



THE CITY OF LA CROSSE

2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
8.2.23 DRAFT

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Gundersen Health System

Habitat for Humanity Greater La Crosse Region

Heritage Preservation Commission

La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce

La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC)

La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU)

La Crosse Regional Airport (LSE)

La Crosse Stormwater Utility

La Crosse Water Utility

Mayo Clinic

Port of La Crosse Joint Harbor Commission

Neighborhood Associations

River Travel Media

School District of La Crosse

UW-La Crosse

Western Technical College

Viterbo University

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the city of La Crosse occupies the ancestral lands of the Ho-Chunk, who have stewarded this land since time immemorial. This land acknowledgment gives gratitude for the original caretakers and affirms the continuing relationship between Indigenous People and this land. The City of La Crosse is committed to building reciprocity with the local native communities. Through the La Crosse Comprehensive Plan, we seek to work toward an equitable and resilient future as well as inspire La Crosse community members to honor and protect the land and resources.



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Introduction



What Is A Comprehensive Plan?

According to the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law (Statute 66.1001), each community across the state is required to create and adopt a **Comprehensive Plan**.

Comprehensive plans are intended to provide a long-range vision for local land use and future planning and community decisions over a twenty-year time horizon.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a policy framework to guide the community towards desired outcomes in key elements including housing, cultural resources, transportation, economic development, agriculture, natural resources, utilities and facilities, and intergovernmental cooperation.

La Crosse adopted its first Comprehensive Plan, Confluence, in 2002, and, similar to many communities during the early phase of comprehensive planning, designed the plan to closely reflect the requirements outlined by state statute. The result was a 500-page document robust with information and graphics, but lacking the user-friendliness to be widely understood and usable by many in the community. During the creation of the 2023 Plan, a robust community engagement process was completed to ensure the Plan closely reflects the needs, priorities, and feedback of the residents, business owners, and elected officials that know and love La Crosse. This Plan replaces the outdated 2002 Comprehensive Plan and provides an updated guiding vision for the community with the themes and priorities of today.

How Is This Plan Organized?

Recognizing that a comprehensive plan can and should reflect community-specific conditions and locally-driven priorities,

The 2023 La Crosse Comprehensive Plan Update has been designed as a streamlined document that is more relevant to readers with diverse backgrounds and interests.

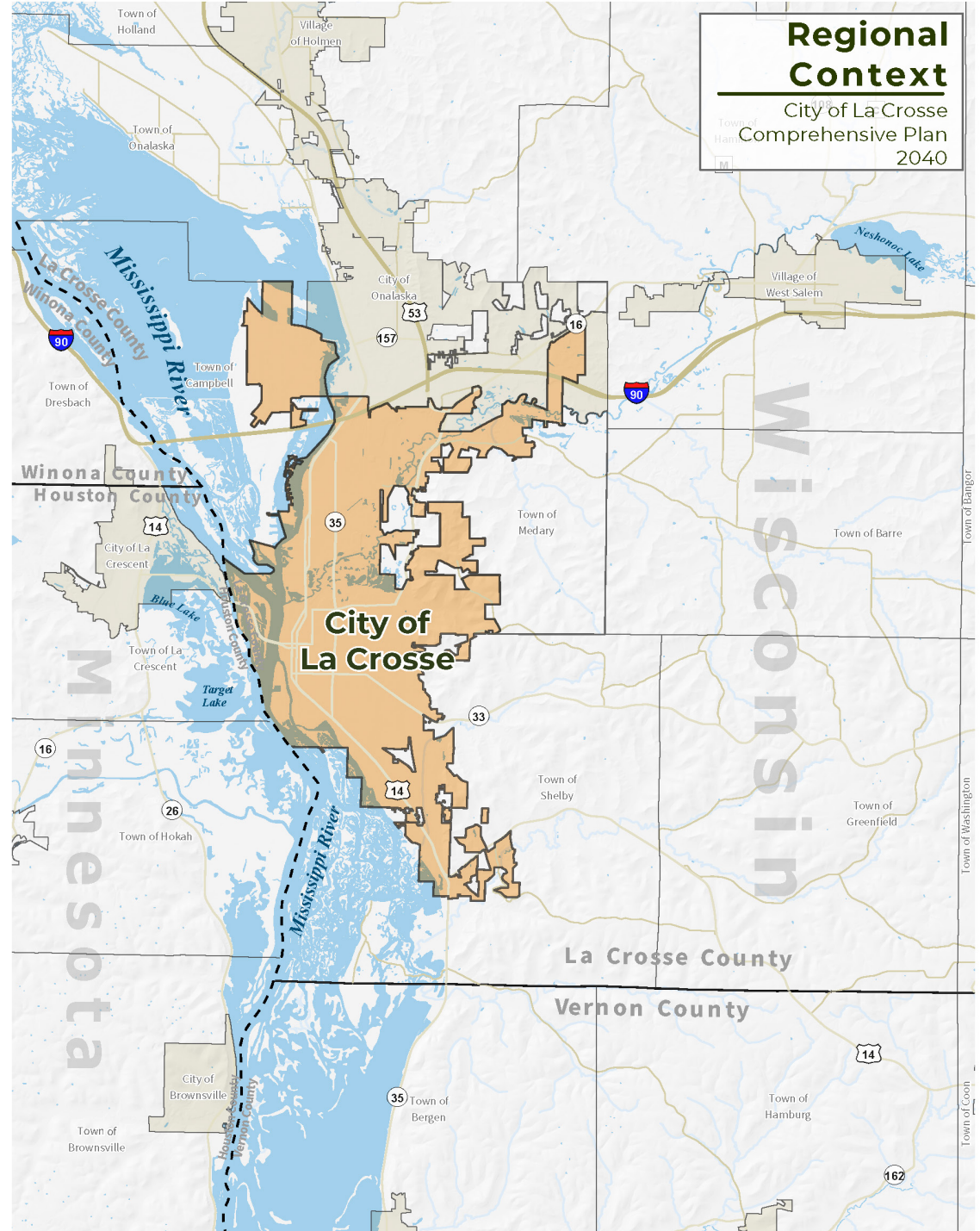
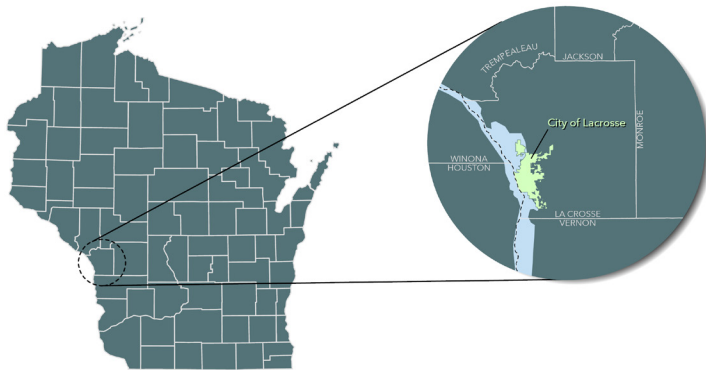
Therefore, in addition to the nine required elements, this Comprehensive Plan Update also includes sub-sections and topics of importance to La Crosse, re-envisioned into the following six sections. The Plan culminates with the “Next Steps” section, which provides key implementation actions and a framework both for tracking intermediate success and updating the Plan in 10 years time.

Regional Context

The City of La Crosse borders the state of Minnesota and the Town of Campbell (west), the City of Onalaska (north), the Town of Medary (east) and the town of Shelby (southeast). The City has a well-established connection to the region's surface water resources with its location at the confluence of the Mississippi, Black, and La Crosse Rivers.

The City of La Crosse is home to **50,869 residents** as of 2021.

La Crosse is the 12th most populated City in Wisconsin, behind Eau Claire (11th) and ahead of Sheboygan (13th). The City serves as the county seat for La Crosse county.



THIS PLAN'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES:



Livable Built Environment:

Ensure that all elements of the built environment work together to provide a sustainable place to live, work, and play with a high quality of life.



Public Health:

Ensure that public health needs are addressed through provisions for healthy food, physical activity, recreation, health care, and safe neighborhoods.



Natural Resources:

Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and that maintaining their health is a primary objective to maintaining harmony with nature.



Fairness and Equity:

Ensure interwoven equity and engagement in housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs.



Economic Health:

Ensure that the community is prepared to deal with changes in its economy and builds on local assets.

The Plan's Guiding Principles were established by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and reinforced by residents via the community engagement process.

LA CROSSE OVER TIME

- PRE- 1600'S** Native tribes including the Ho-Chunk find the natural confluence of rivers to be a strategic and bountiful site for transportation and gathering.
- 1805** First written record of European visitation occurs when Lt. Zebulon Pike travels up the Mississippi River. Pike coins the site “Prairie La Crosse” after witnessing native people playing a game with sticks that resembled a bishop’s cross, “la crosse” in French.
- 1841** The first trading post is established by Nathan Myrick, soon followed by a post office and general store. Trade in commodities and natural resources begins to grow.
- 1856** The City of La Crosse is officially born in 1856 with a population of 745 residents.
- 1884** La Crosse serves as a local hub for lumber, limestone, and agricultural products industries. Goods are transported via steamboat.
La Crosse produces more beer than any other city in Wisconsin in 1884.
- 1890** Viterbo University is founded in La Crosse.
- 1908** Celebrated landscape architect John Nolan visits La Crosse and designs a park plan for the riverside assets.
- 1909** The University of Wisconsin La Crosse is founded in 1909.
- 1912** Western Technical College is founded in 1912.
- 1912** The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, popularly known as the Milwaukee Road, opens the La Crosse station in 1927. Service is still maintained on the Amtrak Empire Builder line today.
- 1961** La Crosse receives an All-American City Award for Oktoberfest, USA.
- 1961** The first Hmoob refugees arrive in La Crosse. By 1982, there were approximately 600 Southeast Asian refugees living here.
- 1995** Franciscan Health System, Skemp Clinic and Mayo Clinic merge to form Franciscan Skemp Healthcare — Mayo Health System in La Crosse, now known as Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.
- 2012** Gundersen Clinic and Lutheran Hospital form Gundersen Health System in 2012, over a hundred years after Adolf Gundersen opened his practice in La Crosse.



▲ La Crosse in 1867. Credit: Chicago Lithograph Co



▲ La Crosse Rail Bridge, built in 1902



▲ A snapshot of La Crosse in the past. Credit: LCMTU

WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

La Crosse has a lively history of “getting things done.” Encouraging our citizens to actively participate in our plans for our future is a perfect example of that collective aspiration to achieve a better place for all of us.

A thriving center of commerce and tourism on the Mississippi River, we are blessed to be surrounded by rich natural resources and farmland – all of which attracted our earliest of settlers and innovators whose determination and sweat equity built a place that is still a destination today. Some come to visit (and most likely come back over and over again) and some of us have made La Crosse our forever hometown.

La Crosse is a place to grow and succeed as individuals, to make lifelong friends and to raise our families surrounded by neighbors who value what is fair and just, what is for good for all and what will sustain us for the future.

While we have faced tough challenges like any small City, we continue to emerge as shining star often recognized for our innovation, our spirit and our urban solutions. In the last decade, we have seen tremendous growth in our economy and we as a government, together with our citizens, have worked painstakingly to ensure that any plans brought forth by the City are designed to benefit every citizen.

Our ongoing mission includes, but is not limited to:

- Building affordable housing and maintaining solid infrastructure;
- Attracting new industry and developing our workforce;
- Beautifying our neighborhoods;
- Maintaining and expanding our park and trail system;
- Preserving our historic assets;
- Working toward permanent environmental sustainability;
- Supporting sound and strong policy to provide for the continued health and safety for our citizens; and
- Providing all-inclusive cultural, recreational and educational experiences that reflect the current world.

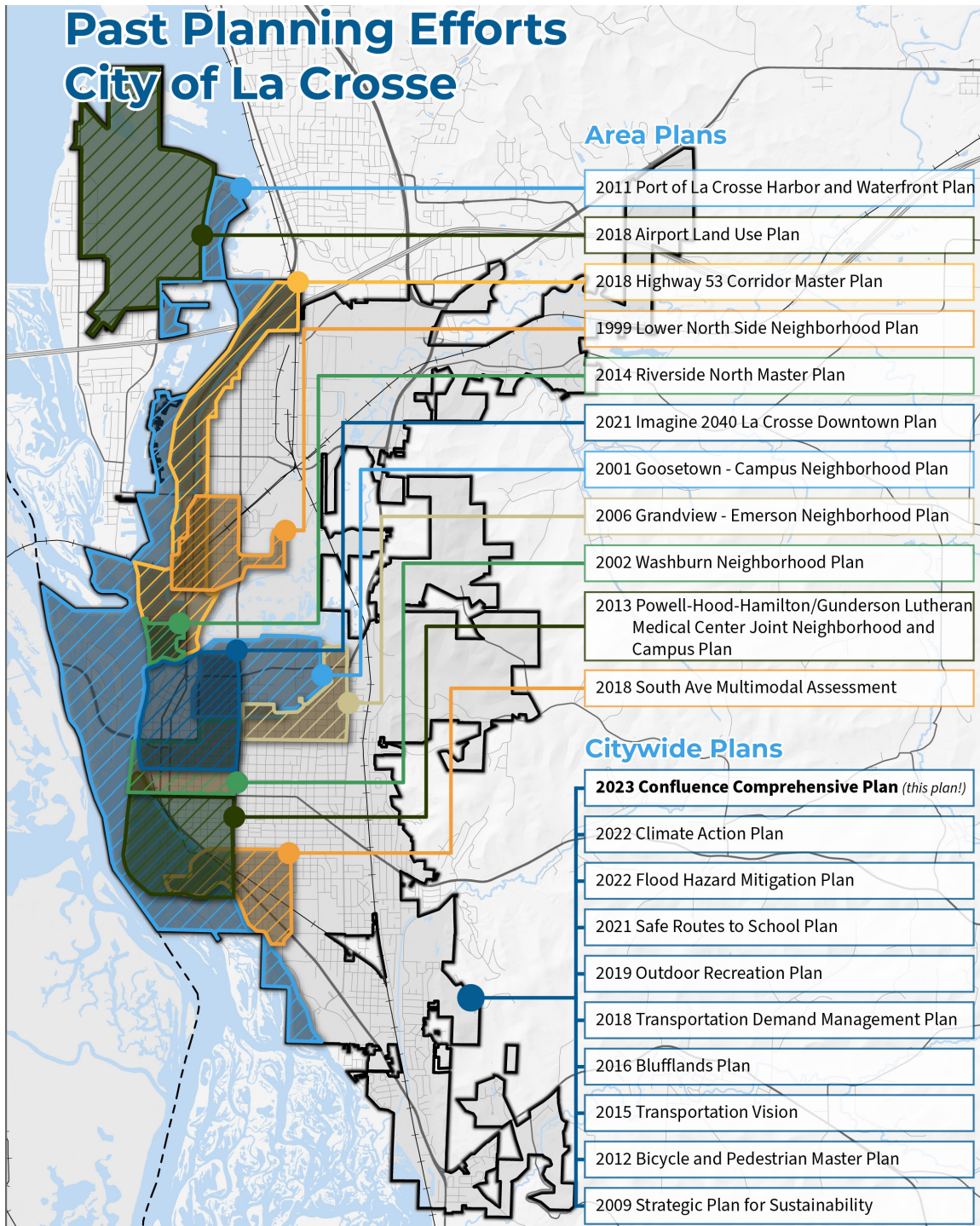
Thank you to all who have made time to respond and contribute to the development of this plan. Your valuable input will truly help continue to make our community strong.

-Mayor Mitch Reynolds



▲ Mayor Mitch Reynolds (third from right) with youth from the Boys and Girls Club of Greater La Crosse. Credit: City of La Crosse

Past Planning Efforts City of La Crosse



Past Planning Efforts

Like many cities, La Crosse has conducted a multitude of Citywide and area plans. Many of these previous planning efforts focused on specific areas of focus or need within different geographic areas within the City.

The map to the left shows the different boundaries for the past planning efforts that were reviewed and analyzed during the Comprehensive Plan development process.

Many of the City's previous planning efforts are infused throughout this Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan covers the entire City as a long-range planning effort. Past plans are accessible via the City's website.



LA CROSSE AT A GLANCE

This section provides an overview of key demographic aspects of the City, focusing on changes since the City's 2002 Comprehensive Plan. Demographic information provides a lens through which to understand who is living, studying, and working in La Crosse and how these trends are changing over time. This information is used to inform the needs and priorities of housing, economic development, education, and beyond, as can be seen later in this plan. For a complete set of demographic graphs and data descriptions, refer to the Appendix.

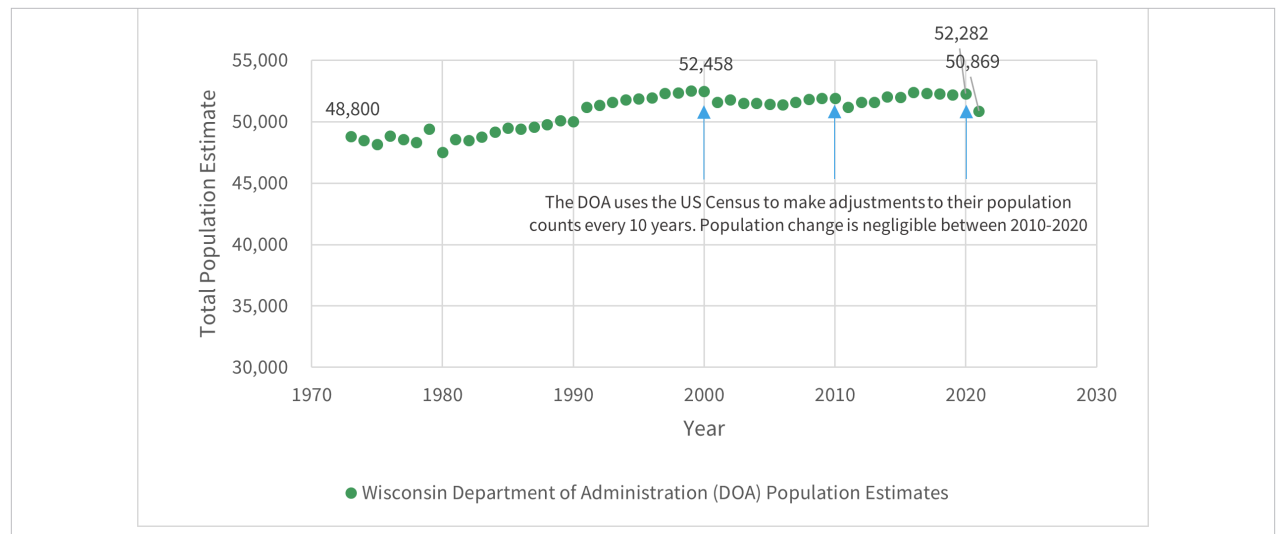
Population Overview



In 2021, the City of La Crosse had 50,869 residents

according to population estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA). Figure 1.1 shows the total population in La Crosse each year from 1973 to 2021. From 1973 to 2021, the population grew minimally, growing between 1-2% every ten years. Population growth appears the greatest in the 80s and 90s, plateauing in the 21st century. Fluctuations over the period of 2000 to present are negligible and not statistically significant.

▼ **Figure 1.1:** 1970-2021 Population of La Crosse. Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Administration (DOA) Population Estimates.

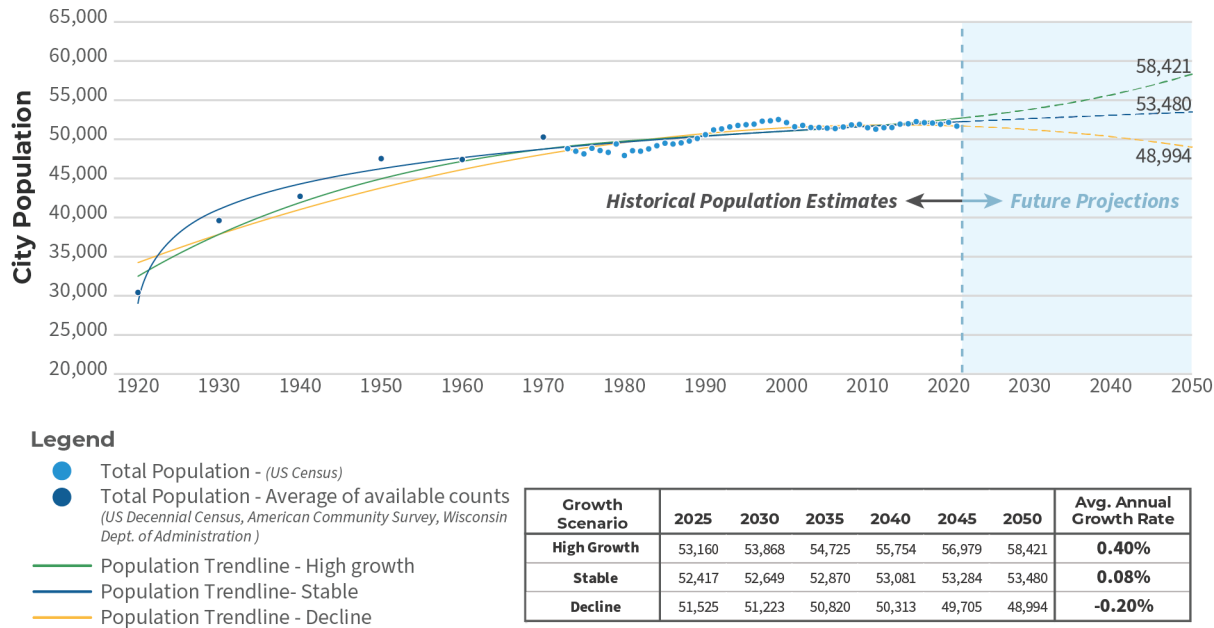


Population Projection

La Crosse has experienced multiple waves of population growth, and more accurate and frequent estimates do not begin until the 1970's. However, accounting for historical data and weighing recent trends more heavily, a series of possible futures emerges which shows the realm of possibility for the future of La Crosse's total population. Using purely mathematical methods of trendline analysis, three scenarios for future growth (or decline) are developed to analyze La Crosse's most significant growth wave starting around 1920. A high growth trendline for the future shows a potential 0.40% average annual population growth rate from 2025 to 2050, resulting in a future population of over 58,000 residents.

However, because La Crosse's population appears to be stabilizing, a more moderate projection of 53,480 residents by 2050 is the most statistically likely.

▼ Figure 1.2: City of La Crosse Population Projections.



One trendline shows a decline scenario in which the population shrinks by 0.20% annually on average. This would lead to a future population of just under 49,000 residents. It is important to recognize that population is influenced by several unpredictable factors beyond birth and death rates, and local governments only have control over a few influencing factors such as fiscal policy and economic development. External factors such as immigration, state and federal policies, and the economy at large are just as impactful on future growth.

▼ Residents of many different backgrounds enjoy the City: Credit City of La Crosse

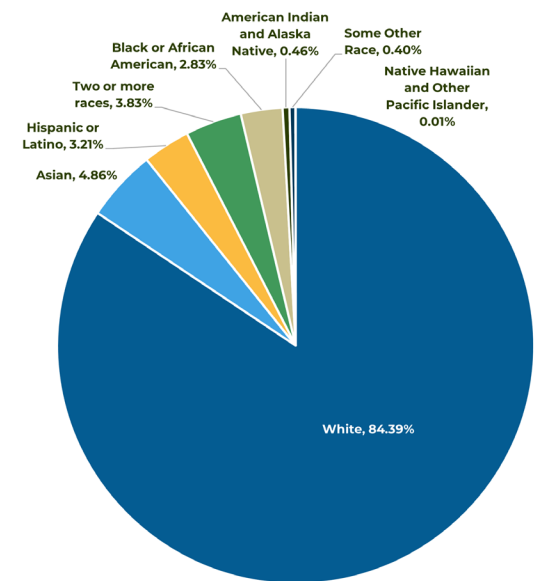


Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Confluence reported that the City would become more racially and ethnically diverse, which has held true.

The proportion of White residents in La Crosse decreased from 88.51% in 2010 to 84.39% in 2020, representing 4.12% of the population fewer. The largest proportion of the 4.12% change is attributed to the increase in the population of Two or more races (1.92% more of the overall population) and the increase in the Hispanic or Latino population (1.24% more of the overall population).

▼ Figure 1.3: City of La Crosse Race & Ethnicity in 2020.



Note: All races/ethnicities other than Hispanic or Latino are Non-Hispanic or Latino.

Source: 2020 US Decennial Census | 100% Counts

Age Distribution

Figure 1.4 shows the change in age distribution of the population of La Crosse for each age group as a percent of the total population, disaggregated by sex.

The largest age group in La Crosse is between 20 to 24 years old, followed by 15 to 19 years old.

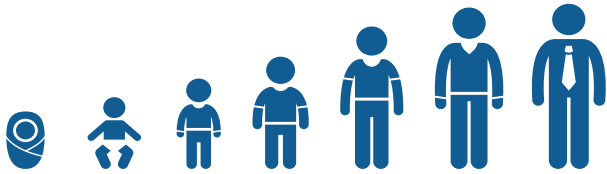
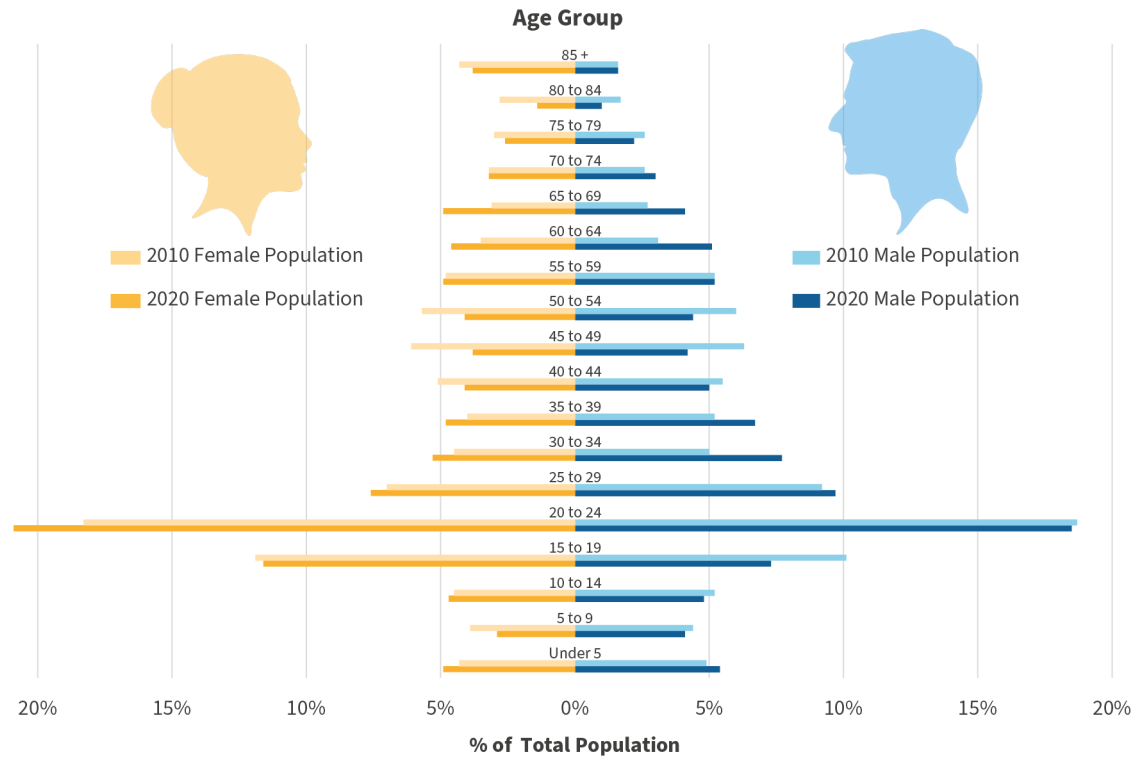


Figure 1.4 shows a slight increase in the 20-24 age group over the ten year period and a slight decline in the 15-19 group. There were not substantially significant changes in age groups; however, the data suggests increases in residents aged 20-39, decreases in residents aged 40-54, and increases in residents aged 60-69. The proportion of residents aged 70 and over remained stable with minor fluctuations suggesting a possible decrease overall.



▼ **Figure 1.4:** City of La Crosse Change in Age Distribution by Sex.



Source: 2010 & 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Across many age groups, the population of La Crosse is more dominantly female between ages 15-24 and 85+ and more dominantly male between ages 25-44.

◀ Older adults in La Crosse aboard an MTU bus. Credit: La Crosse MTU.

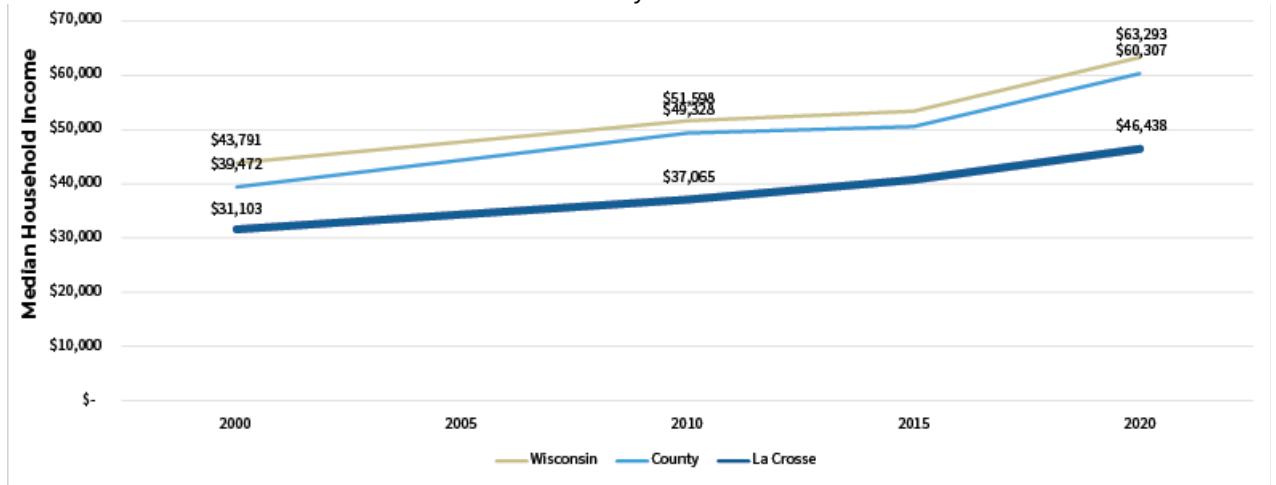
▶ La Crosse elementary schoolers enjoy exploring the La Crosse Regional Airport. Credit: LSE



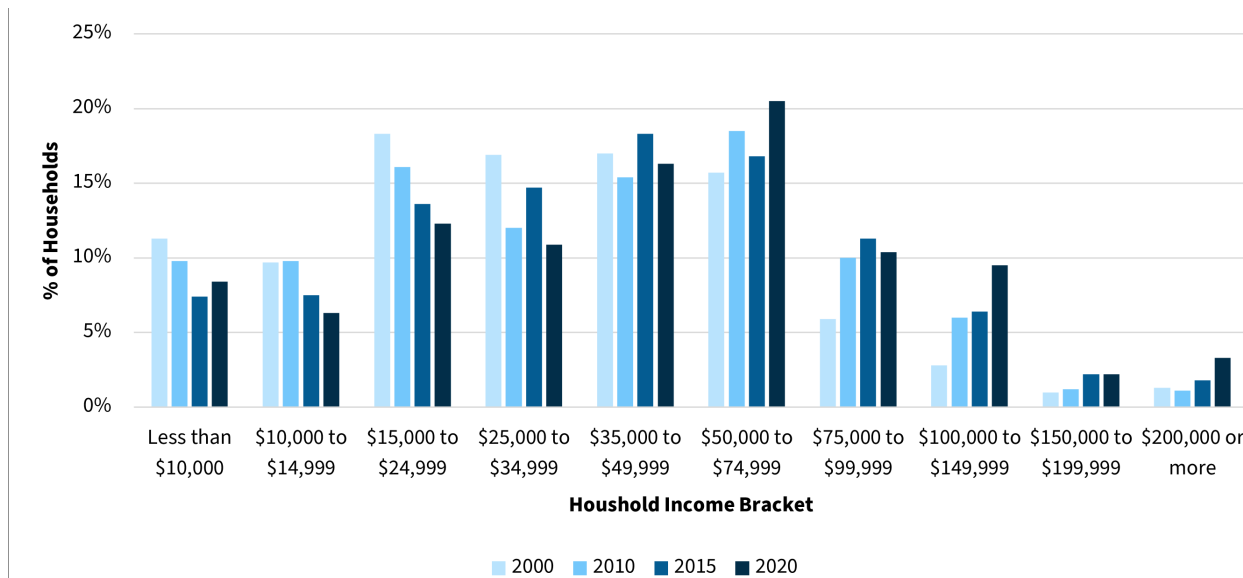
Household Income

Figure 1.5 shows the change in household income in La Crosse between 2000, 2010, 2015, and 2020. Each bracket is represented as a percentage of the total population. From 2010 to 2020, substantial increases in the proportion of residents making \$100,000 or more occurred, with more than double the amount of households making \$200,000 or more. The proportion of households making between \$25,000 to \$99,000 fluctuated – but did not change significantly – between 2010 and 2020. The proportion of households making less than \$15,000 decreased substantially.

▼ **Figure 1.5:** City of La Crosse change in median income compared to La Crosse County & the State of Wisconsin. Source: ACS 5-year estimates.



▼ **Figure 1.6:** City of La Crosse change in household income 2000-2020.



▲ **Figure 1.6:** City of La Crosse change in household income 2000-2020.

The median household income of all households in La Crosse was consistently lower compared to the County and the State of Wisconsin; this is consistent with predictions reported in Confluence.

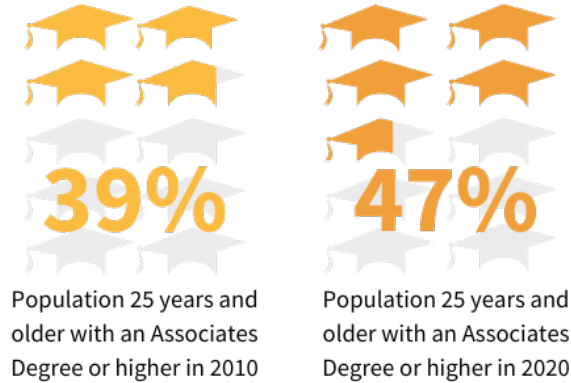
This is likely due to the larger number of young people studying at higher education institutions in La Crosse compared to the County and State.

Education

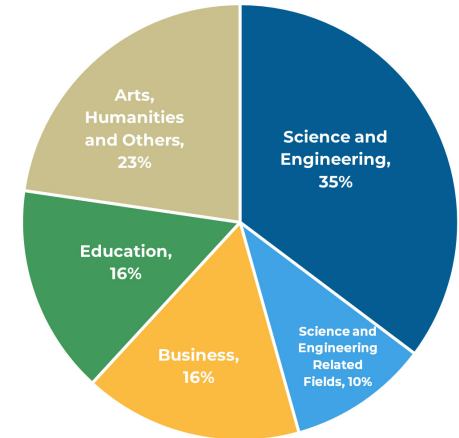
Figure 1.8 compares the field of Bachelor's degrees or higher held by La Crosse residents between age groups as a percentage of that age group. A substantially higher proportion of the population 65 years and over in La Crosse holds college degrees in education compared to all other fields. Residents age 40 to 64 hold more business and arts, humanities and others, and science and engineering related degrees compared to other age groups. Within the 40 to 64 age group, the most numerous degrees are in science and engineering. Residents age 25 to 39 hold the greatest proportion of science and engineering degrees, representing 45% of the age groups' first degrees.

Figure 1.7 shows the field of Bachelor's degrees or higher for the total population of La Crosse age 25 or older.

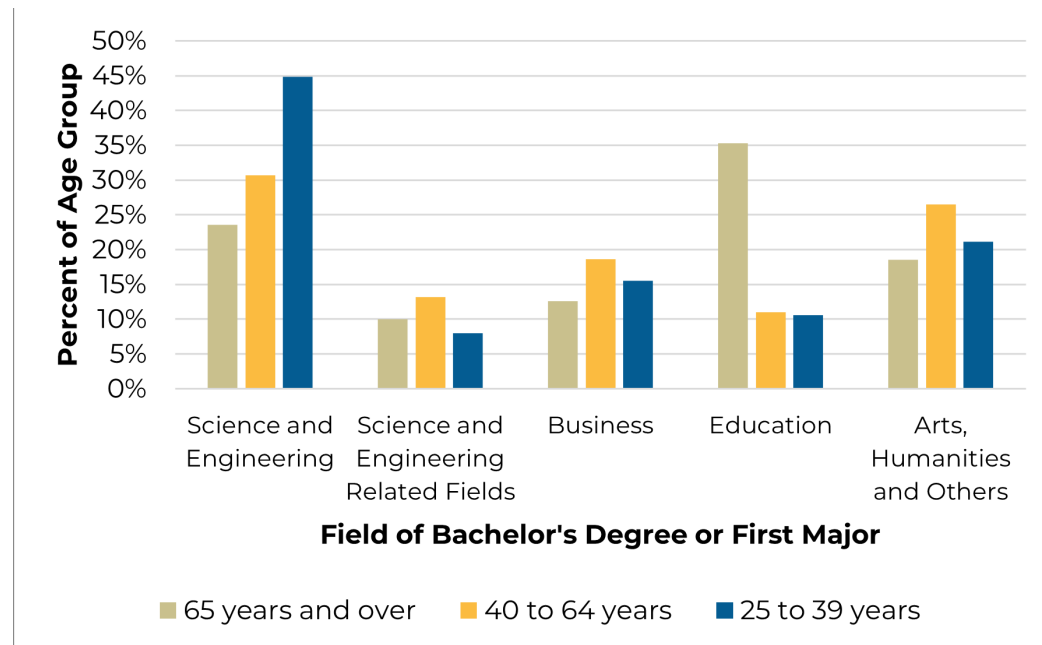
The largest field of the first college degrees obtained in La Crosse is science and engineering followed by arts, humanities and others.



▼ **Figure 1.7:** 2020 City of La Crosse - Total Population 25 Years and Over with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher: Field of Major. Source: ACS 5-year estimates.



▼ **Figure 1.8:** Population in La Crosse 25 years and older with a Bachelor's Degree or higher: field of first major by age group. Source: ACS 5-year estimates.



Educational Attainment

The data shows a substantial increase between 2010 and 2020 of the population with a Bachelor's or higher, demonstrating that

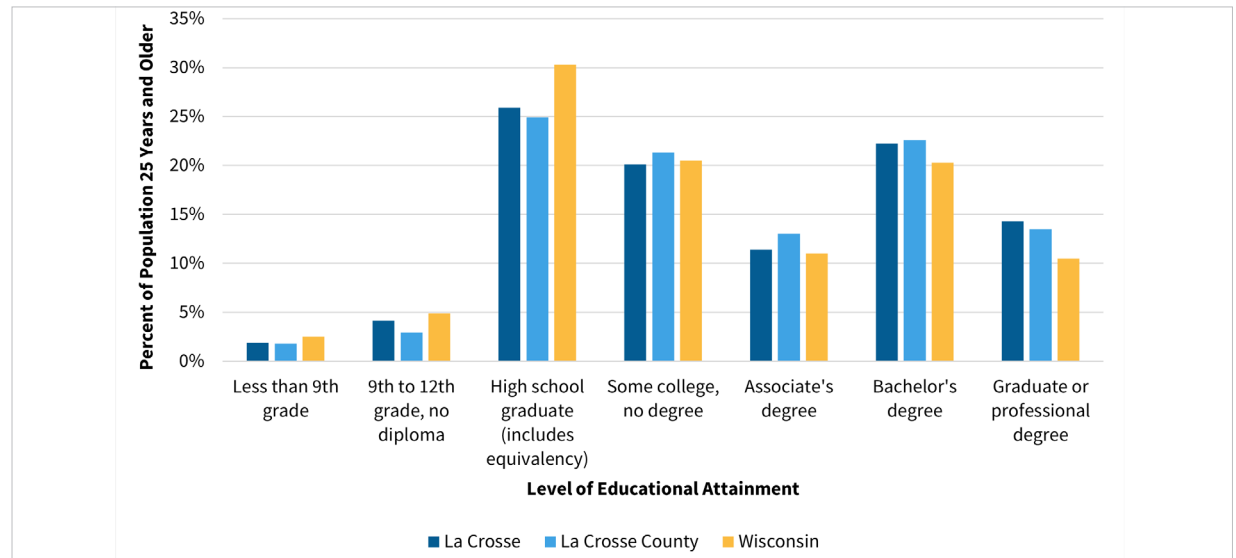
the population of La Crosse is becoming substantially more educated.

Large decreases in population with less than an Associate degree are also shown in the data. Figure 1.9 compares the educational attainment in La Crosse in 2020 to that of the County and State. Trends between La Crosse and the County versus La Crosse and the State tend to differ. Compared to the County, residents in the City of La Crosse are generally less educated, holding less college education overall, but with slightly more residents holding a graduate or professional degree than the County. Compared to the State, residents in La Crosse are highly educated.



▲ The UWL team gets ready to welcome students to campus. Credit: City of La Crosse.

▼ **Figure 1.9:** Educational Attainment in La Crosse in 2020 compared to La Crosse County and the State of Wisconsin. Source: ACS 5-year estimates.





▲ La Crosse River Marsh from above.

Process & Engagement



2

DRIFTLESS RECOVERY
SERVICES

Real recovery. Real peace.

▲ Vibrant Downtown La Crosse. Credit: Dylan Overhouse

HELM
BAR

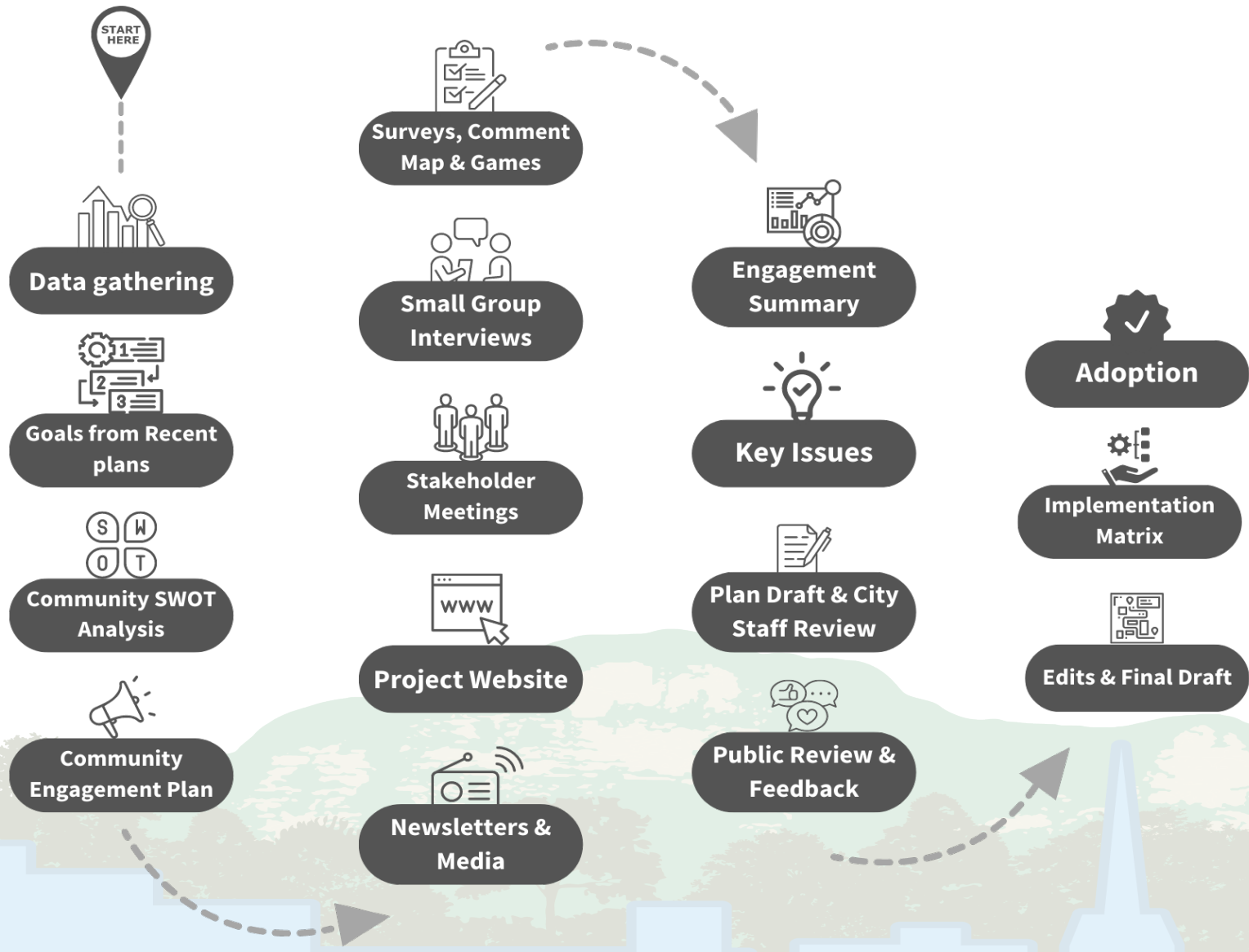
LIBRARY

Big Al's

Main St



PLANNING PROCESS



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engaging the public was a central focus for the “Forward La Crosse” campaign to update the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

To accurately outline the community vision and priorities and effectively shape La Crosse’s goals for the future required extensive collaboration and public input. “Forward La Crosse” kicked off in April 2021 and incorporated a variety of participation efforts and opportunities. Primary methods are described later in this section. Special emphasis was placed on inclusivity, accessibility, flexibility, and creativity. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a combination of in-person and virtual/online engagement was used to reach the public sensitive to changes in public health and safety precautions. This challenge also provided an opportunity to reach a broader audience. The community engagement strategy for “Forward La Crosse” was structured on three primary objectives:

- Provide diverse opportunities for members of the public to provide feedback both in-person and online
- Ensure public engagement opportunities were broadly accessible for all residents
- Utilize community leaders, media outlets, and social media to promote opportunities to provide input and feedback

The project consulting team partnered with City of La Crosse staff and local leaders and organizations to implement the community engagement process. Opportunities for engagement were widely publicized via radio, social media, across City’s departments, major institutions, the La Crosse school district, La Crosse Public Library, City Commissions and Committees, and via posters at popular gathering places around the community. In addition, an insert promoting participation in the comprehensive planning process was included with the City’s water quality reports.

Forward La Crosse Website & Newsletters

The Forward La Crosse website served as the primary public-facing landing page for the engagement campaign. The website hosted a homepage with linked surveys, comment map, and the voting game, recent project news and updates, videos with community leaders, quotes from project partners, and contact information. Website visitors had the option to enter their email address to receive regular bi-weekly project e-newsletters, which announced competitions, upcoming stakeholder sessions or public meetings, and new surveys.

► Bike and pedestrian stakeholder meeting held at City Hall during the planning process. Credit: GRAEF

Stakeholder Sessions & Targeted Interviews

Stakeholder sessions were hosted throughout the engagement process to provide a platform for focused discussion on a variety of topics of importance to the Comprehensive Plan Update. Sessions were hosted via in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats and many were open to the public. Sessions utilized different techniques to stimulate discussion including Mentimeter, an online tool to solicit anonymous responses to facilitated questions, and poster boards and post-it notes. Smaller group sessions and one-on-one interviews were also conducted following each stakeholder session, and the questions asked of participants were made available to the public via online, topic-specific survey modules. This ensured the public had an opportunity to comment on the topics even if they were unable to attend a stakeholder session.



Neighborhood Association Meetings

Neighborhood Associations in La Crosse have a rich history. Throughout the Forward La Crosse campaign, the City's twelve Neighborhood Associations were consulted for feedback, especially regarding neighborhood visioning, challenges, opportunities, and future land use preferences.

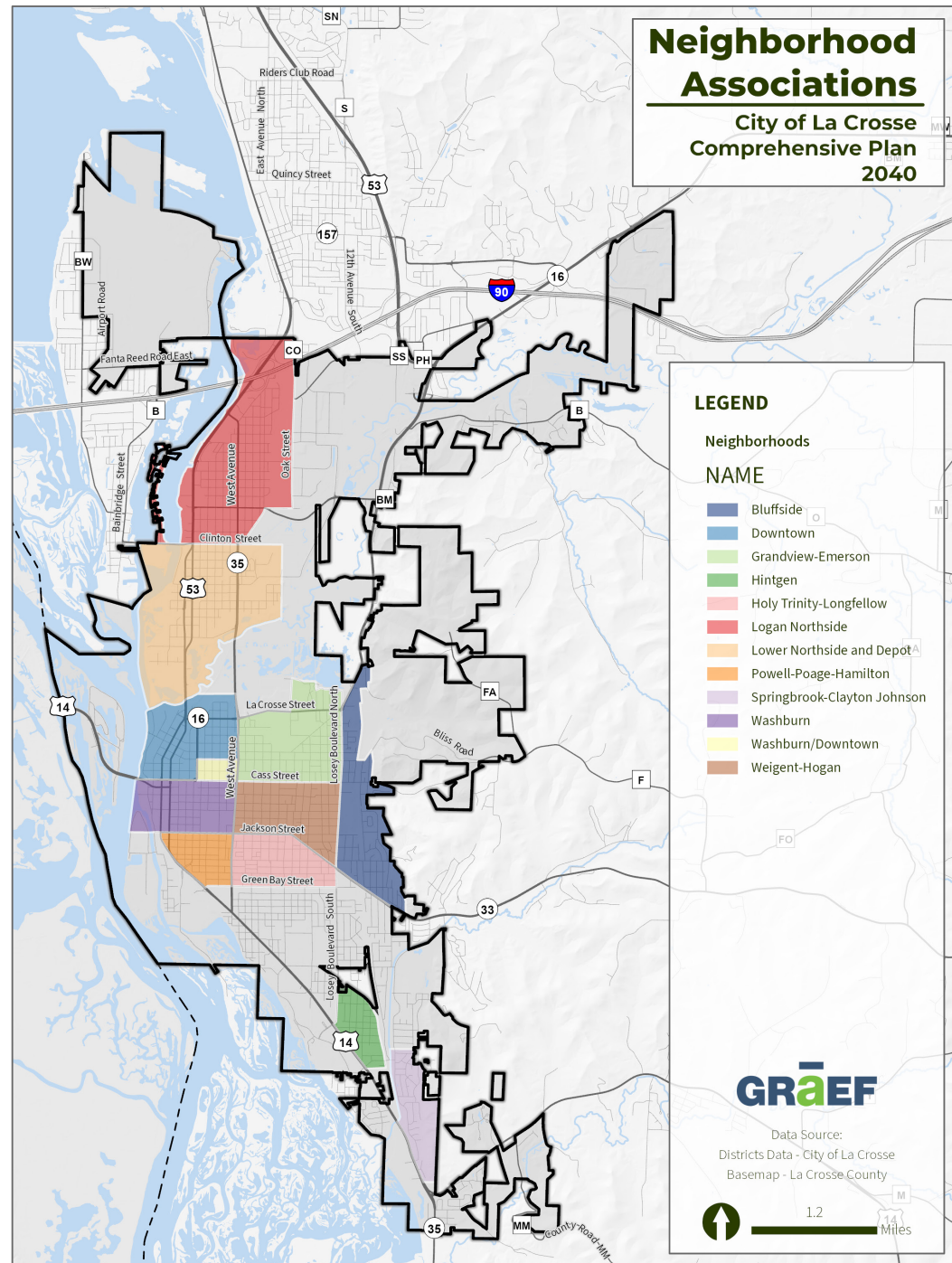
This feedback informed the Neighborhoods, Districts, and Corridors future land use designations found in Chapter 3.

Topical Surveys

In addition to a comprehensive, overarching community survey, seven topical surveys were made available for online responses. These surveys served to enable feedback for a variety of topics and gather input on key issues.

The community survey received over **2,100** responses.

One of the most popular topic surveys, the Bike and Pedestrian Survey, received over 600 responses. A visual preference survey also helped inform urban design preferences, and a guiding principles survey was used to identify overall community priorities.



Key Findings

Who answered the survey?

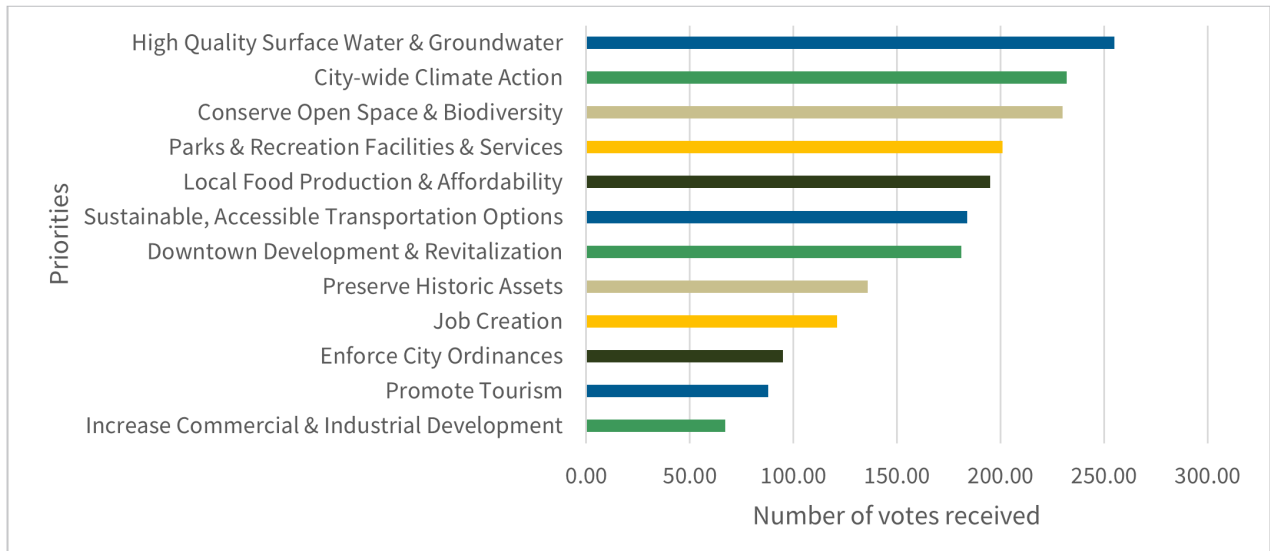
- Survey respondents lived and worked across City Council Districts and neighborhoods, with Grandview Emerson and Weigent-Hogan as the most well-represented neighborhoods
- Over half of survey respondents were female, over one-third were in the 45-64 age category, and three-quarters identified living in a household with 2-3 adults
- The majority of respondents identified as renters of property with a household income ranging from \$50,000-\$150,000+ and have lived in the City for at least ten years
- The majority of survey respondents reported high levels of educational achievement, with over two-thirds possessing a Bachelors degree or a Graduate/professional degree

What were the respondents' priorities?

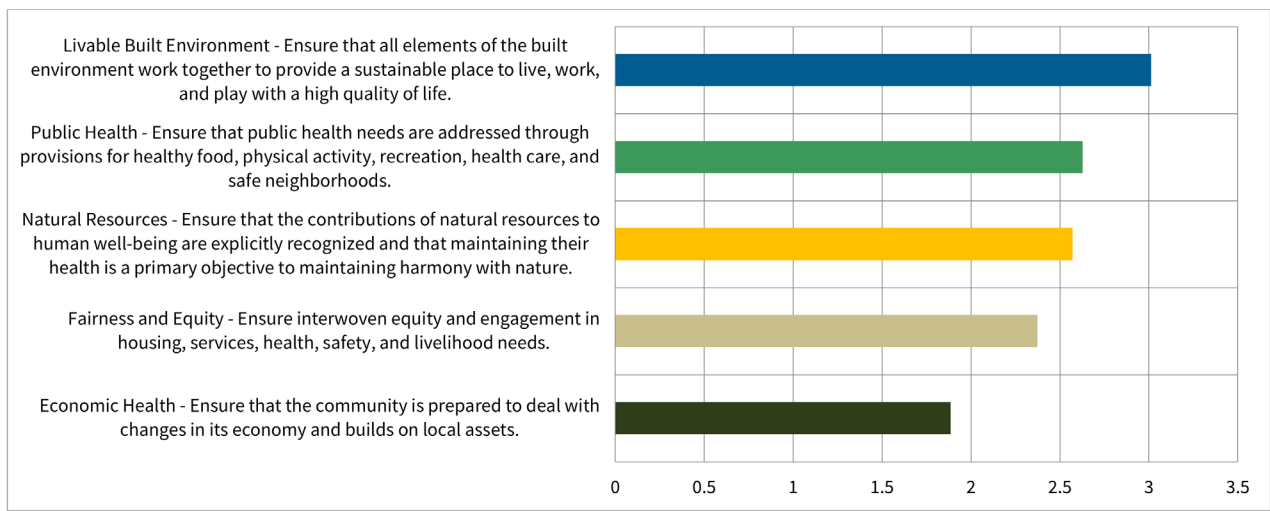
The Voting Game asked respondents to identify their top 5 priorities to focus on in the Comprehensive Plan. Survey respondents prioritized environmental and equity issues over ones of economic development.

The results of the Guiding Principles Survey also mirror the results of the voting game. The Survey asked respondents to identify and rank their top priorities to guide La Crosse's future. A higher number along the X-axis represents the principle was highly ranked. The highest ranked guiding principle was "Livable Built Environment" followed by "Public Health" and "Natural Resources."

▼ **Figure 2.1:** displays the survey respondents' top issues to prioritize in the Comprehensive Plan.



▼ **Figure 2.2:** displays the survey respondents' ranking of the Plan's Guiding Principles.



Visual Preference Survey

The Visual Preference Survey gave respondents an opportunity to indicate their preferences for how buildings, districts, open spaces, and corridors are designed in La Crosse. The survey presented a series of sample images in different categories and asked respondents to select the images they felt were appropriate or appealing for La Crosse.

In short, respondents want to protect and celebrate the natural beauty of La Crosse as well as the people that live there.

Respondents prefer more greenery throughout the City. This includes greenery in neighborhoods, the downtown area, and using less man-made elements in public spaces. For example, green infrastructure like planters and trees should be used to limit motor vehicle traffic and help create spaces for pedestrians and biking. There is also a preference for native plants/animals and a diversity of natural landscapes to showcase the region's beauty. Natural areas should be allowed to be "messy" rather than overly manicured. Public art should use natural materials and feature local artists that offer diverse perspectives and showcase the history of the area. Respondents want a variety of housing types and styles that reflect La Crosse's character. They want smaller lots that meet sustainable maintenance requirements. Existing or historic buildings should be used for multi-family and mixed-use options instead of large apartment buildings.

Voices from the visual preference survey respondents

Each has its place. Historic preservation. New Urban. Higher density in urban core. Modern design with mixed vocabulary of materials. Traditional neighborhood. All images are good examples of zoning regulation AND enforcement.

Fun colors and designs; space for nature.

I chose photos with a more modern look and also those that reflect the current architecture of the area. A mixture of both would help modernize the City while also respecting the roots.

I would like to see more car free areas downtown.

Engagement by the Numbers



INTERACTIVE MAP

830

COMMENTS



SOCIAL MEDIA

400+

FOLLOWERS



WEBSITE

7,800

VISITORS



SURVEYS

2,100+

RESPONSES



VIDEOS

5

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Growth and Land Use

3

LAND USE FRAMEWORK

Introduction

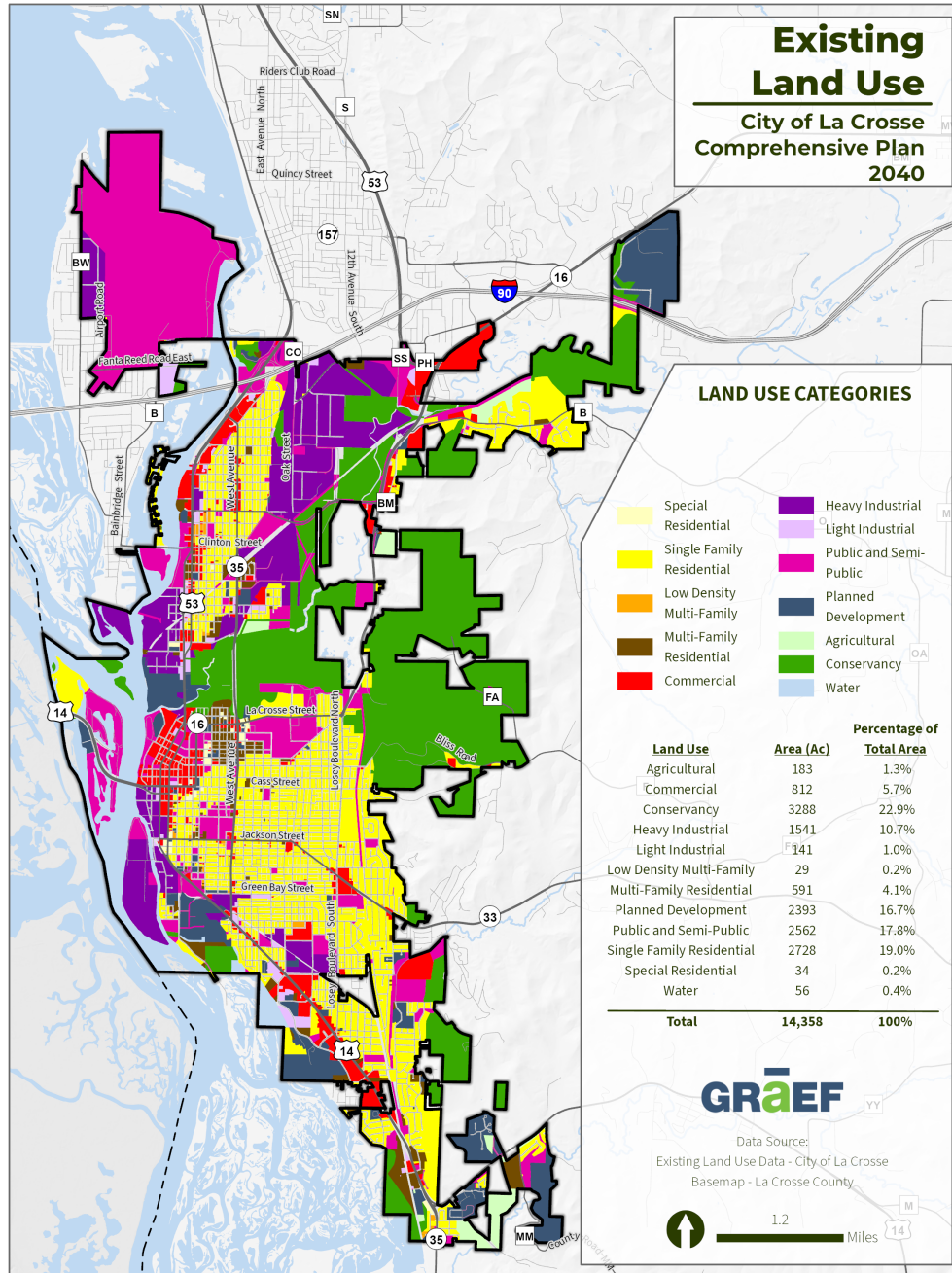
The Comprehensive Plan sets forth the vision for future land uses across all properties within the City of La Crosse. Future Land Use identifies the appropriate mix of uses which may become appropriate for a given property over the next twenty years, taking into account the larger scale of neighboring properties and how they interact together to serve residents.

Future land use is based on the neighborhood, district, and corridor framework model (NDC), a system devised by the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU). Neighborhoods, districts, and corridors are further described and defined on page 27.



▲ Downtown La Crosse. Credit: GRAEF team

How is Land Used Now in La Crosse?



The map to the left shows the existing land use throughout the 14,358 acres that compose the City of La Crosse according to twelve different land use categories. The legend on the map displays a breakdown of percentages for each type of existing land use. The map can be used to help identify land use patterns across the City.

The highest percentage of land use in La Crosse is identified as "Conservancy" (22.9%), predominantly consisting of the La Crosse River Marsh and Hixon Forest. "Single-family residential" land uses compose the second highest percentage at 19.0%, followed by "Public and semi-public" land uses at 17.8%. Much of the public and semi-public land acreage is composed of the La Crosse Municipal Airport (LSE).

Very little land within the City is identified as "Agricultural" at 1.3% or "Light Industrial" at 1.0% (Note that "Heavy Industrial" is 10.7% of the City's land area). "Low-Density Multi-Family," "Special Residential," and "Water" combined compose less than 1% of the City's existing land use acreage. There are several Planned Developments located throughout the City. Planned developments are site-specific and typically feature more flexible requirements for specific projects.

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 historic fabric of communities. NDC proposes three fundamental areas that view La Crosse as a mix of uses rather than isolated land uses. NDC respects human scale and the community of La Crosse while creating places for larger institutions and infrastructure. NDC does not replace the adopted zoning code, but instead paints a broad and cohesive long-term picture for the built environment.

The following pages continue the description of the NDC model by describing preferred land uses.



▲ Approaching Grandad Bluff. Credit: GRAEF team

Neighborhoods:

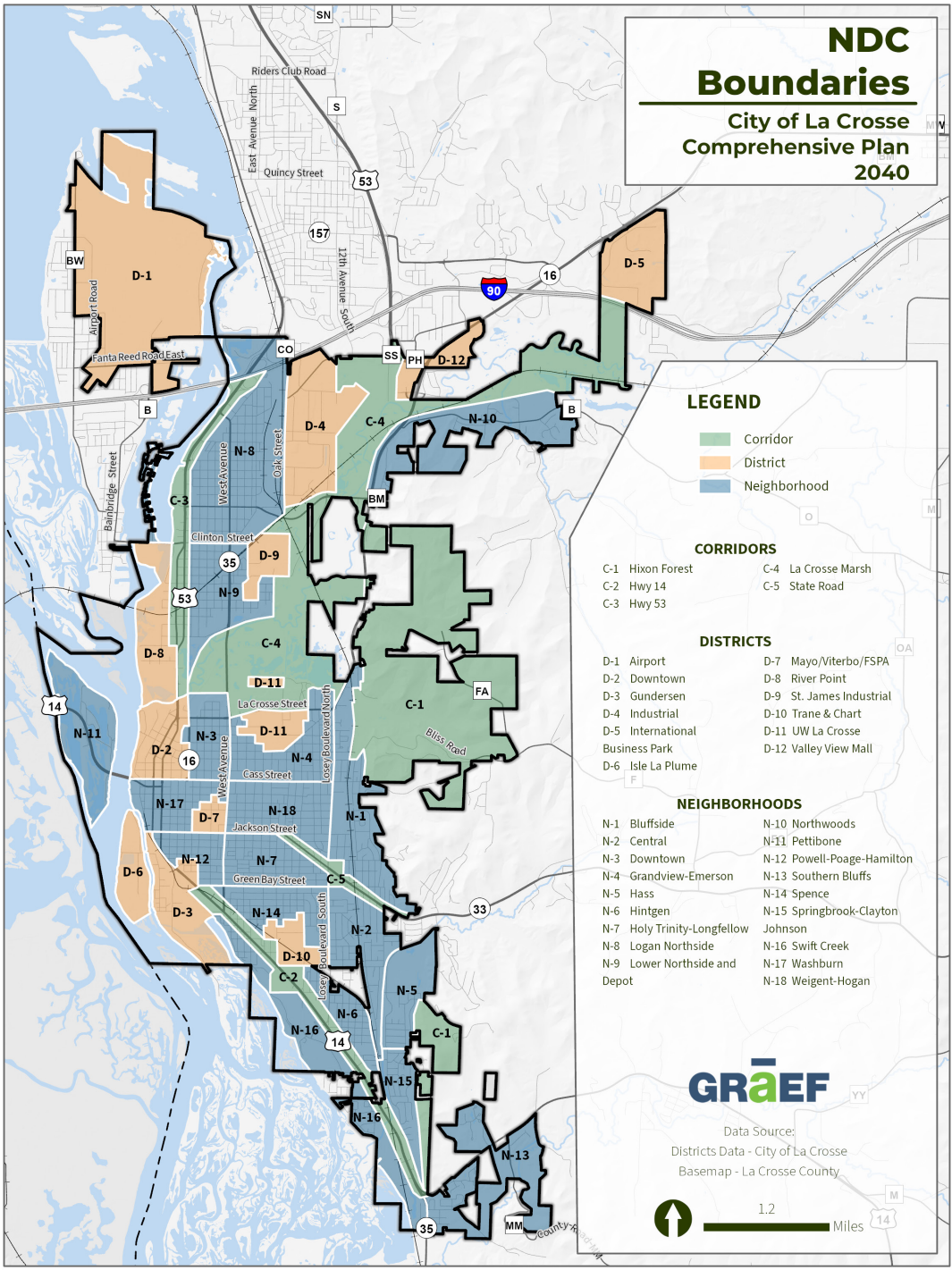
La Crosse neighborhoods were identified during the comprehensive planning process based on their distinct identities, housing characteristics, unique history, and geographic features. They are typically compact, pedestrian-friendly, and mixed-use. Neighborhoods may contain a number of supporting uses 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 were identified during the comprehensive planning process as 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 were identified based on types of uses and geographic location.

Corridors:

Corridors are linear edges 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.



Preferred Land Uses:

Within each Neighborhood, District or Corridor, the list of all land uses are all designated with one of the following:

Desirable (D):

These uses should be encouraged because they are consistent with, support, and enhance the desired character.

Allowable (A):

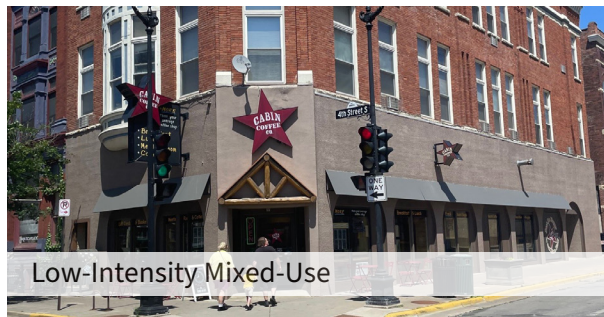
These uses are generally considered appropriate, but may require additional consideration and/or specific modification or developed features to be compatible with other uses in the area.

Undesirable (U):

These uses should not be encouraged but may still be acceptable for the area under special circumstances.

<u>Category</u>	Shown as
Desirable	D
Allowable	A
Undesirable	U

The images below (credits: GRAEF team except where noted) represent examples of types of land use categories described on the following pages. These images are for illustrative purposes only, as each land use category includes a range of densities that can be represented via a range of designs and architectural styles.



LAND USE CATEGORIES

The City of La Crosse’s Future Land Use includes twelve (12) future land use categories:

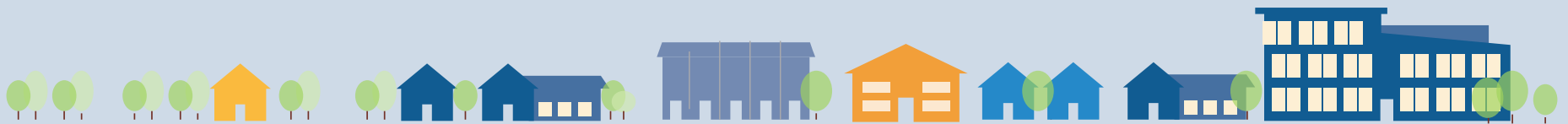
- **Existing Uses:** Existing Uses are noted within each Future Land Use Category to specify that an existing use is always “Allowable” on any property in La Crosse and that no existing property must be changed in order to comply with the Future Land Use Plan. Rather, when a property seeks a permit for development such as a zoning change, that is considered a change in use and is no longer automatically “Allowable” as an existing land use.
- **Low Density Residential:** Low Density Residential land uses are predominantly made up of one-two story single-family structures but may also include two- and three-unit dwellings that may have been converted from single-family structures. Other housing types such as townhomes and rowhomes may be compatible, especially if developed to fit a single-family mold. Low Density Residential should be walkable, with an interconnected street and sidewalk system. Low Density areas should be developed with varying degrees of styles to accommodate a range of socio-economic factors. Isolated, car-dependent developments should be discouraged in

order to achieve a minimum level of density and cost efficiency to support basic urban infrastructure, such as direct pedestrian access to transit where feasible and public sidewalks. Safe and easy bicycle access is advised. Transportation networks should be designed in such a way so as to provide as much local access while discouraging external traffic and through traffic.

- **Medium Density Residential:** Medium Density Residential may include more variety of housing types than Low Density Residential, including townhomes, rowhomes, small multi-family buildings, and large multi-family buildings of two-four stories. The uses in this category are interconnected within surrounding neighborhoods as part of a complete neighborhood, providing access to a variety of uses and amenities through enhanced walkability and connectivity. These uses should generally support the local neighborhood or provide broader community amenities without disrupting the local neighborhood. Both owner-occupied and rental units may exist in this category. The introduction of vast, open spaces such as parking lots, building setbacks, or landscapes

that do not provide high levels of recreational and public amenities should be discouraged to maintain neighborhood character and a high level of value to local residents and community members.

- **High Density Residential:** High Density Residential typically includes multi-family owner-occupied and rental units in structures taller than three stories. Similar to medium density, high density is interconnected within surrounding neighborhoods and may be concentrated in areas with major streets connections and employment and commercial areas. High Density Residential can include mix of surrounding uses to provide convenient access to amenities and services for residents. High Density Residential can include housing for UW-La Crosse, Viterbo, and Western Technical College students and active senior living communities. Commercial uses that require large numbers of parking spaces and have generally much larger lot sizes or lot widths than surrounding lots should be allowed only along major arterial corridors and designed with comprehensive pedestrian infrastructure and multi-modal facilities.



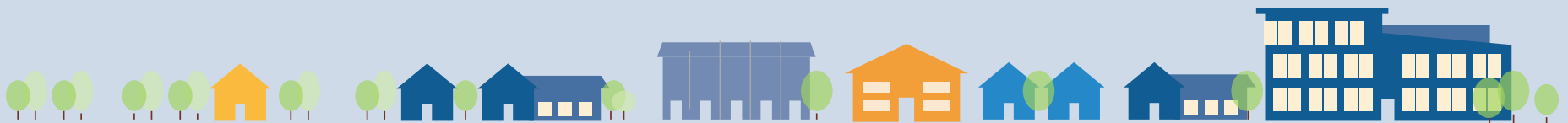
- **Low-Intensity Mixed-Use:** Low-Intensity Mixed-Use may include relatively small existing and planned activity centers that include a variety of uses such as residential, retail, restaurant, service, institutional, and civic uses primarily serving existing neighborhoods and their residents. The design and layout is typically compact, walkable, and nearby transit. Development should be transit-oriented, even if transit doesn't currently exist.
- **High-Intensity Mixed-Use:** High-Intensity Mixed-Use was included to delineate areas of higher-intensity mixed uses that support an active and vibrant street life. These can be located within the core of Downtown La Crosse, as well as outside of the Downtown core in areas still appropriate for a higher intensity mix of uses. These areas can include government buildings and large employment centers, along with a more traditional mix of uses including residential, retail, small to mid-scale commercial/office, restaurant, and other services. Transit-orientated development is a priority.
- **Neighborhood Retail/Commercial:** Neighborhood Retail/Commercial areas include walkable, small-business, small format, independent businesses primarily serving walk-up customers from within the neighborhood. These can also include office

and larger commercial spaces, although the focus is on walkability to reduce driving and parking requirements.

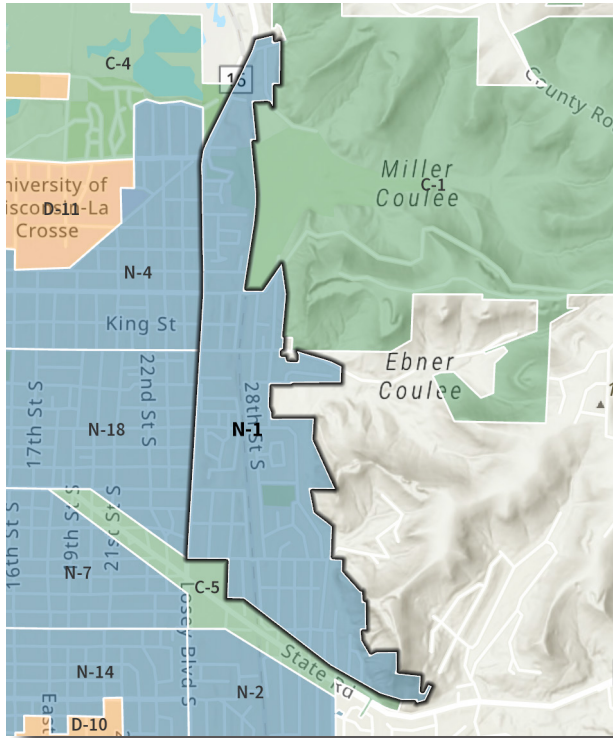
- **Commercial:** Commercial includes professional office uses, corporate, retail, services and other commercial/consumer-based land uses providing consumer and employment opportunities. Commercial can also feature businesses considered “big box” stores, drive-ups, and large format services such as car dealerships. Lighter industrial uses such as maker spaces, art lofts, and dual purpose live-work uses may also be considered. Typically, residential components are not promoted like in mixed-use categories.
- **Industrial:** Industrial includes uses involved in manufacturing, wholesale, storage, distribution, transportation, repair/maintenance, and utilities. These can also include uses typically identified as “nuisance” uses that should not be located in proximity to residential, neighborhood mixed-use, or other non-residential uses due to noise, odor, appearance, traffic, or other potentially adverse impacts. Screening, buffering, and securitization should be deployed to protect surrounding uses wherever possible.
- **Institutional:** Institutional includes government buildings, structures, and campuses, as well as public community

facilities, schools, not-for-profits, and civic buildings where residents and visitors gather. This category also reflects the major university, healthcare, and other large employment centers within La Crosse, including but not restricted to: UW-La Crosse, Western Technical College, Viterbo, Gunderson Health, and Mayo Clinic).

- **Parks & Open Space:** This category includes public parks, trails, and recreation areas, private recreation uses (such as golf courses), cemeteries, and other natural features that create a park-like setting. The emphasis is on natural and open spaces that provide for recreation and environmental uses.
- **Conservancy, Wetland, & Agricultural:** This category includes wetlands and marshes, greenways and environmental corridors, and other natural areas. These may function as natural drainage or expansion of the Mississippi River corridor. This category includes areas of the City identified as wooded and steep slope areas and also includes any land or parcel used for agricultural purposes. Agricultural uses are typically located at the periphery of the City.



BLUFFSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD (N-1)



Description

Bluffside is a primarily residential neighborhood with some commercial uses located along Losey Boulevard and Route 33. Bluffside is located along the eastern boundary of the City. Bluffside’s proximity to parks, including Bluffside Park and Grandad Bluff Park, recreational trails, and variety of open space and scenic views creates a desirable and family-friendly neighborhood. Bluffside is home to the Bluffside Neighborhood Association, whose borders extend from Losey Boulevard to the Bluffs and Highway 16 to State Highway 30.

Vision for Future Land Use

Nearly all of the land within the Bluffside neighborhood is already developed, with primarily single-family residential lots. Residents are largely content with the existing fabric of the neighborhood, and encourage any future redevelopment of residential properties to be of low-to-medium densities. A maximum medium-density of four-units is recommended for this neighborhood. Higher density residential uses should maintain the existing style and character of the neighborhood. A very limited number of vacant parcels are within the neighborhood after some houses were demolished from being within the floodplain. The highest and best use of these parcels should be evaluated, including the potential for community gardens or open space.

Voices from the community

“Some medium to high density would be appropriate if it fits in with the existing style/character of the neighborhood.”

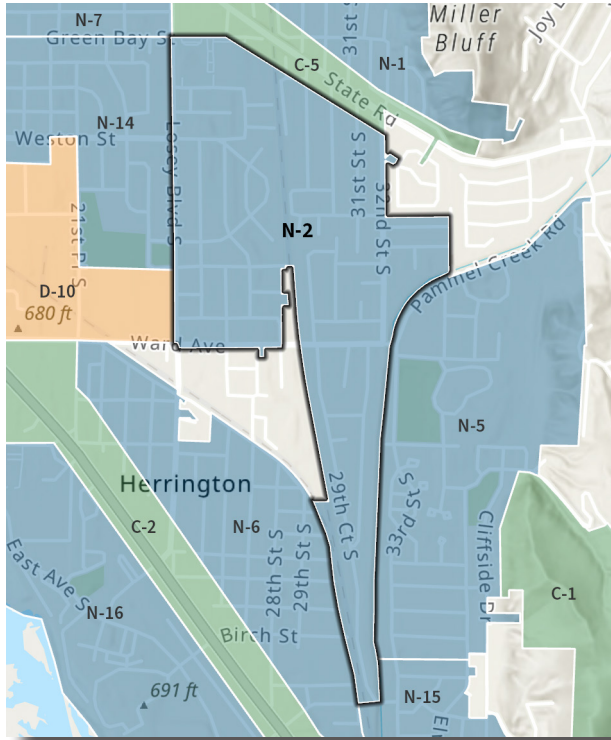
“Four-unit residences could fit nicely”

“Not a preferable neighborhood for industrial uses.”

“Add community gardens on Cliffwood.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
D	D	A	A	A	U	A	U	U	U	D	D

CENTRAL NEIGHBORHOOD (N-2)



Description

The Central neighborhood falls between the State Road Corridor to the north, Losey Boulevard to the west, and the Haas neighborhood to the east. Central is comprised of primarily single-family residential homes with neighborhood low-intensity retail uses scattered throughout. The Central High School campus, including the associated athletic fields and track, are also located within the northern portion of the neighborhood. Starlite Park is located along the eastern edge of the neighborhood. The railroad tracks bisect the neighborhood and there are currently no crossing opportunities.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Central Neighborhood is essentially fully developed with predominantly single-family detached homes and small clusters of multi-family residences such as the apartment homes bordering Pammel Creek Road. There are a handful of undeveloped parcels south of 28th Street South. Commercial uses are likely limited to redevelopment of existing commercial parcels or small expansions to existing commercial uses. Opportunities to provide small pockets of parks and open space are highly desired.

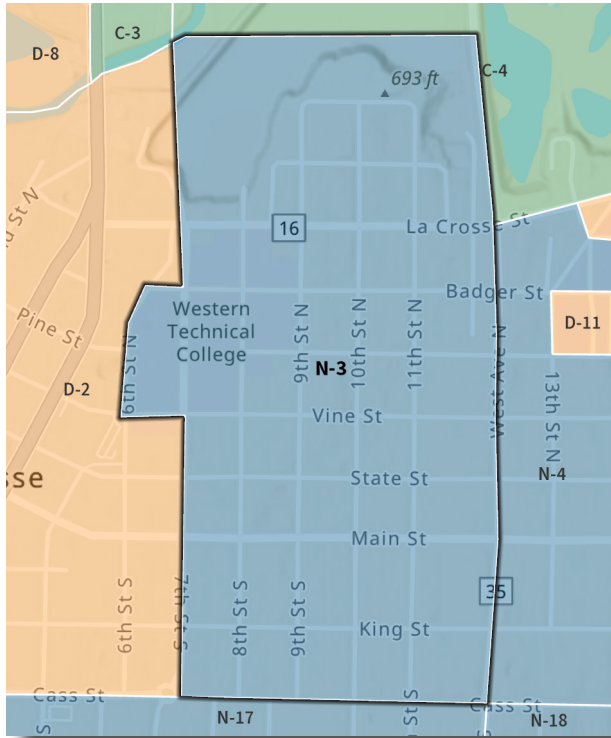
Voices from the community

“The bike lane along 32nd St. S. near Fairchild St. could be a very important north/south corridor if it is made safer to ride.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	U	U	U	U	D	A	U	A	D	D

DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD (N-3)



Description

The Downtown neighborhood is adjacent to the La Crosse central business district and encompasses a portion of the 10th and Cass National Register Historic District. The Downtown neighborhood also includes the campus of Western Technical College. Residents have quick access to the Downtown district to the west. The Downtown Neighborhood Association boundaries are the Mississippi River to West Avenue and the La Crosse River to Cass Street.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Downtown neighborhood has a need to increase affordable housing while maintaining a good mix of housing types that include high-end and luxury options. Single-family homes are needed, as well as additional housing types that complement existing uses. Medium density is desired where it fits the scale and character of surrounding existing housing types. High density housing is desired in certain areas including along 7th Street, along high-traffic corridors, and in areas identified in the Vision 2040 Downtown Plan. Both medium and high density housing should be consistent with strong design standards that complement historic character. Smaller-format commercial uses that serve residents are desired. Mixed-use commercial that incorporates a residential element are preferred.

Voices from the community

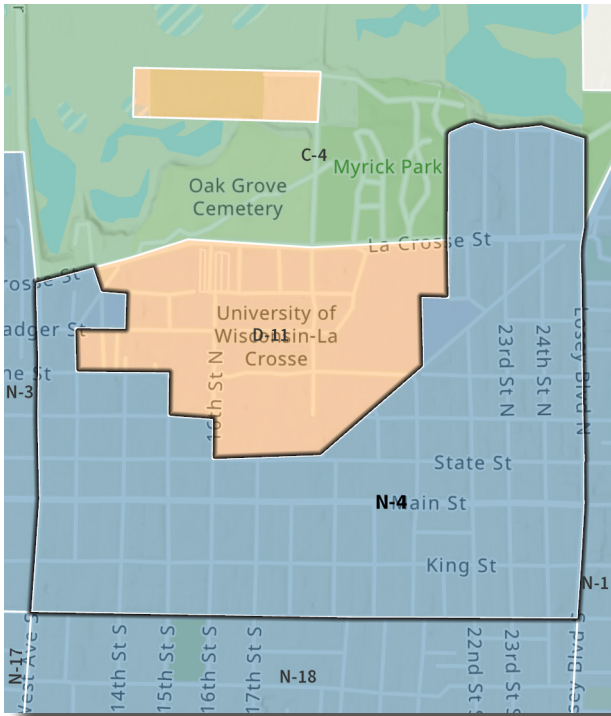
“Would love to see bike lanes implemented on 7th street in place of on street parking.”

“Build up more welcoming spaces next to the library. We need more green spaces like this with seating, paths, and play areas.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
D	A	D	A	D	A	A	U	U	U	D	A

GRANDVIEW EMERSON NEIGHBORHOOD (N-4)



Description

The Grandview Emerson neighborhood is predominantly a residential area, overseen by the Grandview Emerson Neighborhood Association (GENA) that encompasses La Crosse River to Cass Street and West Avenue to Losey Boulevard. The neighborhood borders the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse district, the City’s largest university system. The Grandview Emerson neighborhood is further identified by a mix of housing types including student housing, Emerson Elementary School, several parks, and a commercial district along Campbell Road and State Street.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Grandview Emerson Neighborhood is predominately composed of single family residential uses. Medium density and mixed use are supported with careful consideration of the neighborhood character and with design standards in place. Some limits on boundary growth for the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse are desired to maintain the residential character of the neighborhood outside of the university campus. A small-to-mid-scale grocery store to serve residents and the student population is highly-desired in this neighborhood.

Voices from the community

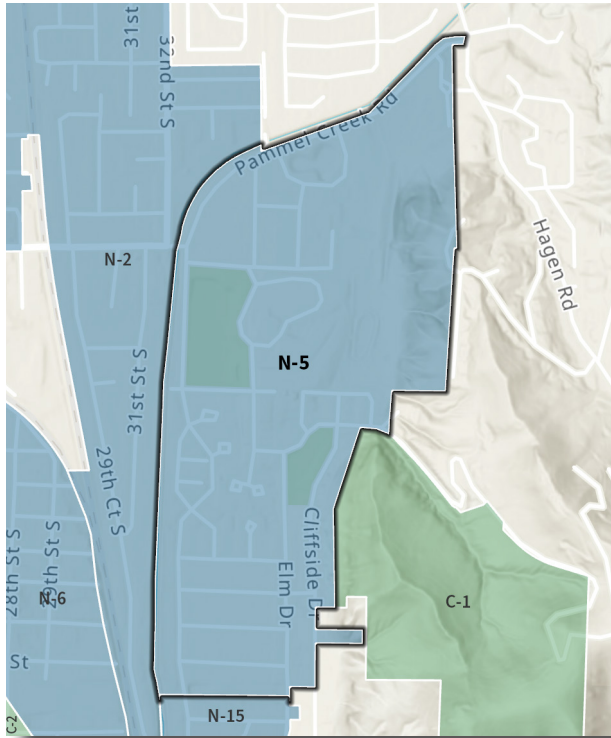
“This neighborhood, among others, has notable gaps in tree cover on public boulevards between the sidewalk and road.”

“This area is a bit of a food dessert and would benefit from support for a bodega or convenience store.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	U	U	A	A	D	U	U	D	D	D

HAAS NEIGHBORHOOD (N-5)



Description

The Haas neighborhood is located at the eastern portion of the City south of Highway 33, bordering the Town of Shelby. The Haas neighborhood is made up of public park and recreation facilities including Haas Park and Chad Erickson Memorial Park, office parks, and some residential uses. Pammel Creek forms the western boundary, while blufflands border the eastern boundary.

Vision for Future Land Use

There is a former Trane Company property currently for sale within the neighborhood, representing a potential opportunity for redevelopment, but there may be archaeological restrictions. This property represents several blocks of underutilized land with a significant amount of greenspace. The County has also focused interest on the Hillview property that neighbors the Trane site. They have expressed interest in collaborating with the City on the development of these two properties. Any future development within this neighborhood should prioritize respecting the interface between the urban and natural environment. The intensity of development should be evaluated, particularly around trailheads. Pammel Creek Road is a preferred area to cluster residential development. As this neighborhood currently has an abundance of cul-de-sacs, any future roadway expansions should prioritize connectivity.

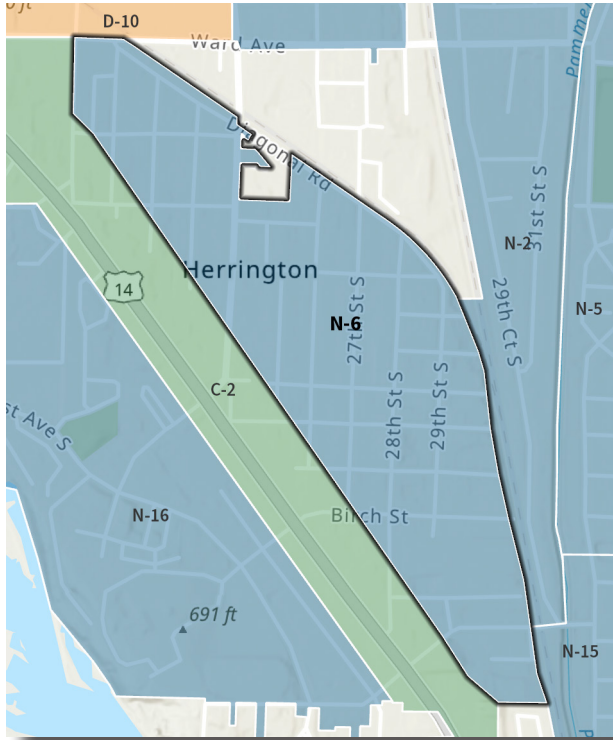
Voices from the community

“Turn Pammel Creek Road into a trail from Ward Ave to Hagen Rd to improve safety for students going to State Road. This would have the added benefit of freeing up space for wetlands/floodway.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	D	A	D	U	A	A	U	A	D	D

HINTGEN NEIGHBORHOOD (N-5)



Description

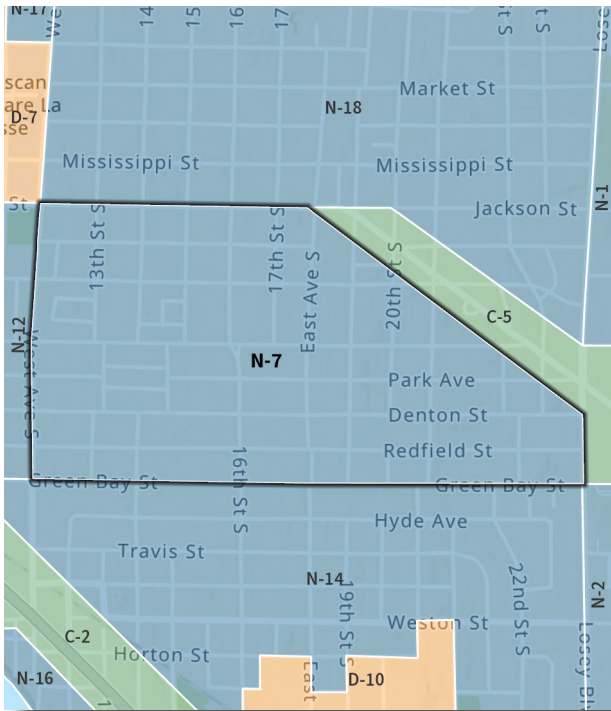
The Hintgen neighborhood is made up of a mix of uses. Within Hintgen are institutional uses such as Highland Park as well as Hintgen Elementary School. Commercial development dominates the Route 14 corridor to the southwest. The Hintgen Neighborhood Association oversees the neighborhood within the following boundaries: Diagonal Road to the north, to the east along the Railroad tracks to 29th Street south, to Holly Place, Broadview Place and Mormon Coulee Road to the south, and Losey Boulevard to the west.

Vision for Future Land Use

Mixed-use residential and apartments are desired in the neighborhood if they are consistent with established architectural design standards. It is recommended that these standards include building siting recommendations that encourage buildings to front the street and maintain parking in the rear. There is also a strong desire to increase walkability and bicycle infrastructure within the neighborhood, particularly to complement access to more small restaurants and grocery businesses that serve residents. Improvements to the public realm that are desired for this area include improved lighting and more trees, greenery, and natural elements.

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	A	A	U	D	A	U	A	D	A

HOLY TRINITY-LONGFELLOW NEIGHBORHOOD (N-7)



Description

The Holy Trinity-Longfellow neighborhood is characterized by diverse housing styles throughout and by a concentration of local businesses along the dominant neighborhood arterial streets. The neighborhood includes the South Community Library, multiple public and private schools, numerous places of worship, and Tower Park. The Holy Trinity-Longfellow Neighborhood Association boundaries are formed by Jackson Street to the north, Green Bay Street to the south, Losey Boulevard to the east, and West Avenue to the west.

Vision for Future Land Use

Consistency of architectural style across housing types is desired within Holy Trinity-Longfellow, including low- and medium-density housing. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should be considered as a means to increase density while maintaining neighborhood character. Medium density is preferred at the edge of the neighborhood and at corners to maintain height consistency and preserve views for existing homes. Higher density is desired in specific locations including near Copper Rocks and along major intersections. Mixed use is desired if it is consistent with historic mixed-uses, which have been situated closer to major arterials. Institutional buildings are desired at a scale consistent with the existing library. There is also a desire to increase green space and natural landscaping to soften and green the landscape.

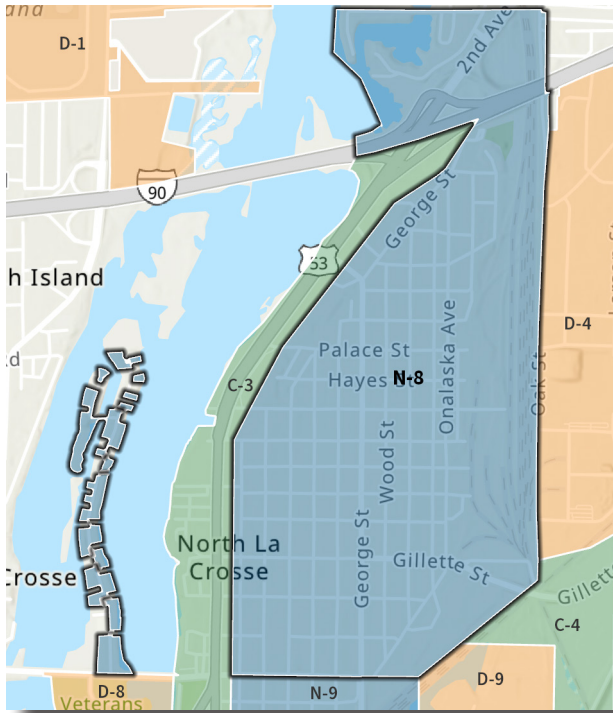
Voices from the community

“Have a farmer’s market at Longfellow in the summer when school is closed. Charge small booth fees and put the money towards school supplies for low income students.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	A	D	U	D	A	U	D	D	A

LOGAN-NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD (N-8)



Description

The Logan-Northside neighborhood consists of a wide range of uses from residential to heavy industrial. The Logan-Northside Neighborhood Association boundaries are from Lauderdale Place to Clinton Street, and French Island to Oak/Ranger Streets. The neighborhood includes the rail yard and active commercial uses along Route 53 to the West (see Highway 53 corridor). Logan Northside’s location next to the Black River consists of both residential and commercial uses, as well as Veterans Park.

Vision for Future Land Use

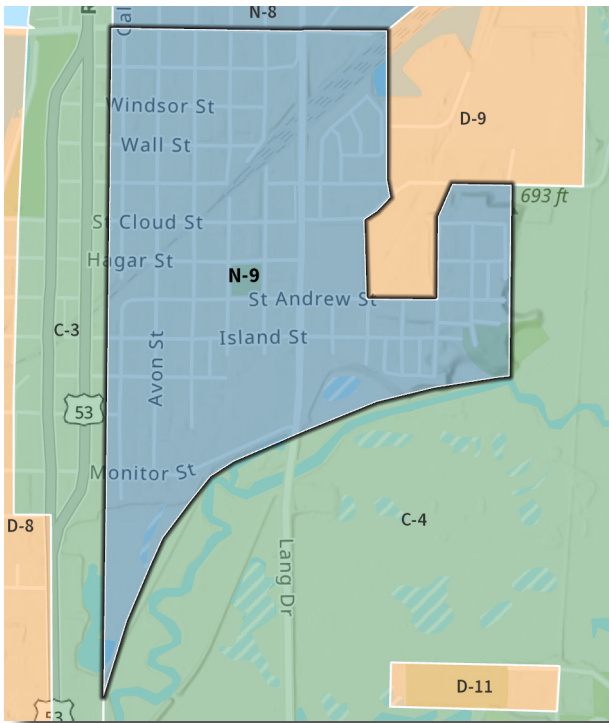
New buildings should align with the context and past uses authentic to the area. Low density residential is desired with updated design standards that maintain the neighborhood’s architectural character. Medium density residential uses over two stories could be allowable on Rose Street, while height limits are recommended in other areas. High density residential should be allowable only in the area off Exit 3 and Bridgeview plaza. Mixed-use commercial is recommended for Bridgeview plaza, George Street, Rose Street and Caledonia Street. Encouraging small businesses to integrate into residential areas is desired. Institutional uses should be limited to the main arterials. There is a desire to rezone industrial uses, including storage facilities, and increase parks and green space, especially with river access.

Voices from the community

I would love to see a cafe/coffee shop in one of the empty buildings across from where WAFER is going.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	A	A	U	A	D	D	A	D	U

LOWER NORTHSIDE AND DEPOT NEIGHBORHOOD (N-9)



Description

One of La Crosse’s oldest and most established neighborhoods, the Lower Northside and Depot neighborhood is known for its walkable and resident-friendly assets. These include the Northside Community Center, several private schools and places of worship, multiple City parks, and various small businesses. The Lower Northside and Depot Neighborhood Association oversees the neighborhood. The neighborhood is also home to the La Crosse Amtrak Depot and the Coulee Region Business Center, which includes a decent amount of light industrial/manufacturing. There's a significant high-density development (5th Ward) underway in this neighborhood, with plans to double the size and scope with the completion of phase 2.

Vision for Future Land Use

Future land use within this neighborhood is highly influenced by the floodplain, as this is a very low-lying area. There is a desire for commercial uses along Caledonia Street, which could help grow the area of old town north. As there is a concentration of students living here, rental opportunities should be considered in order to provide more diversity of housing options for the City's student population. Additionally, Garden Terrace is in this neighborhood, and the City's Community Development has plans to develop another block in this neighborhood in a similar way.

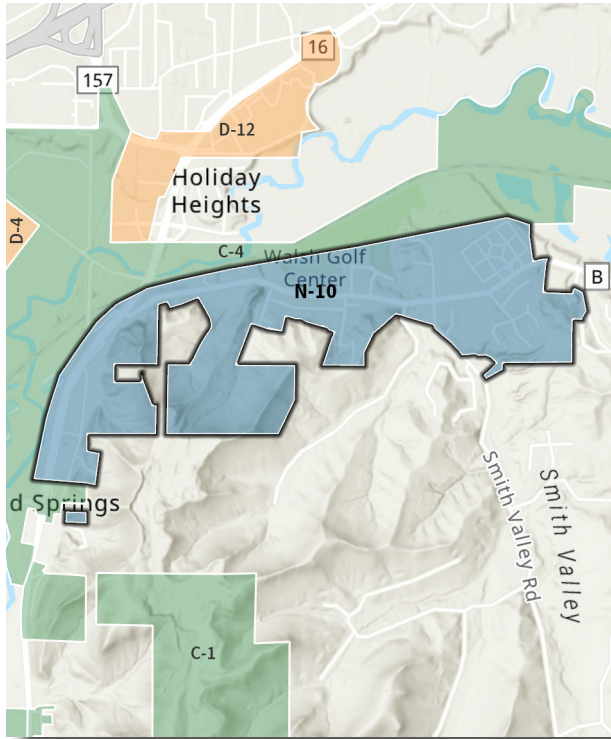
Voices from the community

“There has been a great resurgence here in Old Town North, since leaving and returning after many years to see that is wonderful. Keep investing in incentives here - the old North vs South of LaX needs to pass on, and invest in both equally to survive and flourish as towns like Holmen and Ona expand and grow.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	D	D	D	U	D	A	A	D	D	U

NORTHWOODS NEIGHBORHOOD (N-10)



Description

The Northwoods neighborhood is located at the far northeast corner of La Crosse. The neighborhood borders the La Crosse Marsh to the north. Northwoods includes a mix of suburban-type development patterns, predominantly single-family residential subdivisions. The neighborhood also includes a public golf course as well as commercial uses along Highway 16 on the western boundary.

Vision for Future Land Use

Low-density residential uses are the primary residential uses desired in this neighborhood. There is also support for some medium-density residential if it is coupled with expanded transportation access. More neighborhood commercial/commercial uses are also desired in order to provide residents with easier access to basic goods and services.

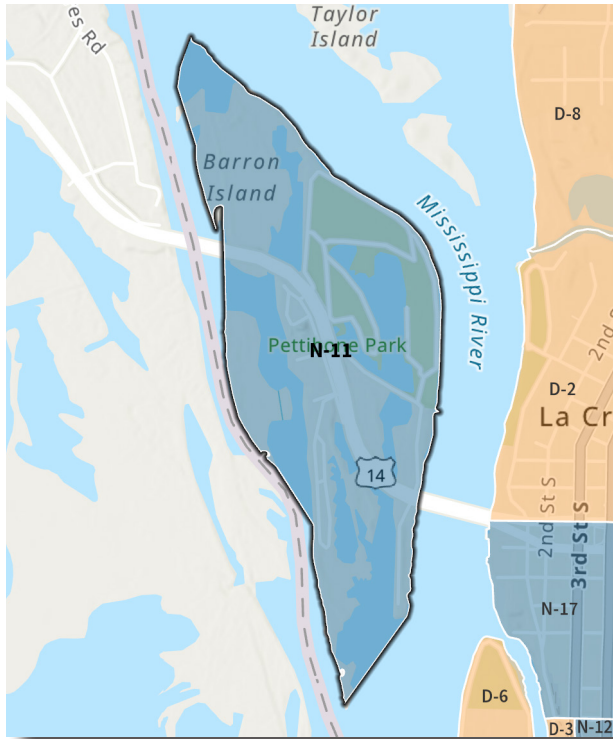
Voices from the community

“This intersection [River Valley Dr. and Gillette St.] is chaos for bicycles and impossible to cross comfortably, especially when I have my child with me”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	U	A	U	D	D	A	A	A	U

PETTIBONE NEIGHBORHOOD (N-11)



Description

The Pettibone neighborhood encompasses Barron Island, located across the Mississippi River to the west along the border with the state of Minnesota. The island is made up of parks, including the popular sandy Pettibone Beach, a resort, marinas, and beaches. The island is a popular site for recreational boating. One of the defining features of the Pettibone neighborhood is the presence of historic fixed boathouses along the river.

Vision for Future Land Use

It is recommended for the island to maintain the existing park and natural areas and the scenic landscape with minimal new development. While there are some properties within the neighborhood that offer redevelopment potential, a significant consideration should be how redevelopment proposals would interact with the park spaces. A priority for this neighborhood is maintaining public access to the waterfront as one of the City's valuable assets, and consequently limiting waterfront privatization. Recently, the County sold the five-acre Park Plaza which, if approved, will be developed into a mixed-use space with approximately 47 rental apartments and commercial space.

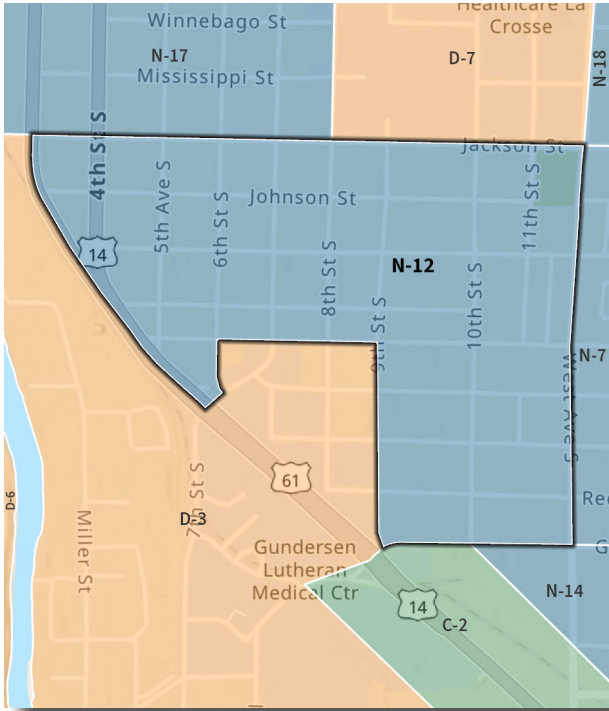
Voices from the community

“Hope to see physically protected bicycle infrastructure to tie in to Wagon Wheel Trail to allow safe travel between La Crescent and La Crosse for people of all abilities on bikes.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	A	A	U	A	A	U	A	D	A

POWELL-POAGE-HAMILTON NEIGHBORHOOD (N-12)



Description

The Powell Poage Hamilton neighborhood is anchored by the Gunderson Lutheran medical campus, a major healthcare institution and regional employer. Single-family residential properties comprise the majority of the northeast portion of the neighborhood, while mixed-use defines the Route 14 corridor. Industrial and park uses make up Isle La Plume to the west. The neighborhood is home to the South Side Community Center and Hamilton Elementary School. The Powell-Poage Hamilton Neighborhood Association oversees the neighborhood within the boundaries of Green Bay Street to Jackson Street and West Avenue to 3rd/South Avenue.

Vision for Future Land Use

There is a strong desire to improve waterfront recreation and access to the Mississippi River within the neighborhood. There is also a desire to increase the availability of housing stock, while preserving the single-family residential vibe of the area. Higher density housing should be clustered in areas that are well-served by transportation and that are close to major employers. Diversifying zoning to include a variety of uses in specified areas is recommended. High density is desired at the periphery, targeted toward mixed use residential with ground floor business and commercial. A small grocery store is desired for this neighborhood.

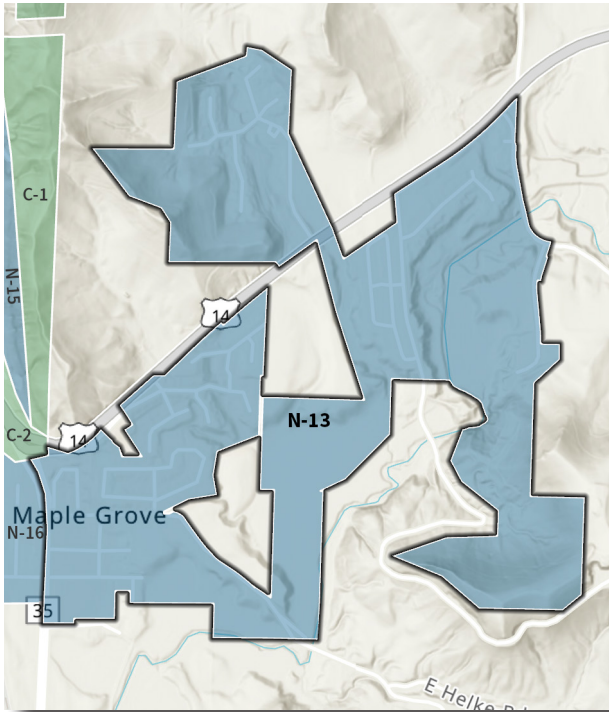
Voices from the community

“Perfect location for a Trader Joe’s or some other grocery store in this south side food desert.”

“WE NEED a grocery store near here! It is over a mile any direction to get groceries...not walkable for many of us!!!”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	D	D	D	A	D	A	U	D	D	U

SOUTHERN BLUFFS NEIGHBORHOOD (N-13)



Description

The Southern Bluffs neighborhood is located at the far south/southeast portion of the City of La Crosse next to the neighboring Town of Shelby. Current uses within the neighborhood include predominantly residential, with a small amount of “big box” style retail stores. The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe is also located within this neighborhood and welcomes many visitors annually.

Vision for Future Land Use

Considerations for future land use include evaluating the minimum lot size (currently 7,200 square feet) to allow for more affordable housing types within the neighborhood. There may also be opportunities for more small bed-and-breakfast type establishments and associated small businesses, such as coffee shops or boutiques, to serve visitors to the Shrine as well as residents. This would enable residents to be able to meet more of their day-to-day needs within the neighborhood without having to travel far north.

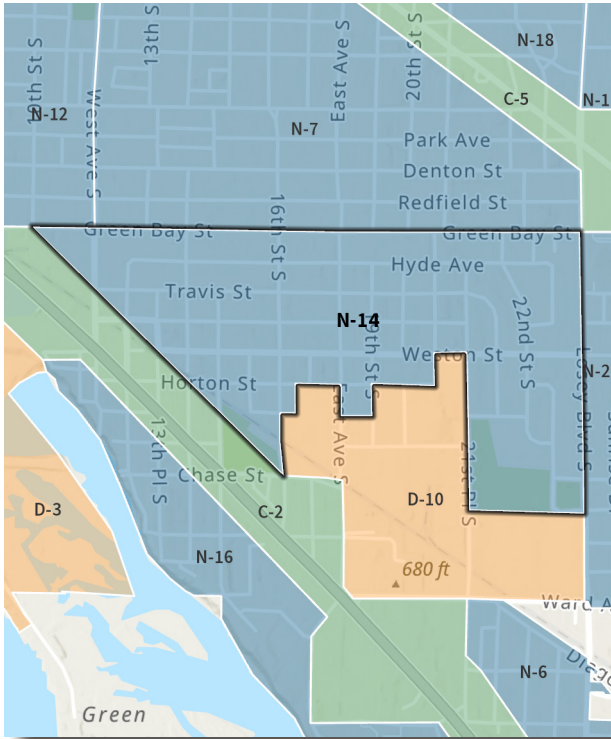
Voices from the community

“Lots of bike groups use Hwy 14. Add more shoulder area for bike and walking use for all of these homes--at least to Justin Rd leading to the Shrine”

“How much farther south are we going to allow car-focused construction? It's incredibly expensive to service these areas with water and utilities and roads, and the taxes from low density housing don't support it.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	U	A	U	A	U	U	U	D	A

SPENCE NEIGHBORHOOD (N-14)



Description

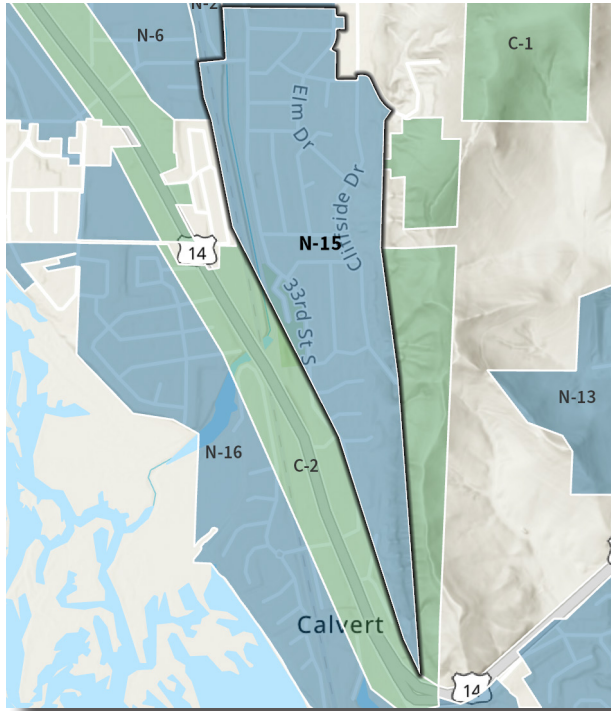
The Spence neighborhood is located on the eastern side of Highway 14, south of the Downtown district and north of the Trane Company facilities. The Spence neighborhood includes a variety of retail and commercial uses along West Avenue and Green Bay Street, as well as multiple places of worship, but is overall predominantly residential in character. One of the City's three public pools, Erickson Pool, is located within the neighborhood.

Vision for Future Land Use

One area of focus for future land use within the Spence neighborhood is how best to facilitate public movement to and from regional draws within the neighborhood, such as the Erickson Pool.

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	D	A	D	U	D	A	U	U	D	U

SPRINGBROOK-CLAYTON JOHNSON NEIGHBORHOOD (N-15)



Description

The Springbrook-Clayton Johnson neighborhood is located at the southern portion of the City and is bounded by the Pammel Creek waterway to the west. This neighborhood is dominated by primarily residential uses, but also includes two City parks as well as access to the 33rd Street Bike Trail.

Vision for Future Land Use

A priority for future land use within this neighborhood is expanding accessibility to transportation routes, especially where medium-density residential is considered. Design standards are preferred to ensure redevelopment is consistent with the neighborhood character, especially given the proximity to the Highway 14 commercial corridor to the west.

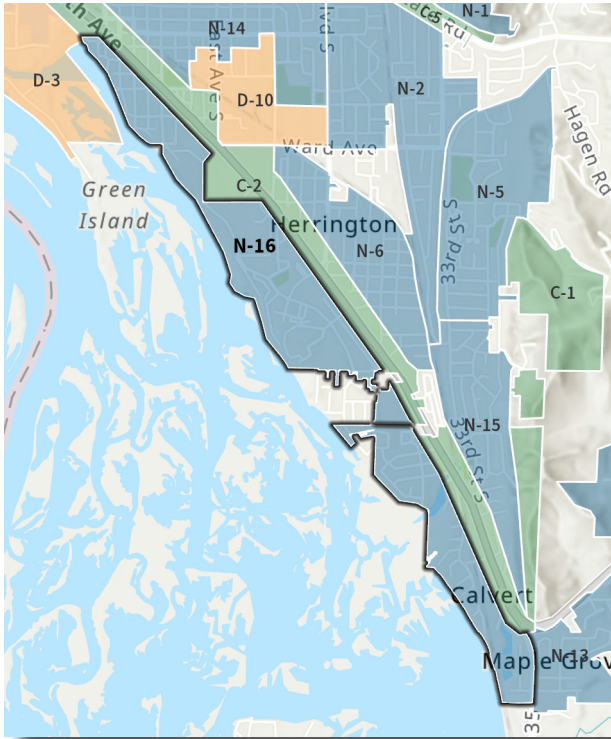
Voices from the community

“Repurpose the easternmost lane on Mormon Coulee Rd from Highway 35 to Walmart into a trail. There is currently no safe place to walk or bike along that side of Mormon Coulee to access the homes and businesses.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	D	U	D	U	A	U	U	A	D	D

SWIFT CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD (N-16)



Description

The Swift Creek Neighborhood is located at the southern end of Highway 14 at the southern portion of the City of La Crosse. This neighborhood is composed of a mix of uses typical of suburban development patterns, featuring large surface parking lots and residential multi-family subdivisions. Some industrial uses, such as the Dairyland Power facility, are mixed among homes with prime riverfront access. A significant portion of land here is owned by the Catholic diocese offices and the La Crosse Housing Authority.

Vision for Future Land Use

Due to the neighborhood's prime riverfront access, consideration of water-oriented land uses is an important aspect of future land use. Neighborhood retail/commercial uses could ideally be concentrated along East Avenue, the main street through the neighborhood.

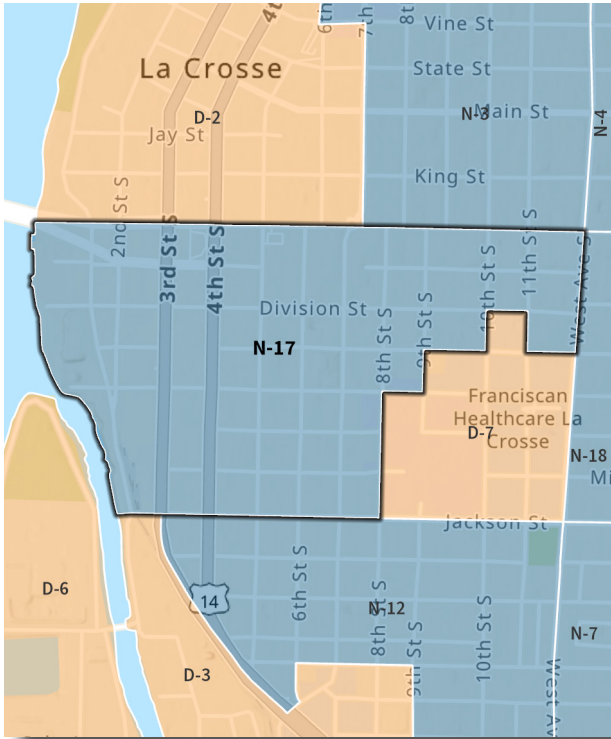
Voices from the community

“Revitalize the south side of town....There are so many health conscious folks in this area. A dog park+pub establishment would be insanely profitable.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	D	U	D	U	D	A	U	A	D	A

WASHBURN NEIGHBORHOOD (N-17)



Description

The Washburn neighborhood is located south of La Crosse’s historic Downtown district. The neighborhood is overseen by the Washburn Neighborhood Association, which extends from the Mississippi River on the west to the Viterbo University campus. Washburn features several civic and park spaces including Fire Station Number 1, Lincoln Middle School, and Houska Park, as well as a mix of residential and commercial uses. Lincoln Middle School recently closed and the School District will be putting out RFP to sell the property.

Vision for Future Land Use

The future land use vision for Washburn focuses on improving the appearance and functionality of existing infrastructure, particularly Houska Park, buildings in need of repair/maintenance, and sidewalk maintenance to enable residents to easily and conveniently walk to the Downtown. Washburn can encourage low-intensity mixed-uses such as local family-friendly as well as high-end restaurants (preferably without a bar/tavern element), and expanding green spaces, particularly in close proximity to the existing community garden and extending south of Riverside Park. The neighborhood has an abundance of high-density residential uses and more uses of this nature are not desirable.

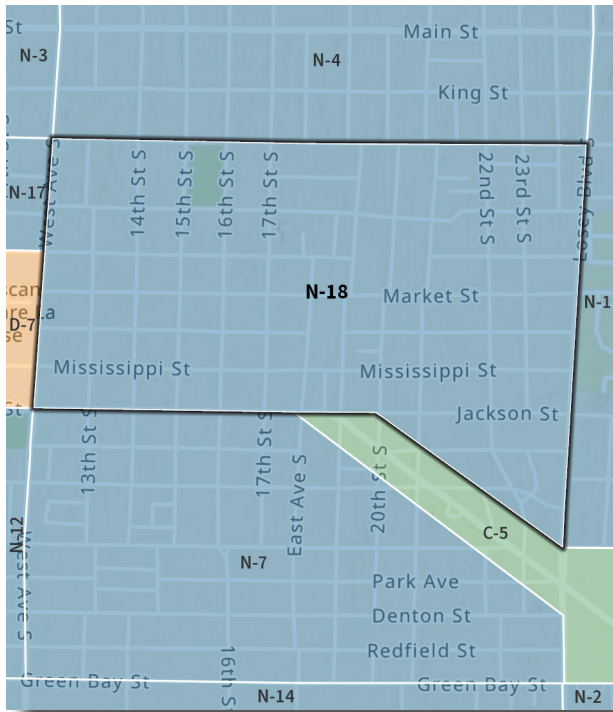
Voices from the community

“Downtown is the most profitable part of every City. The City is losing out on great sources of revenue by having low value development in downtown. Especially considering the undersupply of housing.”

“It looks like they may already be in the process of re-painting the six pack, which would be great! ...it could be such a cool opportunity for a mural or some other public art!”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	D	U	A	U	U	U	A	A	D	A

WEIGENT-HOGAN NEIGHBORHOOD (N-18)



Description

The Weigent-Hogan neighborhood borders the Grandview-Emerson neighborhood to the north, Bluffside neighborhood to the east, Holy Trinity-Longfellow neighborhood to the south, and Washburn neighborhood to the west. The Weigent-Hogan Neighborhood is overseen by the Weigent-Hogan Neighborhood Association. It is primarily a walkable, residential neighborhood with a scattering of places of worship, local schools, and commercial uses. Weigent Park is also located within the neighborhood’s borders.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Weigent-Hogan vision for future land use includes increasing housing options to include smaller places for people to live, and exploring options such as duplexes and ADUs. More mixed use and opportunities for small commercial and shops in the neighborhood are desired. Higher density “missing-middle” housing types of 2-3 stories maximum should be considered to give prospective residents more housing opportunities. There is support for increasing the amount of green space and improving access to public transportation within the neighborhood.

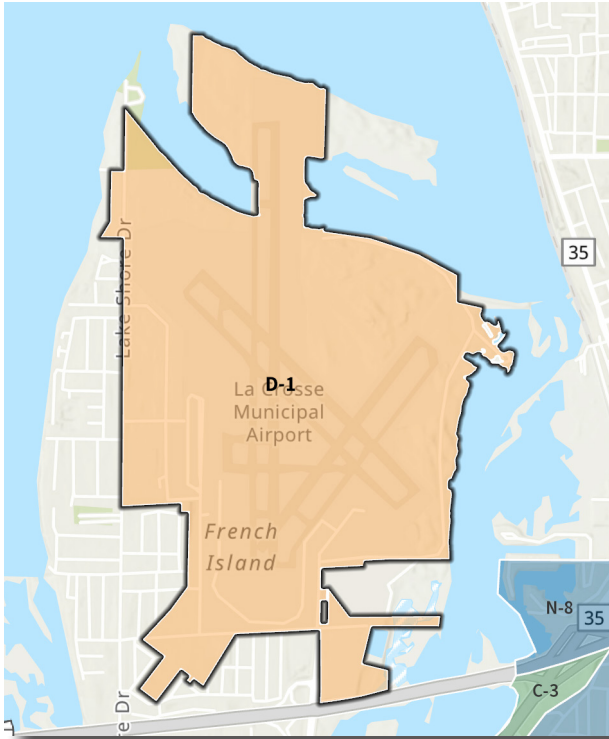
Voices from the community

“Not a single street lines up across Losey Blvd between Cass St and State Rd. The City could benefit from connecting across neighborhoods.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	D	A	U	D	U	D	U	U	A	D	U

AIRPORT DISTRICT (D-1)



District Description

The Airport district primarily encompasses the La Crosse Regional Airport (LSE) on French Island located across the Mississippi River. An industrial park, occupied primarily by warehouses and manufacturers, is located adjacent to the Airport’s west side. This Airport Industrial District covers approximately 95 acres and all parcels are zoned "Heavy Industrial." In addition, a few commercial and light industrial parcels are located to the south of the LSE property. These parcels form the "La Crosse Interchange Industrial Park," home to the Ace Hardware Distribution Center. Similar industrial uses are encouraged if they comply with the Aviation-specific municipal code and Airport Zoning.

Vision for Future Land Use

The La Crosse Regional Airport has a master plan to guide land use and operations until 2037. Conservancy and wetland areas are desirable along the waterfront in this district. Industrial uses and expansions are encouraged within the existing industrial parks.

Voices from the community

“Add solar panels and pollinator gardens on some of this empty land around the airport.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	U	U	U	U	D	U	D	A	D	D

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT (D-2)



District Description

The Downtown district is the primary commercial and cultural hub for the City of La Crosse and the broader La Crosse County. The Downtown district is adjacent to the Mississippi River, and includes the scenic Riverside Park as well as two historic districts. Commercial uses include hospitality, retail, and entertainment.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan is an area-specific plan that includes Downtown portions along the riverfront, government and education campuses, the Downtown core, south of Downtown, and the surrounding neighborhoods (Washburn and the former Goosetown neighborhood). The 2040 Downtown Plan emphasizes the importance of utilizing the highest and best use of all sites within the Downtown, weaving together residential and commercial uses as a connected urban center, and strengthening connections between the Downtown core, neighborhoods, and the river and bluffs. For more details on the vision for the Downtown District, refer to the Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan.

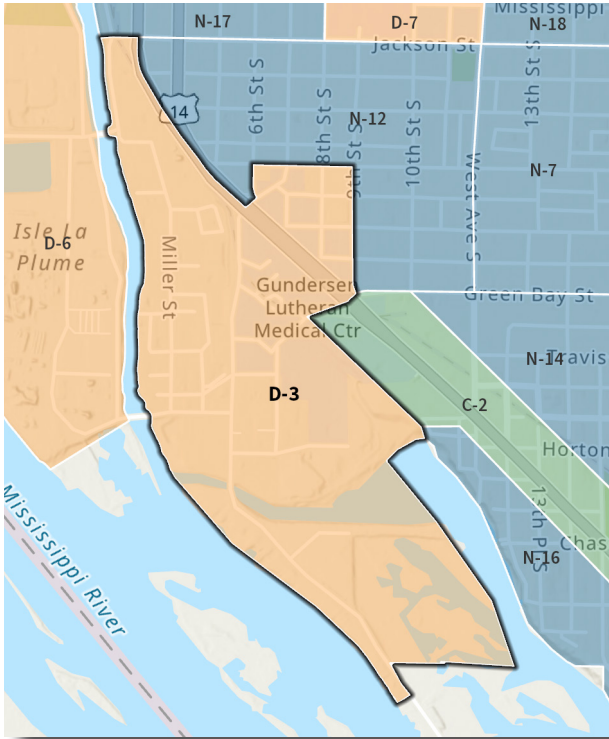
Voices from the community

“Shut down Pearl St. and turn into a pedestrian walkway/thoroughfare like Pearl St. in Boulder, CO. Space for trees, cafe seating, and room for food trucks.”

“I’d love to see some businesses and shops to move into the first floor of the office buildings around here.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	A	D	A	D	U	U	U	A	D	U

GUNDERSEN DISTRICT (D-3)



District Description

The Gundersen district includes the Gundersen Health System campus, featuring the Gundersen-Lutheran Hospital, a collection of diverse buildings for inpatient and outpatient care, as well as sites devoted to training and education for health care workers. The Gundersen district also includes high-intensity residential uses and active retail spaces that serve campus visitors and employees. A portion of the Gundersen campus crosses into the Powell-Poage-Hamilton neighborhood. There are also some existing industrial parcels within the district.

Vision for Future Land Use

Future land use should prioritize the continued coordination between Gundersen and the nearby neighborhood associations. This will be important to minimizing future land use conflicts and synergizing potential uses with shared benefits. The potential for higher-end rental units for entry-level workers and young professionals that are in close proximity to the employment hub within the district should be considered. While the current carpooling parking system appears to be working well, future land uses should be planned with a priority to enhance alternative modes of transit, particularly shuttles for staff working Downtown as well as safe and convenient bus transportation for those working night shifts. Conservancy and wetland areas along the waterfront should be restored.

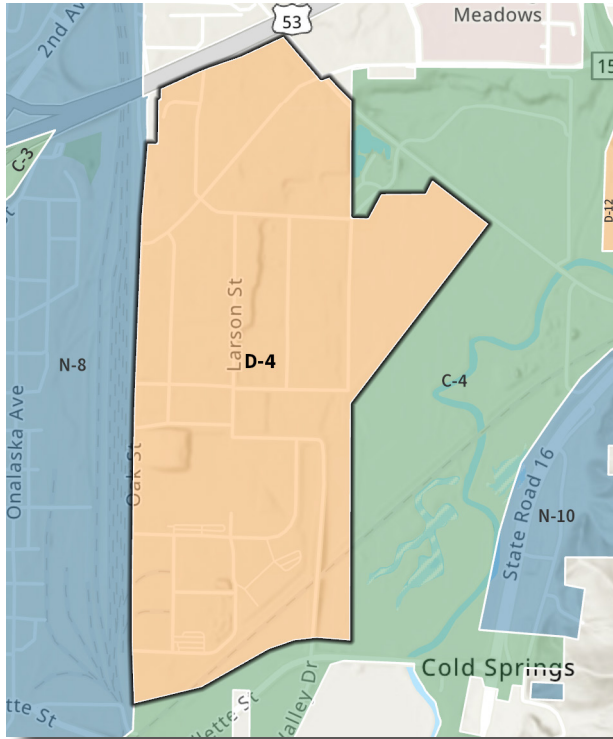
Voices from the community

“Green Island can be built up to a great venue! Look at the impact the Omni Center has. Housing hockey and other rec events, such as curling, broomball, and figure skating. This could also be used as an event venue, concert venue, etc.”

“Heavy industrial is not a great use of this prime land....”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	D	D	A	U	D	U	U	A	D	D

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT (D-4)



District Description

The Industrial district is located at the north/central section of the City, bordering Interstate 90 and the City of Onalaska to the north. Uses within this district are predominantly industrial in nature and lots are zoned "Light and Heavy Industrial." The corporate headquarters for Kwik Trip and the associated campus facilities are located here. Combined with the industrial area to the south of the Park, this is the largest industrial area in La Crosse.

Vision for Future Land Use

The vision for future land use within the Industrial district centers around the incorporation of protected open space, including conservancy/wetland buffers, around industrial uses. There is also a desire to incorporate neighborhood-level retail/commercial uses at strategic locations throughout the industrial areas to provide employee services while at work. This would enable employees to meet more of their needs during the day without having to travel long distances, for example, going to lunch or dropping a child off at daycare.

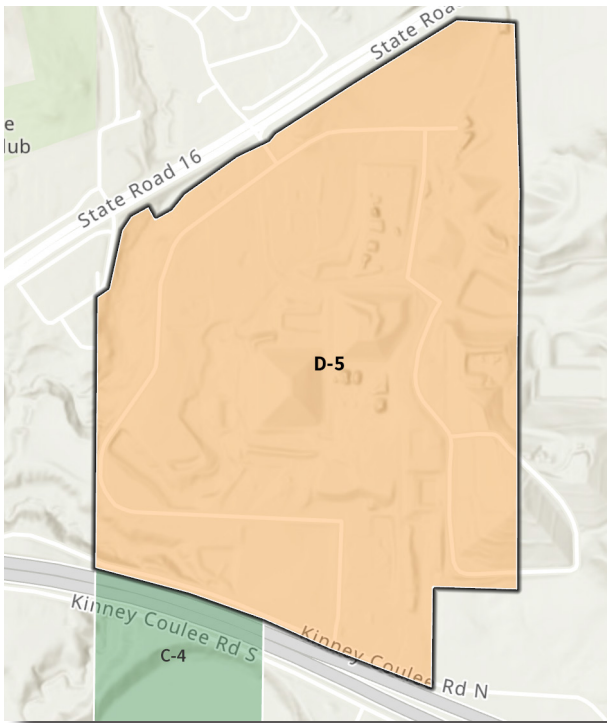
Voices from the community

“Just went here [Campbell Cemetery] on a bike ride. What a cool place! There are some exceptionally old tombstones. Needs some TLC, maybe work with the archeology program at UWL.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	U	U	U	U	A	U	D	A	A	D

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS PARK DISTRICT (D-5)



District Description

The International Business Park district extends as the northeast arm of the City, in close proximity to Interstate-90 to the south Highway 16 to the east. The district also has easy access to the La Crosse Municipal Airport, only seven miles away. Established in 1999, this district is the City’s most recent industrial park. This 85-acre industrial park is dominated by large industrial buildings and uses as well as expansive surface parking lots. Lots within this district are zoned as "Planned Development," and the outlots are zoned as "Conservancy." Protective covenants ensure the park maintains its high level of amenities. This district also includes the City’s landfill, which has a capacity of over 5,600,000 cubic yards.

Vision for Future Land Use

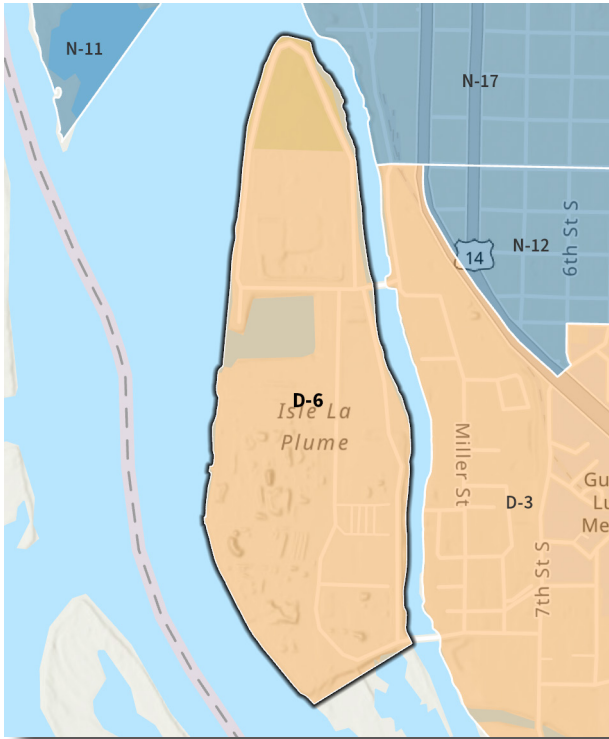
The City maintains a webpage with a list of available properties for sale/lease within the International Business Park. An important priority to maximizing the best use of land here is to ensure that businesses that site here are well-suited for, and have needs that are best served here rather than a commercial district. Another important focus for future land use is how the existing park and trail system interacts and co-exists with the industrial uses here. Finally, as the landfill is expected to reach capacity within the next 20 years, the City should evaluate the potential for re-vegetating the landfill area, which can provide carbon sequestration and improved aesthetics.

Voices from the community

“The landfill is running out of space. In 20 years, the City will need to be more creative about how they dispose of waste...”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	U	U	A	U	U	A	D	U	A	A

ISLE LA PLUME DISTRICT (D-6)



District Description

The Isle La Plume district includes a variety of municipal facilities such as wastewater and public transit, as well as several public parks and a marina. The City’s wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) within this district serves as a regional facility, accepting and treating waste from the City of La Crosse, and several areas adjacent to the City, including the City of Onalaska, the City of La Crescent (Minnesota), the Town of Campbell, and Sanitary Districts 1 and 2 in the Town of Shelby. The WWTP has a design flow capacity of 20 million gallons per day (MGD) and discharges very high-quality effluent, well within permit limits, to the Mississippi River. As of 2023, the facility was undergoing a \$68 million upgrade, one of the largest public works projects in La Crosse's history.

Vision for Future Land Use

Land use is significantly restricted, especially for residential uses, due to the former use of land here as a dump. The WWTP's expansion project limits the amount of land available for future uses within the district. This district has been identified as a potential microgrid site in the City's Climate Action Plan. There may be an opportunity to expand shipping uses within the district if there is interest from companies. Due to the district's close proximity to the Mississippi River, future land uses that enable an emphasis on outdoor natural areas for public use and enjoyment should be prioritized to the extent feasible.

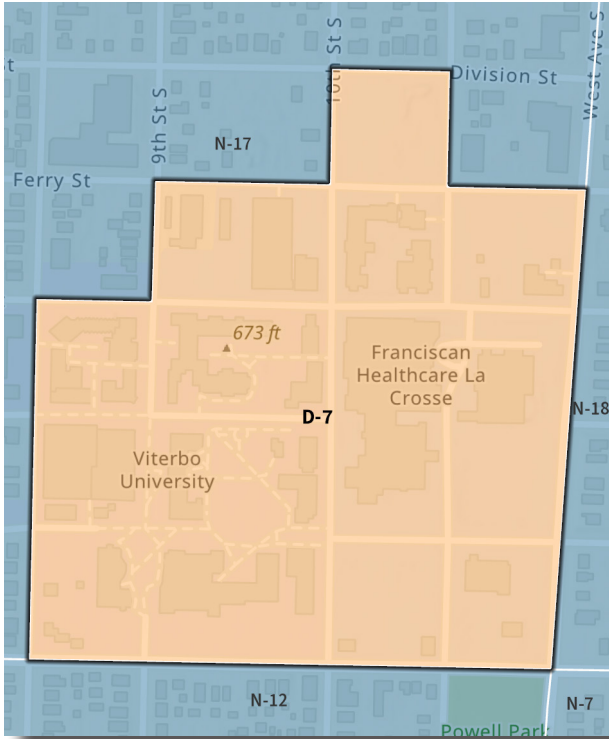
Voices from the community

“The horseshoe pits at Houska Park need a new home. Up to 30 and 40 people played on those pits weekly prior to covid; they are even state sanctioned for having large tournaments that brought people from all over the state to La Crosse.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	U	U	U	U	D	A	U	A	D	A

MAYO CLINIC/VITERBO DISTRICT (D-7)



District Description

The institutional campuses of Mayo Clinic Health Systems and Viterbo University are located in this compact district, surrounded by residential uses and Highway 35 to the east. This employment-rich district encourages higher-density residential and neighborhood retail uses to support the density of jobs.

Vision for Future Land Use

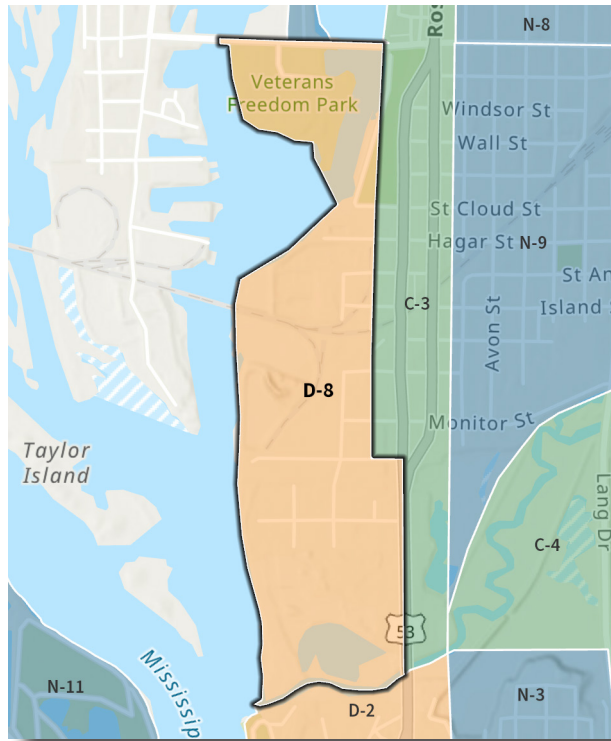
At the time of the creation of this plan, Mayo Clinic was completing its own public engagement outreach to create a plan for what neighbors want to see around the edges of the medical campus. Mayo Clinic and Viterbo University also complete their own Strategic Plans every 5 years. Future land uses should emphasize a variety of accessible transit options for shift employees that live both within and outside of La Crosse (approximately 2/3 of Mayo Clinic employees live outside of the City). In particular, opportunities for rideshare, downtown shuttles, park-and-ride, and secure bike storage should be evaluated. Future land uses should also consider trends in student/entry-level professional housing preferences, particularly single-bedrooms with shared common spaces that promote a vibrant, social lifestyle.

Voices from the community

“I was surprised how difficult it was to get from my home near UW-L to Mayo via public transit.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	U	A	D	U

RIVER POINT DISTRICT (D-8)



District Description

The River Point district is made up of the Planned Development - River Point District and the Oktoberfest festival grounds. The River district is located on either side of the confluence of the Mississippi, Black, and La Crosse Rivers, with much of the area within the 100-year floodplain. Development here is intended to complement La Crosse’s downtown historic grid and pedestrian character, as well as enhanced recreation and conservation education opportunities, with mindfulness of development limitations within the floodplain areas.

Vision for Future Land Use

The future land use vision is described in detail in the 2019 Riverside North Planned Development District document as “re-imagining the former 65-acre industrial property as a vibrant, new, mixed-use waterfront neighborhood in City of La Crosse” and “...an opportunity to stitch together La Crosse’s riverfront, system of parks and trails, and expand its urban grid, integrated as a unique, holistically considered neighborhood.” For more information on Riverside North, refer to the 2019 Plan.

Voices from the community

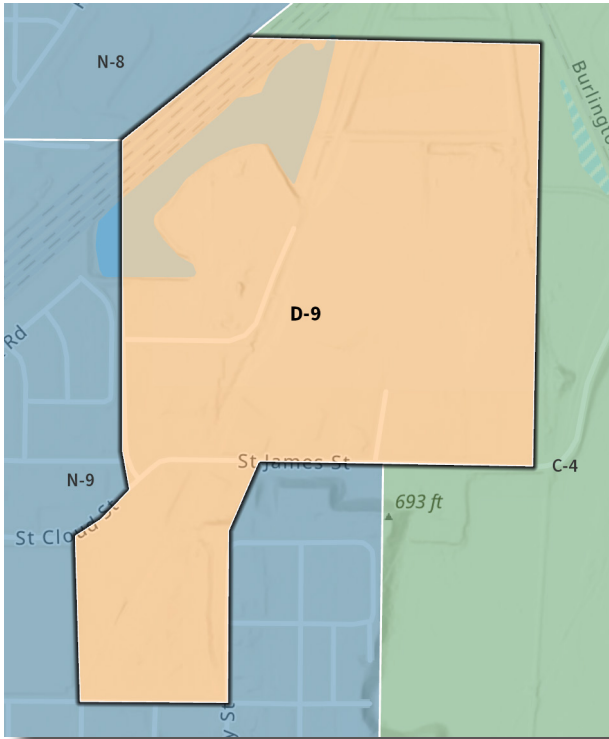
“Add affordable housing”

“There is a lot of housing going up around here, but you have to drive to get to any grocery store. Maybe somewhere around here we should add a grocery store and hardware store... Right now its not very inviting but it has a whole lot of potential.”

“Please build affordable town home condos in River Point development.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	D	A	D	D	A	A	A	D	A

ST. JAMES INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT (D-9)



District Description

The St. James Industrial district is bounded by Highway 35 to the west. The district is located east of the Lower Northside Depot neighborhood and northwest of the La Crosse Marsh and the Grand Crossing Trail. The St. James Industrial district is composed of a mix of uses ranging from residential to warehouse, manufacturing, and related industrial uses.

Vision for Future Land Use

The St. James Industrial District borders to the La Crosse River Marsh along its eastern boundary. The La Crosse River Marsh was identified as a priority to conserve and protect during this Plan's community engagement process. Therefore, future land uses should prioritize the protection of natural resources and softening the edge of the industrial zone where it borders the marsh. This could include prioritizing the siting of lower-intensity industrial uses along the eastern edge of the district, to the extent feasible, and clustering higher-intensity industrial uses along the central/western portion of the district.

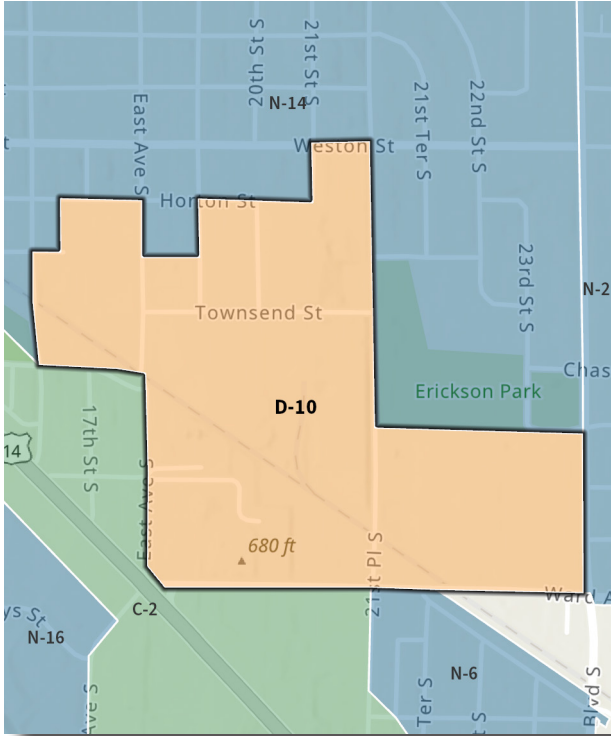
Voices from the community

“Make Sumner or Milwaukee St into a complete “through” street to allow a bike and pedestrian connection from downtown to the Northside and River Point to Copeland park.”

“Put more trees back up here. Native plants as well. It looks terrible without them. It’s what makes this area.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	U	U	U	A	U	A	D	U	A	D

TRANE & CHART DISTRICT (D-10)



District Description

The Trane & Chart district straddles Highway 14 and the railroad right-of-way. It includes several facilities owned and operated by Trane Company, one of the larger employers in the City, as well as a variety of uses including high and low-intensity commercial. There are minor residential components within the district as well.

Vision for Future Land Use

The vision for future land use within this district is highly dependent on future trends in needs for industrial space. If existing buildings used for industrial space is transitioned away from industrial, there is the potential to create medium-high-density residential within the district. However, consideration should be given to needs for industrial employer expansion within the City.

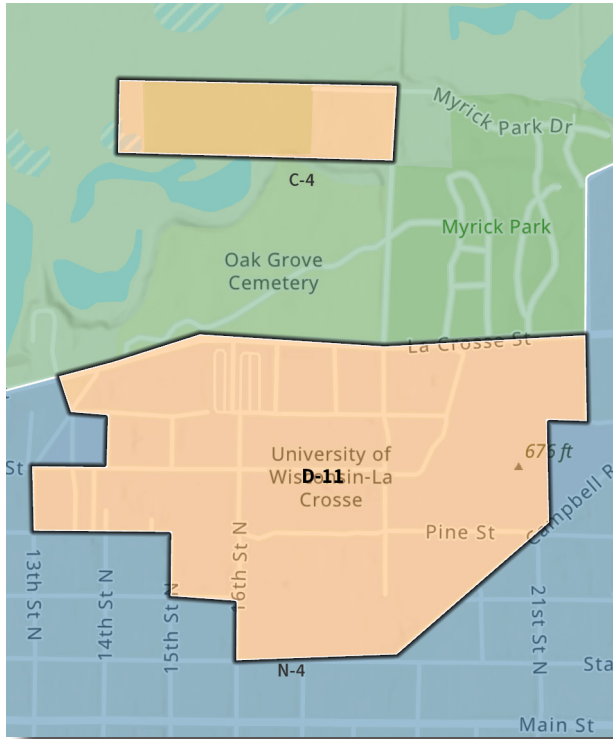
Voices from the community

“The HCCA is an essential part of the La Crosse area. The local government should work with them more to recognize and affirm that Hmong people are a respected part of our community.”

“Biking across the railroad tracks here is very rough. I have seen other cities with smoother rail crossings, or just replacing the wood would be great”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	D	A	D	D	A	A	U	A	A

UW-LA CROSSE DISTRICT (D-11)



District Description

The UW La Crosse district composes the campus of the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse, the City’s largest higher education institution. The university system sits at the center of this district, with approximately 3,200 students and staff residing in on-campus housing (10 residence halls). The core campus is surrounded by supporting uses including single-family residential conversions to multi-family housing for the student renter population.

Vision for Future Land Use

The overall focus in this district is on pedestrian-focused and neighborhood-friendly uses that promote cohabitation of the student population and surrounding low density residential neighborhoods.

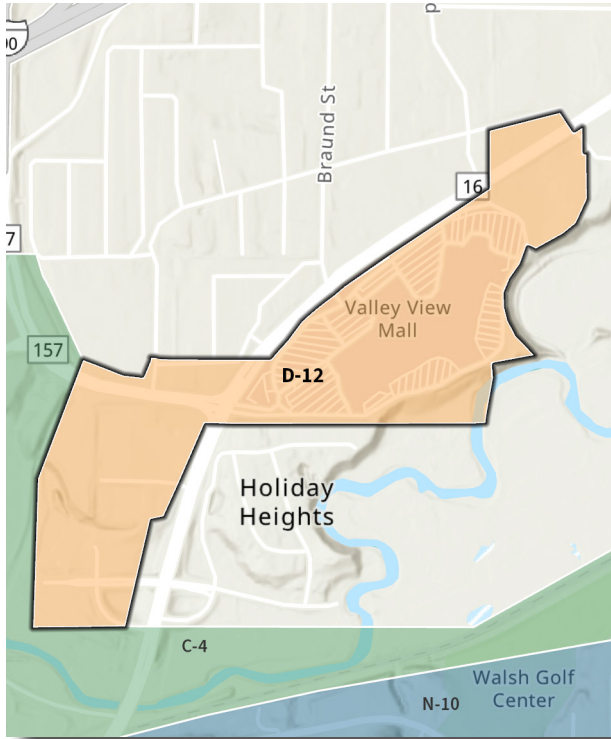
Voices from the community

“Memorial Pool is a great asset for central La Crosse residents!”

“Remove or renovate the Cartwright Center to reconnect East Ave through campus.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	D	A	D	D	U	U	A	D	A

VALLEY VIEW MALL DISTRICT (D-12)



District Description

The Valley View Mall district is a commercial district that encompasses the mall. This District features expansive surface parking space and large-format retail stores. Anchor retail stores at the mall include Barnes and Noble, JC Penney, and Ulta Beauty, among many other smaller retail stores and chain restaurants.

Vision for Future Land Use

At the time of this Plan's creation, there were several vacant storefronts available for redevelopment at the Valley View Mall. As a retail hub with abundant access to goods and services, there is an opportunity to include high-density residential uses within the district. Any development of this nature should be paired with expanded transportation access both for future residents as well as residents/visitors from outside of the district.

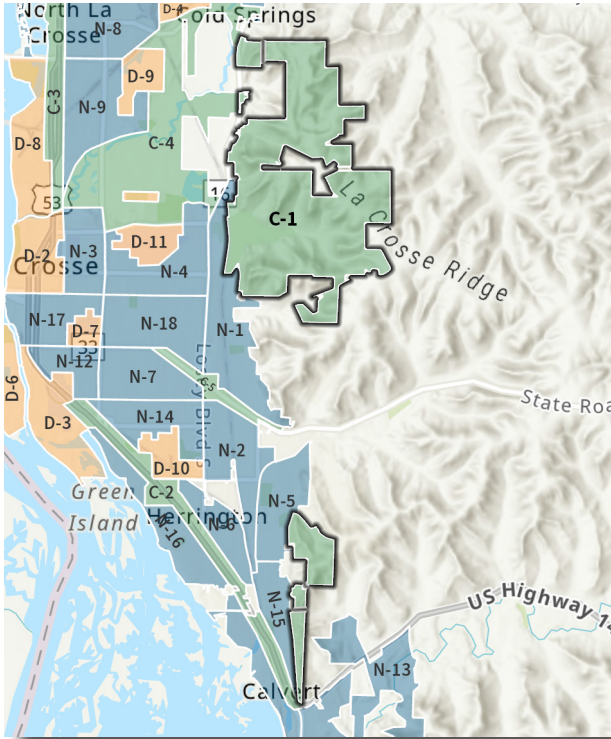
Voices from the community

“Greatly looking forward to the development of Hy-Vee. They offer much more than existing grocery options and would use the mostly currently empty space well”

“There needs to be a movie theatre on this end of town. It could be at the mall (again). There could be an escape room, a museum, more restaurants...”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	A	D	A	D	D	D	U	A	U	U

HIXON FOREST CORRIDOR (C-1)



Corridor Description

The Hixon Forest corridor is located on the eastern and southeastern boundaries of the City. The Hixon Forest corridor includes an abundance of natural bluffland areas as well as parks (including the well-known Grandad Bluff Park), many walking, hiking, and biking trails, the Hixon Forest, and a public golf course. This is a popular area for outdoor recreation amongst residents and visitors and offers stunning scenic views of the Coulee region.

Vision for Future Land Use

The intent for future land uses within this corridor is to preserve the many natural features and amenities as important contributors to overall quality of life for residents and visitors of the City of La Crosse. Neighborhood retail/commercial and institutional uses are intended to serve outdoor recreation enthusiasts and users (i.e. small sporting goods outfitters, bike rentals, grab-and-go concessions, and environmental education centers). Low density residential is located along the periphery of the natural areas along established roadways. The preservation of scenic views is a high priority for this corridor.

Voices from the community

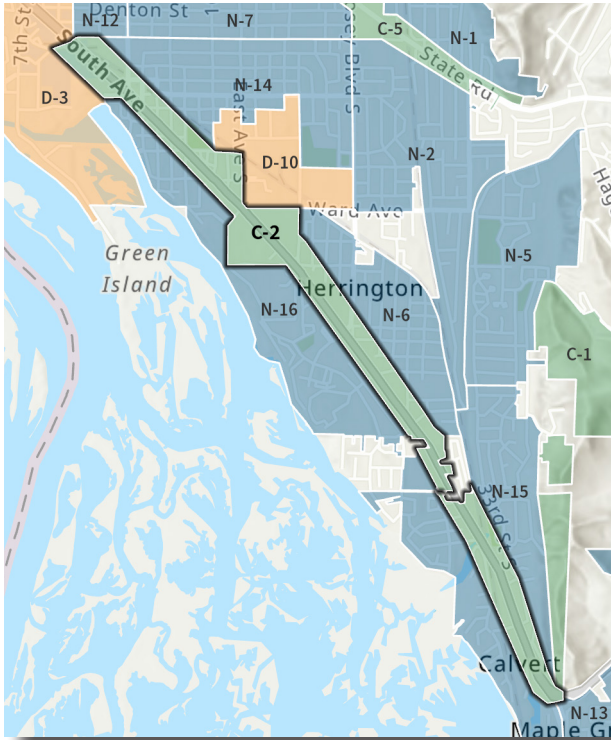
“Please build a trail around the front of Grandad Bluff, connecting the existing trail systems on the north and south sides of the bluff.”

“Absolutely love the gateway trails. Thanks to the City and ORA and hope to see more neighborhood access projects like this!”

“Lookout Prairie and the other bluffland dry prairies...should be restored and preserved.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	U	U	U	U	A	U	U	A	D	D

HIGHWAY 14 CORRIDOR (C-2)



Corridor Description

The Highway 14 corridor is one of the primary access routes that runs from the northwest to southeast in the southern portion of the City. Two lanes run in each direction, separated by a shared-turn lane. Highway 14 is a federal highway that serves as a commercial corridor, featuring a variety of restaurant, good, and service providers, many of which offer dedicated surface parking lots. Highway 14 connects La Crosse with destinations in southwestern Wisconsin including Madison and Janesville.

Vision for Future Land Use

The Highway 14 Corridor features prominently in the City's Climate Action Plan. The south avenue portion of the corridor is indicated as a prime place for transit-oriented development (TOD). However, this could be challenging with the way the road is being redesigned. The City should explore the potential for TOD to be oriented perpendicular to Highway 14 to accommodate bus traffic. Development should also be oriented so as to have a visual relationship with, and outdoor space that is aligned with, the street. The future land use should also consider the DOT's La Crosse Area Plan, currently under development at the time of this Plan's creation, and the City's "Transportation Vision," which included a look at South Avenue.

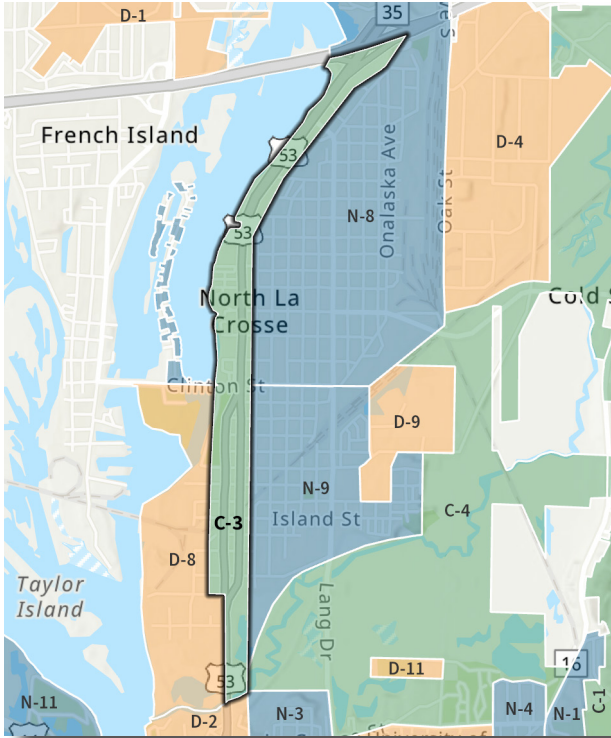
Voices from the community

“Great to have small businesses mixed in with residential neighborhoods (Book Revolution, The Groomery, Su Casa Salon).”

“Consider reducing parking minimums and creative ways to redevelop this corridor that is comprised of far too much pavement/impervious surfaces and far set-back commercial uses, several of which are now vacant.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	D	A	D	D	D	A	A	A	U

HIGHWAY ROUTE 53 CORRIDOR (C-3)



Corridor Description

The Highway Route 53 corridor extends from Interstate-90 on the north to the La Crosse River to the south. This corridor has a similar boundary as the 2018 Highway 53 Corridor Plan, and includes one block on either side of the corridor and the associated commercial uses.

Vision for Future Land Use

The results of the 2018 Highway 53 Corridor Study remain relevant: future land uses should be based upon desires for pulse-nodes of activities, areas of increased intense, compact development, and incorporating pedestrian-friendly areas for social connections in addition to goods and services. As this corridor serves as an important gateway to the City, future land uses should focus on providing a welcoming first impression by adhering to established design standards with high-quality signage and landscaping.

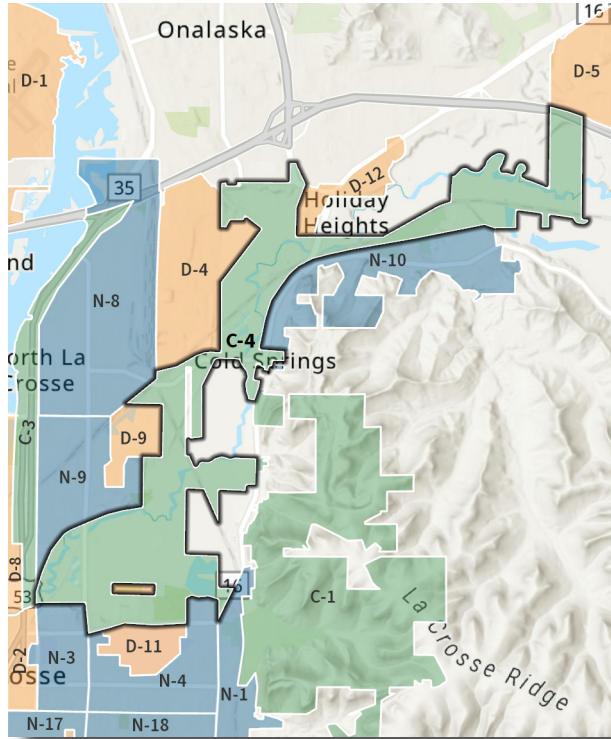
Voices from the community

“What a rare opportunity for housing. Combination of condo on top floor is an entrance to the City with added amenities like restaurant/stores much needed for the northside.”

“It would be nice to have restaurant options besides fast food. Mid-size grocery store example: Whole foods.”

Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	A	D	D	A	D	D	D	U	A	A	U

LA CROSSE MARSH CORRIDOR (C-4)



Corridor Description

The La Crosse Marsh corridor is located at the confluence of the Mississippi and La Crosse Rivers. This corridor is predominantly composed of a thousand acre-natural wetland and steep slopes and is therefore largely undevelopable land. There is a trail network through the marsh, and major utility lines also cross through. The marsh has largely been restored to its natural state after previous conversion to farmland. The former gun club site is within this corridor. The non-profit group Friends of the Marsh focuses its efforts on trail maintenance, marsh restoration, education, and advocacy to help protect this natural resource.

Vision for Future Land Use

The La Crosse Marsh provides significant environmental benefits and services to the City and surrounding region including clean water, flood regulation, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty. Future land uses should be evaluated so as to minimize negative impacts to the sensitive ecosystems of the marsh, particularly pollution and excessive nutrient runoff from neighboring uses. The City should strive to collaborate effectively across departments and organizations to ensure visions are aligned between groups such as Friends of the Marsh and WisCorps. Commercial uses and high density or medium density residential uses should only be allowable along Highway-16 as part of future multi-modal vision.

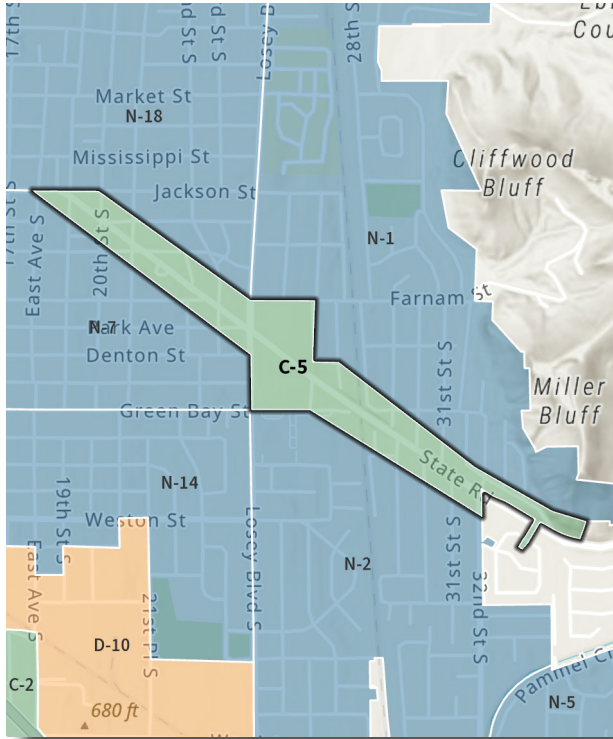
Voices from the community:

“Pave the section of the Great River State Trail that’s between Onalaska and La Crosse.”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	A	U	A	U	U	A	U	A	D	D

STATE ROAD CORRIDOR (C-5)



Corridor Description

The State Road corridor extends from Route 33 between Jackson Street and the City limits. This C=corridor includes both residential uses and commercial uses, including large scale retail such as Festival Foods and “strip mall” retail with expansive parking lots at the intersection with Losey Boulevard. The State Road corridor is a high-traffic volume corridor.

Vision for Future Land Use

Future land uses within the State Road corridor should focus on developing a mix of medium-high density residential and commercial uses that are accessible via multiple modes of transportation. Downtown-mixed uses should be focused along the existing major intersection. Jackson Plaza could serve as a transit-oriented hub. The City should consider implementing design guidelines for parcels that are oriented towards the street.

Voices from the community

“I agree with the housing and mixed-use development. It would be great to have more green space in this highly commercial area. Wouldn't it be great if there was a communal park where multiple food trucks would visit on different nights of the week?”



Existing Uses	Low Density Residential	Medium Density Residential	High Density Residential	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	Commercial	Industrial	Institutional	Parks and Open Space	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agricultural
A	U	D	D	D	A	D	D	U	A	A	U

Zoning Guide for Future Land Use: How to Use this Matrix

As the Neighborhoods, Districts, and Corridors chapter guides land use, it also appropriately locates development within La Crosse's zoning code. Any zoning amendments should refer to this matrix to ensure the proposed zoning is consistent with the Future Land Use (NDC) Map.

Zoning																		
Single Family Residential	Residence District	Special Residence	Low-Density Multiple Dwelling District	Multiple Dwelling District	Special Multiple Dwelling District	Washburn Neighborhood Residential District	Local Business District	Community Business District	Commercial District	Light Manufacturing District	Heavy Industrial District	Public Utility District	Parking Lot District	Public and Semi-Public District	Conservancy District	Agricultural District	Exclusive Agricultural District	
R-1	R-2	R-3	R-4	R-5	R-6					M-1								

Future Land Use	Low Density Residential	C	C	C	C	i	i	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
	Medium Density Residential	i	C	C	C	C	i	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
	High Density Residential	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
	Low-Intensity Mixed-Use	i	i	i	C	C	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	C	i	i	i
	High-Intensity Mixed-Use	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	C	i	i
	Neighborhood Retail/Commercial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
	Commercial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C	C	i	i	i	i	i	i
	Industrial	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	i	i	i	i	i
	Institutional	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	i	C	i	i	i
	Parks & Open Space	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C
	Conservancy, Wetlands, Agriculture	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	C	C	C

C= Consistent i=Inconsistent

A Place to Call Home



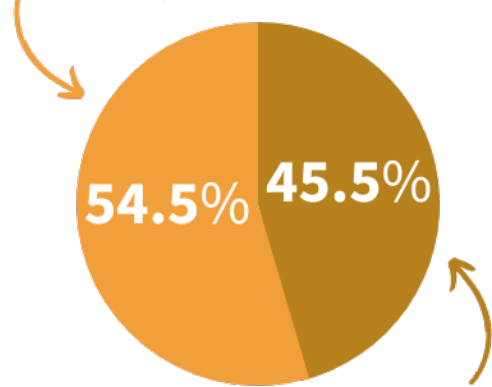
4

HOUSING

Background

Nestled within Wisconsin’s Driftless Region along the banks of the Mississippi River, La Crosse’s unique location and scenic beauty set the backdrop for over 21,000 households that call the City home.

As of 2020, 54.5% of households in La Crosse are renter-occupied



As of 2020, 45.5% of households in La Crosse are owner-occupied

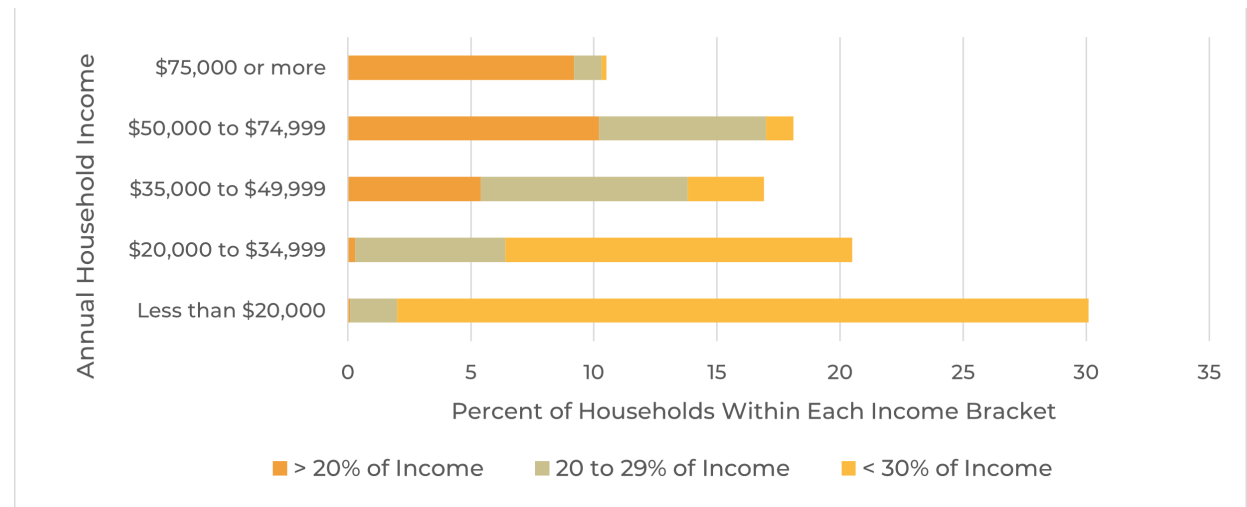
As of 2020, 45.5% of households in La Crosse are owner-occupied and 54.5% are renter-occupied; a decade prior the rate of owner-occupied households was 50.8%.

The City’s high incidence of renting in comparison to its regional peers is in part attributable to the presence of college students attending

¹ Table S1701 POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate

² Table B14006 POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY LEVEL OF SCHOOL FOR THE POPULATION 3 YEARS AND OVER, 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate

▼ **Figure 4.1:** Renter Occupied Monthly Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income in the Past 12-Months. Source: ACS 2020 5-year estimates.



the University of Wisconsin La Crosse, Viterbo University, and Western Technical College. In 2020, the total enrollment for UW-La Crosse was 10,543 students—roughly 20% of La Crosse’s total population that year. Total headcount enrollment at Viterbo University and Western Technical College for the 2020-2021 academic year was 2,591 and 5,416, respectively, bringing the total student population in the City in 2020 to over 18,500.

The availability of affordable rental properties is an ongoing challenge for the City. Gross rents requiring 30% or more of a household’s monthly income—the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s threshold for being considered “cost burdened”—affected nearly half (48%) of all renter-occupied households in 2020. Citywide, the Census Bureau estimates that 22.9% of La Crosse’s population in 2020 was below the federal poverty line.¹ For the City’s non-college student

population, the poverty rate in 2020 was 12.8%, and for those enrolled in higher education (both undergraduate and graduate students), the poverty rate was nearly 66%.²

High housing costs are in part a function of low wages. Local and regional employers should strive for their wages to meet baseline housing affordability thresholds (housing costs less than 30% annual household income, or at least 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)). This nexus between housing and economic development is especially critical for retaining La Crosse’s student population after graduation and to ensure the goal of homeownership is achievable for the next generation. When wages fail to keep up with the cost of housing, purchasing a home is pushed further out of reach for renters wanting to put down roots in La Crosse. Over the long-term, this hinders family’s ability to build intergenerational

wealth. This situation is complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the housing market and levels of inflation not seen in decades.

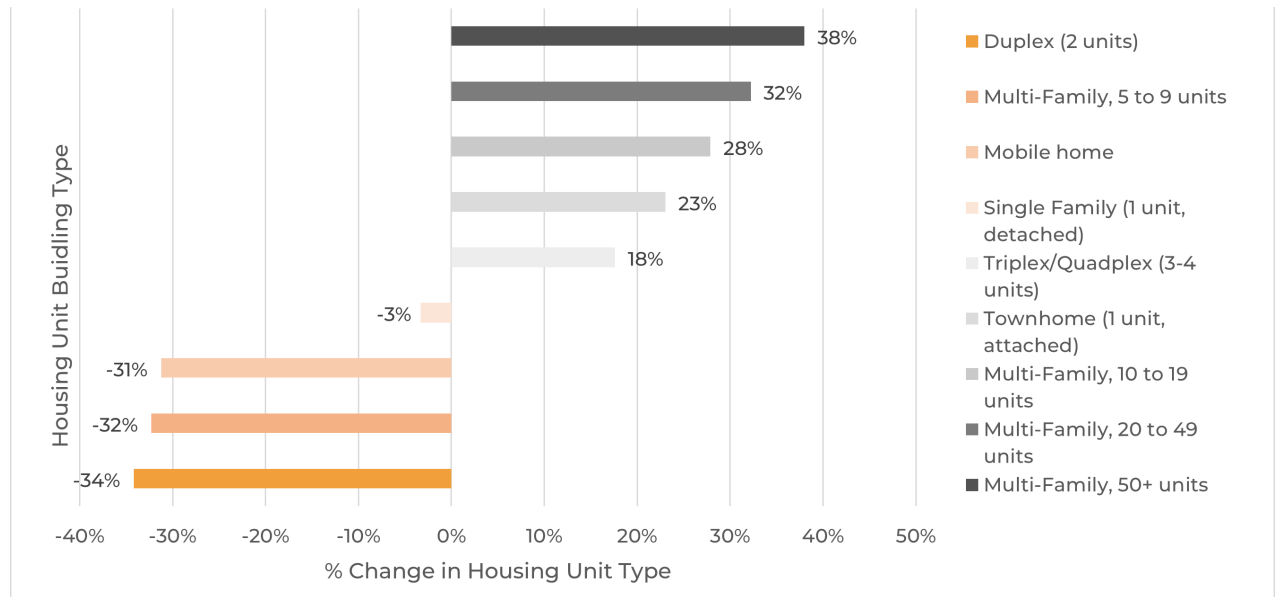
Detached single-family homes comprise nearly half (49.6%) of La Crosse's total housing units, followed by multi-family buildings with 10-20 or more units (23%).

Many of these larger multi-family buildings were constructed within the last decade: between 2010 and 2020 the number of buildings with 50 or more units increased by 38%, the highest growth rate amongst building types (See Figures 4.2 and 4.4). At the same time, the number of duplexes and 5 to 9-unit buildings decreased over the same period, falling 34% and 32% respectively.

Since 2000, the City has lost over 1,100 duplex housing units and nearly 400 buildings with 5-9 units.

This reflects a loss of 'missing middle' housing types: buildings that range in size and density somewhere between a single-family detached home and mid-rise apartments, such as townhomes, duplex, triplex, and multiplex buildings with roughly 10 or fewer units (source). These types of buildings are deemed "missing" in many U.S. communities because market

▼ **Figure 4.2:** Change in Housing Unit Building Type 2010-2020. Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates.



forces, lending regulation and municipal zoning practices combined to sharply reduce their construction after World War II. In La Crosse and across the country, communities implemented zoning regulations, such as minimum lot areas, set backs, and parking requirements, that left little to no room for residential homes outside the typical suburban-style single family. Today, these

regulations are major impediments to developing missing middle housing styles as infill within existing neighborhoods.

Attached-unit housing in smaller buildings, such as townhomes and 8-plexes, can be appealing to households that want to feel more connected to a neighborhood but find a single-family detached home too big, too expensive, or too hard to



maintain. These housing types are particularly attractive to 1- or 2-person households, which can encompass both undergraduate and graduate students, young professionals, and households entering retirement. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—typically 1–2-bedroom housing units built within existing single family home lots (either attached or detached)—can also be attractive to these demographics. Sometimes referred to as “mother-in-law suits,” ADUs can offer intergenerational living arrangement for families looking to take care of aging relatives, or households looking to make extra income by renting out their ADU to a family member or another member of the community. This need for this type of living arrangement is likely to increase as La Crosse’s population continues to age; between 2010 and 2020, the City’s 60 and older population increased by 10%. Currently, La Crosse’s zoning ordinance only permits property owners within the R-1 district to build a separate accessory building for the care of an infirmed family member or their caretaker as a conditional use. Given the City’s land locked location between the Mississippi River and bluffs, ADUs are an attractive option for gradually increasing housing density within its existing residential landscape, since minimal opportunities for greenfield development are available.

The number of smaller households in La Crosse is at odds with the limited number of smaller-unit building types like townhomes, duplexes, condos, and ADUs. Both nationally and locally, working-aged people are marrying later in life than they did a generation ago and are choosing to have fewer, if any, children. Since 2000, the rate of 1-person households in La Crosse County and Wisconsin overall grew by 28% (See Figure 3). In comparison

to the county and state, the City of La Crosse had the highest rate of 1-person households in 2000 (37%), 2010 (40%), and 2020 (39%).

1- and 2-person households together comprised 71.5% of all households in La Crosse in 2020, with over half of these households being renters.

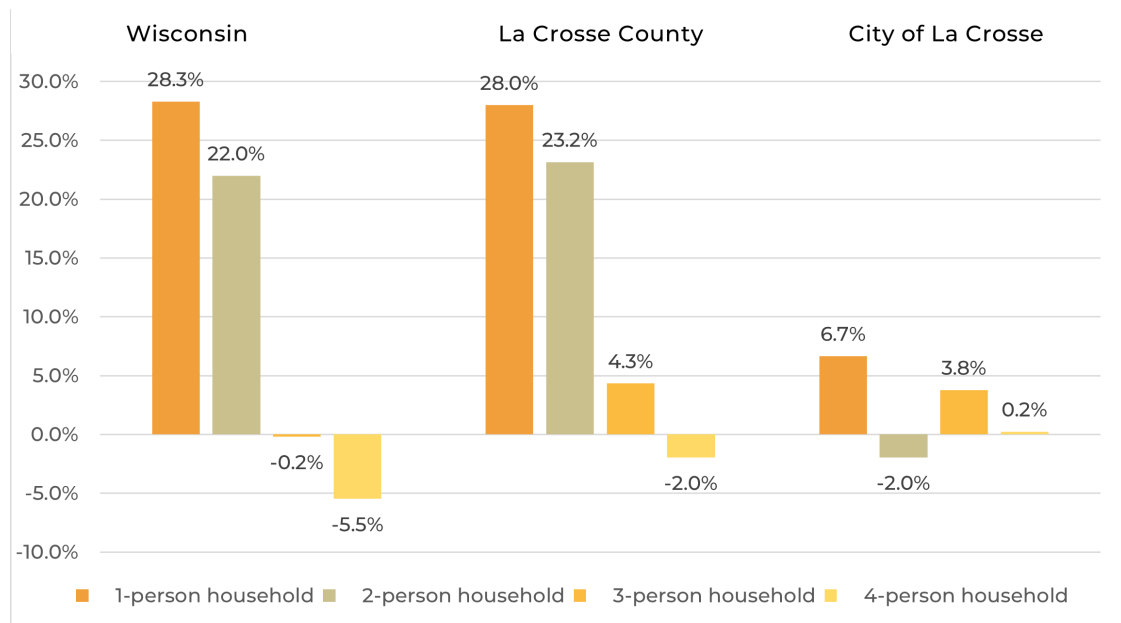
The predominance of single-family homes and large apartment buildings in La Crosse’s housing market may not be sufficiently meeting the needs of some of these smaller household sizes, both in terms of preference and attainability.



▲ An example of a traditional single-family home in La Crosse. Credit: GRAEF team

Research conducted by the Wisconsin League of Municipalities points to many millennial households being unsatisfied with their housing

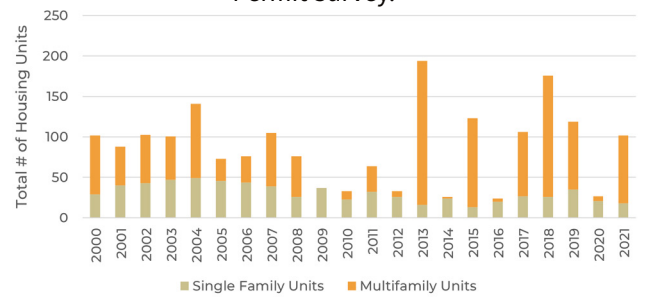
▼ **Figure 4.3:** Change in Household Size by Type, 2000-2020. Source: 2010-2020 ACS 5-year estimates.



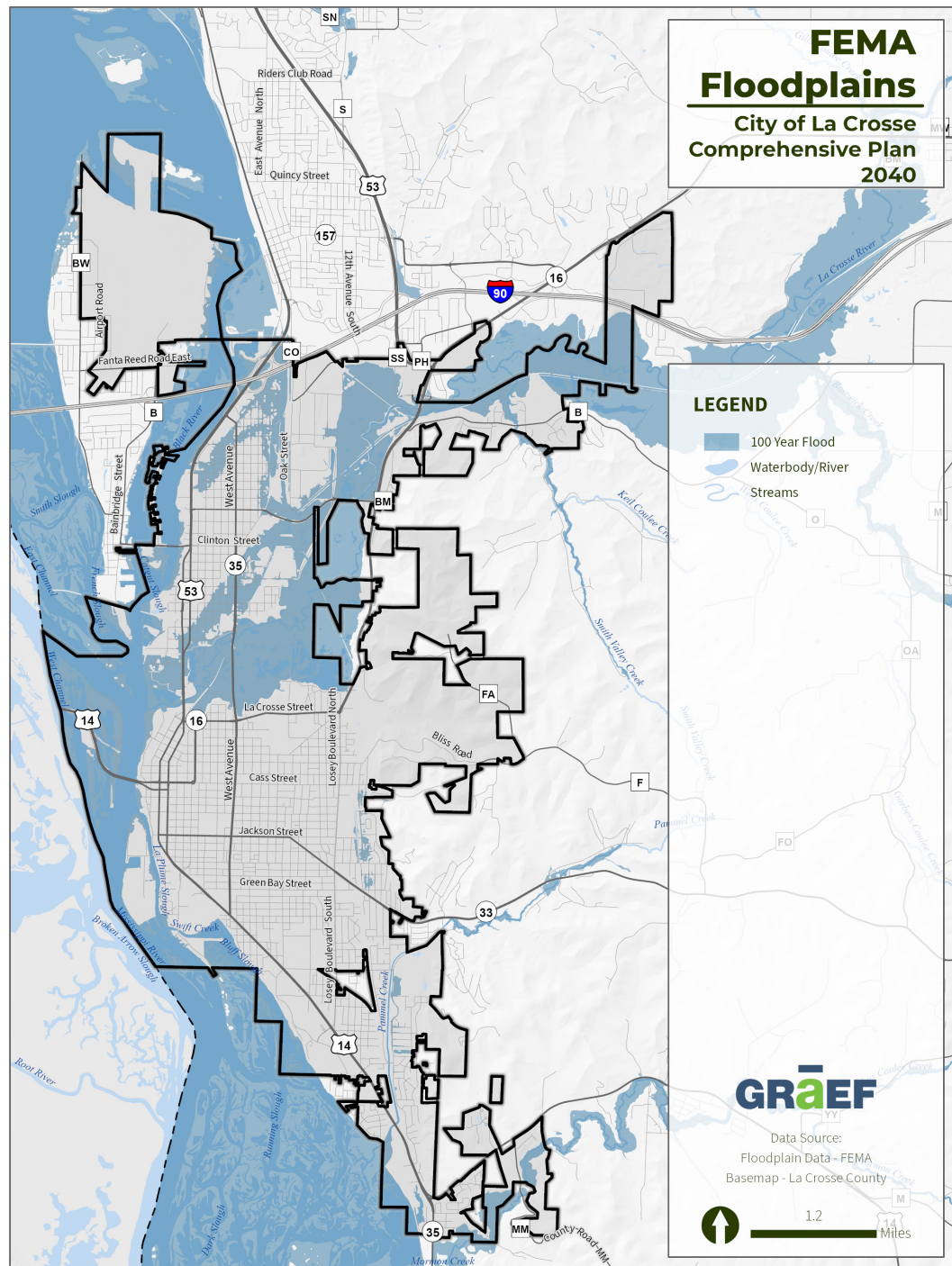
choices: unable to afford the cost of purchasing single-family homes and preferring formats such as condominiums in small buildings that are largely “missing” from Wisconsin’s housing landscape, including La Crosse. As mentioned previously, the lack of this housing type at affordable costs can hinder student’s ability to settle in La Crosse after graduation.

While the City made strides in building large-scale apartments over the last decade, housing units built in the 21st century still comprise a relatively small share of the City’s housing landscape—only 11.7%. As of 2020, the largest share of housing units in La Crosse were built before 1940 (26.7%). Older housing units in La Crosse are more likely to be owner-occupied, as reflected in Figure 2, with only 17% of owner-occupied homes built after 1980 in comparison to 42% of renter-occupied homes. Many older, single-family homes in the City need repair and rehabilitation, but households looking to upgrade their properties are hindered by the high cost of building materials and a nationwide shortage of contractors—conditions that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

▼ **Figure 4.4:** New Building Permits by Housing Unit Type, 2000-2021. Source: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permit Survey.



Houses located within the floodplain face additional barriers to rehabilitating and repairing their home given that the Federal Emergency



Management Agency (FEMA) limits the allowable improvements these households can make to their properties. It is estimated that at least 1,700 housing structures are located within the 100-year floodplain in La Crosse's North Side.

Past Accomplishments

City Housing Repair & Rehabilitation Programs:

- Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program (Income-Qualified): households can receive up to \$35,000 to repair items such as roofing, siding, windows, and electrical through a 1% deferred loan. Visit the City's website to see the qualifying income limits.
- Housing Rehabilitation Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSA): In two target neighborhoods, households above the income limits set by HUD can qualify for a Housing Rehabilitation Loan. Visit the City's website to see the NRSA target areas.
- Housing Renovation Loan Program (No Income Restrictions): Property owners within specific target neighborhoods can receive up to \$40,000 (for single-family homes) to repair or replace certain items in their home. Higher loan amounts are available for 2- to 4-unit homes, and up 100% loan forgiveness is available to property owners converting rental properties to owner-occupied units they agree to occupy for 10 years. Learn more about the current target areas here.
- City Affordable Housing Loan Fund is intended to incentivize the creation of new affordable multi-family housing units in La Crosse, especially for the lowest income and most vulnerable residents. Projects that create or renovate units for individuals exiting homelessness or set aside 20% of the total units as affordable (no more than 30%

of the tenant's gross income) are eligible for loans with 1% simple interest due annually, with the principle deferred for up to 20 years or until the building is sold. Learn more about the program's requirements [here](#).

- La Crosse Promise is a non-profit that incentivizes families to build or buy a new home, or renovate an existing home, in select neighborhoods by offering up to \$50,000 in education scholarships.
- Habitat for Humanity, La Crosse Area offers a variety of housing assistance programs for low-income households in the greater La Crosse area. The Homeownership Program builds simple, decent homes for households making between 30-80% of their county's AMI through affordable and zero-interest mortgages. The Critical Home Repair (CHR) Program helps low-income homeowners address safety concerns in their homes by making necessary repairs up to \$10,000 at a subsidized rate.

Community Engagement Highlights

The following themes were gathered through conversations with local housing leaders, City staff, community surveys:

- The City's housing rehabilitation and repair programs are not strongly marketed, leaving many qualifying households unaware of potential funding opportunities. These programs also only apply to owner-occupied units, excluding rental units in need of upkeep.

- It's expensive to acquire and tear down dilapidated housing; the City could assist with the cost of acquiring lots for new housing development.
- Parking requirements for building multi-family units are seen by some as too high, hindering their development.
- La Crosse needs a variety of housing types to fit every point in a person's lifecycle. The lack of condos, townhomes, and other 'missing middle' housing types presents a challenge for households looking to downsize from their single-family homes.

▼ An example of apartments in La Crosse. Credit: GRAEF team



- There is little housing support for households that make 80%-100% of the area median income (AMI). This creates a very difficult environment for first time homebuyers.
- Some of the housing most in need of repair are single family homes that were converted into rental units in the neighborhoods nearest the universities.
- A dedicated housing study would help the City better understand the current makeup of its housing market and identify its deficits. This study could provide data to backup the City's housing policy goals.

Opportunities & Strategies

Goal: La Crosse will have safe, affordable housing options for residents of all ages, incomes, and household sizes in line with population projections.

1. INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF RENTAL UNITS AFFORDABLE TO HOUSEHOLDS MAKING LESS THAN THE AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI).

The majority of households in La Crosse are renters, and nearly half of renters are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their annual income on housing costs. The community's most affordable housing tends also to be its oldest, putting lower-income residents at greater risk of exposure to safety risks related to lead paint, outdated electrical systems and lesser protections from fire. The City of La Crosse should continue to work with local, state, and federal partners to increase the supply of new rental properties while ensuring a significant share of new units remain affordable to households making less than the Area Median Income (AMI). The City should also prioritize the safety of residents by working to ensure that older housing that is naturally more affordable is also safe.

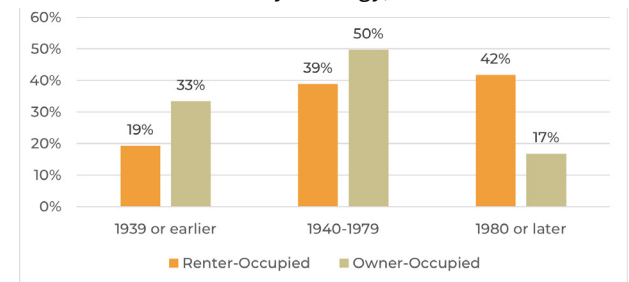
In 2022, the AMI for the La Crosse-Onalaska, WI-MN metro area was **\$90,800** according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

▼ A mix of rental unit sizes and amenities can appeal to a diversity of resident needs. Credits: GRAEF team



- For a 1-person household making \$50,500 a year (80% AMI), \$1,263 is the maximum (30% of annual household income) for affordable housing costs (rent and utilities). For a 2-person household making 80% AMI, \$1,443 is the maximum for affordable housing costs.
- For a 1-person household making \$31,550 a year (50% AMI), \$789 is the maximum for affordable housing costs. For a 2-person household making 50% AMI, \$901 is the maximum for affordable housing costs.
- For a 1-person household making \$18,950 a year (less than 50% AMI), \$474 is the maximum for affordable housing costs. For a 2-person household making less than 50% AMI, \$541 is the maximum for affordable housing costs.

▼ **Figure 4.5:** Age of Housing Units by Tenure (2015-2019). Source: 2015-2019 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy, U.S. HUD.



Actions:

- Consider the following amendments to the La Crosse Zoning Code to help remove barriers to new development: Review and consider reducing off-street parking requirements in all zoning districts to help mitigate the growing cost of new housing development.; Review and consider reducing minimum lot size and set back standards in R-1, R-2, and

R-3 zoning districts.; Consider permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right in the R-1 Single-Family Residence District, and with no additional off-street parking requirements.

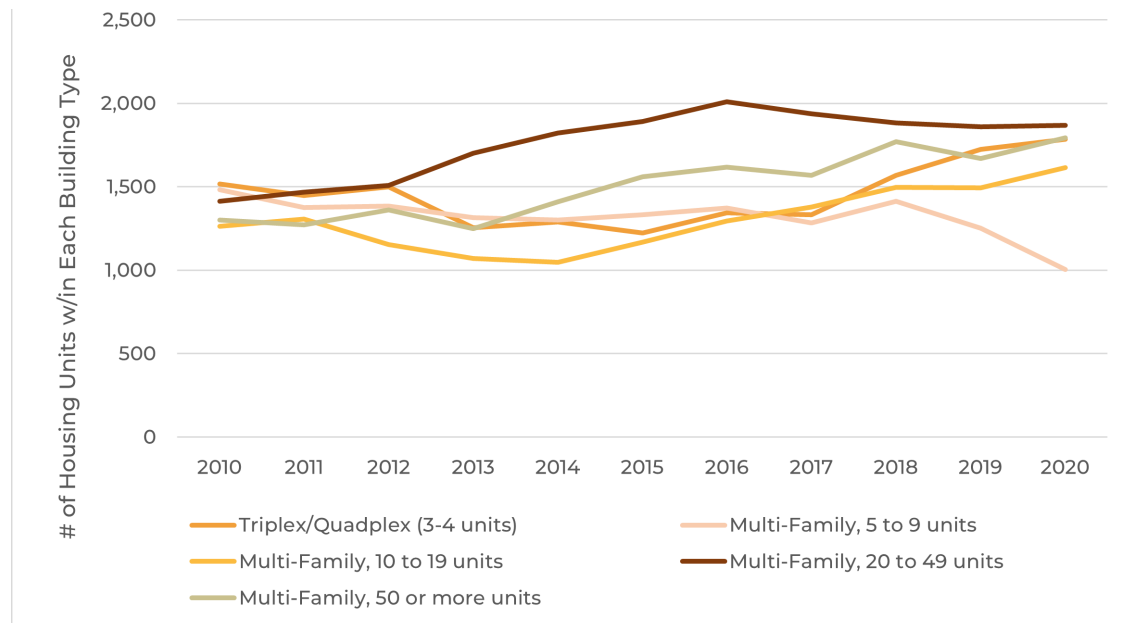
- Action 1.2: Continue to actively partner with housing developers to pursue funding opportunities for the development and rehabilitation of income-qualified rental units; continue to promote the City’s Affordable Housing Loan Fund to incentivize affordable multi-family housing developments.
- Action 1.3: Investigate and document the condition of dilapidated rental properties; increase building code enforcement for non-compliant properties.
- Action 1.4: Fund opportunities for the development of rehabilitation of income-qualified rental units; continue to promote the City’s Affordable Housing Loan Fund to incentivize affordable multi-family housing developments.
- Action 1.5: The City will prioritize resident safety by proactively inspecting rental property and enforcing building codes, especially where exterior conditions indicate cause for concern and enable City action.
- Action 1.6: Evaluate and promote stronger education and awareness of existing laws concerning tenant rights.

2. FOSTER GREATER NEIGHBORHOOD DIVERSITY THROUGH STRATEGIC INFILL DEVELOPMENT.

La Crosse is a community comprised of neighborhoods with their own identities, character, and history. The City’s neighborhoods must also be adaptable in the face of demographic shifts already underway. With an understanding of each neighborhood’s unique identity, the City should encourage opportunities for strategic infill development to increase the total supply of units and promote the spectrum of unit and building types. In predominately single-family neighborhoods, the City should encourage the development of missing middle housing types—especially duplex, triplex, and townhome

building styles—that are able to blend well within the neighborhood’s current character while incrementally increasing density and affordability. This type of development should be prioritized along neighborhood edges and near transportation and commercial corridors. This will help balance the need to maintain the character and history of the City’s neighborhoods while creating more walkable destinations for residents to meet their daily needs. Encouraging incremental density through the development of missing middle housing types will enable a greater diversity of housing that meet residents’ shifting needs and preferences throughout life.

▼ **Figure 4.6:** Change in Multi-Family Housing Units 2010-2020. Source: 2010 & 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates.



Actions:

- Action 2.1: Within existing neighborhoods, develop more townhomes and buildings with 4 to 16 units as transitional infill development adjacent to large apartment complexes, commercial uses, and transit corridors. Continue to evaluate the financing and regulatory impediments to such housing and offer solutions such as tax incremental financing support as feasible.
- Action 2.2: Prioritize underutilized areas within the City for redevelopment into multi-family residential or mixed-use developments, such as surface parking lots and vacant office space.
- Action 2.3: Support innovative housing production methods such as pre-fabrication, and partner with local organizations also exploring these new construction methods.
- Action 2.4: Evaluate instituting a demolition delay ordinance.

3: CREATE MORE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES ATTRACTIVE TO LA CROSSE RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN.

Given the many advantages La Crosse offers its residents, from world class healthcare facilities and higher education institutions to its compact urban form and scenic beauty, the City is an excellent place for families and households with children to live. The City should work to attract

and retain more family households by creating more housing opportunities for 3-4 person households, including options affordable to first-time homebuyers.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Create more accessible housing opportunities with amenities and formats desired by older adults to encourage the turnover of single-family housing units from older adults to first-time homebuyers. These formats can include:
 - Assisted living facilities
 - Independent living communities with rental and ownership options

▼ The City of La Crosse Replacement Housing Program offers a unique opportunity for students to get hands-on experience building homes. Credit: City of La Crosse



- Action 3.2: Increase public awareness of the City's housing repair and rehabilitation programs for income-qualifying households. Partner with local organizations like Habitat for Humanity to expand housing rehabilitation assistance for families making 80-120% AMI.
- Action 3.3: Encourage and facilitate the construction of new owner-occupied units as infill development projects throughout the City. This could include detached units but should also include various forms of attached unit housing.



▲ Single-family homes in La Crosse's historic neighborhoods. Credit: GRAEF team

HERITAGE PRESERVATION & CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP

Vision

For centuries, La Crosse has been home for people between the bluffs of the Coulee Region. La Crosse’s unique history and culture are central to the City’s identity and set it apart from other communities as a special place to live, work, and play.

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to identify the foundation of La Crosse’s cultural identity and guide the future of heritage preservation and cultural stewardship in the City. This section identifies opportunities for growth based on an evaluation of past and present preservation efforts in the City, as well as sharing input from community members and pertinent stakeholders. This section also includes a discussion of the importance of recognizing and celebrating the perspectives and traditions of the diverse residents and visitors that give the City life. Lastly, this section makes recommendations regarding specific actions that can be taken by City officials to seize those opportunities and ensure that La Crosse’s rich history is celebrated and memorialized for decades to come.

What is Heritage Preservation?

At its most basic level, heritage preservation refers to the act of physically preserving and protecting those special places (historic buildings, landscapes, sites, and archaeological resources) for the enjoyment and education of the public. But preservation is about much more than simply saving old objects. It is an opportunity for a community to engage with its past in order to inform its future and contribute to its defining culture. The history of La Crosse, like that of any community, is complex, has been shaped by a variety of lived experiences, and contains a multitude of meanings that are often informed by the perspective of a single individual. At its heart, heritage preservation encourages a community to ask itself “What is important about our past?” and transmit the answer to future generations through the built environment.



Key terms related to heritage preservation and cultural stewardship include:



Preservation: the act of preserving a property as it has evolved over time in an attempt to retain as much of its historic character as possible.



Cultural Resources: refers to physical evidence of past human activity. The term covers a variety of resources (sites, objects, landscapes, structures, or buildings), but they’re all linked by a relationship to the past.



Rehabilitation/Adaptive Reuse: the strategic renovation and reuse of a pre-existing property for new purposes. This serves to preserve the historic character of a property while providing it with a new and active use.

◀ La Crosse Grand Hotel is one of 28 sites on the local register of historic places. Credit: GRAEF team

Past Accomplishments

La Crosse benefits from a strong tradition of community events, a robust and active downtown, and a dedication to preservation that can inspire and power local efforts in the years to come. Past preservation initiatives and accomplishments serve as a guide for future efforts, reflect an existing interest in preservation within the community, and provide a solid foundation upon which to build.

One of the earliest and most impactful efforts in La Crosse resulted from the work of Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. (DMI). DMI, a private, non-profit organization, was formed in 1990 by local businesses and financial institutions in response to the perceived need to revitalize the City's downtown core. In coordination with the City and other stakeholders, DMI facilitated an expansive study of downtown La Crosse to inform the City Vision 2000 Downtown Master Plan (completed in 1992). The work of DMI resulted directly in the

listing of the Downtown Commercial Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1994. This district, and the historic buildings located within it, is considered a central element of the City's identity for residents and visitors alike. The establishment of the Downtown Commercial Historic District earned La Crosse the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Great American Main Street Award in 2002 and laid the foundation for future preservation efforts in the City. In 2002, a Heritage Preservation Plan was developed as part of Confluence: The La Crosse Comprehensive Plan. This preservation plan recommended a variety of objectives and strategies to strengthen and expand preservation efforts in La Crosse. The recommendations contained within the 2002 plan ranged from developing a closer working relationship between the HPC (Heritage Preservation Commission) and the City's Planning Department to educating the public about the local preservation process. La Crosse

moved quickly to act on the preservation plan and has succeeded in implementing most of its recommendations as of 2023. Some of the major accomplishments stemming from the 2002 preservation plan include, but are not limited to,

- Assigning a dedicated staff member in the Planning Department to oversee the City's preservation efforts.
- Updating the HPC's local nomination form with more information and clearer instructions
- Reworking existing ordinances to provide the HPC with binding authority and developing an interactive map on the HPC website to increase public awareness of preservation activities.
- More than doubling the amount of locally designated properties and districts in La Crosse since the publication of the 2002 preservation plan.

▲ This building on the National Register of Historic Places (101 State Street) was originally constructed in 1898 for the FUNKE Candy Factory and was converted to a 67-room boutique hotel "Charmont." Credit: GRAEF team

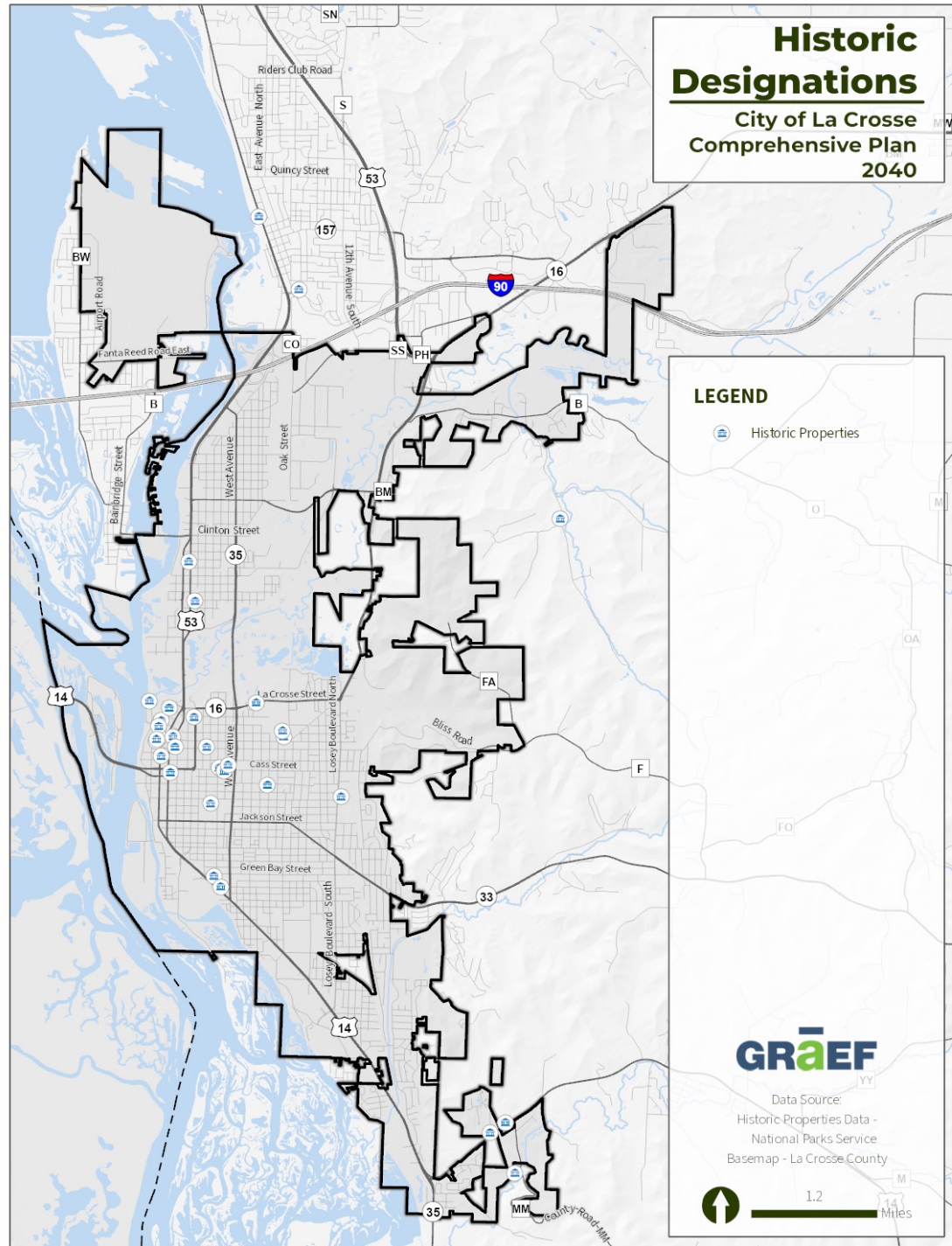
Background & Relevant Data

Heritage Preservation in La Crosse

Heritage preservation focuses on protecting and uplifting tangible remnants of the past that speak to a particular place's unique history. In La Crosse, this process is governed by a combination of federal, state, and local laws that provide regulatory frameworks for the designation and maintenance of historic resources (see **Appendix** for details). While these historic resources remain active elements of La Crosse's cultural fabric, they are distinct from the City's contemporary cultural offerings (e.g. arts centers or public festivals) due to their direct relationship to the past. Detailed lists of properties that have been locally designated as historic resources or listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) can be found in the **Appendix**.

Where Arts & Festivals Thrive

Heritage preservation goes beyond simply protecting physical elements of the built environment and involves uplifting intangible aspects of local culture such as the arts, festivals, and social gatherings. La Crosse features several beloved spaces where community members can learn about and appreciate the City's arts and culture. A prime example is the Pump House Regional Arts Center, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and presents visual arts, performing arts, and a wide variety of educational programming. Other prominent venues include the Capella Performing Arts Center and the Viterbo University Fine Arts Center. Residents and visitors alike may join one of the half-dozen annual stage shows or youth



► Participants in the "Footsteps of La Crosse" tour admire a historic home. Credit: La Crosse Public Library

performances of the La Crosse Community Theatre, or one of six symphonic concerts each year by the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra.

Community Engagement Insights

Analyzing the responses to the community engagement opportunities revealed key themes to consider when developing historic preservation and cultural stewardship strategies for La Crosse.

Identity

For heritage preservation, the most consistent sentiment expressed by respondents was that historic buildings are central to La Crosse's identity. They imbue La Crosse with a unique sense of place, generate pride among residents regarding where they live, provide incentive for new residents to choose to live in La Crosse over other locations in the region, and impress tourists who visit the City.

Many respondents felt this is particularly true of the Downtown Historic Commercial District, where there is a high concentration of unique historic properties. Following is a sample of responses:

"Historic buildings are what make La Crosse unique. Without them, the City would be just another metro area by the river."

"[Historic architecture] is one of the things I love about La Crosse and show my friends when they come to visit."



Perceived Cost

When it comes to obstacles to preservation in La Crosse, the perceived cost of rehabilitating and maintaining historic properties was by far the most common answer provided by respondents. Many believe that preserving a historic property is simply too expensive or impractical to be worthwhile for the majority of homeowners and small businesses. Multiple respondents also believed weak local ordinances and a lack of enforcement on the part of the City hinders preservation. Following is a sample of responses:

"Cost of preservation is a big hindrance. Where to get information for programs that can provide guidance and loans/grants is confusing."

"Lack of enforcement of ordinances...we have lost historic buildings because of owner neglect..."

Under-Represented Resources

With regard to historic and cultural resources that are currently under-represented among the City's locally designated properties, it is clear that there is ample room to expand the scope of the local register. Many respondents expressed the sentiment that the history currently represented by locally listed properties is too narrowly focused on Euro-Americans. Recognition of Native American history was the most commonly suggested area for expansion, but respondents also expressed a desire to see more representation of La Crosse's immigrant communities, particularly the City's Hmong population. Multiple respondents also expressed a desire to see diversity amongst the types of properties represented in the local register. They suggested that an effort be made to designate properties other than buildings, such as parks and landscapes. Following is a sample of responses:

“I would like to see recognition of indigenous... contributions.”

“I think there should be a cultural marker in the downtown representing the Hmong...population who migrated here and made lasting impacts on the community.”

Moving Forward

Respondents expressed a variety of ideas regarding what they hoped to see prioritized by the HPC moving forward. Their thoughts can generally be placed under two broad categories: 1) increasing public engagement in the preservation process and 2) being proactive in preserving historic properties. Respondents desired opportunities to provide input regarding what types of resources were preserved and wanted greater access to preservation-related resources. At the same time, they wanted to see that the City was making an effort to save historic properties before it was too late. Following is a sample of responses:

“Work with property owners [to understand] options that make maintenance/restoration approachable.”

“Make sure buildings do not deteriorate too much so that it becomes too late and too costly to preserve them.”

Enhanced Public Realm

When asked about new design and amenities, respondents preferred options for the built environment that enhanced the street as a public space and maintained a harmonious relationship to historic architecture. Many comments highlight the need for walkable streets and public spaces. Choices for architecture favored facades featuring architecture details, ample windows, porches and stoops with proximity to sidewalks and smaller front yards that promote walking and social interaction. In the most popular images chosen

for La Crosse’s urban neighborhoods, for example, respondents generally indicated preferences for a mix of living environments emphasizing walkability, space for nature and greenery, with historic and more modern architecture seamlessly mixed.

Desire for Events and Art

In terms of cultural spaces and events, residents expressed interest in seeing more outdoor events and public gathering spaces in the downtown area of La Crosse. This, along with pedestrian facilities and more greenery, were the top three desires for downtown amenities. Preferences focused on public spaces that are inviting and welcoming, that incorporate more greenery (especially grass and mature shade trees) and less man-made elements, that incorporate art and varied elements of creativity, and that allow space for individuals or small gatherings. Respondents indicated a preference for public art that features local artists and inclusive and diverse perspectives and history.



▲ The Great River Folks Fest is the longest-running non-profit music festival in the City, highlighting folk culture in the Driftless Region. Credit: La Crosse Mayor FB



▲ Residents and visitors enjoy an event at the La Crosse Bandshell in Riverside Park. Credit: City

Opportunities & Strategies

Based on the community engagement process outlined above, as well as research into the current state of cultural assets and heritage preservation efforts in La Crosse and in cities of similar size, opportunities to strengthen the sense of place and unique character of the City, as described in this section, have been identified and are described below.

1. INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Heritage preservation should not be the responsibility of a single group. Beyond protecting unique architecture or cultural sites, preservation can meaningfully impact a variety of La Crosse’s priorities, ranging from economic development to environmental sustainability.

The General Public

Heritage preservation is ultimately a celebration of the individuals who have made, and continue to make, La Crosse a vibrant community. It strengthens civic identity, fosters pride among current residents, and leaves a lasting impact on visitors. Publicizing the past and present efforts to preserve the City's historic and culturally significant sites tells the community that La Crosse recognizes its history as central to its identity and is committed to being good stewards of its heritage. The City can Increase Public Understanding by continuing to support the initiatives mentioned above while taking additional steps to expand awareness. Information regarding the City's preservation activities, priorities, and process should be circulated regularly through a singular, accessible channel to demonstrate La Crosse's continual work to protect and celebrate its heritage. According to responses to the stakeholder survey, the top two channels through which the public would like to receive preservation-related information are an emailed newsletter (selected by 66% of respondents) and social media (selected by 44% of respondents).

Efforts should also be made to expand the reach of this information by meeting people where they are. While the above-mentioned channels will be valuable resources for those who are already interested in heritage preservation, they may be missed by members of the public who do not actively seek them out. Establishing a presence at community events, such as the La Crosse Riverfest, the La Crosse Storytelling Festival, and the Art Fair on the Green, provide opportunities to raise public visibility of heritage preservation in La Crosse while reaching a wider audience.

Property Owners and Developers

The preservation and maintenance of La Crosse's historic and culturally significant properties cannot be achieved without buy-in from the owners of those properties and local developers. Generally, there is a misconception among both groups that preservation is too complicated, cumbersome, and expensive to be worthwhile. In reality, the preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic properties produces distinct economic and social benefits. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings promotes sustainability and fuels the local economy; the establishment of historic districts retains property values; and the retention of historic properties maintains unique neighborhood character.

Tools are also available at the state and federal level to incentivize preservation, such as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit, the Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Tax Credit for Income-Producing Buildings, and the Wisconsin Supplemental Historic Preservation Tax Credit for Historic Homes. Efforts should be made to demystify the process and benefits of preservation for property owners and developers while making information related to available resources readily available. Consider developing a dedicated page on the City website that provides links to relevant information and resources to create a central location from which property owners and developers can begin the preservation process. Public workshops should be held for homeowners that offer information about the benefits of preservation and do-it-yourself training with local tradespeople on preservation techniques to encourage the maintenance of historic residences. These workshops will not only empower residents to maintain historic properties but will provide opportunities to address associated public health risks.

In the long term, the City should undertake a dedicated study of the economic and climate impacts of heritage preservation. Research has increasingly recognized the economic benefits of preservation, including increased property values, the creation of affordable housing options, and the stimulation of building trades. A range of services and resources are available through organizations such as the National Trust of Historic Preservation and PlaceEconomics that can guide such a study.

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Establish a singular, accessible channel through which to circulate preservation-related news.
- Action 1.2: Develop interpretive signage and app-based walking tours to increase public engagement with La Crosse's history.



▲ Nods to the historic character of La Crosse can be found throughout the City, such as this Historic Preservation Alliance bench sign. Credit: GRAEF team

- Action 1.3: Develop a dedicated page on the City website that provides links to preservation-related resources.
- Action 1.4: Foster positive relationships between the HPC and local developers.
- Action 1.5: Host public workshops for historic property owners.
- Action 1.6: Undertake a dedicated study of the economic and climate impacts of heritage preservation in La Crosse.

2. DIVERSIFY HISTORIC PRESERVATION EFFORTS

The history and culture of La Crosse are rich and diverse. The City’s heritage preservation program should reflect that diversity. Historically, preservation efforts in La Crosse—and throughout the country—have prioritized properties that have unique architectural character or are associated with well-known individuals. But this approach provides only a narrow view of the City’s history. La Crosse’s locally designated and NRHP-listed resources should represent a variety of lived experiences, including those of Indigenous people, historically marginalized groups, and immigrant communities. Not only can broadening the scope of preservation foster a sense of belonging by highlighting tangible representations one’s heritage, but it has the potential to advance equity through improving property values and stimulating economic activity within communities that have been historically denied investment.

Diversify Storytelling

In order to ensure its historic resources reflect a diverse array of stories, La Crosse must actively seek out such stories. The most effective means of doing so is by developing meaningful and

sustained relationships with community partners.



▲ A local author shares his story at the Public Library. Credit: La Crosse Public Library

The City already has such a relationship with the Preservation Alliance of La Crosse, but expanding partnerships beyond groups focused specifically on preservation can provide insight into culturally significant resources that have been historically overlooked during the preservation process. It is essential that the City build these relationships through long-term engagement as opposed to “parachuting” in with a particular request.

Collaborating with these community partners will provide a foundation on which to build a preservation program that tells more diverse stories. The City and its community partners can facilitate oral history sessions centered on underrepresented groups during which community members are invited to share stories about significant events and sites related to La Crosse’s past. This grassroots knowledge can help identify historic and cultural resources that have so far gone unrecognized by the City. The City should also develop City-wide thematic contexts related

to the history of underrepresented groups, such as women, the LGBTQ community, and Hmong immigrants, to aid in evaluating the significance of cultural resources associated with these groups. Keeping in mind that some of these resources may no longer exist due to historical trends such as highway construction, urban renewal, and generational resource deprivation, the City should consider creative ways of telling the story of what has been lost.

Diversify Resource Protection

Expanding the property types represented in the City’s preservation program goes hand-in-hand with telling more diverse stories. Vernacular resources—properties that were built to meet local needs and do not embody a high style of design—are often overlooked because their significance may not be readily apparent, e.g. the City’s cast iron drinking fountains.

Opportunities to incorporate energy efficiency measures such as LED bulbs, electrification, and lighter colored roofs should also be explored where such measures will not detract from historic character. In addition, renewable energy options that can be incorporated on-site in historic buildings should be considered, where such infrastructure would not negatively impact building character. These aspects are highlighted in the City’s Climate Action Plan and can be paired with other preservation activities. Historic and cultural resources are also not limited to the built environment. Protecting the natural aspects that define the City, such as the La Crosse River Marsh, also contributes to this goal.

Diversify Decision Making

The City’s HPC has considerable power in determining what is protected and preserved. The City should revisit the makeup of the commission

to expand the diversity of the HPC and ensure it reflects the variety of perspectives contained within the City.

Actions:

- Action 2.1: Develop meaningful and sustained relationships with community organizations and Tribes to aid in identifying cultural resources.
- Action 2.2: Develop City-wide thematic contexts related to the history of underrepresented groups.
- Action 2.3: Partner with local artists, historians, and digital designers to develop novel ways of telling the story of resources that have been lost.
- Action 2.4: Conduct dedicated surveys to identify cultural sites important to local tribes, vernacular resources, and cultural landscapes.
- Action 2.5: Intentionally diversify membership of the HPC as openings become available.
- Action 2.6: Engage local, county, and regional preservation organizations in preserving the history and culture in La Crosse.

3. STRENGTHEN CITY CAPACITY

La Crosse has over 100 locally designated and NRHP-listed resources that embody the City's distinct history and culture. The City must ensure that it has the means to act as an effective steward of those resources for future generations as it works to leverage the opportunities described above.

Provide More Preservation Tools

A major obstacle facing preservation efforts in La Crosse is demolition by neglect. City ordinances currently require the HPC to grant a certificate of appropriateness prior to the planned demolition of any historic property but do not prevent property owners from allowing the material condition of their historic properties to deteriorate to the point where demolition is the only course of action. This loophole both allows for the spirit of the existing preservation ordinances to be circumvented and results in the irreversible loss of historic resources. However, such loss can be prevented. City staff should work together with elected officials to update existing ordinances to prevent demolition by neglect through a system of enforceable penalties. The fees collected through the enforcement of this updated ordinance can be dedicated to a fund used to support preservation related activities.

There are additional tools that the City can leverage to further advance its heritage preservation program, such as encouraging property owners to adopt preservation easements. Local ordinances already allow historic property owners to enter into voluntary restrictive covenants; however, steps can be taken to make this process more accessible for property owners. In addition to providing information and guidance related to easements/covenants on the City website, La Crosse should develop a sample preservation easement and make it readily available.

Expand Internal Resources

The role of the HPC can be expanded to strengthen the City's preservation program. The HPC should establish a Historic Asset Inventory Committee (HAIC) to develop proactive preservation strategies throughout the City, as has been done in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. These strategies will vary

based on La Crosse's particular circumstances but should include compiling an annual list of prioritized properties and engaging in direct owner outreach to facilitate local designation. The HAIC should be composed primarily of HPC members but can also include members of nonprofit organizations and community representatives, particularly of previously underrepresented communities. Ongoing training for HPC members and preservation staff should also be provided, to include courses provided by national organizations, such as the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions and the National Preservation Institute.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Update existing ordinances to prevent demolition by neglect.
- Action 3.2: Develop a sample preservation easement and publicize the program online to encourage use by historic property owners.
- Action 3.3: Establish a conservation district program to provide a more flexible means of preserving neighborhood character.
- Action 3.4: Establish a Historic Asset Inventory Committee to develop and implement proactive preservation strategies.
- Action 3.5: Expand ongoing training for HPC members and preservation staff.

4. EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE ARTS & HUMAN CONNECTIONS

Placemaking through art creates ownership of public spaces, responds to changing needs and varied interests, and keeps residents engaged and

thinking about their space and community. The City can work to continue and expand support of community partners to implement arts activities. Public art of all kinds can be explored from performance, dance, sculpture, interactive trips and environmental installations. The La Crosse Arts Board could explore ways to integrate the arts with the City's historic preservation efforts, such as converting disused churches into public studio space or commissioning murals for neglected buildings.

Collaboration could transform into direct City design and placemaking by integrating the creative community in design of public infrastructure and furniture such as benches, light fixtures and wayfinding. Arts bring people together and partnering with artists from the community represents local issues and experiences. Placemaking activities offer economic opportunities and tie in with neighborhood business organizations and local businesses.

Actions:

- Action 4.1: Continue and expand support of and coordination with community partners to implement arts activities that are consistent with and help promote City character.
- Action 4.2: Pursue partnerships and activities that offer economic opportunities and tie in with local businesses and artists.
- Action 4.3: Ensure a balance of cultural and entertainment venues between the downtown and other areas of the City.
- Action 4.4: Partner with local higher education arts students to beautify neighborhoods with a high concentration of student residents (e.g. crosswalk art, murals, sculpture).

▼ "Confluence," on the Pump House Regional Arts Center, is a popular example of public art in La Crosse. Credit: GREAF team

- Action 4.5: Engage community members and neighborhood associations via surveys, events, and meetings to determine the types of public art that are most desired and harmonious with neighborhood character.

5. PROTECT DEFINING LANDSCAPES

The landscapes of La Crosse are valuable not only for their environmental and recreational function; they have important historic and cultural significance as well. A defining landscape is a type of cultural landscape that has significant cultural, historical, and aesthetic value. It is a landscape that has been shaped and modified by human activity over time and is considered to be of historical importance. Defining landscapes can be found in a variety of settings, including urban areas, rural areas, and natural areas. They may include features such as buildings, structures, gardens, parks, streetscapes and other cultural or natural elements that reflect the history and cultural heritage of a La Crosse.

There are many groups of people who have made their home in La Crosse and find meaning in the built and natural landscapes that define their history and culture, including Indigenous people, historically marginalized groups, and immigrant communities. The Ho-Chunk people, also known as the Hooçaągra or Winnebago, have a deep connection to the land and many landscapes are considered sacred and significant to them. Indigenous people have fought and prevailed despite extreme adversity in order to maintain meaningful connections to the Wisconsin landscape, to preserve tribal languages, and to uphold the traditional cultural practices that express distinctly Native relationships to this



landscape today. Landscapes such as these are significant not only for their beauty and cultural value, but also for the insights they provide into the social, cultural, and historical context of their time.

Preserve Views and Sightlines

The City can take steps to ensure sightlines are maintained and key vantage points remain publicly accessible. In some cases, such efforts may be performed in conjunction with measures to preserve and create access to natural areas and waterways. This should include an emphasis on re-introducing or maintaining native plants. The City may wish to perform a viewshed study to inform regulations like height restrictions and scenic easements which would protect the integrity of La Crosse's scenic setting.



▲ The view from Grandad Bluff is a defining view of La Crosse. Credit: GREAF team

Establish Historic Landscape Designation

Historic landscapes are often protected by government agencies or private organizations in order to preserve their cultural and historical significance for future generations. They may be designated as national parks, historic sites, or landmarks, and may be subject to various conservation measures to protect their integrity and value. Cultural landscapes—geographic areas that illustrate the interaction between human society and the natural environment over time—are resources that can be representative of a place's heritage that are often hidden in plain sight. Dedicated surveys can be conducted to identify, document, and evaluate the significance of historic and cultural landscapes located within the City.

Actions:

- Action 5.1: Ensure sightlines are maintained and key vantage points remain publicly accessible.
- Action 5.2: Perform a viewshed study to inform regulations such as height restrictions and scenic easements to help protect the integrity of La Crosse's scenic settings.
- Action 5.3: Conduct targeted surveys to identify, document, and evaluate the significance of historic and cultural landscapes located within La Crosse.
- Action 5.4: Ensure priorities and restrictions that are developed to protect defining views are consistent with the zoning code.

6. CREATE INVITING PLACES THROUGH DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC REALM

The characteristics of La Crosse all contribute to its unique 'sense of place': the feeling of belonging that comes from connection to a particular place, its history, people and environment. Longevity and investment in community stem from a strong 'sense of place' and pride in all the details that establish a City identity. The design of the public realm can play a crucial role in creating a sense of community by providing spaces and infrastructure that facilitate social interaction, connectivity, safety, accessibility, and aesthetics. The City can think about development in terms of activity nodes and corridors. These are the ways that people move through the City in their daily activities and structures their experience. The downtown is a dynamic center for the City, but how does it connect to other points of interest and community centers throughout La Crosse? Investing in smaller, connected, points of interest established culture and entertainment close to where people live and draws people to explore more areas of the City.

Human Scale Design

Building at the human scale creates comfortable public spaces by focusing on the physical experience of a space. It focuses on how spaces are used by people rather than the needs of cars or purely aesthetic design gestures. Considerations include distances that are comfortable to see across and that are interesting at human eye level, spaces defined by buildings and landscape features that are proportioned to the human body, and spaces designed for walkability and conversation.

Integrate New Buildings with Existing Architecture

The City can establish design standards to proportionally integrate new construction with existing buildings. Belle Square is as an example of a job well done in this regard – the development includes many features that work well with the older buildings surrounding it. Design guidelines can feature criteria such as height, expression lines in the architectural façade, and entrance features. These can be established across architectural styles. This creates a strong relationship to the street and public space by creating visual interest and context sensitive design. New developments should provide public space and a well-designed public realm through streetscapes, walkability and access to public parks.

Actions:

- Action 6.1: Encourage building at the human scale to help create comfortable and engaging public spaces.
- Action 6.2: Establish design standards to proportionally integrate new construction with existing buildings.
- Action 6.3: Encourage new developments to provide public spaces and a well-designed public realm through streetscapes, walkability, and access to public parks.

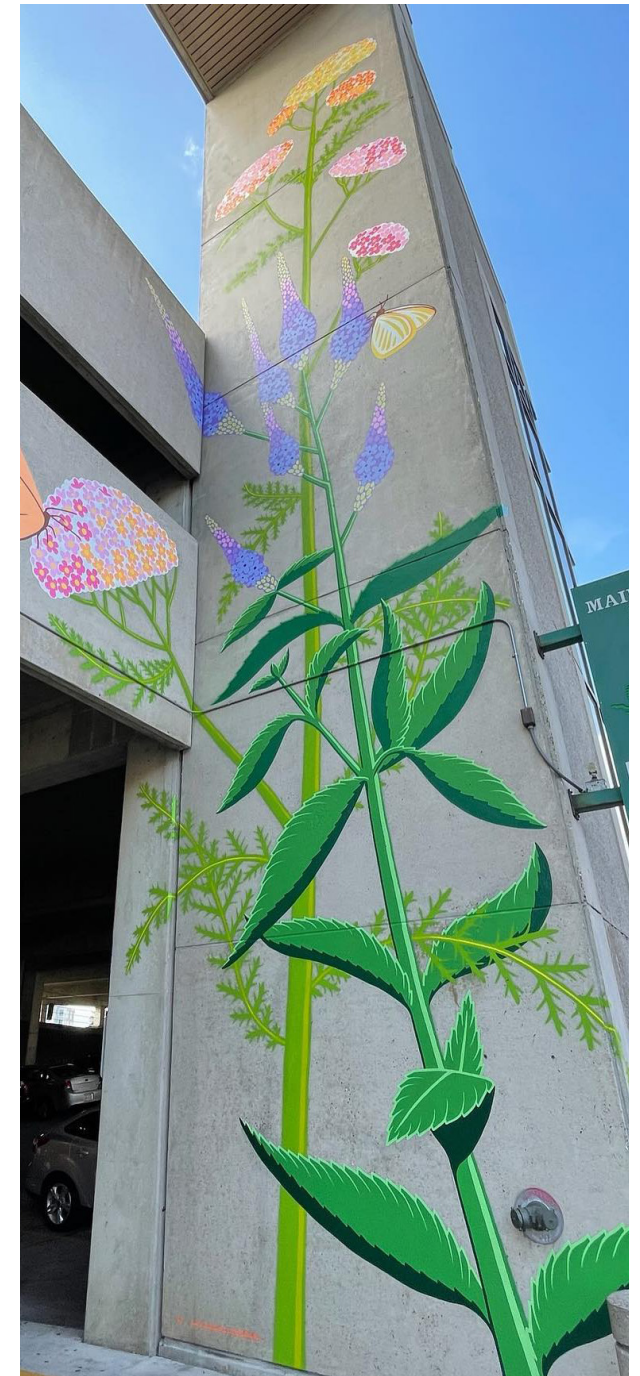
7. WELCOME AND INCORPORATE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES VIA PUBLIC ART, LANDMARKS, AND SPACES

The City can work to create spaces and social outlets for the full spectrum of La Crosse residents, inclusive of many cultures and ages. Underutilized or underinvested spaces can be opportunities for expanding engagement. The City should look to build on existing cultural resources and centers of community life with enhanced public spaces. A center of community life could be as simple as a grocery store catering to a certain type of cuisine or an established resource like a library or cultural center. It could also take the form of an outdoor green space or a religious gathering space, such as a church.



▲ Riverside International Friendship Gardens celebrates La Crosse’s sister-city relationships with communities in China, Germany, France, Russia, Norway, Ireland and Cameroon. Credit: GRAEF team

▼ Public art on the Main St. Parking Ramp. Credit: City



These are all examples of places where people are likely to engage for daily needs or other resources and can be extended into strong community spaces and landmarks. These types of spaces offer the kind of casual social opportunities that build and connect people to their neighborhood. They also facilitate the integration of new, diverse cultures into the City. La Crosse's proximity to Fort McCoy, one of many locations across the country where the military coordinates resettlement for refugees, has led to new residents from different backgrounds moving to La Crosse. New residents contribute to diversifying and enriching the City's culture.

Actions:

- Action 7.1: Identify underutilized or underinvested spaces (e.g. festival grounds, parking lots, vacant lots, and other public, quasi-public, or private spaces) that can be used as opportunities for expanding public gathering spaces.
- Action 7.2: Expand offerings of casual social opportunities that build and connect people to their neighborhoods.
- Action 7.3: Explore opportunities to provide space and social outlets for marginalized and underrepresented groups, especially those that provide connections across ages (e.g. between students and older adults).

► Shelter house at the top of Grandad Bluff. Credit: GRAEF team



A Place to Prosper



5

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Vision

Strengthen the City's economy, improve the quality of life for residents, and enhance La Crosse's position as the economic engine of the region.

BACKGROUND

The City of La Crosse's central location in the region, access to robust transportation infrastructure, and diverse economic base have contributed to its position as the employment hub for the region.

In 2021, there were approximately 44,000 people aged 16 or older residing in the City and 45,000 jobs in La Crosse, resulting in a jobs per capita of working aged residents ratio of 1.02.

This is higher than comparably sized cities in Wisconsin and is an indication of the City's role as an employment hub in the county.

Higher education institutions including University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Viterbo University, and Western Technical College contribute to fostering the City's young population, strengthening the local workforce with educated and skilled employees, and promoting innovation in La Crosse's industries. Two renowned healthcare systems, the Gundersen Health System's headquarters and the Mayo Clinic Health System's Franciscan Healthcare, are significant regional employers. These large institutions have played a key role in the local economy for many years and

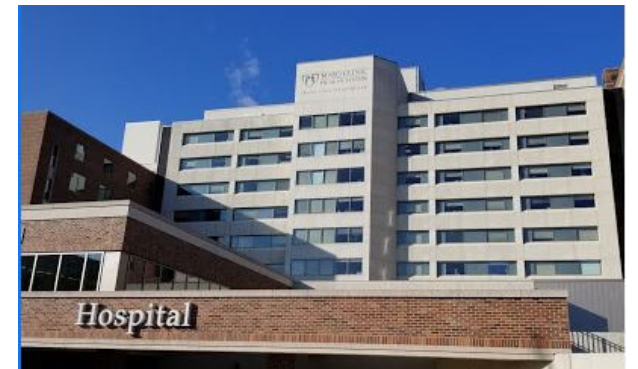
are looking to the future with growing enrollment at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and planned expansions underway at the Mayo Clinic at the time of writing this Comprehensive Plan.

In addition, several major private companies have significant presences in La Crosse. Kwik Trip's corporate headquarters is in the City, employing nearly 4,000 people; and TRANE Inc., an international equipment manufacturer, was founded in La Crosse and continues to employ over 1,000 people in the City. In addition to La Crosse's major institutions and private corporations providing employment opportunities to residents of the City, La Crosse also has a large number of jobs in Local Government Services, Local Education and Training, and Local Community and Civic Organizations totaling 4,400 jobs in 2021.

Economic development involves fostering a suitable business environment that supports the current and future outlook for everyone in La Crosse.

Economic development activities contribute towards a livable community by sustaining a diverse, stable local business environment, providing new opportunities for employment, attracting a talented workforce, and supporting public services and amenities that improve quality of life. Many policies and processes have been established to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens, and these policies and process affect opening a business, building a store, office, or factory or otherwise operating in the City. As the City changes over time, these processes of planning, zoning, permitting, and

▼ Gundersen Health System (top) and Mayo Clinic (bottom) both employ over 1000 employees, many of which live or commute to La Crosse to work. Credit: City



licensing should be reviewed to ensure their efficacy. Over time, businesses and entrepreneurs, especially smaller businesses with more limited resources, can be stymied by these processes and experience restricted growth. The consequences of not providing a business-friendly environment can lead to a lack of amenities, investments, job opportunities, and diversity in the community. Therefore, economic development is an important priority for the City and specific strategies have been crafted to support the business environment over the planning horizon.



High-Impact Economic Clusters

According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD), the top five occupations projected to grow in the La Crosse region are in:



◀ La Crosse is the economic hub of the region, supporting a variety of businesses in different industries. Credit: City

The industries with the greatest expected growth are:



The City's established institutions, organizations, and employers contribute to La Crosse's diverse economic base. By identifying high-impact economic clusters--groups of interrelated industry sectors that are regionally concentrated in an area--existing supply chains, institutional assets, and infrastructure can be leveraged to spur innovation and growth.

High-impact economic clusters offer higher wages, provide strong contributions to a City's gross regional product, have high employment, and typically are experiencing growth.

High-impact economic clusters were identified through the analysis of Lightcast data, a comprehensive labor market analytics software which aggregates data from sources including the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of Labor, and U.S. Department of Education. In the City of La Crosse, high-impact economic clusters include:

- Food Processing & Manufacturing
- Production Technology & Manufacturing
- Business Services
- Distribution & E-Commerce
- Education & Knowledge Creation
- Local Health Services
- Local Financial Services

Many of these clusters, especially those involved in processing, manufacturing, and technology, can benefit from advances in "clean tech." Clean tech integrates processes and solutions that reduce negative environmental impacts, improve efficiency, or use resources in a more sustainable way. Oftentimes, the integration of clean tech can result in significant cost savings. La Crosse should promote and encourage clean tech within these industries.

Although the City of La Crosse is the economic hub of the region, it still faces challenges. Lack of developable land, housing availability and affordability across all income levels, workforce shortages, and retaining graduating students from higher-education institutions are key challenges that this section seeks to address.

Community Engagement Insights

Higher education opportunities and quality of life for employees were cited as the top two economic strengths in La Crosse in the community

▼ **Table 5.1:** Majors Offered by High Economic Impact Cluster

High Impact Economic Cluster	Major Offered at UW-La Crosse?	Major Offered at Western Technical College?	Major Offered at Viterbo?
Food Processing & Manufacturing	X	✓	X
Production Technology & Manufacturing	X	✓	X
Business Services	X	✓	✓
Distribution & E-Commerce	X	✓	X
Education & Knowledge Creation	✓	✓	✓
Local Health Services	✓	✓	✓
Local Financial Services	✓	✓	✓



in industries that appeal to residents (25%). Given the identification of healthcare, education, and manufacturing as the industries community members identify as having the most potential, the City appears to be succeeding in meeting resident priorities in regards to healthcare and education, but not manufacturing. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, education and health services is projected to grow by 1,434 jobs in the region from 2020-2030, and manufacturing is expected to grow by 1,017 jobs. Due to this projected growth, the City should explore ways to welcome new manufacturing, healthcare, and education employees as residents. Access to affordable housing is a key strategy for making this happen.

Quality of life also impacts the economic health of a community because employees may choose to live within the community in which they work. In La Crosse, community members consistently stated that the City’s natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities are strong contributors to overall quality of life. Therefore, economic development actions that could negatively affect the natural environment, such as new developments around sensitive resources, should be avoided. The City may benefit from encouraging more outdoor recreation-oriented businesses to support these aspects, which may also serve to attract more tourists and spending dollars to the local economy. For example, La Crosse can capitalize on its prime location for birdwatching along the Mississippi flyway. Small businesses that support birdwatchers (from equipment to concessions) can help to diversify business offerings and support more tourists.

survey. Increasing educational attainment and encouraging strong growth in certain high-impact economic clusters supports the idea that La Crosse is increasingly the place for highly educated individuals to choose to live and work. When asked which factors are the most pressing to address from an economic development lens, community members answered that expanding access to childcare for employees and adding more quality housing options for employees were very important.

Healthcare, education, and manufacturing were viewed by community members in the survey as the industries with the most perceived potential for growth in the City over the next 5-10 years. While the healthcare and education were the largest and strongest industries employing residents in La Crosse from 2010 to 2020, experiencing the largest

▲ Western Technical College solar array (top) and Viterbo University Dahl School of Business. Credits: GRAEF team

growth in the number of jobs, manufacturing actually experienced the largest decline in terms of the number of jobs employing residents of La Crosse. On the other hand, the finance industry was viewed as having the least potential for growth in the community survey, but from 2010 to 2020, the finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing industries grew by over 85%, an increase of 809 La Crosse residents employed in the industries.

The most agreed upon economic development strategies to focus on in the community survey had to do with historic preservation (30%), business and industry recruitment (27%), and providing a sufficient quantity and mix of job opportunities

Opportunities & Strategies

Data on job growth and local specialization was used to identify the following high-impact clusters: Food Processing & Manufacturing, Production Technology & Manufacturing, Business Services, Distribution & E-Commerce, Education & Knowledge Creation, Local Health Services, and Local Financial Services.

Positive values on the horizontal axis indicate a positive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in jobs in the City of La Crosse, whereas positive values on the vertical axis indicates higher local specialization in respective economic clusters. The size of the industry cluster bubbles is relative to the number of jobs in that cluster in La Crosse.

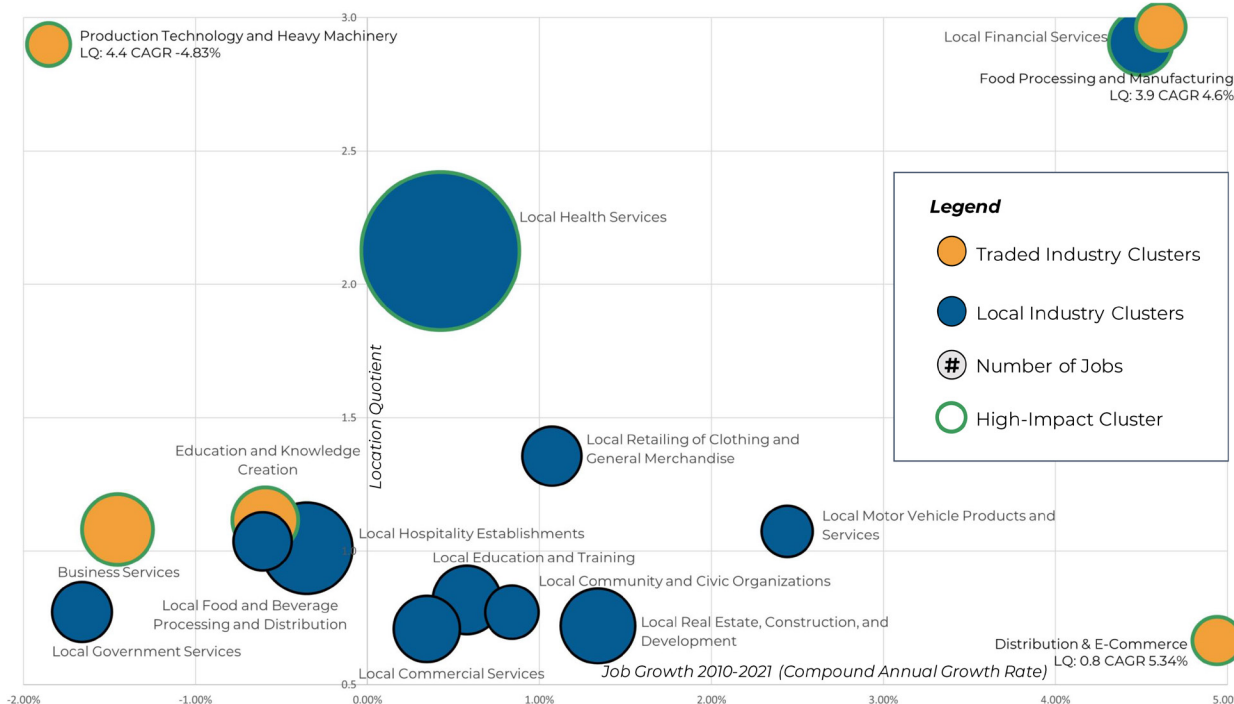
La Crosse’s economy is specialized in several traded economic clusters including Education and Knowledge Creation, Food Processing and Manufacturing, as well as Production Technology and Heavy Machinery. Additionally, local economic clusters, including Local Health Services and Local Financial Services are a major source of employment and gross regional product for the City, and are highly specialized in La Crosse with location quotients above 2. Prominent local economic clusters contribute to the success of other sectors, for example, the success of the Local Health Services cluster draws healthcare tourism to La Crosse, which helps to support hospitality and retail businesses.

1. ATTRACT AND RETAIN EXISTING EMPLOYERS IN HIGH-IMPACT ECONOMIC CLUSTERS:

A high-impact economic cluster strategy focuses economic development efforts and resources on industries that already enjoy a strong competitive advantage, offer higher wages, and hold a strong desire to remain in the City. Focusing efforts on specific industries can spur innovation, build on existing supply chains, institutional assets, and infrastructure, while creating more opportunities for residents seeking to grow their skills or move between jobs. For clusters to support one another, it is important to focus efforts both on local and traded economic clusters.

Local clusters are those industries which serve the local market. While these are found in any geography, they are crucial in providing employment to residents, supporting traded cluster industries, and providing critical goods and services to residents which contribute to the City’s desirability and quality of life. Local clusters tend to grow as population grows and tend to not be highly specialized from one location to another. Uniquely in La Crosse, several local economic clusters are highly specialized, which indicates that there are large employers and institutions that likely serve a market greater than the City itself. Local Health Services and Local Financial Services are highly specialized in La Crosse, and therefore provide an opportunity to strengthen economic opportunities as part of a high-impact cluster strategy.

▼ **Figure 5.1:** Major Economic Clusters in La Crosse. Source: Lightcast & SB Friedman.

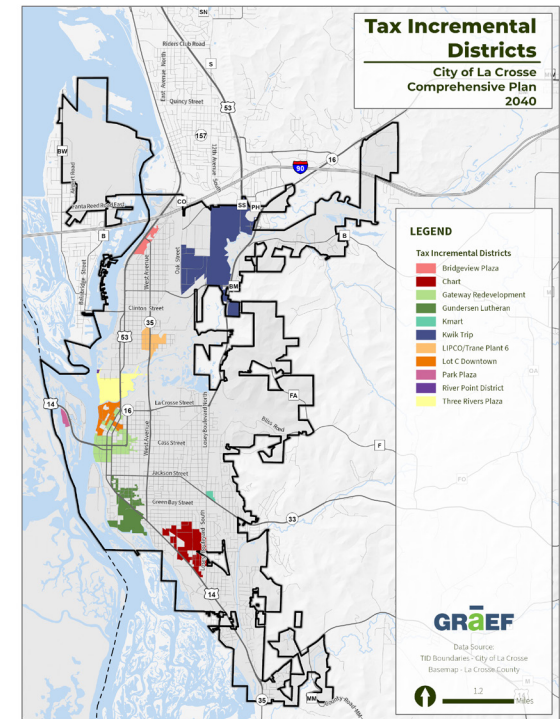
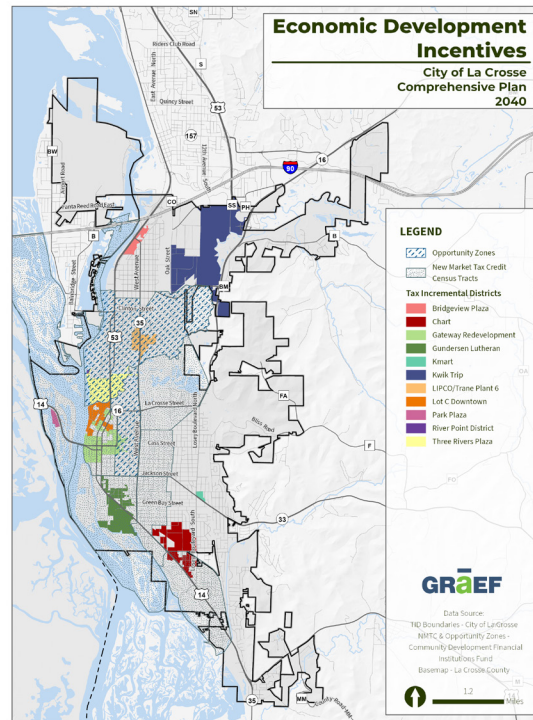


Traded clusters are groups of related industries which export goods and services outside of the City in which they are located. These industries compete with other regions for business and are important for long-term economic growth as they draw in economic activity from outside of the region. Traded cluster industries are crucial for growing a City’s economy, as these sectors export goods and services and import economic activity from outside of the City.

High-impact economic clusters should be bolstered by targeted economic development policies as they offer higher wages for residents, strong contributions to a City’s gross regional product, and contribute to the City’s economic competitiveness within the region. In the City of La Crosse, high-impact economic clusters include Food Processing & Manufacturing, Production Technology & Manufacturing, Business Services, Distribution & E-Commerce, Education & Knowledge Creation, Local Health Services, and Local Financial Services.

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Continue to support existing businesses in high-impact clusters and conduct a study to identify barriers to expansion and retention.
- Action 1.2: Explore business linkages, procurement arrangements, and collaboration between high-impact industries and other local businesses to promote small business growth and relieve pressure on the supply chain.



- Action 1.3: Increase connectivity between economic development agencies in the region, chambers of commerce, and local businesses by collaborating on a regular basis to evaluate the needs of the business community.
- Action 1.4: Incentivize existing employers to implement local hiring initiatives that connect the local workforce to higher wage local employment in high-impact clusters.

2. EXPAND AND LEVERAGE EXISTING INCENTIVES AND PROGRAMS TO ADVANCE ECONOMIC PRIORITIES.

The City of La Crosse can continue to utilize its full toolkit of economic development incentives to continue to attract and retain employers in targeted high-impact economic clusters, while also promoting development that aligns with the City’s economic development and quality of life goals. Currently, the City of La Crosse has 11 active Tax Incremental Districts (“TIDs”), which have been used to support the expansion of local companies such as Gundersen Health and Kwik Trip. In addition, two census tracts in the City are classified by the Federal Government as

“Opportunity Zones,” which provide special tax incentives to support economic development. Currently, the River Point District to the north of Downtown La Crosse is utilizing these incentive programs to support a 65-acre mixed-use development project which will boost economic activity in the City and the region.

Economic Development Incentives

Economic development incentives are programs to provide money for investments that improve the local economy, such as through job creation, access to retail services, and increased tax base. Frequently, these incentives target areas with less successful economic indicators to help support development.

Tax Incremental Districts (TID): Tax Incremental Districts allow a municipality to pay for public improvements and other eligible costs within a designated area using future taxes collected on the TID’s increased property value to repay the cost of the improvements. (League of Wisconsin Municipalities)

Opportunity Zones: Opportunity Zones are an economic development tool that allows people to invest in distressed areas in the United State. Their purpose is to spur economic growth and job creation in low-income communities while providing tax benefits to investors. The program was created via the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and includes thousands of communities across the county. Congress will have the opportunity to extend the Opportunity Zones benefits in 2026. (IRS)

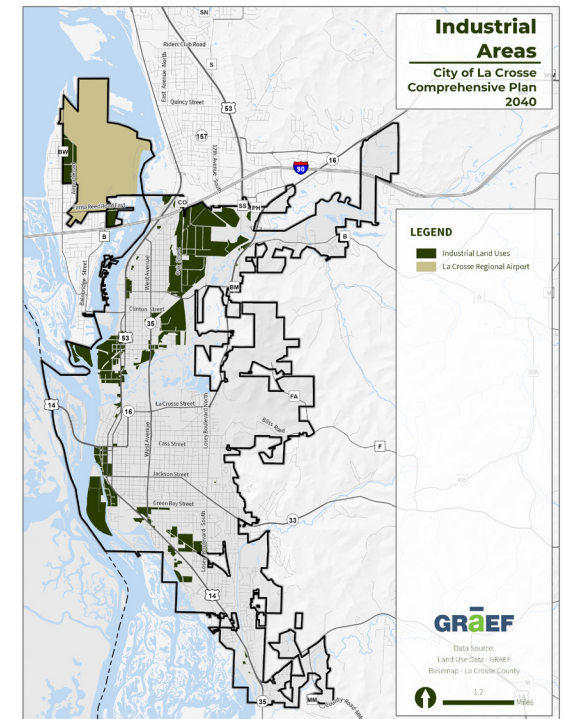
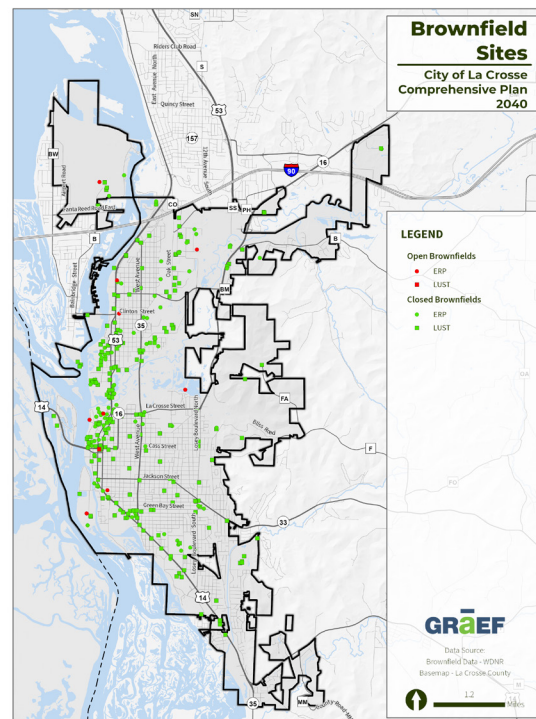
New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC): The New Markets Tax Credit Program incentivizes community development and economic growth through the use of tax credits that attract private investment

to distressed communities. Investments made through the NMTC Program are used to finance businesses which breathe new life into neglected and underserved low-income communities¹.

Actions:

- Action 2.1: Expand and diversify the City’s use of tax increment districts (TID) to include broader applications of public assistance, particularly those that contribute to the implementation of multiple public policies and priorities.
- Action 2.2: Utilize TID to prepare move-in-ready industrial and commercial space for high-impact tenants with the potential to increase employment opportunities in La Crosse.

- Action 2.3: Increase promotion of the availability of all City, county, and state incentives on the City’s economic development website to increase awareness of existing programs that are available to support the City’s economic development priorities.



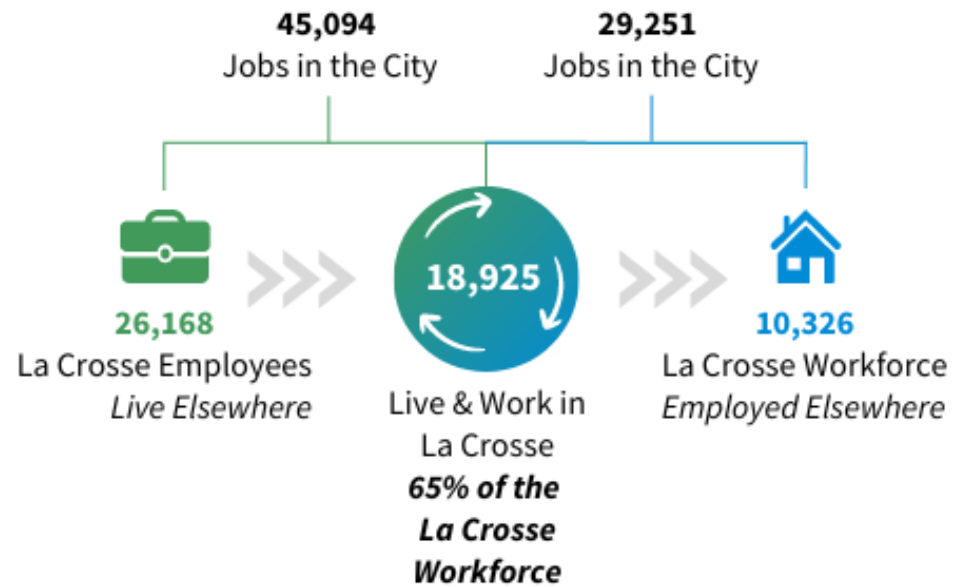
3. ENSURE AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF SITES FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF EMPLOYERS TO OPERATE AND GROW.

The City of La Crosse’s location between the bluffs and the Mississippi River provides beautiful scenery and a source of outdoor recreation for residents and visitors alike. Proximity to these natural resources is a major asset to the City, but these features also constrain the City’s ability to expand, develop, and grow due to limited availability of buildable land for new commercial and/or industrial development. In addition, La Crosse has several potential brownfield sites which may be an opportunity to revitalize previously industrial and commercial areas to modern uses that are in line with the City’s economic development goals. Brownfield sites are properties identified by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as having environmental contamination or potential environmental contamination and require clean up prior to redevelopment. To continue to attract employers to the City, La Crosse should continue to ensure there is an adequate supply of industrial and commercial property available. The Riverpoint District is an example of a work-in-progress site for new development within the City.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Maintain and publish City database of active development sites (listed for sale, lease or under construction) in commercial zones.

▼ **Figure 5.2:** Inflow/Outflow of Jobs & Labor in La Crosse. Source: Lightcast & SB Friedman.



- Action 3.2: Continue to develop and refine subarea plans for targeted economic development zones, such as TIDs, to establish preferred development outcomes based on zones’ locational advantages, suitable uses, and potential for job generation.
- Action 3.3: Expedite the incentive process for new developments that are suitable for businesses in targeted high-impact economic clusters.
- Action 3.4: Identify, prioritize, and pursue funding opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield and grayfield sites in the City.
- Action 3.5: Advocate for improved regional and interstate high-speed heavy rail service to enhance La Crosse’s position as the economic engine to attract employers.
- Action 3.6: Continue to leverage City of La Crosse Economic Development programs including the Elevate Downtown Façade Grant Program, Architecture & Engineering Analysis (A&E) Program, and the Upper Floor Renovation Loan program.



▲ Small business owners provide a range of goods and services to residents and visitors. Credit: City

4. SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESSES AND CULTIVATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, ESPECIALLY BUSINESSES OWNED BY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS.

With workforce shortages and supply chain disruptions challenging businesses of all sizes, it is important for the City to continue to support small and emerging businesses who often may not have

access to as many resources as larger businesses.

Actions:

- Action 4.1: Secure new sources of funding to reinstate the Minority Owned Business Assistance program and Business Loan Program.
- Action 4.2: Form strategic partnerships with local stakeholders and business service agencies such as Launch La Crosse and the Coulee Region Business Center to connect local entrepreneurs to resources to grow their businesses.
- Action 4.3: Facilitate collaboration between local businesses, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse College of Business Administration, and their Small Business Development Center to support the retention of graduates and promote small businesses in the City.
- Action 4.4: Prioritize local businesses when contracting for City-financed [energy efficiency and renewable energy] projects, with special consideration given to unionized businesses and ones owned by women and minorities.

5. PRIORITIZE ECONOMIC & HOUSING SECURITY TO SUPPORT THE UPWARD MOBILITY OF RESIDENTS.

Roughly 65% of the City’s resident workforce works within the City, suggesting that residents can find employment opportunities locally without having to travel elsewhere in the region.

For residents to be upwardly mobile, it is important that there are supportive systems in place that can reduce financial burdens and allow them to achieve their goals. Without the availability of affordable housing, La Crosse employees may have to live elsewhere in the region, increasing

▼ **Table 5.1:** Affordable Housing Cost Limits by Income Level (2022).

Low income (80% AMI)	Annual Income*	Affordable Housing Cost Limits**
1-Person HH	\$50,500	\$1,263
2-Person HH	\$57,700	\$1,443
3-Person HH	\$64,900	\$1,623
4-Person HH	\$72,100	\$1,803
Very Low Income (50% AMI)		
1-person HH	\$31,550	\$789
2-Person HH	\$36,050	\$901
3-Person HH	\$40,550	\$1,014
4-Person HH	\$45,050	\$1,126
Extremely Low-Income		
1-person HH	\$18,950	\$474
2-Person HH	\$21,650	\$541
3-Person HH	\$24,350	\$609
4-Person HH	\$27,750	\$694
*FY 2022 annual income limits set by HUD to qualify for federal housing assistance programs for the La Crosse-Onalaska, WI-MN metro area.		
**Housing costs (rent and utilities) equal to 30% of income; costs above this amount would make the household ‘cost burdened.’		

commute times and presumably reducing their civic involvement. Another issue which has contributed to La Crosse employees struggle to re-enter to workforce post-COVID-19 is the lack of affordable and reliable childcare services in the City. This has resulted in some parents, often women, leaving the workforce to care for family. While these challenges exist, residents continue to choose to live and work in La Crosse, and it is critical to protect cost of living affordability to ensure long-term economic success of the City and its residents.

Actions:

- Action 5.1: Explore opportunities to collaborate with large employers to increase the supply of affordable housing in the City.
- Action 5.2: Explore opportunities for adaptive re-use of underutilized properties for the development of additional housing units.
- Action 5.3: Support additional and/or expanded affordable day care facilities in the City.
- Action 5.4: Require livable wages (80% of AMI as defined by HUD) as a condition of receiving economic incentives.
- Action 5.5: Encourage workforce development in residential construction.

6. FOSTER A RESILIENT ECONOMY IN LA CROSSE THAT CAN ADAPT TO SHOCKS AND STRESSES.

- Action 6.1: Encourage growth in underrepresented sectors in La Crosse.

- Action 6.2: Identify mismatches between educational attainment and job sector growth in La Crosse to promote the availability of educated, job-ready residents.
- Action 6.3: Support growth in tourism by promoting local cultural and environmental resources.
- Action 6.4: Promote local research, development, and production of green technology and products.



TRANSPORTATION

Vision

La Crosse will provide a range of safe, sustainable, and convenient mobility options for all residents.

Introduction

La Crosse's multi-faceted transportation system is shaped by the region's unique natural features, including the Mississippi River, bluffs, and La Crosse River and Marsh. How people and goods travel within, to, and from the City not only shapes the daily experience of residents, but also their health, ability to access public spaces, their economic prospects, and the resilience of the built environment. A safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system is a key goal of this plan.

This chapter reviews the range of transportation modalities concentrated in the City and their connection across the Coulee and broader upper-Midwest region. This chapter also provides special attention to La Crosse's pedestrian-oriented transportation network, highlighting opportunities for expanding walking, biking, and transit service for City residents. The content for this chapter was gathered through a review of City and regional transportation plans, insights from key stakeholder interviews, community survey feedback, and input from City staff.

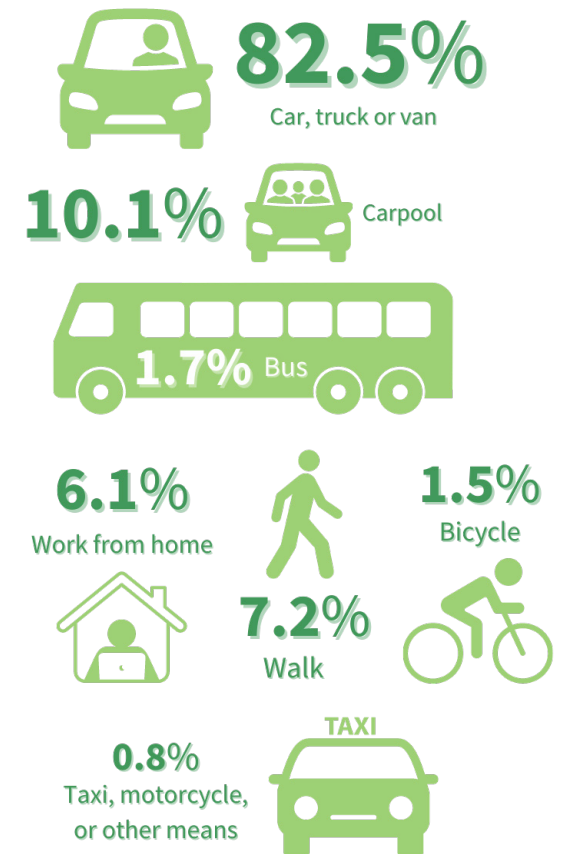
Background

The Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan (adopted in August 2021) notes the important role that improved walkability and bikeability will play

in the future vitality of downtown La Crosse. A user-friendly set of facilities, intersection treatments, and overall network is a key component of the Downtown Plan's recommendations. In addition, the 2015 visioning process for the Coulee Vision 2050: A Vision for the La Crosse - La Crescent Area Plan supported the goals of safety, walkability, bike friendliness, access, slower driving speeds, fewer vehicle miles traveled, and complete streets. The final design concepts included a transit-oriented development approach along bus routes downtown and on South Avenue, with mixed uses, high density, and parking maximums. Other proposals included bus stop accessibility improvements, shared streetscape design on Pearl Street, separated bicycle lanes on La Crosse Street, and a series of roundabouts along South Avenue. Improving streetscape appearance and pedestrian safety near transit stops and adding or improving shelters, wayfinding signage, and amenities should continue to be priorities for the City.

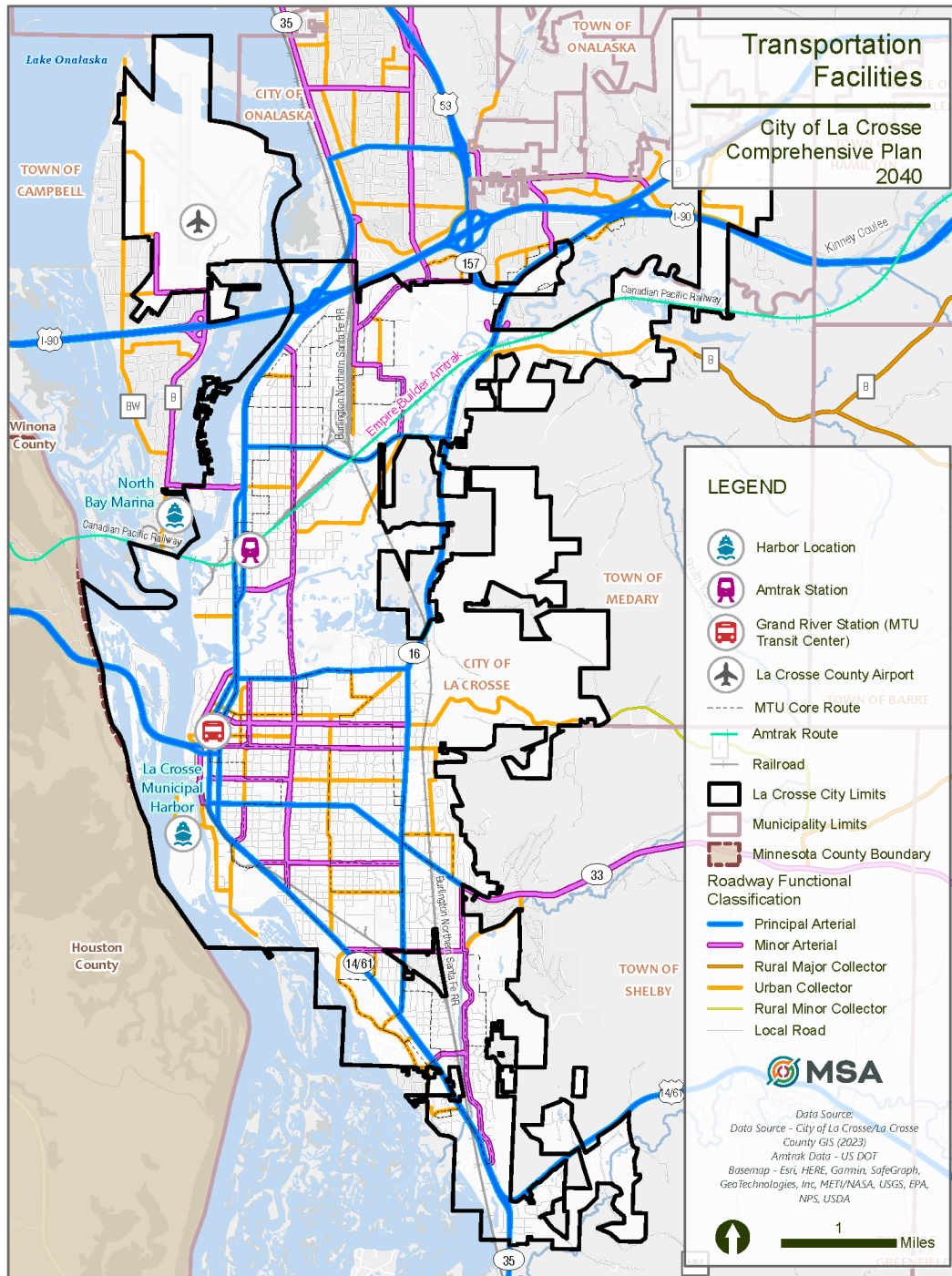
Transit demand is influenced by many factors, including characteristics of the transit service (route efficiency and accessibility, hours, and frequency of service), characteristics of place (the number of people living and working along a route, parking convenience, road congestion), and characteristics of residents (income, age, physical ability). According to data provided by La Crosse's Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), ridership over the last ten years fell from a high of 1,294,275 riders in 2013 to 759,949 riders in 2022, as shown in **Figure 1**. The most significant reduction in ridership was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021,

How Do La Crosse Residents Travel to Work?



▲ Data source: ACS 5-year estimates (2021).

MTU reduced some service from 30 min-service to hourly and encouraged rides for essential needs only to reduce the spread of infection.



Public transit as a means of transportation to work is utilized by a relatively small proportion of La Crosse residents—1.7% in 2021, according to American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. The vast majority of residents commute by car, truck, or van (82.5%), with the majority traveling alone. While the rate of commuting to work by car has held steady at around 82% of commuters since 2013, other means of commuting to work have fluctuated over the past decade, as seen in Figure 2. Notably, the rate of walking and biking to work fell between 2019 and 2021 as the rate of working from home spiked from 2.7% in 2019 to 6.1% in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Existing Transportation System

The City of La Crosse’s transportation system includes:

Interstate 90 (I-90)

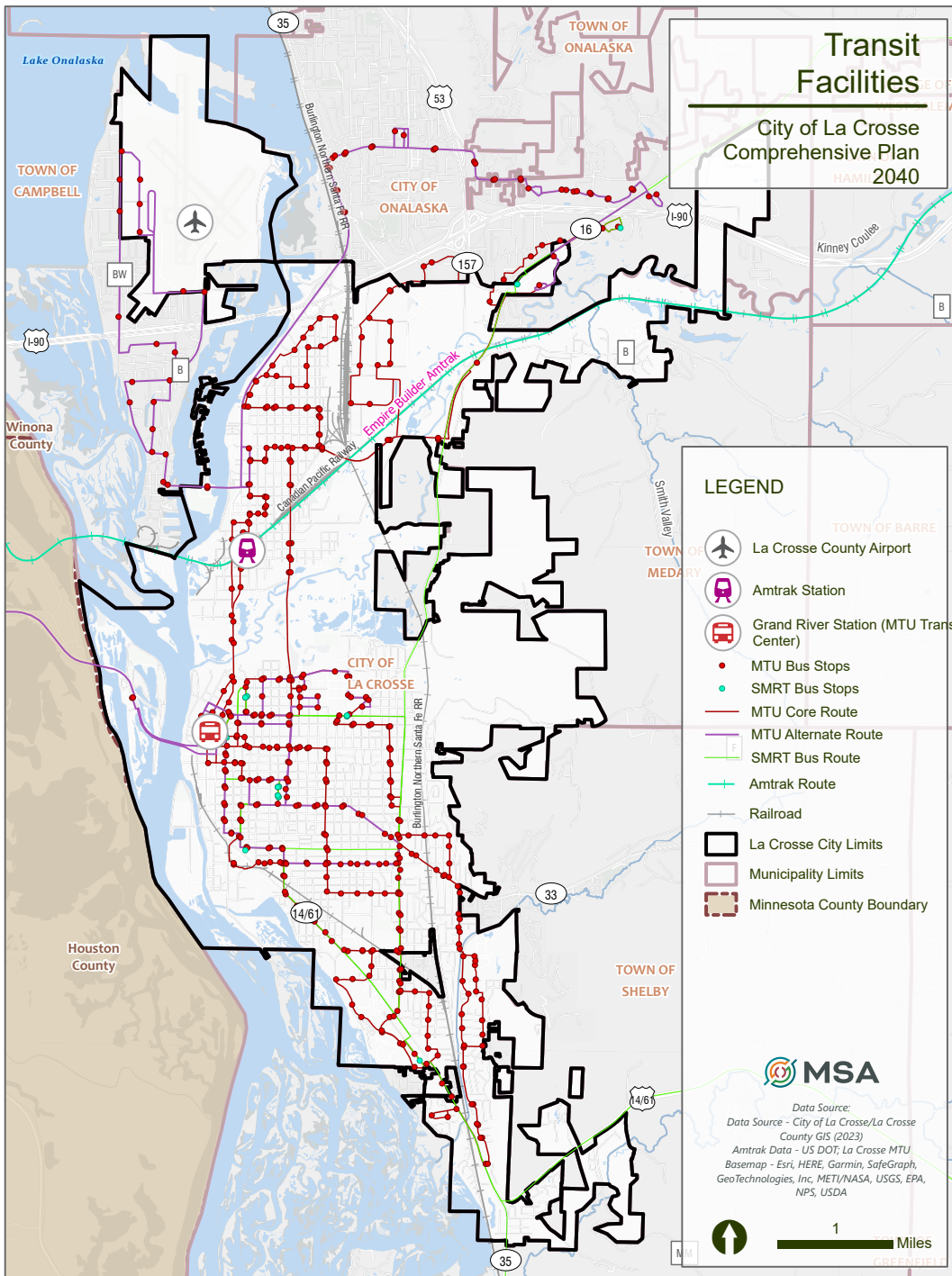
I-90 is an east-west transcontinental freeway starting in Seattle, WA and ending in Boston, MA, entering Wisconsin through the City of La Crosse.

U.S., State and County Highways (14, 53, 33, 35, 16, 157, B, F)

Primary access routes to and through La Crosse include U.S. highways 14 and 53, State highways 16, 33, 35, and 157, and County highways B and F.

Local streets/collectors/arterials

A traditional grid pattern exists in La Crosse with many local, collector and arterials throughout the City.



Railroad - (freight and passenger service)

- Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BNSF) – double track rail line connecting to Chicago and Twin Cities.
- Canadian Pacific (CP) – single track rail line connecting to Milwaukee and Twin Cities
- Amtrak – The Empire Builder route uses the CP line between Chicago and Twin Cities, with service to Portland, OR and Seattle, WA. The La Crosse Station is currently the only staffed Amtrak station in Wisconsin outside of Milwaukee. In the coming years, the new Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago (TCMC) route will add additional service in Wisconsin between La Crosse and Milwaukee (with additional



▲ The airport sits on 1,380 acres of land and supports approximately 19,000 operations annually. Credit: LSE

stops in Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, Portage, and Columbus) as well as stops at the General Mitchell International Airport and Sturtevant between Milwaukee and Chicago.

La Crosse Regional Airport (LSE)

LSE is a non-hub commercial service airport located at the north end of the City on French Island. This multi-faceted facility offers multiple flights per day to Chicago O'Hare International Airport through American Airlines. Prior to the summer of 2023, Delta Air Lines offered daily service to Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. LSE, and the greater La Crosse community, is at the center of the larger national issue related to pilot labor shortages impacting the airline industry. The airport serves a key transportation function for the nearby US Army facility, Fort McCoy. Additionally, the facility has 59 based aircraft and a growing



▲ The Viking Mississippi Cruise Ship docked in La Crosse for the first time in 2022. Credit: La Crosse Mayor FB

hangar waiting list. Future facility planning for the La Crosse Regional Airport is guided by the 2037 La Crosse Regional Airport Master Plan.

La Crosse Municipal Harbor

The City-owned harbor is managed by Coulee Services, LLC and provides slip rentals and dry land storage on the Mississippi River.

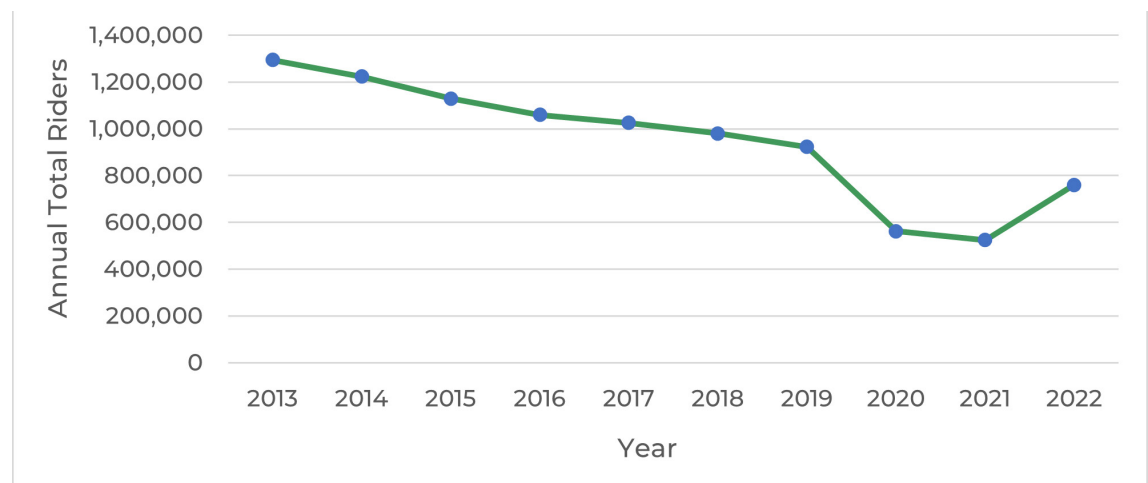
Port of La Crosse (Mississippi River)

Roughly 2 million tons of commodities pass through the Port of La Crosse annually on barges, including food and agricultural products, construction materials, and fuels. In December 2022, the Northern Grain Belt Ports (NGBPP), including the Port of La Crosse, on the Upper Mississippi River between Wisconsin and Minnesota were approved by the U.S. Waterborne Commerce Statistics Center and the Navigation and Civil Works Decision Center to be listed as a federally designated port. Previously, all tonnage handled through these ports was tallied by the federal government only when it reached St. Louis. This significant designation will improve the ability of La Crosse and other communities in the region to secure federal funding for projects relating to shipping, and lock and dam maintenance.

La Crosse Public Transit

- Municipal Transit Utility (MTU): MTU offers ten (10) bus routes that cover almost the entire City of La Crosse, plus service to the nearby communities of La Crescent, Onalaska, and the Town of Campbell. Buses operate seven days of the week with weekday hours generally 5am to 10pm and 8am to 7pm on weekends. All buses are wheelchair accessible and have bike racks.
- Paratransit: MTU Mobility Plus serves those living with disabilities that cannot get to a bus stop from their home. Service is provided during the same days and times as regular MTU bus service, but on a demand response basis. Riders must apply to establish eligibility and make reservations 24-hours in advance.
- MTU Circulator Go: MTU Go is a bus route that offers more frequent service (every 30 minutes) on higher-volume routes with access to daily necessities and conveniences such as the library, grocery stores, clinics, and other shopping areas.

▼ **Figure 5.3:** MTU Ridership 2013-2022 (Regular & Paratransit Service). Source: La Crosse MTU.



- **Safe Ride:** Bus service offered between downtown and UW campus on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The bus circulates through the route every 15 minutes from 10:30 pm until 3:00 am on all evenings of service.

Intercity Rural Regional Bus

- **Scenic Mississippi (SMRT):** This regional bus transit service is for commuters, the elderly, those living with disabilities, the general public, and tourists in southwest WI. Area businesses, local governments and the WisDOT contribute funding to the bus service.
- **Rolling Hills Transit:** This southeast Minnesota transit service provides curb to curb local transportation to the general public. All buses are handicapped accessible, though anyone may use it. Rolling Hills operates on a "shared-ride" basis, which means that trips are coordinated to carry as many passengers as economically as possible.
- **Jefferson Lines:** This long-distance intercity bus company serves 14 states and has two (2) stops in La Crosse. This bus has connections to Madison, Milwaukee and Minneapolis through Winona and Rochester.



Active Transportation Network

- **La Crosse offers a robust set of assets for walking and bicycling to serve both daily transportation and recreational needs.**
- **Pedestrian network:** The City has a well-developed pedestrian network, with sidewalks in the majority of residential districts and older parts of the community. Sidewalks may be less likely in more recently developed residential areas (e.g., near the City's eastern and southern edges) and in industrial districts. Some neighborhoods and commercial areas present difficult conditions for walking due to long crossing distances, high speed traffic, and disconnected land uses (for example, areas near Hiawatha Pioneer Trail).
- **Bicycle network:** The City offers two bicycle networks: a growing transportation-oriented urban bicycle network accommodated within and connected to the City's street grid, and an extensive network of recreational and mountain biking trails located in natural areas surrounding the City.

▼ Bicycling is a popular mode of transportation and recreation in La Crosse. Credit: La Crosse Public Library



- **Urban bicycle network:** Includes a limited number of conventional, unprotected bicycle lanes (e.g., Cass Street and La Crosse Street) and several "share the lane" ("sharrow") facilities (e.g., Main Street, 7th Street, and 16th Street). In most cases these facilities do not provide sufficient separation from car traffic to qualify as an "All Ages and Abilities" network. However, new facilities that will meet this standard are in development, including a protected bicycle lane along 2nd Street in downtown. La Crosse was recognized as a Silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists in 2020.
- **Bicycle share system:** A bikeshare system, sponsored by local businesses and institutions, was recently introduced to the community. Drift Cycle Bike Share Program offers a fleet of 50 bikes in 10 docking stations located in and around the City's downtown.
- **Outdoor recreation network:** More than fifty miles of outdoor recreational trails for walking/hiking are located in and around La Crosse. Approximately 18 miles are shared use trails that allow biking. Most of the trails are located along the eastern end of the City,



with trails along the riverfront and near the marsh. Notable trails include the Great River State Trail, the La Crosse River State Trail, the Gateway Trails, the Lower and Upper Hixon Trails, and the Myrick Marsh Trails.

- *Neighborhood Greenways*: The City has three existing Neighborhood Greenways (King St. 17th St., and Avon St.) and has plans to create two more (Farnam St. and 22nd St.) These are also referred to as “slow streets” because they have low motorized traffic volumes and speed limits. La Crosse Greenways incorporate signs, pavement markings, green infrastructure, and other measures to facilitate a safe experience for residents to walk or ride bikes.

- Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory: A Supplement to Beyond Coulee Vision 2040 (2020)
- Beyond Coulee Vision 2040 (September 2020)
- 2021-2024 LAPC Transportation Improvement Program (updated 2020)
- Midwest Regional Rail Plan (2021)
- Safe Routes to School Plan (2021)
- Imagine 2040 La Crosse Downtown Plan (August 2021)
- Envision 2050 La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan (2022)
- La Crosse Regional Airport Master Plan (2022)
- 2035 Coulee Regional Bicycle Plan

- Almost half of participants in the plan’s survey (47%) walk four or more times per week
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents walk for pleasure or exercise at least 2-3 times per week
- Almost half (47%) of respondents walk at least once a week to complete shopping or errands

Existing / Relevant Transportation Plans

- Confluence: The La Crosse Comprehensive Plan (2002)
- Port of La Crosse Harbor and Waterfront Plan (2011)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2012)
- La Crosse Transportation Vision (February 2015)
- Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan (May 2015)
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Study (May 2017)
- Weathering Climate Change: A Vulnerability Assessment of Road, Bridge, and Rail Infrastructure (December 2018)
- Transportation Demand Management Plan (2018)
- South Ave Multimodal Assessment (February 2018)
- La Crosse Corridor Studies – US 53/14/61, WIS 35, WIS 16/157

Community Engagement Insights

A bicycle and pedestrian-oriented survey was conducted to gather comments and guidance related to walking and bicycling in La Crosse. The online survey was distributed online, received more than 600 responses. In addition, several in-person through public input sessions were conducted. Several key themes emerged through this engagement, including:

La Crosse’s walking/biking facilities and network are highly valued by residents

Residents recognize, appreciate, and use the walking and biking facilities that are in place today, while recognizing opportunities for improving the system.

Walking is a very popular activity in La Crosse today

Bicycling is also very popular

- Almost two-thirds of participants in the plan’s engagement (63%) ride a bike at least 2-3 times per week
- More than half (51%) of respondents ride a bike at least once per week to go shopping
- Almost half (47%) respondents ride a bike at least once a week to go to school or work

There’s a lot of room to promote walking and bicycling

- About 40% of respondents have never biked to work or school
- One third (33%) of respondents have never walked for shopping or running errands

Opportunities for promoting walking and biking

Participants identified several improvements that would encourage them to walk or bike more often:

- Expanding the network of walking and biking routes
- Making it easier for people to cross busy streets

- Increasing separation from motor-vehicle traffic
- Addressing gaps in the network
- Improving lighting along trails and streets
- Improving winter maintenance of walking and biking routes, including curb cuts
- Installing more and better bike racks
- Providing maps and wayfinding signage to find destinations more easily

Facility Preferences

The online survey included questions asking people to describe how comfortable they would feel walking or bicycling along different types of facilities (user comfort is important because it will determine use of the City’s network). The most



comfortable facilities were those that provided separation from motor vehicles. Please see the report with full results in the plan’s Appendix.

Walking

People who walk indicated a very significant increase in the level of comfort they would experience if additional space (as little as 5 ft) was provided between the walking surface and lanes of moving traffic. Providing a boulevard or other separation between sidewalks and traffic lanes will be key when developing new facilities.

Bicycling

People who bicycle indicated a clear and strong increase in the level of comfort they would experience as bicycle riders if additional space was provided between the bicycle facility and lanes of moving cars. Two key findings are:



▲ Older adults pose on the La Crosse MTU bus. Credit: La Crosse MTU

◀ Examples of protected bicycle lanes. Credits: GRAEF team

- A bicycle lane with a permanent barrier, like a median, ranked as high as an entirely separate off-street facility like a shared-use path or trail.
- A temporary facility, marked with bollards and paint, had a “level of comfort” almost indistinguishable to a trail, but can be developed more rapidly and for less than 5% of the cost (\$40,000 per mile vs \$2,500,00 per mile)

Opportunities & Strategies

1. IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICE AND EXPAND RIDERSHIP.

The City of La Crosse needs a public transit system that is attractive and convenient for all travelers, with direct connections, few delays, and service to major employers and the student population. The system should also provide efficient connections to other transportation modes in the City, including the La Crosse Amtrak station and Regional Airport. Overall, the transit system should be viewed by residents as a practical and convenient mode of transportation for their daily trips.

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Regularly review and adjust route design to respond to shifts in ridership, especially related to the development of new housing or the expansion/contraction of major employers.

- Action 1.2: Ensure ease of use for MTU riders, including simple fare purchase, clear route maps, accessible bus stops, and technology for riders to view when the next bus will arrive.
- Action 1.3: Promote infill development in key transportation corridors so residents can access and support the viability of high-frequency transit routes.
- Action 1.4: Facilitate an annual contract between MTU transit and major employers to evaluate employee transit demand and usage.
- Action 1.5: Ensure access and ADA compliance of all sidewalks and curb cuts throughout the year

2: EXPAND THE CITY'S PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORKS TO ENSURE EVERY STREET AND ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT MEETS THE SAFETY AND MOBILITY NEEDS OF ALL USERS. PROMOTE THESE NETWORKS AS A DRIVER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM, AND RECREATION.

Walking and biking are sustainable forms of transportation that enable healthy, affordable, and enjoyable pathways for reaching daily destinations. La Crosse has numerous assets, such as its compact street grid network, that can be

leveraged to encourage more walking and biking as a common means for getting around the City. The successful implementation of this strategy will lead to a more pedestrian-oriented transportation system that reduces automobile dependency for meeting the daily needs of La Crosse residents.

Expanding the City's outdoor recreation network will also benefit the community's economy. These networks not only draw in tourists; they also draw in employers and employees alike, which helps attract and retain more families to live in the City of La Crosse. For the state overall, outdoor recreation contributed \$8.7 billion to Wisconsin's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2021.

In an effort to realize this vision, the City adopted a Green Complete Streets ordinance in 2011—becoming the first municipality in Wisconsin to adopt such a policy. Complete Streets are designed to enable safe use and mobility for all users. This includes people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. Complete Street design includes the planning, designing, and operating of roadways and rights-of-way with all users in mind to make the transportation network safer and more efficient. Common features include sidewalks, bicycle lanes, curb extensions, median islands, and landscaping.

Actions:

- Action 2.1: Expand walking and biking in the City by:
 - *Growing the City's "All Ages and Abilities" pedestrian and bicycle network through strategic investment in additional routes and infrastructure, especially facilities such as protected bike lanes that provide*

increased separation between users of non-motorized transportation and cars. This can also include off-street routes (e.g., paved and un-paved trails) that connect users with nature, away from car infrastructure.

- *Conducting education, encouragement, and promotion initiatives that invite residents (including those who don't currently walk or bike with regularity) to explore the City's walking and biking infrastructure.*
- *Updating the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to guide future investments in pedestrian-oriented infrastructure.*
- *Complying with the City's Green Complete Streets ordinance (Sec. 40-14) and strive towards a "Vision Zero" approach to pedestrian safety that accommodates all forms of mobility.*
- Action 2.2: Revise development requirements to reduce excess off-street parking requirements and ensure the provision of bicycle parking, including specialized parking for e-bikes and cargo bikes, and safe pedestrian routes in site designs.
- Action 2.3: Continue to support residents and neighborhoods with the formalized traffic-calming program.
- Action 2.4: Collaborate with surrounding communities and LAPC to coordinate interconnecting pedestrian infrastructure such as Bluffland Traverse, a 50+ mile trail connecting Goose Island on the south side of La Crosse to Camp Decorah in Holmen.
- Action 2.5: Comply with the City's Safe Routes to School Plan when considering, planning, and updating any infrastructure changes within two miles of a La Crosse School.

3: EMBRACE NEW TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGIES, ESPECIALLY MICROMOBILITY OPTIONS AND VEHICLE ELECTRIFICATION.

Innovation in transportation technology not only provides a wider array of options for residents but can help the City achieve its climate and sustainability goals.

Shared-use mobility (also known as micromobility) removes the need for individual ownership of different transportation modes, such as electric bicycles (e-bikes) and scooters, by creating systems for sharing among users; this can include carshare, bikeshare, carpools, taxis, app-based ride-hailing services, shuttles, and more. While some may choose to buy their own e-scooters or e-bikes, there are a variety of companies offering rental services with single-ride, monthly or annual passes available for users. A Mobility Hub is a transportation facility that brings together all the elements of the shared-use mobility



model: convenient access to multiple modes of transportation, walkability, and density of uses and destinations. La Crosse, with its compact size, attractive downtown, and growing number of visitors, is well suited for this transportation model.

Another important shift on the horizon that will significantly change transportation systems across the U.S. and globally is the rapidly increasing demand for electric vehicles. In 2022, WisDOT submitted a plan to the federal government (FHWA) for planning about 60 charging stations within 50 miles of designated highways, also known as alternative fuel corridors. Under the state's approved plan, around 1,900 miles in Wisconsin will be covered by this network of charging stations and 85% of all state highway miles will be within 25 miles of a fast charger.

The City should collaborate with Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), surrounding communities, and private partners to plan for and enhance the Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure in the La Crosse region, which will also help support the City and County's carbon neutrality goals. Specifically, La Crosse and the LAPC should collaborate to plan a network of Level 2 charging stations across the City, including encouraging or requiring private stations at all multifamily developments and office complexes, as well as public stations in parking garages and suitable street parking locations downtown. Strategically sited level 3 rapid chargers in high volume/high demand locations, most likely near the interstate or adjacent to shopping and dining commercial nodes, can help attract travelers to specific locations in the City. Working with mobility providers to offer charging infrastructure in or near ◀ La Crosse MTU started adding electric buses to the fleet in 2022. Credit: La Crosse MTU

the downtown (especially if combined as part of other travel services in a downtown Mobility Hub) may be a useful strategy to increase visitation and potential customers to local businesses.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Encourage engineering staff responsible for the City's transportation infrastructure to stay informed on emerging best practices and technologies related to micromobility and electric vehicles through opportunities for continuing education.
- Action 3.2: Consider development of a Mobility Hub in downtown and other locations in the City.
- Action 3.3: Support the continuing transition to electric vehicles by developing a regional EV Infrastructure plan and considering zoning amendments to require charging stations in multifamily residential and office development. Specialized charging stations for e-bikes should also be included in this regional plan.

4: PROMOTE THE USE OF THE LA CROSSE REGIONAL AIRPORT IN BALANCE WITH NEIGHBORHOOD LIVABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS.

Since 1947, the La Crosse Regional Airport has been located approximately two miles north of downtown La Crosse on French Island between the Mississippi River and the Black River. LSE is

served by American Airlines to Chicago O’Hare International Airport with multiple flights per day. Prior to June of 2023, Delta Air Lines flew daily flights to Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport. This service was discontinued due to the nation wide pilot labor challenges that are adversely impacting communities the size of La Crosse. The City seeks to maintain its service while minimizing negative impacts to surrounding neighborhoods related to noise, air quality, and safety concerns.

The La Crosse Regional Airport completed the 2037 La Crosse Regional Airport Master plan in early 2022. This document anticipates gradual but consistent growth over the planning period. The airport currently has enough space to meet higher demand, including adding additional airlines and service higher capacity aircraft. La



▲ Travelers arrive and depart at the La Crosse Regional Airport. Credit: LSE

Crosse has adopted the height limitations zoning ordinance as required by the conditions of State aid for airport improvement under Wis. Code Trans 55.06. Neighboring municipalities are required to designate the City of La Crosse as the authority

having jurisdiction or to adopt height limitations ordinances of their own. The neighboring municipalities have done this.

Additionally, there are further opportunities for economic development that could be explored to further promote the use of the La Crosse Regional Airport. These possibilities are best described within the 2037 La Crosse Regional Airport Master Plan. Opportunities can best be forged through partnerships with the local business community as well as universities.

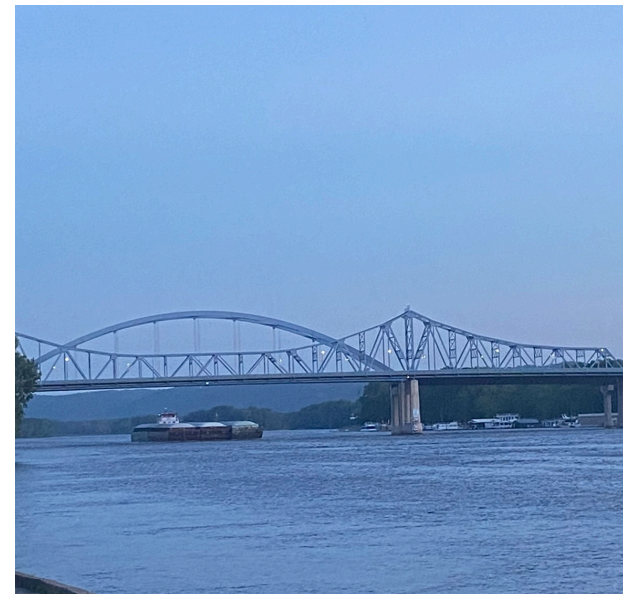
Actions:

- Action 4.1: Continue to maintain and enforce height and land use restrictions near the airport.
- Action 4.2: If airport land becomes available for other uses, the long-term viability of the airport should be considered when determining future uses.
- Action 4.3: Monitor demand for enhanced transit opportunities to the airport, such as a potential public shuttle service to and from downtown La Crosse.
- Action 4.4: Consider new/expanded economic development opportunities related to cargo transportation and other activities.

▶ A barge passes under the bridge as viewed from Riverside Park. Credit: GRAEF team



▲ Boating is a popular form of river-based transportation. Credit: La Crosse Parks Dept.



5: PROMOTE RIVER-BASED TRANSPORTATION AS A DRIVER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM, AND RECREATION.

La Crosse is fortunate to have direct access to the Mississippi, Black, and La Crosse Rivers. Plans for these waterfronts can integrate many uses and activities, including port facilities, water-focused development, recreational amenities, and water quality protection. According to the Community Survey, the top reason for choosing to live in La Crosse for over 50% of respondents was natural beauty, with another 26% indicating recreational opportunities as their top reason. When asked what primary factors improve the quality of life in La Crosse, over 70% indicated natural features, the bluffs, and Mississippi River.

There are many opportunities for recreation on La Crosse's scenic waterways, including boating and fishing from numerous access points throughout the region. Recently, Riverboat cruising has also returned to La Crosse. The La Crosse Queen is a modern-day replica of the grand river boats that operated on the Mississippi River in the early 1900's. Cruising out of La Crosse, this river boat is one of the few authentic Mississippi River paddlewheel river boats still in operation in the United States today. This is a unique recreational amenity the City can use to attract tourists into the community and showcase its downtown riverfront.

Actions:

- Action 5.1: Continue to support waterfront programming and recreational opportunities.

- Action 5.2: Encourage best practices for environmental protection regarding stormwater runoff and water quality.
- Action 5.3: Promote recent federal port designation and explore the additional funding opportunities this designation makes available to the City.

6: PRIORITIZE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION IN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND INVESTMENT.

Collaboration with surrounding communities and other stakeholders is essential for the success of the La Crosse region's transportation system. The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is a critical partner on transportation planning and investment. The LAPC is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the La Crosse, WI-La Crescent, MN Urbanized Area, as affirmed by the governors of Wisconsin and Minnesota and the consent of most of the cities and villages in the La Crosse area. The LAPC guides the local expenditure of state and federal transportation funding and serves as a forum for communication, collaboration, and decisions on critical transportation issues.

There have been multiple regional collaboration efforts to establish high-speed, regional passenger rail in the Midwest. These include the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MRRI), a 9-state effort seeking 110-mph service that started in 1996, and most recently the creation of the Midwest

Regional Rail Plan (MWRRP) by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in 2021. The MWRRP recommits to a "Core Express" route between Chicago and Minneapolis-St. Paul, with

▼ The City's Climate Action Plan encourages the reduction of single-passenger vehicle trips. Credit: Dylan Overhouse



connections to Milwaukee and La Crosse. The realization of the MRRI would benefit the City of La Crosse by providing an additional pathway for tourists to access the City's well-known festivals and water-based recreational amenities.

Actions:

- Action 6.1: Utilize LAPC meetings to facilitate regional collaboration on all types of mobility and pursue one-on-one meetings as necessary to supplement interactions at LAPC.
- Action 6.2: Promote the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail Project for quality passenger rail service from the La Crosse Depot to key regional destinations, and support efforts to increase the speed, frequency, and reliability of service.
- Action 6.3: Work with WisDOT and local railroad operators to maintain the viability of existing rail corridors while protecting connectivity for existing neighborhoods and to promote future passenger rail operations both within the La Crosse region and to nearby larger cities.

► Electric vehicle charging is available at the La Crosse Regional Airport. Credit: LSE



A Place to Admire



6

NATURAL RESOURCES & RESILIENCE

Vision

Restore, protect, and manage the City's natural assets and systems to sustain a healthy environment, vibrant recreation opportunities, and ample connections to nature for La Crosse residents and visitors.

Background

La Crosse is located at the center of the Midwest's "Driftless" Region: an unglaciated landscape where the flat Midwestern landscape in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa gives way to scenic cliffs overlooking the wide Mississippi River. The beautiful limestone bluffs surrounding La Crosse, once an important source of building material, now provides a unique ecological resource for outdoor recreation and rare natural communities like bluff prairies. Grandad Bluff, the tallest bluff in the area at 600 feet, is a beloved focal point of the La Crosse community overlooking the rivers and marsh. As of the time of this plan's creation, the City was in the process of restoring 80 acres of bluff land habitat.

The La Crosse River Marsh is a 1200-acre urban riparian wetland located in the heart of La Crosse, fed by the adjacent La Crosse and Mississippi Rivers. The Marsh provides important ecosystem services to the City including flood water detention and air and water purification. In addition, the marsh provides an important habitat for fish breeding, migratory birds, and other native wildlife. Friends of the Marsh is a local group dedicated to protecting the health of the Marsh

for generations to come. Ongoing projects focus on La Crosse River Marsh restoration, including connecting the different cells for hydraulic and habitat connectivity. There is strong community support for protecting the marsh from new roads or other types of development.

The natural resources of La Crosse from the bluffs, rivers, and marsh to the wooded Hixon Forest define and contribute to the character and beauty of life in the City. With the Mississippi and Black Rivers on the western border, the La Crosse River marsh bisecting the central City, and the oak bluff lands along the eastern border, nature is never far away.

In fact, nearly a quarter of the City's land is under "conservancy" land use (22.9%, or 3,288 acres).

It is no wonder that preserving natural resources ranked high on the list of priorities for La Crosse residents during the community engagement portion of the planning process. La Crosse's natural amenities do more than provide an outlet for recreation, commerce and enjoyment of scenic beauty; these assets also clean the air and water, absorb and slow excess flood water and provide critical ecosystems for countless plant and animal species. Maintaining these natural systems as they move through the City is vital to sustaining a healthy environment for La Crosse residents.

Past Accomplishments

The City has already shown a strong commitment to protecting natural resources through the development of its Climate Action Plan in 2022, Strategic Plan for Sustainability in 2009, and Bluffland Protection Program in partnership with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy in 2006 (the City was subsequently recognized as "Policymaker of the Year" by Gathering Waters, Wisconsin's land trust alliance). Additional highlights of past accomplishments are listed below:

- La Crosse's municipal code regulates: Erosion Control (Ch. 105), Shoreland-Wetland Zoning (Ch. 109), Conservancy Zoning District (Sec. 115-158), Floodplain Zoning (Ch. 115, Article V, Division 2), and the City has adopted Stormwater Utility and Stormwater Management (Ch. 105) regulations to meet WI DNR standards.

Additionally, the City has established effective partnerships with state and county agencies to preserve important natural areas in and around La Crosse. It is important that the City continue to reinforce these partnerships to ensure future development pressure does not have adverse impacts on the natural assets so beloved by residents and visitors alike. The strategies outlined in this section are tailored to address the needs of La Crosse to protect and enhance natural assets as an integral part of community health and vitality. Such efforts will ensure that La Crosse can continue to rely on the benefits of its natural resources for many years to come.



▲ La Crosse's trail system is a major regional draw. Credit: City of La Crosse Mayor FB



▲ Members of the La Crosse Parks, Recreation & Forestry teach students about tree planting. Credit: City

Community Engagement Insights

Community engagement efforts for the “Forward La Crosse” campaign identified key concerns among residents for the City’s natural resources and highlighted the strong value placed on natural areas by the community. Notably, when asked to compare priorities across all categories for La Crosse’s Comprehensive Plan ‘Conserve Open Space & Biodiversity’ won out over any other category. This result displays La Crosse resident’s strong desire for the preservation and enhancement of natural resources.

Respondents highly rated the Mississippi River and streams (#1), scenic views and developed bluffs (#2), and wetlands (#3) as important resources and environmental assets in La Crosse to protect. Water issues including water quality and flood control were highest on the priority list for environmental concerns in La Crosse. Cumulatively, water protection issues made up 48%, or almost half, of responses given for environmental issues most important to La Crosse residents. Also ranked highly were air quality and, unsurprisingly for an urban community, preservation of open space.

The natural environment also plays a vital role in recreational opportunities in La Crosse. Survey respondents identified walking, biking, and scenic trails, parks, picnics, and playgrounds, and swimming pools, splash pads, and beaches as top recreational priorities. Closely linked was the need expressed for additional walking paths and bike lanes, which made up the largest response to transportation improvements desired for La Crosse. One of the major goals from the 2002 Comprehensive Plan was to “Establish a parkway system to create an interconnected system of

attractively landscaped roadways that connect the City’s major parks and open spaces.” Respondents seemed generally unaware of this goal and do not feel there are significant active transportation (non-car) connections across the City.

Community engagement results confirm the iconic recreational areas in La Crosse contribute strongly to the City’s sense of place.

Integrating conservation into development practices and distributing greenspace throughout the City remain highly desired objectives.

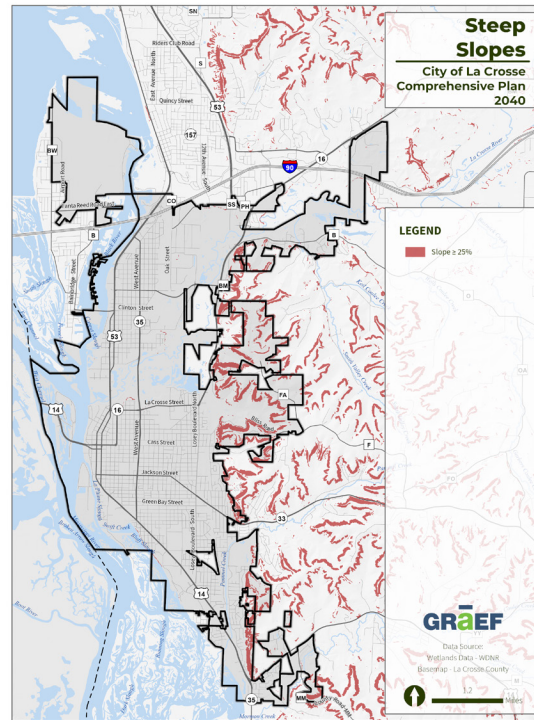
Respondents highlighted the following recreational areas as contributing significantly to the City’s character: Hixon Forest, La Crosse marsh, Bluffs/Grandad Bluff, and Riverside Park. Green space remained highly desired even in the downtown core, with ‘More greenery and natural elements’ making up 19% of the top three desires for downtown amenities. In response to the question “Do you feel that important parks, recreation areas, and sensitive natural resources like wetland, riparian, and woodland resources are protected from the impacts of development?” only 30% felt current protection was adequate, suggesting that more regulation of greenfield development would be welcome by the majority of residents.

Opportunities & Strategies

1. ENHANCE PROTECTION FOR EXISTING AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL HABITATS

Because of its location in the Mississippi River alluvial plain, La Crosse has a deep connection to water resources. The City's rivers and wetlands clean the air and water, serve as wildlife habitat, and provide great scenic beauty. Next to La Crosse, the Mississippi River channel is divided by hundreds of small islands which disperse its waters into side channels, backwaters, marshes, and wetlands. These distinctive natural areas include the shifting spaces between wet and dry such as floodplain forests and wetlands, which provide a key benefit to the region: they slow down the water and capture sediment and nutrients, reducing pollution downstream and in the groundwater. Wetland ecosystems, which distinguish the La Crosse environment, often harbor the greatest species diversity and provide important breeding habitat and migration stopover grounds. However, the benefits of the marsh are not always widely understood or recognized, and pressure to develop the marsh continues.

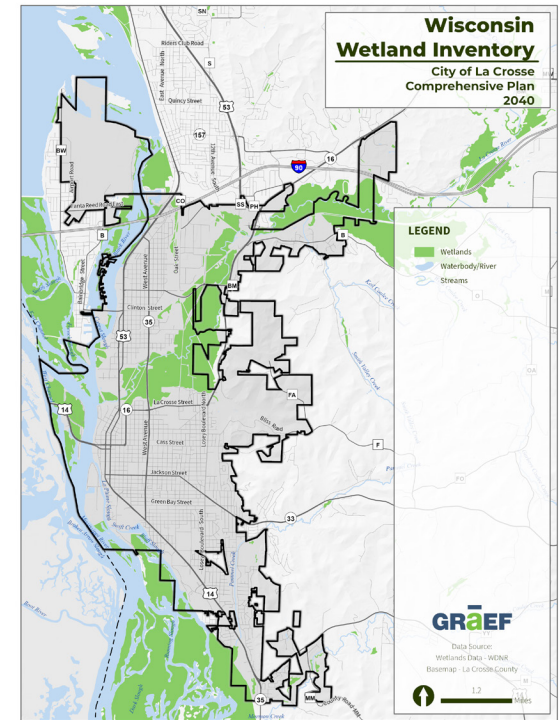
The bluffs and coulees further inland are themselves unique geological features which distinguish La Crosse's identity and harbor ecological communities in an otherwise urban, largely developed, area. The State of Wisconsin limits developments on slopes steeper than 20%, but La Crosse County was granted an exemption up to 30% due to the higher concentration of steep land. The current La Crosse Municipal Code



prohibits building on land with steep slopes 30% or greater: Sec. 113-140(j) prohibits platting lots that are mostly a steep slope, and Sec. 105-30(10) and (11) restricts development on parcels with steep slopes. It is recommended that the restriction be reverted back to 20%, as La Crosse is just as susceptible to landslides and erosion for land with a slope of 20-30%.

Drinking Water

The natural areas in and around La Crosse play a vital role in the ecology of the larger region and in cleaning polluted water runoff before it enters bodies of water or infiltrates into groundwater. Because La Crosse is dependent on groundwater for its drinking supply, the benefits of water filtration from natural areas to the City are significant. As water travels slowly through small surface creeks and over vegetated natural



areas, sediment and pollutants are removed. Water that percolates down through the deep root system of natural vegetation is cleaned of organic contamination through plant uptake and biodegradation. As a result, groundwater is cleaner and replenished through infiltration. This process prevents harmful algae outbreaks and other degradation of aquatic environments from excess nutrient loads and other pollution. Protection of

natural areas maintains water quality standards for fishing and recreation in the La Crosse region and for downstream communities as well.

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Coordinate protection efforts with regional and state public and nonprofit entities and focus resources on long-term protection and prevention of degradation.
- Action 1.2: Encourage public education and recreational use of the La Crosse River Marsh.
- Action 1.3: Establish development buffer zones around areas of steep slopes and wetlands.
- Action 1.4: Restore natural ecosystem elements of French Island, Riverside, and Houska Parks.
- Action 1.5: Maintain and expand long-term public access to rivers and wetlands.
- Action 1.6: Encourage urban infill development and urban redevelopment to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and prevent fringe development of marsh and forest areas.
- Action 1.7: Protect natural and man-made/engineered drainage ways to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff on existing natural resources and urban land uses.

2. EXPAND AWARENESS, ACCESS, AND CONNECTIVITY OF NATURAL AREAS

Continuous, large, natural areas such as Hixon Forest are close to people's hearts and define natural spaces within La Crosse. However, smaller, local spaces within cities are also

important, as they provide everyday encounters with nature. These everyday green spaces, near to home, contribute to a sense of wellbeing through frequent moments in nature. They are important for community building, as well as maintaining a robust system of connected green space. Even a small natural area can provide an important link for pollinators, plants, and animals navigating an otherwise inhospitable urban environment. Cumulatively, smaller natural areas are responsible for important ecosystem services such as stormwater management, heat reduction, and clean air throughout all areas of the City.



▲ Houska Park features over a dozen amenities along the Mississippi River. Credit: Dylan Overhouse

Parks for Recreation and Conservation

Increasing protection in parks and conservation areas involves not just increasing the area of park spaces where possible, but also increasing the

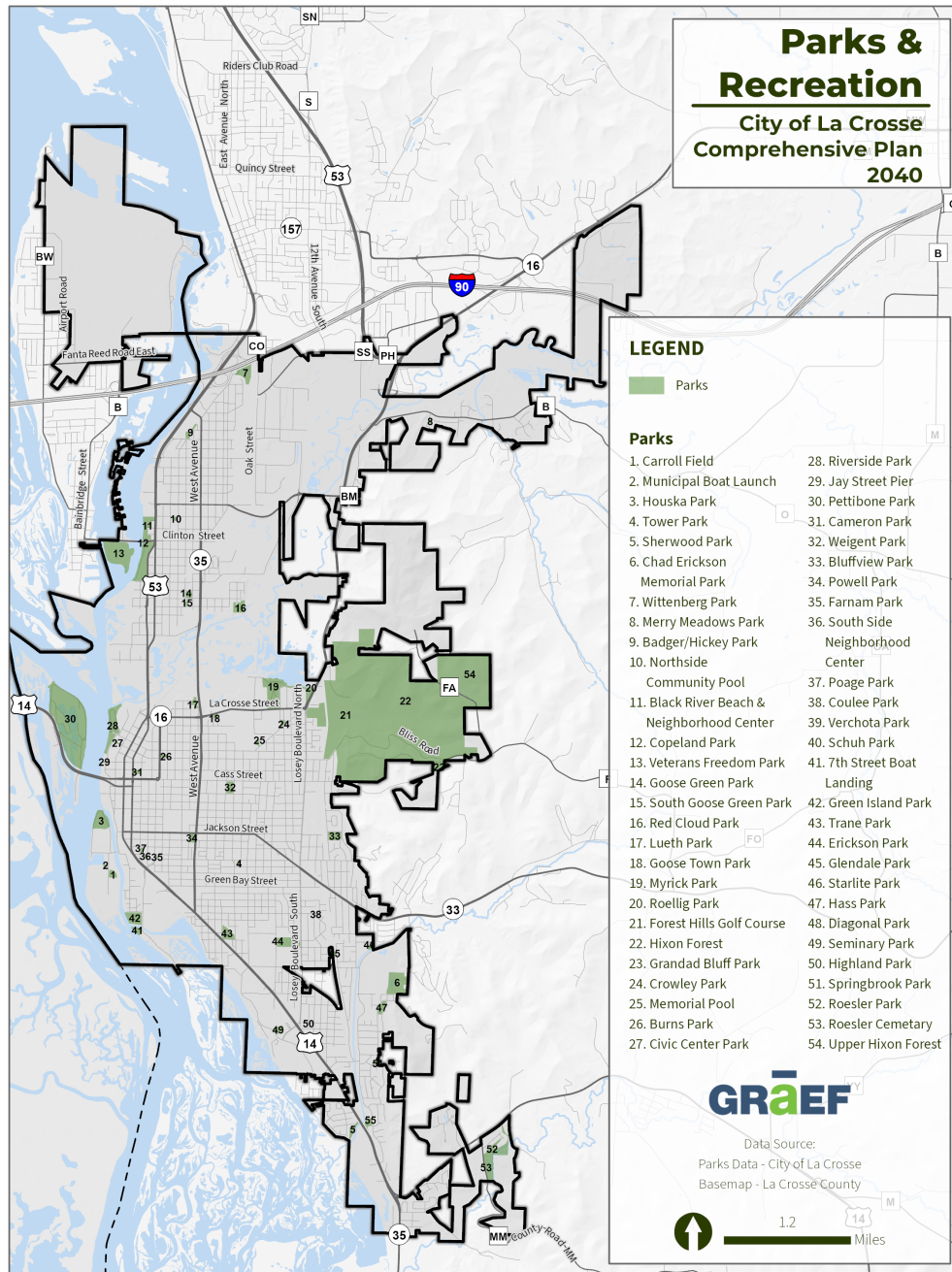
ecological quality within existing parks. Parks can expand on their benefit to the public by providing for a diversity of interaction in nature including recreation, environmental education, and relaxation. Increasing the quality of stream buffers and naturalized areas strengthens the ability of such areas to provide environmental services while increasing opportunities for immersion in nature within the City. Naturalizing park space also reduces the City's maintenance burden from mowing, planting and fertilizing, and reduces the negative environmental impact of these activities to air and water quality.

Parks & Recreation in La Crosse

La Crosse boasts over 100 miles of maintained bike paths and trails and 47 parks connected to vibrant neighborhoods and the historic downtown. La Crosse's parks range in size, scale, and amenities, and provide important gathering space for people to recreate and interact with each other and with nature. The robust network of parks and trails, connected to vibrant neighborhoods and the historic downtown, contributes to quality of life and overall City aesthetics.

Due to the very limited amount of contiguous open space for new parks, it is unlikely that La Crosse will have significant opportunity to establish large new parks. Therefore, the City should focus on maintaining existing parks and improvements to park facilities over the next ten years. Since the last Comprehensive Plan, the City lost two parks: Farnam Park and Goosetown Park.

In addition, many of the City's existing parks have been entertaining residents and visitors for many years, and therefore ensuring the equipment and facilities are in good working condition is very important. The City should also prioritize responding to changes in recreational preferences and needs to best serve residents and visitors. For



example, the recent rise in popularity of pickleball as a low-impact and fun game for all ages has increased the desire for net sports space. The COVID-19 pandemic also drew more people to take up outdoor hobbies that allow for safe social distancing, such as birdwatching and cycling. Pet ownership also skyrocketed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many municipalities are grappling with increased desire for dog-friendly parks and fenced spaces. La Crosse currently hosts the Houska Dog Park, a 5-acre, fenced space for dogs to run and play, as well as a small dog park in Myrick Park near the Marsh.



▲ Riverside Park (top, credit: GRAEF team) and Pettibone Beach (bottom, credit: City of La Crosse Mayor FB) are two popular park spaces.

Over the planning horizon, the City should also focus on connectivity between parks and trails to enable more residents to access green spaces via safe and sustainable means such as walking or cycling (as opposed to driving and parking). Community input throughout the planning process revealed that there are many places where walkers and cyclists feel unsafe at road crossings or on sections of trails that parallel roads with fast traffic. The City should compile a full list of areas where residents have identified challenges and develop a set of actions to address them.

In addition, the City's existing park system can be enhanced by incorporating more natural features, such as native plantings and green infrastructure. Native plantings can provide food and habitat for small mammals, birds, bats, and insects, especially important due to recent global declines in insect populations, especially pollinators such as bees. Pairing native vegetation with green infrastructure designs such as rain gardens can provide important flood control and pollution mitigation, as well as potentially lower park maintenance expenditures.



▲ Native plants help support wildlife. Credit: City

These park enhancements can also provide more opportunities for residents and visitors to connect intimately with nature, a proven benefit for overall physical and mental wellness.

Gardens & Greenspaces

Private gardens and maintained greenspaces can be an oasis within the City for people and wildlife alike. Encouraging native planting on private property increases the ecological health of the City and strengthens the food system by providing vital pollinator habitat. Well-kept gardens and native landscaping can also enhance the overall appearance of commercial and residential properties.

Right-of-way Plantings

Right-of-way plantings are linear by design, which means they can serve as a natural corridor for plants, pollinators and other beneficial wildlife to move through the City. Land area devoted to right-of ways typically makes up 20% of urban areas, which can make a significant impact when converted to beneficial plantings. Because vegetation planted in the right-of-way is next to roads, these planting can be used to naturally clean polluted runoff from traffic before it makes its way into the groundwater or water bodies.

Actions:

- Action 2.1: Promote landscaped areas that include native plant and tree types that serve a variety of ecological functions such as interception and filtration of stormwater, reduction of the urban heat island effect, and preservation and restoration of natural systems.

- Action 2.2: Require maintenance of private landscaped areas to preserve view corridors and to maintain sight lines at vehicular and pedestrian intersections.
- Action 2.3: Require landscaping plans for new developments that facilitate future maintenance including those that minimize the need for irrigation systems, utilize drought and salt-resistant species, and consider ongoing performance of storm water treatment practices, snow storage, access to sun, proximity to buildings, paved surfaces and overhead utilities.
- Action 2.4: Incentivize and identify opportunities to integrate green roofs, living walls, and porous pavement into new developments, especially within the downtown core, to bring more green spaces into the urban landscape.
- Action 2.5: Revise the existing ordinance that protects existing mature trees to focus on allocating funding for the replacement of lost trees, especially due to culling from invasive pests.
- Action 2.6: Develop a framework for public realm improvements Citywide that guides landscaping, street furnishings, bird-friendly street lighting, trees, heritage streets, and other improvements to the public realm and pedestrian environment.

3. STRENGTHEN RESILIENCY OF THE NATURAL & BUILT ENVIRONMENT

La Crosse residents can expect the future to bring more frequent and more intense precipitation events. This will increase the amount of water flowing through river system resulting higher

flows and flooding that occur more frequently and last longer. At the same time, temperatures are increasing in La Crosse, with longer and more frequent periods of extreme heat. La Crosse can reduce vulnerability to such extreme events by adapting infrastructure and housing to anticipate such changes and using open space to help protect against flooding and the urban heat island effect. In addition to anticipating extreme weather events, La Crosse can take measures to be self-sufficient in its response systems.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Continue to prepare for pressures and shocks that climate change will introduce or worsen by collaborating across City departments, government agencies, private businesses and organizations, and resident networks.
- Action 3.2: Continue climate forecasts in stormwater feasibility and modeling work to inform infrastructure investments.
- Action 3.3: Continue to explore funding opportunities which assess, inventory, clean up, and bring new compatible uses to contaminated sites in the City.

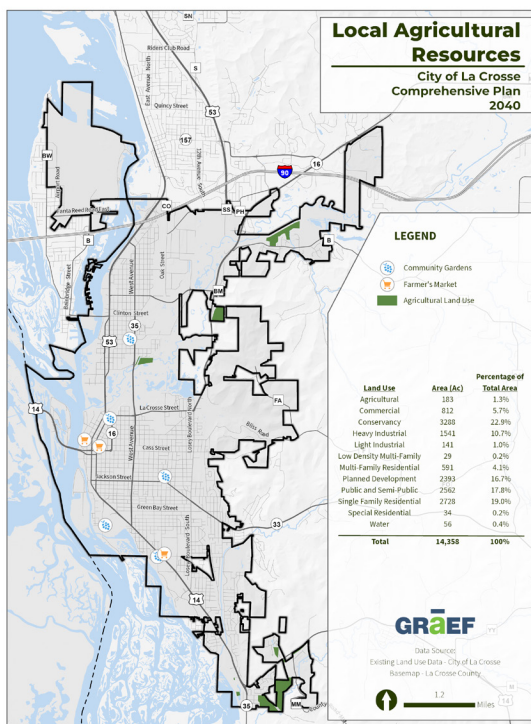
4. EXPLORE SITES AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM AND CONNECT ALL RESIDENTS WITH FRESH, HEALTHY FOOD

Local Agriculture in La Crosse

Agriculture is deeply ingrained in the tradition and land use of La Crosse County. Despite an 11% decrease in the total number of farms since 2012, there were still an impressive 667 farms in La Crosse County as of the latest available data (2017). Agricultural land uses are very limited within the City limits, predominantly concentrated in a few parcels in the southernmost portion of the City.

Only 1.3% of the City’s land is under “Agricultural” land use. This is primarily due to La Crosse’s character as the urban hub of the region.

Nearly all of the land suitable for agricultural means within the City has been developed already, and much of the remaining open space is home to wetlands, woodlands, and parks. However, many of the 667 farms across the County supply La



Crosse residents with locally-produced products in one way or another. Furthermore, despite limited soils suitable for agriculture and limited land availability, La Crosse has a thriving network of community gardens and farmers markets that offer residents opportunities to get involved with local agriculture.

▼ Vendors offer fresh food and goods at the Farmer's Market. Credit: Dylan Overhouse



Farmers Markets

The largest of La Crosse’s two farmer’s markets is the Cameron Park Farmer’s Market, held weekly from May to October during peak season and November to December during the winter season. Part of the Wisconsin Farmer’s Market Association, the Cameron Park Farmer’s Market offers a variety of fruits, vegetables, meats, breads, cheeses, and prepared foods, as well as crafts and art by local artisans. The second of La Crosse’s Farmer’s Market is held weekly at the La Crosse Hmoob Cultural & Community Agency from June to October.

Community Gardens



▲ Tending to the community garden near City Hall.
Credit: City

La Crosse's oldest community garden was established in 1998. Located on the corner of Kane St. and St. Cloud St., the Kane Street Community Garden produces 30,000 pounds of fresh, organic vegetables annually. The garden serves not only as a source of free, fresh produce for residents, but also a valuable gathering space for staff and volunteers to connect through planting, weeding, and harvesting. The South Side Community Garden, located behind the Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center complex, also provides a source of social connection for volunteers and is a valued asset of the neighborhood. Seeds grown at this site are started by the students at Hamilton Elementary School, providing a unique educational opportunity for students to engage with local agriculture. GROW La Crosse, a local nonprofit dedicated to connecting youth with healthy food and nature, also serves to connect students with local agriculture. In 2022, GROW La Crosse maintained 17,281 square feet of garden

space at 10 schools in the City, La Crosse County, and neighboring sites across the Mississippi River in Minnesota.

The most recent community gardens were established in 2020 as a series of Community Victory Gardens. There are currently three Victory Gardens (in addition to the Kane Street site) located throughout the City:

- La Crosse City Hall,
- Aptiv, Inc (3000 South Avenue), and
- The School District of La Crosse Hogan Administrative Center (19th and Mississippi)

While these gardens originated as a way for residents to enjoy the outdoors safely during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, they remain as popular, volunteer-led local food sources that supply community members with fresh produce.

Combating Food Deserts

Areas of the City still lack easy access to fresh food. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a "food desert" as an area that has at least 20 percent poverty and where residents are located more than a mile from a grocery store in an urban area. In La Crosse, residents within the Powell-Poage-Hamilton Neighborhood located near the Gundersen Medical Center campus are experiencing the impacts of a food desert, particularly limited access to fresh, healthy food and higher rates of food insecurity. With a very limited amount of land available for agricultural production on a large-scale, smaller, distributed

farmers markets, community gardens, and grocery stores provide an important link for residents to secure fresh, healthy food.

Actions:

- Action 4.1: Continue to encourage agricultural preservation policies and practices in neighboring towns and Villages to maintain the family-owned farms that supply La Crosse's farmers markets.
- Action 4.2: Identify sites to expand community gardens and farmers markets to ensure geography is not a limiting factor in fresh food access.
- Action 4.3: Utilize economic development resources to promote more high-quality grocery store locations in underserved areas.
- Action 4.4: Implement the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan to combat the effects of climate change on the local food system.
- Action 4.5: Integrate urban agriculture within downtown La Crosse, including methods such as green roofs and living walls.
- Action 4.6: Evaluate the zoning code and revise as necessary to allow urban agriculture activities such as chicken coops, beekeeping, fruit and nut trees, and beyond.
- Action 4.7: Establish guidelines for preferred methods of urban agriculture and best management practices that are consistent with the community vision.

5. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY, RESILIENCE, AND DIVERSITY OF THE CITY'S PARK AND TRAIL SYSTEM.

Actions:

- Action 5.1: Implement the recommendations of the City's Parks Strategic Plan to guide future park and recreation priorities and decision-making.
- Action 5.2: Regularly survey parks and recreation participants to understanding changing needs and desires.
- Action 5.3: Increase connectivity between parks through an expanded network of greenways and trails as identified by community engagement.
- Action 5.4: Continue to provide and expand diverse amenities at City parks to promote accessibility and inclusivity for all ages, abilities, and interests within the City.
- Action 5.5: Integrate native plantings and green infrastructure at park sites to provide wildlife habitat, flood control, and pollution mitigation.
- Action 5.6: Pursue opportunities to establish "pocket" or "mini" parks throughout the City as consistent with neighborhood future land use visions.



▲ Fishing at the La Crosse River Marsh. Credit: Dylan Overhouse

A Place for the Long Term

7

UTILITIES & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Background

The City's three public utilities—Water, Sanitary Sewer, and Stormwater—are public enterprises funded predominately through user fees, not tax dollars. The utilities report to and are supervised by the City of La Crosse's Board of Public Works and Common Council.

Water Utility

The Water Utility is responsible for providing fresh water to the City of La Crosse. The system is comprised of 13 high-capacity wells, 2 reservoirs, 221 miles of water main, 3,020 valves, and 2,017 hydrants. All water in the City is sourced from a sand and gravel aquifer located about 170 feet beneath the City. In 2021, the City pumped a total of 3.8 billion gallons of water, with an average 10.4 million gallons used per day.

Sanitary Sewer Utility

The Sanitary Sewer Utility is responsible for treating the wastewater produced by the City of La Crosse. The system is comprised of 26 pumping stations, roughly 205 miles of sanitary sewer lines, and the Isle la Plume wastewater treatment plant. The Utility serves over 16,000 customers within La Crosse as well as several industrial customers and four wholesale municipal customers, namely the City of Onalaska, Town of Campbell, the City of La Crescent, MN, and Sanitary Districts 1 & 2 in the Town of Shelby.



▲ Members of the La Crosse water utility attend to an infrastructure project. Credit: City of La Crosse Mayor FB

Stormwater Utility

The Stormwater Utility was created in 2011 to manage the City's stormwater, meaning the water that runs off the land and into rivers, streams, and lakes following a rainfall event. It is important that stormwater is managed effectively since it accumulates contaminants that can pollute surface water. Residential properties with three or less units on a lot are charged a fixed rate quarterly based on a City-wide average of pervious and impervious surfaces for single family homes. Multi-family residential properties with 4 or more units per lot are considered "non-residential" by the stormwater utility, and along with all other commercial, industrial, and institutional properties are charged a fee based on the actual amount of impervious area on their lots.

Solid Waste & Recycling

The La Crosse County Solid Waste Department oversees solid waste and recycling services county-wide at the La Crosse County Solid Waste Facility (the landfill), and Household Hazardous Waste Facility located in the far northeast corner of the City off of Berlin Dr. These facilities also serve portions of several surrounding counties in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota.



▲ The compost sorter separates organic material from City residents. Credit: La Crosse Street Dept.

According to the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department's 2021 Annual Report, the landfill received 109,405 tons of waste for disposal in 2021, of which 45,014 tons (41%) was municipal waste. The second highest category in terms of tonnage was construction and demolition waste at 25,284 (23%).¹ A single-stream recycling system was implemented by the County in 2010 to serve the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska; plastic, glass, paper, and other recyclable materials are processed at privately operated material recovery

facilities (MRF) in La Crosse and Onalaska. Residents are also allowed to drop-off a variety of items at the County landfill for disposal including tires, furniture, refrigerators, mattresses, yard waste, and more.

A unique feature of the County's solid waste system is the Excel Energy Waste-To-Energy (WTE) plant located on French Island. This system is under contract with La Crosse County to accept a minimum of 73,000 tons of municipal solid waste annually and process at least 66% into refuse-derived fuel to generate electricity. As a result, this system diverts a significant portion of the region's municipal waste from entering the County's landfill, which in turn extends the life of the landfill. In 2020 the French Island generating plant produced enough electricity to serve roughly 9,000 homes.

Energy

The major energy provider for the City of La Crosse is Excel Energy. In 2021, Excel provided over 783 million kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity to 26,346 residential and business customers. La Crosse's electric power is derived from a number of sources, as seen in Table 1, with the largest source being nuclear power (27.2%) and wind power as the second highest source (22.9%). Excel also served over 18,000 residential and commercial natural gas customers.

Police Department

The La Crosse Police Department's (LCPD) is comprised of four bureaus: Administrative Services, Professional Standards/Community Services, Field Services, and Investigative Services. The LCPD also oversees the Police Parking Utility. As of 2014, the La Crosse Police Department created a new community policing position—Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO)—through a combination

of private donations and federal grants. These officers focus on community concerns within specific City neighborhoods—Washburn, Lower Northside Depot, Downtown, and Powell-Poage-Hamilton—as well as Parks-Parking-Transit. NROs meet with business leaders and members of local organizations, attend community events, and generally serve as liaisons between the citizens they serve and City leaders. As of 2020, there are 10 NRO positions within the LCPD. The Police Department also manages animal control services within the City.



▲ Students and staff pose with the School Resource Officer, a position of the police dept. Credit: LCPD.

Fire Department

The mission of the La Crosse Fire Department is to promote safety, reduce risks, and respond to calls for fire suppression, emergency medical services, and all-hazards rescue. The department is comprised of numerous response teams, including Fire Suppression, Emergency Medical, and Natural or Manmade Disaster. There are also four technical rescue response teams: Hazardous Materials; Urban Search & Research; Water, Ice & Dive Rescue Team; and the Tactical Response Team, who works in conjunction with the LCPD's Emergency Response Team.

▼ Firefighters with a Kwik Trip employee whose quick action helped save a building from fire. Credit: LCFD.



Library

The La Crosse Public Library (LPL) was founded in 1888 to serve the citizens of La Crosse. LPL operates one main and two smaller satellite facilities within the City, providing access to almost 250,000 items, while also offering public computer access and wireless internet at all three locations and via mobile library service. Alone and in partnership with the school district, universities, local businesses and other organizations, the library provides a wide variety of programs and services for all ages. Public meeting rooms, copying and printing services are also well utilized.



▲ Residents enjoy a craft lesson offered by the Library. Credit: La Crosse Public Library



◀ Donations for the Library pantry. Credit: La Crosse Public Library

Unique to the La Crosse community, the library supports an Archives department that offers a connection to the region's past, assisting in both personal research and genealogy, as well as an extensive collection that tells the City's story. Annually, the library has hundreds of thousands of visits and provides a public space that welcomes all, embracing the objective that libraries are for everyone. LPL is dedicated to promoting literacy and lifelong learning by fulfilling its mission to connect people with resources that enrich lives in the community. Learn more about LPL's array of offerings [here](#).

Public School District

As of 2023, the School District of La Crosse is comprised of 12 elementary schools, seven middle schools, and four high schools; these facilities include a mix of public, specialized charter schools, and the Coulee Region Virtual Academy.

The District serves a community of roughly 80,000 people in the City of La Crosse and adjacent Towns within La Crosse County, with 6,139 k-12 students enrolled in the 2021-2022 school year.

Opportunities & Strategies

1: RESERVE ACCESS TO SANITARY SEWER AND WATER SERVICE FOR CITY OF LA CROSSE GROWTH WHEN NEW DEVELOPMENT OCCURS AT THE MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY.

La Crosse's location between the Mississippi River and the bluffs limits future growth to the east and west. These natural boundaries direct growth potential largely to the northeast and southeast fringes of the City, but there are areas where La Crosse is bounded by adjacent municipalities. Any future development in currently unincorporated areas requires collaboration with these communities, and annexation into the City of La Crosse is typically preferred. The City intends to promote land-efficient development patterns that use City sewer and water services.

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Continue to pursue and maintain boundary agreements with each of the neighboring towns and municipalities to ensure the development process is predictable and promotes a mix of development densities in areas already connected to La Crosse's public sewer and water.

- Action 1.2: Do not permit the extension of City water and sewer service into Town lands except with annexation.

- Action 2.3: Strategically invest in system improvements that are cost-effective and minimize service-related impacts to the extent possible.

2. PERFORM REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND UPDATES TO LA CROSSE’S SANITARY SEWER AND WATER SYSTEMS TO ENSURE EXCELLENT SERVICE FOR ALL USERS.

Generally, La Crosse’s water and sanitary systems are in good condition, and the City’s aquifer has more than enough capacity to provide fresh water for the community well into the future. However, preventative maintenance and upkeep are essential to ensure La Crosse’s water and sanitary sewer systems continue to have adequate capacity and integrity. Well-timed and strategic infrastructure investments will ensure the City’s high-level of service is maintained in the decades ahead.

Actions:

- Action 2.1: Continue to utilize the 2040 Wastewater Strategic Plan to guide capital planning for the improvement of La Crosse’s wastewater treatment system.
- Action 2.2: Plan for known and anticipated water quality regulatory compliance issues, including for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

3. PROTECT SURFACE WATER QUALITY BY IMPLEMENTING STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES.

Any time impervious surfaces like rooftops and pavement are added to urban areas there is increased potential for nutrients and pollutants to run off into local waterways. This degrades the quality of nearby surface water, is harmful to wildlife, and can even increase the temperature of water bodies during certain times of the year. The City’s stormwater utility works to lessen the negative impacts of stormwater runoff through facilities such as retention basins, storm sewer mains, and catch basins. This infrastructure helps to slow down the flow of rainfall and snowmelt, lessen soil erosion, encourage runoff infiltration into the ground, and ultimately reduce the amount of stormwater that reaches La Crosse’s cherished rivers and streams.



► Flooding at Riverside Park.
Credit: City

Actions:

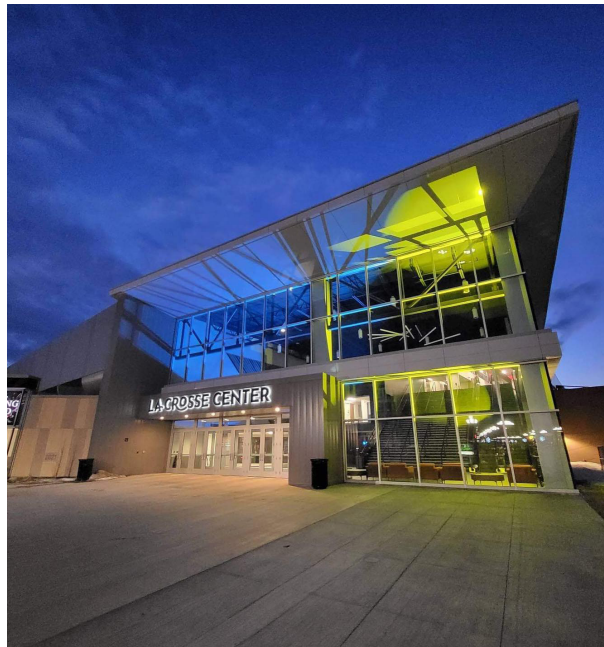
- Action 3.1: Continue to meet the requirements of the WDNR’s NR216 Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) Storm Water Permit, which regulates the stormsewer discharges from the City of La Crosse into local watersheds, including the Mississippi River.
- Action 3.2: Limit development types near wellheads to protect the quality of the public water supply.
- Action 3.3: Limit impervious surfaces and utilize best management practices in all new development to promote water infiltration.
- Action 3.4: Encourage opportunities for outdoor recreation, public art, and community involvement in stormwater management, such as the creation of an adopt-a-drain program.

4. STRATEGICALLY LOCATE COMMUNITY FACILITIES TO ENSURE EFFICIENT ACCESS BY THE WIDEST ARRAY OF CITY RESIDENTS POSSIBLE.

Community facilities, including fire and police stations, libraries, and public schools, are key elements of a community’s quality of life. Where fire and police stations, libraries and schools are located can impact the degree of service they provide to residents. The buildings that house these community service providers must also be regularly maintained to ensure La Crosse residents receive the highest quality service.

Actions:

- Action 4.1: Create long-range facilities plan to guide the scheduling and siting of new police, fire, or library facilities as well as continued maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.
- Action 4.2: Co-locate community facilities when appropriate to improve service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.
- Action 4.3: Ensure access to convenient community gathering spaces in every City neighborhood. These can be dedicated resident-use facilities such as community centers or spaces within facilities that primarily serve other City functions.



5. FOSTER POSITIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CITY’S POLICE, FIRE, PUBLIC SCHOOL, AND LIBRARY SYSTEMS AND THE RESIDENTS THEY SERVE.

In order to provide the highest quality service to residents, the City’s fire, police, library, and school systems must foster trust between themselves and the public. Transparency and communication are essential to building a strong foundation of mutual respect between all members of the community.

Actions:

- Action 5.1: Encourage police officers to regularly interface with the public at community events to foster goodwill and trust amongst residents. Continue to fund and expand the Neighborhood Resource Officer Program.
- Action 5.2: Create opportunities for outreach and education about the core responsibilities of the police, fire, and library departments, as well as solicit feedback on the success and areas of improvement in the provision of these key City services.
- Action 5.3: Explore opportunities to repurpose closed or no longer used municipal buildings for other uses that serve La Crosse residents.

◀ A renovation and expansion project at the La Crosse Center wrapped up in 2022. Credit: City of La Crosse Mayor FB

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

Vision

La Crosse will effectively coordinate with other units of government to achieve shared goals.

Introduction

Wisconsin's Smart Growth legislation requires that comprehensive plans are coordinated with other jurisdictions and agencies such as school districts, adjacent municipal governments, and other regional agencies. The intent is for issues such as transportation, stormwater management, and sanitary sewer growth to be considered at a broader, regional scale, rather than just within municipal borders.

Despite its well-known location as a water-centric City, La Crosse is not an island – its borders ebb and flow with neighboring communities, each with their own unique assets, challenges, and visions for the future. Oftentimes, the issues that communities face – from protecting sensitive natural systems to enhancing quality transportation – are felt at a regional or even state level. Therefore, the ability for the City to coordinate with its neighbors is of significant value both for the City and the region. Effective coordination can help the City stay up to date with changes occurring along the periphery of its borders, provide a platform for tackling any regional challenges or threats that may arise that do not recognize map boundaries, and give the City a heads-up when potential changes may occur that are outside of the City's direct control.

This section focuses on the relationships between the City and neighboring units of government. It provides context for past and present conversations and agreements, describes key entities at the local and regional level, and identifies the most prevalent opportunities and strategies for the City. Finally, this section provides a framework to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation efforts over the planning horizon of the Comprehensive Plan.

Background

Local governments play a key role in community land use decision making and governmental service delivery that impact the quality of life for residents and the economic vitality of businesses. There are certainly topics under the umbrella term of intergovernmental cooperation that can be seen as conflict points; competition for tax base and annexation disagreements chief among them. Having established processes for resolving disputes can shorten the severity and duration of these challenges.

All local governments are under stress to maintain a wide range of services on limited budgets due to increasing costs and regulatory pressures, especially in Wisconsin due to statutory limitations on tax levy increases. These services, described in other sections of this plan, include water-related utilities, transportation resources, community facilities, public education, and emergency response. Beginning with the challenge of cost-effective solutions to resident needs is a useful framework for pursuing intergovernmental cooperation.

When all entities involved are committed to mutual benefit, resources can be shared to achieve operational efficiencies and economies of scale.

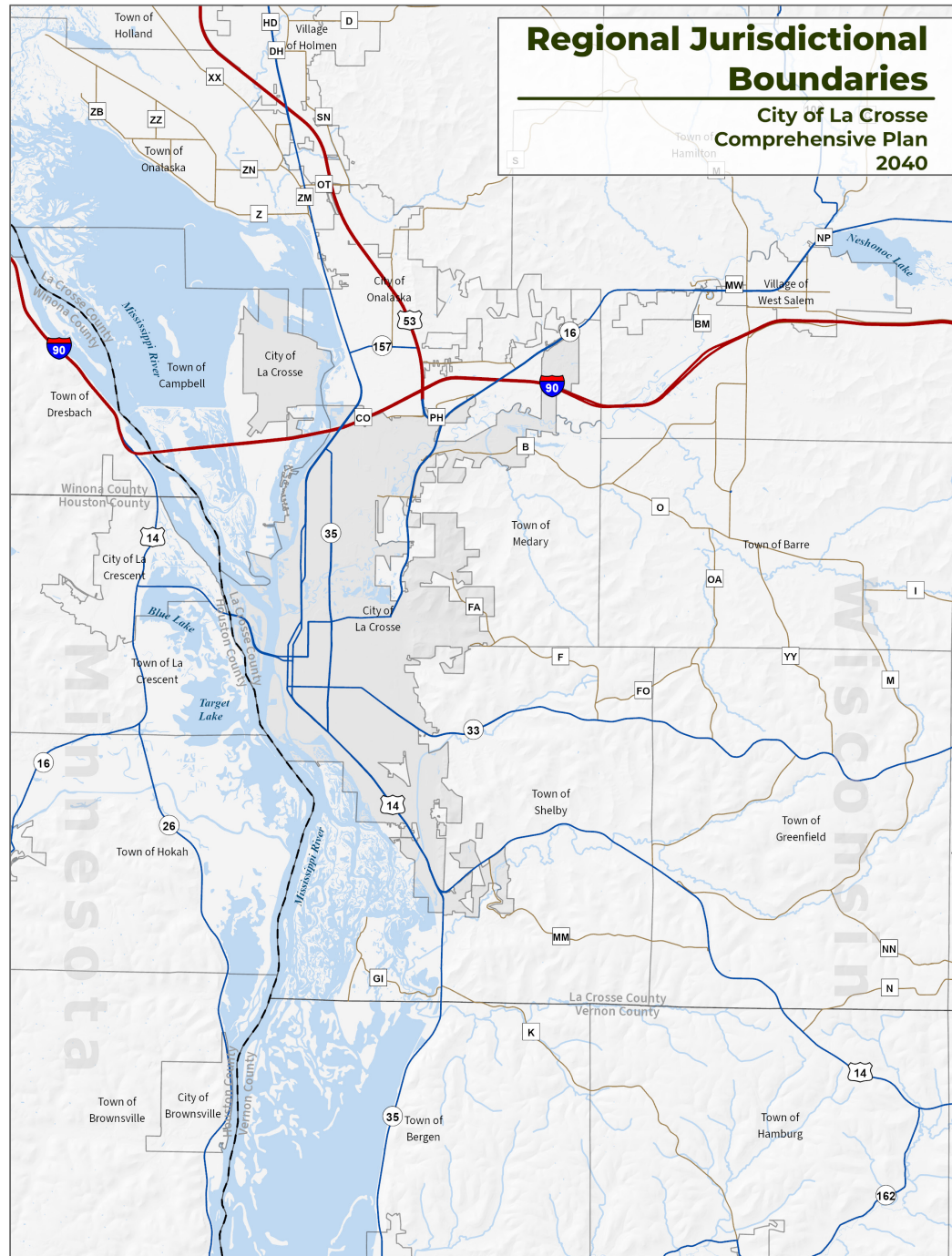


▲ City Hall is located at 400 La Crosse Street. Credit: City of La Crosse Mayor FB

Regional Context

The City of La Crosse hugs the Wisconsin side of the mighty Mississippi River in the southwest portion of La Crosse County. As the largest incorporated municipality in the county, the City serves as the county seat and leading economic engine of the region. La Crosse is bordered to the north by the City of Onalaska, to the east by the Town of Medary, to the south by the Town of Shelby, and to the west by the Town of Campbell. The City of La Crescent and the Village of Holmen are also key members of the wider La Crosse community.

▼ The Isle La Plume Wastewater Treatment Facility serves the City of La Crosse as well as the City of Onalaska; the City of La Crescent, MN; the Town of Campbell; and Sanitary Districts 1 and 2 in the Town of Shelby Credit: City



▼ **Table 7.1:** Comprehensive Plan Topics with Associated Government Entity, Agency, or Department.

Element	Relationship	Government, Agency, or Department
Transportation	Federal & State Highways	Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation
	County Highways	La Crosse County Highway Department
	Airport	City of La Crosse
	Regional Roadway Planning	La Crosse Area Planning Committee
	Railway Facilities	Burlington Northern & Santa Fe (BNSF), Canadian Pacific, Amtrak
	Waterways	Port of La Crosse Harbor Commission
Natural & Cultural Resources	Wetlands, Endangered Species, & Sensitive Environmental Locations	Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), La Crosse County Land Conservation Dept.
	Floodplains	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Wisconsin DNR
	Rivers, Surface Waters, & Groundwater	Wisconsin DNR, Mississippi Valley Division of the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers
	La Crosse History, Sites, & Documents	Wisconsin State Historical Society, La Crosse County Historic Sites Preservation Commission, National Park Service
Utilities & Community Facilities	Public Safety - State	Wisconsin State Patrol
	Public Safety - County	La Crosse County Sheriff's Office
	Solid Waste	La Crosse County Solid Waste Dept.
Housing	Federal Assistance	U.S. Dept. of Housing & Urban Development
	State Assistance	Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority
	County Assistance	La Crosse County Housing Authority
Economic Development	State Community Development Assistance	Wisconsin Dept. of Commerce, Dept. of Workforce Development
	Regional Assistance	7 Rivers Alliance, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission
	Training	U.S. Small Business Association

Opportunities & Strategies

1. ESTABLISH LONG-RANGE LAND USE AGREEMENTS WITH NEIGHBORING MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS TO REDUCE BOUNDARY DISPUTES AND IMPROVE LAND USE COORDINATION ALONG THE CITY'S BORDERS.

Boundary Agreements

The City of La Crosse has some existing agreements in place with neighboring communities. The oldest existing boundary agreement is between La Crosse and the Town of Campbell, established in 2004 and expiring on January 1, 2025. La Crosse also has ongoing boundary agreement discussions with the Town of Shelby that started in 2016.

Extraterritorial Plat Jurisdiction

WI State Statute 236.02(5) outlines extraterritorial plat approval jurisdiction within 3 miles of the La Crosse City limits. This covers most of the towns of Shelby, Medary and Campbell and jurisdiction requires City approval of subdivision plats in those areas. La Crosse uses Ordinance Number 4830, adopted in 2014, to guide these reviews.

► View of nearby La Crescent from La Crosse. Credit: Dylan Overhouse

Actions:

- Action 1.1: Encourage joint planning and action in the region by actively convening cooperative conversations and promoting shared commitments to mutual benefit.
- Action 1.2: With the support of La Crosse County, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and the Wisconsin Department of Administration Municipal Boundary Review section, pursue boundary agreements (new or updated) with the Towns of Medary, Shelby and Campbell that clarify the timing and extent of annexation and the terms of any extraterritorial service extension.
- Action 1.3: Encourage nearby municipal governments to adopt plans and zoning consistent with the preservation of open space and compact urban growth.
- Action 1.4: Maintain clear and responsive channels of communication in conflict resolution.



2. EXPLORE CONSOLIDATION OF SERVICES TO REDUCE INEFFICIENCIES AND PROVIDE THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE SERVICES TO RESIDENTS.

Shared Use Facilities

The School District of La Crosse facilities serve residents hailing not only from within the City's borders, but also from neighboring communities. School district facilities often serve a crucial role in providing space for community events such as conferences, sporting events and tournaments, music, art, and theater performances, and more. Shared use facilities can include large gathering spaces such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, athletic fields, auditoriums, and smaller gathering spaces such as conference rooms or classrooms. All of these facilities require ongoing maintenance that should be shared among the users that benefit. For more details about school district facilities, please refer to the Community Facilities and Utilities section of this Plan.

Emergency Services

La Crosse currently participates in several intergovernmental mutual aid agreements for police, fire, Haz Mat, drug interdiction, and beyond. Emergency services are optimal opportunities for cooperative planning and resource sharing to deploy solutions that improve quality of life and neighborhood vitality across the region. Inadequate communication and siloed investments can result in missed opportunities to leverage efficiencies.

Technology that improves response time, safety, and convenience should be an important part of these discussions due to the rapid evolving market offerings. Over the next decade, La Crosse should make it a priority to identify technologies that offer faster and more convenient ways for people to access emergency services and for the City to provide those services. Over the next decade, La Crosse should make it a priority to identify technologies that continue to enhance service quality and efficiency, and seek partnership arrangements with neighbors as appropriate and mutually beneficial, to share the costs and benefits of those technologies.

Natural Resources, Parks, & Recreation

La Crosse’s diverse and scenic natural resources are a key attraction for residents and tourists alike. Preserving and promoting access to the surface waters, woodlands, wetlands, and bluffs is an inherently regional effort because they cross boundaries and are used and enjoyed by everyone in the region.



Actions:

- Action 2.1: Continue to seek opportunities for proportional shared investment and shared use of community facilities.
- Action 2.2: Evaluate technology options that can improve emergency response convenience and speed, such as GPS technology that improves traffic flow.
- Action 2.3: Support compact growth patterns throughout the region to preserve natural resources and enhance the viability of transit service in more areas, consistent with Coulee Vision 2050.
- Action 2.3: Emphasize surface water management at a watershed level by establishing collaborative, watershed-based plans for stormwater management and waterway protection.
- Action 2.4: Support joint planning and action for the protection of environmental corridors for recreation and wildlife movement, including continued participation in the Blufflands Coalition.
- Action 2.5: Develop a long-range facilities plan to identify underserved areas (such as locations where residents do not have easy access to services that might benefit them) and determine how to cost-effectively provide services to these areas.
- Action 2.7: Perform a cost-benefit analysis during the consideration process for any future annexation.

◀ La Crosse Marsh Trail. Credit: Dylan Overhouse

3. PURSUE THE IDENTIFICATION AND FORMALIZATION OF SHARED GOALS WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES TO AID IN JOINT PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING.

La Crosse uses a variety of agreements, leases, and contracts that formally describe the intergovernmental coordination that takes place across the region. These cooperative arrangements involve public works, water and sanitary sewer, police, fire, park and recreation, transit, information management, recycling, assessing, municipal airport, and personnel. Opportunities to broaden these agreements to address regional issues should be explored.

Actions:

- Action 3.1: Work with La Crosse County and other municipalities to develop regional approaches for shared challenges. When possible, memorialize shared challenges and commitments to collaborative action in some way, such as memoranda of understanding or jointly created and adopted plans.
- Action 3.2: Find opportunities to engage residents, especially underrepresented populations, in aspects of regional collaboration work, to reinforce and clarify the public interest in those efforts.

- Action 3.3: Make consideration of regional cooperation a required step in the annual budgeting process for City departments, utilities and services.

▼ La Crosse Rail Bridge. Credit: Dylan Overhouse



Next Steps

8

An aerial photograph of a wide river winding through a lush, green landscape. The river is dark blue, and the surrounding land is covered in dense green trees and vegetation. In the foreground, there are some industrial or construction sites with piles of sand and gravel. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. A large, yellow, stylized number '8' is overlaid on the right side of the image, partially obscuring the river and the surrounding greenery.

IMPLEMENTATION

Plan Updates & Amendments

Introduction

This Plan should be reviewed annually and amended periodically. Suggestions for amendments may be brought forward by City staff, officials, and residents, and should be consistent with the Plan vision. Proposed amendments may originate in the following ways:

- Amendments proposed as corrections of clerical or administrative errors, mapping errors, and updated data for text, tables, and maps. Such amendments would be drafted by City staff.
- Amendments proposed as a result of discussion with officials and citizens.
- Amendments proposed as a result of recommendations discussed during a City planning process.

Procedure & Frequency

When a change is proposed, it should follow this general procedure:

- Recommendation by the Plan Commission to conduct a review process for the proposed amendment.
- Facilitation of public hearings as required by applicable Wisconsin Statute and/or ordinance.
- Recommendation from the Plan Commission to the Common Council.
- Consideration and decision by Common Council.

Plan amendments and updates should coincide with an established annual monitoring schedule. Currently, the La Crosse Code of Ordinances specifies that Comprehensive Plan Updates or amendments may take place up to twice a year.

Additional Considerations

The City should consider creating a standardized amendment application form for Plan updates or amendments to accompany the existing form for staff reports.

Section 66.1001(4)(b) of the Statutes requires that an adopted comprehensive plan, or an amendment to a plan, be sent to all governmental units within and adjacent to the county or local government preparing a plan; the Wisconsin Department of Administration; the regional planning commission; and the public library that serves the area in which the county or local government is located. Plan updates are considered plan amendments.

The Implementation Matrix

The Comprehensive Plan is a community-plan, requiring coordination and cooperation between the City and the La Crosse community, as well as regional partners.

The implementation matrix found on the following pages prioritizes all of the recommendations presented throughout the sections of this Plan so that the City is able to accomplish its vision. The following matrix lists each of the opportunity items identified in the Plan elements, followed by

specific action items. For each action item, the prime party responsible for implementing the item is indicated.

A priority level is also assigned to each recommendation. This is intended to help guide the City by highlighting items that should be considered in the short-, mid-, and long-term. Some action items that may already be in progress and should continue to be implemented are identified as "Ongoing."

List of Plans Adopted by Reference

The planning process is a fluid one, and the City recognizes that over the course of the Comprehensive Plan's horizon, sub-area and topic-specific plans may need to be incorporated within the Comprehensive Plan. The following list should be updated on a regular basis to ensure new plans are included and that the entire list remains active and relevant:

- City of La Crosse Climate Action Plan (2023)

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
<h2 style="color: #E67E22;">Housing</h2>			
Opportunity 1: Increase the supply of rental units affordable to households making less than the area median income (AMI).			
Action 1	Consider the following amendments to the La Crosse Zoning Code to help remove barriers to new development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and consider reducing off-street parking requirements in all zoning districts to help mitigate the growing cost of new housing development. • Review and consider reducing minimum lot size and set back standards in R-1, R-2, and R-3 zoning districts. • Consider permitting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) by right in the R-1 Single-Family Residence District, and with no additional off-street parking requirements. 		
Action 2	Continue to actively partner with housing developers to pursue funding opportunities for the development and rehabilitation of income-qualified rental units; continue to promote the City’s Affordable Housing Loan Fund to incentivize affordable multi-family housing developments.		
Action 3	Investigate and document the condition of dilapidated rental properties; increase building code enforcement for non-compliant properties.		
Action 4	Fund opportunities for the development and of rehabilitation of income-qualified rental units; continue to promote the City’s Affordable Housing Loan Fund to incentivize affordable multi-family housing developments.		
Action 5	The City will prioritize resident safety by proactively inspecting rental property and enforcing building codes, especially where exterior conditions indicate cause for concern and enable City action.		
Action 6	Evaluate and promote stronger education and awareness of existing laws concerning tenant rights.		
Opportunity 2: Foster healthy and diversified neighborhoods through strategic infill development.			
Action 1	Within existing neighborhoods, develop more townhomes and buildings with 4 to 16 units as transitional infill development adjacent to large apartment complexes, commercial uses, and transit corridors. Continue to evaluate the financing and regulatory impediments to such housing and offer solutions such as tax incremental financing support as feasible.		
Action 2	Prioritize underutilized areas within the City for redevelopment into multi-family residential or mixed-use developments, such as surface parking lots and vacant office space.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 3	Support innovative housing production methods such as pre-fabrication, and partner with local organizations also exploring these new construction methods.		
Action 4	Evaluate instituting a demolition delay ordinance.		
Opportunity 3: Create more housing opportunities attractive to La Crosse residents, especially households with children.			
Action 1	Create more accessible housing opportunities with amenities and formats desired by older adults to encourage the turnover of single-family housing units from older adults to first-time homebuyers.		
Action 2	Increase public awareness of the City's housing repair and rehabilitation programs for income-qualifying households. Partner with local organizations like Habitat for Humanity to expand housing rehabilitation assistance for families making 80-120% AMI.		
Action 3	Encourage and facilitate the construction of new owner-occupied units as infill development projects throughout the City. This could include detached units but should also include various forms of attached unit housing.		
Heritage Preservation & Cultural Stewardship			
Opportunity 1: Increase public understanding of historic preservation.			
Action 1	Establish a singular, accessible channel through which to circulate preservation-related news.		
Action 2	Develop interpretive signage and app-based walking tours to increase public engagement with La Crosse's history.		
Action 3	Develop a dedicated page on the City website that provides links to preservation-related resources.		
Action 4	Foster positive relationships between the HPC and local developers.		
Action 5	Host public workshops for historic property owners.		
Action 6	Undertake a dedicated study of the economic and climate impacts of heritage preservation in La Crosse.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Opportunity 2: Diversify historic preservation efforts.			
Action 1	Develop meaningful and sustained relationships with community organizations and Tribes to aid in identifying cultural resources.		
Action 2	Develop City-wide thematic contexts related to the history of underrepresented groups.		
Action 3	Partner with local artists, historians, and digital designers to develop novel ways of telling the story of resources that have been lost.		
Action 4	Conduct dedicated surveys to identify cultural sites important to local tribes, vernacular resources, and cultural landscapes.		
Action 5	Intentionally diversify membership of the HPC as openings become available.		
Action 6	Engage local, county, and regional preservation organizations in preserving the history and culture in La Crosse.		
Opportunity 3: Strengthen City capacity.			
Action 1	Update existing ordinances to prevent demolition by neglect.		
Action 2	Develop a sample preservation easement and publicize the program online to encourage use by historic property owners.		
Action 3	Establish a conservation district program to provide a more flexible means of preserving neighborhood character.		
Action 4	Establish a Historic Asset Inventory Committee to develop and implement proactive preservation strategies.		
Action 5	Expand ongoing training for HPC members and preservation staff.		
Opportunity 4: Expand partnerships to promote arts and human connections.			
Action 1	Continue and expand support of and coordination with community partners to implement arts activities that are consistent with and help promote City character.		
Action 2	Pursue partnerships and activities that offer economic opportunities and tie in with local businesses and artists.		
Action 3	Ensure a balance of cultural and entertainment venues between the downtown and other areas of the City.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 4	Partner with local higher education arts students to beautify neighborhoods with a high concentration of student residents (e.g. crosswalk art, murals, sculpture).		
Action 5	Engage community members and neighborhood associations via surveys, events, and meetings to determine the types of public art that are most desired and harmonious with neighborhood character.		
Opportunity 5: Protect defining landscapes.			
Action 1	Ensure sightlines are maintained and key vantage points remain publicly accessible.		
Action 2	Perform a viewshed study to inform regulations such as height restrictions and scenic easements to help protect the integrity of La Crosse’s scenic settings.		
Action 3	Conduct targeted surveys to identify, document, and evaluate the significance of historic and cultural landscapes located within La Crosse.		
Action 4	Ensure priorities and restrictions that are developed to protect defining views are consistent with the zoning code.		
Opportunity 6: Create inviting places through design of the public realm.			
Action 1	Encourage building at the human scale to help create comfortable and engaging public spaces.		
Action 2	Establish design standards to proportionally integrate new construction with existing buildings.		
Action 3	Encourage new developments to provide public spaces and a well-designed public realm through streetscapes, walkability, and access to public parks.		
Opportunity 7: Welcome and incorporate diverse perspectives via public art, landmarks, and spaces.			
Action 1	Identify underutilized or underinvested spaces (e.g. festival grounds, parking lots, vacant lots, and other public, quasi-public, or private spaces) that can be used as opportunities for expanding public gathering spaces.		
Action 2	Expand offerings of casual social opportunities that build and connect people to their neighborhoods.		
Action 3	Explore opportunities to provide space and social outlets for marginalized and underrepresented groups, especially those that provide connections across ages (e.g. between students and older adults).		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Economic Development			
Opportunity 1: Attract and retain existing employers in high-impact economic clusters.			
Action 1	Continue to support existing businesses in high-impact clusters with programs and incentives to promote expansion and retention.		
Action 2	Explore business linkages, procurement arrangements, and collaboration between high-impact industries and other local businesses to promote small business growth and relieve pressure on the supply chain.		
Action 3	Increase connectivity between economic development agencies in the region, chambers of commerce, and local businesses by collaborating on a regular basis to evaluate the needs of the business community.		
Action 4	Incentivize existing employers to implement local hiring initiatives that connect the local workforce to higher wage local employment in high-impact clusters.		
Opportunity 2: Expand and leverage existing incentives and other programs to advance economic priorities.			
Action 1	Expand and diversify the City's use of tax increment districts (TID) to include broader applications of public assistance, particularly those that contribute to the implementation of multiple public policies and priorities.		
Action 2	Utilize TID to prepare move-in-ready industrial and commercial space for high-impact tenants with the potential to increase employment opportunities in La Crosse.		
Action 3	Increase promotion of the availability of all City, county, and state incentives on the City's economic development website to increase awareness of existing programs that are available to support the City's economic development priorities.		
Opportunity 3: Ensure an adequate supply of sites for a wide variety of employers to operate and grow.			
Action 1	Maintain and publish City database of active development sites (listed for sale, lease or under construction) in commercial zones.		
Action 2	Prepare subarea plans to establish preferred development outcomes in targeted economic development zones based on their locational advantages, suitable uses, and potential for job generation.		
Action 3	Expedite permitting process for new developments that are suitable for businesses in targeted high-impact economic clusters.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 4	Identify, prioritize, and pursue funding opportunities for the redevelopment of brownfield and grayfield sites in the City.		
Action 5	Advocate for improved regional and interstate high-speed heavy rail service to enhance La Crosse’s position as the economic engine to attract employers.		
Opportunity 4: Support small businesses and cultivate entrepreneurship, especially businesses owned by underrepresented groups.			
Action 1	Secure new sources of funding to reinstate the Minority Owned Business Assistance program and Business Loan Program.		
Action 2	Form strategic partnerships with local stakeholders and business service agencies such as Launch La Crosse and the Coulee Region Business Center to connect local entrepreneurs to resources to grow their businesses.		
Action 3	Facilitate collaboration between local businesses, the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse College of Business Administration, and their Small Business Development Center to support the retention of graduates and promote small businesses in the City.		
Action 4	Prioritize local businesses when contracting for City-financed [energy efficiency and renewable energy] projects, with special consideration given to unionized businesses and ones owned by women and minorities.		
Opportunity 5: Prioritize economic and housing security to support the upward mobility of residents.			
Action 1	Explore opportunities to collaborate with large employers to increase the supply of affordable housing in the City. Encourage workforce development in residential construction.		
Action 2	Support additional and/or expanded affordable day care facilities in the City.		
Action 3	Require livable wages (80% of AMI as defined by HUD) as a condition of receiving economic incentives.		
Action 4	Encourage workforce development in residential construction.		
Opportunity 5: Foster a resilient economy in La Crosse that can adapt to shocks and stresses.			
Action 1	Encourage growth in underrepresented sectors in La Crosse.		
Action 2	Identify mismatches between educational attainment and job sector growth in La Crosse to promote the availability of educated, job-ready residents.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 3	Support growth in tourism by promoting local cultural and environmental resources.		
Action 4	Promote local research, development, and production of green technology and products.		

Transportation

Opportunity 1: Improve transit service and expand ridership.

Action 1	Review and adjust route design annually to respond to shifts in ridership, especially related to the development of new housing or the expansion/contraction of major employers.		
Action 2	Ensure ease of use for MTU riders, including simple fare purchase, clear route maps, accessible bus stops, and technology for riders to view when the next bus will arrive.		
Action 3	Promote infill development in key transportation corridors so residents can access and support the viability of high-frequency transit routes.		
Action 4	Facilitate an annual contract between MTU transit and major employers to evaluate employee transit demand and usage.		
Action 5	Ensure access and ADA compliance of all sidewalks and curbcuts throughout the year		

Opportunity 2: Expand the City's pedestrian and bicycle networks to ensure every street and all new development meets the safety and mobility needs of all users. Promote these networks as a driver for economic development, tourism, and recreation.

Action 1	<p>Expand walking and biking in the City by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing the City's "All Ages and Abilities" pedestrian and bicycle network through strategic investment in additional routes and infrastructure, especially facilities such as protected bike lanes that provide increased separation between users of non-motorized transportation and cars. • Conducting education, encouragement, and promotion initiatives that invite residents (including those who don't currently walk or bike with regularity) to explore the City's walking and biking infrastructure. • Update the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to guide future investments in pedestrian-oriented infrastructure. • Comply with the City's Green Complete Streets ordinance (Sec. 40-14) and strive towards a "Vision Zero" approach to pedestrian safety that accommodates all forms of mobility. 		
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Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 2	Review development requirements to avoid excess off-street parking and ensure the provision of bike parking and safe pedestrian routes in site designs.		
Action 3	Continue to support residents and neighborhoods with the formalized traffic-calming program.		
Action 4	Collaborate with surrounding communities and LAPC to coordinate interconnecting pedestrian infrastructure such as Bluffland Traverse, a 50+ mile trail connecting Goose Island on the south side of La Crosse to Camp Decorah in Holmen.		
Action 5	Comply with the City’s Safe Routes to School Plan when considering, planning, and updating any infrastructure changes within two miles of a La Crosse School.		
Opportunity 3: Embrace new transportation technologies, especially micromobility options and vehicle electrification.			
Action 1	Encourage engineering staff responsible for the City’s transportation infrastructure to stay informed on emerging best practices and technologies related to micromobility and electric vehicles through opportunities for continuing education.		
Action 2	Consider development of a Mobility Hub in downtown and other locations in the City.		
Action 3	Support the continuing transition to electric vehicles by developing a regional EV Infrastructure plan and considering zoning amendments to require charging stations in multifamily residential and office development.		
Opportunity 4: Promote and protect the operational capacity of the La Crosse Airport in balance with neighborhood livability and environmental protections.			
Action 1	Continue to maintain and enforce height and land use restrictions near the airport.		
Action 2	If airport land becomes available for other uses, the long-term viability of the airport should be considered when determining future uses.		
Action 3	Monitor demand for enhanced transit opportunities to the airport, such as a potential public shuttle service to and from downtown La Crosse.		
Action 4	Consider new/expanded economic development opportunities related to cargo transportation and other activities.		
Opportunity 5: Promote river-based transportation as a driver for economic development, tourism and recreation.			
Action 1	Continue to support waterfront programming and recreational opportunities.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 2	Encourage best practices for environmental protection regarding stormwater runoff and water quality.		
Action 3	Promote recent federal port designation and explore the additional funding opportunities this designation makes available to the City.		

Opportunity 6: Prioritize intergovernmental collaboration in transportation planning and investment.

Action 1	Utilize LAPC meetings to facilitate regional collaboration on all types of mobility and pursue one-on-one meetings as necessary to supplement interactions at LAPC.		
Action 2	Promote the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail Project for quality passenger rail service from the La Crosse Depot to key regional destinations, and support efforts to increase the speed, frequency, and reliability of service.		
Action 3	Work with WisDOT and local railroad operators to maintain the viability of existing rail corridors while protecting connectivity for existing neighborhoods and to promote future passenger rail operations both within the La Crosse region and to nearby larger cities.		

Natural Resources & Resilience

Opportunity 1: Enhance protection for existing aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Action 1	Coordinate protection efforts with regional and state public and nonprofit entities and focus resources on long-term protection and prevention of degradation.		
Action 2	Encourage public education and recreational use of the La Crosse River Marsh.		
Action 3	Establish development buffer zones around areas of steep slopes and wetlands.		
Action 4	Restore natural ecosystem elements of French Island, Riverside, and Houska Parks.		
Action 5	Maintain and expand long-term public access to rivers and wetlands.		
Action 6	Encourage urban infill development and urban redevelopment to maximize the use of existing infrastructure and prevent fringe development of marsh and forest areas.		
Action 7	Protect natural and man-made/engineered drainage ways to minimize the impacts of stormwater runoff on existing natural resources and urban land uses.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Opportunity 2: Expand awareness, access, and connectivity of natural areas.			
Action 1	Promote landscaped areas that include plant and tree types that serve a variety of ecological functions such as interception and filtration of stormwater, reduction of the urban heat island effect, and preservation and restoration of natural systems.		
Action 2	Require maintenance of private landscaped areas to preserve view corridors and to maintain sight lines at vehicular and pedestrian intersections.		
Action 3	Require landscaping plans for new developments that facilitate future maintenance including those that minimize the need for irrigation systems, utilize drought and salt-resistant species, and consider ongoing performance of storm water treatment practices, snow storage, access to sun, proximity to buildings, paved surfaces and overhead utilities.		
Action 4	Incentivize and identify opportunities to integrate green roofs, living walls, and porous pavement into new developments, especially within the downtown core, to bring more green spaces into the urban landscape.		
Action 5	Revise the existing ordinance that protects existing mature trees to focus on allocating funding for the replacement of lost trees, especially due to culling from invasive pests.		
Action 6	Develop a framework for public realm improvements Citywide that guides landscaping, street furnishings, bird-friendly street lighting, trees, heritage streets, and other improvements to the public realm and pedestrian environment.		
Opportunity 3: Strengthen resiliency of the natural & build environment.			
Action 1	Continue to prepare for pressures and shocks that climate change will introduce or worsen by collaborating across City departments, government agencies, private businesses and organizations, and resident networks.		
Action 2	Continue climate forecasts in stormwater feasibility and modeling work to inform infrastructure investments.		
Action 3	Continue to explore funding opportunities which assess, inventory, clean up, and bring new compatible uses to contaminated sites in the City.		
Opportunity 4: Explore sites and distribution systems to strengthen the local food system and connect all residents with fresh, healthy food.			
Action 1	Continue to encourage agricultural preservation policies and practices in neighboring towns and Villages to maintain the family-owned farms that supply La Crosse's farmers markets.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 2	Identify sites to expand community gardens and farmers markets to ensure geography is not a limiting factor in fresh food access.		
Action 3	Utilize economic development resources to promote more high-quality grocery store locations in underserved areas.		
Action 4	Implement the recommendations of the Climate Action Plan to combat the effects of climate change on the local food system.		
Action 5	Integrate urban agriculture within downtown La Crosse, including methods such as green roofs and living walls.		
Action 6	Evaluate the zoning code and revise as necessary to allow urban agriculture activities such as chicken coops, beekeeping, fruit and nut trees, and beyond.		
Action 7	Establish guidelines for preferred methods of urban agriculture and best management practices that are consistent with the community vision.		
Opportunity 5: Maintain and enhance the accessibility, resilience, and diversity of the City's park and trail system.			
Action 1	Implement the recommendations of the City's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) to guide future park and recreation priorities and decision-making.		
Action 2	Regularly survey parks and recreation participants to understanding changing needs and desires.		
Action 3	Increase connectivity between parks through an expanded network of greenways and trails as identified by community engagement.		
Action 4	Continue to provide and expand diverse amenities at City parks to promote accessibility and inclusivity for all ages, abilities, and interests within the City.		
Action 5	Integrate native plantings and green infrastructure at park sites to provide wildlife habitat, flood control, and pollution mitigation.		
Action 6	Pursue opportunities to establish “pocket” or “mini” parks throughout the City as consistent with neighborhood future land use visions.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Utilities & Community Facilities			
Opportunity 1: Reserve access to sanitary sewer and water service for City of La Crosse growth when new development occurs at the municipal boundary.			
Action 1	Continue to pursue and maintain boundary agreements with each of the neighboring towns and municipalities to ensure the development process is predictable and promotes a mix of development densities in areas already connected to La Crosse’s public sewer and water.		
Action 2	Do not permit the extension of City water and sewer service into Town lands except with annexation.		
Opportunity 2: Perform regular maintenance and updates to La Crosse’s sanitary sewer and water systems to ensure excellent service for all users.			
Action 1	Continue to utilize the 2040 Wastewater Strategic Plan to guide capital planning for the improvement of La Crosse’s wastewater treatment system.		
Action 2	Plan for known and anticipated water quality regulatory compliance issues, including for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).		
Action 3	Strategically invest in system improvements that are cost-effective and minimize service-related impacts to the extent possible.		
Opportunity 3: Protect surface water quality by implementing stormwater management best practices.			
Action 1	Continue to meet the requirements of the WDNR’s NR216 Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) Storm Water Permit, which regulates the stormsewer discharges from the City of La Crosse into local watersheds, including the Mississippi River.		
Action 2	Limit development types near wellheads to protect the quality of the public water supply.		
Action 3	Limit impervious surfaces and utilize best management practices in all new development to promote water infiltration.		
Action 4	Encourage opportunities for outdoor recreation, public art, and community involvement in stormwater management, such as the creation of an adopt-a-drain program.		
Opportunity 4: Strategically locate community facilities to ensure efficient access by the widest array of City residents possible.			
Action 1	Create long-range facilities plan to guide the scheduling and siting of new police, fire, or library facilities as well as continued maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Action 2	Co-locate community facilities when appropriate to improve service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.		
Action 3	Ensure access to convenient community gathering spaces in every City neighborhood. These can be dedicated resident-use facilities such as community centers or spaces within facilities that primarily serve other City functions.		
Opportunity 5: Foster positive collaboration between the City’s police, fire, public school, and library systems and the residents they serve.			
Action 1	Encourage police officers to regularly interface with the public at community events to foster goodwill and trust amongst residents. Continue to fund and expand the Neighborhood Resource Officer Program.		
Action 2	Create opportunities for outreach and education about the core responsibilities of the police, fire, and library departments, as well as solicit feedback on the success and areas of improvement in the provision of these key City services.		
Action 3	Explore opportunities to repurpose closed or no longer used municipal buildings for other uses that serve La Crosse residents.		
Intergovernmental Cooperation			
Opportunity 1: Establish long-range land use agreements with neighboring municipal governments to reduce boundary disputes and improve land use coordination along the City's borders.			
Action 1	Encourage joint planning and action in the region by actively convening cooperative conversations and promoting shared commitments to mutual benefit.		
Action 2	With the support of La Crosse County, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and the Wisconsin Department of Administration Municipal Boundary Review section, pursue boundary agreements (new or updated) with the Towns of Medary, Shelby and Campbell that clarify the timing and extent of annexation and the terms of any extraterritorial service extension.		
Action 3	Encourage nearby municipal governments to adopt plans and zoning consistent with the preservation of open space and compact urban growth.		
Action 4	Maintain clear and responsive channels of communication in conflict resolution.		

Opportunity	Action	Priority	Lead Actor
Opportunity 2: Explore consolidation of services to reduce inefficiencies and provide the most cost-effective services to residents.			
Action 1	Continue to seek opportunities for proportional shared investment and shared use of community facilities.		
Action 2	Evaluate technology options that can improve emergency response convenience and speed, such as GPS technology that improves traffic flow.		
Action 3	Support compact growth patterns throughout the region to preserve natural resources and enhance the viability of transit service in more areas, consistent with Coulee Vision 2050.		
Action 4	Emphasize surface water management at a watershed level by establishing collaborative, watershed-based plans for stormwater management and waterway protection.		
Action 5	Support joint planning and action for the protection of environmental corridors for recreation and wildlife movement, including continued participation in the Blufflands Coalition.		
Action 6	Develop a long-range facilities plan to identify underserved areas (such as locations where residents do not have easy access to services that might benefit them) and determine how to cost-effectively provide services to these areas.		
Action 7	Perform a cost-benefit analysis during the consideration process for any future annexation.		
Opportunity 3: Pursue the identification and formalization of shared goals with neighboring communities to aid in joint planning and decision-making.			
Action 1	Work with La Crosse County and other municipalities to develop regional approaches for shared challenges. When possible, memorialize shared challenges and commitments to collaborative action in some way, such as memoranda of understanding or jointly created and adopted plans.		
Action 2	Find opportunities to engage residents, especially underrepresented populations, in aspects of regional collaboration work, to reinforce and clarify the public interest in those efforts.		
Action 3	Make consideration of regional cooperation a required step in the annual budgeting process for City departments, utilities and services.		