

**CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN  
CITY PLAN COMMISSION  
REPORT  
March 31, 2014**

➤ **AGENDA ITEM – PC2014-03-31-05**

Application of Western Technical College for waiver of two-story requirement for new construction at 232 6th St. S. which is located within the downtown area as defined in 15.25(A)(5)(R) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse.

➤ **ROUTING: J&A Committee**

➤ **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Western Technical College plans to build green houses and a small classroom at the corner of Vine Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The greenhouse is being constructed in collaboration with the Hillview Urban Agriculture Center and will provide academic space for horticulture and agriculture programs. WTC is requesting a waiver from the downtown area two-story building requirement. The building will be two-stories tall, but only have one story of usable space.

➤ **GENERAL LOCATION:**

232 6<sup>th</sup> Street North

➤ **RECOMMENDATION OF OTHER BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**

N/A

➤ **CONSISTENCY WITH ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

While the general idea of this site development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the two-story waiver would not be. The greenhouse and classroom space supports Land Use Objectives 4 (Downtown Revitalization) and 14 (Enhance Urban Ecology). However, the one-story design may not support Objectives 7 (Improve Land Use Compatibility) and 9 (Major Institutions). The two-story height requirement is intended to provide building design guidelines regarding appropriate scale. Additionally, the Plan recommends providing for institutional growth while protecting the character and integrity of the surrounding neighborhood. The City has encouraged institutions to build up rather than out.

➤ **PLANNING RECOMMENDATION:**

The demolition of the former Ivy Motel is lauded and the creation of the urban greenhouses is also lauded. The two-story facade of the building does give the appearance of a two-story building but is not entirely in keeping with the intent of the two-story requirement. The language in the ordinance requires two stories but not necessarily two usable floors of space. The intent of the ordinance is to have a minimum of two floors of usable space, while at the same time providing the massing of a two story building to keep an urban feel. The building has an overall height of 23' 4 1/4" which is the height of two stories along Vine Street however, inside the building there is only one usable floor not two. Assuming that Western Technical College will also grow over the period the building is in use, it would be more forward-thinking and economical in the long run to accommodate some future
























growth on this site. Rooftop greenhouses are possible, though maybe not economically feasible at this time.

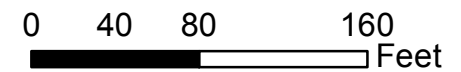
The Common Council amended the two-story ordinance in 2013 to require that all requests for waivers go through the City Council rather than just the City Plan Commission. From that change it can be deduced that the Council has strong policy concerns on the density and function of the downtown. La Crosse has learned from the past when single story buildings were constructed in the downtown. Single story buildings "suburbanize" the heart of the region.

Early in the administration of the two-story requirement, the People's Food Co-op added on to their building and the second floor is partly a two story use with the restaurant, kitchen and meeting space and the grocery part of the co-op has no second story use. The exterior facade of the grocery portion has the appearance of a two story building. While the greenhouse project does not have a usable second story, the building does provide the height and appearance of a two-story building and is designed for its intended purpose. In order to provide some consistency in interpretation of what constitutes a two-story height requirement, these two projects should be looked at together. If the People's Food Co-op complies then so does this project. **The waiver is recommended for approval.**

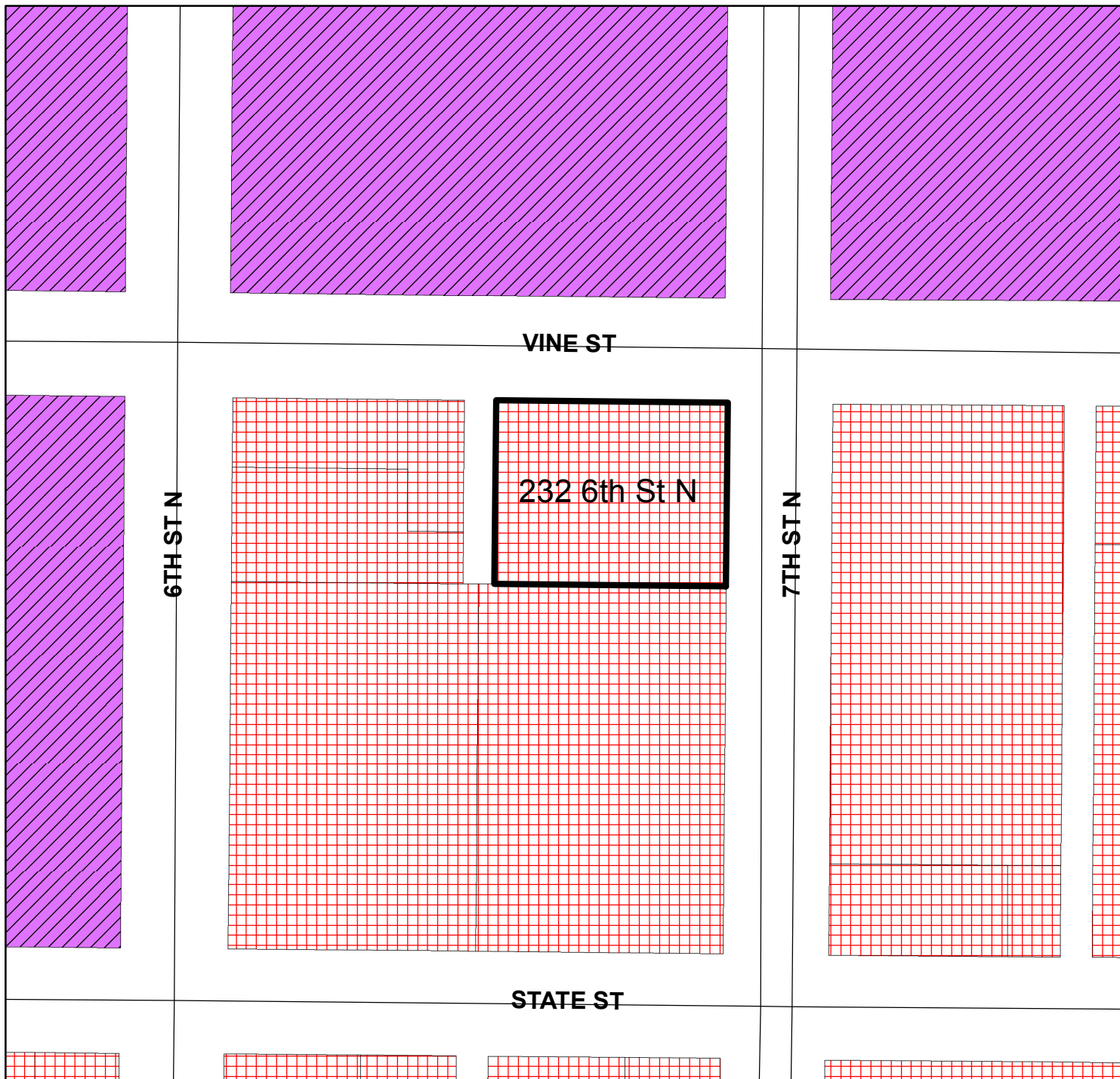


# BASIC ZONING DISTRICTS
























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	R2 - RESIDENCE
	WR - WASHBURN RES
	R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE
	R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTI
	R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING
	R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE
	PD- PLANNED DEVELOP
	TND - TRAD NEIGH DEV.
	C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS
	C2 - COMMERCIAL
	C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS
	M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
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	PS - PUBLIC & SEMI-PUBLIC
	PL - PARKING LOT
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	A1 - AGRICULTURAL
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	City Limits
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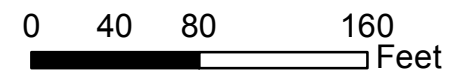


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