



To: Members of the Town Council

From: Dustin Anderson, Town Manager
Tom Vander Woude, Planning Director

Date: June 17, 2021

Re: Approval of Resolution 2084: A Resolution Adopting the Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan

The purpose of this memo is to request Town Council adoption of the Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan by approving the attached Resolution 2084.

Background

The Town of Munster Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan is an improvement program for Calumet Avenue from the north municipal boundary (the Little Calumet River) to Briar Lane and Ridge Road from State Line Road to Columbia Avenue.

The themes of the plan and the goals for the recommendations include:

- A safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.
- A functional streetscape providing stormwater benefits.
- A consistent and beautiful public realm.
- A sense of arrival and identity.
- A multimodal system that balances access and mobility.

The focus of the streetscape plan is only the public right of way and municipally controlled properties. Apart from recommendations for modified or closed curb cuts, there are no recommendations for the private properties.

This project began in the fall of 2019, after the Town was awarded a Lake Michigan Coastal Program grant to develop a streetscaping plan and it formally kicked off in April of 2020, when the Town hired Teska Associates, Inc. with Sam Schwartz Engineering to complete the work.

The development of the Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan was overseen and reviewed by a 13-member Advisory Committee that included members of the Munster Town Council, local business and property owners, residents with expertise in transportation and planning, and representatives of regional agencies. Although traditional public involvement was not possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, we were able to engage with the community over four Advisory Committee meetings, two meetings with Munster Public Works staff, one meeting with the Munster Plan Commission, one meeting with the Munster Town Council, three public workshops, multiple stakeholder interviews, two online polls, and a publicly accessible website.

The public engagement was linked to key project milestones so we were able to gather initial input, develop alternative concepts, and then identify a preferred alternative. For each corridor, a minimum concept and a maximum concept was developed and evaluated using objective metrics that included percentage of impervious surface, number of trees, pedestrian crossing distance, and drive time through the corridor. For most metrics, the maximum concept performed equal to or better than the minimum. Based on community

feedback and Committee direction, the maximum concept was selected and established the basis for the preferred concept design.

The plan includes the following major recommendations:

- An enhanced gateway at Calumet Avenue and the Little Calumet River featuring relocation of overhead utilities, decorative lighting, parkway tree plantings, steel backed timber rails, entry signage, landscaping, mid-block crosswalk, and a pedestrian refuge island
- New and improved landscaping within parkways along Calumet Avenue and Ridge Road
- A center median within Calumet Avenue which will provide area for new landscaping, reduce left-turn conflicts, provide mid-block crossing opportunities, and calm traffic.
- Locations and types of new ornamental light fixtures
- Proposed wayfinding signage concepts
- A cohesive program of street furniture

The most transformative recommendation of the plan is a “road diet” for Ridge Road: the plan proposes to modify Ridge Road from 5 auto lanes to 3 auto lanes between Calumet Avenue and Forest Avenue and in the vicinity of the Town Hall. This reimagining of Ridge Road frees up space within the public right-of-way for on-street parking for local businesses, a multi-use trail along the south side of Ridge Road, enhanced landscaping and tree canopy, and wider sidewalks on the north side of Ridge Road that can be used for seating and outdoor dining. Taken together, the Committee believes these improvements will accomplish the direction received from the residents and business owners to calm traffic, beautify the roadway, provide a safe walking and biking environment, support local businesses, and promote Ridge Road as a destination.

It should be noted that all the recommendations are plan-level and will require final engineering prior to implementation.

The final chapter of the plan discusses implementation. This chapter includes conceptual level cost estimates for each component project. The total cost of the Ridge Road improvements is \$21 million while the cost for the Calumet Avenue improvements is \$13 million. A major expense of both is overhead utility relocation. Because of the substantial cost, the plan includes recommendations to divide the projects into near-, mid-, and long-term phases as well as a list of potential partners. Adopting this plan puts the Town in a strong position to compete for grant dollars to offset the Town’s costs.

The plan also includes as appendices two related studies that were completed concurrently with the streetscape plan: a design study with recommendations to enhance a proposed bike/ped bridge over Calumet Avenue north of the Little Calumet River in Hammond and a study of traffic calming and street network connectivity in the vicinity of the proposed Manor Avenue NICTD commuter rail station.

Attachments:

1. Resolution 2084: A Resolution Adopting the Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan
2. Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan

Recommendation

The Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Advisory Committee Members and staff believe that the attached Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan accurately implements the Munster 2010 Comprehensive Plan, reflects the feedback from residents, businesses, and the Plan Commission, and represents a significant step forward in the development of the community.

By motion and voice vote, approve Resolution 2084: A Resolution Adopting the Calumet-Ridge Streetscape Plan.