

IMAGINE 2040

2040 LA CROSSE DOWNTOWN PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MAYOR

Mitch Reynolds, Plan Adoption
Tim Kabat, Plan Initiation

CITY COUNCIL

Andrea Richmond
Scott Neumeister
Barb Janssen
Larry Sleznikow
Justice Weaver
Chris Kahlow
Doug Happel
Mac Kiel
Mackenzie Mindel
Chris Woodard
Rebecca Schwarz
Jennifer Trost
Mark Neumann

STEERING COMMITTEE

Chris Kahlow, Chair
Will Kratt, Vice-Chair
Charlie Handy
Dani Peterslie
Jamie Dahl
Mary Larson
Casey Meehan
Mike Keil
Courtney Lokken
Chad Staehly

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Andrea Trane, City of La Crosse
Tim Acklin, City of La Crosse
Brian Fukuda, La Crosse County
Chris Kahlow, Chair
Will Kratt, Vice-Chair
Terry Bauer, Downtown Mainstreet
Robin Moses, Downtown Mainstreet (past)

CONSULTANT TEAM



RDG Planning & Design
www.RDGUSA.com



ECONOMIC & PLANNING SYSTEMS

Economic & Planning Systems
www.EPSYS.com



Neighborhood Planners
www.NEIGHBORHOODPLANNERS.com

WELCOME!



IMAGINE 2040 represents a year-long process where we met monthly and sometimes multiple times a month to gather input on the plan's direction and receive feedback on its concepts. The past planning effort for downtown was launched in the early 2000's, and it led our community through 20 years of great success. That plan, like this plan, was nimble to respond to new innovations in design practices. Undoubtedly we will see changes in consumer demands, jobs, housing, transportation, environment, health and wellness, parks, arts, community facilities, festivals, and more. We will pivot and leverage these changes to make La Crosse an even more inspiring community in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee





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PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

Downtown La Crosse must be thriving for the community and region to remain vital and generate the energy to attract creative talent, jobs, and new investment. At the onset of the process the driving forces were the people who live, work, and visit La Crosse; the need to create a near-term resiliency strategy for the businesses, while having a long-term plan; and the desire for a visionary, yet realistic document.



FOCUSED
ON
PEOPLE

Downtown La Crosse is a place for people - a place to live, work, play, and explore. In turn, the plan must represent everyone's voice so that downtown can be a desirable and welcoming district, where people will want to live and visit - to shop at our stores, eat at our restaurants, work in our businesses, and engage in community.



NEAR-TERM
RESILIENCY,
LONG-TERM
STRATEGY

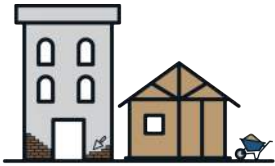
Resiliency is the ability to recover. Downtown's all across America will be tested on their resiliency amid the pandemic. While we work to support our local business owners during this time of uncertainty, we also need to use this time to imagine the next 20 years. Should we go back to the way it was before or is there an opportunity to transform downtown La Crosse?



VISIONARY,
YET
REALISTIC

The plan will continue to push La Crosse to become a community where everyone belongs. This plan aims to be visionary and push La Crosse to think big and test out new ideas. While testing the boundaries, the plan will be grounded in realistic expectations, making sure ideas make it beyond the planning stage.

THEMES OF THE PLAN



MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

We envision a downtown that continues to be a premier location for development and growth in Wisconsin. We know our available real estate is finite, and we want to maximize its potential for the future.



NETWORK OF STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

We envision a downtown with vibrant, welcoming, and livable neighborhoods that flourish as our region's urban center.



A CONNECTED CITY

We envision a downtown with strong connections from the river to downtown, to the neighborhoods, and to the bluffs.



DESTINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

We envision a downtown that is a memorable destination that is welcoming to all people.

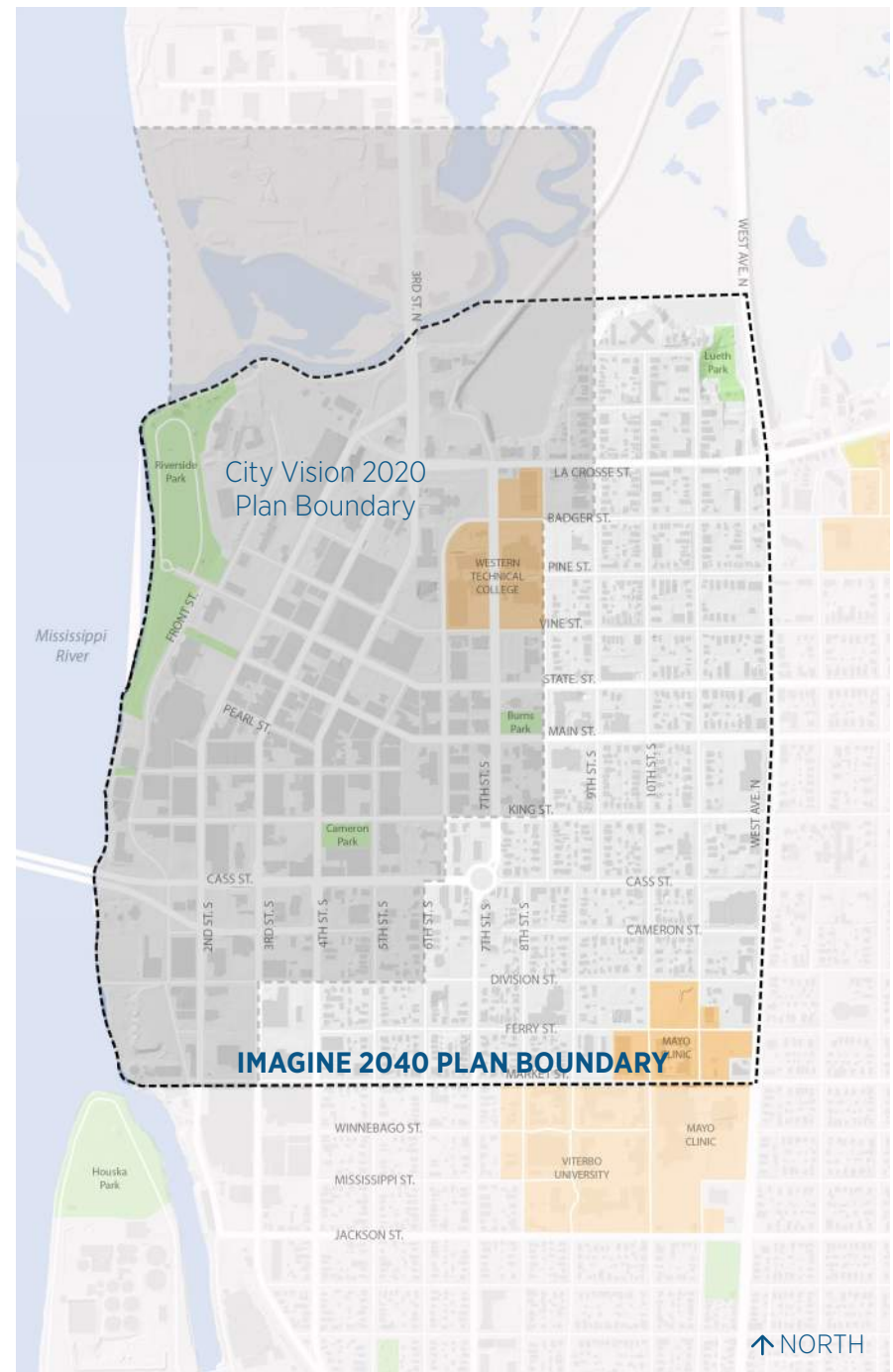


CONFLUENCE OF NATURE

We envision a downtown that celebrates and values the outdoors with a visible, healthy natural environment. A downtown that, no matter where you look, offers the ability to easily interact with nature.

THE PLAN'S APPROACH

- Elevated Communication.** Non-traditional engagement strategies were necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The process involved more online engagement through a variety of tools including interactive mapping, survey, listening sessions, informational videos, public committee meetings, and virtual open houses. Activities in the community shifted from large group gatherings to decentralized outdoor activities. Arguably, the process allowed the public more opportunities to learn and contribute ideas than previous planning initiatives.
- Downtown as a Neighborhood.** A wider area of analysis was considered with the understanding that downtown does not exist in a vacuum, but relies on the residential neighborhoods surrounding it. The map to the right shows the boundaries for the previous City Vision 2020 Plan and the newly expanded boundary of Imagine 2040 Plan.
- Tactical, Incremental Strategies.** A focus beyond just building projects allows opportunities for individuals and businesses alike to take action and contribute to downtown growth. This appears in the form of more tactical and incremental approaches to achieving the bigger goals set out in the plan.




ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2004

Since 2004, numerous projects identified in the City Vision 2020 Plan were implemented, to transform downtown. These successes are testimony to the value of planning the future for the better. The projects illustrate just a few that contribute to the experience of downtown.




 The former Mobil Oil site, identified for redevelopment in 2004 is now planned for mixed use development.




 The Sara Lee Building property has been partially redeveloped with the Hampton Inn & Suites.




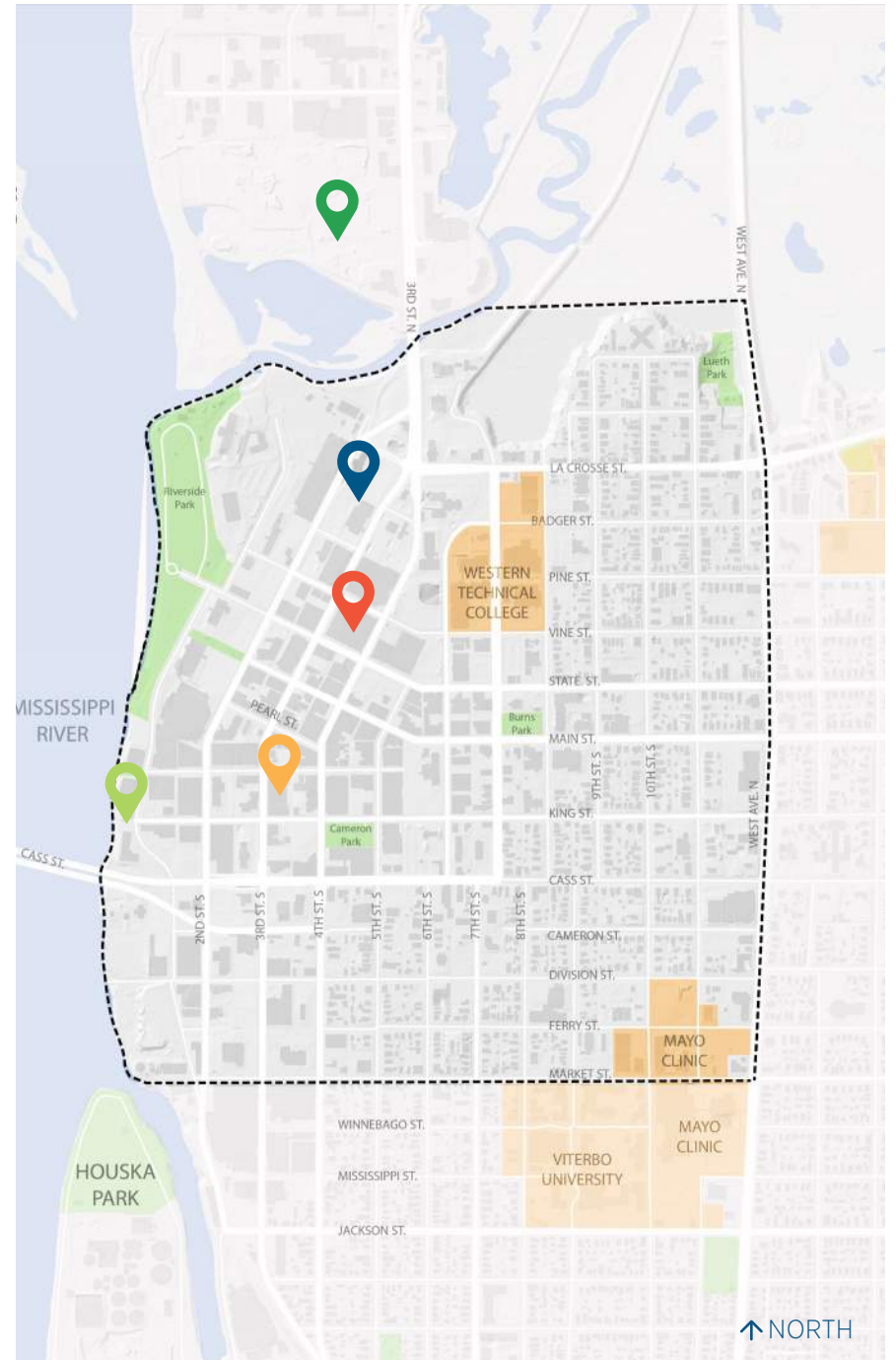
 The former county parking lot block was redeveloped into a mixed use project.



 The former Listman Mill site was redeveloped for the Weber Center, Parking Ramp and Riverside Center.



 A transit center was built at 3rd and King Streets.





IMAGIN'
2040 LA CROSSE DOWNTOWN

PUMP HOUSE
REGIONAL ARTS CENTER

ARTS
TRIP



01

process

Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan kicked off amidst the global pandemic. Despite this setback, the process pivoted to ensure the same level of engagement and outreach that would be provided under prior conditions. The following pages will discuss the methods of engagement and results and themes that emerged from the year-long process.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Imagine 2040’s public engagement process relied on an intense level of meetings and interviews to gain input and feedback on ideas from people who know La Crosse best – its residents and employees.

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, activities in the community shifted from large events to decentralized outdoor activities, and included a blend of online and onsite activities promoted through the project’s duration.

Guiding the process was a steering committee of 16 people, representing residents, business owners and employees, Downtown Mainstreet, city staff, elected officials, and leaders in the community. The committee met monthly, often multiple times a month, to work through the material in this plan.

Promotional Features. To build awareness and engagement, the process used an intense awareness campaign.

- **Social Media.** Social media posts were prepared and shared on the DMI, county, and city pages, with a targeted advertisement to promote the survey in August 2020. These efforts led to over 90,000 social media views.
- **Videos.** A legacy video, describing the project themes and direction was created at the onset of the project. Additional short video clips were posted to social media.
- **Flyers.** Flyers were distributed to area businesses for their customers.
- **Sidewalk Signs.** Sidewalk signs were placed at high traffic areas to alert people of the process.
- **Sidewalk Art.** Local artists were commissioned for sidewalk art to build awareness for the project.
- **Local Media Coverage.** Local news stations and radio provided additional coverage of the project and helped promote upcoming activities.



PLANNING PROCESS



MAY

Project Launch

The first steering committee meeting was held and the engagement platform was created which included a legacy video describing the project themes and directions, a social media strategy, and the project website.



JUNE

Listening Sessions

Over 35 virtual listening sessions were held. Participants represented a variety of voices with diverse experience and perspectives.



JULY

Feedback

An interactive map was launched allowing users to pin location specific ideas or comments. The online survey was launched and promoted at a planned events. The first of 6 walking tours were conducted with the steering committee.



AUGUST

Design Studio

The most prominent in-person event was the three day design studio, which provided opportunities to learn and comment at three stations on Main Street. Additionally, two walking tours were conducted.



SEPTEMBER

Listening Sessions

Additional listening sessions were held virtually with the addition of meetings at Burns Park with the neighborhood association and on Pearl Street with business owners.



OCTOBER

Pulse Check

Concepts were advanced and themes refined, which helped frame the plan's structure. Additional interviews and listening sessions were held with stakeholders.



NOV - DEC

Subcommittee Workshops

The steering committee split into three sub-committees to discuss policy, projects, and process.



JANUARY '21

Concept Refinement

Through the sub-committee meetings, the plan concepts were further refined. The team met with several community groups to get receive additional feedback on ideas.



FEB - MARCH

Plan Drafting

Narrative and graphics were prepared for the publication.



FEB - MAY

Open House

A public open house gallery was setup at the public library for several months and in a virtual gallery space. The project team presented at numerous meetings to orient people to the plan's concepts.



MAY - JULY

Plan Refinement

The document was edited and reviewed by the steering committee throughout the Spring and incorporated feedback from the public open houses.



AUGUST

Approval

The final document was posted online for public review before formal approval.

ONLINE ACTIVITIES

- **Virtual Meetings.** Over 80 virtual meetings were held with community members throughout the plan's schedule, including monthly meetings with the steering committee.
- **Interactive Website.** The project website served as the hub for all engagement activities. In addition, participants could access the site from community websites, including DMI, City, and County.
- **Interactive Map.** The project website included an interactive map that invited participants to drop pins on sites to share their ideas and comments about specific locations in downtown.
- **Survey.** An online survey was launched at the beginning of the project to gather input on various topics. Over 400 people took the survey. A second survey was distributed in November 2020 to gauge support for the plan's preliminary ideas.
- **Feedback Forum.** An online forum in April '21, offered the public to an opportunity to react to concepts and see previous comments.
- **Virtual Gallery.** The virtual gallery mimicked an in-person experience where people can roam a room and view displays



ONSITE ACTIVITIES

- **Walking Tours.** A total of six tours were conducted with the steering committee, business owners, and residents.
- **Farmers Market Booth.** In July the project team set up a booth at the farmers market with informational pamphlets and to talk with attendees.
- **DMI Office.** Throughout the process, DMI's office was setup with displays for people to learn about the process and offer input.
- **Outdoor Design Studio.** The most prominent in-person event was the August design studio. The three-day event provided opportunities to learn and comment at three stations on Main Street.
- **Outdoor Neighborhood Meeting.** In September a meeting with neighborhood residents was held in Burns Park.
- **Open House Galleries.** From March to May 2021, the project team set up displays at the public library for people to explore the plan's concepts. To evoke the feeling of walking through a physical room, a virtual room was also designed to host displays.



ENGAGEMENT RESULTS SNAPSHOT

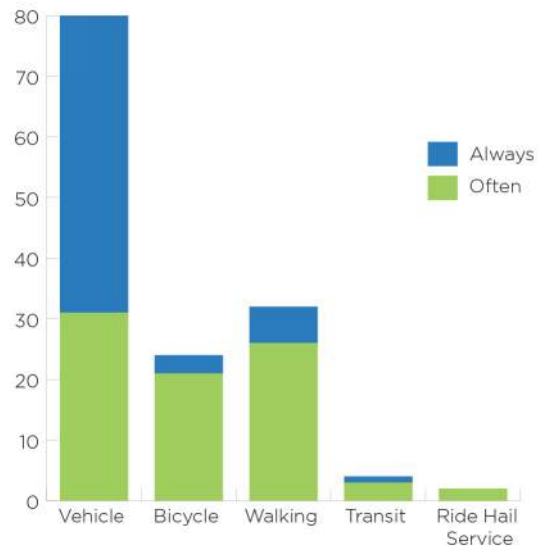
The public survey was made available on the Imagine 2040 website in July 2020 and remained open through the end of the project. To provide direction for the project as concepts and recommendations were made a snapshot of survey results was consolidated in October 2020. The survey was viewed by nearly 600 people, providing over 17,000 points of data. The appendix includes the full results of the survey.

As part of the online survey, respondents were asked to identify what they thought were immediate priorities for downtown. The bubble diagram below consolidates these comments into categories. Most of these priority projects are not large capital expenditures, but can be

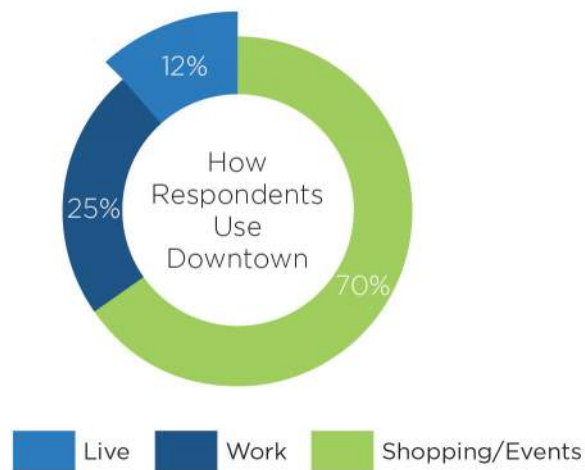
PRIORITIES IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



1.2 MOST FREQUENT TRANSPORTATION METHOD TO DOWNTOWN



1.3 HOW RESPONDENTS USE DOWNTOWN



INTERACTIVE MAP COMMENTS

The interactive map allowed users to pin comments to specific locations. The map below consolidates those comments as many ideas were repeated.





MAYO CLINIC
HEALTH SYSTEM
BRANDS AND SERVICES

DIVERSIDE



02

market conditions

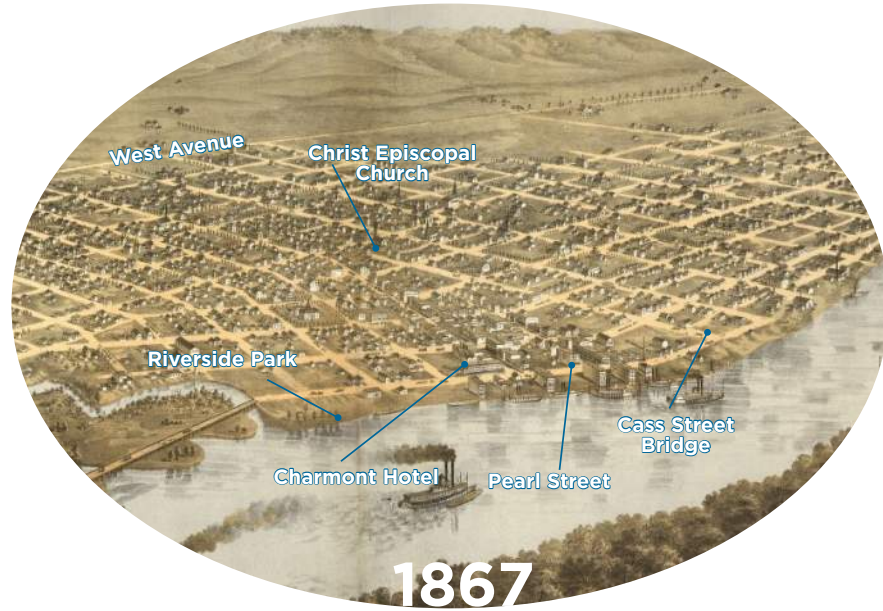
Downtown La Crosse has evolved dramatically since 1993 when the first long-term plan was adopted. The district has become a thriving, regional destination in the heart of the Driftless Area and has seen an increase in private investment, including a boom in businesses, restaurants, and the growth of community events and festivals.

This chapter provides pertinent market history and a snapshot of downtown market conditions in 2020. The snapshot will serve as a foundation for the ideas and actions recommended in the following chapters, with the goal of ensuring the district persists as the center for market activity in the region over the next 20 years.

HISTORY OF SUCCESSFUL PLANNING

La Crosse was founded in 1841 as a trading post by Nathan Myrick. A community grew up around the small trading post and in 1856 the city was incorporated. The railroad extension into the city in 1858 set La Crosse up for rapid growth.

Downtown served as the lifeblood and center of activity through it all, until the Valley View Mall opened in 1980, pulling businesses and shoppers to the edge of town. Beginning in 1993 the city has led a number of successful planning initiatives that returned downtown to the center of activity in La Crosse.



1993

City Vision 2000, the first downtown Plan is adopted to reverse decades of disinvestment in downtown

1999

City Vision 2000 is updated after numerous changes and improvements occur

2002

Downtown is named a Great American Main Street by the National Trust for Historic Preservation National Main Street Center

2004

City Vision 2020 is adopted, setting the stage for the next 20 years

2009

The Strategic Plan for Sustainability is adopted to manage environmental impacts, secure economic prosperity and attain social equity

2011

The Port of La Crosse Harbor and Waterfront Plan is approved which identifies the economic, recreational, and environmental assets to be protected and improved

2012

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan lays out the existing and proposed framework for a citywide network of sidewalks, trails, and bicycle infrastructure that ties into downtown

2013

The Arts Board Strategic Plan identifies potential for an arts district to support the City Vision 2020 plan vision to "promote the arts as a unique downtown attraction"

2014

The first step in revitalizing the area north of downtown is complete with the adoption of the Riverside North Master Plan

2018

The Highway 53 Corridor Master Plan is adopted which studies land use, market conditions, parking, sidewalk width, transportation and traffic, and bicycle and pedestrian circulation within the corridor

2019

La Crosse Public Market Feasibility report is the first step in building a public market in downtown La Crosse

2020

As a result of nearly 20 years of progress, its time for an update to the vision, now known as Imagine 2040



INTRODUCTION

When people are asked, “Where is downtown?” many individuals cite the area west of 5th Street to the Mississippi River. Imagine 2040 seeks to undo this misperception and encourages the prioritization of an expanded geographic area. In this broader vision of downtown, various districts offer distinguishing characteristics and expanded opportunity, working in congruence to support the activity that makes downtown La Crosse a great place to live, work, and visit. The Downtown Structure Map illustrates the districts in the area.

Despite downtowns historic ability to attract and retain customers, economic sustainability will continue to be a concern as the pandemic continues. Restaurants, hospitality groups, performance and event venues, and major employers are struggling to continue operations under the strained conditions. Increased communication and continued leadership across the region will help local business owners navigate the uncertain future. La Crosse has a strong entrepreneurial spirit that will excel when provided the support needed to get started. As we emerge from the pandemic, local startups will be great additions to downtown.

The market analysis on the following page sets up the case for downtown investment. As the heart of the region, downtown La Crosse is an important asset to support and ensure it continues to grow and recover from the pandemic.

Investing into Downtown is Important Because:

1. Holds a greater share of population growth
2. Accounts for a sizable share of commercial value
3. Supports daytime activity and nightlife
4. Generates a strong share of La Crosse’s tax revenue
5. Provides a hub for employment
6. Proves the desire for mixed-use development

Riverfront

This area is primarily occupied by Riverside Park, but also includes the commercial and entertainment buildings north of Cass Street and the industrial area to the south.

Campuses

A Government and Education district northeast of the Core includes a number of city, county, and federal buildings in addition to the Western Technical College campus.

The Core

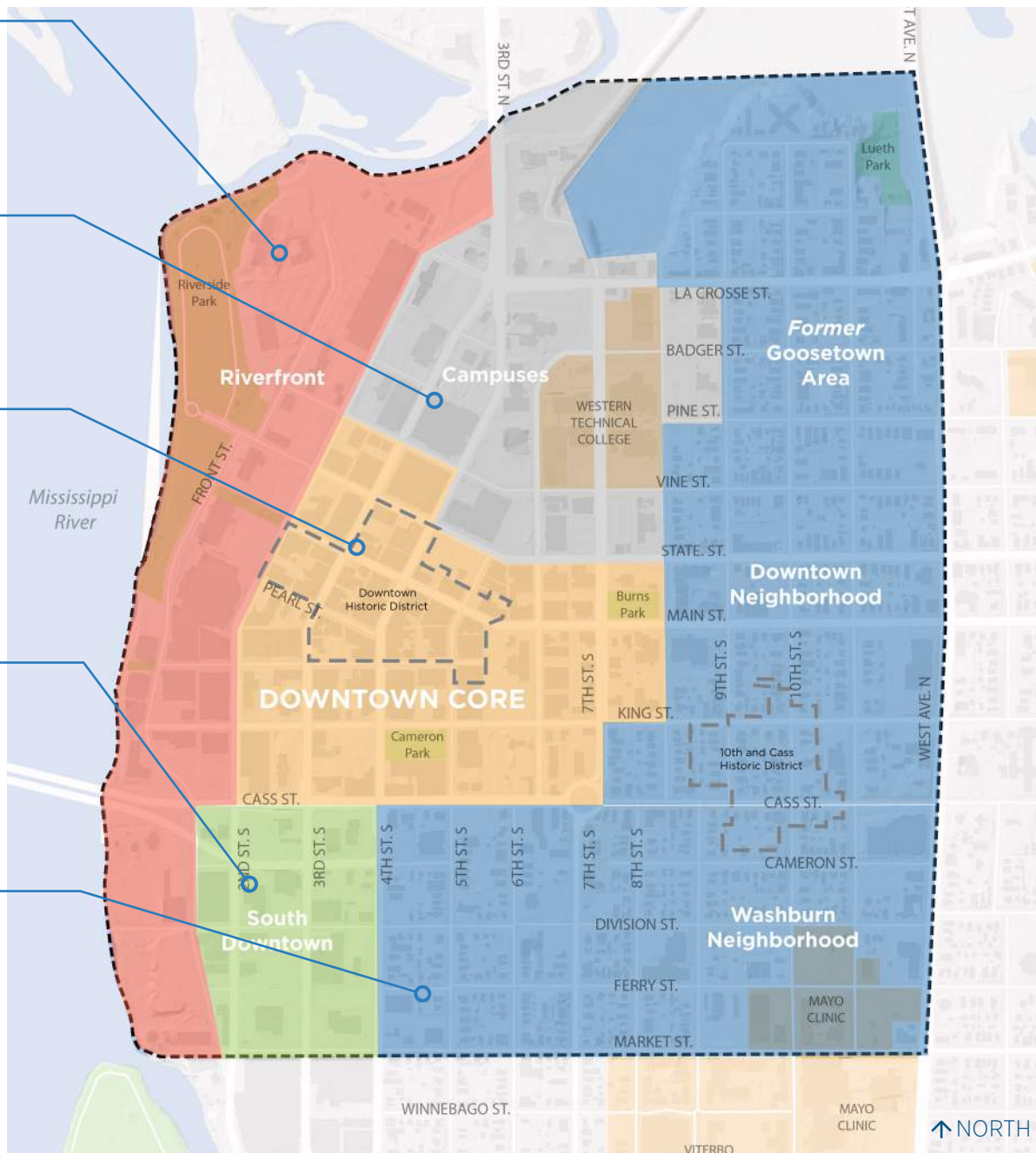
The Core encompasses the boundary of the Downtown Historic District as well as the blocks to the south and east. This area is traditionally referred to as downtown with primarily 19th century buildings and some newer construction on the fringe.

South Downtown

A small district of automobile and warehousing uses developed in the southwest end of the study area. This includes several automobile sales lots and associated warehousing structures.

Neighborhoods

Three residential areas comprise the larger neighborhood district. To the north, formerly known as Goosetown, is primarily residential with many late 20th century apartment buildings. The center of the district houses the 10th and Cass Historic Residential District. The southern end is Washburn, an area with numerous medical and educational campuses with a mix of old and new residential units.



DOWNTOWN STRUCTURE

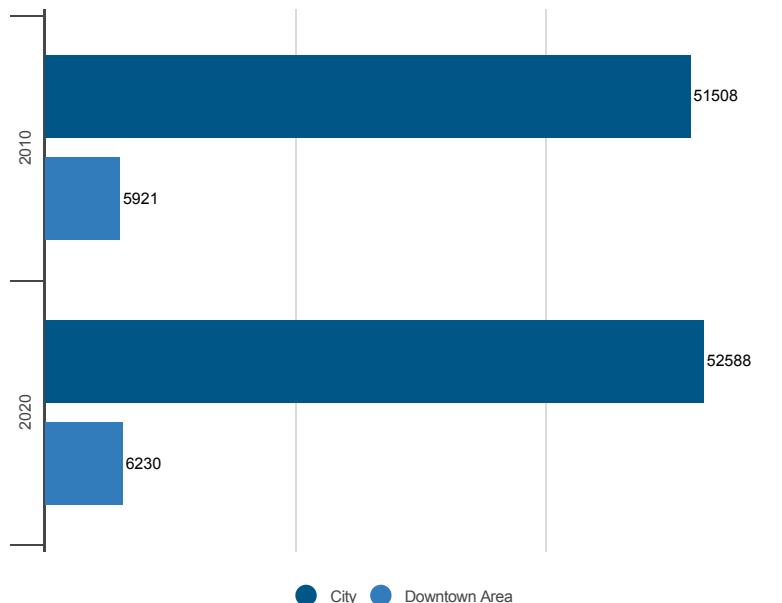
CASE FOR DOWNTOWN:

1. HOLDS A GREATER SHARE OF POPULATION GROWTH

Downtown captured a greater share of population and housing growth within the city over the past 10 years. Downtown has also captured a greater share of housing growth countywide than the city as a whole (up 1% in downtown compared to down 1% citywide). Downtown has retained a steady 5% share of the county's population.

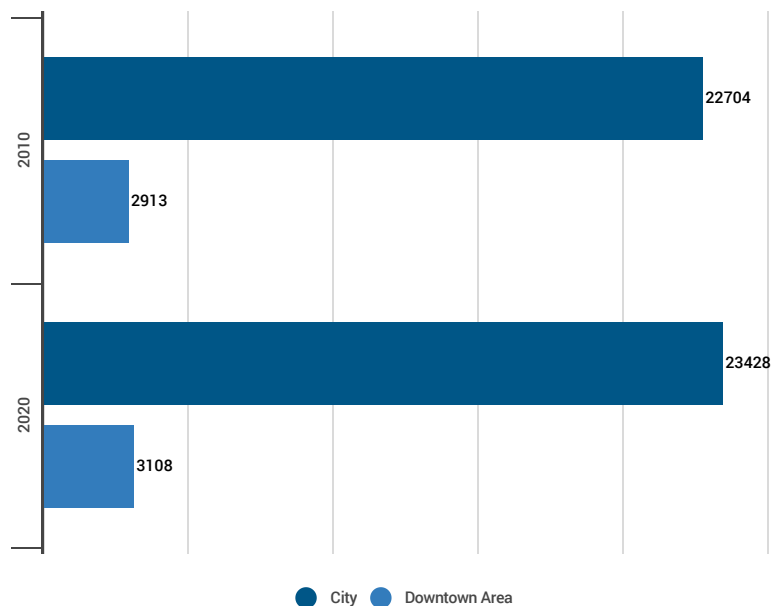
Downtown accounted for **29% of the city's population growth, despite only having 12% of city's population**

POPULATION



Downtown has **13% of the city's housing units, but captured 27% of housing growth**

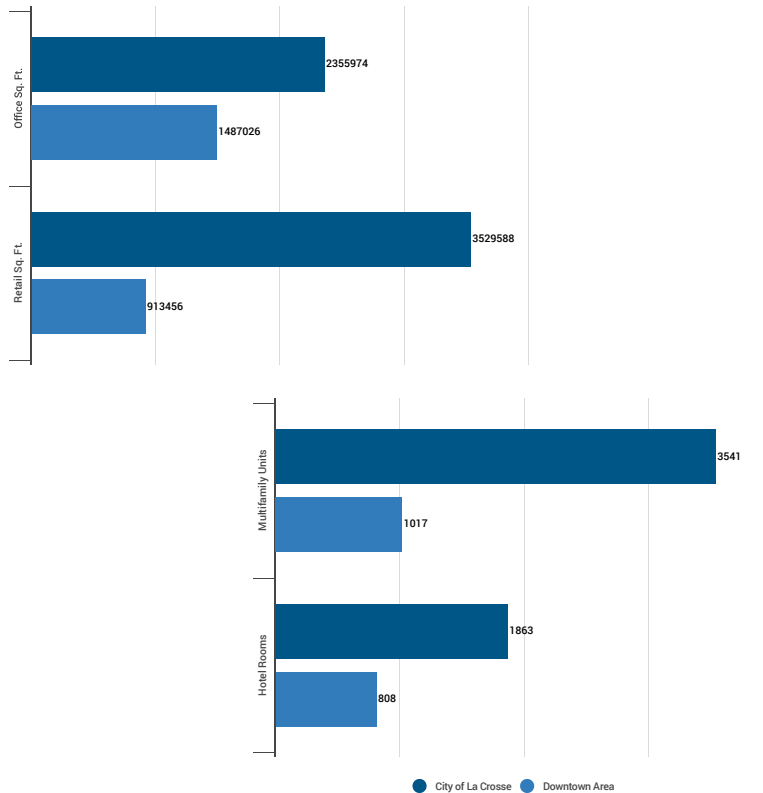
HOUSING UNITS



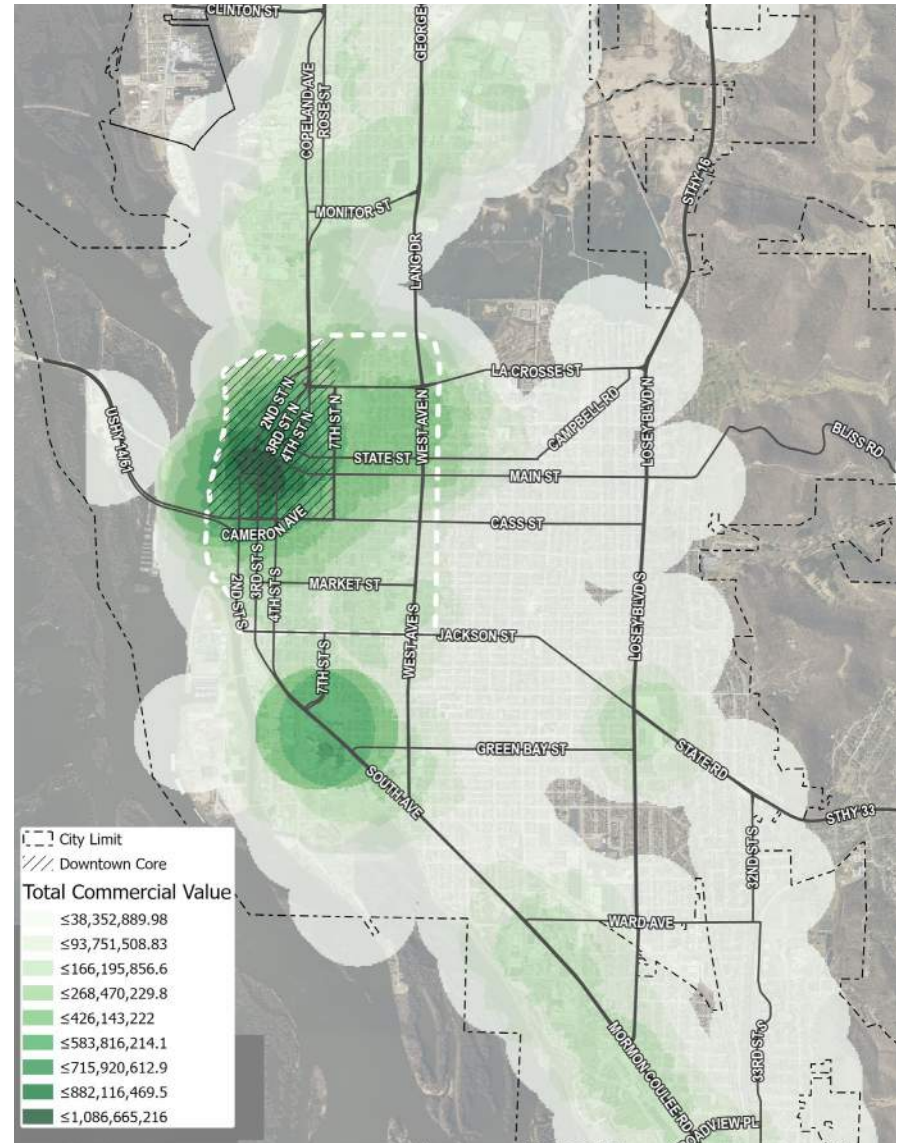
2. ACCOUNTS FOR A SIZABLE SHARE OF COMMERCIAL VALUE

Downtown is the largest commercial activity center in the city with over one-third of the commercial property value, despite only having 11% of the commercial land in the city. In addition, downtown has 49% of the La Crosse-Onalaska Market Area office inventory.

The Downtown has about **1/3 of the city's retail**, **just under half the city's office**, **1/3 the city's multifamily housing**, and **just under half the hotel rooms**



COMMERCIAL TOTAL VALUE



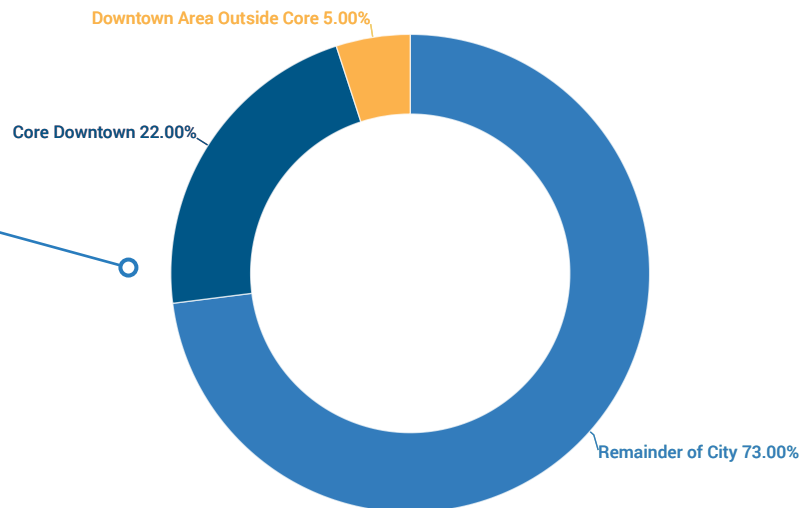
3. SUPPORTS DAYTIME ACTIVITY AND NIGHTLIFE

Downtown is a major anchor for restaurants and bars.

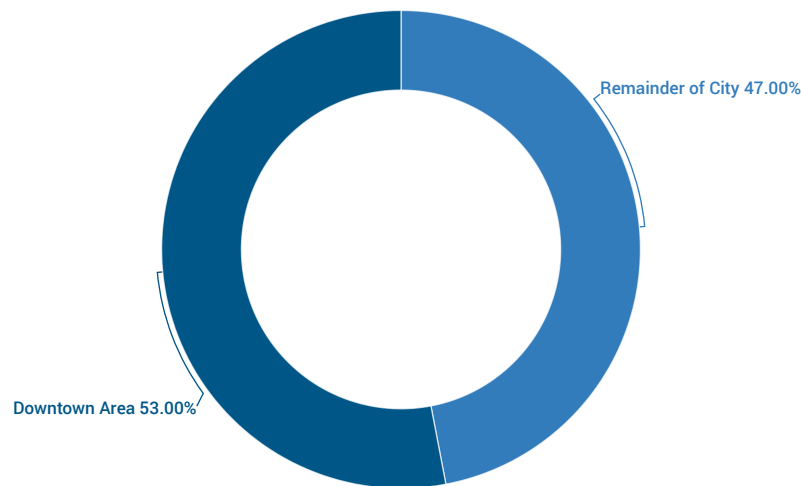
The Downtown Area accounts for just over 1/4 of all restaurants and bars in the city, with nearly all these establishments in the core commercial area



SHARE OF FOOD SERVICE/TAVERN BUSINESS



SHARE OF AUTOMOBILE DEALER SALES



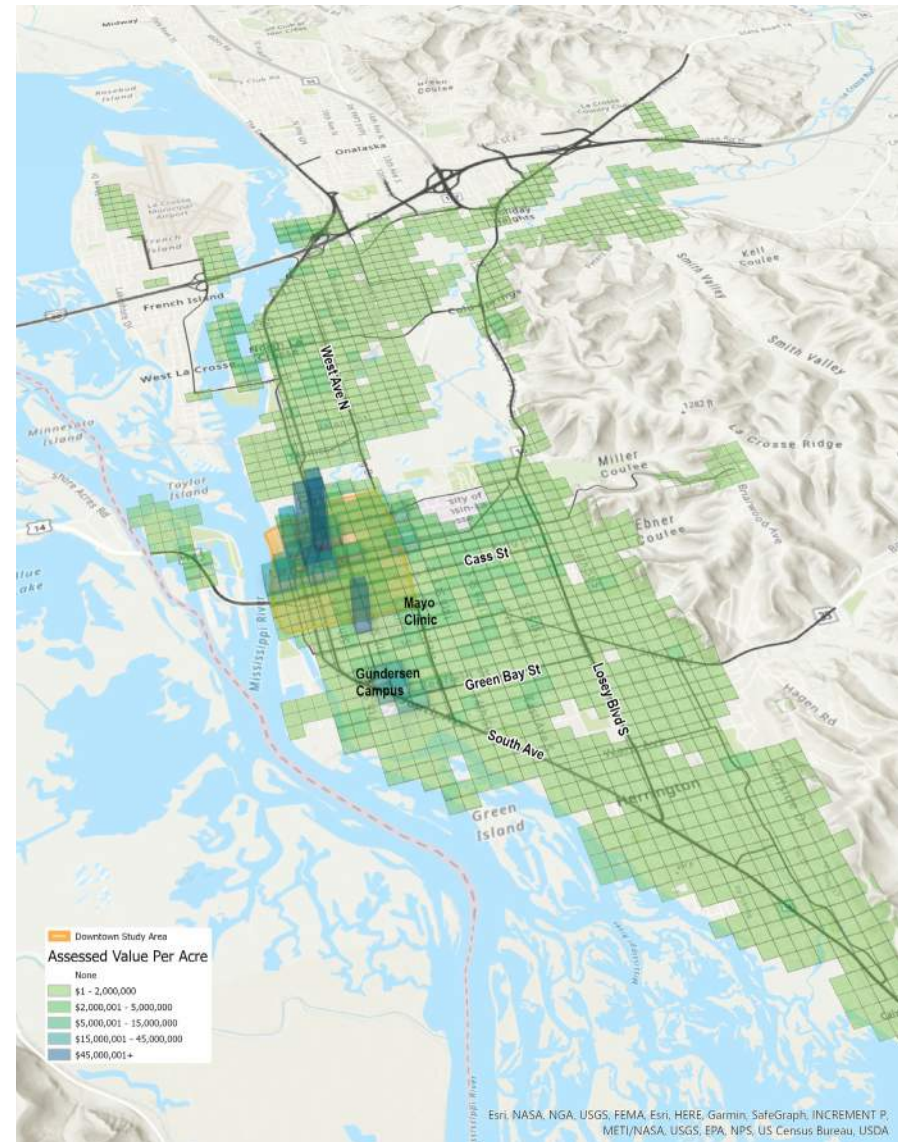
4. GENERATES A STRONG SHARE OF TAX REVENUE

Average value per acre for commercial property in downtown is nearly twice that of the citywide average and within the core commercial area it is nearly three times higher.

Just under 1/4 of the city's commercial value is in downtown which covers less than 5% of the City's commercial land

This means land within Downtown is a more efficient tax generator than elsewhere in the city, where more land would be required to generate the same revenue

COMMERCIAL VALUE PER ACRE



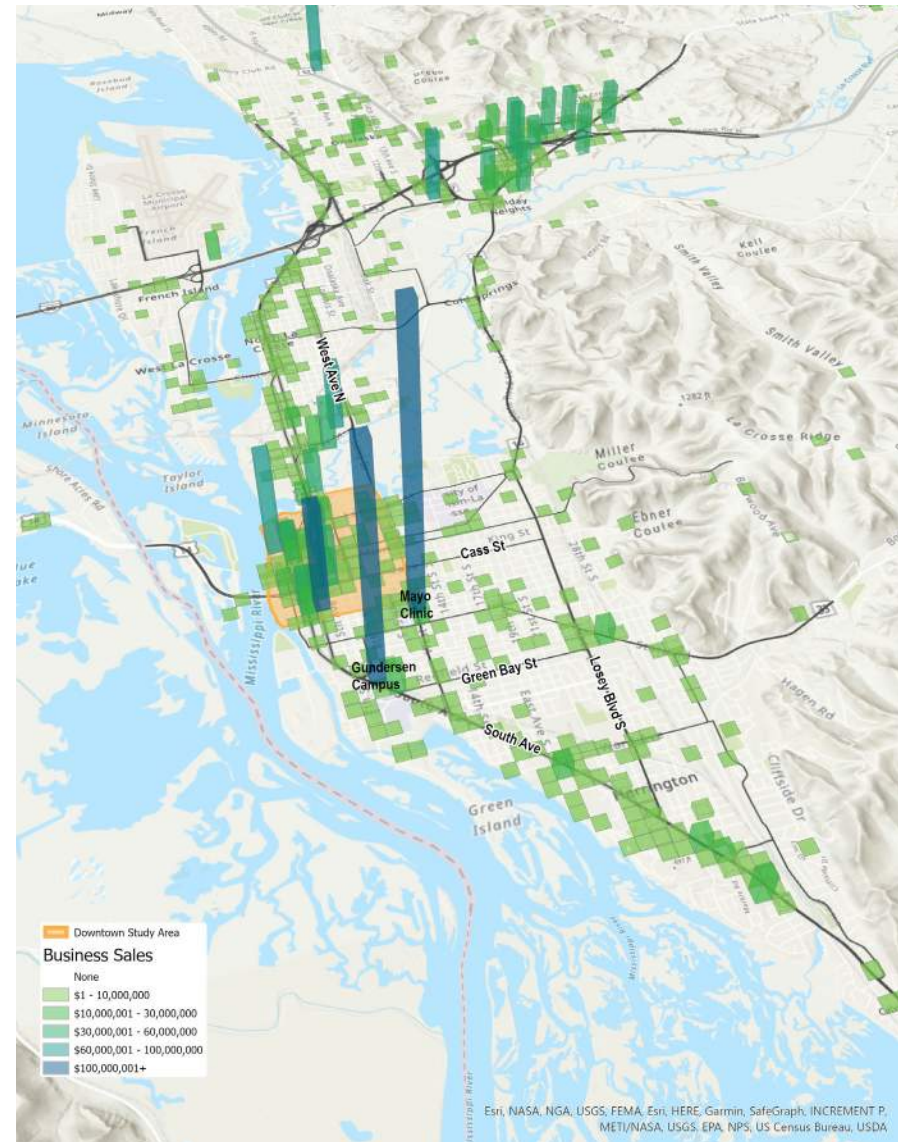
5. PROVIDES A HUB FOR EMPLOYMENT

Downtown is a medical, educational and employment hub for the region.

Nearly **1/4 of the City's jobs** and **16% of the County's jobs** are in Downtown.

Anchor institutions provide strong employment bases and often have a need for supporting services/businesses - these institutions **create a significant economic base in the area** that further investment

BUSINESS SALES



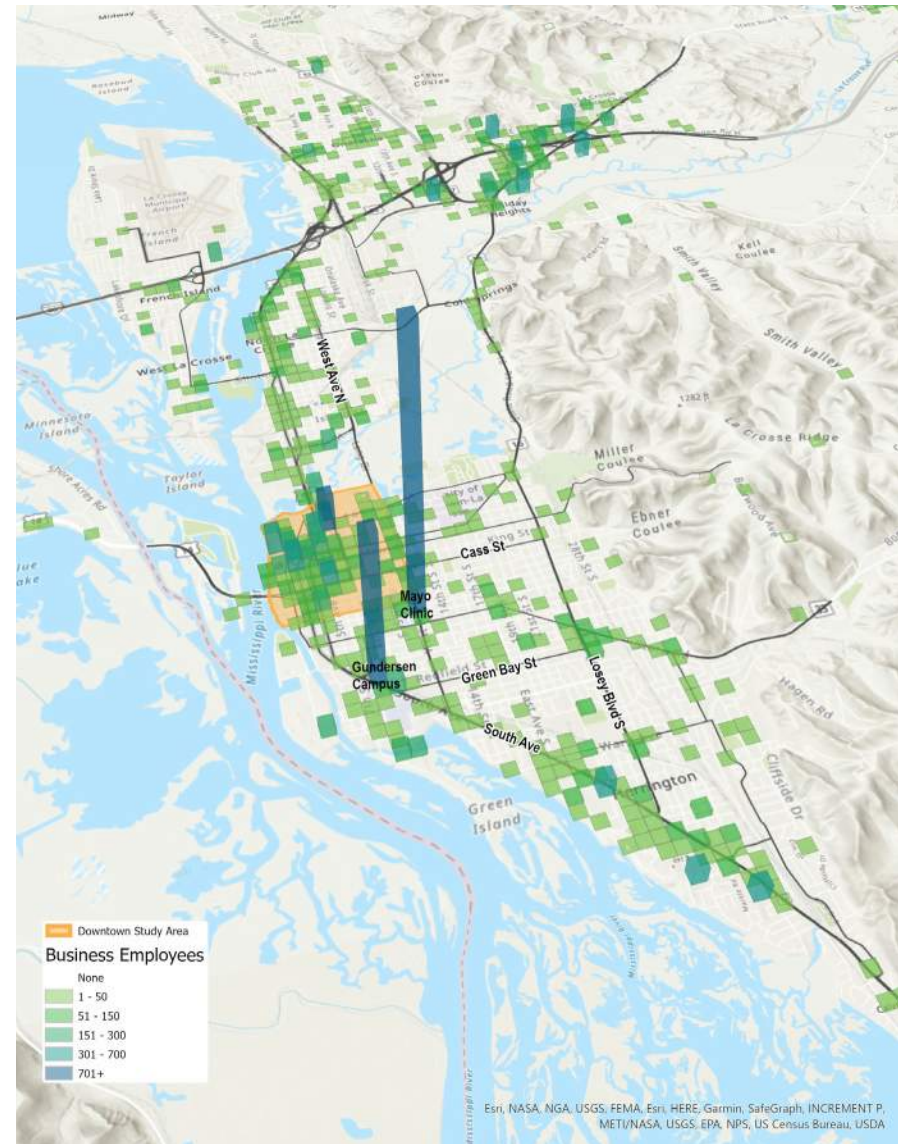
6. PROVES THE DESIRE FOR NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

The development of recent mixed use projects including Belle Square, The Hub, and Landmark by the Rivers, have shown downtown's appeal for a variety of new uses, especially higher density residential development.

These projects, constructed between 2016 and 2019, added over **250 new multifamily units to the area**, along with retail and office space.



BUSINESS EMPLOYEES



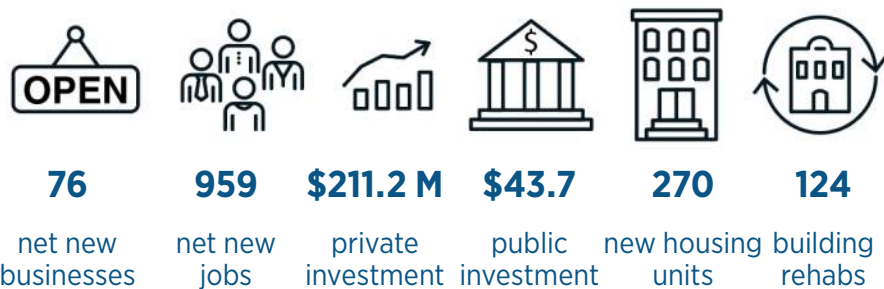
MARKET ANALYSIS SNAPSHOT

The market analysis provides an understanding of the demographic forces that impact downtown growth and development. The major findings are summarized here and in the appendix. Highlights of the analysis includes:

- A. Nearly one-third of the city’s population growth was captured in downtown.
- B. Young adults and retirees are coming to La Crosse.
- C. La Crosse has a relatively low median household income compared to the state.
- D. Nearly 20,000 students attend La Crosse’s higher-education schools.
- E. Downtown is an employment center containing one-fourth of the City’s jobs and 16% of all jobs in the County.
- F. Downtown has a concentration of high-paying professional jobs.

Strengths

- Downtown is a medical, educational, and cultural hub in the region, with multiple anchor institutions located in the area
- Recent development momentum and capture of citywide growth indicate demand for downtown development
- Downtown investments and development since 2014 include:



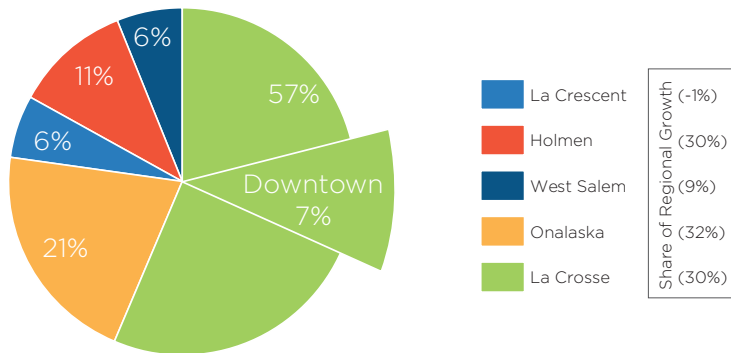
Takeaways from the Data

- The city is losing ground to surrounding areas (Onalaska, Holmen) in terms of population growth
- Population growth in La Crosse is concentrated in the downtown
- Age data indicates students, recent grads, and retirees/ downsizers are a significant presence in the downtown
- The city and project area are differentiated from the region by their unique housing inventory

Opportunities

- › Students, recent graduates, and retirees/downsizers are a significant presence in the downtown, and represent key market sectors for growth in the area
- › Improve connections to adjacent areas through complete streets with improved bike and sidewalk connections to increase the attraction of downtown for residential uses as well as visitors and employers
- › Build infill housing in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to provide additional customers for the commercial core
- › Increase the variety of housing options, including units designed and priced for the downtown’s core markets of workforce, family-friendly, empty nesters, and retirees
- › Make strong connections with Riverside North as it develops

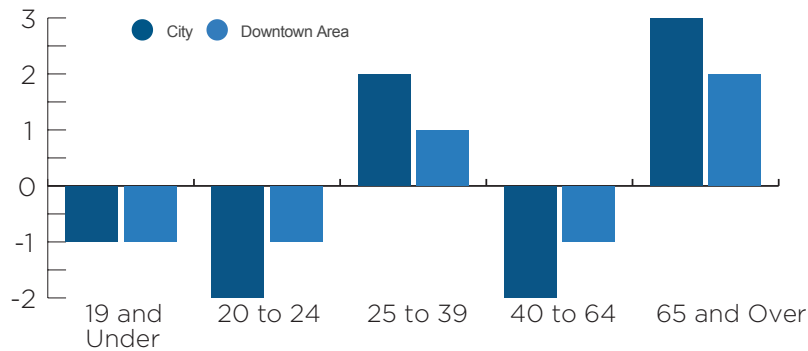
REGIONAL POPULATION AND SHARE OF GROWTH, 2020



A. NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF THE CITY'S POPULATION GROWTH WAS CAPTURED IN DOWNTOWN.

- Of the 52,600 residents in La Crosse, 6,200 (12%) live downtown
- Downtown has grown by 300 residents since 2010, accounting for 27% of the city's growth (and 9% of growth in the region)
- Since 2010, La Crosse grew by approximately 1,100 residents, the same amount of growth as Onalaska (population 18,800) and Holmen (population 10,100), which are much smaller communities yet captured the same amount of regional growth
- The city overall is losing ground to surrounding areas in terms of population growth. Growth within the city is concentrated downtown

% POPULATION CHANGE BY AGE GROUP 2010-2020



B. YOUNG ADULTS AND RETIREES ARE COMING TO LA CROSSE.

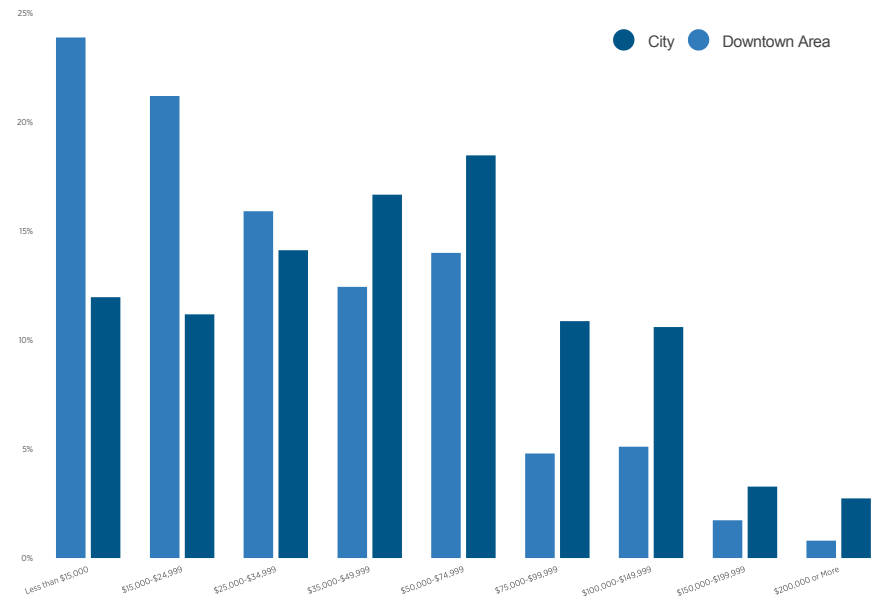
- Nearly all the city's population growth since 2010 was aged 25 to 29, and 65 and older
- The population downtown is reflective the concentration of higher education institutions with 47% of residents aged 20 to 24 and a median age of 23.8
- Downtown is seeing significant growth of older residents. While only 9% of the population downtown is over age 65, this group accounted for 43% of the area's growth since 2010

C. LA CROSSE HAS A RELATIVELY LOW MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME COMPARED TO THE STATE.

- The downtown median household income is \$27,400, reflecting the large student population
- The citywide median household income is \$45,400, 25% lower than the statewide median of \$60,800
- The lower median income is indicative of small household sizes and single-earner households.

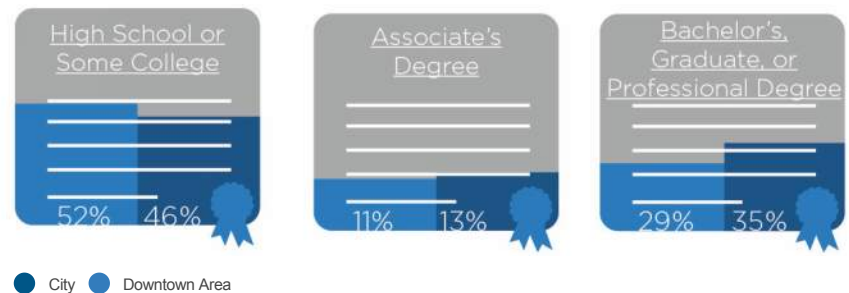


INCOME BREAKDOWN, 2020

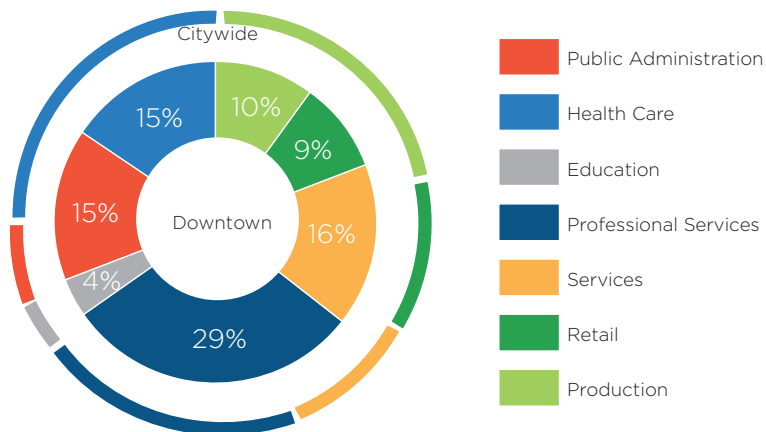


D. NEARLY 20,000 STUDENTS ATTEND LA CROSSE'S HIGHER-EDUCATION SCHOOLS.

- While enrollment has remained consistent in recent years, the number of graduates staying after completing their degrees has gone up.
- In terms of overall education levels, the city has a higher proportion of residents (age 25 and older) with bachelors, graduate, or professional degrees (35% of the population) than the state (14%)
- The educational attainment of downtown residents is reflective of a large student population; 53% of residents (age 25 and older) have a high school education or some college, compared to 46% citywide
- The presence of multiple educational institutions influences both market conditions and opportunities for downtown



EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



E. DOWNTOWN IS AN EMPLOYMENT CENTER CONTAINING ONE-FOURTH OF THE CITY'S JOBS AND 16% OF ALL JOBS IN THE COUNTY.

- There is a total of 48,800 jobs in La Crosse; 11,700 of those are downtown
- Major employment sectors in the city are health care (25% of jobs), professional services (23% of jobs), and production (21% of jobs)
- Within downtown, major employment sectors are professional services (29% of jobs), followed by accommodation and entertainment (16% of jobs), health care (15%), and public administration (15%)

F. DOWNTOWN HAS A CONCENTRATION OF HIGH PAYING PROFESSIONAL JOBS.

- Downtown has 71% of citywide management jobs, 70% of public administration jobs, 47% of finance and insurance jobs, and 39% of jobs in accommodations and entertainment





03

five themes

The following chapter was formed from the extensive public engagement efforts and the market analysis summarized on the preceding pages. A total of 5 big ideas were developed, which each includes topics that support the vision. The topics each begin with background information summarizing current conditions and programs within La Crosse. Each topic includes opportunities for actions that can be taken to support the overarching vision. Not all opportunities need to be pursued to achieve the visions set forth. They merely provide options for obtaining the vision of Imagine 2040.

IMAGINE 2040

INTRODUCTION

The plan's recommendations are organized into five themes, each beginning with a vision statement that emerged from the steering committee and stakeholders.

The concepts within each theme address opportunities and actions for achieving the vision. All of the themes braid into each other to create a holistic vision of making downtown an even better place for tomorrow.

ORGANIZATION



MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

We envision a downtown that continues to be a premier location for development and growth in Wisconsin. We know our available real estate is finite, and we want to maximize its potential for the future.



NETWORK OF STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS

We envision a downtown with vibrant, welcoming, and livable neighborhoods that flourish as our region's urban center.



A CONNECTED CITY

We envision a downtown with strong connections from the river to downtown, to the neighborhoods, and to the bluffs.



DESTINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

We envision a downtown that is a memorable destination that is welcoming to all people.



CONFLUENCE OF NATURE

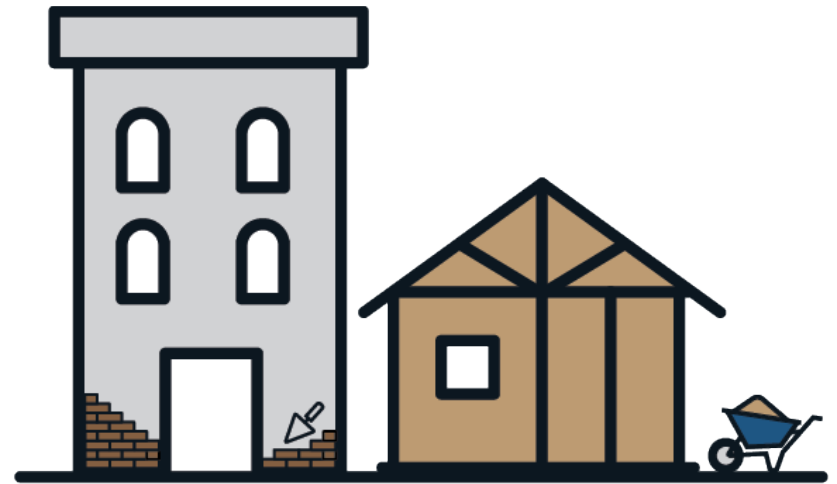
We envision a downtown that celebrates and values the outdoors with a visible, healthy natural environment. A downtown that, no matter where you look, offers the ability to easily interact with nature.

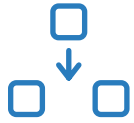
theme

A MARKET FOR DEVELOPMENT

We envision a downtown that continues to be a premier location for development and growth in Wisconsin. Real estate is finite, and we must maximize site potential to ensure continued growth.

Downtown has many sites that could be better utilized, some which were identified in the previous plan, others that emerged since. This plan presents a future direction that enhances downtown as a place to live, work, and visit. It complements other development efforts like River Point District and the surrounding neighborhoods.





ORGANIZATION

The section includes:

- Opportunity Sites
- Core Cluster Concepts
- Prototypical Development



OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY SITES

Downtown has many sites that are subject to change in the future because of underused land or obsolete uses. Participants in the planning process identified these sites.

- › Redirection for surface parking lots
- › US Post Office Site
- › Core Gateway Blocks
- › Houska Village - Riverfront Development
- › La Crosse River Area
- › Salvation Army Block

FACILITATE THE ASSEMBLY OF PROPERTY FOR REDEVELOPMENT

- › US Post Office Site
- › Washburn Neighborhood Expansion

CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS ON KEY PROJECTS

- › US Post Office Site
- › Symphony Hall
- › Public Market
- › Salvation Army
- › Decommissioning of surface parking
- › Museums and cultural facilities

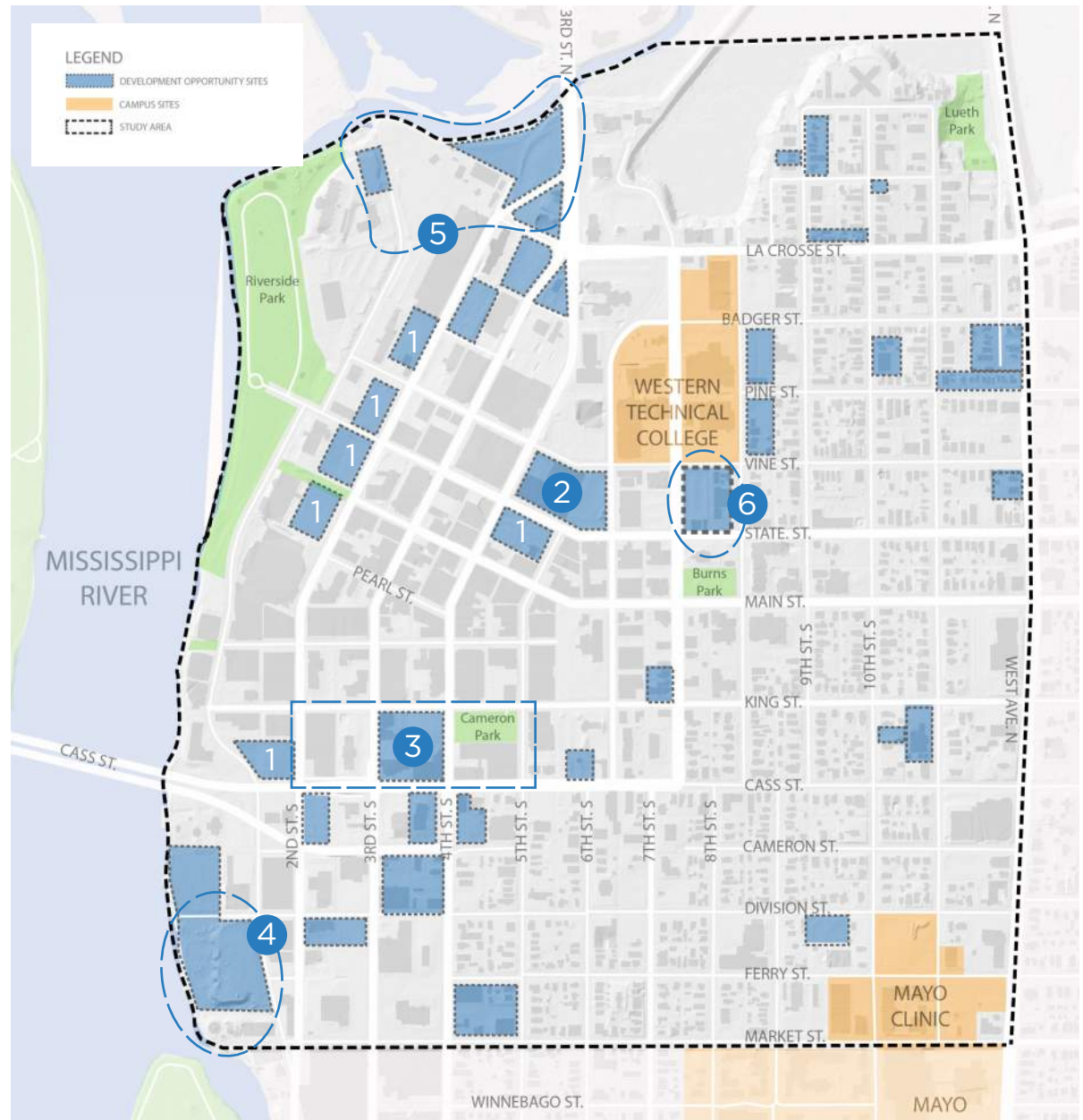
OPPORTUNITY SITES

The study area has a good supply of under-used land, held both publicly and privately. The Development Opportunities Map identifies properties in downtown that present possibilities for redirection through natural market forces. Maximizing the potential of opportunity sites is important because available real estate is finite.

The concepts in this plan are organized by:

- **Prototypical Development.** The prototypical development diagrams identify the intensity of new projects in the study area. They show a greater level of density than experienced today.
- **Test Fit Concepts - Core Clusters.** Several blocks and half-blocks throughout downtown are subject to market forces for redevelopment. Test fit concepts are included in this chapter to illustrate the vision.
- **Test Fit Concepts - Neighborhood Clusters.** Several properties throughout the neighborhoods that wrap the downtown core are subject to market changes. Several homes within the neighborhood are poor or dilapidated condition. While rehabilitation is an option, these sites could be assembled for larger projects that may have a reasonable financial return for investors. Test fits of the neighborhood are described in the next section, "Network for Vibrant Neighborhoods".

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES MAP

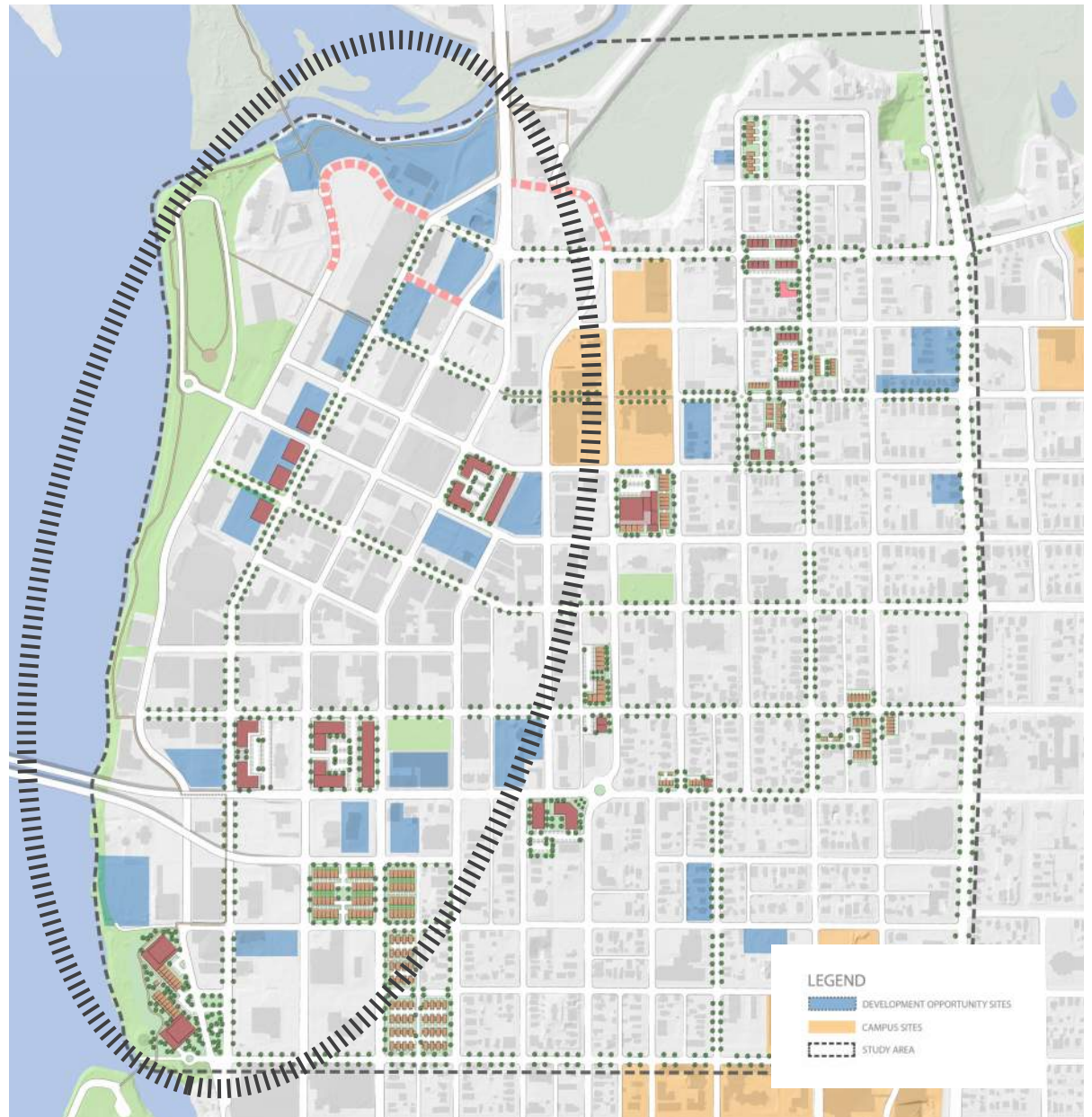


CORE CLUSTER CONCEPTS

This plan recognizes that sites may redevelop entirely differently than imagined in this plan, yet the plan illustrates possibilities that may complement downtown as a place to work, live, and visit.

1. **Surface Parking Lots.** Privately owned parking lots could be redeveloped into a vertical mixed use. These sites are subject to concepts in the prototypical development diagrams.
2. **US Post Office Site.** Redeveloping the US Post Office site for a project that better contributes to the culture of downtown is a high-priority from the planning participants.
3. **Core Gateway.** Blocks located north of the bridge are candidates for signature projects like Belle Square.
4. **Houska Village.** A long-term vision for this area should protect the site until the market can support the project. The concept leverages the views of the Mississippi River and proximity to downtown.
5. **La Crosse River Area.** Sites near the La Crosse River can become prime for development by connecting La Crosse Street to Front Street.
6. **Salvation Army.** A redevelopment concept for a block that straddles the core of downtown and traditional neighborhood.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT MAP



↑ NORTH

PROTOTYPICAL DEVELOPMENT

This section establishes the basic program of prototypical development in downtown La Crosse during the next twenty years. The diagrams illustrate the desirable intensity of development to support growth and maximize the limited real estate in the heart of the community. Population growth and changing markets will continue to create a demand for new housing options for people who want to live in downtown, and want a product that doesn't exist in the market today. Economic development and diversification efforts will require new product types for changing trends. Despite this section emphasis on vertical growth, the plan's focus steers development through infill prototypical developments that respects their surroundings.

Again, the Development Opportunities Map identifies properties in downtown that present possibilities for redirection. The prototypical diagrams apply to these sites.

General characteristics of the prototypical developments include:

- High Intensity
- Medium-High Intensity
- Medium Intensity
- Low Intensity

HIGH-INTENSITY

The development of housing above office and commercial establishments adds vitality to business areas and increases the economic yield on the property. Nationally, more communities are finding that by mixing land uses, neighborhoods are more attractive to workers who are looking at quality of life criteria when determining where to settle.

Apartment buildings can be considered high-intensity uses, as well, assuming the structure is 5+ stories.

Eligible Placement. Any half-or full-blocks that are opportunity sites for redevelopment in the study area. The Hive (901 State Street) is a demonstration of quality high-intensity development east of 7th Street

MEDIUM-HIGH INTENSITY

Medium-high intensity uses include townhomes, rowhomes, and shorter apartment buildings. Commercial uses can be integrated and more likely located at the crossroads of major streets. Parking can be shared and located within the structure.

Eligible Placement. Many of the auto dealerships operating in downtown intend to remain downtown. These uses often seek settings that allow them to display more merchandise – vehicles. If these uses relocate, then this plan imagines that these

areas become a neighborhood, offering housing options unlike the current choices found in the downtown core or Washburn Neighborhood.

MEDIUM INTENSITY

Medium intensity uses include small lot single family uses that may be semi-attached with independent parking. The number of units per acre is greater than the surrounding neighborhood's single-family density. This housing type is unmet and offers a housing option for changing demographics in the La Crosse region. While the diagram shows a full-block redevelopment concept, a quarter of the concept can be adapted for select areas.

Eligible Placement. Medium intensity uses offers a transition from the downtown core to the historic neighborhoods.

LOW INTENSITY

This plan does not identify any low-intensity redevelopment unless individual properties within the single-family neighborhoods can support only a single-family residence. These instances usually consist of one or two adjacent properties surrounded by stable housing. A string of three or more "in-flux" properties are eligible for greater intensity development. In flux properties refer to vacant lots or dilapidated structures.

BLOCK DIAGRAMS

INTENSITY DEMONSTRATIONS

INTENSITY

MEDIUM-HIGH

MEDIUM



High-Intensity Mixed Use

FEATURES:

- > 5+ Stories
- > Main Level: Active Uses
- > Upper Level: Residential/Office
- > Lower Level: Parking/storage



Medium-High Intensity

FEATURES:

- > Rowhomes or Townhomes with independent entries.
- > Corner lots can be commercial
- > Shared underground parking
- > Shared internal green space



Medium Intensity

FEATURES:

- > Small lot, single-family
- > Semi attached housing with independent parking.

1. SURFACE LOT REUSE

Downtown has many surface parking lots, exceeding the amount necessary according to the 2020 Parking Study. This means an opportunity to redevelop many of the parking lots, primarily located on 2nd Street, with new mixed use developments.

Site redevelopment should create an edge to 2nd Street with commercial and covered parking on the main floor and residential or offices on upper floors. Having rooftop amenities establishes another dimension to downtown and may include shared tenant spaces or dining/drinking experiences. Development should frame the intersections and reinforce the existing downtown development character.

FEATURES:

- A. Mixed use development
- B. Shared Parking



AERIAL



MIXED USE



MIXED USE



ROOFTOP AMENITIES



2. POST OFFICE SITE

The U.S. Post Office at 425 State Street is a prime location for redevelopment, being close to jobs, recreation opportunities, and the downtown core.

Community members desire redeveloping the site like the Belle Square project, located immediately to the west. The balance of the site hosts community uses, including a symphony hall, public market, cultural arts center, human services, museum, and/or public parking.

- **Action: Continue negotiations.** The City continues its ongoing discussion for acquiring the site from the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). Current requirements for acquiring the site burdens the city to purchase an alternate site for the post office and build the new facility. Also, the vacated site is subject to special conditions from the federal government for years, requiring the future use of the site to be redeveloped for public use or remain vacant until the special conditions expire. The City continues its discussion with state and elected officials to determine if the site can be developed as imagined by the participants in the planning process.



FEATURES:

- A. Major mixed use project like Belle Square
- B. Possible community amenity or parking.
- C. Surface lot redevelopment



3. CORE GATEWAY

The Core Gateway represents the new arrival to downtown for travelers. Concepts include:

Gateway Block. The block from King Street to Cass Street, between 3rd and 4th Streets, straddles two of downtown’s higher profile streets. This opportunity site is imagined as a full-block redevelopment effort with two preferred paths:

- **Mixed Use Redevelopment.** Redeveloped with higher intensity uses similar to Belle Square. Several parking structures are located nearby and the prominence and convenience of the site is highly marketable for tenants with nearby amenities like Pearl Street, Riverwalk, and Cameron Park.
- **Signature Civic-Oriented Facility.** The site’s exposure to most travelers approaching downtown from the south, and proximity to transit, stores, restaurants, hotels, and Cameron Park; positions the site as a strong candidate for a future signature civic-oriented facility. Possibilities include a new symphony hall, cultural arts center, public market, and museums.

Warehouse Redevelopment. First Supply’s warehouse, located behind the Fairfield Inn, is subject to change in the future. It’s redevelopment will likely necessitate a higher-intensity use to be financially feasible.



Cameron Park Scenario. Bimbo Bakeries is a very important business to retain in La Crosse. If the business were to relocate to another area of the city that offers greater expansion opportunities, then Cameron Park could expand to become iconic gateway park. This scenario could accelerate investment in the area.



FEATURES:

- A. Signature civic-oriented facility
 - › Possible Symphony Hall
 - › Possible Cultural Arts Center
- B. Mixed Use Development (alt to A)
- C. Possible expanded Cameron Park
- D. Warehouse Redevelopment

4. “HOUSKA VILLAGE”

The Houska Village is a long-term redevelopment strategy for the area west of Front Street between Division Street and Market Street.

The site's proximity to the Mississippi River lends itself to become an ideal location for future redevelopment between Houska Park and the downtown core. However, redevelopment is unlikely to be realized during the next twenty years.

The plan presents possibilities for the area to become a future major neighborhood development project that maximizes the number of housing units with views to the river, and offers a mix of living options.

FEATURES:

- A. Multi-family Tower
- B. Townhomes
- C. Integrated Trail
- D. Restored riverfront connection with public art.

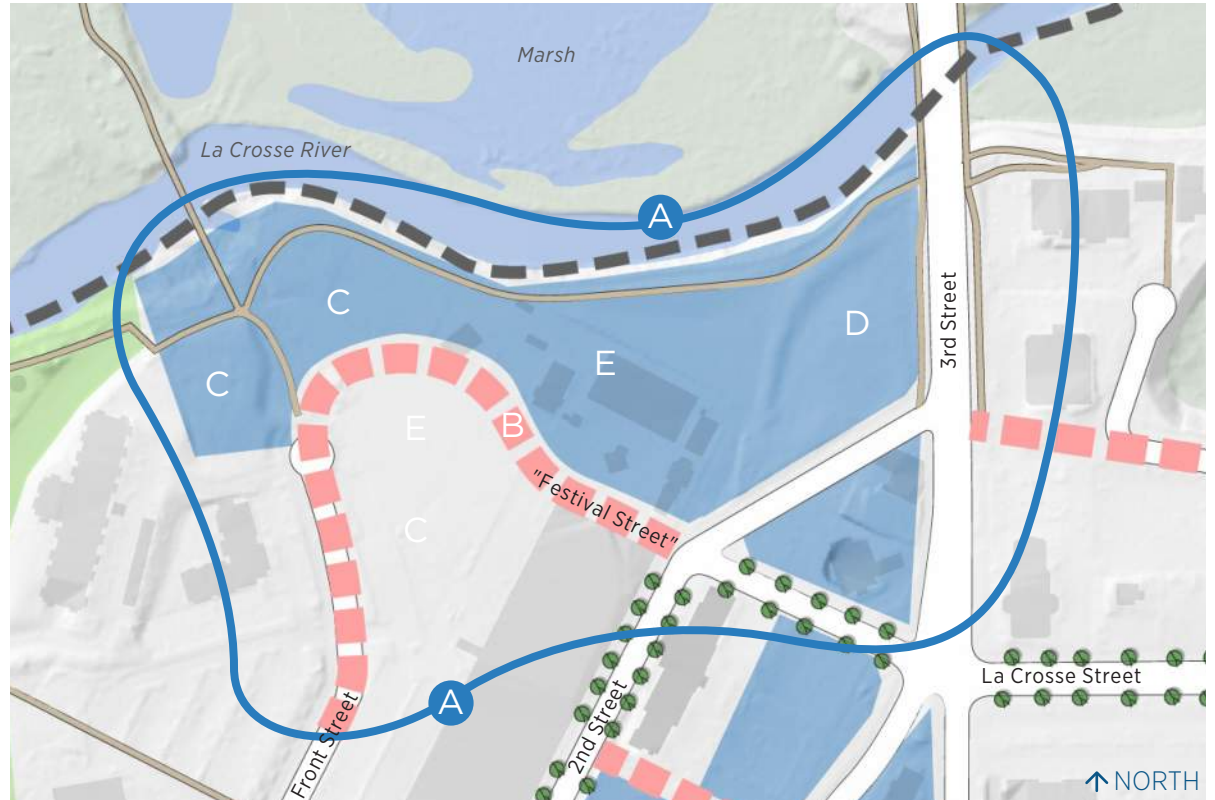


5. LA CROSSE RIVER

The La Crosse River Area is separated from the rest of downtown. Extending La Crosse Street to reconnect with Front Street will open this area for development. While the path for the new street runs through the Oktoberfest grounds, it creates an opportunity for a new festival street, which is a road that can be temporarily closed for events and activities like Oktoberfest. During events, the path can become a central pedestrian promenade to program activities. Advancing this concept deserves its own master planning process to ensure property owners and event managers contribute to its design.

The riverside of the road could host several functions, including commercial projects, civic uses, park space, and public market. All of these uses should be connected by trails that link to the marsh trail system. The balance of the area could support a unique setting for housing that appeals to active adults.

Public Market. The 2019 Public Market feasibility study determined that the project is viable in La Crosse. Fifteen potential locations were identified with the 3rd Street landing being one of the preferred destinations because of its ability to become a gateway to all of downtown.



This plan reinforces the 3rd Street Landing as the site for the public market. The facility can function all year and become a hub of activity during special events that overlooks the Oktoberfest Grounds and marsh.

La Crosse River Park. The park's design should support staging of vendors and activities that complements Riverside Park and guides people to connecting trails.

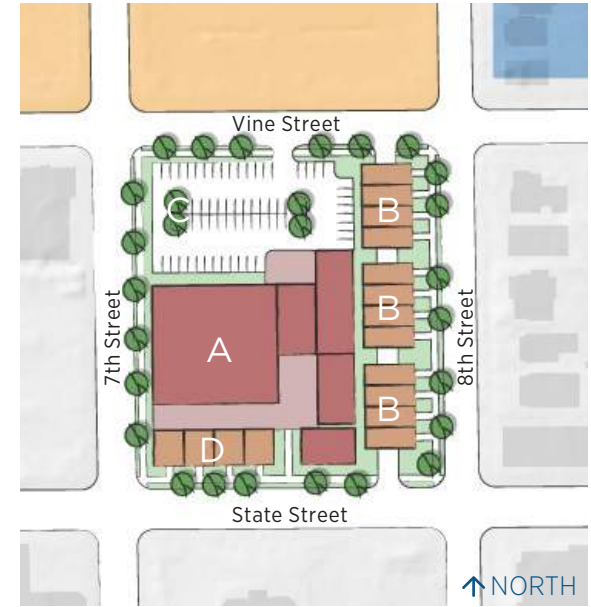
FEATURES:

- A. Prepare detailed Master Plan
- B. Festival street
- C. Development site
- D. Possible public market
- E. Festival grounds

6. SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army is located mid-block on the west side of 8th Street between Vine and State Streets. The organization is in the early stages of planning for a future facility expansion on its current site. Meanwhile, La Crosse County has been decommissioning surface parking lots in downtown, resulting in some lots being redeveloped. Currently, the County does not have plans to decommission the parking lot west of the Salvation Army, yet the County continues to evaluate its parking needs. Therefore, the site is subject to reprogramming.

The concept for this block's redevelopment includes residential uses, a new Salvation Army, and possible retention of commercial buildings. The 4-plexes along 8th Street establishes a stronger neighborhood edge and transition to single-family residences. The 4-plexes could be part of a transitional housing program. The Salvation Army's new building and entrance moves to 7th Street. Portions of the existing structure could be retained under the concept shown. The commercial buildings along State Street could be preserved or become part of the redevelopment plan. Altogether, the concept maximizes the use of land, creates a stronger neighborhood feel, introduces transitional housing, and provides flexibility for the layout of the future Salvation Army.



The existing buildings along Vine Street could be adapted into the concept or be redeveloped for new transitional housing as shown.

The next steps to realize the future redevelopment of the block is for the Salvation Army and County representatives to discuss the site's availability. Initial discussions with both groups indicate that the concept is intriguing and that additional dialogue is necessary beyond this plan's schedule.

FEATURES:

- A. New Salvation Army Building
- B. Residential 4-plex transitional housing
- C. Shared parking
- D. Possible retention of buildings

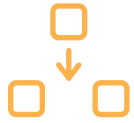
theme

A NETWORK OF VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS

We envision a downtown of connected neighborhoods that continues to grow as an urban center.

We typically think of neighborhoods as residential areas separate from commercial districts, but downtown is a vibrant urban center comprised of homes and businesses woven together. Strengthening these distinct but symbiotic areas is important for near-term recovery from the pandemic and our long-term future.





ORGANIZATION

To create a network of strong neighborhoods, a good understanding of the existing conditions is necessary. This vision begins with a look at the current housing market in downtown and La Crosse, then diving into topics that address opportunities and challenges for housing in downtown. The section includes:

- Housing Trends
- Neighborhood Concepts
- Housing Maintenance
- Housing Affordability
- Housing Insecurity



OPPORTUNITIES

HOUSING REHABILITATION

- › Create a volunteer interior inspection program for rental units
- › Create housing policies that prioritize at-risk areas
- › Recruit the next generation of locals to restore homes
- › Commit funding to more code enforcement

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- › Ensure policies & codes support affordable housing
- › Support a housing demonstration project
- › Create mechanisms to share risk

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPTS

- › Establish greenway connections
- › Assemble properties to aid redevelopment
- › Ensure regulations support new housing options
- › Ensure context sensitive design for new projects

HOUSING INSECURITY

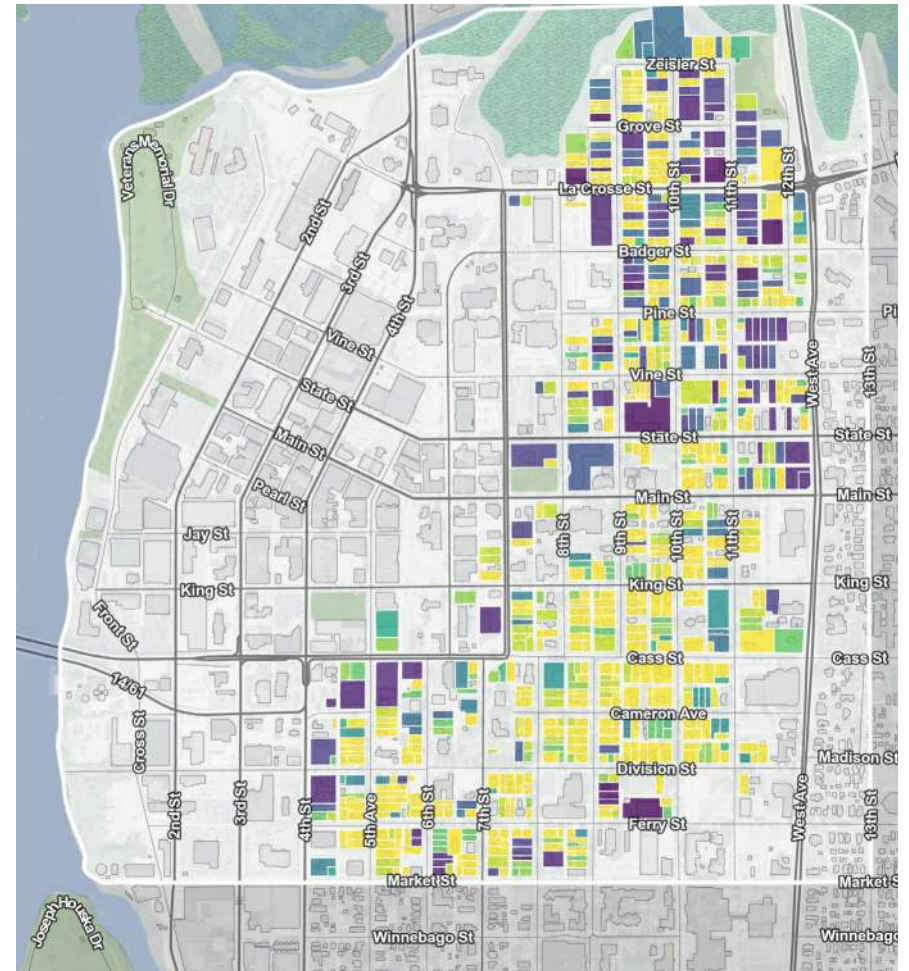
- › Launch a working group of existing service providers
- › Create a central location for service provision
- › Commission a permanent supportive housing study

HOUSING TRENDS

Downtown is a unique and desirable place to live setting it apart from the rest of the city. The convenience to the riverfront, shopping and dining, employment, and events throughout the year are unparalleled. A short walk provides access to all these amenities without the need to find a place to park. Major trends in downtown housing include:

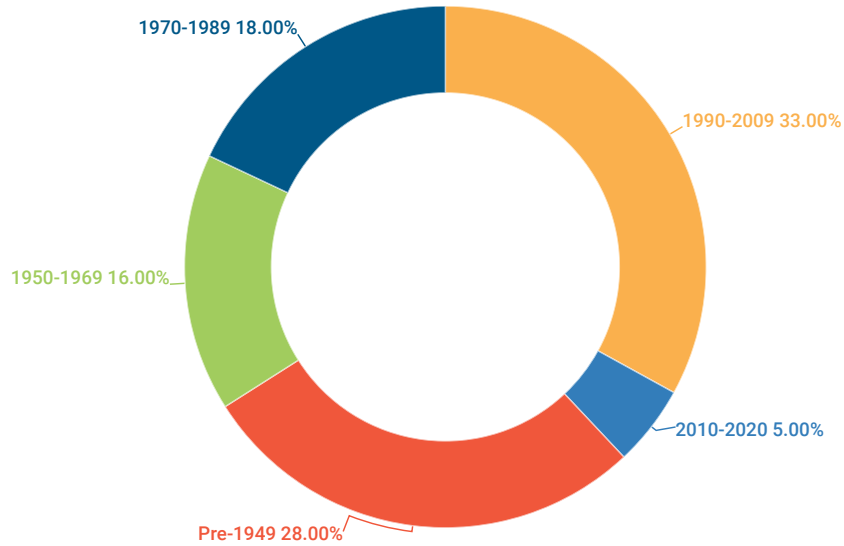
- **High rate of renter occupancy.** The City of La Crosse has a high rate of renter-occupied households (54%), and downtown's rate is nearly all renter-occupied housing (93%). This is typical of student/center city areas.
- **Small share of downtown residents work downtown.** Of the job-aged residents living in downtown, 25% stay in downtown to work, while the other 75% commute to other areas.
- **Relatively older housing stock.** Only 38% of the housing units in downtown were built after 1990. 44% of the units were constructed before 1970.
 - › The oldest housing units are in the Washburn neighborhood while much of the housing stock in to the north has been upgraded since the early 2000s.
- **Varied vacancy rate.** In downtown, the vacancy rate for owner-occupied units is zero, while renter-occupied units is almost 12%. Generally, a healthy, self-sustaining housing market has a vacancy rate between 5% and 7%.
 - › The low supply of owner-occupied housing in downtown influences the overall vacancy rate.
 - › Nearly half the vacancy rate is from rental units on the market or rented, but not occupied. The remaining 38% of vacant units are listed as other reasons not occupied because the owner doesn't want to sell or rent, is using it for storage, or an elderly person owns it but is living in a nursing home or with family.
- **Diverse housing unit supply.** Downtown has a fairly diverse housing stock with various housing types available, except for single-family attached units. The largest share of the market is large apartment complexes (29%), with single-family detached units only making up about 17% of the market.

YEAR BUILT



↑ NORTH

HOUSING YEAR BUILT



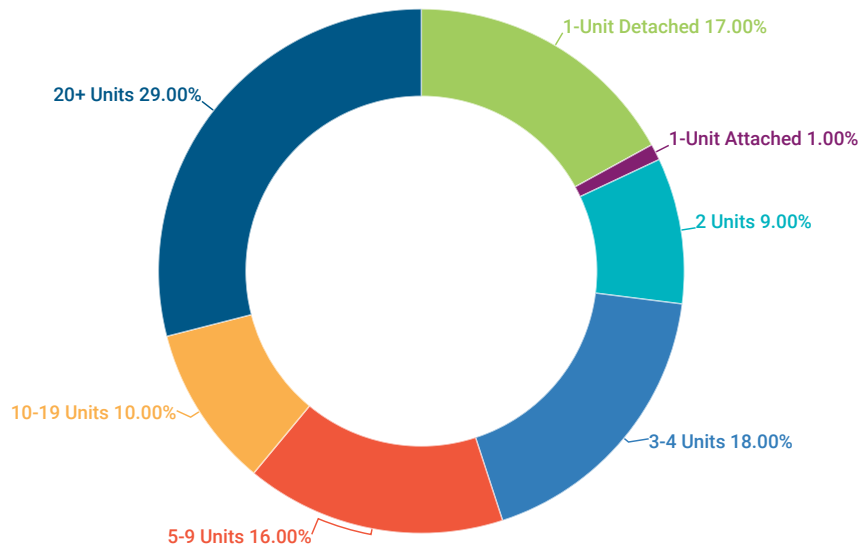
HOUSEHOLD ANALYSIS

La Crosse captured 31% of regional growth between 2010 and 2020, but was outpaced by Onalaska who captured 33%

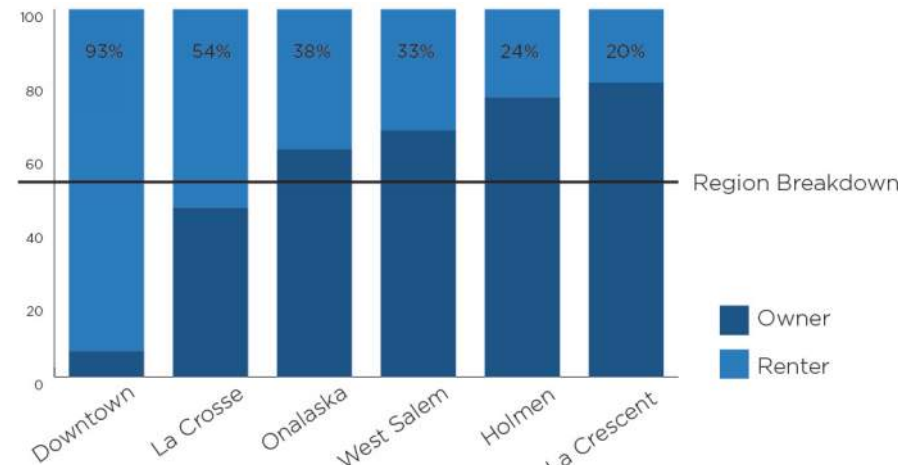
Downtown makes up 8% of the regional population while the city itself comprises 58%, down 1% from 2010

La Crosse added 485 new households between 2010 and 2020, 137 of which were located downtown

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE



OWNER-RENTER SHARE OF DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL UNITS



HOUSING REHABILITATION

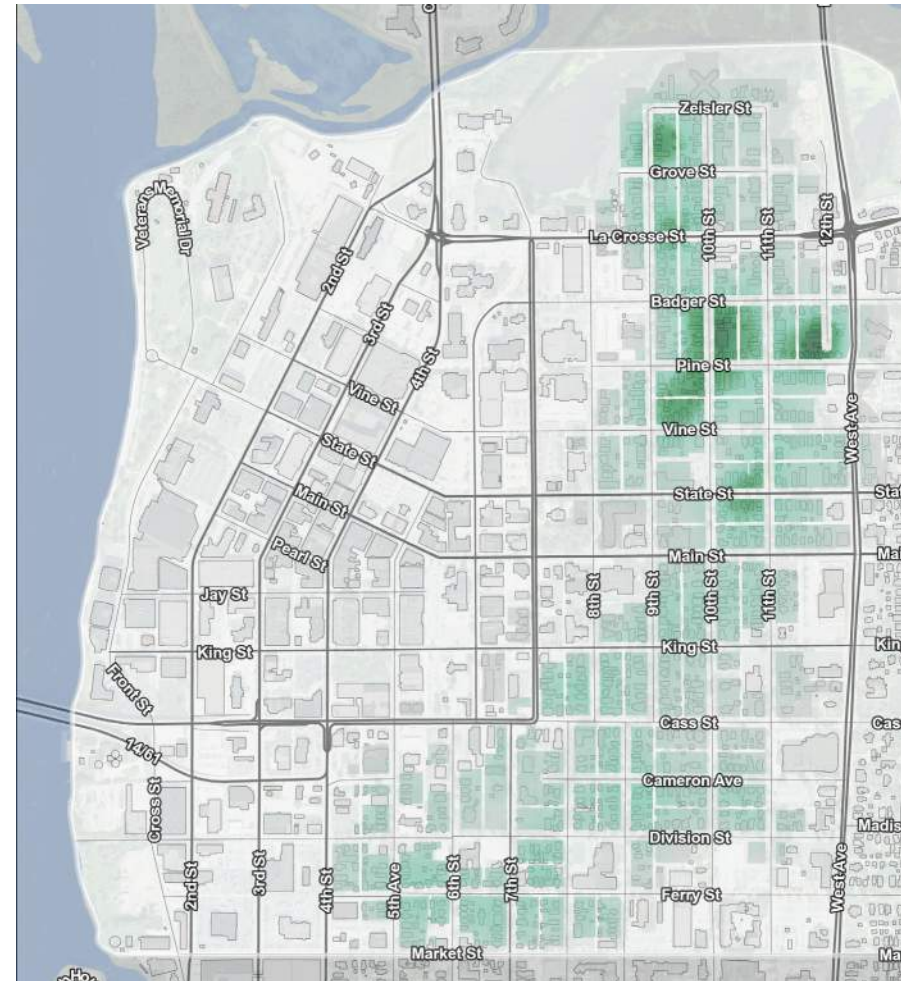
The neighborhoods surrounding downtown have seen a resurgence with individuals reinvesting in the housing stock and converting apartment homes back to single-family dwellings. The work to restore the homes, maintaining their historic character, has largely been initiated by a few longtime residents. Much of this work has been done in and around the 10th and Cass Historic District. Several homes were demolished in past decades and replaced with slip-in apartment buildings. Reinvestment and redevelopment have influenced the condition of the neighborhood.

The housing condition heat map identifies areas that are at-risk, meaning that the curbside evaluation suggests that the building needs significant reinvestment to become stable. In 2016, the state legislature passed a law prohibiting local ordinances that require routine inspections of rental units. Therefore, inspection of rental units is voluntary and leaves little incentive for landlords to make necessary upgrades to the units for the safety of their tenants, which are often college students or low-income residents. Intervention for rehabilitation or redevelopment is a priority for at-risk areas.

Potential programs for improving the maintenance of homes include:

- Adopt a "Seal of Approval" rental inspection program.
- Recruit the next generation of locals to restore homes.
- Continue housing renovation loan program.
- Commit funding to more code enforcement.

HOUSING CONDITION HEAT MAP



↑ NORTH



OPPORTUNITIES

A ADOPT A "SEAL OF APPROVAL" RENTAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

A rental inspection program could be established through a landlord association. The association would establish a set of criteria that could include issues the city and Department of Health find difficult to monitor/enforce like mold. Regularly (annually or bi-annually), units would be inspected. When the units pass they would receive some type of "seal of approval." This recognition could then be used by different organizations or agencies when they receive inquiries about rental housing. Additionally, programs that offer education on how to be a good tenant are also important.

B RECRUIT THE NEXT GENERATION OF LOCALS TO RESTORE HOMES

Downtown has a major asset in the old historic homes that define the neighborhoods. Many of these older homes need updates to meet modern expectations. Community-based restoration efforts will ensure the work is done not just to make a profit, but to see the image of the neighborhood upheld. For many years the same local investors have been rehabbing homes and restoring them to their original character. It will take recruitment of the next generation of locals to continue the restoration work started.

C CONTINUE HOUSING RENOVATION LOAN PROGRAM

The city manages targeted housing rehabilitation projects through the Housing Renovation Loan Program, in its third year of operation. With no upper income limit and up to \$35,000 to repair or replace items such as siding and roofing, this program encourages residents to make significant repairs and remodeling work on their homes. The 2020 program targets the neighborhood southeast of Green Bay Street and South Avenue. Future allocations should be investigated for the neighborhood northwest of Main Street and West Avenue to help stabilize the neighborhood.

D COMMIT FUNDING TO MORE CODE ENFORCEMENT

Expanding code enforcement efforts and developing resources to help owners solve those problems could help preserve and improve more existing affordable housing. This action requires additional funding, staff, and training. For landlords, many have an interest in keeping their properties well-maintained, but when demand outpaces supply, the incentive is reduced. Developing additional resources for property improvements in exchange for rent ceilings for a period of time would help preserve and improve low-income housing as well.

 CASE STUDY

MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

PRIDE OF MARYVILLE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE PROGRAM Maryville, Missouri

The City of Maryville initiated the Pride of Maryville project to recruit community members to help keep the city "cleaner, safer, and more beautiful place to live." There are four programs that provide an opportunity to participate, three of which directly impact housing:

- Adopt a Neighborhood
- Beautification Awards
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors

When active, the neighborhoods in the adopt a neighborhood were supported by volunteers helping to keep the city litter, debris, and weed free. The beautification awards program honors homes and businesses for the beautification and improvements made to their property. Neighbors helping neighbors pairs volunteers with residents in need which could include maintaining their property by cleaning leaves, pulling weeds, or painting shutters.

 CASE STUDY

LA CROSSE PROMISE

LA CROSSE PROMISE

La Crosse is a case study in itself.

The La Crosse Promise program provides up to \$50,000 in grants from La Crosse County to acquire and prepare a property. The Washburn Neighborhood is a priority area for the program. Applicants are required to finance a minimum of \$150,000 in person funds or market rate financing to qualify.



In addition to the funding offered to rehabilitation or build on a property, the program provides up to \$50,000 to families that build, buy a new home, or renovate a home in select La Crosse neighborhoods as education scholarships.

IMPACT

Since the program began, many properties have been improved. Of the 68 replacement homes sold citywide between 2010 and 2018, 10 were located in the Washburn Neighborhood with three of them on 9th Street.



Historic home in the foreground adjacent to three new La Crosse Promise homes on 9th Street

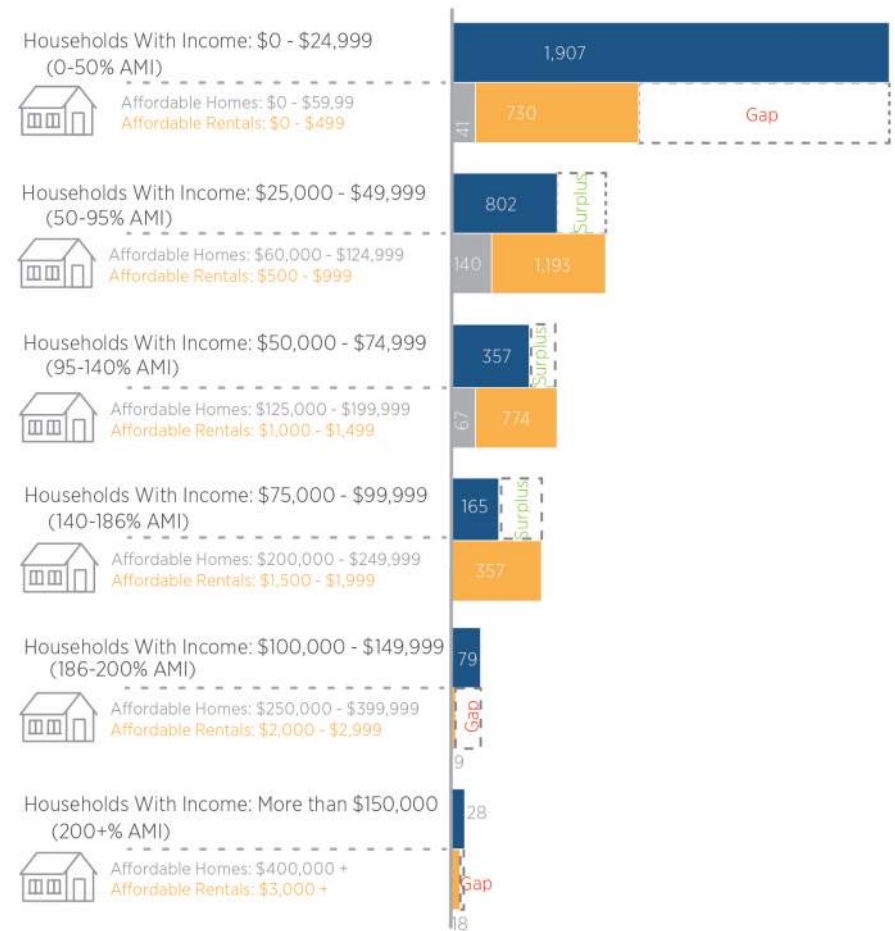
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The demand analysis shows potential for 700-1,000 units over 20 years, primarily in larger developments in downtown. The current trend in La Crosse is the construction of large, multi-bedroom apartment units. This is often unaffordable to families or young professionals living alone. Smaller units with more outdoor space and shared amenities can provide quality living environments while reducing rents. These types of units would also limit the number of landlords charging rent by the room which is also driving up rental rates for families and young professionals desiring to live alone.

Downtown struggles to provide affordable housing units to households making less than \$25,000 annually. This price point is not usually supplied by the market and requires subsidies to construct. This income range includes retirees (6%), many living on fixed incomes with no mortgages remaining and students receiving assistance with housing (29%). Additionally, this price point suggests too many residents are making wages below what is necessary to afford a decent housing unit. While beyond the scope of this plan, La Crosse should research programs that address living wages in La Crosse.

One barrier to affordable housing limited variety in housing unit type. Downtown has a good mix of housing types. However, single-family attached units are almost non-existent. In addition, much of the larger apartment buildings (20+ units) command higher rents, making them inaccessible to a large portion of the downtown population. During public engagement many near-retirees expressed a desire for low maintenance housing options in downtown with space for their vehicle. The single-family attached housing type would meet this need.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF EXISTING HOUSING STOCK



Gap = shortage of affordable units for households within identified income range

Surplus = more affordable units than households within an income range



OPPORTUNITIES

A ENSURE POLICIES & CODES SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Nationally, there is growing discussion regarding the influence ordinances have on the development of affordable housing. Overly complex codes can create unpredictability and concern about the public approval process, causing developers to return to what they know will have the quickest and smoothest approval process. Additionally, codes can restrict the variety or design of diverse housing types, restricting what can be built. Policies and codes should be reviewed to ensure they allow for a variety of housing types, especially medium density housing (known as missing middle), infill on small lots, and a clear approval process.

B SUPPORT A HOUSING DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Many community leaders express a strong appetite for more diverse types of housing products. Developers are somewhat hesitant to be the first to test a new market when their current projects are successful. To illustrate these new products or innovative development configurations will work, it may be necessary to build a demonstration project. While developers can incorporate limited elements into their projects voluntarily, a demonstration project may require significant public assistance. Types of assistance include:

- Gap financing
- Infrastructure assistance
- Financial or tax assistance
- Expedited permitting

C CREATE MECHANISMS TO SHARE RISK

All development comes with a level of risk among stakeholders when building a project.

- **Developers.** The developer often takes on a significant amount of debt in the hope that rent or sale prices will be high enough and units will fill fast enough to cover that debt while providing a living commensurate with the level of risk they take.
- **Lenders.** The banking and financing community take on risk when they loan money to developers. Lenders can be instrumental partners in a lending consortium, noted below.
- **Contractors.** The contractors and subcontractors risk that payment for their services will come even if the project is not as successful as the developer had hoped.

For La Crosse, there are few options for lowering or sharing the level of risk that these partners must take on. Tools to share risk include:

- **Lending consortium.** A lending consortium is an ideal instrument to provide short-term financing or "patient financing" for builders and contractors. It can fill the gap in financing when the cost of construction is more than the final value of the home.
- **Housing trust fund.** A housing trust fund provides a source of seed capital that can include the banking community, unconstrained by program regulations, for a community/county to use to develop needed housing types.
- **Tax Increment Financing (TIF).** TIF uses the added tax revenue created by the redevelopment to finance project-related costs such as land acquisition, core and shell rehabilitation, and public improvements. Traditionally, the developer takes on the debt of the project, pays their full tax burden, and then is allocated back the increment to pay down the debt on the pre-identified project-related costs.

🔍 CASE STUDY

RISK SHARING

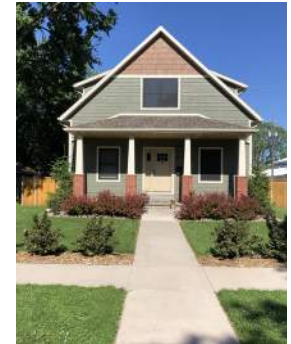
Risk sharing is noted throughout the strategies and goals to address housing challenges. However, communities cannot simply wait around for development opportunities and developer interest. Residents and stakeholder within several communities in Iowa are recognizing the need to take action by pooling their own resources and expertise to act as the developer of new lots. Two examples are described below:

- **Fairfield, Iowa.** A group of local stakeholders combined equity stakes to act together as the developer and builder of 27+ townhomes and duplexes in Fairfield. Risk sharing included private equity, City TIF funds, tax abatement, and Iowa Workforce Housing Tax Credits. Units were priced between \$160K-\$220K.

- **Humboldt, Iowa.** Similar to development in Fairfield, local stakeholder pooled equity to finance 32 single-family and duplex units. The City helped share risk through TIF financing and tax abatement. Units are priced between \$230K-\$280K.

These are a couple examples of local action to share risk and start a grassroots, proactive effort to housing development. For La Crosse, examples like this are not about the product type or price point, but rather, the ability to take action on a local level.

These projects were assisted in part by 571 Polson Developments, LLC. For more information on these and similar projects in Iowa go to: <https://571polson.com>



NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPTS

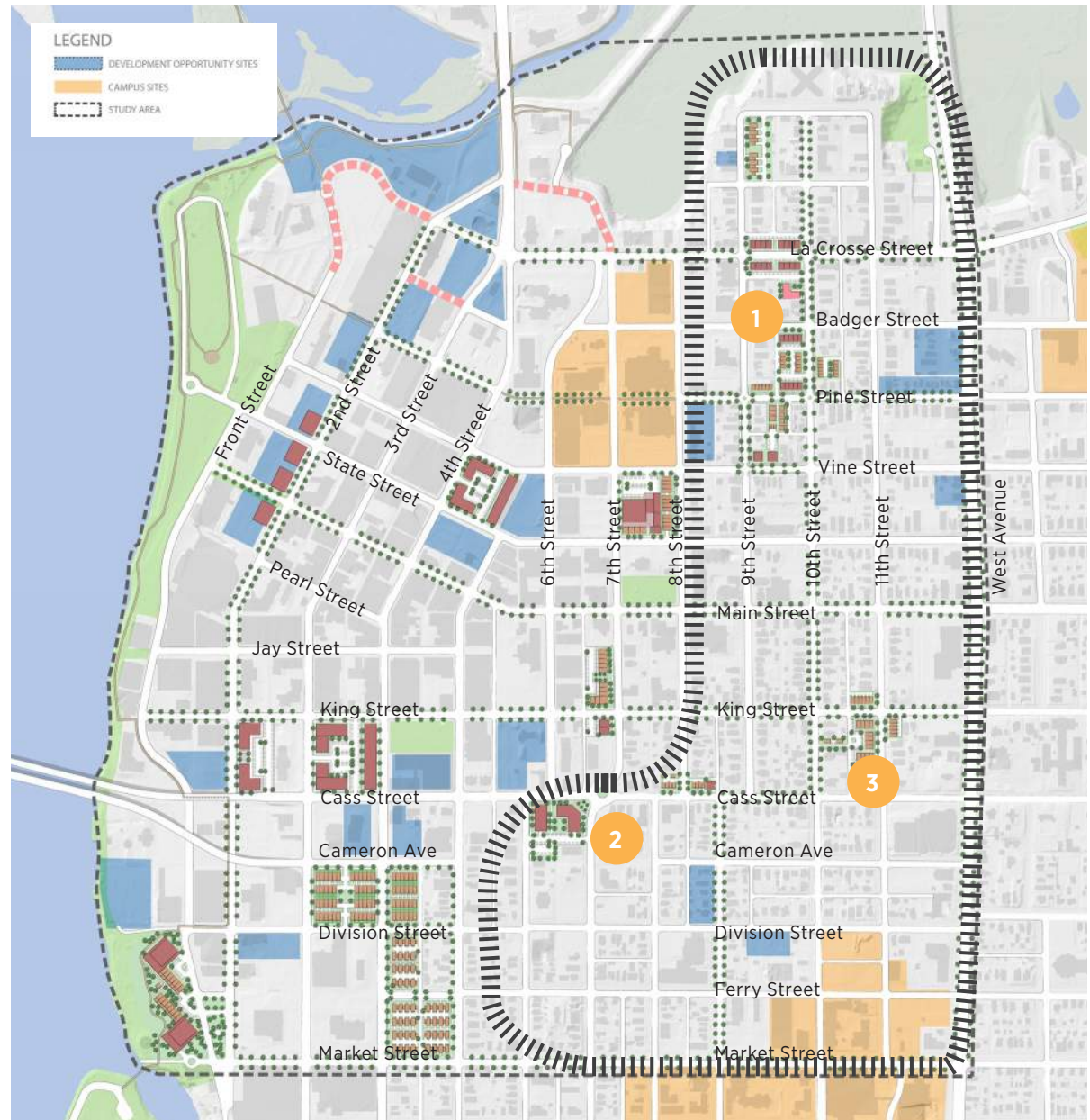
The neighborhood concepts show future possibilities that may naturally occur through market forces. The areas shown in this section are not intended to prescribe redevelopment plans, but rather demonstrate redirection for underused, inefficient, or obsolete lots, should they become available.

Throughout the planning process, numerous concepts and ideas were exchanged about individual sites. Representative of those concepts and detailed in graphics are prototypical development projects that apply to sites that are subject to change in the future. The plan includes conceptual diagrams for possibilities within the area, including:

1. Former Goosetown Area
2. South Downtown Neighborhood Infill
3. Washburn Area

The "Connected City" section describes pathways that link the different parts of downtown, including the east-west connections. Notable to the neighborhoods is establishing a north-south pathway that is well marked and comfortable for cyclists and pedestrians. Improvements include signage, additional lighting, trees, well-marked crosswalks, and shared lane markings for bicyclists,

NEIGHBORHOOD CONCEPTS



PROTOTYPICAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Rehabilitating neighborhood buildings is a priority before considering their redevelopment.

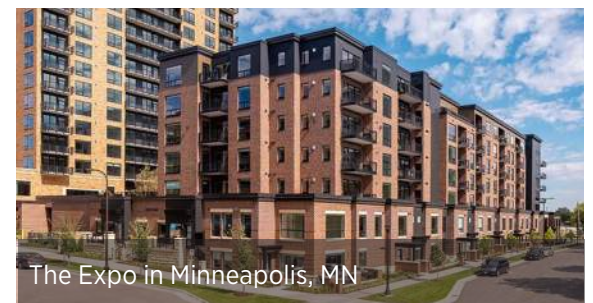
The neighborhood has many circumstances where there are a sequence of obsolete buildings, deteriorating conditions, and vacancies. These conditions often warrant more significant intervention to **stabilize the neighborhood** and create conditions for surrounding uses to reinvest into their properties.

Redevelopment can be in the form of various product types throughout the neighborhood, including:

- **Townhome/rowhome Infill.** Townhomes and rowhomes are lower density options for infill that fit the scale and character of the existing neighborhood. These units can be oriented to the "missing middle" households that want to be close to downtown, yet don't want to live in downtown.
- **Mixed Use Infill.** Mixed-use buildings are ideal for areas in and adjacent to commercial areas, but also could be used for medical and higher education campus infill. These building types could be standard developments similar to Belle Square or Hive.
- **Deep Lot Concept.** Deep lots, at an average of 140 feet deep, are inefficiently used in their current single-family configuration. The rear half of the lot is often dead space. One solution is to redevelop these lots in a double-loaded configuration where the alley's are used for rear access to garages with rowhouses that line the street.
- **Single Family Patio Homes.** Single-family patio home is similar to an attached accessory dwelling unit (adu) above the garage.



Townhomes in Lincoln, NE



The Expo in Minneapolis, MN

1. FORMER GOOSETOWN AREA

Formerly known as the Goosetown Neighborhood, this area is characterized by older homes, slip in apartments, and small historic commercial structures. Many of the 1970s era apartments are in poor condition and nearing the end of their productive use. Several other older homes have fallen into disrepair and may not be salvageable. As market forces open development opportunities on these sites, a variety of infill opportunities emerge. The diagram to the right illustrates several demonstration projects to provide new housing options on unique existing lots such as narrow, but deep lots.

FEATURES:

- A. Urban Multi-family.** These buildings frame the street corridor and have several visible entrances along the main corridor to reinforce a pedestrian focused environment. Projects could be adapted for mixed use.
- B. Rowhome Infill.** The medium-high prototypical diagram can apply to this half-block. The shown concept provides a possible layout.
- C. Deep Lot Housing.** The project shows a common drive that serves two-story units. The use attempts to complement the single-family units nearby, yet provides a slightly higher return of units.
- D. Pine Street Pathway Corridor.** The Pine Street Pathway is an east-west pedestrian corridor that starts at the Mississippi River and connects to the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The corridor could support a significant amount of redevelopment to replace housing that's in diminishing condition.
- E. Neighborhood Nodes.** Adding well-marked pedestrian crosswalks will improve the safety for people crossing these streets.
- F. North-South Greenway.** The greenway is a priority street to restore the tree canopy and designate as a bicycle route that connects the neighborhoods.



A Network of Vibrant Neighborhoods



Projects should frame the street by building to the property line and making parking available from behind.

The plan presents new housing options with independent entries. The project may have greater intensity than shown, like the Hive Mixed Use Project.



↑ NORTH

2. NEIGHBORHOOD INFILL

The plan recognizes that the pattern for infill redevelopment may need to involve a cluster of properties, rather than individual sites, to ensure a financial return on the investment. Concepts are just that, ideas for the future to retain the area's character while providing options for redirection.

FEATURES:

A. Townhomes. Townhomes offer a new housing option in the neighborhood, while blending into the residential character of the area.

B. Medium-High Intensity Redevelopment. The plan shows the demolition of the Franciscan Skemp Healthcare facility and redevelops it into a medium-high intensity residential project. The increased level of intensity is likely necessary to gain a return on investment.

C. ADU-like Development. Some sites in the neighborhood are relatively tight spaces for redevelopment. A possible development form for these sites is living spaces above parking.

D. Good Year Redirection Area. The area from 6th to 7th Street, south of Cass Street, where Good Year Tires is located could be

redeveloped for a variety of uses, including mixed use, residential, or office. The concept shows one scenario for buildings addressing the street with parking available from the rear.

E. Citizens Bank Block Redevelopment. Citizens Bank (Main and 7th Street) and the multi-family structures to its south is an opportunity site for redevelopment. The area is re-imagined as high-intensity mixed use project, like the Hive. The illustration shows an alternative concept with townhouses and commercial space on the corner.

F. Commercial. The southwest corner of King and 7th Street can support an expansion or be redeveloped altogether.

G. Target Rehabilitation. Buildings near the roundabout influence people's perception of the neighborhood.



CASS & KING CONCEPTS



4. WASHBURN AREA

The area south of the downtown core presents opportunities for increasing residential density in the study area, while providing new housing options that are unavailable in the community.

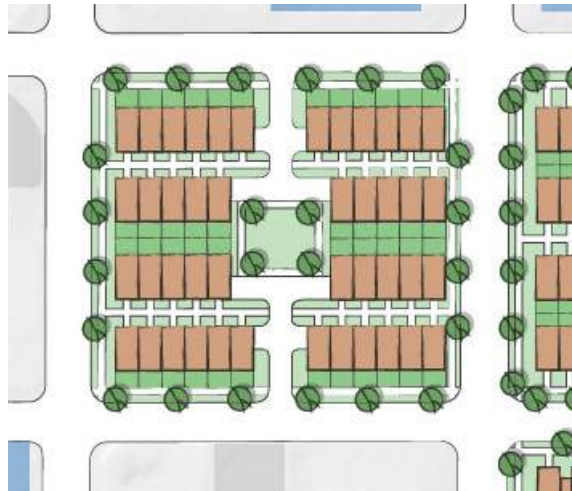
Two types of units are illustrated to convey increasing intensity of uses as they approach the downtown core. Demonstrations are from Omaha, Nebraska. Both include common shared space, such as an urban alley or green space.

- **Medium-High Intensity.** Two- to three-story townhomes with parking underneath. The layout shows a configuration centered on a shared greenspace. As the half block configuration on the east shows, the townhome design can be adapted to various block sizes depending on the available land for redevelopment.
- **Medium Intensity.** The scenario shows attached single-family residential with alley access for parking and shared common space. These outdoor spaces can be activated with amenities for the residents go give them more ownership of the space such as outdoor grills, seating, or playground equipment for children.



DEVELOPMENT DEMONSTRATIONS

Each intensity scenario is shown as demonstrations of redevelopment that can be applied to an entire block or partial area. The shaded area of the diagram represents how a portion (quarter or half) can be applied to a redevelopment area.



Medium-High Intensity Housing Development

Density: ~14 DUA

Townhome or rowhomes with shared common space provide currently unavailable housing types that can be built in a full-block or half-block or even quarter block configurations.



Medium Intensity Housing Development

Density: ~10 DUA

Small lot single-family homes can be built on a full block or in smaller quarter block configurations allowing for incremental phased development.

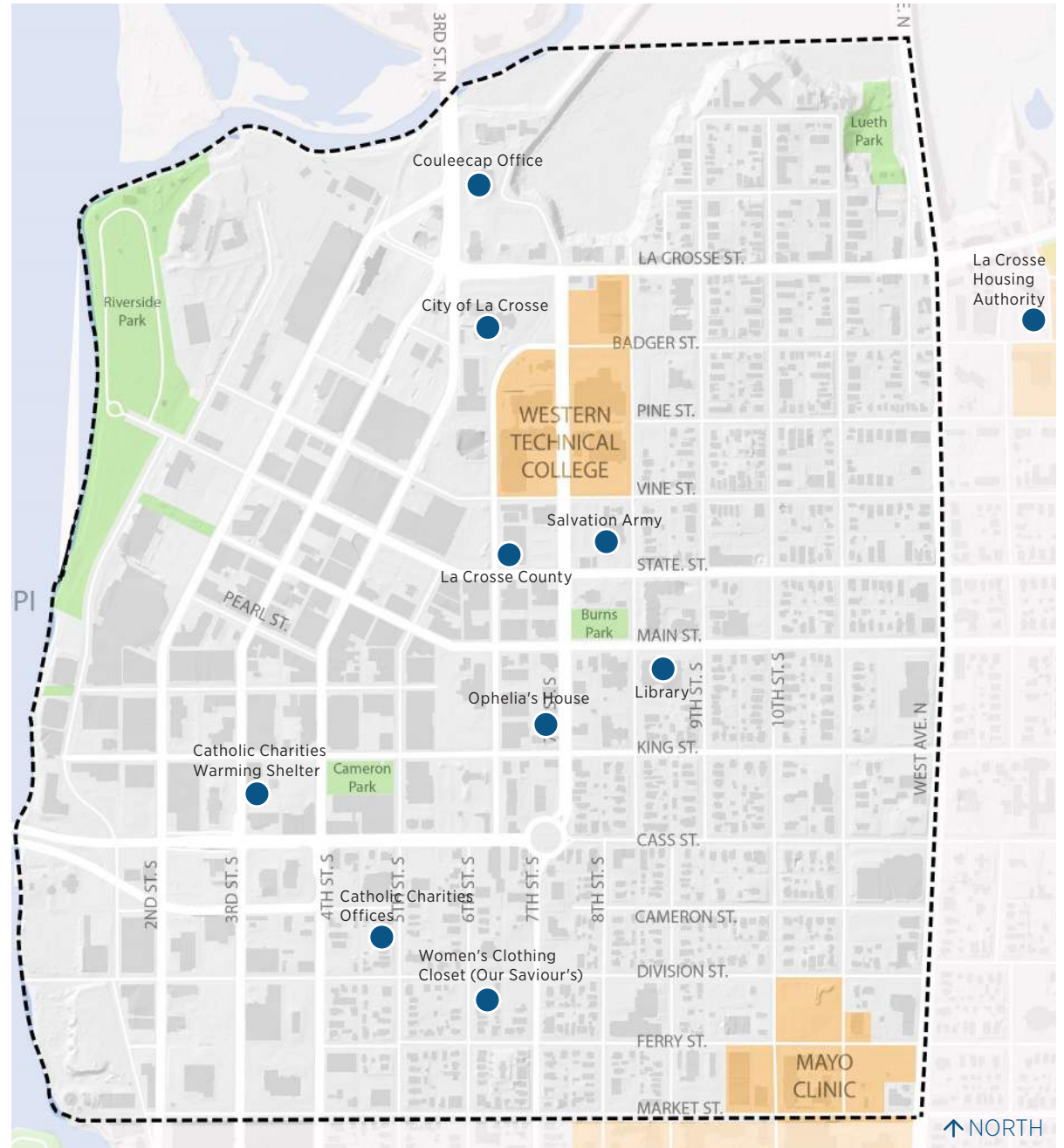
HOUSING INSECURITY

Challenges to providing services to address housing insecurity are an issue only made greater by the pandemic. In July of each year a point in time count is conducted to track the number of individuals sleeping on the street overnight. In 2020 the count estimated 71 individuals, up from 57 in 2019 and 33 in 2018. These numbers do not include individuals in emergency shelters or couch surfing. The more detailed July 2019 count included about 237 unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness and of those 45 were struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues. About 16% of all homeless individuals, sheltered or not, struggle with substance abuse or mental illness. While it is out of the scope of this plan to address this topic in its entirety, the topic is covered at a high level, knowing that more targeted work is necessary.

Many organizations and groups are working to end homelessness and provide supportive services for those experience housing or financial insecurity, but more work is needed to help those struggling with mental health or drug addiction as well.

Primary providers are listed in Services by Provider Matrix along with their services. Highlighted in yellow are services provided by at least three agencies, providing an opportunity to increase efficiency through more coordinated efforts. The locations of each service provider in downtown are identified in the map to the right.

SERVICE PROVIDER LOCATIONS



A Network of Vibrant Neighborhoods

SERVICES BY PROVIDER MATRIX

	SALVATION ARMY	CATHOLIC CHARITIES	LA CROSSE COLLABORATIVE	COULEECAP HOUSING ASSISTANCE	CITY/LIBRARY	COUNTY	OTHER*
IMMEDIATE SHELTER							
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING		***		X			
TEMPORARY SHELTER	X	X				X	
ACCESSING SHELTER			X				
APPLYING FOR HOUSING			X				
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE							
RENTAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE**	X	X		X			X
HOME REHAB AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS				X	X	X	
HOMEOWNERSHIP ASSISTANCE				X	X		
MEALS							
FOOD PANTRY	X	X		X			X
MEAL PROGRAM	X			X	X	X	
OTHER SERVICES							
CLOTHING CLOSET		X					X
LAUNDRY AND SHOWERS		X					
BUDGET PLANNING SERVICES		X					
ASSESSMENTS AND STABILITY PLANNING	X		X				
TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE				X			
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING				X	X	X	

*Category includes groups like religious institutions also providing services such as a women's clothing closet

**Motel voucher, security deposit, first month rent

***Provided in Wausau and St. Lawrence, but not La Crosse

COORDINATED ENTRY

Managed by the La Crosse Collaborative the End Homelessness, the Coordinated Entry program involves several agencies including:

- Catholic Charities
- Couleecap
- New Horizons
- La Crosse Collaborative
- Salvation Army
- YMCA

The program assists individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity by streamlining access to the housing solution that fits each person's situation.

In order to determine the best solution the organization screens and completes an assessment. Based on the assessment, applicants are referred to a prioritization list for various program types and provided additional information upon request.



OPPORTUNITIES

CREATE A CENTRAL LOCATION FOR SERVICE PROVISION

People experiencing housing insecurity need clarity in navigating the support services available to them, since many organizations offer different services.

In 2020 Catholic Charities proposed a plan to establish a resource center that provides day services, budget and financial assistance, the men's clothes closet, food pantry, and a community meeting room. This type of facility, which serves all service providers in La Crosse working to end housing insecurity and homelessness, is needed. Government agencies, service providers, civic organizations, and faith-based organizations should collaborate on a plan for a central facility to provide services.

COMMISSION A PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STUDY

A permanent supportive housing study should be commissioned to identify unit type and count needed and make recommendations on the best to approach to the situation in the La Crosse region. This study should include identifying the house need by category and offer recommendations on working

with landlords, increasing flexibility, overcoming barriers, and creating transitional housing.

LAUNCH A WORKING GROUP OF EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS

A joint effort to coordinate work on service provisions will lead to better and more comprehensive services without duplicating efforts. This cooperative should be made up of a variety of organizations such as service providers, the city and County Human Services Department, non-profits, the library, faith based organizations, and other groups such as the Collaborative to End Homelessness that are working in this space.

Catholic Charities has indicated an interest in such a cooperative to coordinate services with other non-profits, churches, corporations, and government agencies, avoiding duplication. Conversations should be advanced to formalize the structure of the organization, set up a method for open dialogue, and provide efficient service delivery. A model to consider is the cross sector communication model that provides an umbrella for accountability implemented in Chelsea, Massachusetts.



CASE STUDY

HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Community First! Village
| Austin, TX

www.mlf.org/community-first

The Community First! Village began in 2004 with the concept of purchasing gently used RV's to house the chronic homeless. The site was a master planned community of 51 acres, developed in two phases. Phase I included 200 individuals on 27 acres and Phase II provided an additional 500 homes on the remaining 24 acres. The most unique aspect of this community is the on-site businesses providing opportunities to learn a skill and earn a wage. These facilities include:

- Car Care business
- Art House
- Blacksmith Shop
- Wood Shop
- Organic farming operation



CASE STUDY

CROSS SECTOR COMMUNICATION

Chelsea Hub | Chelsea, MA

Launched in 2015, the program helps vulnerable populations by increasing communication among local police, city departments, medical providers, and 30 social service groups to connect families and individuals who may need services from more than one community agency. Representatives from all groups meet regularly to review cases and develop action plans to help at risk individuals and families. Two "navigators" hired by a mental health agency build relationships and connect with at-risk individuals. The programs primary cost is the salaries of the navigators, a total of \$125,000.

A similar program could be spearheaded by the City of La Crosse and La Crosse County. Services could be paired with Service Provisions .



CASE STUDY

SERVICE PROVISION IN A PARK

Woodruff Park | Atlanta, GA

Launched in 2016, the program infuses social service provision and a housing-first strategy into everyday management at a local park. Meeting people where they are focuses efforts into one centralized location. A full-time case manager integrates social service provision into daily park operations. This includes building relationships with regular park users and connecting them to services and permanent housing. The program is time intensive, yet in just over a year they connected 100 people to permanent housing. Grant funding supports the program and could be scaled to include social service integration in park budgets.

A similar program could be launched at Cameron Park.

theme

A CONNECTED CITY

We envision a downtown with strong connections from the river to downtown, to the neighborhoods, and to the bluffs.

Having strong connections between spaces is instrumental to our downtown's success and fosters intangible connections. Our greatest gains will come with a commitment to being more equitable to all modes of transportation.





ORGANIZATION

- Mobility Options
- Mobility Concepts
- Complete Streets Enhancements
- Mobility Demonstrations
- Festival Streets
- Parking



OPPORTUNITIES

- Survey sidewalks in downtown, giving upgrade priority to those with mobility barriers such as brick or cobblestone pavement
- Work with local business owners to upgrade entrances and restrooms for accessibility
- Develop a winter maintenance program that ensures sidewalks, ramps, and bus shelters remain free of snow and provide a clear path to destinations
- Synchronize signal timing to encourage slower speed through downtown
- Review ordinances and develop standards for use of alley space by adjacent businesses including acceptable uses, plantings, decoration, seating, to ensure the spaces remain open to traffic
- Install decorative paving, lighting, and plantings in targeted alleys
- Host a mural-making initiative around an important theme to the La Crosse community, such as equity and inclusivity
- Create a parking benefit district in downtown
- Fund the ramp LPR counter system
- Install directional wayfinding graphics to inform travelers of destinations

MOBILITY OPTIONS

Downtown has made significant strides in shifting the priority of moving people in cars to moving people by any mode.

In the past, mobility was defined by the ability to move and park automobiles at the expense of the pedestrian or bicycle. Universal design has returned priority to those who commute by foot, wheels, bike, or public transit, leveling the playing field with the automobile. A shift is needed to moving people instead of moving vehicles. By prioritizing the person, not one type of transportation, a genuinely equitable mobility system will result. La Crosse is moving in this direction, starting with the Green Complete Streets policy adopted in 2012, which requires new road construction projects to consider all modes of travel. This has resulted in new bike infrastructure, more sidewalks, upgraded street crossings with bump-outs, and bike fix-it stations. La Crosse should continue the Green Complete Streets program and incorporate more upgrades for bicyclists and pedestrians. The following is an overview of each mode of travel.

PEDESTRIANS

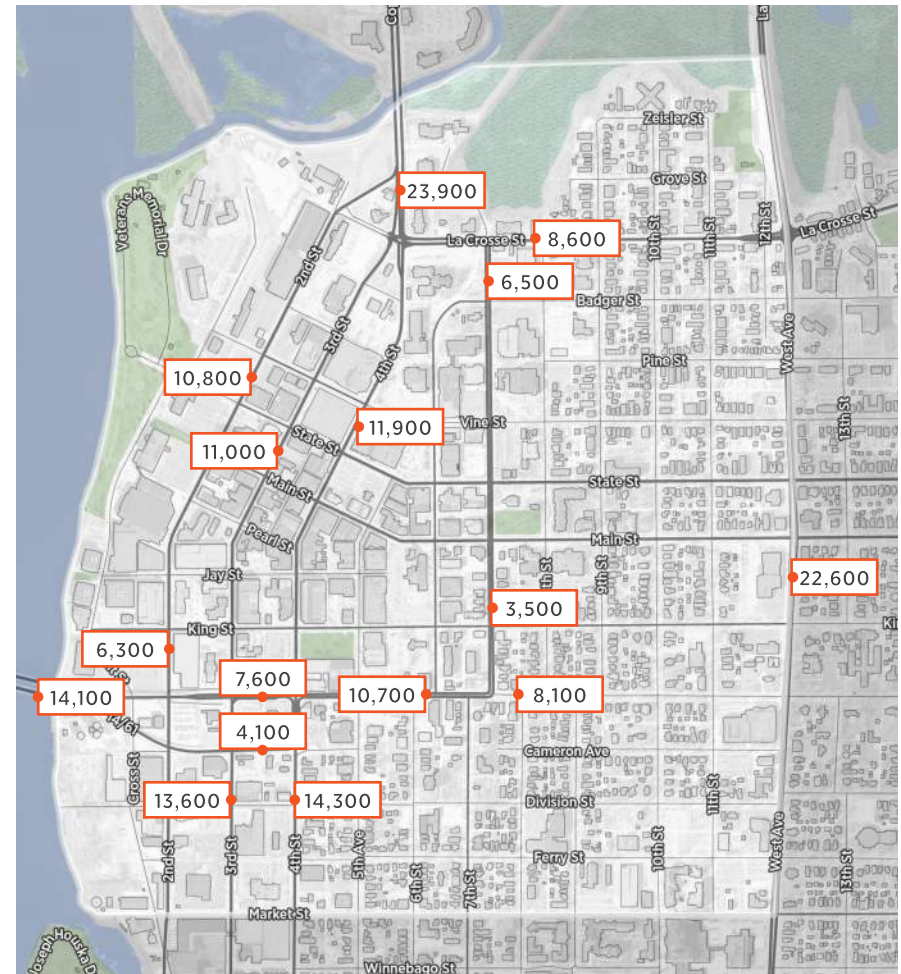
Downtown has a walk score of 71 out of 100 (walkscore.com). This is largely because of the clustering of restaurants, shops, entertainment options, and parks easily accessed on foot within a short walking trip. Most people are willing to walk a 1/4-mile to their destination, but studies have also shown non-commuting trips average about 1 mile.

The pedestrian's experience while walking influences their tolerance to get to their destination. A 1/4-mile threshold can increase if the path is well shaded and has good lighting and sidewalks. Almost all of downtown is easily walkable from any starting point. The historic architecture, and mature tree canopy, well-maintained sidewalks, combined with a flat topography, make walking to the downtown core relatively free of barriers.

MOBILITY-IMPAIRED

La Crosse County reportedly has 35,000 people living with a mobility impairment. Persons with impairments struggle to access events, businesses, and recreational opportunities when cities

VEHICULAR ADT



THE GREEN COMPLETE STREETS POLICY REQUIRES NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS TO CONSIDER ALL MODES OF TRAVEL

are not designed to accommodate their needs. The impediments existing in the physical infrastructure are not intentional, and without a conscious understanding of barriers, they go unnoticed. Some of the barriers in downtown include:

- Lack of automatic entrance doors
- Offset thresholds into some businesses (small step)
- Crosswalks with lips or barriers to pushing the walk button
- Inconveniently placed actuated signals near crosswalks
- Cobblestone surfaces that create uneven surfaces and tripping hazards for someone using a walker, cane, or wheelchair
- Closing sidewalks during construction and forcing the traveler into a street that may be poorly maintained
- Bike racks, planters, or trees placed in the sidewalk path
- Narrow sidewalks
- Poorly designed and located accessible stalls
- Poorly maintained sidewalks in the winter
- Restrooms that are inaccessible

These barriers can be resolved as the public sector, non-profit organizations, and local businesses work together to make the environment downtown more friendly to persons with a disability.

BICYCLISTS

Downtown has limited dedicated bicycle facilities, which are primarily located near Western Technical College. A portion of 6th Street has a bicycle lane and 7th Street has shared lane markings.

TRANSIT

The La Crosse Regional Transit Center is located at Grand River Station in downtown, and the hub for the city's transit service.

While public input was more oriented to active transportation, participants indicated interest in establishing a more frequent local circulator between Viterbo University, Mayo Clinic, University of Wisconsin La Crosse, Western Technical College, and nearby neighborhoods. Also, participants desire for more transit services in the downtown.

VEHICULAR & FREIGHT

Average daily traffic (ADT) from the north on 3rd Street is about 22,200 and from the south on South Avenue is about 16,000. Within the district, the one-way pairs of 3rd and 4th Street each experience about 10,000 to 16,000 ADT. West Avenue has about 23,000 ADT. ADT is the most recently available data from WisDOT (2014-2018).

GREEN COMPLETE STREETS

Through the Green Complete Streets ordinance, the City of La Crosse has committed to:

- Provide safe, convenient, and comfortable routes for walking, bicycling, and public transportation
- Encourage increased use of these modes of transportation
- Enable convenient travel as part of daily activities
- Improve the public welfare by addressing a wide array of health and environmental problems
- Meet the needs of all users of the streets, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities

These standards apply:

- As a routine part of everyday operations
- During every corridor project on public or private property
- To existing and future public and private streets
- Within the scope of pavement resurfacing, restriping, or signalization operations

MOBILITY CONCEPTS

The concepts presented in the plan are just that - ideas for the future that need to be further investigated to understand their feasibility.

Concepts are separated into the following project categories:

- Streets
- Trails
- Bike lanes and Protected Bike Lanes
- Neighborhood Greenways

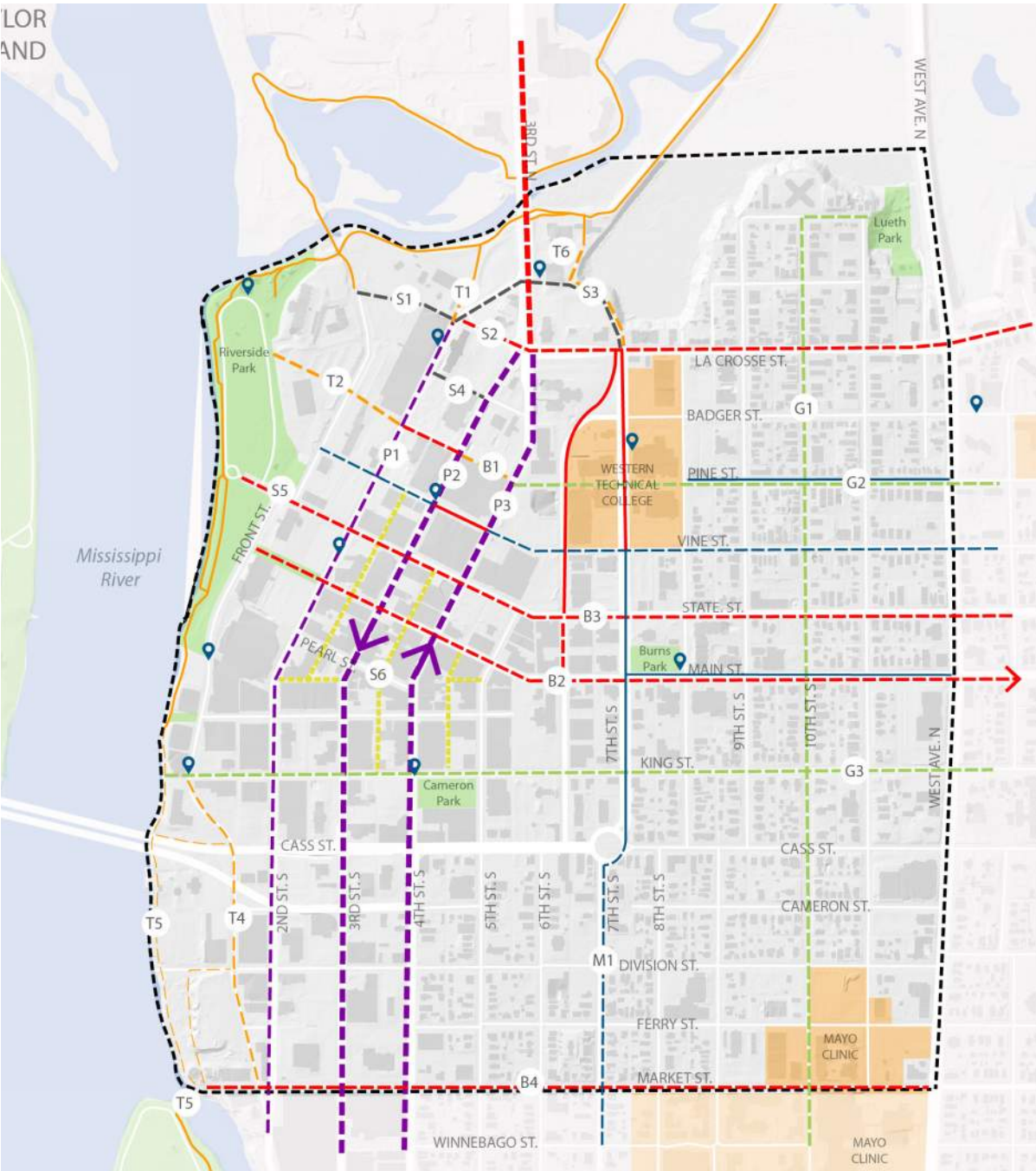
While the plan identifies many possible enhancements, high priority projects include:

- 3rd/4th Street Circulation Design
- 2nd Street Cycletrack
- La Crosse Street to Front Street Connection
- Front Street Pathway from Riverside Park to Houska Park

LEGEND

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
(B) BIKE LANES		
(T) TRAIL		
(S) SHARED LANE MARKING		
(P) CYCLE TRACK		
(G) BICYCLE BOULEVARD		
(V) VEHICULAR CONNECTION		
(A) ALLEY CONNECTION		
STUDY AREA		
BIKE SHARE STATION		

MOBILITY FRAMEWORK





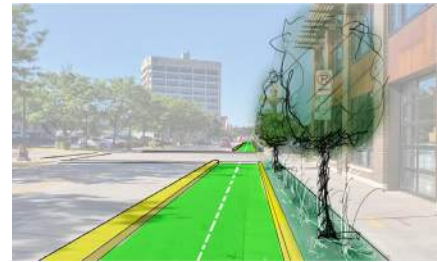
STREET PROJECTS

MAP KEY	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	ISSUES/REQUIREMENTS
S1	La Crosse Street to Front Street Extension	Extension of La Crosse Street from 2nd Street to Front Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better access from east side to Riverside Park - Eliminates Front Street cul-de-sac - Opens Oktoberfest site and north riverfront to future development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Right-of-way dedication through Oktoberfest - Illustrated alignment is schematic and may change given specific development plan - Creates a festival street that can be temporarily closed for events
S2	La Crosse Street Improvement	Connects La Crosse Street to 2nd Street	Part of La Crosse to Front Street link, improves geometry and simplifies complex intersection	Existing street
S3	North Circulation Alignment	Connects 7th and 2nd Street North, providing greater connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverts local traffic from the north away from the La Crosse and 3rd Street North intersection - Distributes traffic easily to three downtown corridors - Aligns two offset intersections - Clarifies circulation and site plan 	Minor redesign of parking lots and ROW dedication
S4	Badger Street extension	Connects Badger Street from 4th to 2nd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides local access to and through major redevelopment site - Part of an improved access system around the 3/4th and La Cross intersection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires street dedication through the Tribune redevelopment site. - Shared street with minimal right-of-way
S5	Front Street alignment at State Street	Resolves offset intersection of Front Street north and south of State with realignment and possible roundabout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminates turning movements and conflicts created by offset - Roundabout may provide a public art opportunity to complement eagle monument at the State Street circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roundabout requires some site revisions at 100 Harborview Plaza but reduces impact on park and possible historic fort site on the north side of State
S6	Pearl Street	Redesign of Pearl Street to become a festival street (no curbs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improves Pearl Street's role as a pedestrian environment - Improves connection to La Crosse Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Possible replacement of underground utilities. - Needs further investigation.
S7	Front/Ferry Street realignment to 2nd Street	Connects Front and Ferry Street to 2nd Street, vacating Front Street between Ferry and Market with redevelopment of riverfront site east of Front	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eliminates hazardous convergence of Front and 2nd Street at Market Street - Provides a future green space at Front/2nd triangle with redevelopment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vacation of a portion of Front with development of a green space. - Existing rail spur may be removed if possible or retained as part of a local transportation shuttle to Gunderson campus.



TRAIL PROJECTS

MAP KEY	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	ISSUES/REQUIREMENTS
T1	Trail spur to 2nd Street Upgrade	Connects 2nd Street cycletrack to La Crosse River Trail	- Key bike/ped connection from Downtown system to regional trail network and connection to northern neighborhoods	- Alignment depends on future redevelopment or reconfiguration of Oktoberfest site. - May involve conversion or replacement of existing access road
T2	Pine Street Pathway	Connects proposed Pine Street neighborhood greenway corridor to Riverside Park	- Part of re-envisioning Pine Street as a community amenity and development corridor linking UWL, Western Technical College, and government center campuses to the riverfront	- Requires minor to moderate redesign of Landmark parking to provide path continuity - Incorporates and extends existing path north of CenturyLink office building
T3	Riverfront Path extension	Connects popular path from King Street to Houska Park bridge using Front Street sidewalk and proposed sidepath to Market Street and new trail along flood plain edge of future redevelopment site, now used for trailer storage. Existing path under bridge links to proposed 2nd Street cycletrack	- Connects Riverside and Houska Parks - May catalyze future redevelopment in south downtown area and riverfront	- May require some right of way acquisition between Cass and Division - Probably requires redevelopment of riverfront site between Division and Market Streets
T4	Riverfront Path extension (long-term)	Optimum trail path along Mississippi River from King Street to Houska Park	- Provides ideal Riverfront Path connection, separated from streets	- Requires significant ROW dedications (Mariott) and negotiation through dock and industrial sites. - Preferred route compared to T3.
T5	Houska Park Bridge	Access to Houska Park, using existing bridge in short-term with possible bridge replacement to full trail width standards. Also includes connection to a future Market Street bikeway	- Connects Riverside and Houska Parks - May catalyze future redevelopment in south downtown area and riverfront - With Market Street bikeway, connects Washburn neighborhood, Viterbo, and Mayo campus to Houska Park	Uses existing bridge in the short term, with edventual replacement to a standard width trail bridge



BIKE LANES AND PROTECTED BIKE LANE PROJECTS

MAP KEY	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	ISSUES/REQUIREMENTS
B1	Pine Street	Identifies a bicycle and pedestrian route through County Courthouse site and on Pine Street, connecting 2nd and 4th Streets. Also includes RRFB protected pedestrian crossings of 3rd and 4th Streets	- Part of re-envisioning Pine Street as a community amenity and development corridor linking UWL, Western, and government center campuses to riverfront	- Requires minor redesign of county parking lot, probably by widening existing landscaped parking bay returns to protect bike and pedestrian access.
B2	Main Street bike lanes	Scenario A: Two-way standard bike lanes between West Avenue and the river. Scenario B: One-way bike lane paired with State Street.	Provides east-west crosstown bike access	- One-way bike lane can retain two sided parking on 42-foot sections; parking would be one-side only on any 38' sections Alternative: Two-way bike lane
B3	State Street bike lane	Scenario B: One-way standard eastbound bike lane between West Avenue and the river, paired with Main Street	- Combined with on-street bike route east of West Avenue, provides east-west crosstown bike access	- One-way bike lane can retain two sided parking on 42-foot sections; parking would be one-side only on 38' sections
B4	Market Street bike lanes	Standard bike lanes on Market Street	- Connects Washburn neighborhood, Viterbo, and Mayo campus to Houska Park	- Probably eliminates on-street parking on Market Street with 2-6' bike lanes and 2-12' travel lanes
P1	2nd Street Cycletrack	Protected cycletrack on east side of 2nd Street from La Crosse to Market Street	- Provides primary bicycle access to riverfront locations and points north and south of Downtown - Reduces conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on the riverwalk - Supports redevelopment in the 2nd Street corridor - Has traffic calming benefits on 2nd Street	- Replaces on-street parking on one side of 2nd Street
P2	3rd Street protected bike lane scenario	BPAC recommendation. Provides southbound protected bike lane between Badger and Market	- Provides direct and safe bicycle access through the downtown core	- Limits on-street parking to one-side on 42' wide sections. 46' sections through core blocks can retain two-sided parking. - Possible continuation to Gunderson with modification/widening of existing west side path to shared use path standards. Also, possible reuse of rail spur that serves the brewery, if that spur were abandoned



NEIGHBORHOOD GREENWAY PROJECTS

MAP KEY	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE	ISSUES/REQUIREMENTS
G1	North-South Greenway	Neighborhood greenway (bicycle boulevard) treatment with traffic calmers, route signage, and shared lane markings for wayfinding on 10th from the neighborhood to Gunderson campus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North-south connection that links neighborhood nodes and development potentials at 10th and La Crosse and Pine Street - Connects route to Gunderson through Washburn neighborhood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Envisions traffic calming such as mini-roundabouts, signage, and appropriate signage and crossings of major cross streets
G2	Pine Street Greenway	East-west connection and development corridor from UWL to Riverfront. Uses a variety of facilities, including neighborhood greenway, woonerf, and campus mall segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part of re-envisioning Pine Street as a community amenity and development corridor linking UWL, Western, and government center campuses to riverfront 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves more detailed planning and design of possible woonerf and special street segments - Protected crossing of West Avenue required for safe continuity
G3	King Street Greenway	Existing east-west greenway between Front Street and West Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighborhood stabilization project and support for historic district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighborhood development policies along the corridor
M1	7th Street Corridor	Continuation of shared lane markings and bike route signage south to Green Bay Street Convert to shared markings to bicycle lanes, if possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuation of a principal north-south through route. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Installation of shared lane markings south of Cass Street

COMPLETE STREETS ENHANCEMENTS

The design of sidewalks and intersections in downtown significantly influences people's perception of the district and their sense of belonging to the area. The community survey in the planning process identified several intersections that need improvement, citing concerns for visibility, crossing distances, vehicle speed, low lighting, condition of existing elements and surfaces.

Downtown alone has a diverse set of streetscape amenities that changes from one area to the next. The variety makes it difficult for the city to store replacement parts and to efficiently repair/replace amenities. Also, the variety creates visual noise that does not reinforce the image of downtown.

This plan recommends standardizing future streetscape improvements across the city to manage costs, while identifying special districts for exception from the standard. In general, a standard should be created for the core of downtown and a separate standard created for the neighborhoods.

PROTOTYPICAL ENHANCEMENTS



- A** Standard crosswalk on state highways
- B** Artisan crosswalk on local streets
- C** Countdown timer at all crossings
- D** Pedestrian paths that are obstacle-free
- E** Uniform bicycle parking and benches
- F** Uniform receptacles (waste/recycling)
- G** Uniform, energy-efficient streetlights
- H** Stormwater Best Management Practices
- I** Restore urban tree canopy
- J** Uniform parklet (seasonal) dining
- K** Parking pay kiosk

STREETSCAPE SYSTEM

The prototypical streetscape concept does not commit the city to initiating a streetscape project. Rather, it identifies features that need to remain in rhythm to reinforce the image of downtown.

A. Standard crosswalks.

Crosswalks on highways need to follow federal MUTCD standards. Ladder crossings provide the most visibility of the pedestrian zones.

B. Artisan crosswalks on local streets. Crosswalks not on the highway system could exhibit unique artwork from local artists.

C. Countdown timers at all crossings. Countdown timers help people know how much time they have to cross the street. Audible signals help people with impaired vision.

D. Obstacle-free zone. Sidewalks should be free of obstructions and have consistent surfaces. Pavers provide a special character to the pedestrian, yet can be difficult to navigate for people with mobility impairments. Pedestrian paths should be built with an even surface and well-maintained.

E. Uniform bicycle parking and benches. Bicycle parking and seating should be placed

outside of the pedestrian zone. These can be placed between the curb and walking path.

F. Uniform receptacles. Uniform amenities creates predictability for service and maintenance, while reinforcing the image of downtown. Also, receptacles help keep the area clean of debris.

G. Stormwater best management practices. Streetscape projects should consider methods for intercepting stormwater to manage runoff.

H. Restore urban tree canopy. Trees should be maintained and replaced when necessary.

I. Uniform parklet (seasonal) dining. Parklets provide additional outdoor seating spaces, while reserving the sidewalk for pedestrians.

J. Parking pay kiosk. Rather than individual parking meters, parking pay kiosks can be strategically placed throughout downtown.







OPPORTUNITIES

- **PREPARE A STREETSCAPE HANDBOOK.** The handbook should include typical streetscape features to apply throughout the community. This includes furniture (benches, bicycle racks, bus shelters, kiosks, waste/recycle collection, newspaper dispensers, railings), lighting, street trees and other plantings, street signage, paving, and public art placement. The handbook should identify different segments of the community that may be eligible for design exceptions.
- **PREPARE A DETAILED WALKABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN.** The plan should include an inventory of sidewalks in downtown, identifying obstructions and ADA issues. The process could be a collaborative initiative with students at Western Technical College or through an RFP. The plan should identify the precise location of barriers along pathways and intersections, an opinion of probable cost, and a phased implementation schedule.
- **DEVELOP A MAINTENANCE PROGRAM.** A seasonal maintenance program should include debris cleanup (street and sidewalk), restriping, and replanting/watering of vegetation. The winter maintenance program should ensure that sidewalks, ramps, and bus shelters remain free of snow and provide a clear path to destinations. The program could be supported through a Parking Benefit District or DMI.
- **PREPARE A STREET TREE PLAN.** Restoring the tree canopy provides shade for pedestrians, adds color to the corridor, and reduces the heat island effect. Placement should consider potential obstructions, such as utilities, buildings, and other restrictions.
- **SYNCHRONIZE SIGNAL TIMING.** Traffic flow relies on appropriate signal timing. A study should be conducted to determine where and how to update signal timing to ensure proper flows through downtown without causing increased congestion.

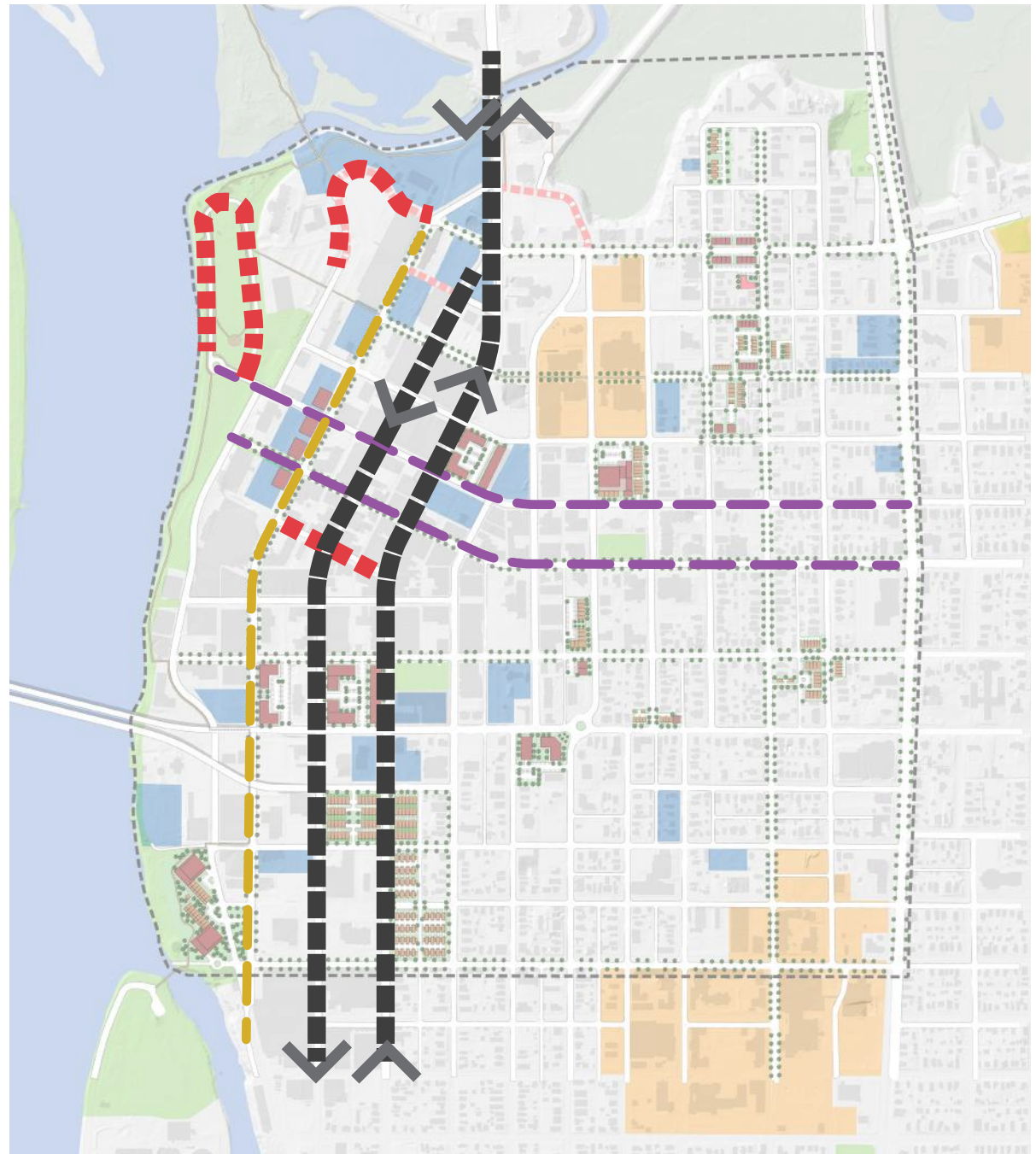
MOBILITY DEMONSTRATIONS

La Crosse is dedicated to a holistic approach to road design through the complete streets policy and supporting plans like the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2012). These documents support a network designed for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and the mobility impaired. Ample opportunity exists to build out the network and make connections to the regional trail systems. This network should encourage travelers to take transit or bike into downtown and become pedestrians once arriving in the core of downtown to create interactive, local streets leading to destinations.

Since mobility is an integrated system, this section is organized by street not by mode of travel which includes:

-  3rd and 4th Street Scenarios
-  2nd Street Cycletrack
-  Main and State Streets
-  Festival streets

DEMONSTRATIONS



3RD & 4TH STREET SCENARIOS

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) intends to improve 3rd and 4th Streets through downtown as both streets are designated as highway corridors. The extent and nature of the project is undefined, requiring this plan to be nimble, showing scenarios that reflect a simple overlay project (replace top layer of the street) to complete replacement of the street and sidewalk.

Funding for the project would be shared between WisDOT and the City. WisDOT covers the roadway, while the City covers items beneath the street and behind the curb to the building.

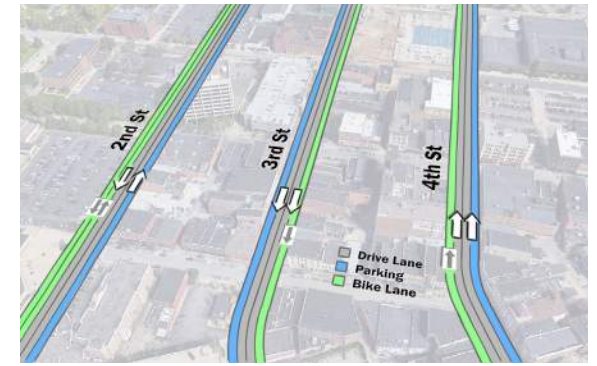
Public input for the future design of 3rd and 4th Street varied, so multiple concepts were considered. The scenarios form a starting point for discussing a preferred scenario to share with the WisDOT.

Input received:

- Build wider sidewalks for pedestrians
- Retain parking for businesses
- Remove parking for wider sidewalks or bike lanes.
- Add bicycle lanes or protected bicycle lanes
- Convert to two-way circulation
- Keep circulation one-way



Scenario A: 2nd Street Cycletrack with no facilities on 3rd and 4th Streets



Scenario B: One-way bike lane on left hand side of 3rd and 4th Streets, requiring removal of parking from one side



Scenario C: Remove parking on both sides of 3rd and 4th Streets to expand sidewalks to 25 to 30 feet wide



Scenario D: One-way pairs on 3rd and 4th become to two-way traffic to encourage commerce, long truck and bus movements, and bicycling-pedestrian safety and mobility

3RD & 4TH STREET SCENARIOS

SCENARIO A: TODAY'S CONFIGURATION

Street project is an overlay resulting in no change.



Scenario shows that the orientation of the street remains. The sidewalk could be expanded a few feet by reducing the width of the travel lines to 11 feet, adding a foot to both sides of the sidewalk.

SCENARIO B: EXPAND SIDEWALKS

Wider sidewalks with removal of parking.

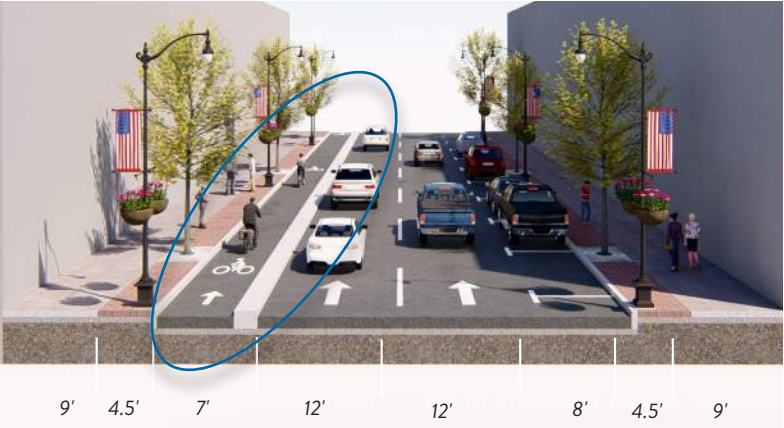


While wider sidewalks provide an expanded pedestrian zone, customers do not have immediate parking to businesses along the street. The concept shows intermittent parking or drop-off/loading spots.

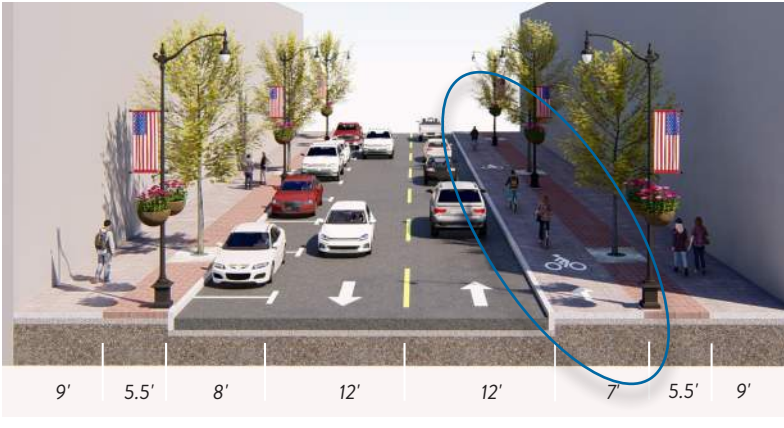
3RD & 4TH STREET SCENARIOS

SCENARIO C: ADD BIKE LANES

Add bike lanes on 3rd and 4th Streets, requiring removal of parking from one side.



Bike lane can be protected by paint/bollards or by a curb. Alternatively, the lane could be raised to be above the curb as shown in Concept D.



Proceeding with this concept will likely delay the street improvement project beyond 2028 to prepare a traffic study for the one-way to two-way conversion.

2ND STREET CYCLETRACK

2nd Street is shown as a two-way cycletrack on the west side of the street. This bicycle facility provides an uninterrupted route through downtown connecting the Marsh Trails, Riverwalk, and Houska Park.

PLAN VIEW



SECTION



The cycletrack on 2nd Street provides parallel circulation to 3rd and 4th Streets, offering:

- + Bicyclists have a dedicated space, buffered from moving vehicles
- + Risk of bicyclists getting door dinged from parked cars is removed
- + Adequate space for street trees
- + 2nd Street connects users to the Great River Trail and Gundersen campus

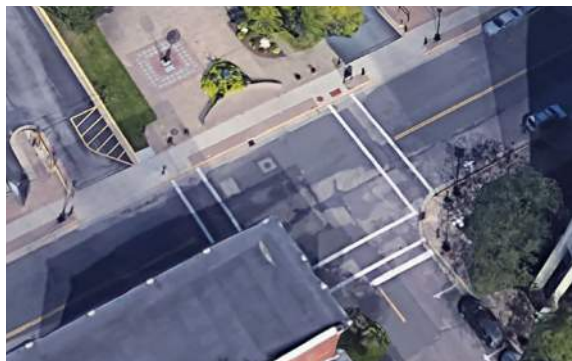


2ND STREET CYCLETRACK - PERSPECTIVE



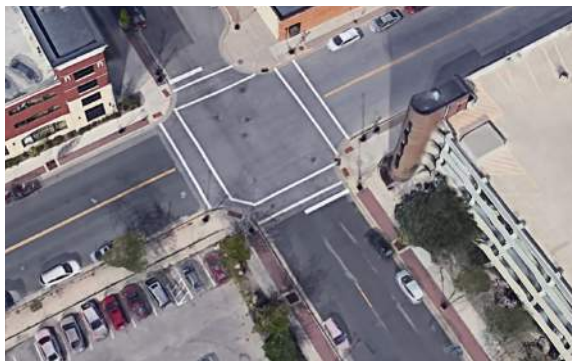
2nd Street is shown to include a two-way cycletrack on the west side of the street. This barrier-separated bicycle facility would provide an uninterrupted route through downtown, connecting Houska Park to the Marsh trail system.

2ND STREET CYCLETRACK - MAIN STREET



The aerial perspective of 2nd Street and Main Street shows the cycletrack on the west side of the road. Conflict zones are well-marked, this include ladder-marked crosswalks, contrasting paint in the bike path, and signage. The cycletrack could be separated from other traffic by being placed above the curb or separated by bollards/ curb (as shown)

2ND STREET CYCLETRACK - TYPICAL INTERSECTION



The aerial perspective shows a typical intersection design with the cycletrack. The pathway is well-marked to alert motorists that slow-moving vehicles are present.

Most intersections in downtown should be retrofitted to prioritize active modes of transportation in downtown.

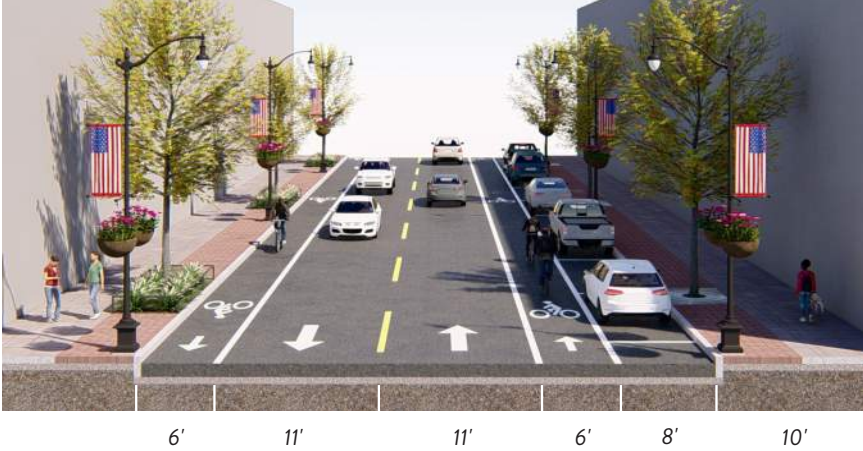
MAIN & STATE STREETS

Main Street and State Street connects the neighborhoods to downtown and the river. This plan explores two scenarios for introducing dedicated space for active transportation.

Scenario A - Bicycle lanes on Main Street. Main Street's 42' section could be restriped to include 6' bicycle lanes going in both directions. The result is removing one lane of on-street parking. Which side the parking is removed is for future study. Retrofitting the street should be accompanied by a wayfinding system that directs bicyclists to destinations.

Scenario B - One-way bike lane. Main Street and State Street could be designed with one-way bicycle lanes where the bike lane is a climbing lane and the downhill is where the cyclists "take the lane". The 42-foot section can support a design that preserves parking for businesses and two-way circulation. A caveat to this scenario is user's legibility of using the bicycle lane in one direction. Retrofitting the street MUST be accompanied by a wayfinding system that directs bicyclists to the one-way bike lanes.

BICYCLE LANES - BOTH DIRECTIONS ON MAIN STREET



ONE-WAY PAIR BICYCLE LANES ON MAIN STREET AND STATE STREET

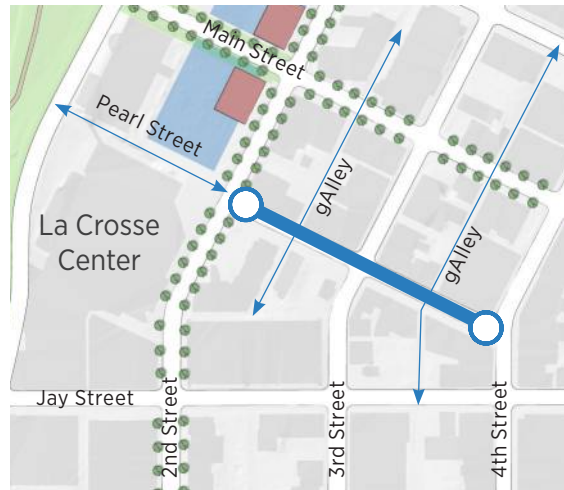


FESTIVAL STREETS

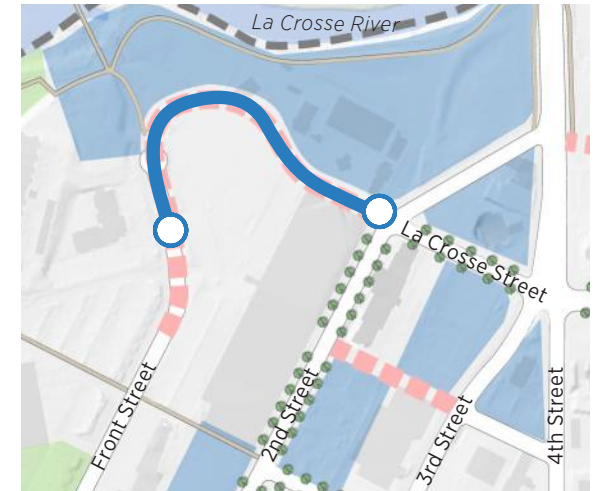
For this plan, Festival Streets are segments of roadways that can be temporarily closed for special events and activities. Otherwise the roadway is open for vehicles to travel. Candidate festival streets in La Crosse include Pearl Street, La Crosse Street Extension, and Veterans Memorial Drive.

Features of La Crosse's future festival streets include:

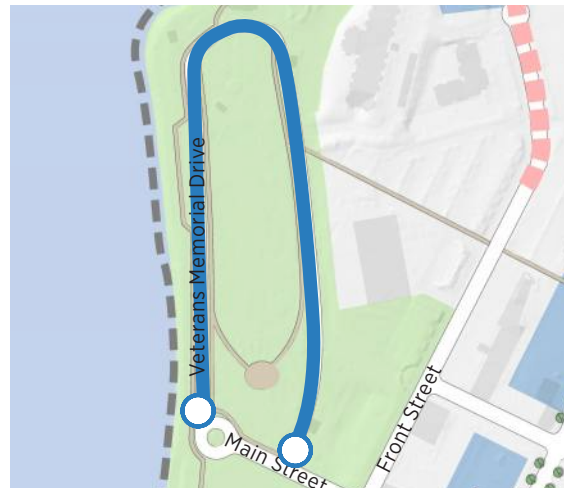
- Mountable curb, meaning that it is subtle or does not exist, eliminating a tripping hazards.
- Emphasis on pedestrian lighting
- Dedicated space for dining
- Gateway feature to alert visitors that they are entering a special district
- Unique barricades to manage vehicle traffic during events
- Pedestrian signage and kiosks
- Street trees for shade
- Power receptacles placed to serve vendors in street, limiting the need for extension cords going across the street
- Stormwater management features that do not introduce new pedestrian hazards



Pearl Street is occasionally closed for special events, and its future redesign can be oriented to festivals..



The future extension of La Crosse Street, between Front Street and 2nd Street, can be closed for Oktoberfest and other special events.



Veteran Memorial Drive can be a festival street or woonerf during events at Riverside Park.



Pine Street, between 8th Street and 13th Street, can be adapted to a woonerf, meaning that traffic is designed for a pedestrian speed.

PEARL STREET

Pearl Street is the origin of downtown's renaissance for tourism. The expansion of the La Crosse Center will undoubtedly attract more visitors to Pearl Street, presenting an opportunity to leverage this investment and its connection to the Mississippi River.

Stakeholders along Pearl Street met during the planning process to discuss their ideas for the future. Themes of the discussion oriented to activating the street, adjusting parking, and developing projects. Discussion was supplemented by a grassroots publication prepared by a local business owner, TJ Peterslie.

The "Big Idea" for Pearl Street is redesigning the corridor as a festival street, which will allow the road to be temporarily closed to vehicles for special events but otherwise open vehicular traffic. The underground utilities are reportedly inadequate and need replacement, as well. The street may be just as much of a functional improvement as it is a placemaking initiative.

Comparable projects suggest that the magnitude of the initiative could reach \$1.25 million per block should the utilities need replacement. Additional study is needed to understand the conditions and design.

LA CROSSE STREET

Extending La Crosse Street to connect to Front Street provides greater accessibility to underused site near the La Crosse River. Opening this connection will improve the marketability of the area for



Photo courtesy of Chamber of Commerce

new development, and improve clarity to accessing property.

The La Crosse Street extension can be a festival street that is closed during Oktoberfest. The pathway can become a staging area for vendors or a spine route for pedestrian circulation. The street design should involve event coordinators to ensure that its implementation limits future obstructions for vendors (loading and setup) and activities.

VETERAN'S MEMORIAL DRIVE

During special events at Riverside Park and at the band shell, Veteran's Memorial Drive behaves as a woonerf or festival street. Woonerfs are streets where vehicles and pedestrians share the roadway, moving at a pedestrian pace.

Bump-outs and speed tables should be

retrofitted into the street, particularly between the river walk and green space, to improve the safety of pedestrians.

For special events at the park, clear pathways should be identified for people with mobility impairments. This may require some additional surfaced pathways into the green space.

PINE STREET PATHWAY

The Pine Street Pathway is an east-west pedestrian route with Western Technical College as the fulcrum. The pathway connects the western neighborhoods to the riverfront. Pine Street, west of Western Technical College, could be retrofitted as a woonerf. This means that improvements to the roadway naturally encourage drivers to move at a slower speed since more pedestrians are present in the corridor. Speed tables, signage, and bump-outs are common along woonerfs.

FESTIVAL STREET - PEARL STREET





OPPORTUNITIES

CASE STUDY

FESTIVAL STREETS

Bethesda, Maryland
www.bethesda.org

Bethesda, Maryland programs a number of activities that occupy their streets throughout the year, primarily on Woodmont Avenue and Elm Street but also other streets. These events include:

- Taste of Bethesda
- Bethesda Outdoor Movies
- Summer Concert Series
- Fine Arts Festival
- Winter Wonderland
- Children's Street Festival



SPEED TABLE ON VETERAN'S MEMORIAL DRIVE

CASE STUDY

WOONERFS

Washington D.C.
Wharf Street

Wharf Street in the District Wharf is a woonerf, a dutch term for a living street or recreation street. While vehicles can drive along the street, vehicles are restricted to walking speeds and pedestrians often occupy the path. The image below shows pedestrian scaled lighting, available parking distinguished by pavers, and no curb.



MOUNTABLE CURB

- **INITIATE STREET DESIGN PROJECTS.** Streetscape projects provide functional and aesthetic improvement that can increase visibility for pedestrians. Funding should be identified in the Capital Improvements Program for the following near-term projects.
 - › 3rd and 4th Street Redesign
 - › 2nd Street Cycletrack
 - › Main and State Streets
- **IDENTIFY INTERSECTIONS FOR SAFETY AND COMFORT UPGRADES.** The process for identifying intersections should include frequently traveled pedestrian paths and areas presenting obstacles for people with mobility impairments, notably on 2nd Street. This plan provides several high-level demonstrations with bump-outs, pedestrian signals, and configuration.
- **IMPLEMENT FESTIVAL STREETS.** Pearl Street is a priority corridor to fund the design and reconstruction.

PARKING

Customers arriving by automobile want visible and convenient parking near their destination otherwise they perceive a lack of parking and can be deterred from patronizing business in the area.

The City commissioned a study on downtown parking in early 2020. The findings show:

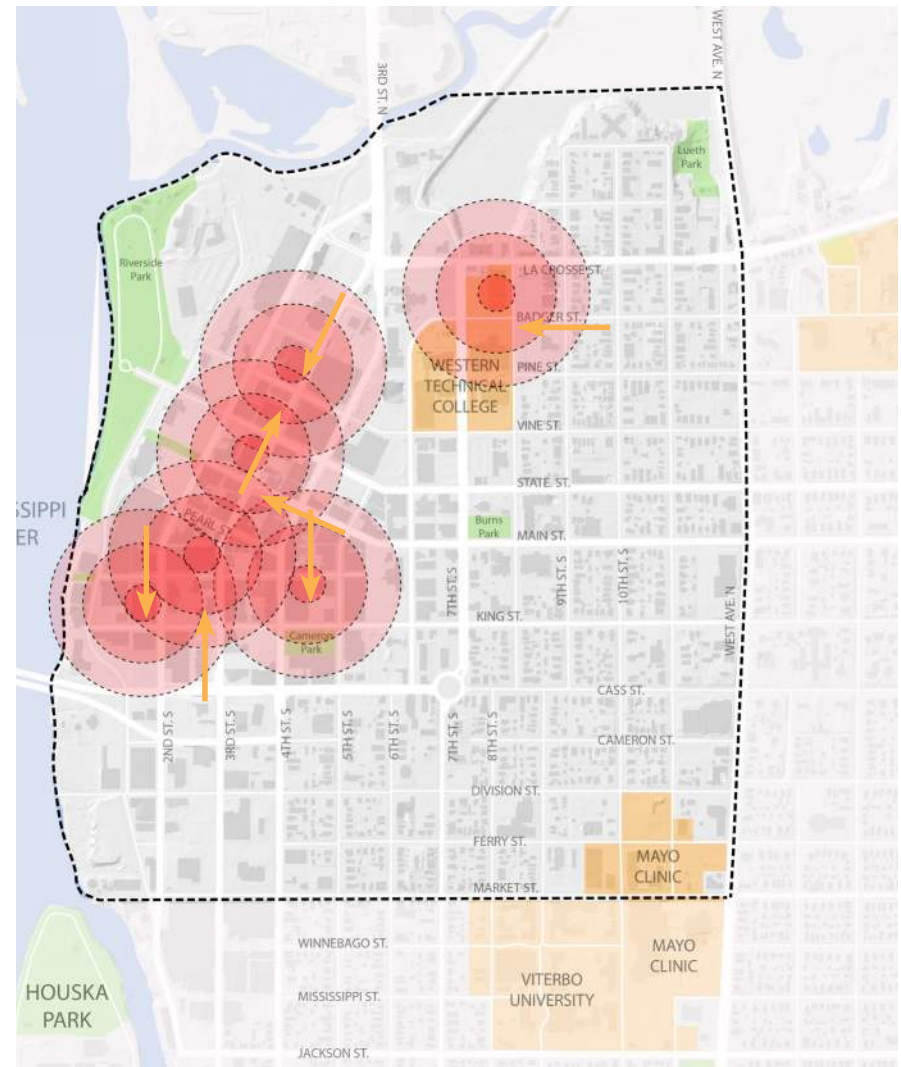
- **A surplus of parking exists.** Downtown has 9,129 parking stalls available and 52% of the parking is public.
- **Parking shortage is a perception, not a reality.** Employees parking in the on-street spaces in front of stores contributes to the perception of lack of available parking for customers. Many patrons avoid parking in the garages, despite the less than 5 minute walk to nearly all parts of downtown as shown in the map to the right.
- **Parking utilization rates are low.** During peak time (12:00pm-2:00pm) less than 50% of the available public spaces in downtown were occupied. At its highest point, off-street spaces reached 42% occupancy while on-street reached 45%.

The parking study includes 30 actions to improve conditions, which most are achievable with minimal investment. Actions that are already under consideration are identified on the next page.

Imagine 2040 spotlights four recommendations from the parking study as high-priority initiatives, including:

- Adopt pay-for-parking
- Initiate a downtown wayfinding program.
- Establish a parking benefits district
- Manage parking by zones

WALKING TIMES FROM PUBLIC PARKING GARAGES



LEGEND



ADOPT PAY-FOR-PARKING

A strategy to encourage on-street parking turnover is by charging fees for parking. This system is already in effect adjacent to the colleges with the Pay-to-Park areas to reduce on-street parking congestion. A similar application could be expanded to the commercial core.

Pricing could be connected to supply and demand, fluctuating with use over time and by area. This helps account for the hidden costs of free parking and encourage more downtown customers to walk, bike, or take transit than circle the block in a car for an open spot. Also it discourages employees from parking in stalls that serve businesses.

By adopting pay-for-parking, downtown should establish a Parking Benefit District. Fees collected from the parking can be recycled into future improvements for the district.

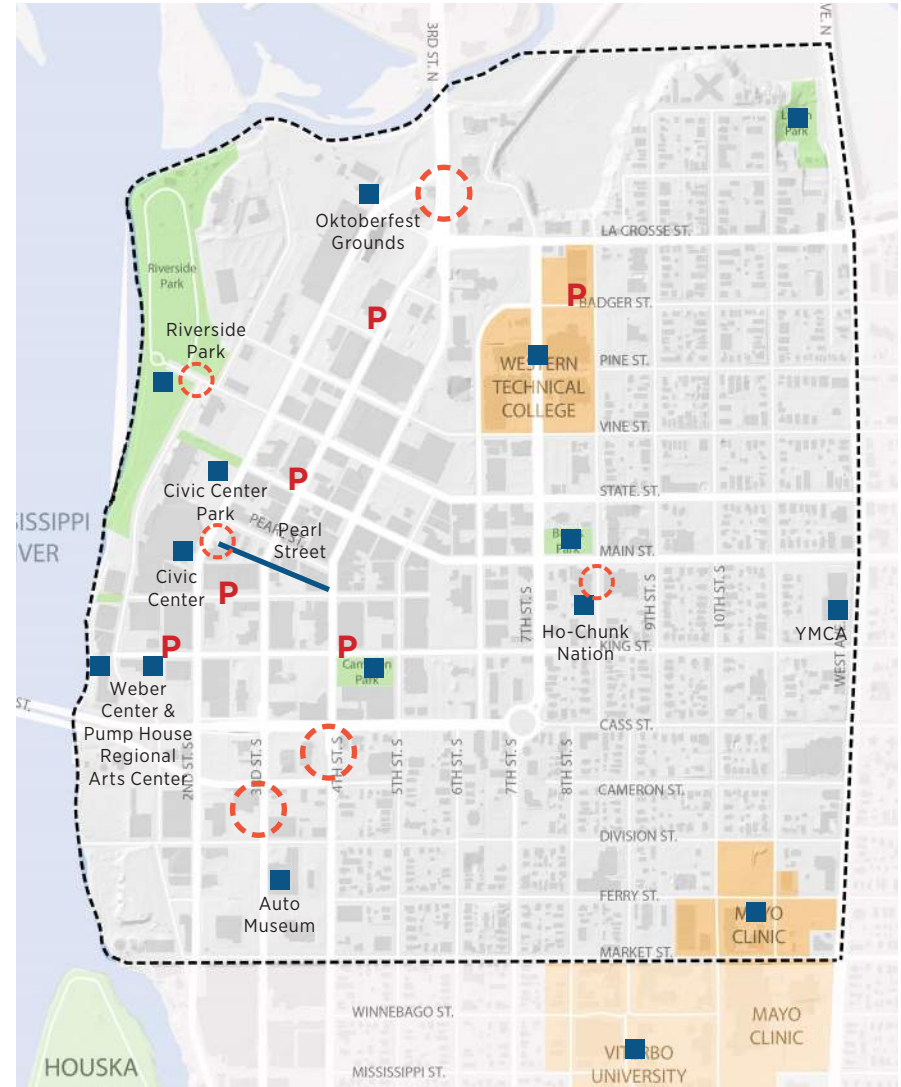
INITIATE A WAYFINDING PROGRAM

Finding destinations quickly and easily is important to a thriving business district. Three types of signage work together in a wayfinding program to achieve these results.

- **Gateway Signs.** Gateway signs welcome visitors to the district. These signs can be basic panel signs or be designed as artistic gateway features.
- **Vehicle-oriented Signs.** Vehicle-oriented signs help direct motorists to major destinations and areas to park their vehicle. The design should follow design standards set by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.
- **Pedestrian-oriented Signs.** Pedestrian-oriented signs help direct people to destinations. Placement should be near decision-making points for travelers. Kiosks could be placed near major gathering spaces, such as Riverside Park and the La Crosse Center.

The system should be master planned to ensure rhythm between all modes of transportation. Bicycle-oriented signs should be adopted and have rhythm with the city's trail signage system.

PRELIMINARY GATEWAY AND WAYFINDING DESTINATIONS



- Gateway
- Destinations

PARKING STUDY ACTIONS UNDER REVIEW

TYPE	NUMBER	RECOMMENDATION	STATUS
PARKING GUIDANCE	1.1	Install LPR counter system in ramps	Looking at funding options to install cameras on ramp entrances/exits
	1.2	Install counter system display signs at each ramp and along main thoroughfares into the Downtown	
SIGNAGE	2.1	Install on-street signs directing patrons to the ramps throughout the city	Have discussed improved signage with DMI; looking at website updates to make parking options more clear
	2.2	Install directional exit signs in ramps that inform users which street they are exiting onto and which street is to the left/right	Installing better signage in ramps with exiting directional information
	2.3	Clearly identify ramp levels and amenities by incorporating different colors or art themes per ramp/floor	Ramps are currently color coded, but will be implementing a more consistent color coding system
	2.4	Install on-street and ramp signs directing users to bicycle parking	
PASSPORT SYSTEM	3.1	Utilize LPR from 1.1 above to automatically register users and start 3-hour free parking upon entry into the ramp	Exploring addition of sign occupancy levels ahead of entering downtown; possible plate reader upon garage entrance to automatically register 3 hours free to avoid pay stations or apps
RAMP PERMIT SYSTEM	4.1	Allow monthly ramp permit holders to park in any ramp (except Riverside) between 2nd and roof (overflow only) level	Will consider this option if LPR counter systems are installed in the ramps; in the meantime, wait lists on Main and Pine Street ramps was abolished
	4.3	Implement reduced rate employee permit parking on top floor of ramps	Launched the Downtown Employee Parking Permit summer 2020 designed for part-time employees, interns, low income employees reducing fee by half to \$20/month
SAFE PARK	7.1	Implement a Safe Park program	Not considering until pandemic is under control
ON-STREET	8.2	Add 15-minute loading zones where appropriate	Implemented curbside pickup/delivery in March, extended through April 2021
PARKING BENEFITS DISTRICT	11.0	Implement parking benefits district as requested by neighborhood groups	Considering this option, but need either the neighborhood group or DMI to request
PARKING SYSTEM ECONOMICS	14.0	Implement a full paid parking system with paid on-street (future)	Only in early discussions

MANAGE PARKING BY ZONES

DOWNTOWN CORE

Parking turnover helps drive retail sales in commercial district. By restricting the time motorists can park their vehicle at one location it encourages them to move their car, allowing other shoppers to use the space and patronize the business. With ample coverage and availability in the garages, a zoned parking system, restricting parking times in certain areas could encourage more long term visitors to park their vehicles in the garage, freeing up on-street stalls for short term shoppers. A zoned system can include 60 minutes for Pearl and Main Streets, and 2 hours for other areas.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Outside the downtown core, parking in the residential areas can be a challenge resulting from a high number of college students. Many college towns and larger urban cities implement a residential parking permit program to manage the concern. In downtown, two systems operate:

- **Residential Permit.** Allows permanent residents in the district to park on-street free of charge.
- **Pay to Park.** Located on the blocks immediately surrounding the higher education facilities, these streets require payment if a residential permit is not displayed.

The Parking Study recommends expanding the Pay to Park boundaries in some locations, however not within the boundaries of the downtown plan. If the Pay to Park boundaries are expanded, the study recommends expanding the residential parking permit program as well to prevent pushing the parking problem further into the neighborhood.



OPPORTUNITIES

ESTABLISH A PARKING BENEFITS DISTRICT

Guidelines are already in place to implement a parking benefits district (PBD) in downtown. Downtown Mainstreet Inc., working with the Parking Utility staff, should implement the PBD. An appointed board will be necessary to manage the district.

Funding from the benefit district can be used to build the proposed projects in this plan, including the wayfinding program, streetscape maintenance and amenities.

FUND THE RAMP LPR COUNTER SYSTEM

Revenue bonds, backed by funds from paid parking or the parking benefit district, can be used to fund installation of the LPR Counter System. This system will streamline ramp usage by removing the barrier or registration for use of the free 3 hour parking, or approaching a full garage. This system will help free up short-term on-street parking by encourage more use of garage parking.

DESIGN DIRECTIONAL WAYFINDING

A community wayfinding system should be coordinated and themed.



theme

A DESTINATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

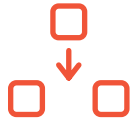
We envision a downtown that is a memorable destination that is welcoming to all people.

Residents, tourists, students, and employees are all patrons of downtown. Residents want a safe and inviting space that serves their daily needs.

Students want opportunities to connect with friends, eat, and have fun. Tourists want unique experiences. Employees want a place that appeals to them, and employers want to recruit talent.

We want to appeal year-round to tomorrow's patrons through the rich diversity of our shops, restaurants, galleries, music venues, and the scenic beauty that surrounds the district.





ORGANIZATION

Building downtown into an even greater destination hinges on creating positive memories for residents and visitors alike.

Concepts in this section are not exhaustive recommendations as other chapters contribute to strategies of enhancing downtown's sense of destination, including urban design initiatives for mobility, business growth, development form, environment, and neighborhood reinvestment.

This chapter is organized by sharing concepts as places and paths.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand the 10th and Cass Historic District boundary
- Continue to support historic preservation efforts
- Expand funding support for facade improvements
- Continue offering support to building owners for navigating approval procedures and available funding programs
- Prepare a facade enhancement study for certain blocks at a time
- Continue to add signage that identifies the stories of buildings and districts
- Identify an Arts District and its future programming
- Prepare a Public Arts Master Plan for the entire City
- Formalize Mural Program
- Art in Transit
- Establish a Regional Arts Council
- Review ordinance for retrofitting alleys
- Initiate pilot gAlley between Pearl Street and Main Street
- Create the Pine Street Pathway.
- Initiate mural program in all alleys
- Create a Streetscape Handbook

PLACES HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Downtown is home to two National Register Historic Districts—the Downtown Commercial Historic District and the 10th and Cass Historic District. Nowhere else in the city has the same sense of continuity with the past. **The maintenance and care of older buildings should continue to remain a priority for preserving the history of La Crosse,** a theme that strongly came through public engagement.

Historic districts have numerous advantages beyond their beauty, character, and history. They have been proven to influence the economy by:

- **Providing affordable housing.** The most affordable house was built more than 50 years ago; it's impossible to build a house today for less than \$180,000 without heavy subsidies, a fact that prices many first-time home-buyers out of purchasing.
- **Supporting small business and job generation.** Historic districts serve as small business incubators. Older buildings have more affordable rents than new buildings, the latter of which must often recoup the cost of construction.
- **Driving heritage tourism and increasing property values.** Heritage tourism is an economic benefit of historic preservation. These tourists stay longer, visit more places and spend more per day than other tourists. Also, homes in historic districts appreciate in value faster than in other parts of a city.



- **Being sustainable.** The most sustainable building is one that is already standing. Saving an old building instead of demolishing it and starting over is one of the most sustainable acts a city can support. Reusing existing buildings can offer a way to avoid unnecessary carbon output while saving communities the economic and environmental expense of new construction.
- **Defining a community's identity.** The historic buildings that define our neighborhoods and communities ultimately define us. Saving these buildings means making the community yours.

The 10th and Cass Historic District has supported several rehabilitations, helping to strengthen the residential neighborhood. Surrounding the district are many historic homes that may have enough significance to be included within the existing district or form a second historic district. As district boundaries are very purposely chosen, the **existing district will need to be reviewed to determine the boundary justification and whether an adjustment is warranted.** It may be easier to review the La Crosse Intensive Survey to determine if a potential National Register District was recommended if not commission a survey specific to downtown to confirm the presence, or lack thereof, of another district.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand the 10th and Cass Historic District boundary or create a second residential historic district
- Continue to support historic preservation efforts, highlighting the economic benefits listed previously
- Expand funding support for facade improvements
- Continue offering support to building owners for navigating approval procedures and available funding programs
- Prepare a facade enhancement study for a block at a time
- Continue to add signage that identifies the storie of buildings and districts

A Destination for All People

1904



TODAY



1910



1915



1936



PLACES THE ARTS

La Crosse has a well established and active visual and performing arts scene along with several museums and other cultural amenities. Even beyond the beauty of the buildings that host these activities, art is seen throughout the downtown in the pavement, freestanding sculptures, and walls.

Cultural facilities in La Crosse include:

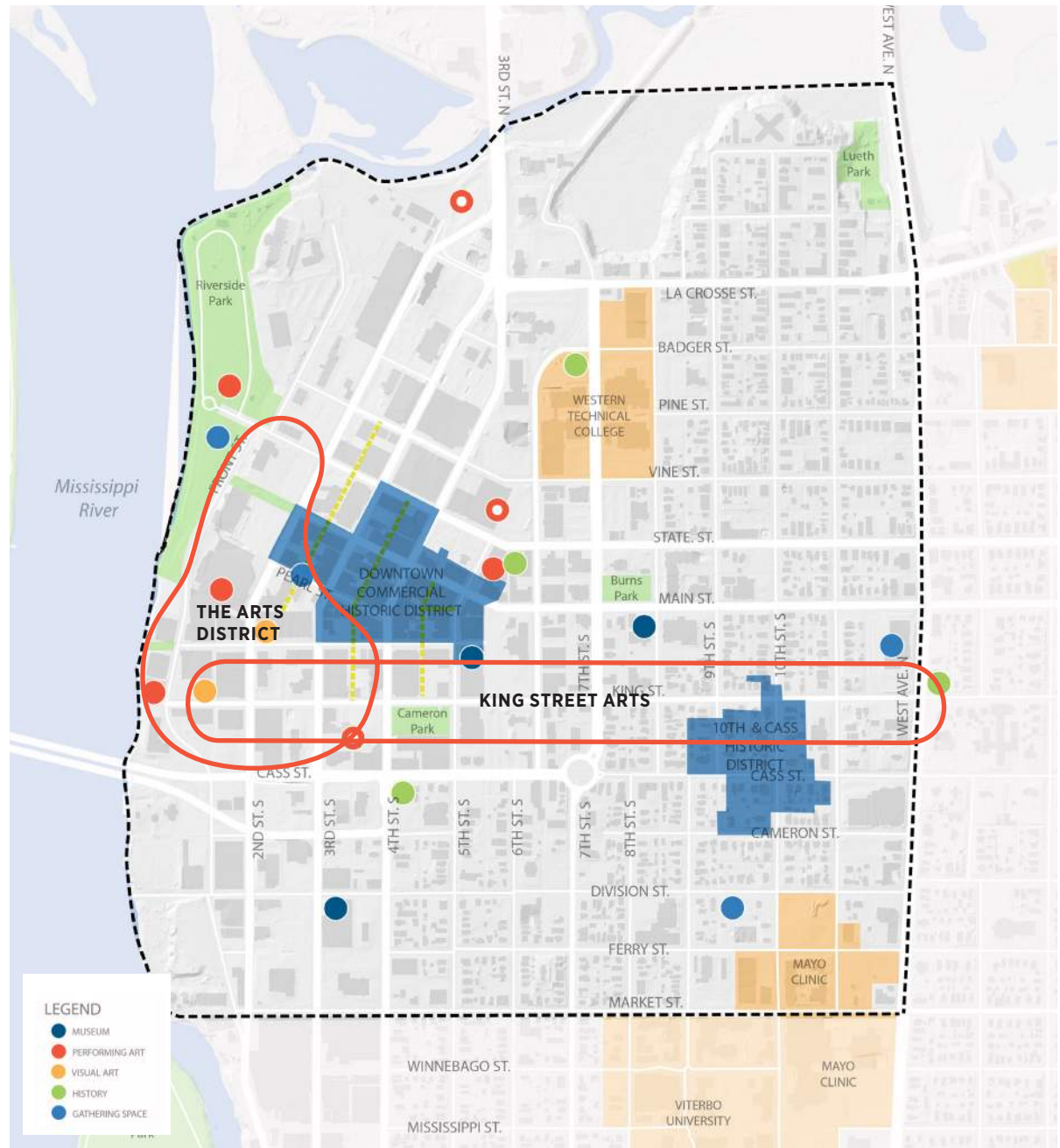
- La Crosse Community Theater
- Pump House Regional Arts Center
- University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
- Viterbo University
- La Crosse Symphony Orchestra
- La Crosse Center
- Grand River Station
- Historic theaters and live music venues, including Cavalier Theater, Rivoli Theater, and Hollywood Theater.

The list of art galleries and studios has been shrinking, with many closing in recent years. Besides the Pump House and the gallery in the Grand River Station, only one or two sporadically active art galleries remain downtown.

Positioning downtown as the center for arts and culture sets the stage for the city to attract more talent and become more inclusive to all. **Future success depends on building partnerships between the arts groups and having a collective, coordinated approach to sharing the opportunities to experience in La Crosse.**

Future success depends on building partnerships between the arts groups and having a collective, coordinated approach to sharing the opportunities to experience in La Crosse.

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS IN DOWNTOWN



ARTS DISTRICT(S)

All of downtown is essentially an arts district with facilities and exhibits located throughout the area.

Imagine 2040 identifies the area near the downtown historic district as an Arts District with a tendril following King Street to the neighborhoods. The district boundary is somewhat ambiguous to allow for a future Arts Master Plan to knit together the parts - current/potential facilities and public art.

The intent of the arts district is to create an intense focus on the arts, establishing a “main street” for this arts community. The area is already home to many artists who live in the area that create, sell and share their artistic achievements. The idea echoes a proposal by Citizens for the Arts in La Crosse. Their role can be implementing the district, collectively campaigning for funding support and coordinating activities.

PUBLIC ART - OUTDOOR

La Crosse needs more public art, and it can take many forms. At its best, public art is a synthesis of forms creating an engaging experience for visitors and residents inspired by a connection between narrative, function, and place. Public art is a process guided by the relationship of three principles: Story | Structure | Site.

- **Story.** Understanding story leads the design effort where artists engage in site-specific research, artistic fact-finding, interviews, community interactions, and site visits, to uncover unique aspects of place critical to the conceptual development of a project.
- **Structure.** Public art installations should have an element of usefulness where the public is invited to touch, sit upon, walk through or be sheltered by the work. Structures can be a park bench or picnic shelter re-imagined through a story.
- **Site.** Specific to the physical and cultural features of La Crosse, public art is about finding and creating connections to the cultural landscape, both real and symbolic, historic, and contemporary. Site specifics include views – both to and from the installation, human



scale and orientation regarding natural light and illumination considering both daytime and nighttime experiences.

Engagement guides the outcome. Public art does not necessarily reflect a single identifiable style. Rather the form, materials, and techniques change to create unique installations selected for specific relationships as a critical part of interpreting connection to place. Public art is meaningful when it is about the specifics of place and is informed deeply by public engagement – that is the public art process. Participants offered ideas of focusing initial art projects on celebrating diversity of people living in the region.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Identify an Arts District and its future programming.**

While an effort has been made to launch a district (2013 Arts Board Strategic Plan), no such district has evolved.

- **Prepare a Public Arts Master Plan for the entire city.**

The plan should identify priority areas in downtown for public art and art integration.

- **Formalize Mural Program.**

Create a system for identifying supportive building owners to expand on murals in downtown.

- **Art in Transit.** Incorporate public art in planned streetscape improvements.

- **Establish a Regional Arts Council.** An initiative for non-profit groups, members can include visual and performing artists to discuss ideas for coordinating and elevating the arts community for the La Crosse region.



CASE STUDY

MURAL PROGRAM

DOTHAN, ALABAMA MURALS OF THE WIREGRASS, INC.

Dothan (pop. 67,000) has over two dozen murals in their downtown that depict the city's history and culture. The Dothan Mural Project is managed by a board of directors with the mission to preserve existing murals and commission new pieces. These pieces include painted murals, sculptures, ghost signs, outdoor signs, and other public art.

La Crosse could adopt a similar program that could include members from the Arts Board, DMI, and Citizens for the Arts.



ESTABLISHING AN ARTS DISTRICT

Americans for the Arts defines cultural districts, or arts districts, as “well-organized, labeled areas of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities and programs serve as the main anchor of attraction.” These districts go beyond just art galleries and include supporting cultural amenities such as theaters, art cinemas, music venues and public space for performance. To establish an arts district, the following steps should be considered:

- Create **partnerships** with the Arts Board, local artists, the City, small businesses, developers, etc.
- Develop an **arts district plan** to formally identify the vision and goal and actions needed.
- **Secure funding** through local sources as well as grants and federal programs.
- Create a **marketing plan** that promotes the district and garners support from the community.

PLACES EDUCATIONAL

La Crosse is home to three higher education campuses and one primary education facility.

Western Technical College and Viterbo University are both within the project area while the University of La Crosse-Wisconsin sits adjacent to the northeast end of the district. These institutions have served downtown La Crosse for over 100 years and partnered with the City on area improvements, like the bike lanes and green infrastructure on 7th Street by Western Tech campus. Facility space is sufficient, and more projects may emerge that could reinforce the campus' presence in its area.

La Crosse Polytechnic School is relatively new to downtown, opening in fall 2020. The charter school is committed to partnering with downtown businesses and organizations to provide students with valuable learning experiences and participate in the culture to downtown.

INITIATIVES:

- **Collaborate on campus master plans.** Campuses evolve and change over time. The institutions should continue their commitment of working with the community to manage their edge development so that projects strengthen the campus and neighborhood. Future capital projects may include satellite spaces in downtown and new facilities like a symphony hall.

TELL ME AND I FORGET
TEACH ME AND I MAY LEARN
INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN
- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

- **Implement multi-mobility projects.** Multi-mobility projects support alternative transportation for students, faculty and visitors.
 - › Offering a transit circulator route to offer alternative transportation to students.
 - › Adding bicycle facilities, like bicycle lanes and signage, supports active transportation and personal health.
 - › Improving sidewalks to ensure that pedestrians have safe and convenient pathways to facilities.
- **Design an outdoor classroom.** Open spaces can be designed to function as outdoor classrooms. Areas near La Crosse Polytechnic School (228 S. 5th Avenue) could be retrofitted for an outdoor learning area, such as redeveloping a parking lot or enhancing Cameron Park. Outdoor classrooms promote hands-on learning by providing a source of knowledge for classroom content - from an art class sketching a leaf to a math class measuring distances and angles, and to a science class studying plants and water runoff.
- **Collaborate with student groups.** Hands-on learning can benefit the community through collaboration.
 - › Conduct walkability audit.
 - › Inventory ADA conflict points.
 - › Count pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - › Participate in neighborhood and park clean-up.
 - › Plant flowers and shrubs.
 - › Participate in DMI meeting.
 - › Serve meals.
 - › Poll people visiting downtown.
 - › Coordinate with City on tactical urbanism exercise.
 - › Volunteer at events.
 - › Partner on job shadow programs and internships.

The City thanks the faculty and students for their input on this segment of the plan.

PLACES EVENT SPACES

Downtown hosts a variety of events throughout the year. Most notable of the outdoor festivals is Oktoberfest located on the grounds at the district's north end. MoonTunes draws large crowds for their summer concert series in Riverside Park.

Beyond outdoor activities, events held at the La Crosse Center, Pump House, Weber Center, and other gallery spaces attract visitors and residents throughout the year.

INITIATIVES:

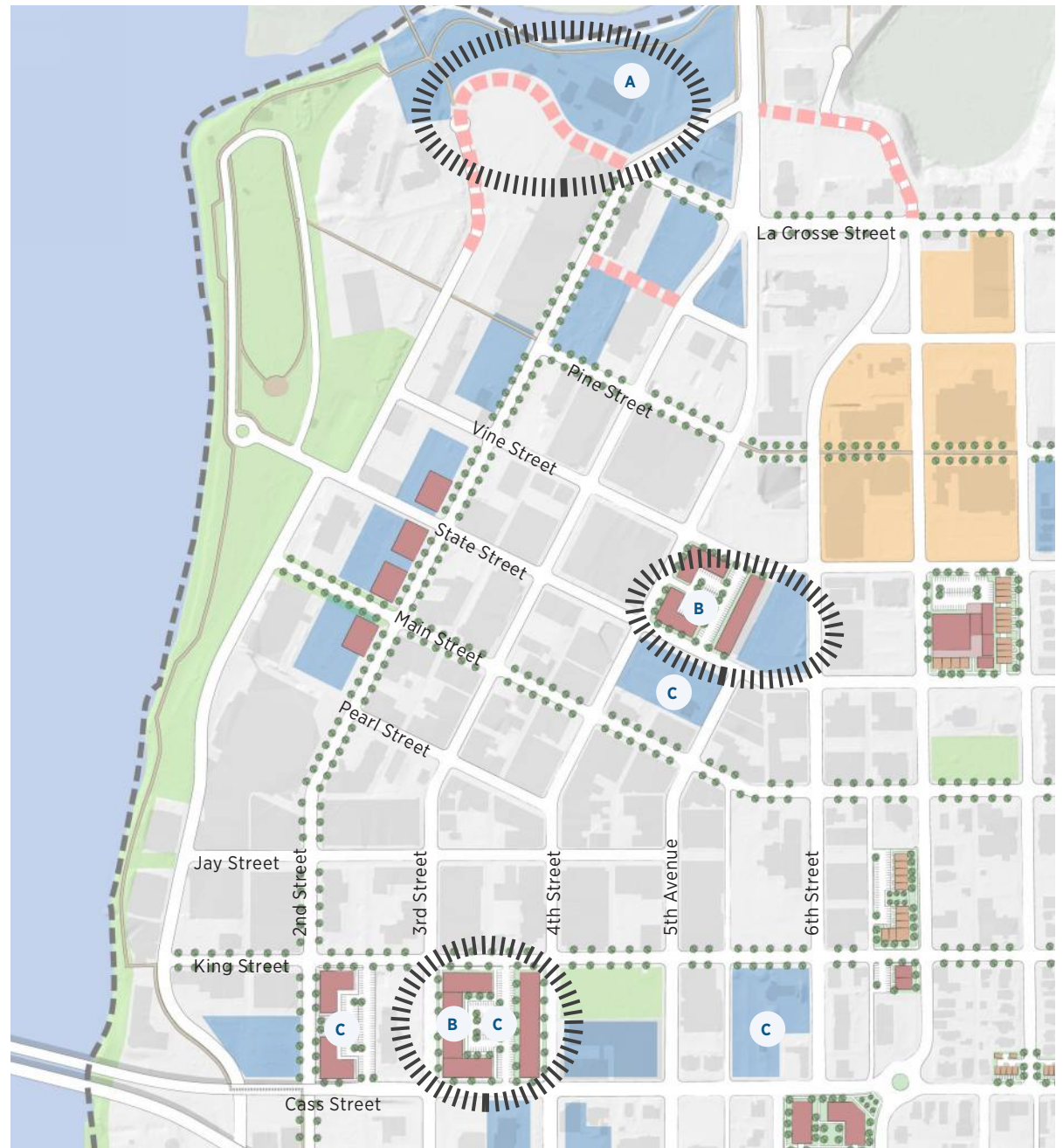
A. New Public Market. A new public market at the northern gateway to downtown can become a catalyst for nearby reinvestment, while supporting programmed events like Oktoberfest.

A new public market, similar to the Public Market in Milwaukee, would become a regional attraction that draws daily visitors to downtown.

B. New Symphony Hall. A new symphony was introduced as an idea for downtown. The project is imagined as a public/private partnership in association with the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. This type of project could fit on a number of sites, including:

- › Dealership site. The site is well-positioned to become a new gateway development project that presents a greater sense of arrival to the downtown core. Nearby hotels, parking, parks, and entertainment

EVENT FACILITY INITIATIVES



venues reinforces the area as a district oriented to tourism and culture.

- › Post Office site
- › Former La Crosse Tribune site

C. New Museum Facility Study. While downtown supports many museums and cultural attractions, the area can become an even stronger setting for future museums and exhibits.

Imagine 2040 is a twenty-year plan. It identifies the need to develop a facility program for the La Crosse Historic and Cultural Museum, identify partnerships, and funding strategies. The scale and programming of the facility will be influenced by the number of complementary partnerships, which may include consolidating other museum programs in the community to maximize funding from contributors. The plan identifies preliminary candidate sites that are subject to change based on the results of the study.

D. Other Event Facilities

- › **Concert Venue Study.** Planning participants desire a new concert venue that supports 1,000 to 2,000 people. A study, likely a private initiative, should determine the demand, size, and possible locations for the space.
- › **Hollywood Theater Rehabilitation.** Planning participants desire to rehabilitate the Hollywood Theater.
- › **Makers Space.** Planning participants desire a new maker space for people to build projects and crafts. Maker spaces



have communal tools for users, and can be oriented to different levels of experience, children to adults.



PLACES PARKS

Improvements to individual parks should involve users of the space and may warrant their own planning process.

POSSIBILITIES:

- A. Riverside Park Master Plan.** Riverside Park will continue to evolve over the decades with new programming and design features like the levy and bandshell. The design of the park should be preserved, yet a master plan should be developed to program capital improvements. The plan can include features like public art, speed tables, restrooms, skating rink, playscapes, and maintenance.
- B. Cameron Park Expansion.** Bimbo Bakeries is an important business to downtown. If the business needed to expand, resulting in its relocating from its current location, Imagine 2040 recommends expanding Cameron Park to become a new signature gateway to downtown.
- C. New Pocket Parks.** New development projects should incorporate outdoor spaces, either rooftop decks or communal green spaces.
- D. Marsh Area.** The River Point District Plan identifies features for interacting with the outdoors. Imagine 2040 recommends creating a new trailhead at the bridge and redesign the La Crosse River waterfront to support Oktoberfest.
- E. Burns Park.** Burns Park was upgraded in 2020 and should be regularly maintained.



*Imagine 2040 is a twenty-year plan.
Concepts are just that - ideas for the future.*

PATHS gALLEYS

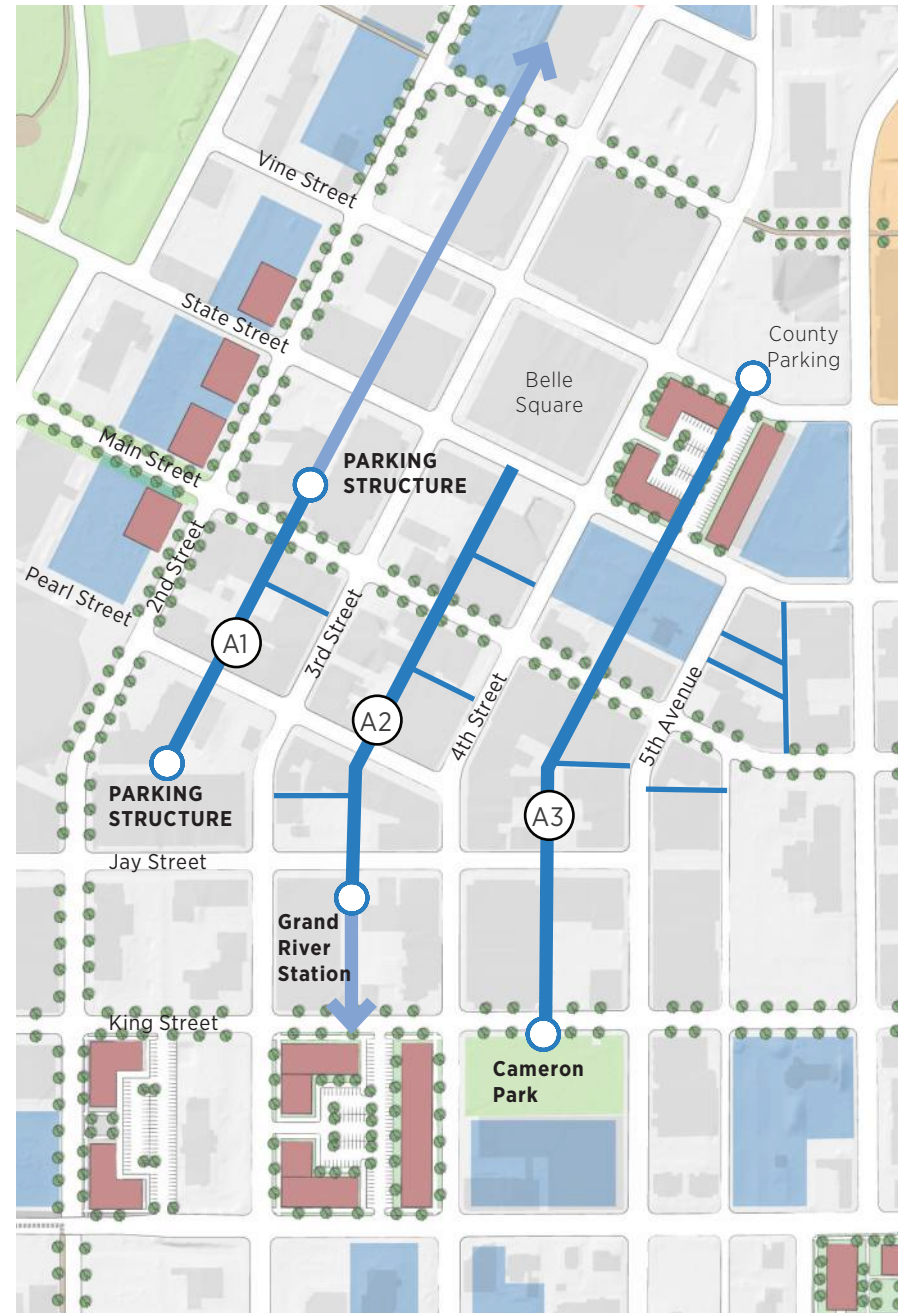
Alleys are often viewed as nondescript spaces in cities. These narrow paths can become hidden art galleries - gAlleys - that provide a new dimension to the pedestrian experience that can be short-cuts secluded from moving vehicle traffic.

Imagine 2040 recommends a detailed planning study of the gAlleys to understand functional needs and design opportunities to retrofit spaces that can be shared between vehicles and pedestrians. Many alleys are used for rear access parking, trash disposal, loading/unloading, and service deliveries. Seed money for implementation should be identified and committed before commissioning the detailed study.

At a minimum, La Crosse should avoid painting directly on brick that has not already been painted. In these circumstances tapestries can be mounted to the side of buildings.

MAP KEY	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	POSSIBLE FEATURES
A1	Mississippi gAlley	Midblock pathway that connects people to parking structures and destinations. This gAlley is a priority pilot project. Phase 1 connects parking structures and additional phases expand by one block at a time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gallery of graffiti art - Cantenary lighting - Breadcrumb trail (ground plane art) to parking entrances - Signage to attractions
A2	Grand River gAlley	Midblock pathway that connects people to Grand River Station to the downtown core. Project occurs after Mississippi gAlley.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gallery of graffiti art - Lighting - Pavers matching alley at Grand River Station - Living walls with facades that have greater sun exposure.
A3	Cameron gAlley	Midblock pathway that connects people to Cameron Park and county parking lot. Project occurs after Mississippi gAlley and Grand River gAlley..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gallery of graffiti art
	Alleys and Building Gaps	Alleys and building gaps that are spur routes from the gAlleys or provide opportunities for enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gallery of graffiti art.

ALLEY PROJECTS



A Destination for All People



Ground plane enhancements. Alley improvements at Grand River Station can be a model for future surface improvements.



Overhead enhancements. Lighting and artwork draped over an alley can enclose the space. Lighting offers some security.



Gateway entrances. Entrances can tease pedestrians to explore the alley.

GRAND RIVER gALLEY



A demonstration concept for the Grand River gALLEY. Features include draped lighting, planters, mural art, and receptacles for trash and recycling. Wall art can be graffiti, murals, living walls, mounted paintings and the like.

PINE STREET PATHWAY



A demonstration concept for the Pine Street Pathway. Features include:

- Defined, lighted path
- Bump-outs at crossings
- Possible living wall along facades

CASE STUDY

BREADCRUM PATHS

Boston, Massachusetts

Boston's Freedom Trail spans for 2.5 miles and guides people to a collection of museums, a ship, historic markers, and other local attractions. The pathway has markers along the route, indicating that the visitor has arrived to a destination.



Hyannis, Massachusetts

Hyannis' Walkway to the Sea guides people from downtown to the waterfront. The wave-pattern of bricks and paint helps connect the area's main attractions.



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Review ordinances.** Review ordinances and development standards for the use of alley space by adjacent businesses including acceptable uses, plantings, decoration, seating, and to ensure the spaces remain open to traffic.
- **Initiate pilot gAlley between Pearl Street and Main Street.** The pilot program can become a permanent program, starting with lighting and artwork. Additional improvements may include permanent installations of lighting and paving.
- **Create Pine Street Pathway.** The project includes a number of stakeholders, including Western Technical College and La Crosse County.
- **Initiate mural project in all alleys.** Host a mural-making initiative around an important theme to the La Crosse community, such as equity and inclusivity.
- **Create a Streetscape Handbook.** Discussed in "A Connected City" section, the streetscape handbook provides a taxonomy of features that can apply to many street improvement projects, unifying the appearance of downtown and reinforcing the image of belonging to a destination.

PATHS

RIVERWALK PROMENADE

The city's trail network fractures between Riverside Park and Houska Park. Downtown is essentially the knot missing to complete the network from Gunderson Health System and the city's Marsh Trails.

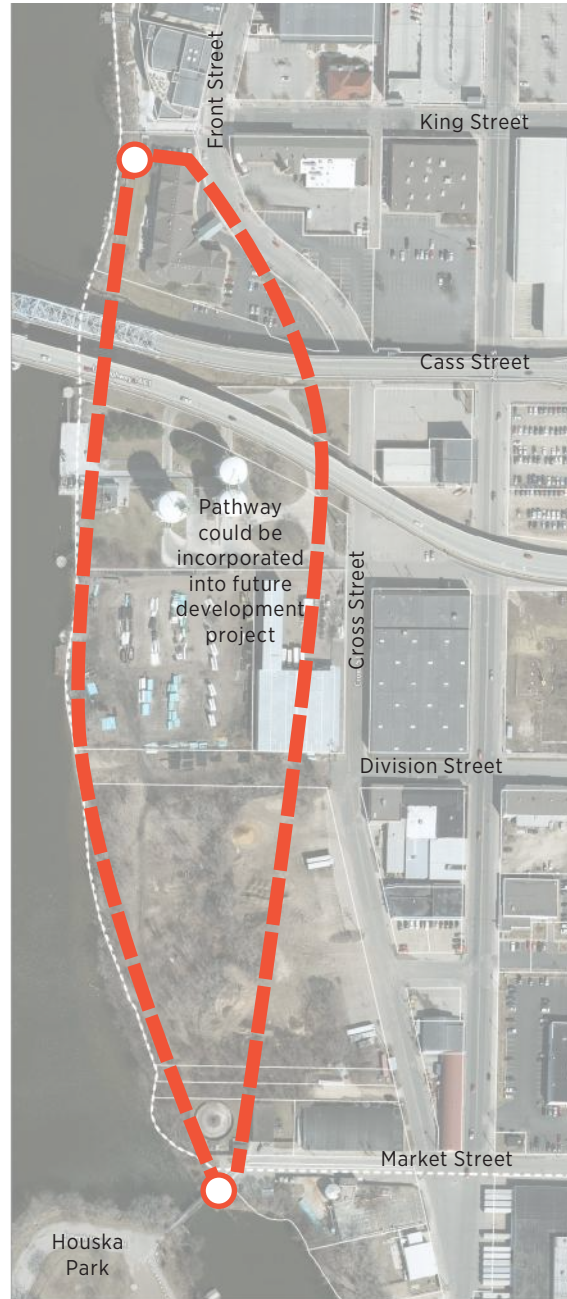
Continuing the riverwalk along the Mississippi River is the community's ultimate ambition. While the project may go beyond 2040, the **City should continue to preserve the ability to establish a path along the river.**

Interim improvements can be retrofitted along streets with a sidepath or on-street pavement markings and signage.

Features of the ultimate design includes:

- Integrating the pathway with adjoining redevelopment of property
- Wide path
- Public art
- Artistic lighting
- Public refuge spaces, such as a small park and observation areas (watching people/wildlife)
- Resilient landscaping in the event of flooding

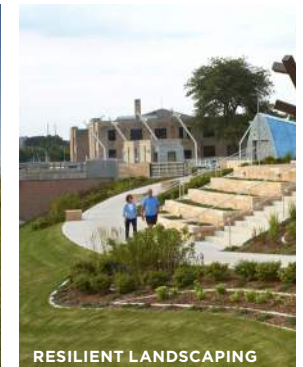
RIVERWALK PATHS



CANTILEVER PATH OVER RIVER



ART



RESILIENT LANDSCAPING



PLAY AREAS



PUBLIC RESTROOMS

Downtown has a limited number of public restrooms. While restrooms are available in stores and restaurants, visitors are not always customers and some restrooms are not accessible by all.

Possible initiatives for future study include:

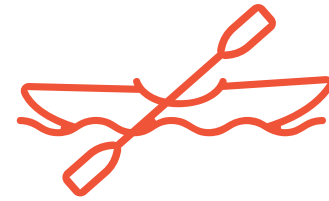
- Investigate the ability to retrofit existing parking structures with permanent bathrooms.
- Place portable restrooms [trailers] near Riverside Park, possibly parking them on Front Street. Restrooms should be well-screened, fitting into its surroundings.
- Development projects receiving public funding assistance should have accessible restrooms.
- Include public restrooms on wayfinding signs and kiosks.
- Continue upgrading existing public restrooms.



INTERNET HOTSPOTS

Downtown needs outdoor seating with free WIFI hotspots. Providing public WIFI lets people enjoy public spaces. Activating spaces to work between meetings or gather with friends after school would be welcomed.

The recently completed Burns Park renovations provide one such opportunity. Pearl Street is another area that has been recommended by residents as an opportunity to create open, pedestrian friendly space with potential for outdoor seating.



WATERFRONT SERVICES

Downtown needs to continue its programming for waterfront services. These may include:

- **Water Taxi Service.** Study a system of waterfront taxis available along the riverfront to crisscross the Mississippi to and from Pettibone Park.
- **Canoe/Kayak Storage.** Study locations to place rental lockers for kayaks and canoes that are convenient to launch areas. A downtown business, such as a bike shop, could lease kayaks.
- **Riverboat Pathways.** Kiosks and directional signage at riverboat landings should alert visitors about the attractions in La Crosse.
- **Bike Share Stations.** The riverfront should have several bike share stations for patrons to lease bikes.

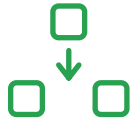
theme

A CONFLUENCE OF NATURE

**We envision a downtown
that celebrates and builds on the outdoors
with a visible, healthy natural environment.
A downtown that, no matter where you
look, offers the ability to easily interact with
nature.**

La Crosse's beauty derives from the confluence of three rivers and soaring bluffs in the heart of the Driftless region. The beauty of the natural environment draws people to La Crosse and connects us with the indigenous culture and legacy of the region. Protecting this natural asset is a priority for all and supports pursuing initiatives that make downtown an oasis for the outdoors.





ORGANIZATION

The section includes:

- Address Climate Change
- Create a Model Sustainability District
- Use Green Technology
- Create Green Corridors

To the right is the summary of all opportunities presented for this vision.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Prioritize projects that support the net neutrality by 2050.
- Prioritize and incentivize energy efficiency improvements.
- Encourage use of environmentally responsible building materials and construction practices.
- Update policies to require sustainable development policies in publicly led or funded improvement projects.
- Add electric vehicle charging stations east of 7th Street.
- Market availability of electric vehicle charging stations in downtown.
- Create a rooftop solar program for downtown commercial buildings
- Identify locations for living walls and funding sources for a demonstration installation.
- Leverage primary thoroughfares as Green Corridors.
- Develop a stormwater ordinance unique to the urban conditions of La Crosse.
- Use alternative winter weather management strategies that are environmentally friendly.
- Increase awareness of stormwater run-off through education projects and art
- Fund a tree program.

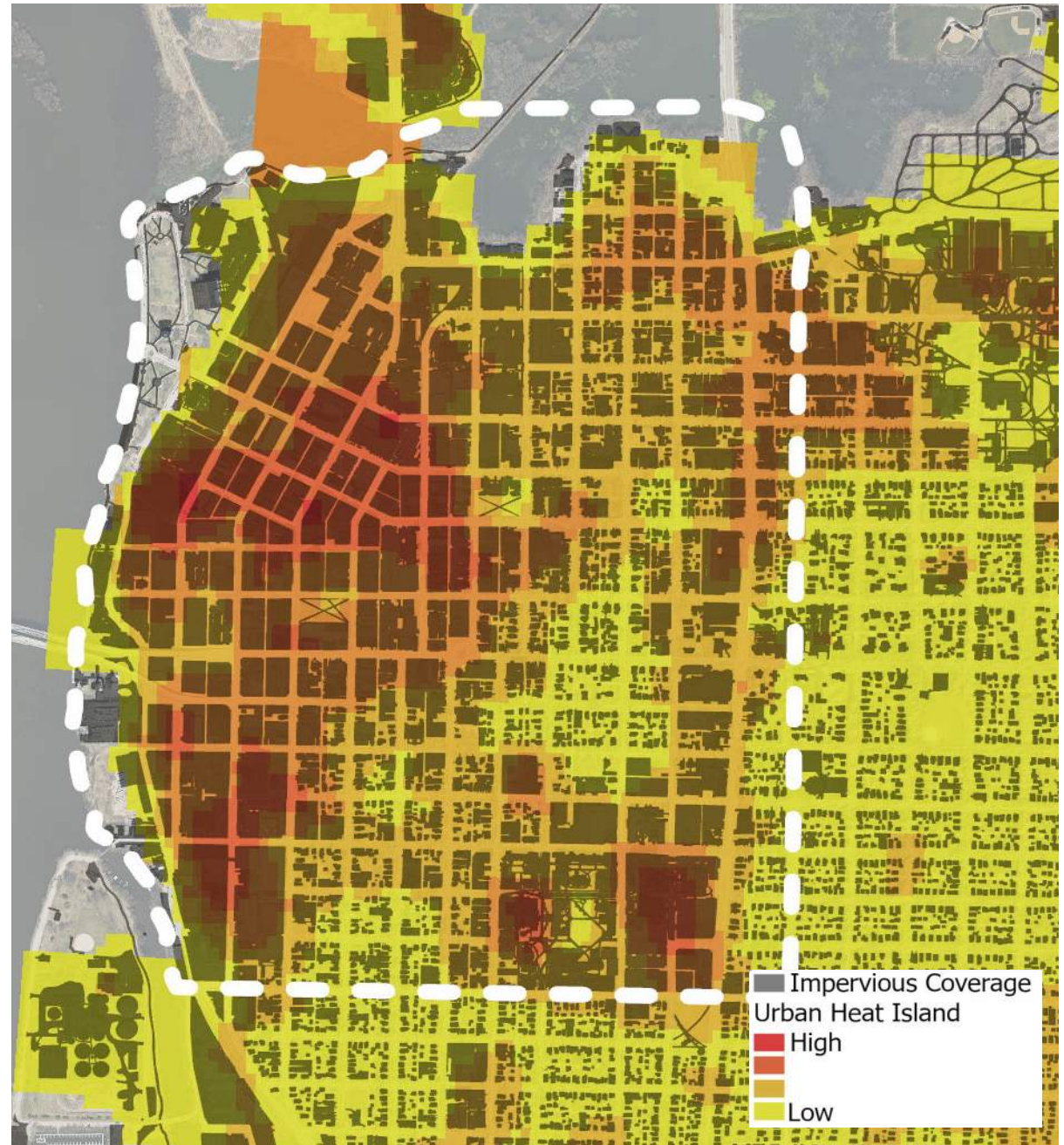
ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

The weather changes little by little, year by year. The growing seasons are getting longer, rainfall rates are rising, temperatures are hotter for longer, droughts and flooding are more frequent. La Crosse has had its fair share of flooding and cleanup. With more urbanization and heavier precipitation events, it leads to higher river flows and more dynamic river heights.

Reducing downtown's influence on climate change is one way the city can contribute to managing the influence on the greater climate concerns. **Imagine 2040 recommends managing areas that contribute to the urban heat island effect, which consists of areas with impervious covering as shown in the map. Also, Imagine 2040 recommends preparing a Climate Action Plan for the whole city to understand management strategies for the broader community.**

La Crosse has embraced green Infrastructure which is helping to make the community more resilient. Multiple, overlapping solutions will strengthen the resiliency of downtown and create educational opportunities for residents and visitors. Features in the following pages will help the environment and the health of La Crosse's residents. Polluted environments, limited greenspace, lack of access to healthy food are just some of the many harms that affect our well-being. Choosing sustainability creates cleaner, healthier, safer, and a more vibrant neighborhoods where people thrive.

URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

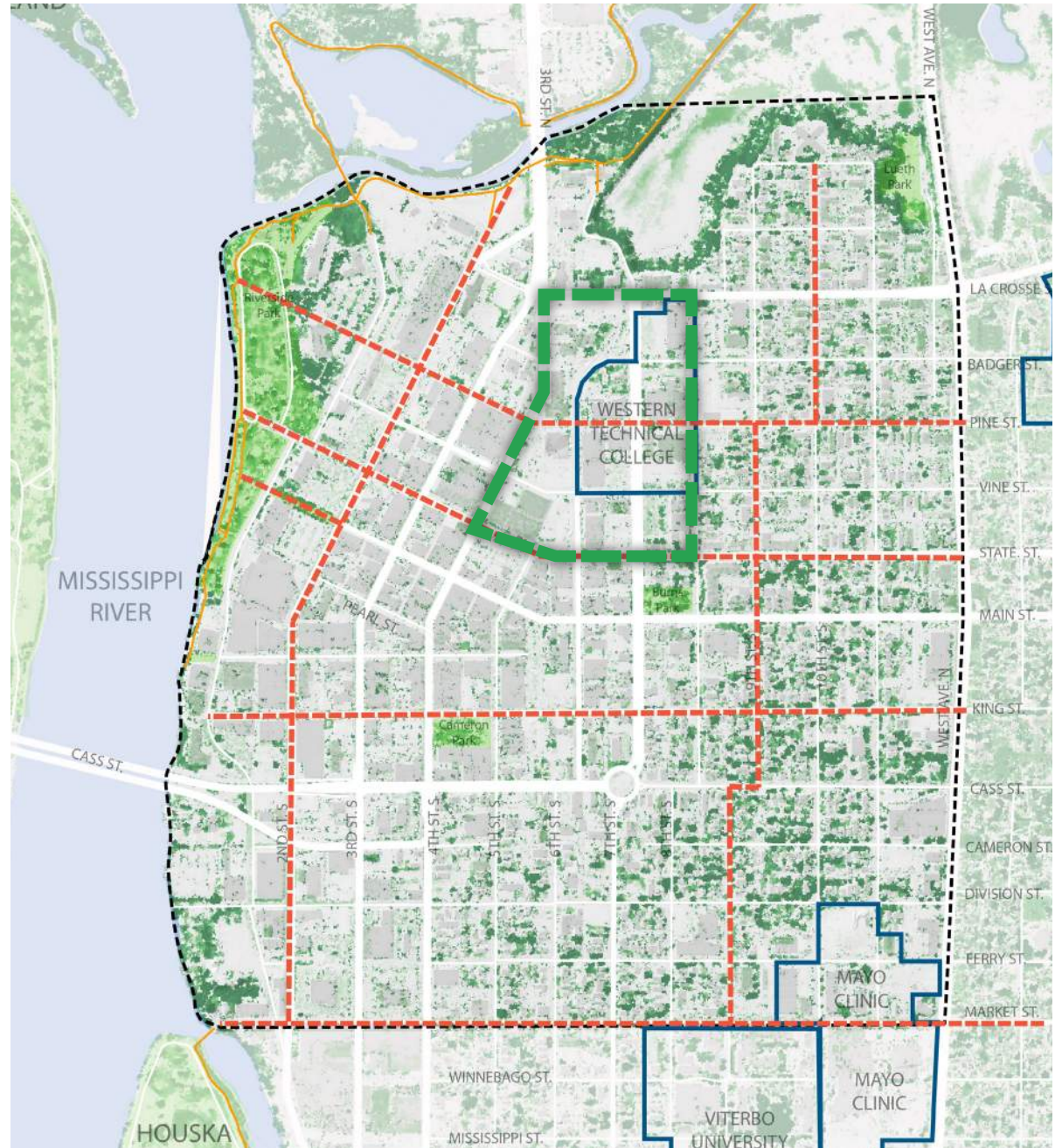


CREATE A MODEL SUSTAINABLE DISTRICT

One important element of sustainability in La Crosse will be increased education efforts. Signage is installed explaining various sustainable projects on the Western Technical College Campus, however more signage throughout downtown, artwork, and interactive infrastructure will be necessary to ensure residents and visitors alike understand the importance of reducing energy consumption, managing water, impact on human health, and increasing greenspace to reduce the city's impact.

One of the most effective educational opportunities are demonstration projects. Several demonstration projects exist throughout La Crosse, however one continuous demonstration project with a variety of overlapping installations and benefits in downtown would serve as not only an educational installation, but a catalyst for other developments to incorporate aspects of the design. To the right is a model sustainable district between City Hall and Main Street on 6th Street that shows how design can include all inhabitants, not just humans thrive in the face of climate change. The area would include not only public right-of-way but the buildings and sites as well. The Western Technical College Campus provides a good guide for how to implement as they already have many of the sustainable features proposed.

MODEL SUSTAINABLE DISTRICT



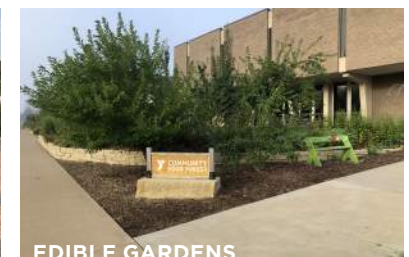
FEATURES OF THE MODEL SUSTAINABLE DISTRICT

GREEN TECHNOLOGY

- Building construction
- Green roofs
- District heating and cooling
- Electric vehicles
- Lighting
- Solar
- Composting
- Living walls

GREEN CORRIDORS

- Stormwater Best Management Practices
- Green Spaces
- Tree Reforestation



USE GREEN TECHNOLOGY

La Crosse committed to green technologies and reducing its carbon footprint with the adoption of the 2009 Strategic Plan for Sustainability. A major component of the plan includes reducing and eventually eliminating reliance on fossil fuels. Building construction, while a good sign of a healthy economy, influences the environment and should be managed to minimize its impact.

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

A number of new technologies and systems have emerged in recent years that result in greener construction methods for new buildings. This is important because building construction and operation accounts for nearly 40% of greenhouse gas emissions annually. Some ways to reduce waste and create a green building stock include:

- **Building to Established Energy Standards.** Many sustainable and efficient buildings have resulted using the LEED program which has a three tier rating system for designating green buildings. Other systems such as Living Building Challenge place an emphasis on the actual performance of a building instead of achieving a desired point level prior to construction. Developing incentives for achieving either established ratings or more importantly certain levels of performance post construction will result in increased green building construction.
- **Prioritizing Preservation.** The greenest building is the one already standing. Existing buildings hold embodied energy that would be lost if demolished and replaced with a new structure. Even a

new energy efficient building would take between 10 and 80 years to overcome the negative climate change impacts created during construction. Making a commitment to preserve buildings before replacing will reduce waste of embodied energy.

- **Modular Construction.** Using modular construction techniques can reduce material waste, disruption to the building site, and reduce operational energy. Neighborhood infill projects can steer towards modular construction
- **Energy Modeling.** Over half of carbon emissions for buildings comes from operational use. Modeling and tracking energy use in a building can lead to decisions for retrofits or modifications that decrease energy use and in turn, carbon emissions.
- **Sustainable Materials.** Sustainable materials are manufactured with concern for toxicity, sustainability of sources and the amount of energy required for production. Using sustainable materials reduces energy use and conserves natural resources.

- › Is the material made from renewable resources or rapidly renewing materials? Rapidly renewable materials include bamboo or recycled plastics.
- › What is the amount and source of energy used to produce the material? Use of renewable or alternative sources of energy conserves resources and often reduces environmental degradation.
- › Is the material manufactured regionally? Regional production reduces the amount of energy to transport the material. Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) defines materials extracted, processed, and manufactured within 500 miles as “regional.”
- › Is the material made of recycled content? Without compromising other design considerations, materials and street furnishings should make greater use of recycled components.



CASE STUDY

GREEN BUILDING INCENTIVE PROGRAM

MORE GREEN ROOFS

A green roof is a layer of vegetation planted over a waterproofing system on a flat or slightly sloped roof. T

Since downtown is largely built out, with buildings constructed over 100 years ago, the structural capacity of most will not allow an intensive green roof. New projects on redevelopment sites however can be designed with an intensive green roof in mind. An example in downtown is the green roof recently installed on the new Integrated Technology Building at Western Technical College. Existing buildings with ample room to add an extensive green roof addition to help reduce heat island effect as well as lower the cooling load of the building.

To incentivize green roof installation, **the city should provide a stormwater credit for buildings that install a green roof.** The city would benefit from the reduced amount of water shedding from the building into the storm drain, decreasing the burden on the system. In order to ensure a smooth approval process building inspectors should be trained on green roof regulations and their interaction with other building codes.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

The program provides incentives of reduced plan check turnaround time and a 7.5% reduction in plan check and building permit fees for projects that meet at least one of the following:

- Natural Resource Conservation by using straw bale construction or recycled content.
- Water Conservation through gray water systems.
- Energy Conservation by exceeding minimum standards of CEC title 24 by a certain percent based on use type.



ROE COLLEGE - PELLA, IA



HISTORIC CITY HALL - WEST DES MOINES, IA



LA CROSSE

BETTER LIGHTING AND PRESERVE DARK SKIES

Outdoor lighting is important in urban environments. Appropriate lighting levels promotes a feeling of comfort and security and encourages pedestrian activity. Illuminating building facades highlights interesting architectural features and strengthens the character of a district. Facade illumination also directs ambient light to the vertical plane at eye level, creating higher visual contrast and recognition of faces. Proper lighting levels in pedestrian areas also provides visual cues to motorists, reducing areas of shadow that hide pedestrians from view.

Street lighting fixtures should relate to the streetscape vocabulary during both day and night. Their scale, spacing and style of the fixtures contribute to the visual tone of the street. Use of light poles for signage, banners and other wayfinding devices adds color and detail and reduces visual clutter by ordering street graphics.

At night, the light sources should become almost invisible. Full cut-off or cut-off fixture optics focus the observer's eye on the illuminated surface below the fixture.

The type of light source influences energy consumption and sustainability. Efficient light sources can achieve equivalent lighting levels with lower energy use. The spectrum of light becomes an important part of the nighttime streetscape. For example, high pressure sodium vapor lights are very efficient, but their orange-yellow light renders colors poorly, making it difficult to



CASE STUDY

DISTRICT HEATING/COOLING

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Milwaukee's central business district uses district heating albeit generated from natural gas.

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

St. Paul has the largest hot water district heating system in the country that's supplemented by a solar array.

COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Many college campuses use district heating to manage building temperatures, including Iowa State University, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cornell University uses a lake source cooling system for their facility and the Ithaca City School District.

INVESTIGATE FEASIBILITY OF DISTRICT HEATING AND COOLING

District heating and cooling networks distribute energy to a network of buildings, managing their temperature.

The principle purpose to investigate the feasibility is to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality. Cooling systems use free-cooling from a local water source, like the La Crosse River or Mississippi River. Heating systems use biomass, solar, and/or geothermal wells. An additional purpose is to seek out renewable energy sources to reduce the future cost of powering environmental systems for buildings.

The initial application of the district heating/cooling includes the campus for the City and County buildings. The initiative may be completed with Western Technical College and the targeted area may expand to include a broader area.



distinguish true colors in the environment. Metal halide's white light, on the other hand, renders colors and surfaces more realistically. These lamps are available in different color temperatures to provide a more "incandescent" appearance. Current studies indicate that human peripheral vision and visual acuity in urban settings is substantially better under white light than orange light.

The concept of "dark skies" minimizes extraneous light and directs light to areas and surfaces that should be illuminated. Light pollution and obtrusive light result from both the optical characteristics and placement of the luminaries in an outdoor site or roadway. Outdoor lighting performance should be based on both optics and overall system design, including distribution and functional and aesthetic requirements.

Lighting design can create visual interest by highlighting special features. Uplighting of trees, floodlighting of architectural facades and highlighting other streetscape features provide "sparkle" when complementing good overall street lighting design

MORE ELECTRIC VEHICLES

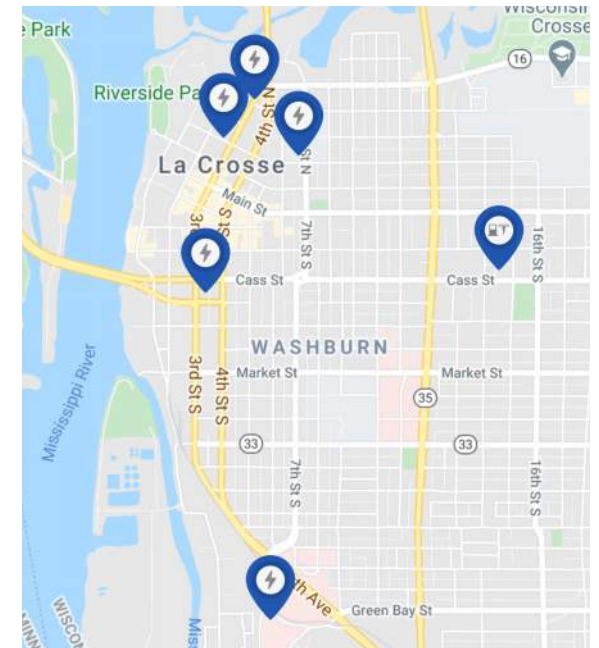
All of the city's parking structures should be retrofitted with first level charging stations, rewarding users for offsetting greenhouse gas emissions.

Transportation accounts for 28% of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. As the largest contributor to emissions, solutions to reduce fossil fuel consumption related to transportation should be prioritized. One form of reduction is through the promotion and support of electric vehicles.

La Crosse has six electric vehicle charging stations, four of which are located in downtown. All stations are Level 2 which possess around 240 charging volts and 40 amp circuit. These stations have a range of charging speeds, but typically max out at around 26 miles of range per hour of charging.

In addition to private electric vehicles, the city will have electric buses as part of their transit fleet, supported by a private charging station. The move to an electric fleet offers double benefits, reducing emissions from the vehicle as well as multiple vehicles that would otherwise be carrying individual passengers if not riding the bus.

CHARGING STATIONS, 2020



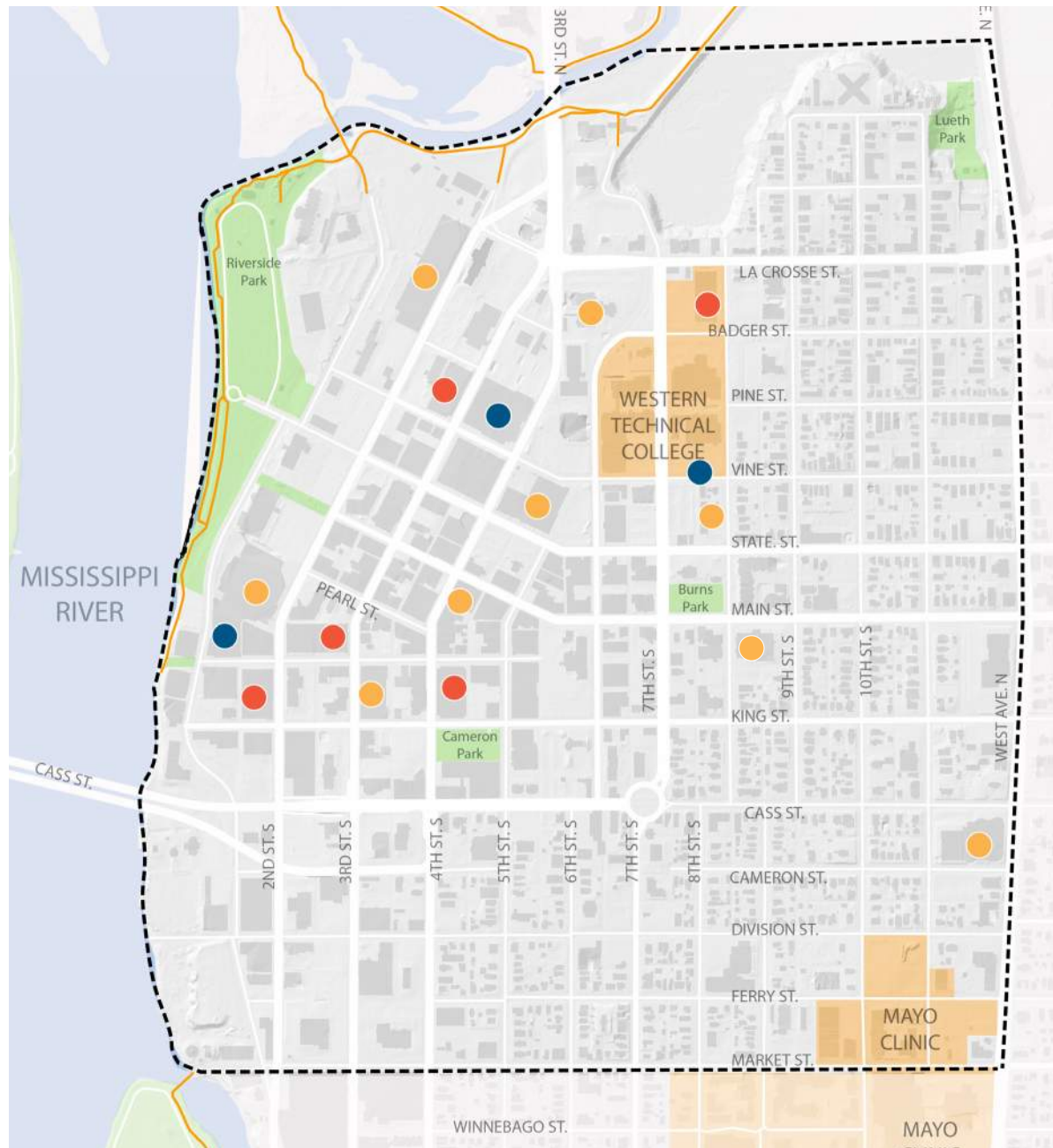
MORE SOLAR ENERGY

The city committed to switching at least 25% of its own fuel sources by 2025 to renewal and alternative fuels such as solar energy in the 2009 Strategic Plan for Sustainability. This goal can be expanded beyond city infrastructure to include building across downtown as well to make a greater impact. As building operations contributing significantly to energy consumption and therefore greenhouse gas creation, supporting solar energy projects on downtown buildings can have a great impact.

Two opportunities exist for downtown solar, building integrated rooftop systems and solar canopies on the top floor of parking garages.

The Grow Solar La Crosse program, launched in summer 2020, is a step towards this vision. The group purchasing program was offered by the City and County of La Crosse and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association to homeowners. The more residents who sign up, the greater the discounts and affordability. The launch of the program came at a bad time due to the pandemic and led to less than desired participation. The program should be repeated in 2021 or 2022 and do more education and outreach.

SOLAR OPPORTUNITIES



LEGEND

- EXISTING SOLAR
- ROOFTOP ARRAY CANDIDATE
- ROOFTOP CANOPY CANDIDATE



CASE STUDY

SOLAR FOR VOUCHERS PROGRAM

TWIN CITIES METRO

As part of a pilot program, the Metropolitan Council is testing a pilot program for multifamily property owners. The “Solar-for-Vouchers” program is designed to help advance the adoption of solar energy in the region while also increasing the availability of affordable housing to low-income residents.

- Owners lower their operating costs by installing solar panels at competitive prices
- The Council manages a competitive bid process to install the solar facilities, provides expert knowledge, contract terms, and financing options, and streamlines approval processes
- The owner is required to rent, at market rate, a limited number of units to low-income households through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program.

The program is launched in October 2020.

MORE COMPOSTING

While not typically considered a technology, composting takes food scraps and yard waste and converts it into nutrient rich compost to be used again. This process diverts waste from landfills that would otherwise fail to breakdown under conditions present in a landfill. **Composting has the potential to reduce a significant amount of waste and carbon, and downtown restaurants should the join a program.**

Currently, the City compost site on Isle Le Plum accepts yard waste and residents can drop off food waste as well. Additionally, a company in town offers yard and food waste pick up from spring through fall, and another hauler has started a commercial foot waste hauling program for businesses and work with Festival Foods, The People’s Co-op, and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

A composting program if implemented is most successful on a community-wide level, however many composting programs have been initiated at a neighborhood level, with compost sites located within community gardens.

Neighborhoods associations should educate and support backyard composting.

A personal compost pile can be very small and requires minimal work to maintain, but proper guidance to avoid pests and smells is necessary.

MORE LIVING WALLS

Living walls are not new to La Crosse. In 2016 Western Technical College installed a living wall inside the new Integrated Technology Center. Living walls on the exterior of a building have yet to be seen. Living walls are systems designed to hold a variety of plants on the surface of a wall. The benefits of a living wall system include:

- Additional insulation reducing heating and cooling loads on a building
- Carbon sequestration
- Beauty and greenery
- Reduce heat island effect

Many buildings in downtown could benefit from a living wall, adding both greenery and sustainability to the district. Alleys with good access to daylight would be good candidate site and buildings outside the historic districts.

Buildings along the Pine Street Pathway, including the County’s building, can be retrofitted with a living wall.





OPPORTUNITIES

PRIORITIZE PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT CARBON NEUTRALITY BY 2050 GOAL IN THE NEW CITY CLIMATE ACTION PLAN.

Projects that incorporate solar arrays, geothermal systems, and green building design should receive priority for approvals. All city funded projects should have requirements that the buildings incorporate clean energy and reduced operational demands.

PRIORITIZE AND INCENTIVIZE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS.

The program should focus on existing residential and commercial buildings with high energy consumption, historic buildings, and low-income neighborhoods.

ENCOURAGE USE OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES.

Develop a guide with recommended building materials and construction practices made available to the public and local developers. Any city funded projects should reference the guide and develop a certain standard of construction meeting the guide.

UPDATE POLICIES TO REQUIRE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN PUBLICLY LED OR FUNDED IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS.

The City and County should serve as leaders in sustainable development and update policies to reflect their support. Any new renovations or construction projects should follow sustainable best practices. Additionally, any City funded projects should require the project to meet these same standards. While sustainable development practices benefit the developer in the long run, it can be difficult to convince them to spend the extra money up front. Providing incentives, whether financial or regulatory, can help encourage more sustainable practices in downtown.

ADD ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS EAST OF 7TH STREET.

Downtown has a number of electric vehicle charging stations available, however the neighborhood to the east is lacking immediate access. Explore partnerships with local businesses to find one to two more locations for the residential district east of 7th Street for charging stations.

MARKET AVAILABILITY OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS IN DOWNTOWN.

Downtown has four charging stations within the project area, however signage and education on their location and availability is lacking. With a new downtown wayfinding system, directions to charging stations should be included.

CREATE A ROOFTOP SOLAR PROGRAM FOR DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The rooftop solar project recently ended for residential properties in La Crosse. A similar program should be implemented to encourage downtown building owners to add rooftop solar, making sure any buildings within the historic district follow the Secretary of the Interior Illustrated Guidelines on Sustainability for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

IDENTIFY LOCATIONS FOR LIVING WALLS AND FUNDING SOURCES FOR A DEMONSTRATION INSTALLATION.

Large southern wall exposures are ideal locations for green/living walls. A living wall should be considered for the south wall of City Hall as a demonstration project to encourage more installations throughout downtown.

CREATE GREEN CORRIDORS

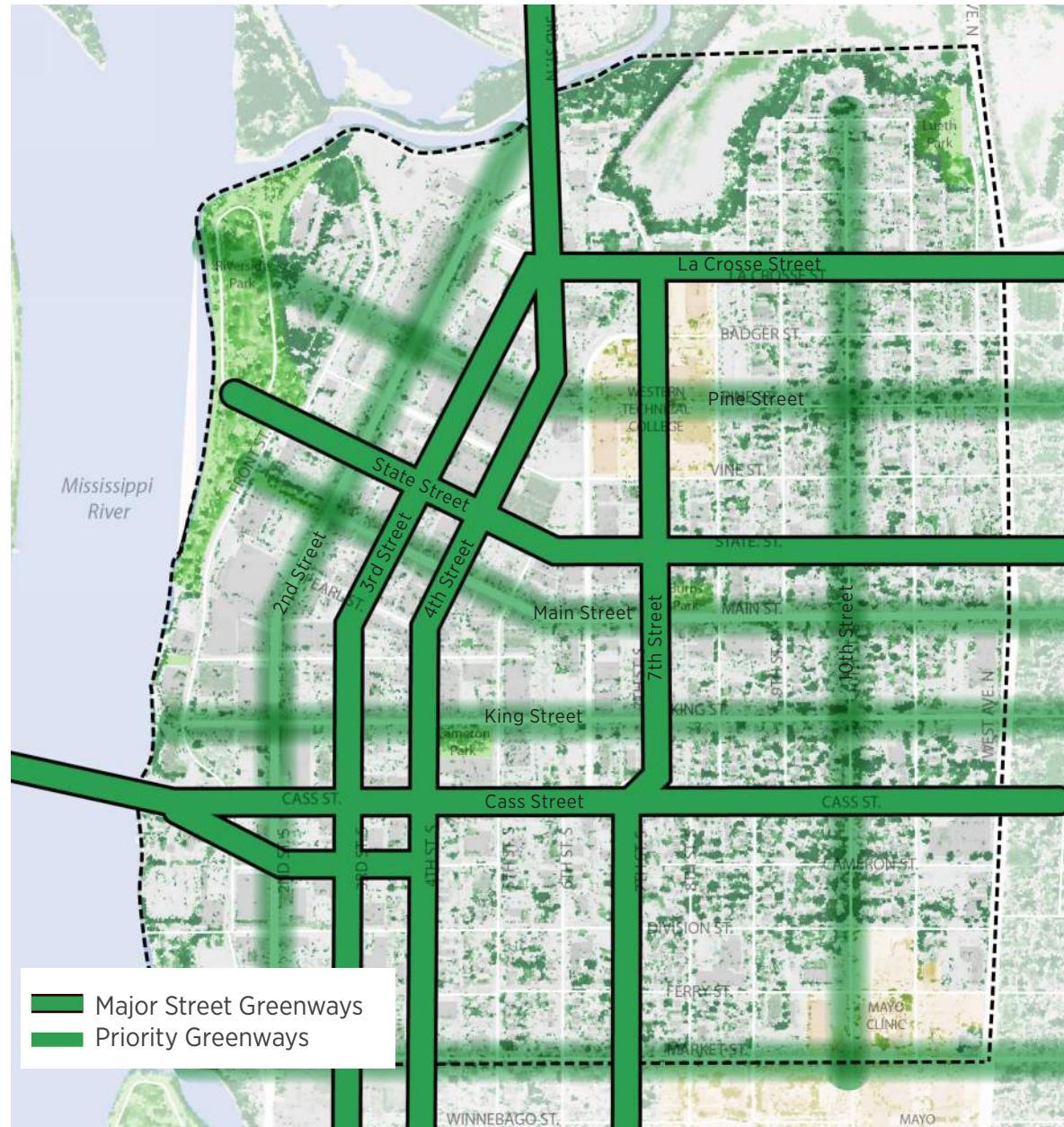
All of downtown's streets should be green corridors, exhibiting a strong canopy of trees and plantings that add beauty to the community. Green corridors also manage stormwater, link to parks, and stimulate private reinvestment.

Priority green corridors are pathways that provide strong east/west connectivity to the Mississippi River and downtown. Connections between parks and the riverfront should be developed and improved through a walkable/bikeable network of trails, parks, and greenways that improve access from neighborhoods to the riverfront. These pathways are routes to initially target improvements and receive additional treatment to set them apart from standard streets. These areas are typically very walkable and bikeable, have a good tree canopy, and installations such as bioswales and rain gardens. Overall, they are pleasant paths to travel.

These corridors should include:

- Stormwater Best Management Practices
- Green Space and Plantings
- Tree Reforestation

PROPOSED CONNECTING CORRIDORS



STORMWATER BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMP)

Downtown is relatively protected from severe flooding. While other communities invested heavily in flood walls that cut off their residents from the Mississippi River, La Crosse activated its riverfront with park space, which also provides passive areas for potential flooding which was necessary during the 1965 and 2019 floods.

Downtown has a significant amount of impervious coverage with its streets, buildings, and parking lots. This condition channels stormwater away from downtown, rather than managing it through green infrastructure, and contributes to peak runoff conditions. More recent development projects have incorporated green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioswales.

Stormwater runoff that is not properly managed flows rapidly over impervious surfaces (paved surfaces or other materials that do not absorb water), picking up debris and pollutants along the way and washing them into rivers and drains. Poorly managed stormwater runoff also causes flooding and erosion, destroys habitat and contributes to stormsewer capacity.

Integrating best stormwater management practices (BMP's) into building and site development can reduce the damaging effects of urbanization on rivers and streams. Disconnecting the flow from storm sewers and directing runoff to natural systems such

as landscaped planters, swales and rain gardens reduces water velocity and cleans stormwater runoff. Natural stormwater systems also permit reduced pipe size for storm sewers.

Best Management Practices (BMP'S) include bioswales, pervious paving, rain gardens, and rain barrels. The following techniques should be considered in street and parking area design and integrated into the streetscape:

- **Bioswales.** Bioswales, depressions sloped on either side, contain vegetation or riprap that maximize the amount of time water spends over permeable surfaces before entering the storm sewer system. Bioswales also clean stormwater by removing pollutants.
- **Permeable Surfaces.** Permeable pavers can capture runoff and provide a distinctive and appealing paving surface. These pavers come in a variety of styles, but all are designed to absorb water into the ground. Paver technology has advanced and pavers are now resistant to winter conditions and as durable as conventional materials when properly maintained. Porous asphalt provides another “green” paving option, conducting water into the ground rather than blocking infiltration.
- **Rain Gardens.** Rain gardens are an attractive way to capture water while providing landscaping. Rain gardens are dry most of the time, yet designed to capture significant amounts of runoff



from adjacent areas during a rain event. When designed to capture runoff from streets or sidewalks, careful consideration to the type of plants is necessary as road salt is likely to concentrate in the garden with the spring thaw.

- **Rain Barrels.** Rain barrels collect and detain rain from building gutter systems. The water in the rain barrels can be used to irrigate the surrounding landscape.
- **Curb Inlets.** Sawtooth curbs can direct runoff into planted stormwater management features like rain gardens. These curbs are broken every few feet to allow water to run into the planting area, but still provide the protection of a curb. This technique is often used in areas with large impervious surfaces to funnel rainwater into adjacent landscaping areas or bioswales.

GREEN SPACES & PLANTINGS

La Crosse has ample natural beauty with the presence of the Mississippi River, the wetlands, and Grandad Bluff. Supplementing these more striking destinations are parks and trails that draw in residents and tourists.

Parks, especially Riverside Park, has the capacity to serve multiple functions. Not only are the parks recreational amenities, they serve as holding space for stormwater runoff or flooding in the case of Riverside Park until the water levels recede. These areas can still maintain function as a greenspace without necessary repairs following a flooding event. La Crosse's parks can be designed to mimic the ecosystem of their neighboring wetlands, to slow down and hold water flows, protecting the investments made in adjacent businesses and housing.

- **Parks.** The design for each park within downtown should be reviewed by 2040 through the city's Parks Master Plan.
 - › Riverside Park. Programming within the park will continue annually, considering its preservation as the city's premier public gathering space.
 - › Cameron Park. The scale of the space may change by 2040, resulting in a major park redesign.
 - › Burns Park. Continued maintenance from its redesign 2020.
- **Future Small Parks.** Private development, particularly high-intensity projects, should include communal green space for the people it serves. Most vacant lots in the

neighborhood and downtown can be temporarily retrofitted as green space (park and/or community gardens) until the market suggest its redevelopment.

- **Native Pollinator Habitat.** A feature of rain gardens is native plantings. Using native plants ensures deep root systems that infiltrate water better than non-native plants with more shallow root structures. These plants also dual as pollinator habitats for butterflies and bees, an important part of the local ecosystem. These types of plants are also less costly to maintain, requiring less management.
- **Edible Plants.** La Crosse should continue to embrace planting fruit and vegetable plants in parks and private property. The Community Food Forest at the YMCA is an excellent demonstration of edible plants that are available for people to harvest. Future edible gardens/forests should be accompanied by signage to educate the public about the purpose and benefit of edible plants.

TREE REFORESTATION

Many cities encourage the growth of their urban forests because of the many benefits they provide. A healthy tree canopy is sustainable and provides a multi-solution approach that can be applied to other elsewhere. The benefits include:

- Reduces heat island effect in urban areas
- Sequesters carbon dioxide
- Captures and absorbs stormwater runoff
- Reduces air and noise pollution and



atmospheric greenhouse affects

- Reduces energy use
- Conserves water, reduces soil erosion and promotes good soil structure
- Increases community and individual well-being
- Supports wildlife and plant diversity

The types and placement of trees must be carefully selected. The lessons of the emerald ash underscores the need to diversify and avoid mono-cultures that are vulnerable to disease and infestation. Tree wells should be a minimum of 6 feet square with either mulch or ground cover. Preventing tree vandalism is important, as well.

In the downtown core, a certified arborist should conduct an annual evaluation of trees and oversee their pruning or removal. Street trees that need to be removed should be replaced, and the tree wells should be retrofitted to ensure the tree's survival.

In the neighborhoods, trees should be planted at regular intervals to restore the street's tree canopy.



OPPORTUNITIES

LEVERAGE PRIMARY THOROUGHFARES AS GREEN CORRIDORS.

Green infrastructure should be added to the Green Corridors identified within this section. Additionally, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should be installed to make these thoroughfares welcoming and safe corridors. These thoroughfares should improve connectivity between and among parks and also establish better connections from the Riverwalk to downtown and the neighborhoods. For street reconstruction projects, the roadway can be narrowed to allow for more green space and wider sidewalks.

DEVELOP A STORMWATER ORDINANCE UNIQUE TO THE URBAN CONDITIONS OF LA CROSSE.

The City of La Crosse adopted the La Crosse County stormwater ordinance which is more suburban in its regulations. By creating a stormwater ordinance unique to the city of La Crosse, more innovative and layered concepts can be implemented to provide solutions to stormwater management that go

beyond just a single purpose installation such as a stormwater pond.

USE ALTERNATIVE WINTER WEATHER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES THAT ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY.

For decades the solution to icy roads and sidewalks has been salt. It is widely known that salt, when melted into nearby rivers and streams, causes significant damage to ecosystems. Alternatives such as beet juice, skid resistant plates, or steam using geothermal wells, should be investigated to determine their applicability as an environmentally friendly alternative to standard ice melt. The City could team with Western Technical College to develop solutions and a demonstration project.

INCREASE AWARENESS OF STORMWATER RUN-OFF THROUGH EDUCATION PROJECTS AND ART

Art and educational signage are great ways to educate residents of where stormwater run-off ends up and how they can help protect the lakes, rivers, and wetlands that make La Crosse so special. Painting storm drains, installing plaques, or creating a "drain army"

of residents to keep the drains clear of litter and yard waste are all ideal projects.

FUND A TREE PROGRAM.

Throughout downtown the effects of small tree wells can be seen in the stumps left behind from dead trees. The City should fund a re-tree program to replant trees in downtown while also increasing size and design of the tree wells to better support growth.

MANAGE TREE VANDALISM

Trees often experience vandalism, which includes people breaking branches, scraping off bark, and leaning items on them like bikes and signs. Vandalism is particularly challenging with new tree installations. The city should investigate methods for managing tree vandalism, which may include an educational campaign, signage, surveillance, yarn wraps covering the base (tactical urbanism), and even barriers/cages.