Zoning 101

FORWARD LA CROSSE ZONING CODE UPDATE

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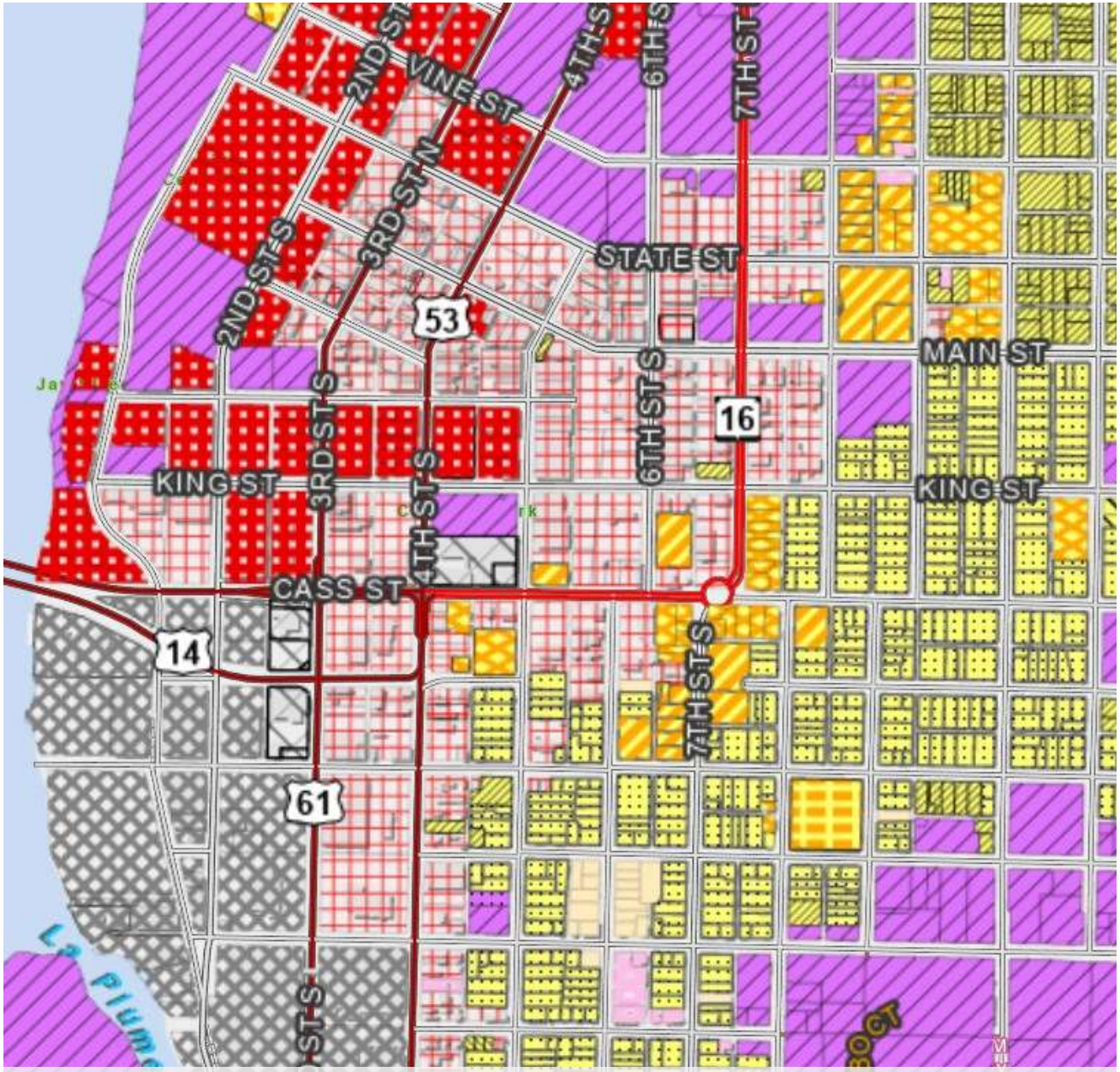


La Crosse Zoning Map - Partial Example

Introduction & History

Zoning is one of the most common methods of land use control used by local governments. Zoning works by defining a community into districts, regulating uses that are allowed within those districts, and prescribing allowable dimensions such as lot sizes, setbacks and building height. Zoning can help a community to achieve goals outlined in a comprehensive plan including:

- Protecting public health, safety and general welfare.
- Promoting desirable patterns of development.
- Separating incompatible land uses.
- Maintaining community character and aesthetics.
- Protecting community resources such as farmland, woodlands, groundwater, surface water, and historic and cultural resources.
- Providing public services and infrastructure in an economical and efficient manner.
- Protecting public and private investments.

Additional Forms of Zoning

State statutes require communities to administer certain types of zoning as described below:

- **Shoreland zoning**
- **Shoreland-wetland zoning**
- **Floodplain zoning**

Source: UW- Madison Division of Extension

- *1920 - First Wisconsin zoning ordinance created by City of Milwaukee*
- *1923 - Zoning upheld by the Wisconsin Supreme Court*
- *1929 - Wisconsin Legislature authorizes zoning to regulate all uses in rural areas*
- *1933 - Oneida County adopts first comprehensive rural zoning ordinance in the U.S.*
- *1966 - Wisconsin Legislature adopts the Water Resources Act*
- *1968 - Local governments required to administer minimum shoreland and floodplain zoning regulations*
- *1999 - Wisconsin adopts Comprehensive Planning Act and establishes grant program*
- *2010 - Zoning must be consistent with a local comprehensive plan*

Scope of Work & Organization

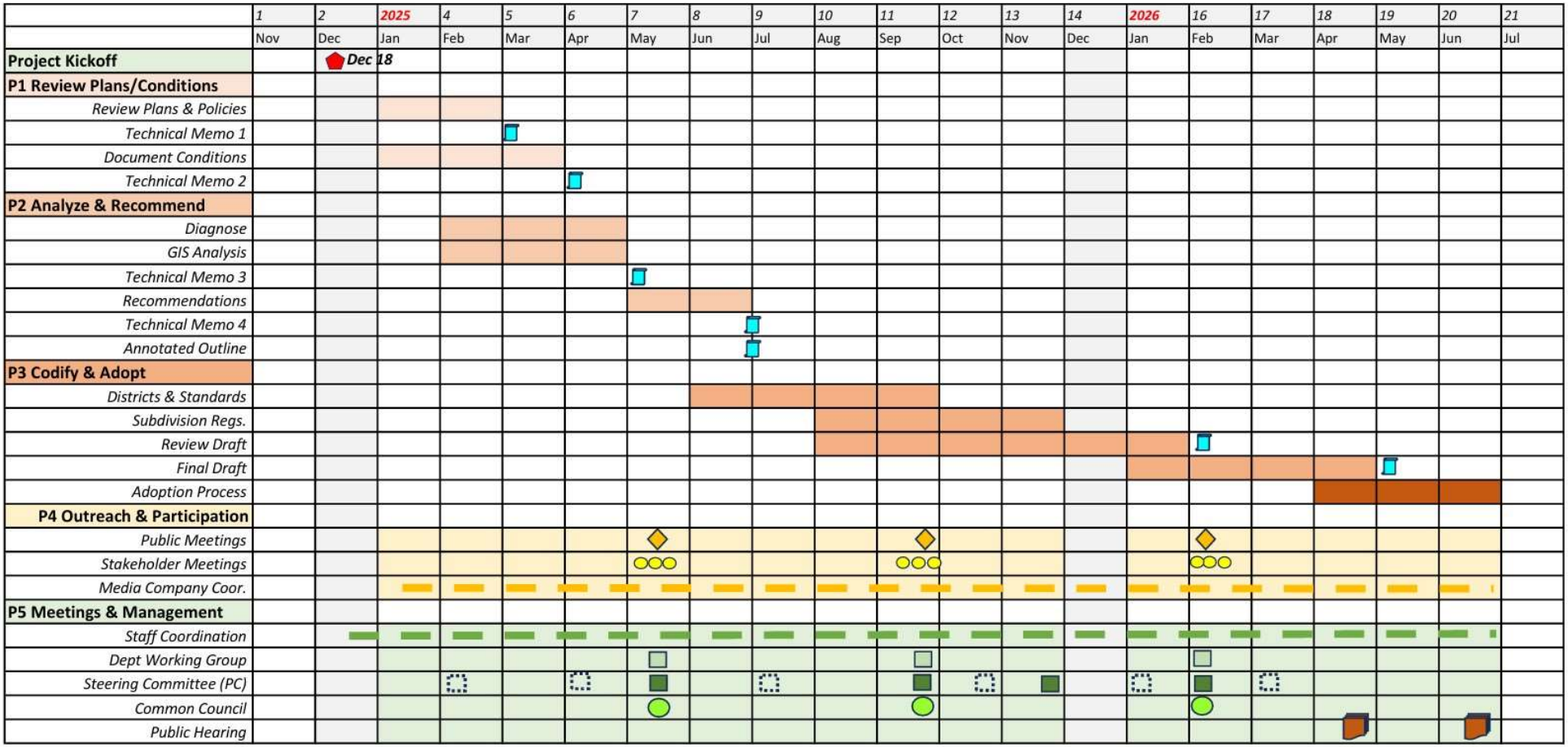
1) **Review of Current Municipal Code**-– Review, familiarize, analyze, and critique Municipal Code Chapter 113- Subdivisions and Chapter 115- Zoning and any other related codes.
2) **Review of Comprehensive Plan and other related plans:** The consultant will review the plans, goals, objectives, and recommendations of the comprehensive plan and other related plans identified by planning staff and the steering committee to ensure the new code will be consistent with current planning documents.
3) **Public Outreach:** The consultant will provide a public participation plan designed to receive input from community stakeholders, staff, and the public as well as educate and inform them on the process.
4) **Analysis and Recommendations.** Provide an analysis of the City's existing code, highlighting its strengths and shortcomings based on the consultant's review of existing code, review of current plans, and community and stakeholder input. Include recommended approach for potential revisions that include best practices/example codes as related to low-carbon sustainable development, form base designs, affordable/attainable housing, missing middle housing, mixed housing integration, parking reductions, multi-modal transportation, performance standards for various uses, equity, accessibility, etc.
5) **Documents:** The consultant will prepare drafts of the zoning ordinance for review by staff, the steering committee, and the public culminating in a final version to be acted upon by the City Plan Commission and adopted by the Common Council.

Organization of a Zoning Code

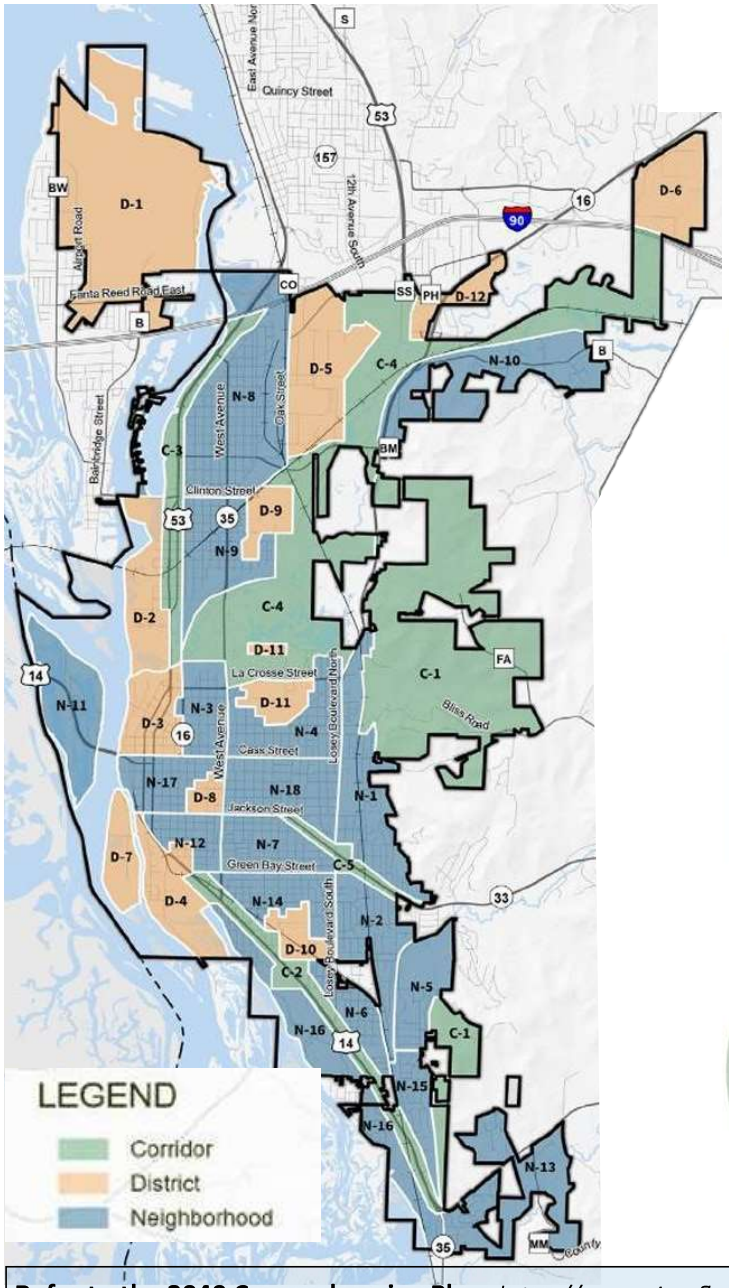
Most zoning ordinances are organized in the following manner:

- **Title, Authority and Purpose**
- **General Provisions**
- **Zoning Districts and Regulations**
- **Zoning Nonconformities**
- **Impact Regulations**
- **Administration and Enforcement**

Schedule


1 2 2025 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 2026 16 17 18 19 20 21
Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul
Project Kickoff
Dec 18
P1 Review Plans/Conditions
Review Plans & Policies
Technical Memo 1
Document Conditions
Technical Memo 2
P2 Analyze & Recommend
Diagnose
GIS Analysis
Technical Memo 3
Recommendations
Technical Memo 4
Annotated Outline
P3 Codify & Adopt
Districts & Standards
Subdivision Regs.
Review Draft
Final Draft
Adoption Process
P4 Outreach & Participation
Public Meetings
Stakeholder Meetings
Media Company Coor.
P5 Meetings & Management
Staff Coordination
Dept Working Group
Steering Committee (PC)
Common Council
Public Hearing

2040 Comprehensive Plan



The **Comprehensive Plan** sets forth the vision of future land uses within the City of La Crosse. Future land use is based on the "Neighborhood, District and Corridor Framework" (NDC), a system devised by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU).

How does NDC Work? The intent of the NDC model is to encourage walkable, compact communities that are rich with amenities and celebrate the history of the built environment and the preservation of natural features, all while respecting the fabric of communities. NDC proposes three fundamental classifications that organize La Crosse into a mix of uses rather than isolated land uses.

Neighborhoods:

La Crosse neighborhoods have distinct identities, housing characteristics, unique history, and geographic features. They are typically compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Neighborhoods may contain a number of supporting uses and activities that serve residents, such as parks, schools, libraries, small-scale retail, and other services. Neighborhood associations were consulted during the creation of this comprehensive plan to help identify the vision and land uses within La Crosse's neighborhoods.

Districts:

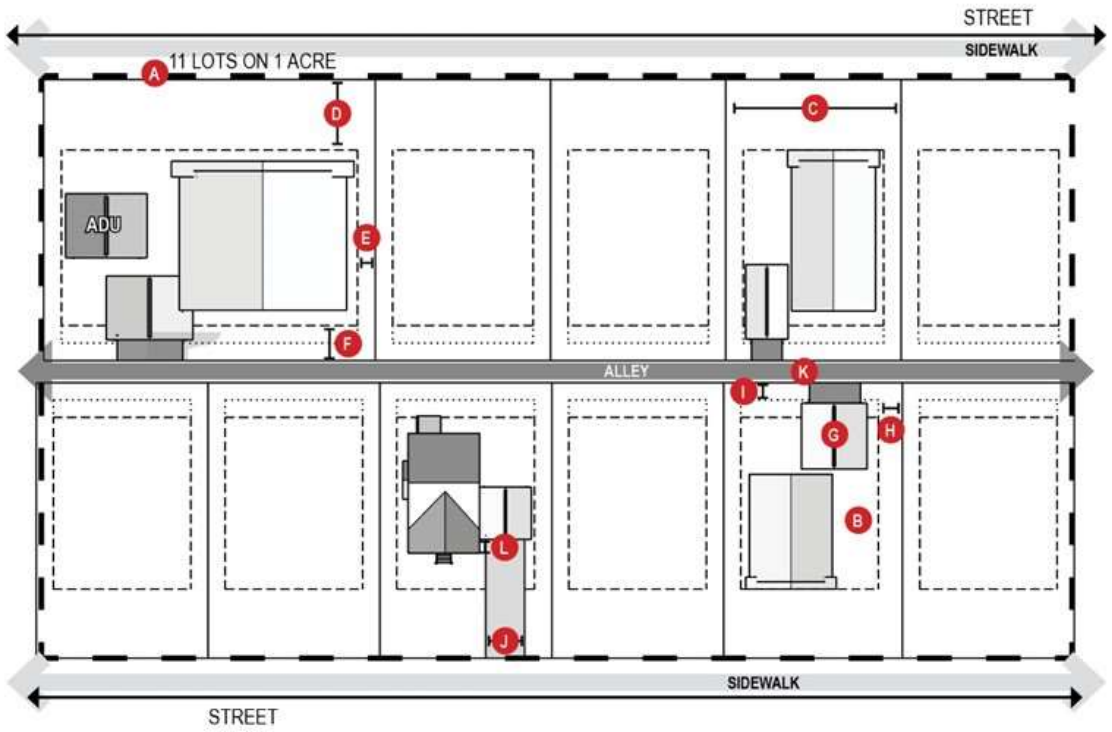
Districts are larger areas where the City, property owners, developers, and investors should concentrate business, commercial, and industrial activity and expansion over the next twenty years. Districts may emphasize a special single use or purpose, but may contain a variety of other uses and activities. For example, a shopping district may have primarily commercial uses with a few small-scale industrial uses mixed in. La Crosse's districts are based on types of dominant uses, include overlapping neighborhoods, and have generally larger geographic extents.

Corridors:

Corridors are linear areas that provide connectivity between the neighborhoods and districts. Corridors can accommodate a variety of land uses, including natural, recreational, and cultural uses. They can range from boulevards and rail lines to rivers and parkways. La Crosse has several major corridors identified based on transportation and environmental features.

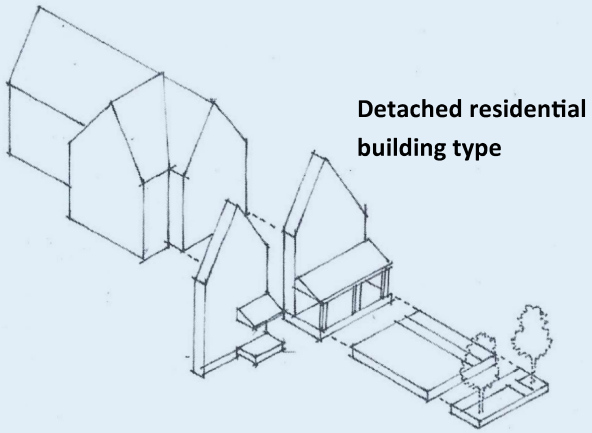
Refer to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan: *https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/home/showpublisheddocument/7655/638345999839030000*

Typical Urban Standards

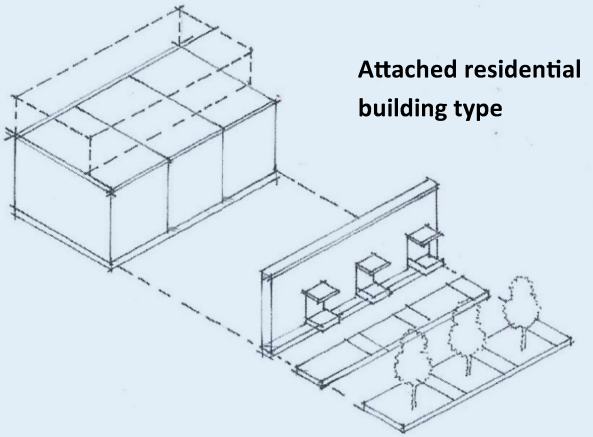


Typical Lot Regulations

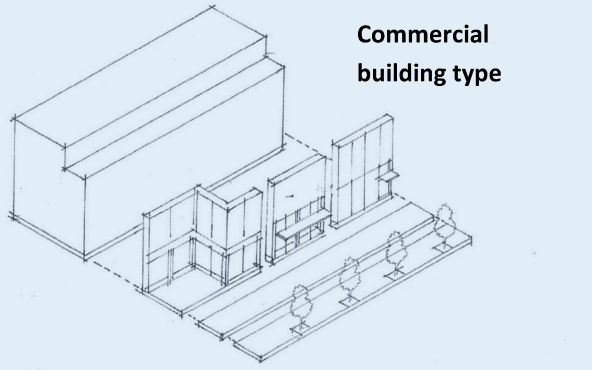
A: Lot area
B: Buildable area
C : Lot width
D : Front yard/setback
E: Side yard/setback
F : Rear yard/setback
G : Accessory building
H/I: Parking setback
J: Driveway width
K: Alley width
L: Garage stepback from main house



Detached residential building type



Attached residential building type



Commercial building type

Possible Housing Types

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HOUSE HACKS
Entrepreneurial adaptations to an existing home that diversify housing options or generate an income.

ATTACHED ADU

DETACHED ADU

SHARED HOUSE

GUEST SUITE

GUEST HOUSE

HOUSE ON WHEELS

FLEX SHED

COMMERCIAL INCUBATION
Low-cost ways to grow and validate an early-stage business.

HOME OFFICE / WORKSHOP

MARKET TENT

PUSH CART

TRAILER

TRUCK

TEMPORARY EVENT

POP-UP SHOP

KIOSK

MAKERSPACE

COMPACT SINGLES
One-unit dwellings that fit on small infill lots alone or in combination with other buildings.

SKINNY HOUSE

COTTAGE

SEMI-DETACHED

ROWHOUSE

TOWNHOUSE

MIDDLE HOUSING
Multi-unit residential buildings that blend well with detached homes.

STACKED DUPLEX

SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX

FRONT-BACK DUPLEX

APT HOUSE (RENO)

HOME CONVERSION

APT HOUSE (NEW)

SMALL APT

STACKED FLATS

WALK-UP APT

COURTYARD APT

ALLEY TOWNHOUSES

NEIGHBORHOOD NODE
Walkable neighborhood destinations like corner stores and workspaces. 1-3 storeys, mixed-use or commercial.

SHOPHOUSE (GRANDFATHERED)

LIVE/WORK

MAINSTREET LITE

MAINSTREET (GRANDFATHERED)

SHOP

MULTI-TENANT COMMERCIAL

SMALL MAINSTREET MIXED

LARGE MAINSTREET MIXED

COMBO
Creative tactics or building combinations that solve for a common development scenario.

PARKING LOT MARKET

BOOTLEG SHOPHOUSE

BOOTLEG TRIPLEX

DETACHED TRIPLEX

GUEST VILLAGE

DOUBLE DUPLEX

DUPLEX COURT

COTTAGE SQUARE

COTTAGE COURT

STEP BUILDINGS
Small-scale
Time-enhanced
Entrepreneurial
Purposeful

Developed by Gregory Johnson and the Incremental Development Alliance.

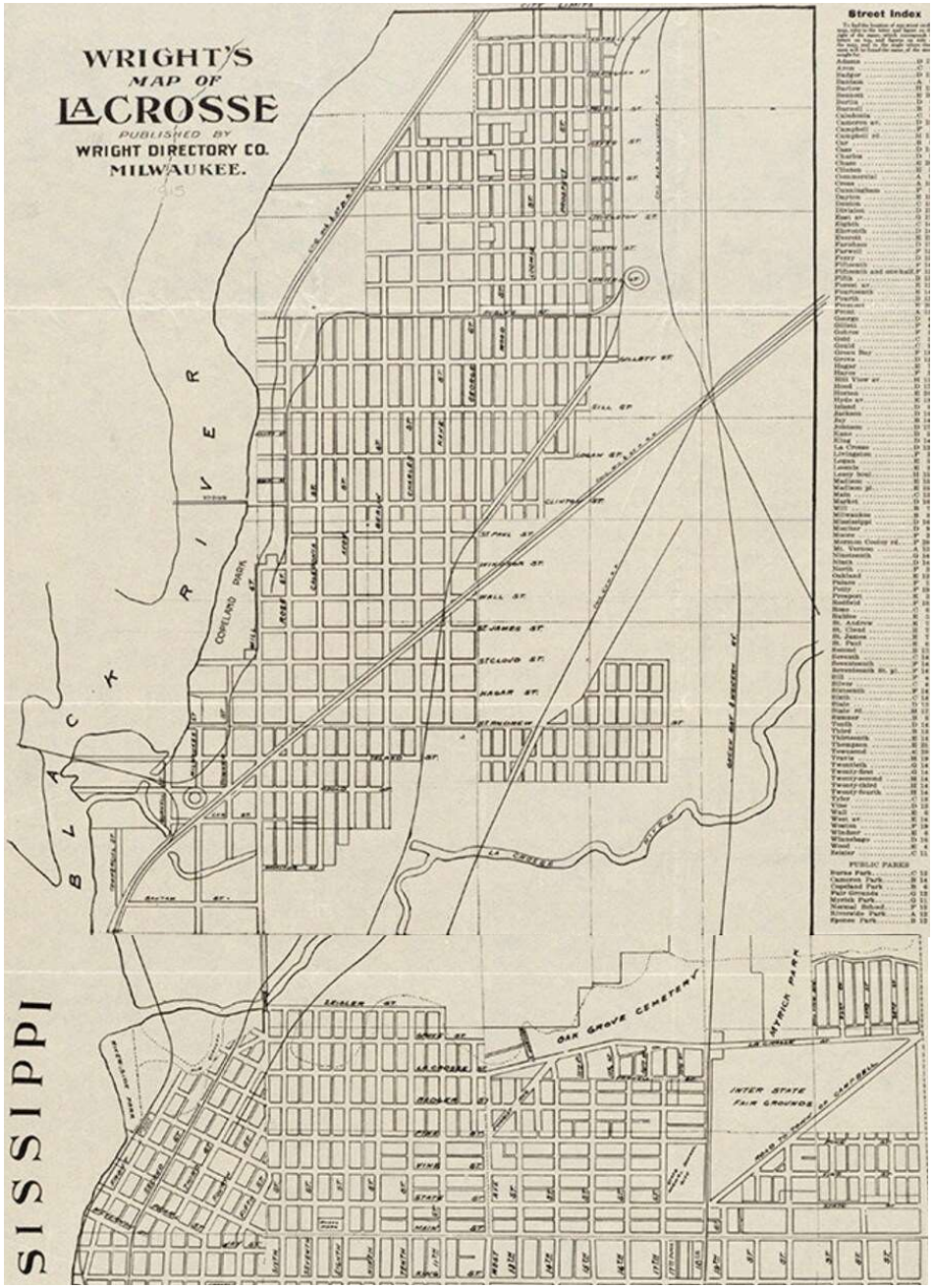
Subdivision of Land

Much of the form and character of a community is determined by the design of subdivisions and the standards by which they are built. State statutes regulate the technical and procedural aspects of dividing land for development and provide minimum standards for subdivisions related to sanitation, street access and layout. Among its many purposes, land division regulations can help a community to:

- Address health and safety issues such as stormwater runoff and emergency access.
- Ensure new development is adequately served by public facilities such as roads and parks.
- Provide for the efficient placement and delivery of public services and facilities.
- Promote neighborhood designs that meet the needs of residents.
- Ensure accurate legal descriptions of properties.
- Avoid disputes regarding the sale, transfer or subdivision of land.
- Protect other community interests outlined in a comprehensive plan or local ordinance.

State Defined "Subdivision" – a division of a lot, parcel or tract of land by the same owner that creates 5 or more parcels or building sites of 1½ acre or less, *or* successive divisions of land by the same owner within a five year period that result in 5 or more parcels of 1½ acre or less.
Wis. Stat. § 236.02(12)

Local "Land Division" – local ordinances may be more restrictive than the state definition with regard to the number or size of lots regulated. This publication will generally use the term "land division" to refer to all such developments.
Wis. Stat. § 236.45



Contact Information

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Housing Week Pop-ups

Community Survey #1

Project Website

Workshops