

## TASK I: Community Engagement

### 1.1 COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

RDG will tailor the communications plan with city staff before the start of the project. The process includes a spectrum of tools:

- A. **Steering Committee.** The steering committee meets at strategic milestones of the project to provide direction, mid-course correction, and review deliverables.
- B. **Project Management Team (PMT).** The project management team, includes the managers from the City of La Crosse, Mainstreet, and RDG. We will meet on a regular basis via phone or webcast, often starting with weekly meetings, then meeting on alternate weeks. Additional participants are pulled in when necessary.
- C. **Online Tools.** RDG will assist the PMT to draft email blasts, social media, surveys, and discussion forums for sharing ideas, concepts, and receiving feedback.
- D. **On-site Tools.** RDG will assist the PMT by prepare the design of fliers, posters, postcards, business cards, letters, and ads.
- E. **Logo and Branding.** A project logo will be developed to use as the brand for the project.

### 1.2 ONLINE INTERACTIVE FORUMS

Online tools can engage people from their home, office, or cafe. We will use PublicInput.com as the portal for online engagement. Possible elements include:

- A. **Project Website.** RDG will develop a website that will provide updates on the planning process.
- B. **Social Media.** RDG will schedule and coordinate announcements for existing social media.
- C. **Survey.** RDG will create a survey (using PublicInput.com) to gauge people's perspective about downtown and possible issues. Also, it will include a visual listening survey that asks participants to score images and setup an interactive mapping tool.

### 1.3 ONSITE MEETINGS

- A. **Committee Kick-off Meeting.** This initial meeting will establish principles and objectives for the study area and help refine the specific objectives of this plan. The project may have multiple committees that focus on specific topics, like development, parks, urban design, transportation, and regulations.
- B. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP #1: Kick-off Webinar.** The kick-off webinar is an opportunity for the public to understand the value of planning for Downtown La Crosse. The setup of the webinar is subject to committee input and may include instant polling and Q&A session. The session will kick-off the online activities of the project. Subject to committee direction, this event may occur in person and be paired with a community social (beverages/ice cream), community fair, existing celebration, movie, and panel discussion.
- C. **Focus Group Interviews.** Working with the Steering Committee and the PMT, RDG will identify stakeholders and conduct a program of focus group discussions to address the project area, its dynamics, potential, and future directions.
- D. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP #2: Community Roundtable.** RDG will host a community workshop to understand goals and issues, inviting the public to participate in roundtable discussions with their peers to identify aspirations for downtown.
- E. **PUBLIC WORKSHOP #3: Student Program.** The program must be tailored for students; could possibly be a one-hour classroom session, stakeholder meeting with government

student body, or half-day event for a large group of students that becomes an educational opportunity about planning and design.

- F. **Other Meetings & Speaker Series.** RDG prides itself on maximizing community involvement throughout the process. During planned visits, RDG will meet with other regulatory and advisory groups, such as student groups, business associations, and clubs. Presentations may be 10 minutes to describe the project and process, or one hour discussions that describe the history of planning, Downtown La Crosse's trends, and the need to think about the future. Subject to committee input, a series of topic-specific webinars can be scheduled.
- G. **Steering Committee Debrief.** RDG will meet with the Steering Committee to review emerging themes from public meetings and documentation of results.
- H. **Concept to Implementation.** Subsequent tasks identify techniques to engage the public in the planning process, including the design studio, implementation workshop, and open house described in Tasks IV-VII.

## **TASK II: Conditions & Opportunities**

### **2.1 BASE MAPPING & REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS/CODES**

RDG will compile existing maps and plans from various local, state, and federal agencies.

### **2.2 DOWNTOWN PROGRAMMING**

RDG will collect and review all relevant events and programs that occur in downtown. This includes discussions with various stakeholder groups to understand the operation and performance of activities.

### **2.3 LAND USE, BUILDING USE, & ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The project team will inventory the project area and present the results in graphic format. As available, team members will visit with property owners while touring the area.

### **2.4 PARKING, TRANSPORTATION, RECREATION, & FACILITIES**

RDG will collaborate with city staff to understand the state of Downtown La Crosse's transportation system and possibilities.

- A. Coordinate on on-going projects.
- B. Diagram circulation patterns for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles, including wayfinding. The team will lend special attention to circulation barriers (real or perceived).
- C. Vehicles: Evaluate traffic patterns, access issues, and truck circulation.
- D. Pedestrians: Inventory and evaluate key pedestrian patterns and challenges.
- E. Bicyclists: Evaluate bicycle movements throughout the district and linkages to neighborhoods.
- F. Identify any infrastructure and facility issues or opportunities.
- G. Provide recommendations for modification of the current streetscape design.

## 2.5 DESIGN INVENTORY AND SUSTAINABLE DESIGN ISSUES

RDG will lead the design inventory:

- Building character and setbacks
- Patterns in the streetscape
- Green infrastructure
- Historic quality
- Art
- Neighborhood connections
- Graphic communication
- Parks and open spaces
- Sustainability issues
- Gateways, graphics, and themes

## 2.6 OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS MAP

Development opportunities will be identified and categorized based upon the physical inventory.

Potential opportunities will include:

- A. Specific redevelopment sites for detailed study.
- B. Adaptive reuse opportunities.
- C. Circulation improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.
- D. Open space/riverfront enhancements.
- E. Connections to parks, neighborhoods, gathering places, and across the waterway.

## TASK III: Market Analysis and Resiliency Strategy

RDG and Economic & Planning Systems (EPS) will evaluate existing market conditions and trends over the last 10 years as a basis for identifying opportunities for future growth and development. The focus for future development and investment will be on strategies and actions to improve resiliency to the current and future economic challenges.

### 3.1 PART ONE: RESILIENCY STRATEGY

The market assessment includes understanding of current conditions and values by land use category including historical development over the last 10 years. Tasks include:

- A. Tabulate data on population and employment trends and conditions in downtown and compared to city.
- B. Using CoStar or other broker data, quantify total space (and units) for retail, office, hotel, and residential development in downtown as well as the amount of space developed over the last 10 years.
- C. Identify current supportable lease rates, sales prices and occupancy levels by land use category.
- D. Conduct confidential interviews with downtown businesses, property owners and real estate professionals to help assess current conditions including the impact of the Covid-19 triggered downturn.
- E. Evaluate current downtown business mix, including retail stores by category, and identify potential niches and opportunities.
- F. Identify current gaps in the market by retail category and other land use categories (e.g. housing units by type, employment and accommodations uses by type).
- G.

- H. Using Assessor parcel data, identify vacant and underutilized properties with a potential for new development or redevelopment.
- I. Based on the quantitative data and stakeholder input, identify potential opportunity sites for catalyst projects.
- J. .

### **3.2 PART TWO: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (POST DESIGN STUDIO)**

Much like developing an architectural program before designing a building, the market analysis becomes the development program for targeted redevelopment sites. This task will place special attention on a few targeted opportunity sites. The results of the study will include:

- A. Recommend for a development program for each opportunity site based on the identified market opportunities and site and zoning capacity and constraints.
- B. Develop a static pro forma to illustrate project feasibility and/or the need for public financing to address a financing gap.
- C. Identify available and applicable financing tools to implement catalyst development projects
- D. Prioritize redevelopment opportunities based on the feasibility testing and expressions of developer interest.
- E.
- F. Identify market strategies to pursue developers and tenants.
- G. .
- H. Identifying obstacles to development, relating to policy, infrastructure, transportation, or market forces.
- I. Identifying methods to retain and grow existing business.
- J. .

### **3.3 MARKET REVIEW REPORT**

The consultant team will make a presentation of the market review findings to the PMT. The two-part report will include (1) near-term market strategies responding to the influence of Covid-19 and (2) long-term market strategies for the development.

## **TASK IV: Plan Concepts**

### **4.1 PUBLIC WORKSHOP #4: DESIGN STUDIO**

The planning team will make extensive use of design studios in most of our urban design work. During the three-day studio, we work on-location with stakeholders, developers, and other interested parties to develop concepts for the action plan. Open sessions encourage the public to work alongside the project team to illustrate and test their own ideas. Numerous stations will be set up, focusing on the various subject areas, like development, urban design, and parks. Sessions are sometimes in coffee shops or other public spaces. Quick results and high energy are a fundamental part of the process. The studio will use the information gathered in previous parts of the process and will address:

- A. The guiding vision for downtown.
- B. Key market focuses and opportunities.
- C. Major functional/infrastructure issues and public investment needs.

- D. Sub-districts, or “community nodes.”
- E. Redevelopment opportunities, including test fits for housing and commercial development. Completing this task marks the start of reviewing the design standards.
- F. Possible reuse of parking areas and under-used buildings for new development.
- G. Transportation concept showing circulation patterns and wayfinding for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.
- H. Connections to adjacent neighborhoods, river, and parks.
- I. Program and design concepts for parks, gathering spaces, and art.

#### **4.2 STUDIO PRESENTATION**

Following the design studio, the consultants will meet with the Steering Committee (or all committees) to review the initial concepts and suggestions developed during the week’s events. We approach these as working sessions rather than public hearings, and always view plans as “works in progress.”

## TASK V: Plan Elements

Following the design studio, the RDG team refines the concept sketches and graphics to illustrate key concepts. These interim and refined plans are presented to the Steering Committee in preparation for the public open house. Major elements can be reviewed in detail and may include development sites, transportation, parks, transportation, infrastructure, and more.

### 5.1 FRAMEWORK

This task is the preparation of the plan document, creating the graphics and narrative associated with concepts and strategies for the district. The framework includes:

- A. **Discovery.** Background information that incorporates qualitative information from public input and our observations, and quantitative information from field research and data collection.
- B. **Vision.** A summary of themes and goals that guide the concepts.
- C. **Concepts.** Graphics will be developed to describe proposed projects in an inspiring way that can be used for funding support. These may include plan view maps, elevation sketches, perspective illustrations, or models.
- D. **Supporting Narrative.** Language that accompanies the graphics, describing the concept and steps for implementation. The plan will include demonstration projects from other communities and case studies of comparable projects that help illustrate desirable outcomes.
- E. **Implementation Strategies.** Concepts will outline a framework of implementation steps and are discussed in Task VI.

## TASK VI: Implementation Strategies

RDG's fundamental goal and commitment is to provide Downtown La Crosse with a strategic vision that has lasting effects.

### 6.1 PUBLIC WORKSHOP #5: IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

This workshop invites city staff, key stakeholders, and the public to review concepts presented in the plan. Participants organize themselves into small groups by topic to discuss roles, challenges, and milestones.

### 6.2 PRIORITY CRITERIA & PHASING

During the implementation workshop, the consultant team works with participants to establish a set of criteria for determining the priority level of proposed projects. These priority criteria will be matched with the vision established in the public engagement process and used to recommend phasing for projects.

### 6.3 DESIGN STANDARDS & POLICY REVIEW

The Design Standards will be its own memo. RDG will conduct a review of the city's code that impacts downtown development. Illustrations and narrative will describe the recommended changes. This will address the balance between form-based code and revisions to the existing process. The city may elect to retain us to author code elements through adoption.

## **6.4 ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE**

Emerging from the results of the Implementation Workshop (6.1) and Policy Review (6.3), the project team will identify leading and supporting agencies/departments to oversee implementation. This will include the role and operations for the Downtown La Crosse, Inc., partners, and the city.

## **TASK VII: Approval Process**

*Objective: To provide full public review, comment, and “buy in” of the plan.*

### **7.1 PUBLIC WORKSHOP #6: PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE & PRESENTATION**

RDG will conduct a community open house, consisting of a presentation and numerous display boards of the entire action plan. The plan will be posted online for public review. In past RDG projects, some communities have elected to host the open house as an organized public celebration with vendors, food, and community groups.

### **7.2 PRESENTATION AND EVENT COLLATERAL**

Digital copies of the PowerPoint and display boards will be available for community groups to share with their membership.

### **7.3 FORMAL APPROVAL**

RDG believes in empowering the community to take ownership of the plan. To that end, RDG will aid the Steering Committee to present the plan at formal meetings. Alternatively, a representative of the project team can present at formal hearings.