroe mean?). The model will assess throughput.
- Might there be a few specific locations for bigger green infrastructure "showcase" projects?
  - Yes, the City is currently looking at Crazylegs Triangle and Wingra Park.
- How much would be gained from improved leaf pickup?
  - A lot! 50% of yearly phosphorus in waterways comes from street tree leaf litter

## Comment Cards Submitted:

- Don't let regulations on phosphorus reduction drive the decisions on what green infrastructure features will be used. Think of other benefits raised during public discussion (ex: aesthetics,

people-friendly, create welcoming and vibrant destination where people want to stay). This is not and should not simply be a phosphorus-reduction exercise given all the other stated benefits of green, living features.

- Someone with the city (or the consultant) should have a serious discussion with MG&E and communication utilities on their 20-30 year budgets and planning for the Monroe Street corridor. There is additional budgeted funds from these sources that should be in the mix. And there are serious trade-offs to be considered. As a former electric utilities engineering consultant, I know these plans and monies are often overlooked.

Meeting notes compiled by Urban Assets.

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