Habitat for Humanity®
of the Greater La Crosse Region

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Washburn Neighborhood Boulevard Improvements & Community Garden Development

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The purpose of this proposal is to request TID funding to support the integrated redevelopment of the Washburn block, including the revitalization of the Washburn Community Gardens, enhancement of the surrounding boulevard spaces, and the construction of two Habitat for Humanity homes for first-time homebuyers. Together, these investments strengthen the public realm, expand access to affordable homeownership, and advance long-term neighborhood revitalization within the TID.

The project site is located on the block bounded by Division Street, 10th Street, Ferry Street, and 9th Street, and is designed to balance new and rehabilitated housing with shared green infrastructure and community amenities.

The requested improvements include:

- 8,350 square feet of community garden plots
- Two communal gathering spaces
- 5350 square feet of perennial pollinator gardens
- Tree plantings around the full city block
- On-grade, single species, boulevard gardens around the full city block
- Construction of two Habitat for Humanity owner-occupied homes for first-time homebuyers
- 12 community volunteer days
- Educational signage and trainings

This neighborhood revitalization project aims to strengthen the neighborhood's environmental resilience, enhance aesthetics, create a public green space, and help achieve outcomes and goals within the City of La Crosse's Climate Action Plan.

Project Background

The Washburn Community Gardens were established in 2011 through a partnership between the Washburn Neighborhood Association and Mayo Clinic Health System. For more than a decade, the gardens served as a valued neighborhood resource—supporting food access, connection, and stewardship through the dedication of community members and local organizations.

In 2024, the sale of the garden property to Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions for future housing development sparked strong community concern about the potential loss of this beloved neighborhood space, clearly demonstrating how deeply the gardens matter to Washburn residents. That response also created an opportunity to expand the project's partnerships by engaging Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region, whose expertise in housing, sustainability, and community collaboration has helped reimagine the site to balance housing needs with shared green space and long-term neighborhood benefits.

This project is the result of extensive collaboration and is fully designed and ready to move forward. Since the beginning of this year, partners including Habitat for Humanity, Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions, Coulee Region Ecoscapes, Coulee Recovery Center, Mayo Clinic Health System, the Washburn Neighborhood Association, City of La Crosse Park, Rec & Forestry and Refuse & Recycling departments, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, past garden plot holders, and neighborhood residents have been working together to shape a shared plan.

The resulting vision integrates new and rehabilitated affordable housing with community gardens and low-maintenance boulevard enhancements, ensuring growth supports both long-term residents and new homeowners while preserving the Washburn Gardens as a shared neighborhood asset.

The project will advance neighborhood revitalization through two integrated efforts: revitalizing the Washburn Community Gardens and enhancing the adjoining boulevard space as a functional, welcoming, and sustainable public asset.

Integrated Housing Development Scope

As part of the overall redevelopment of the Washburn block, the project includes the construction of two Habitat for Humanity homes for first-time home buyers. These homes are located at the northeast corner of the block under development, directly adjacent to the Washburn Community Gardens, and are intentionally designed to complement the surrounding public green space.

This housing investment is part of a broader redevelopment effort led by Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions, which also includes the development of new rental housing units on the block. Together, these components create a mixed-use, mixed income development that supports housing diversity, expands access to affordable homeownership, and strengthens long-term neighborhood stability. In total, 38 new housing units will be built on this one block.

508 10th Street South – Modular New Construction

One home will be constructed at 508 10th Street South using modular housing construction. Modular construction allows Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region to deliver high-quality, energy-efficient homes in a cost-effective and timely manner while minimizing construction-related disruption to the neighborhood.

The home will be set on a permanent foundation and completed on-site to meet or exceed all applicable state and local building codes, as well as Habitat for Humanity standards for durability, energy efficiency, and long-term affordability.

946 Division Street – Rehabilitation Project

The second home, located at 946 Division Street, will be developed as a rehabilitation project. The existing structure on this site was relocated from a nearby property across the alley and will be fully rehabilitated by Habitat for Humanity.

Importantly, this home represents a property with historic and community value to the Washburn Neighborhood. Preserving and rehabilitating the structure, rather than demolishing it, responds directly to neighborhood priorities and helps maintain the character, continuity, and integrity of the block. This approach has been an important factor in building and maintaining strong neighborhood support for the overall project.

Rehabilitation work will include structural improvements as needed, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system upgrades, comprehensive energy-efficiency improvements, and interior and exterior renovations. Upon completion, the home will meet Habitat standards, current building codes, and long-term durability requirements while reactivating an existing structure within the neighborhood.

Land and Construction Support

The development of the two Habitat for Humanity homes is made possible in part through significant contributions from Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions. Three Sixty has donated the two lots on which the homes will be constructed, with an appraised value of $23,000 per lot, reducing overall development costs and directly supporting long-term affordability.

In addition to the land donation, Three Sixty has contributed $35,000 in monetary support toward the construction of the homes, reinforcing the public-private partnership that underpins this project and ensuring housing investment and public realm improvements advance together.

Proposed Garden Revitalization

The Washburn Community Gardens revitalization is designed to strengthen neighborhood connection, increase access to healthy food, and deliver lasting environmental benefits through an inclusive, community-driven garden space. Informed by input from past plot owners and current neighborhood partners, the proposed design supports local food production, outdoor gathering, ecosystem health, and volunteer stewardship while enhancing overall neighborhood livability.

Community-Centered Garden Design

The revitalized garden will include approximately 8,350 square feet of annual garden plots, expanding capacity to serve 38 gardeners, including five ADA-compliant elevated beds to ensure accessibility for elderly and disabled residents. These improvements respond directly to community requests for greater inclusivity and expanded growing opportunities.

To foster openness and shared ownership, the garden will remain unfenced along its perimeter. Individual plots will be secured with small, visually appealing fencing to protect produce from wildlife while maintaining a welcoming, park-like feel that encourages community use and connection.

Gathering Spaces and Shared Amenities

Community gathering is central to the Washburn Gardens vision. Two dedicated gathering areas are integrated into the design to create welcoming spaces for rest, social connection, and neighborhood events.

- A primary gathering space at the garden entrance beneath a 100-year-old Hackberry tree
- A secondary gathering area west of the townhomes featuring a repurposed grain bin gazebo, gas grills, a fire pit, and seating

These shared spaces are intentionally designed for joint use by garden plot holders, Three Sixty residents, and the broader neighborhood, reinforcing the garden as a communal asset rather than a restricted space.

Healthy Food Access and Garden Infrastructure

To support food production and stewardship, the project includes designated mulch and compost stations managed by garden participants. The City of La Crosse Park, Recreation & Forestry Department has committed to donating and delivering all mulch for initial installation and ongoing maintenance of garden pathways, representing an estimated in-kind contribution of $17,310. The City of La Crosse Refuse & Recycling Department will similarly donate and deliver compost for installation and future replenishment, with an estimated value of $11,600.

Additional infrastructure includes:

- Use of an on-site garage space as a shared home base for plot holders
- A communal tool library to reduce barriers to participation
- Wash and harvest stations to support safe and efficient food handling
- A Free Produce Pantry, ensuring fresh, locally grown food is available to neighbors experiencing food insecurity

Environmental Benefits and Pollinator Habitat

Surrounding the gardens and adjacent townhomes, 5,350 square feet of perennial pollinator plantings will be installed to support ecosystem health. These plantings will provide critical food and habitat for pollinators while delivering broader environmental benefits, including increased biodiversity, enhanced carbon sequestration, and improved stormwater infiltration. Together, the gardens and pollinator spaces create a multifunctional landscape that supports climate resilience alongside community well-being.

Proposed Boulevard Enhancements

The proposed boulevard enhancements build on strong community support for neighborhood beautification, climate-responsive design, and shared stewardship of public spaces. Over the past several months, project partners gathered feedback through in-person meetings and online surveys, and responses consistently demonstrated enthusiasm for transforming traditional turf boulevards into greener, more functional neighborhood assets.

Survey results show a high level of community investment in both the design and long-term care of these spaces. More than 76% of respondents indicated a willingness to help maintain common areas and participate in community workdays, reflecting a strong sense of ownership and readiness for shared stewardship. When asked which boulevard features would most benefit the neighborhood, respondents prioritized shade trees (81.8%) and rain gardens and native plantings (77.2%), underscoring a desire for solutions that improve comfort, manage stormwater, and enhance environmental performance.

The image below shows the planned scope of work for the boulevard space including shade trees around the entire city block shown in yellow, and native plantings on the East side of the block shown in blue, and the West side of the block shown in green.

Tree Plantings and Canopy Expansion

Street trees will be installed along Division, 10th, Ferry, and 9th Streets, strategically increasing canopy coverage within the neighborhood. These plantings will provide multiple co-benefits, including reduced urban heat, improved pedestrian comfort, stormwater absorption, enhanced aesthetics, and increased property values.

The City of La Crosse Park & Recreation Department has committed to supporting this effort by providing guidance on tree placement and species selection, and assuming long-term maintenance responsibilities. This partnership ensures trees are planted in a way that supports both immediate neighborhood needs and long-term urban forestry goals.

On-Grade Boulevard Gardens

In addition to trees, select boulevard areas will be converted to on-grade native gardens planted exclusively with one species of sedges. This approach significantly reduces long-term maintenance needs while providing erosion control, soil stabilization, and habitat benefits. Replacing turf grass with native plantings also reduces mowing frequency, lowering associated carbon emissions, and ongoing maintenance costs.

All necessary Revocable Occupancy Permits are being secured from Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region, Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions, and Coulee Recovery Center or Mayo Clinic Health System (shown in blue on the above map. Following TID approval, adjacent homeowners will be contacted to engage in this project and provide ROP signatures (shown in green on the above map). Collaboration and commitments to maintenance of this project to ensure long-term sustainability of installed features.

Environmental Impacts

By integrating green infrastructure, native plantings, and urban agriculture throughout the neighborhood, this project forecasts measurable environmental impacts. Together, these improvements reduce stormwater runoff, improve climate resilience, enhance biodiversity, and support long-term neighborhood environmental health.

Impact Area	Project Element	Metric / Outcome	Estimated Impact
Stormwater Management	Native boulevard gardens & pollinator plantings	Rainfall infiltrated on site	65–90% of annual rainfall within planted areas
	Perennial pollinator gardens (5,350 sq ft)	Stormwater mitigation	Slows, absorbs, and filters runoff; reduces erosion
	Street tree plantings	Stormwater intercepted per tree	500–1,000 gallons/tree/year
	Garden soil improvements	Increased water absorption	Reduced runoff and erosion during storm events
	Cumulative impact	Neighborhood runoff reduction	Tens of thousands of gallons annually
Climate Resilience	Street tree canopy expansion	Local temperature reduction	2–9°F cooling effect
	Tree plantings	Carbon sequestration	25–50 lbs CO_2 per tree per year
	Native boulevard conversions	Reduced mowing emissions	25–40 lbs CO_2 avoided per 1,000 sq ft/year
Biodiversity & Habitat	Native sedge boulevards	Habitat creation for pollinators	Increased food sources & nesting habitat
	Pollinator gardens	Biodiversity support	Increased pollinator and beneficial insect presence
Soil Health	Compost-amended garden beds	Organic matter & soil structure	Improved nutrient cycling and root growth
	Mulched beds & pathways	Soil moisture retention	Reduced compaction and evaporation
Maintenance & Resource Efficiency	Native plantings	Reduced long-term maintenance	Lower mowing, watering, and fuel use
	Shared garden infrastructure	Resource sharing & waste reduction	Fewer tools, reduced landfill waste
Community Co-Benefits	Shaded streets & gardens	Pedestrian comfort & usability	Increased outdoor activity and neighborhood use
	Local food production	Access to healthy food	Fresh produce for gardeners and free pantry users

Community Impact Summary

The project delivers lasting social and economic benefits by strengthening neighborhood identity, expanding access to shared green space and healthy food, enhancing pedestrian comfort, and supporting long-term revitalization within the TID. Strong community participation and committed partnerships ensure these benefits extend well beyond the initial investment.

Benefit Category	Impact Area	Project Feature / Strategy	Metric or Outcome
Social	Community Engagement	Garden and boulevard stewardship model	76.5% of surveyed residents willing to participate in maintenance and community workdays
	Neighborhood Identity	Community-driven design and shared spaces	Stronger neighborhood identity and cohesion through collective ownership and stewardship
	Beautification	Garden revitalization and boulevard enhancements	Visible beautification of a historically underserved block
	Social Connection	Central garden spaces and shared amenities	Increased informal interaction and opportunities for neighborhood events
	Access to Green Space	Open, shared garden and boulevard design	Public access to green space adjacent to housing and a community garden
	Pedestrian Comfort/Safety	Shaded streets, active public spaces	Increased pedestrian comfort and perceived safety through improved streetscape design
	Equity & Inclusion	ADA-accessible garden beds and shared tools	Reduced participation barriers for elderly, disabled, and low-income residents
	Food Access	Community garden plots and Free Pantry	Increased access to fresh, healthy food for gardeners and community members in need
	Homeownership & Stability	Create of Habitat for Humanity homes	2 affordable, homes for first-time buyers, supporting long-term housing stability and resident investment
Economic	Property Values	Tree-lined streets and enhanced public realm	Increased adjacent property values associated with neighborhood green investment
	Invest: Affordable Housing	Land and construction contributions	Donation of 2 lots and construction funding reduces costs and expands access to affordable housing
	Mixed-income Development	Integration of ownership and rental housing	Habitat and Three Sixty partnership = mixed-income neighborhood and increased property values
	Cost Efficiency	Native plantings and reduced turf	Long-term cost savings from reduced mowing and maintenance
	Neighborhood Revitalization	Integrated garden and boulevard improvements	Supports ongoing revitalization within TID boundaries
	Public Return on Investment	City + partner collaboration	Leveraged in-kind support and shared stewardship reduce long-term municipal costs
	Project Sustainability	Long-term partner commitments	Maintenance responsibilities and material support secured beyond initial installation

Maintenance and Long-Term Stewardship

Long-term maintenance and stewardship have been intentionally incorporated into the design and partnership structure of this project to ensure the space remains attractive, functional, and easy to manage—without placing ongoing responsibility on the City. From the outset, partners prioritized low-maintenance landscapes and clearly defined roles to support long-term success.

Maintenance responsibilities will be shared among project partners and users as follows:

- C&C Residences LLC will manage and maintain the pollinator planting beds within the shared garden space, ensuring consistent care of perennial landscapes integrated with the housing development.
- Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region will oversee maintenance of the community garden plots and boulevard plantings, coordinating care and seasonal upkeep.
- Garden plot owners will support routine maintenance of their individual plots and shared garden infrastructure, including compost and mulch areas, through established garden guidelines and volunteer workdays.
- City of La Crosse Park, Recreation and Forestry will manage long-term care of all boulevard trees.

The overall design emphasizes native plantings, reduced turf, and durable materials to minimize ongoing maintenance needs, mowing, and inputs over time. This collaborative stewardship model leverages existing organizational capacity and strong community participation—demonstrated by resident willingness to help maintain common areas—while ensuring the project remains sustainable and well-managed over the long term.

Expected Timeline

- Project launch & site preparation (January 2026–ongoing): Project coordination, design finalization, partner agreements, and site preparation underway since January 2026.
- Community garden implementation (Late May–June 2026): Garden infrastructure installation, soil improvements, planting, and volunteer engagement; substantially complete by end of June 2026.
- Affordable housing construction:
    - Habitat Home 1: Currently under construction; completion expected Fall 2026.
    - Habitat Home 2 (modular): Construction start Spring 2027, with installation and completion following.
- Boulevard enhancements (Fall 2027): Native boulevard conversions, pollinator plantings, and street tree installation.
- Project closeout & long-term stewardship (Late 2027 and beyond): Final inspections, transition to partner-led maintenance, and ongoing community stewardship.

Budget Summary

The total budget for the Washburn Community Garden and Boulevard Enhancements Project is $669,346. This investment supports the creation of durable, low-maintenance community and streetscape improvements while ensuring long-term functionality, shared stewardship, and minimal ongoing costs to the City.

Project costs include community garden development, boulevard enhancements, and indirect costs necessary for coordination and implementation. Significant public-private partnership commitments are already in place, with more than 50% of the total project cost secured through monetary and in-kind contributions.

Project Cost Overview

Category	Cost
Community Garden Improvements & Maintenance	$423,523
Boulevard Enhancements & Maintenance	$221,200
Habitat Home Construction and Rehabilitation	$389,000
Administrative Costs	$132,703
Total Project Budget	**$1,166,426**

Contributions Secured to Date

The project benefits from strong partner investment, demonstrating readiness, and leveraging City funding.

Committed Monetary Contributions

- Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions: $86,504
- Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions (Housing Construction Contribution): $35,000
- City of La Crosse HOME CHDO funds (for housing development): $42,229.64
- Unrestricted funding from Habitat for Humanity (for housing development): $265,770.36

Total Monetary Contributions: $428,504

Committed In-Kind Contributions

- Residential Land Donation – Two Habitat for Humanity Lots (Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions): $46,000
- Garden Land & Garage Property (Three Sixty Real Estate Solutions): $182,100
- Hardscape Elements (C&C Residences): $35,000
- Utilities/Taxes/Insurance (C&C Residences): $42,000
- Mulch (City of La Crosse Park, Recreation & Forestry Department): $17,310
- Compost (City of La Crosse, Refuse & Recycling Department): $11,600
- Site Design (Coulee Region Ecoscapes): $1,000
- Waste Removal (Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration): $3,125
- Volunteer Labor: $20,950

Total In-Kind Contributions: $359,085

Funding Request

- **Total Project Budget: $1,166,426**
- **Total Contributions Secured: $788,590**
- **Total Funding Requested: $377,836**

Through substantial in-kind contributions, private investment, and volunteer support, the project has already leveraged almost three fourths of its total cost, demonstrating strong readiness and fiscal responsibility.

We respectfully **request TID 11 funding to cover the remaining $377,836** needed to fully implement this project. With designs finalized, partners committed, and maintenance responsibilities clearly defined, the project is fully prepared to move forward immediately.

Project Phasing and Impact of Funding Reductions

The Washburn Neighborhood Boulevard Improvements, Community Garden, and Integrated Affordable Housing Development project is a coordinated, multi-benefit investment integrating green space, environmental infrastructure, and housing. TID funding is essential to ensure all elements are implemented together for long-term neighborhood impact.

If funding is reduced, partners will prioritize core components, including construction of the Habitat for Humanity homes and revitalization of the Washburn Community Gardens, which are foundational to neighborhood stability, food access, and community benefits.

Boulevard plantings—including native sedges and portions of pollinator and streetscape enhancements—would be the first elements reduced, as they represent the most flexible portion of the project scope.

Impact of Eliminating Boulevard Plantings

Removing or scaling back the boulevard improvements would have several meaningful impacts on the overall project:

- Reduced Environmental Performance: Boulevard plantings are a key component of the project's stormwater management and climate resilience strategy. Their removal would significantly reduce on-site infiltration, carbon reduction benefits, and urban heat island mitigation.
- Loss of Neighborhood Cohesion and Visual Continuity: The boulevard enhancements are designed to unify the entire block—connecting the community gardens, housing, and public right-of-way into a cohesive neighborhood environment. Without them, the project would feel more fragmented and less intentional in design.
- Diminished Public Realm Improvements: While the gardens provide a central green space, the boulevard plantings extend those benefits throughout the block, improving walkability, aesthetics, and pedestrian comfort. Their absence would limit the project's visibility and broader neighborhood impact.
- Lower Community Engagement and Stewardship Opportunities: Boulevard spaces provide accessible opportunities for residents beyond garden participants to engage in neighborhood stewardship. Reducing these elements would limit opportunities for community involvement and shared ownership.
- Reduced Return on Public Investment: The Boulevard improvements amplify the value of the overall project by extending environmental and aesthetic benefits into the public right-of-way. Without them, the project would still deliver important outcomes but at a reduced scale and impact relative to the original investment.

Even with potential reductions, project partners remain committed to delivering a high-quality development that includes affordable homeownership and a revitalized community garden. Full TID funding, however, is critical to realizing the project's complete vision of an integrated, transformative neighborhood investment.