



2022

CITY OF ALTOONA, WISCONSIN
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ADOPTED: 7.14.22



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Executive Summary	1
Key Strategies.....	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	3
Plan Purpose	4
Planning Lenses.....	4
Vision Statement.....	5
Overarching Goals of the 2022 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan	6
Plan Organization	8
About Altoona	8
Planning Area	9
Chapter 2: Issues and Opportunities	11
Key Issues and Opportunities.....	12
Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Strategies.....	13
Altoona’s Community Profile	14
Summary of Public Input.....	14
Chapter 3: Livability, Sustainability, and Health	17
Introduction	18
Strategies Summary	20
Goals, Objectives, and Polices.....	20
Strategies	22
Chapter 4: Land Use and Community Character	29
Introduction	30
Strategies Summary	31
Goals, Objectives, and Polices.....	31
Existing Land Use.....	33
Alternative Growth Scenario Planning.....	35
Future Land Use	39
Detailed Future Land Use Strategies.....	42
Smart Growth Opportunities	50
Community Character	54

Chapter 5: Housing and Neighborhoods.....57

Introduction 58

Strategies Summary 59

Goals, Objectives, and Polices..... 59

Strategies 61

Chapter 6: Economic Development.....71

Introduction 72

Strategies Summary 72

Economic Opportunity Analysis 73

Altoona’s Desired Economic Focus 75

Goals, Objectives, and Polices..... 76

Strategies 77

Chapter 7: Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities89

Introduction 90

Strategies Summary 90

Goals, Objectives, and Polices..... 91

Strategies 92

Chapter 8: Agricultural and Natural Resources..... 103

Introduction 104

Strategies Summary 104

Goals, Objectives, and Polices..... 104

Strategies 106

Chapter 9: Intergovernmental Opportunities 115

Introduction 116

Strategies Summary 116

Goals, Objectives, and Polices..... 116

Strategies 117

Chapter 10: Action Plan..... 121

Introduction 122

Strategies 122

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This City of Altoona’s Comprehensive Plan is the vision for Altoona and its residents. It serves as a guiding document for City leaders, institutions, and community members to shape Altoona into the community it hopes to be for the next 20 years and beyond. The following executive summary provides the Plan’s key strategies. Each strategy is described in greater detail within each chapter and directly aligns with the action items listed in Chapter 10. Chapter 1 and 2 outline the City’s vision statement, overarching goals, and key issues and opportunities, which provide the framework for the strategies listed below. Appendix A and B detail existing conditions, data analysis, and public input received throughout the planning process.

KEY STRATEGIES

The following is a brief summary of the key strategies in the Plan, organized by chapter. The City invites you to read the full City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan to explore each in greater detail and the context in which they were prepared.



Chapter 3: Livability, Sustainability, and Health

- Advance the City’s role in sustainability and climate resiliency.
- Expand equitable and inclusive community engagement opportunities.
- Increase public health awareness and collaboration.
- Encourage the use of local and healthy foods in Altoona.



Chapter 4: Land Use and Community Character

- Rewrite the City’s Zoning Ordinance to increase user-friendliness, conform to changes in state and federal law, ensure predictable and high-quality neighborhood and site design, improve mobility options, and provide increased opportunities for compact development and mixing of land uses.
- Promote infill development and the redevelopment of key sites and along key corridors.
- Ensure new development is high-quality and matches the established aesthetic design preferences of the community.
- Integrate Traditional Neighborhood Design and mixed use development in both new development and redevelopment.
- Ensure land uses support the community facility, transportation, economic development, and other objectives of this Plan.
- Develop a growth phasing plan.



Chapter 5: Housing and Neighborhoods

- Foster new diverse housing to accommodate the needs, desires, and lifestyles of existing and future residents of all incomes and life stages by implementing the recommendations of the Altoona Housing Action Plan.
- Apply Traditional Neighborhood Design techniques when approving or planning for new neighborhoods.
- Establish high-quality design standards for new multi-family housing developments.



Chapter 6: Economic Development

- Develop and implement a Downtown Revitalization Plan and pursue the redevelopment of underutilized properties along key community corridors.
- Build on the Altoona’s arts and culture to grow the creative economy and spark new economic development.

- Focus on economic opportunities that are aligned with the community’s environmental stewardship and social equity values. Pursue opportunities to facilitate new business investment in sustainable/green technologies and services, as well as opportunities for existing businesses to integrate environmentally and socially preferable practices, such as renewable energy, efficiency, high-performance construction, and mobility choices.
- Attract and retain diverse new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Assist in preparing the local workforce to be prepared for and adapt to economic changes.
- Utilize TIF and grants to foster the implementation of this Plan and drive future redevelopment, new development, and reinvestment throughout the community.
- Collaborate with regional and state economic agencies on growth initiatives.

Chapter 7: Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities

- Incorporate climate resilience and adoption into infrastructure planning.
- Proactively plan for and implement new utilities and community facilities that promote sustainability, climate resiliency, equity, fiscal responsibility, and public health.
- Improve multi-modal transportation accessibility, safety, and connectivity.
- Prepare for transportation technology changes through adapting policies, information sharing, and infrastructure improvements.
- Continue to work with the Altoona School District on future land use planning decisions and establishing neighborhood-scale schools.
- Develop, adopt, and enforce a city-wide official map to align transportation and land use strategies.
- Implement the Altoona Place Plan and complete an update in 2025.
- Utilize tactical urbanism to test infrastructure enhancement and investment opportunities.

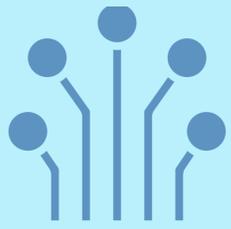
Chapter 8: Agricultural and Natural Resources

- Advance the City’s role in climate resilience and sustainability through the implementation of stormwater best management practices and the preservation of natural and agricultural resources.
- Limit development within the City’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction and foster a compact development pattern within the City’s boundaries.
- Connect natural resources with recreational opportunities and tourism.
- Support long-term farmland preservation efforts outside of the City’s future growth areas.
- Improve and preserve urban biodiversity through well-integrated and connected greenways, forests, vegetation, native plantings, and gardens.

Chapter 9: Intergovernmental Opportunities

- Collaborate on regional initiatives.
- Engage in proactive and regular coordination with adjacent and overlapping governments and entities.
- Develop, implement, and enforce long-term intergovernmental agreements with neighboring municipalities.
- Participate in state-wide groups on topic-specific initiatives and in general government coordination and effectiveness.





Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION





CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

PLAN PURPOSE

This City of Altoona’s Comprehensive Plan is intended to help the City guide, promote, and foster public health, safety, and welfare, with particular attention to equity, inclusion, ecological sustainability, and fiscal responsibility. The plan does this through guiding community change, growth, and development to ensure continued and enhanced community prosperity in the future.

The Comprehensive Plan is distinct in that it confronts the City’s important issues in a high-level, big-picture way. While other adopted plans deal with specialized topics such as parks, transportation, natural resources, or specific neighborhoods or areas, only the Comprehensive Plan lays out a 20-year vision for the community as a whole and truly acknowledges how Altoona’s people, places, values, and aspirations are interconnected and interdependent. The Comprehensive Plan steps away from fine-grained details and overly specific issues, and serves as a guiding document for City leaders and residents.

In developing this plan, the City has identified the core issues that will be central to Altoona’s future success. As a community known for its high quality of life balanced with small-town familiarity, Altoona has become the fastest-growing city in the state. This elevated profile within the Chippewa Valley has increased growth pressures and accelerated the potential for change within the community – both positively and negatively. This raises important questions: As the City grows and evolves, how can the City amplify or create the qualities that residents value? How can the City face the most difficult issues, improve quality of live for all residents, and proactively face the challenges that lie ahead? This Comprehensive Plan attempts to answer these questions and more.

Additionally, it should be recognized that the City is not the only agent influencing change within the community and region; its efforts and powers alone are not sufficient to achieve this Plan’s vision. A collaborative effort will be required between the City, its neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions, community partners, and its residents to advance the Plan’s goals and recommendations.

Specifically, this Plan will:

- Identify areas recommended for development over the next 20 years.
- Recommend types of land use for specific areas in and around the City.
- Preserve and enhance natural and agricultural resources in and around the City.
- Identify and prioritize needed transportation, community facilities, and other infrastructure to serve future land uses.
- Present forward-thinking and adaptable housing and economic strategies.
- Directly connect city policies and development choices to social equity, ecological sustainability, and related goals and values.
- Provide detailed action items to implement plan recommendations.

PLANNING LENSES

Prior to beginning this Comprehensive Plan, the City identified three overarching planning lenses. The lenses were identified because they relate to some of the City’s top challenges that it faces now and in the future. These challenges have been difficult to address in the past, as they relate to cross-cutting issues entrenched within our current systems. They will require action from multiple sectors of society in order to address them. The three planning lenses include:

- **Climate Action:** Proactive and urgent action to mitigate climate change and improve the community’s resiliency to the impacts of an ever-changing climate.
- **Social Equity:** Striving to achieve social equity through creating equitable access and quality of services and opportunities, addressing disparities in health, wealth, and safety outcomes, and the engagement and inclusion of all residents.
- **Economic Vitality:** Maintaining fiscal sustainability through efficient, responsible, and informed public investments, service improvements, and enhancement of quality of life amenities.



The comprehensive planning process was developed and viewed through these lenses in order to ensure these themes were elevated throughout the process and plan document. Additionally, all Plan recommendations, policies, and strategies were repeatedly examined through the lenses to examine how each advanced or hindered the City’s goals and objectives related to climate action, social equity, and economic vitality. Accordingly, each lens is emphasized and integrated into the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations throughout this Plan.

VISION STATEMENT

Based on the planning lenses, extensive public input, and contributions from city staff and officials, the City developed a vision statement that describes the type of community that Altoona intends to be in 20 years.

Altoona’s Vision for 2040

The City of Altoona will be an inclusive, diverse, sustainable, progressive, innovative, and equitable community that features a high quality of life, a family-friendly and welcoming atmosphere, excellent natural resources and recreational opportunities, local and regional destinations and attractions, and a mix of housing, shopping, and employment opportunities for its residents and visitors alike. Building on its regional location and proximity to the greater Chippewa Valley, Altoona will continue to balance growth and natural resource protection to increase climate resiliency, deliver sustainable public infrastructure, provide high-quality educational opportunities, offer affordable, diverse, and inclusive housing options, and work collaboratively with regional partners to advance shared goals.

The City of Altoona’s vision statement is a bold one that expresses high ambitions. Achieving this vision will require the City and community as a whole to question past practices that have led to today’s challenges, and, in many cases, it will require the community to have challenging conversations and deviate from “the way that things have always been done.” Achieving this vision will require the City to blaze a new but necessary path in order to confront and make progress on the many pernicious issues described throughout this Plan, including the housing crisis, racial disparities, unsustainable patterns of growth, and more.

OVERARCHING GOALS OF THE 2022 CITY OF ALTOONA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

There are numerous interrelated ideas and values embedded within the City’s vision statement. The City has identified several overarching goals that are crucial to implementing the vision. These overarching goals describe the primary approaches that the City will pursue in order to achieve its vision, and they complement the many other goals, objectives, policies, and specific strategies described in this Plan. The overarching goals are illustrated in the graphic on the following page.

Many of the goals and themes within this Plan are deeply intertwined. Tackling one challenge at a time is not likely to be successful due to the interrelated nature of many of these topics. For example, focusing on a singular objective (such as quality urban design) could unintentionally impact another (such as affordable housing). For this reason, it is critical for the City and its partners to think about all components of the vision comprehensively. When taken in consideration together, the individual objectives can be mutually reinforcing rather than working at cross purposes. Therefore, this Comprehensive Plan attempts to leverage these co-dependencies and achieve multiple objectives at the same time. Throughout the Plan document, these connections will be highlighted as much as possible.

2022 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan

Planning Lenses



The City of Altoona will be an inclusive, diverse, sustainable, progressive, innovative, and equitable community that features a high quality of life, a family-friendly and welcoming atmosphere, excellent natural resources and recreational opportunities, local and regional destinations and attractions, and a mix of housing, shopping, and employment opportunities for its residents and visitors alike. Building on its regional location and proximity to the greater Chippewa Valley, Altoona will continue to balance growth and natural resource protection to increase climate resiliency, deliver sustainable public infrastructure, provide high-quality educational opportunities, offer affordable, diverse, and inclusive housing options, and work collaboratively with regional partners to advance shared goals.



Vision Statement

Plan Goals

- Promote Compact Growth
 - Advance Inclusivity & Social Justice
- Support Fiscal Sustainability
 - Improve Neighborhood & Building Design
 - Conserve Natural Resources
- Provide Diverse & Affordable Housing Options
 - Foster Sense of Place
- Improve Livability & Quality of Life
 - Regional Collaboration & Leadership
 - Advance Climate Resiliency & Mitigation
 - Foster Infill & Redevelopment
- Grow Local Economy & Diversify Tax Base
- Prepare Workforce
 - Improve Public Health
 - Connect Public Open Space
- Pursue Mixed Densities & Land Uses
 - Preserve Community Character & Unique Features
 - Prioritize Multi-Modal Transportation

Plan Strategies (described within Plan document)



PLAN ORGANIZATION

Each chapter of this Plan is focused on a specific topic and presents the City’s goals, objectives, and policies for that element. These policies are the basis for the recommendations that are presented at the beginning of each chapter. Chapter 10: Action Plan summarizes the proposed strategies, projects, and timelines needed to help make this Plan become a reality. The recommendations of this Plan are supported by current data and background information, which are organized by Chapter and are found in Appendix A.

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared in accordance with the State of Wisconsin’s comprehensive planning legislation contained in §66.1001, Wisconsin Statutes. This legislation describes how a comprehensive plan must be developed and adopted. Additionally, it mandates that only comprehensive plans that contain the nine required elements described in §66.1001, Wis. Stats. and were adopted under the prescribed procedures will have legal standing. Further, any program or action of a local governmental unit that affects land use must be consistent with that local governmental unit’s comprehensive plan. This means that any annexation, zoning, land division, boundary agreements, official mapping decisions, or actions undertaken by the City after the adoption of this Plan must be *consistent* with this Plan.

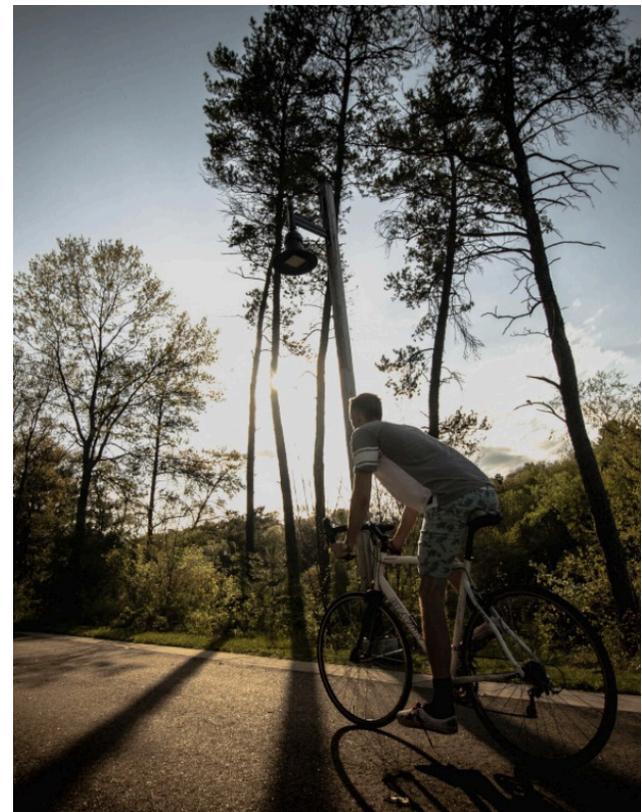
ABOUT ALTOONA

Altoona was originally platted around the railroad yards as East Eau Claire. Upon incorporation in 1887, Altoona became named after the famous Altoona Pennsylvania railroad yards. The City began to grow quickly, as the presence of the railroad attracted businesses and housing construction. By 1929, the City had its first community well and sewage system. While Altoona remained relatively small for many decades, during the 1970s, the City doubled in size. Since the time, Altoona has continued to grow into a full-service community of over 8,000 residents.

Located in west-central Wisconsin, Altoona is bordered by the City of Eau Claire to the west and south, Lake Altoona, Eau Claire River, and the Town of Seymour to the north, and by the Town of Washington to the east and southeast. Regionally, the City is within the greater Chippewa Valley straddling Eau Claire County and Chippewa County, which includes the City of Eau Claire, City of Chippewa Falls, Village of Lake Hallie, and surrounding towns. As of 2021, the City of Altoona had 8,651 residents and encompassed approximately 3,200 acres or 5 square miles.

Altoona’s location near Interstate 94 provides direct, efficient access between the greater Minneapolis and Madison areas. The community also has relatively direct access to Chippewa Falls and northern Wisconsin via USH 53, Wausau and eastern Wisconsin via STH 29, and greater Eau Claire County via USH 12. Freight rail service continues to this day, connecting the City with Eau Claire, Minneapolis, central Wisconsin, and points beyond. The rail yard remains the primary rail switching facility for the region. Combined, this provides the City with access to regional employment, shopping, cultural, and entertainment destinations.

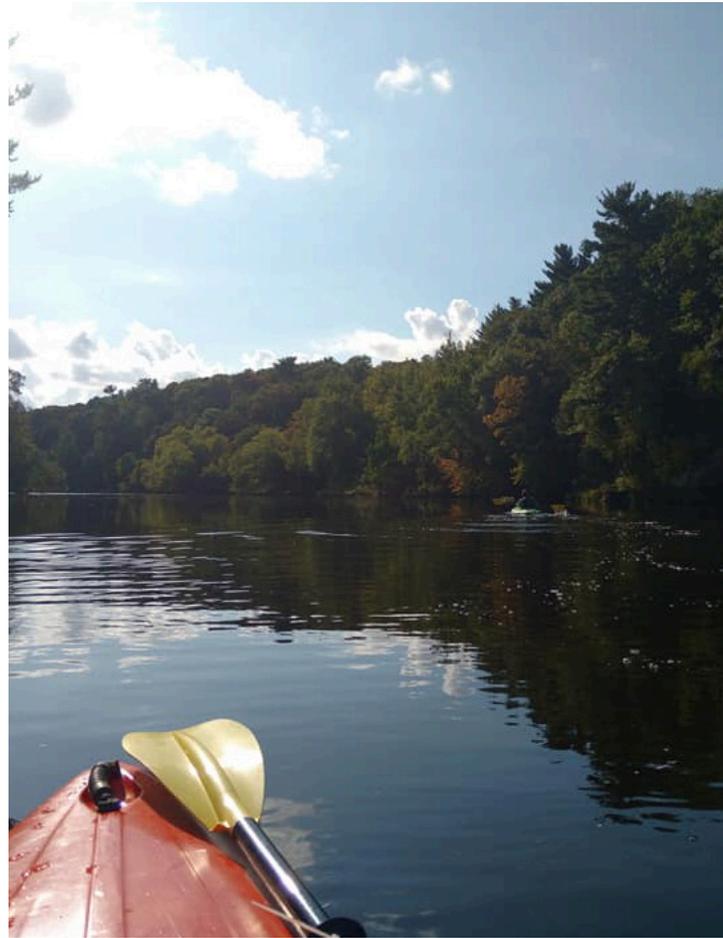
The City is also surrounded by high-quality natural resources including lakes, rivers, streams, woodlands, wetlands, and agricultural lands. Some of the most notable are Lake Altoona, Otter Creek, Eau Claire River, Chippewa River, and Lake Wissota. The Chippewa Valley exists along the edge of the Driftless region, with its hills, valleys, and river systems, the Northwoods of the upper Midwest with its large forests and thousands of lakes, and the prime agricultural areas of the west-central area of the state. Each of these landscapes influence the history, culture, economic and recreational opportunities of the region’s inhabitants.

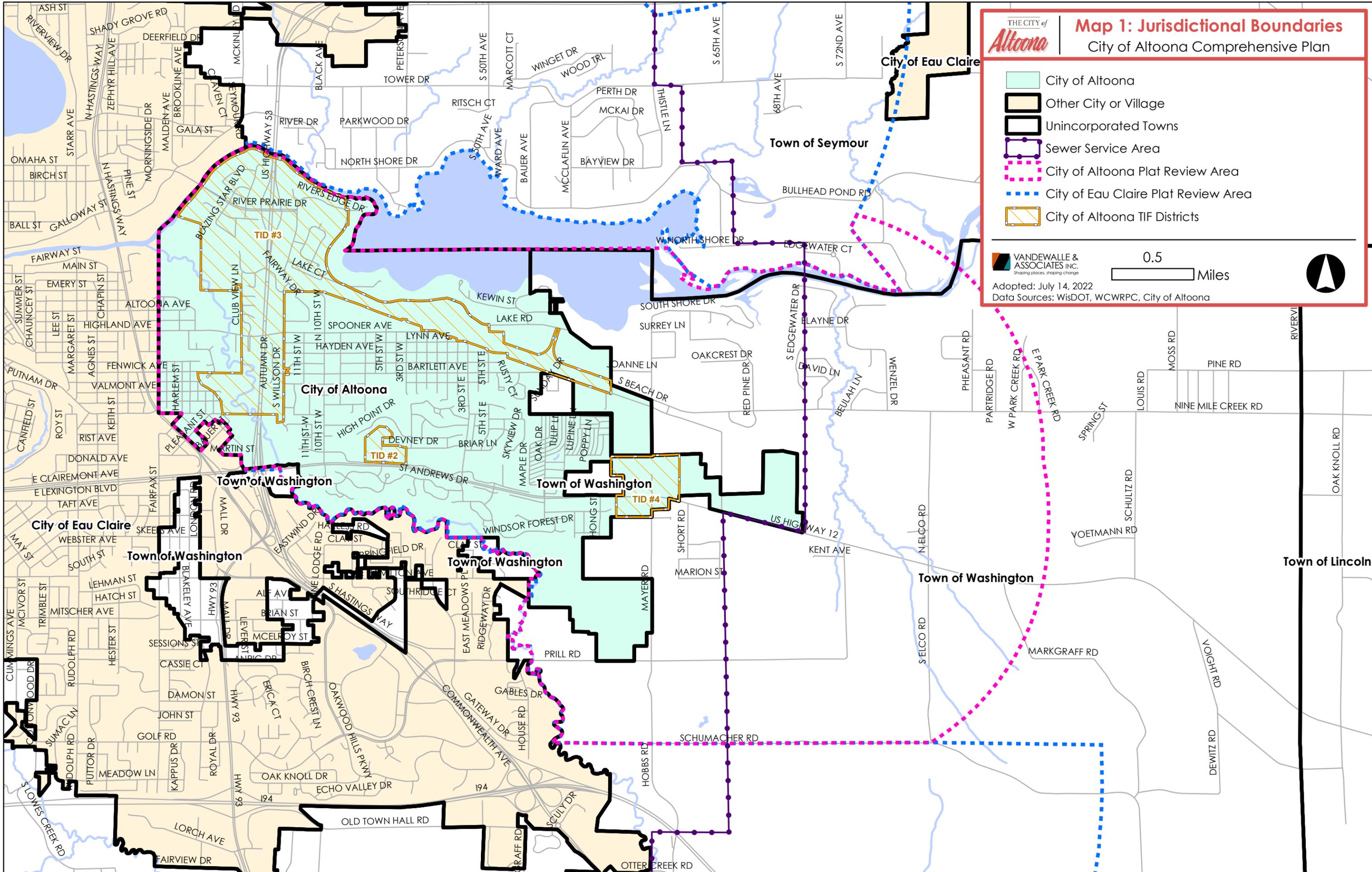


PLANNING AREA

The planning area includes the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), which generally extends 1.5 miles from the City's municipal boundaries. The planning area is shown on Map 1. The City's ETJ extends less than 1.5 miles where it interacts with the ETJ boundary of the City of Eau Claire. Within the ETJ, state statutes enable the City to plan for those areas that bear relation to the City's development, review and approve or deny land divisions, enact extraterritorial zoning, and establish and implement an Official Map.

Within its ETJ, the City has an interest in identifying areas of possible future growth, areas for preservation, and anticipate areas in which conflicts over land use decisions within and between communities may occur. The City also has an interest in ensuring that the types of development allowed in its ETJ areas prior to annexation are compatible with the City's long-term goals and anticipated pattern of development. The City's ETJ radius automatically expands as the City annexes land, except for the ETJ boundaries that has been fixed by intergovernmental agreements. Therefore, this Plan considers the future of and makes recommendations for the area within and slightly beyond the City's current 1.5-mile ETJ.





THE CITY of Altoona
Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries
 City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan

- City of Altoona
- Other City or Village
- Unincorporated Towns
- Sewer Service Area
- City of Altoona Plat Review Area
- City of Eau Claire Plat Review Area
- City of Altoona TIF Districts


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Shaping places. shaping change.

Adopted: July 14, 2022
 Data Sources: WisDOT, WCWRPC, City of Altoona

0.5 Miles



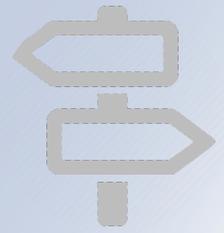


Chapter 2

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



CHAPTER 2: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key issues and opportunities function as the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan. Based on public input, data analysis, and other local trends, the Altoona has identified several key issues to be addressed and opportunities to be leveraged over the coming decade and beyond. Each issue and opportunity is overarching and is addressed throughout this Plan.

Leveraging the City's Existing Assets

- The City is fortunate to have many community assets, including an accessible and diverse park and open space network; several local festivals, events, and community organizations; direct access to USH 53 and 12 and proximity to the greater Chippewa Valley area; the River Prairie mixed use center; and high-quality public school system. In recognition of these assets and the benefits they provide, it is vital to continue to improve and build on them to retain and attract new residents and businesses by offering a high-quality of life.

Population Growth and Demographic Shifts

- Between 1970-2000, the City experienced strong population growth (14% - 55% per decade). Between 2000 and 2010, very little population growth occurred. However, in the last decade, the City has become one of the fastest growing communities in the state, with 29% growth between 2010 and 2021. Accounting for past variability in population growth, this Plan projects that the City of Altoona could grow between 20% - 64% over the next 20 years (adding 1,700-5,500 residents).
- National, regional, and local level large-scale demographic shifts and personal preferences are changing. Some of the most impactful local demographic shifts being: a growing population of persons with Asian heritage and decreasing median age.
- Some of the most impactful personal preference and societal shifts across the United States include: more people choosing to live alone and/or wait longer to start a family, people having fewer children than previous generations, increasing student debt making it harder for young homebuyers and ability to undertake other financial obligations, rapidly rising medical costs and debts, rising cost of childcare constraining labor force participation, largely stagnant wages, easier accessibility to working remotely with technology, and a growing demand for housing and employment mobility.

Housing Shifts

- Altoona experienced recovery of housing construction more quickly than most other Wisconsin communities from the Great Recession of 2008-09. As of 2021, it is the fastest growing city in Wisconsin in percentage terms. The City has also diversified its housing stock over the past two decades with the addition of over 600 new multi-family units (2000-2021).
- Additional housing diversity will be needed over the planning period to accommodate empty nesters, young professionals, and new families, to account for the costs of housing rising much faster than household income and relate to public service and environmental costs associated with housing. These needs can be fulfilled by small-lot single family, two-family, townhouses, and multi-family options such as those described as “missing middle” formats.

Redevelopment, Infill, and New Development

- Over the past decade, the success of the River Prairie redevelopment has been a catalyst for diversifying the City's tax base, increasing local employment, providing additional housing options, and expanding new recreational opportunities. While it is unlikely that this will be replicated in an identical fashion in other locations of the City, it serves as a model for how redevelopment, infill, and new development can successfully be implemented in other parts of the community, including downtown, Spooner Avenue, Hastings Way, and along USH 12.

Addressing Climate Adaptability and Sustainability

- Altoona is surrounded by high-quality lakes, rivers, and creeks, wildlife habitat, agricultural land, and wooded areas. These natural resources affect the City's growth and development potential, but also present opportunities in the form of maintaining and improving these assets to increase the community's high quality of life and proactively adapting to climate changes.
- There are also opportunities to increase the City's role in environmental sustainability and climate resiliency. Altoona has advanced some of these efforts in recent years, however other communities such as the City of Eau Claire have established themselves as leaders in the region on these efforts. Future opportunities for Altoona include assessing and reducing the community's carbon footprint, increasing utility efficiency and alternative energy production, and continuing to proactively address stormwater runoff and water quality.

Cost of Services and Infrastructure

- The cost of municipal services increases each year and exacerbates challenges in maintaining and expanding local services. With the sustained rapid growth experienced over the past decade in Altoona, these issues have manifested themselves in the form of additional public infrastructure capacity needed. Understanding the infrastructure and maintenance costs associated with new development will be important as the City considers new infrastructure investments moving forward. Fiscally responsible planning and investment will be a critical component of alleviating existing constraints to provide opportunities for sustainable long-term growth potential.

Unknown Global Pandemic Outcomes

- The long-term social and economic impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic are not yet known, and subsequently the data and trends described in this Plan may be significantly altered in coming years. Leveraging federal and state resources strategically, including stimulus recovery money, will be vital to overcome the implications of this ongoing event. These resources may also be utilized to progress toward other community goals, such as economic development, racial equity, environmental resiliency, and related quality of life opportunities as described in this Plan.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES

The issues and opportunities described above are reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies found in subsequent chapters of this Plan. Generally, goals, objectives, policies, and strategies are defined below:

- **Goals** are broad, advisory statements that express general public priorities about how the City should approach development issues. Goals are based on key issues and opportunities that are affecting the City.
- **Objectives** more specifically identify future direction. By accomplishing an objective, the City moves closer to achieving its goals.
- **Policies** are rules or courses of action implemented to achieve specific objectives. City staff and officials should use policies on a day-to-day basis when making decisions.
- **Strategies** provide detailed information regarding how to implement objectives, policies, and programs.

ALTOONA'S COMMUNITY PROFILE

Examining key demographic, housing, development, and economic indicators provides a baseline understanding of the City's existing situation and its opportunities for the future. A detailed and complete set of all data for the City of Altoona in comparison to neighboring communities, Eau Claire County, and the state, as required by Wis. Stats. §66.1001, is available in Appendix A: Data Inventory and Analysis. The following is a summary of Appendix A which highlights several key trends.

- Altoona experienced minimal population growth between 2000-2010, but that trend has shifted greatly over the past decade as the City grew by nearly 30% between 2010-2020. This Plan's growth projections factor in both periods of minimal and substantial growth, resulting in a projected population of 11,557 residents and 1,231 new households by the year 2042.
- Counter to the national trend, Altoona's population is younger than it was 20 years ago, and average household size has increased. This is a result of the rapid growth experienced over the past decade and the addition of many new young families in the community.
- Altoona's housing stock has also diversified over the past decade with an increase in two-family, multi-family, and senior housing units constructed, creating a much greater balance in total housing units in 2021 than previous decades. Overall, the City added over 1,400 new housing units between 2010-2021.
- The City's commercial and employment base has also grown and diversified over the past decade, in particular with the addition of approximately 900,000 square feet of new commercial and industrial space centered around the build-out of River Prairie, including several new large employers.
- Altoona's local economy is highly interconnected with the greater Eau Claire metropolitan area, which is reflected in the number of commuters who leave Altoona to work outside of the City, the number of small complimentary businesses and employers in the City, and the difference between the community's top occupational groups and local industries.
- Coupled with the sustained growth and development that have occurred over the past decade, the City's expenses for services, infrastructure, and staffing have also increased, in particular for public works, utilities, and public safety.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

To provide sound public policy guidance, a comprehensive planning process should incorporate inclusive public participation procedures to ensure that recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan reflect a broadly supported vision. Near the outset of this planning process, the City Council and Plan Commission adopted the City's Public Participation Plan by resolution. The following public involvement opportunities were conducted as part of this planning process. For more information on the public feedback gathered, see Appendix B.



Figure 2.1. Summary of Public Input Opportunities

Event	Date	Summary
Joint Plan Commission and City Council Kickoff Meeting	July 8, 2021	To kick off the planning process, a joint Plan Commission and City Council meeting was held to provide an overview of the process and gather insight on key issues and opportunities facing the City.
Stakeholder Focus Group Interviews	July 15 and 16, 2021	A total of eight Focus Group interviews with over 40 local stakeholders were held, centered around key topic areas that included: economic vitality, economic development, housing, transportation, environment and sustainability, community and neighborhood design, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.
Online Map Survey	July 15 – August 9, 2021	The City hosted an online map-based survey to gather input from residents on existing and future assets, growth areas, preservation areas, and transportation issues. The survey closed with 143 unique features added to the map and over 5,000 feature interactions.
Summer Concert Series Booth	Summer 2021	As part of the City’s effort to market the public participation events held over the summer of 2021, promotional materials were provided to residents and visitors at River Prairie Center during the weekly summer concert series.
Visioning and Prioritization Public Workshop and Post-Workshop Online Survey	Workshop: August 5, 2021 Survey: August 5 – August 30, 2021	The first public workshop as part of the planning process aimed at gathering feedback from residents on their vision and priorities for the future. Approximately 30 people participated in the live event. A follow up online survey was also provided that featured the same questions posed during the live workshop. Just over 200 total people responded to the survey.
Scenario Planning Public Workshop (2) and Post-Workshop Online Survey	Workshop: September 28 and 29, 2021 Survey: October 15 – November 5, 2021	The second public workshop focused on different growth scenario options that the City could potentially see over the planning period. This featured both residential and commercial/industrial growth scenarios. Two nights of workshops were held. Approximately 50 people participated in the first live event for the public, while 15 local officials attended the second live event. A follow up online survey was also provided that featured the same questions posed during the live workshop. Just over 200 people responded to the survey.
Plan Commission Draft Review Meetings	January 25 and February 8, 2022	Two different Plan Commission meetings were held to review the draft plan, discuss key strategies, and gather feedback from commission members on policy decisions. Both meetings were interactive, featuring opportunities for discussion and questions throughout. The guidance provided by the Plan Commission was incorporated into the subsequent draft that was reviewed at the Public Open House and joint Plan Commission and City Council review meeting.
East Neighborhood Concept Plan	Workshop: February 17, 2022	Although focused on the specific development area east of the City, the workshop provided a hands-on and practical discussion regarding growth management and neighborhood design.
Public Open House Draft Review	May 18, 2022	This interactive meeting featured the opportunity for the public to review Draft Plan materials, learn about the process, and provide comments. Approximately 30 people attended the in-person event.

Event	Date	Summary
Joint Plan Commission and City Council Draft Review Meeting	May 19, 2022	Similar to the Public Open House, this meeting occurred the following night before members of the Plan Commission, City Council, and School Board. Feedback generated from the Open House was presented, in addition to an opportunity for review of Draft Plan materials and to provide comments prior to the development of the Final Draft Plan.
Joint Plan Commission and City Council Public Hearing and Adoption	July 14, 2022	<p>Prior to the Public Hearing and Adoption meeting, the Final Draft Plan was produced and posted to the City’s website with the Final Draft East Neighborhood Plan.</p> <p>Between May and June, virtual comments were solicited on both plans using a virtual Idea Board and video recording summary.</p> <p>At the meeting, all comments received were provided to the Plan Commission and City Council for review. Following the Public Hearing, both the Plan Commission and City Council acted on the Comprehensive Plan and East Neighborhood Plan.</p>



Chapter 3

LIVABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND HEALTH



CHAPTER 3: LIVABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND HEALTH



INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses several broad and interrelated elements that are critical to the long-term viability and success of the City of Altoona: Livability, Sustainability, and Health. Many Altoona residents enjoy a high quality of life thanks to first-rate public amenities, strong civic organizations and institutions, and popular community events. Additionally, the City plays an active role in promoting environmental sustainability best practices, social equity goals, and advancing public health initiatives at the local and regional levels. (A summary of the City’s livability components and sustainability initiatives are found in Appendix A.) This chapter is intended to build on this strong foundation and advance current and new initiatives through setting ambitious goals, objectives, and policies related to livability, sustainability, and health. It also details a set of key recommendations aimed at achieving those goals.

While this chapter focuses specifically on Livability, Sustainability, and Health, these three topics are overarching in nature and influence nearly every other element of the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, references to these concepts and related themes are found throughout this Plan. This is by design, as they are inseparable from other Comprehensive Plan elements such as land use, natural resources, transportation, etc.

What is Livability?

Livability refers to the suitability of a place (town, city, or neighborhood) to support a high quality of life that contributes to holistic health and happiness of its residents. While livability is defined by each individual community, it often encompasses topics such as the built environment, housing options, physical and mental wellbeing, parks and open space, economic vitality, social infrastructure, cultural resources, safe transportation options, and more. Many of these are strongly related to concepts of sustainability, although livability tends to focus on the present, while sustainability also looks to the future.

What is Sustainability?

The term sustainability refers to a community’s capacity to support the long-term health and welfare of its natural and human-made environment, as well as all forms of life. A sustainable community is focused not only on protecting natural resources and ecological systems, but also on ensuring a high quality of life for all residents, now and in the future. To move in the direction of sustainability, a community must recognize the interconnectedness of all things, as well as the impact their actions have on the greater region and the world.

A community can advance sustainability through a variety of strategies such as promoting comprehensive transportation networks and services; ensuring a variety of housing options throughout the community; investing in a strong economy that provides a diversity of local jobs, goods, and services; supporting well-designed development that preserves high-quality farmland and complements the natural environment; seeking out opportunities to reduce non-renewable energy consumption and waste; and generally by developing comprehensive solutions to resolving complex issues.



What is Public Health?

Like livability and sustainability, public health is a function of many interrelated topics. It is comprised of a large and complex network of social and physical influences such as land use, the environment, social norms, education, transportation, and health care. Collectively, the physical environment, built environment, and social construct of the community contribute to the overall public health of residents.

There are two common ways of measuring public health: physical health and mental health. Physical health is typically measured in life expectancy, obesity rates, chronic diseases, and other similar attributes. Mental health is harder to quantify, but typically consists of addiction/substance abuse, depression, dependency, etc. Further, another component that must be considered in the evaluation of a community's public health is access to services and equitable distribution of services. Health services can be cost prohibitive, inaccessible, and often not widely known by the people who may need them the most. Taking into consideration all of the factors listed above will provide the community with an ability to gain a full understanding of the existing public health situation.

Nearly every component of this Plan either directly or indirectly affects public health. Assessing and addressing existing conditions, needs, and evolving trends of the community public health are vital components to planning for the future of Altoona.

What is an Environmental Determinant of Health?

Collectively, the environmental factors (socioeconomic, built environment, natural environment, health behaviors and healthcare) that influence human health, including physical, chemical, and biological, and related behaviors make up the conditions that are referred to as environmental determinants of health. Anything that has an adverse effect on these determinants can impact the health and well-being of the entire population. Examples include limited access to clean water and sanitation, poor housing conditions, polluted air quality, frequent exposure to extreme weather, limited access to services, etc.

Negative impacts to environmental determinants can lead to increased risk for disease and higher mortality rates, which often manifest themselves in inequitable ways, adversely impacting vulnerable populations most. Overall, environmental determinants of health show the impacts that the surrounding environment has on public health outcomes of a population. Many components of this Plan and its recommendations aim to positively influence the community's environmental determinants of health.

What is Resilience?

In many planning efforts, the focus of resiliency is how to recover from disruptions such as extreme weather events. However, resiliency is not only responding and preparing for a singular crisis, but it should also focus on addressing the entire complex system in adapting to changing circumstances. Building resiliency is adapting and transforming to preserve some elements of the system, while allowing others to fade away, while still retaining the identity of the community. There are six foundations to building resilience:

- People: the power to envision and build a future of resilience resides with community members.
- System Thinking: developing an understanding of the complex, interconnected crises unfolding and how it has been addressed by other similar communities.

Figure 3.1. Environmental and Social Determinants of Health



Social Determinants of Health
Copyright-free

Healthy People 2030

Source: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved April 19, 2022 from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

- **Adaptability:** an ongoing process, a community always has to adapt to changes striving to become resilient.
- **Transformability:** many challenges are so significant that it's not possible to simply adapt, instead transformative change may be needed.
- **Sustainability:** resilience needs to work for all community members, future generations, and ecosystems in order to be sustainable.
- **Courage:** it takes courage to confront challenging issues and take responsibility for a better collective future.

Resiliency is a fundamental issue and opportunity. As such, it is addressed throughout this Plan. Many components of system resilience are beyond the scope of just the City to correct or solve, however, Altoona can advance resilience at the local level, work with stakeholders at the regional level, and strive to create models that can be replicated at the state level and beyond. *(Source: The Community Resilience Reader, 2016)*

What Is Climate Resiliency?

Altoona is not immune to the extreme weather events and natural disasters that are intensifying worldwide. According to the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change Report (2020), Wisconsin has warmed 2.1°F and its annual precipitation has increased by 15% (4.5 inches) since the 1950s. In recent years, the state has also experienced increased frequency of extreme weather events, including tornadoes, flooding, and a polar vortex in 2019 that resulted one of the state's longest periods of sub-zero temperatures, with temperatures as low as -60°F in some parts of the state. Changes in both the "baseline" climate as well as increased frequency and intensity of extreme events cause critical stress on human and natural systems. Because of events like these, it has become a necessity for governments, emergency management operations, and the population at large to proactively prepare for these situations.

Climate resiliency is the capacity for a system to maintain functions in the face of these types of situations and to adapt, reorganize, learn, and evolve from them to be better prepared in the future. This can be done through creating inventories, assessing vulnerabilities and risks, evaluating options, prioritizing strategies, long-term planning, and implementation. All over the world, communities have invested in climate resiliency plans, simulations, tools, technical expertise, and infrastructure. The Altoona City Council has established "climate action" as a one of three planning lenses of the City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan, and improving resiliency is required for existing changes as well as those that are anticipated.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

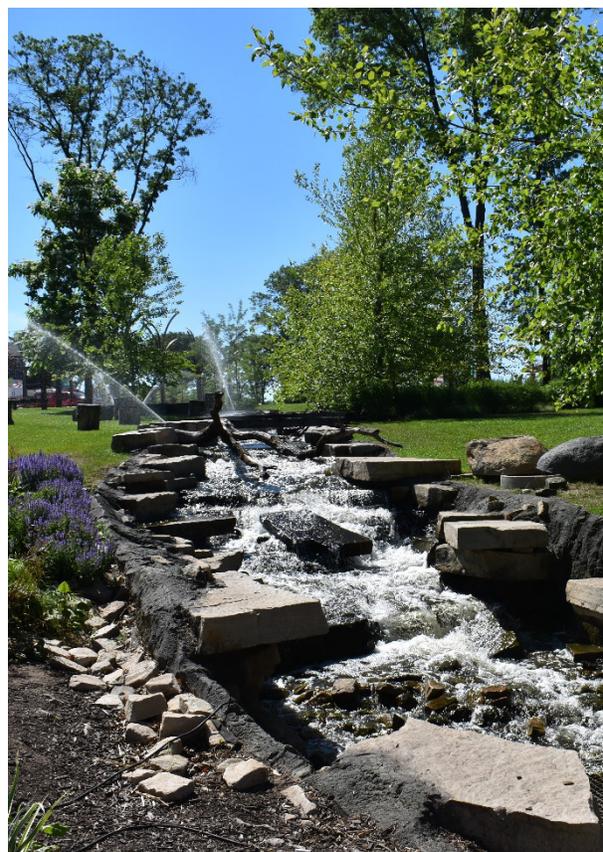
- Advance the City's role in sustainability and climate resiliency.
- Expand equitable and inclusive community engagement opportunities.
- Increase public health awareness and collaboration.
- Encourage the use of local and healthy foods in Altoona.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Continue to build on and improve the quality of life in Altoona.
2. Proactively advance sustainability and expand climate resiliency through immediate action, planning, regional collaboration, targeted policies, and initiatives.
3. Proactively advance public health through planning, regional collaboration, targeted policies, and initiatives.



Objectives

1. Account for and adapt to changing climate conditions, including the impacts of these changes on the design and construction of new development and community facilities.
2. Recognizing the link between the built environment and public health outcomes, continue to work with public health organizations to improve housing, equity, education, food access, clean air, literacy, and other social determinants of health.
3. Recognize the co-dependency of environmental sustainability, public health, social equity, and resilience with characteristics of the built environment.
4. Develop and implement sustainable best practices and strategies in all future policies and public investments.
5. Promote multi-modal transportation opportunities and connections throughout the community to minimize the reliance on automobiles.
6. Ensure that the City's utility system has adequate capacity to accommodate projected future growth and avoid overbuilding that would require existing residents to carry the costs of unutilized capacity.
7. Strive for increased equitable civic engagement, community events, and provision of services.

Policies

1. Enable Altoona residents to have healthy and active lifestyles providing a compact development pattern, proximity to amenities and services, robust parks, recreation, and recreational trails, and by continuing to improve walkability and bikeability throughout Altoona, as recommended by the Altoona Place Plan.
2. Establish municipal and City-wide climate emissions and renewable energy goals as part of a Climate Action Plan.
3. Preserve environmental and open space corridors by prohibiting new development in these areas and integrating these natural features within and surrounding development.
4. Encourage a compact growth pattern, mixed use development, infill, and redevelopment to foster multi-modal transportation options, protection of natural resources, enable healthy lifestyles, and fiscal sustainability. Refer to Chapter 4 for more on this topic.
5. Develop sustainable infrastructure standards and preferred strategies so that developers understand what are acceptable for meeting transportation, landscape, water quality and quantity control objectives and related expectations.
6. Establish and pursue local climate adaption and resiliency mitigation strategies, and actively contribute to establishing and implementing regional plans.
7. Consider enhancing sustainability or climate resiliency training for in-house staff or consider hiring a new sustainability/climate resiliency coordinator to guide these activities.
8. Reduce runoff through the use of Best Management Practices such as rain barrels, infiltration swales, pervious pavement, rain gardens, and green roofs.
9. Reduce pavement/impervious surface area and utilize porous pavements wherever possible (streets, walkways, drives, parking lots, patios, etc.).
10. Expand the City's community engagement opportunities and foster long-term inclusive representation by residents.
11. Continue to integrate public art and cultural components in public spaces and work collaboratively with local groups to showcase regional efforts and consider a percentage for art in public projects.
12. Support the production and consumption of local and healthy foods.



13. Require the cleanup of brownfields, contaminated sites that threaten the public health, safety, and welfare.
14. Pursue becoming a designated Wisconsin Healthy Community through encouraging local efforts to improve community health and well-being in a cooperative, multi-sector approach.
15. Consider developing a “Health in All Policies” approach that aims to integrate public health in all decision-making processes.
16. Participate in Eau Claire County’s update of the Community Health Assessment and Eau Claire County Community Health Improvement Plan.
17. Adopt and enforce “dark sky” lighting requirements that defines maximum light outputs.

STRATEGIES

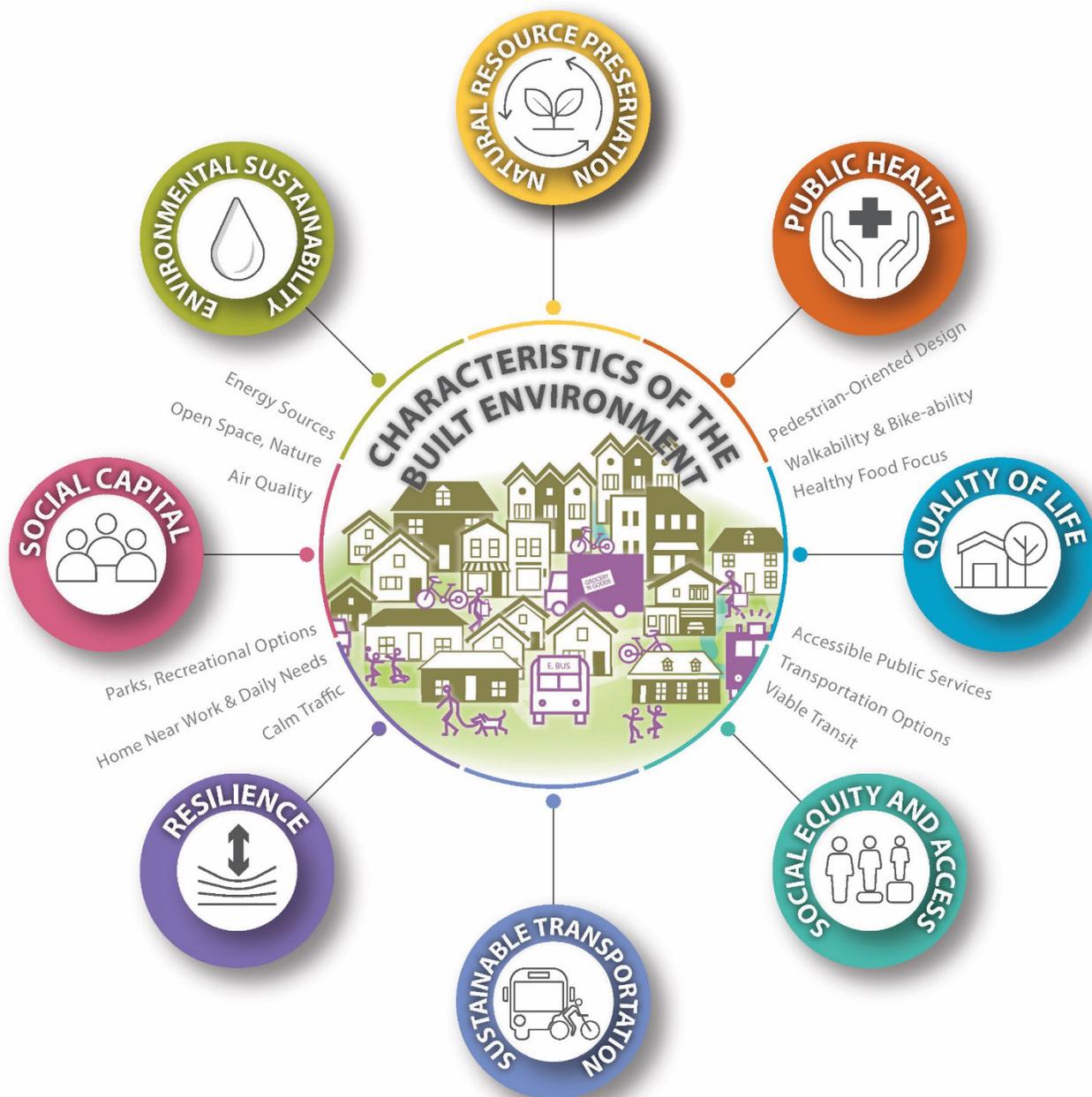


Figure 3.2. Characteristics of the Built Environment

Interrelationship Between the Built Environment and Altoona's Goals

The City recognizes the co-dependency of characteristics of the built environment with its goals related to environmental sustainability, public health, social equity, and resilience. The “built environment” means the manmade environment built for human activity; it includes neighborhoods, buildings, streets, sidewalks, parks, open spaces, trails, and more.

The Comprehensive Plan has many overarching goals ranging from increased housing types to natural resource preservation to promoting public health. Although the relationships between these goals may not be immediately apparent, many of these goals are directly related to the City's built environment. For example, creating a neighborhood that is highly walkable can advance many of the City's goals at the same time: a walkable neighborhood can promote environmental sustainability by reducing the overall use of cars, it can support public health by making it easy for people to incorporate walking into their daily routines, it can promote equity by making local destinations accessible for people who do not drive or have reliable access to a vehicle, and it can support resilience by providing transportation alternatives as conditions change. A neighborhood that is not walkable could actively work against many of these same goals. Consider the design of a shopping center as another example. A shopping center can be a great economic benefit to a city, but if it includes a massive surface parking lot in front, it can work against the City's goals, as it might create significant stormwater runoff, discourage walking, encourage driving, discourage human interaction, limit greenspace, and consume a lot of land that is only used for parking. A mixed use, pedestrian-oriented shopping area that encourages walking, interaction, and stormwater management (such as River Prairie) can instead advance the City's objectives, while still achieving similar or better economic benefits.

Therefore, in order to achieve this Plan's vision and goals, it will be essential to lead with the built environment. As private and public investments occur, the City must consider how the buildings, streets, neighborhoods, and developments it approves may advance or hinder the City's objectives, particularly as they relate to environmental sustainability, public health, social equity, and resilience.

Advance the City's Role in Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

In 2008, the City of Altoona adopted a goal of replacing 25% of the City's municipal operations with renewable resources by 2025. However, the City and its partners have fallen behind in data tracking and pursuit of this goal. With data showing that Wisconsin will become wetter and hotter over the next 30 years, it is recommended that the City take ambitious steps to do its part to counteract climate change and respond to a changing climate in the short term and over the next decade and beyond.

Altoona has a key role to play in advancing sustainability and climate resiliency in the community, however the most successful progress in these areas generally involves multiple parties including elected officials, municipal staff, school districts, neighboring and overlapping governments, other local groups and organizations, the development and building community, and residents. The City is fortunate to have many opportunities for local and regional partnerships on these topics, including the City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, and the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. Overall, the City doesn't need to reinvent this process. There are many examples from around the state that can serve as models for Altoona including the Dane County Climate Action Plan, Eau Claire Energy Action Plan, La Crosse Climate Action Plan, and others.

The following outlines recommended steps for advancing the City's role and continuing to collaborate with regional partners to advance these topics in the region:

Collect, evaluate, and monitor data. This should occur as part of a collaborative effort with local utility providers and other regional entities to gather important benchmark data, analyzing how different policies could impact this data, and establish processes for long-term tracking and updating of the data sets. For example, these data sets could include county or regional data on emission outputs, utility provider data on local energy consumption, and municipal data from energy audits of City-owned facilities.

Determine priorities and set ambitious goals. Altoona must determine its own priorities and goals related to sustainability and climate resiliency. These priorities should focus around committing to social and environmental equity, adaptability to a changing climate, providing economic benefits, improving health, and enhancing the environment. Ambitious goals the City can strive to achieve could include increasing renewable energy production and capacity, striving to become carbon-neutral, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and consumption, enhancing surface or ground water quality, etc.

Develop an action plan. It is recommended that Altoona use the performance measures, priorities, and goals to create concrete steps that help achieve goals and advance priorities. These steps will provide the framework for future decision making and planning efforts undertaken by the City and its partners.

Implementation. Advancing each action step will require resources, collaboration, information sharing, and community buy-in. Altoona can lead this effort locally through its own budgeting process, capital planning, grant applications, and public engagement and education efforts, however it will take regional partnerships, advocacy groups, and the private sector to bridge gaps in what the City alone can do.

There are several specific ways that Altoona can advance the steps outlined above these include:

- Developing a City of Altoona Climate Action Plan and assisting the City of Eau Claire in the implementation of its Renewable Energy Action Plan. (See text box.)
- Working with regional entities to create a Chippewa Valley Climate Action Plan, which would define the specific steps local governments will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region.
- Creating local programs and policies that incentivize and minimize hurdles in the private sector implementing best practices.

Climate Action Plan

The purpose of a Climate Action Plan is to set ambitious carbon reduction and renewable energy goals for the community and develop an action plan for how to accomplish them. This process helps chart a course for how the City, its residents, public sector partners, and the private sector can work together to make these goals a reality. Key components of a Renewable Energy Action Plan include:

- Setting carbon reduction and renewable energy goals for the next 10 years.
- Developing strategies on how the community can advance and meet these goals.
- Establish partnerships with overlapping jurisdictions, local businesses and community organizations, utility providers, and others.
- Identifying funding sources for implementation.
- Creating the framework for future programs, policies, and decision making.



Examples could include density or height bonuses for LEED certified buildings or minimum parking reductions for inclusion of electric vehicle charging stations.

- Fostering local champions, community understanding, and advocacy groups that can help lead efforts the City cannot.
- Increasing in-house staff knowledge, training, and understanding on these topics.
- Leveraging county, state, and federal resources to bridge financial gaps.
- Becoming a member of a third-party environmental community program, such as U.S. Green Building Council LEED for Cities and Communities, or at a minimum, pursue the efforts outlined to advance community-wide initiatives. This includes developing, establishing, and executing a proven sustainability framework at the community level.
- Assisting Eau Claire County in the implementation of the Eau Claire County Hazard Mitigation Plan and other related plans.
- Partnering with UW-Extension, Eau Claire County, neighboring communities and school districts, and local groups to organize opportunities to educate the public on sustainability and climate resiliency.
- Creating an annual sustainability award that promotes businesses, organizations, and individuals to advance sustainable objectives.
- Integrating waste management reduction and recycling education programs in the community.



Development Policy is Integral to Future Climate Stability

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its 6th Assessment in March 2022, underscoring the urgency of systemic action on climate impact mitigation and resiliency measures. Like those that came before, the 6th Report thoroughly examines current research on the climate and sources of climate-affecting emissions and conditions. This report also summarizes various strategies and actions to reduce climate-altering emissions and improve resilience to expected changes to the climate, and it identifies those actions likely to result in the most positive desired effects.

The Report functions as the latest summary of the relationship between city planning choices and climate impacts, including land use, transportation, and housing. Among the 60 identified actions that could change individual climate impacts, individual mobility/transportation choices have the largest potential to reduce carbon footprints. This is accomplished through prioritizing car-free mobility by walking and cycling and adopting electric mobility.

Strategies that can deliver significant public health benefits and lower greenhouse gas emissions include compact cities – with shortened distances between housing and jobs – and interventions that support a modal shift away from private automobiles towards walking, cycling, and low-emissions public (or shared) transportation. Many residents have little choice but to drive to reach everyday destinations, due to the distance between destinations and the character of the infrastructure between. But this inefficient city layout is not the inevitable result of market forces. Exclusionary planning rules and exclusive automobile infrastructure policies have led to both car dependence and residential segregation.

Low-carbon cities are (1) co-located with medium-to-high densities of housing, jobs, and commerce; (2) have high mix of land uses; (3) have high connectivity of streets; and (4) offer high levels of accessibility, distinguished by relatively low travel distances and travel times enabled by multiple modes. These characteristics are referred collectively as “compact and walkable urban form.” This form of urban development has many co-benefits, including improved mental and physical health, lower resource demand, and reserves land for natural areas, agriculture, forestry, and other rural land uses.

A dispersed and auto-centric urban form is strongly correlated with high greenhouse gas emissions, and it is characterized by separated land uses (especially housing and jobs), low street density, large block sizes, and low urban densities. Separated and low densities of employment, retail, and housing increase average travel distances for both work and leisure, and make active transport a challenge. Since **cities are systems**, urban form has interrelated implications across energy, building, transportation, land use, and individual behavior. Compact and walkable urban form enables effective mitigation and encourages more sustainable and healthy behavior, while auto-centric urban form locks in high levels of energy use and resource consumption, low levels of physical activity, and social isolation.

Established cities that are dispersed and auto-centric must focus on creating a modal shift from personal automobiles to active transportation modes and public transportation to reduce emissions, as well as focus on infilling and densifying development. The use of green infrastructure will be essential to offset residual emissions that cannot be reduced because their urban form is already established and difficult to change.

In order to be most effective, the Report urges cities to employ multiple climate strategies at once, stating, “Urban scale interventions that implement multiple strategies concurrently through policy packages are more effective and have greater emissions savings than when single interventions are implemented separately. This is because a citywide strategy can have cascading effects across sectors, that have multiplicative effects on greenhouse gas emissions reduction within and outside a city’s administrative boundaries. Therefore, city-scale strategies can reduce more emissions than the net sum of individual interventions, particularly if multiple scales of governance are included.”

Select summaries from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 6th Assessment Report, 2022.
www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/

Expand Community Engagement Opportunities

The City of Altoona plays an active role in utilizing a variety of methods and tools to keep residents involved, including social media channels, websites, newspaper articles, flyers, and newsletters. Additionally, there are numerous events throughout the year that provide opportunities for the community to get together for recreation and educational purposes. It is recommended that Altoona continue to diversify its public engagement opportunities, especially related to engagement of younger residents (i.e., under 25 years old) and underrepresented populations. This can be done through partnerships with the leaders of local organizations, churches, clubs, the School District, and other groups. The City should work with all of these groups to continue to increase diverse community events and celebrations, and establish new educational opportunities related to sustainability, equity, ethnic and racial diversity, and more. Through this engagement, the City can help foster local champions and advocacy groups to advance community goals and play a pivotal role in implementing action steps of this Plan.

Increase Public Health Awareness and Collaboration

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute will designate a municipality as a “Wisconsin Healthy Community” to recognize and encourage local efforts that improve the overall community’s health and wellbeing. The designation also aims to promote collaboration centered around health improvement.

This Plan recommends that Altoona consider pursuing its own Wisconsin Healthy Community designation by highlighting its work and partnerships related to advancing public health in the community. As described earlier in this chapter, the land use pattern, transportation infrastructure, local and regional park and trail system, and community facilities all play a large component in the promotion and sustainability of improving public health. This step can also provide the City with a greater understanding of health outcomes, determinants, and equity. The overarching goals of the Wisconsin Healthy Community Designation program are reflective of the community’s overarching goals in this Plan.

Additionally, the City can continue to build on the successes of Eau Claire County, which has been designated as a Gold-level Wisconsin Health Community. It is recommended that the City work collaboratively to address and advance public health initiatives in the region through the implementation of the Eau Claire County Community Health Improvement Plan. In working with Eau Claire County and other regional stakeholders, Altoona can directly assist in implementing the many different strategies of this plan through education and programming, data collection and sharing, developing policies, and strengthening partnerships. This could include fostering youth leadership programs that can assist in leading health initiatives, building awareness of mental health programming, increasing local access to services like mobile clinics or medicine disposal locations, and others.

Finally, Altoona can utilize policies to advance public health through the development and adoption of a “Health in All Policies” approach that integrates public health in all decision-making processes. A model for this practice is the established partnership between the City of Watertown Department of Health and Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation which fosters an understanding of the local public health situation, utilizes metrics to track progress, and informs new policies using this understanding. This Comprehensive Plan embraces the “Health in All Policies” approach and recognizes the interrelationship between public health, city planning, and the built environment, and it acknowledges the ability of communities to influence public health through policy decisions. Moving forward, all City planning processes and policies should embrace this concept in order to foster improved and equitable public health outcomes in the future.



Encourage the Use of Local and Healthy Foods

Most of the food consumed in the United States today is transported many miles before it reaches our tables. Various opportunities to promote locally grown foods can help reverse this unsustainable system. Some of the ways in which the City can contribute to these efforts include the following:

Farmers Market: Local farmers markets provide a direct means for farmers to sell their products to the consumer, contribute to the local economy, and encourage a sense of community. Altoona hosts its own Farmers Market in River Prairie each summer. The weekly event may become a success in providing local farmers with direct access to customers in the area and attracting people to River Prairie. The City of Eau Claire also hosts a Farmers Market, which attracts vendors and patrons from around the region. It is recommended that the City continue to establish, promote, and expand its local Farmers Market, in addition to leveraging the proximity of the Eau Claire Farmers Market to connect local food producers with local customers.

Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs: A CSA program allows farmers to sell shares of their products directly to consumers in advance of the growing season. Such programs encourage healthful food choices, support local farmers, and relieve some of the burdens and uncertainties associated with conventional marketing approaches. There are several CSA programs operating throughout the region. It is recommended that CSA programs be expanded within the City to help advance the local economy through direct connections to local markets. A few key strategies to fostering new CSAs is through establishing connections with surrounding farmers or existing CSA operations, connecting with organizations like FairShare CSA Coalition that specializes in connecting farmers with customers, and providing educational materials to residents.

Restaurants and Food Stores: Numerous restaurants, cafes, and bakeries throughout Wisconsin practice purchasing, serving, and promoting locally grown foods. There are several existing restaurants in Altoona and throughout Eau Claire County that currently use and promote locally sourced products. Increasing restaurants' use of locally sourced foods in Altoona can be leveraged to market the community and the region. It is recommended that this be done through encouraging local restaurants and grocery stores to purchase and sell local and organic foods, partnering in marketing or recruitment efforts such as promoting and facilitating the development of a smaller organic/local food cooperative in the City, or through the creation of a supportive planning and zoning environment for further restaurant and food store development.

Promote and Incorporate Community Gardens: Over the past decade, several community gardens have started to emerge within Eau Claire County and Altoona. Overall, establishing these gardens is helping to promote consumption of local foods, which helps increase biodiversity, protect wildlife habitat, provide more stormwater infiltration, reduce energy consumption from commercial food production, and help foster local sustainability efforts. Community gardens also provide neighborhood gathering places, promote community interaction, enhance health, and promote environmental education.





Chapter 4

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER



CHAPTER 4: LAND USE AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER



INTRODUCTION

This chapter is intended to outline the goals, objectives, and policies related to land use and community character in a community that has experienced rapid and sustained growth over the past decade. Recommendations serve to guide the future preservation and development of public and private lands in and around Altoona. Background information, data, and existing plans related to land use and community character can be found in Appendix A.

Compact Growth

This chapter advocates for reserving land for compact, City growth and preserving open space and retaining rural characteristics in the areas outside of the City’s growth area. Pursuing “compact growth” means employing growth patterns and policies that use land more efficiently and thoughtfully, thus reducing the City’s need to grow outward. Outward growth consumes farmland, open space, and sensitive environmental areas, and compact development patterns can make the most of substantial public investments in water and sewer lines, roads, emergency services, and more. Furthermore, compact growth reinforces many of the City’s other goals. For example, compact growth:

- Supports walkable neighborhoods by placing everyday destinations closer together.
- Makes public transportation and other forms of non-car transportation more viable.
- Reduces the total and per-person costs of infrastructure by providing services in a smaller geographic area.
- Preserves open space, farmland, and natural resources by moderating the pace of urban expansion.
- Bring vitality to neighborhoods and districts by enabling mixed use development.
- Supports housing affordability and choice by supporting a wider range of housing formats.



In addition, directing development to the City (and not to rural areas) is essential for providing an environmentally sustainable development pattern and for preserving open space and agricultural lands. Cities and villages such as Altoona are designed to efficiently provide essential public services, including sanitary sewer, public water, storm sewer, sidewalks and bike facilities, high levels of emergency services, street maintenance, parks and recreation, and viable public transit options. Unincorporated areas (i.e., towns), which are typically characterized by large residential lots and unsewered development, cannot provide services as efficiently and consume *significantly more* land and infrastructure as compared to carefully planned urban development within the City. Furthermore, town development, when located adjacent to the City, can often create physical barriers to logical City expansion. In order to preserve its urban growth area, this Plan recommends that the City establish a minimum lot size of 40 acres within in the City’s extraterritorial jurisdiction. Areas planned for urban growth area depicted on the Future Land Use Map (Map 3).

Controlled, well-planned, diverse, and compact growth are all key components to the health, viability, and sustainability of the future of Altoona. Compact growth can be achieved by forwarding a combination of mutually reinforcing policies, including those that encourage development to grow up (rather than out), promote infill and redevelopment within



older parts of the City, support increased residential densities, and advance upfront neighborhood planning. These policies are integrated throughout this chapter and the Comprehensive Plan.

Mixed Use Development

Additionally, this chapter advocates for mixed use development in the City’s growth, infill, and redevelopment areas. Mixing land uses means locating homes, stores, restaurants, offices, schools, parks, and other types of development near one another— within the same building or on the same block. This is in contrast to separating uses, which results in large geographic areas where only one type of use is present. Mixed use neighborhoods support the City’s vision and supporting goals in many ways. Mixed use neighborhoods:

- Enable residents to live closer to their jobs or shopping or other destinations, meaning they can take other forms of transportation or drive their car a shorter distance
- Support economic vitality by supporting support strong tax base and higher assessed value per acre, which is important given the finite land area available for development.
- Promote a higher level of activity at more times of day, providing more foot traffic and a stronger customer base for local businesses.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Rewrite the City’s Zoning Ordinance to increase user-friendliness, conform to changes in state and federal law, ensure predictable and high-quality neighborhood and site design, improve mobility options, and provide increased opportunities for compact development and mixing of land uses.
- Promote infill development and the redevelopment of key sites and along key corridors.
- Ensure new development is high-quality and matches the established aesthetic design preferences of the community.
- Integrate Traditional Neighborhood Design and mixed use development in both new development and redevelopment.
- Ensure land uses support the community facility, transportation, economic development, and other objectives of this Plan.
- Develop a growth phasing plan.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Promote a future land use pattern that accommodates a compact mix of uses, densities, land use types, and affordability levels, while preserving and enhancing natural resources, community character, and high quality of life.
2. Preserve and enhance Altoona’s unique features that contribute to its small-town community character.

Objectives

1. Support efficient land use patterns that limit non-municipal served development patterns, preserve open space, facilitate human interaction, advance economic growth, and foster increased sustainability, climate resiliency, and equity.
2. Thoroughly integrate infrastructure, utility, and public facility capacity and resources in the development review process.
3. Foster new economic and housing opportunities through a balanced approach to redevelopment, infill development, and new development.
4. Protect the City's long-term growth interests beyond its existing municipal boundaries and within its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction by limiting new development until land is annexed into the City.
5. Preserve the resources that contribute to Altoona's character, including waterfront areas, parks and open spaces, environmental corridors, trail systems, and community entryways.
6. Foster a sense of place within the built environment and create memorable places designed for people and interactions.



Policies

1. Follow the future land use recommendations that are mapped on the Future Land Use Map (Map 3) and described in this Plan when reviewing new rezoning requests and making detailed land use decisions.
2. Continue to require that all new development in the City connect to sanitary sewer and public water systems and discourage development outside of the current City limits until sewer and water services are available.
3. Practice fiscal sustainability by encouraging infill and redevelopment to utilize existing infrastructure, and by controlling new development to areas adjacent to existing development and where logical extensions to streets, sewer lines, and water lines may occur.
4. Require compact, Traditional Neighborhood Design (see the Housing Chapter for more information) to better manage the rate of community expansion, preserve farmland, and protect natural resources.
5. Require detailed development plans, neighborhood plans, or corridor plans prior to the platting and development of land (See an example process for this in the text box below).
6. New neighborhoods should contain a wide mix of housing formats, costs, and tenancy in order to create well-balanced and varied neighborhoods. Each neighborhood should accommodate individuals and households of all sizes, ages, income levels, and lifestyle.
7. New residential developments should be planned within cohesive and thoughtfully-planned neighborhoods, not as standalone developments.
8. Disperse higher-density residential development throughout the community, rather than creating large concentrations only in a few locations.
9. Require all proposed residential developments to dedicate land, or pay a fee in lieu thereof, for public park, recreation, and open space acquisition and development.
10. Conduct a full rewrite of the City's Zoning Ordinance to be consistent with recent changes to state and federal law, evolving market trends, and the goals and objectives of this Plan. Examples include enabling smaller single family lot sizes, increasing both small-scale and higher-density multi-family opportunities, integrating design and landscaping standards, and promoting mixed use in all commercial districts.

11. Work with Eau Claire County, the City of Eau Claire, and the Town of Washington on future land use planning within the City’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to promote intergovernmental cooperation and a unified future planning of development and services. Seek intergovernmental agreements with all surrounding municipalities.
12. Coordinate with the School District on development projects and future planning of needed facilities.
13. Integrate health outcomes and determinants into all future land use planning efforts by including health impact studies as part of small area, corridor, and master planning. Partner with Eau Claire County to integrate health impact best practices in these plans.
14. Require and provide incentives for sustainable building and site design techniques, particularly progressive stormwater management using best management practices. Require grading and stormwater management plans for all new development.

EXISTING LAND USE

An accurate depiction of Altoona’s existing land use pattern is the first step in planning for a desired future land use pattern. Map 2 depicts the existing land uses within the City’s boundaries and Extraterritorial Jurisdiction as of 2022.

Existing Land Use Map Categories

Existing Land Use Category	Existing Land Use Description
Agricultural	Agricultural uses, farmsteads, open lands and, single family residential development with densities at 1 dwelling unit per 40 or more acres.
Single family Residential	Single family residential development served by public water and sewer utilities in the city and single family residential development on private well and septic systems in the Town of Washington.
Two-Family Residential and Twin-Home Residential	Two-family residential development (2 dwelling units) typically developed as a two-flat, or duplex, twin-home.
Multi-Family Residential	Mostly multi-family residential buildings of three or more dwelling units.
Manufactured Home Residential	Single family mobile home dwellings, and the associated sanitary, washing, recreational, and office facilities to service mobile home dwellings.
Commercial	Indoor commercial, office, and retail land uses.
Industrial	Indoor industrial, assembly, manufacturing, and warehousing land uses.
Government and Institutional	Small and large-scale public facilities such as City Hall, Library, Public Works, and other government buildings.
Utilities	Small and large-scale public, quasi-public, and private utilities and stormwater management facilities.
Recreational	Public parks, recreational areas, open space, trails, greenways, and conservancy lands, or private recreational-based businesses with significant open space, such as a golf course.
Environmental Corridor	Per the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, these areas include slopes greater than 20%, identified WisDNR wetlands, FEMA 100-year floodplain, and surface water.
Forest	Lands of predominantly mature tree canopies. Some of these areas are protected within existing Environmentally Sensitive Areas.
Vacant Subdivided Land	Mostly open spaces that have been subdivided or platted and are ready to be developed, including residential, business/office, or industrial land uses.
Surface Water	Lakes, rivers, and perennial streams per Eau Claire County mapping.
Rights-of-Way	Areas reserved for public infrastructure and uses such as transportation facilities, utilities, and green infrastructure.

ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIO PLANNING

In part due to the City’s rapid growth experienced over the past decade and the City’s desire to grow most efficiently moving forward, an alternative growth scenario planning exercise was completed as a component to this Plan. The objective of this exercise was to analyze the impacts of various long-term growth policies to help make informed decisions today and in the future, in addition to communicating and educating the community on the impacts of these decisions. This process included multiple phases:

- Inventory of existing land uses, growth patterns, and analysis of potential infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- Future population, housing, and employment projections to the year 2042.
- Review of the City’s fiscal cost and revenue patterns.
- Calculation of the land needed to accommodate each growth scenario.
- Mapping of each alternative and the estimating the amount of land needed to accommodate each.
- Development of alternative growth scenario graphics for both residential and commercial/industrial.

Each alternative growth scenario map provided a tool utilized during various public input components of the planning process to gather community feedback on future growth policies and scenarios. The alternative growth scenarios developed included the following:

Residential Alternative Growth Scenarios

- Scenario 1: Low Density
- Scenario 2: Altoona Baseline Density
- Scenario 3: Mixed Density

Commercial/Industrial Alternative Growth Scenarios

- Scenario 1: Minimal Growth
- Scenario 2: Moderate Growth
- Scenario 3: Significant Growth

To develop each residential alternative, it was projected that the City of Altoona would grow by 2,906 new residents and 1,231 new housing units over the next 20 years. It was also estimated that potentially 448 new dwelling units could be accommodated through infill and redevelopment taking place. This left an estimated 803 new dwelling units needed in growth areas beyond the City’s existing boundary (i.e. greenfield development). The dwelling units per acre and development makeup assumptions were created for study purposes only to estimate land use demand. Below is a summary of each residential growth scenario.

Figure 4.1. Residential Alternative Growth Scenarios

	Residential Low Density	Altoona Baseline Density	Mixed Density
Dwelling Units Per Acre	1.5	3.0	6.0
Development Makeup	100% Single family	70% Single family 18% Two-Family 12% Multi-Family	70% Single family* 18% Two-Family* 12% Multi-Family*
Acres Required to Meet Projected Demand (800 new dwelling units)	535	268	135

**Assumed higher density development for all residential unit types than the baseline alternative.*

A slightly different approach was used to develop the commercial and industrial alternative growth scenarios. Altoona has experienced a substantial amount of this type of new development over the past decade, with most of it occurring within River Prairie. It is unlikely that the City would be able to replicate this scale of development in the future, so each scenario incorporates different levels of anticipated development to analyze land consumption and prioritize future economic, fiscal, and land use priorities. One consistent metric was used in each scenario, the amount of infill and redevelopment square footage that could potentially be accommodated within the City’s existing boundary (300,000 square feet). Below is a summary of each commercial/industrial alternative growth scenario.

Figure 4.2. Commercial/Industrial Alternative Growth Scenarios

	Minimal	Moderate	Significant
Total Square Footage Demand	350,00	844,000	1,341,000
New Square Feet Needed	50,000-100,000	500,000	1,000,000
Estimated New Jobs Created	250-400	650-1,000	1,000-1,600
Acres Required to Accommodate Each Alternative	36	135	282

Two public workshops and a follow-up online survey were conducted as part of this process. Each input opportunity aimed to educate the public and elected officials on the implications of future growth decisions, explore different potential outcomes, and provide feedback on each. Through these events, the residential scenario most preferred was Mixed Density and the commercial/industrial scenario most preferred was Minimal Growth. These results helped inform the development of the Future Land Use Map, policies within the Plan, and the East Neighborhood Plan. For all results from these events, see Appendix B.

Figure 4.3. Alternative Residential Planning Scenarios

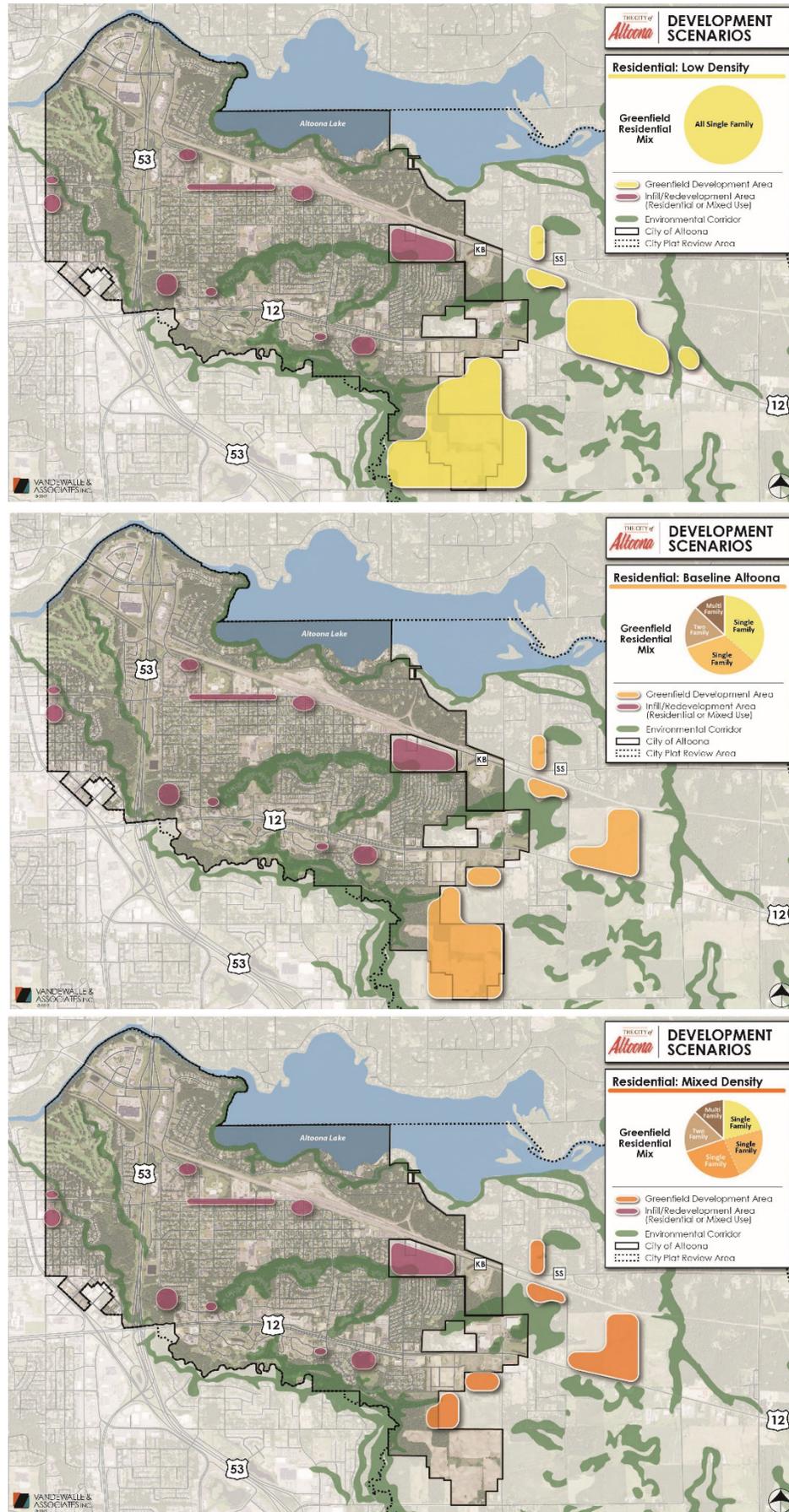
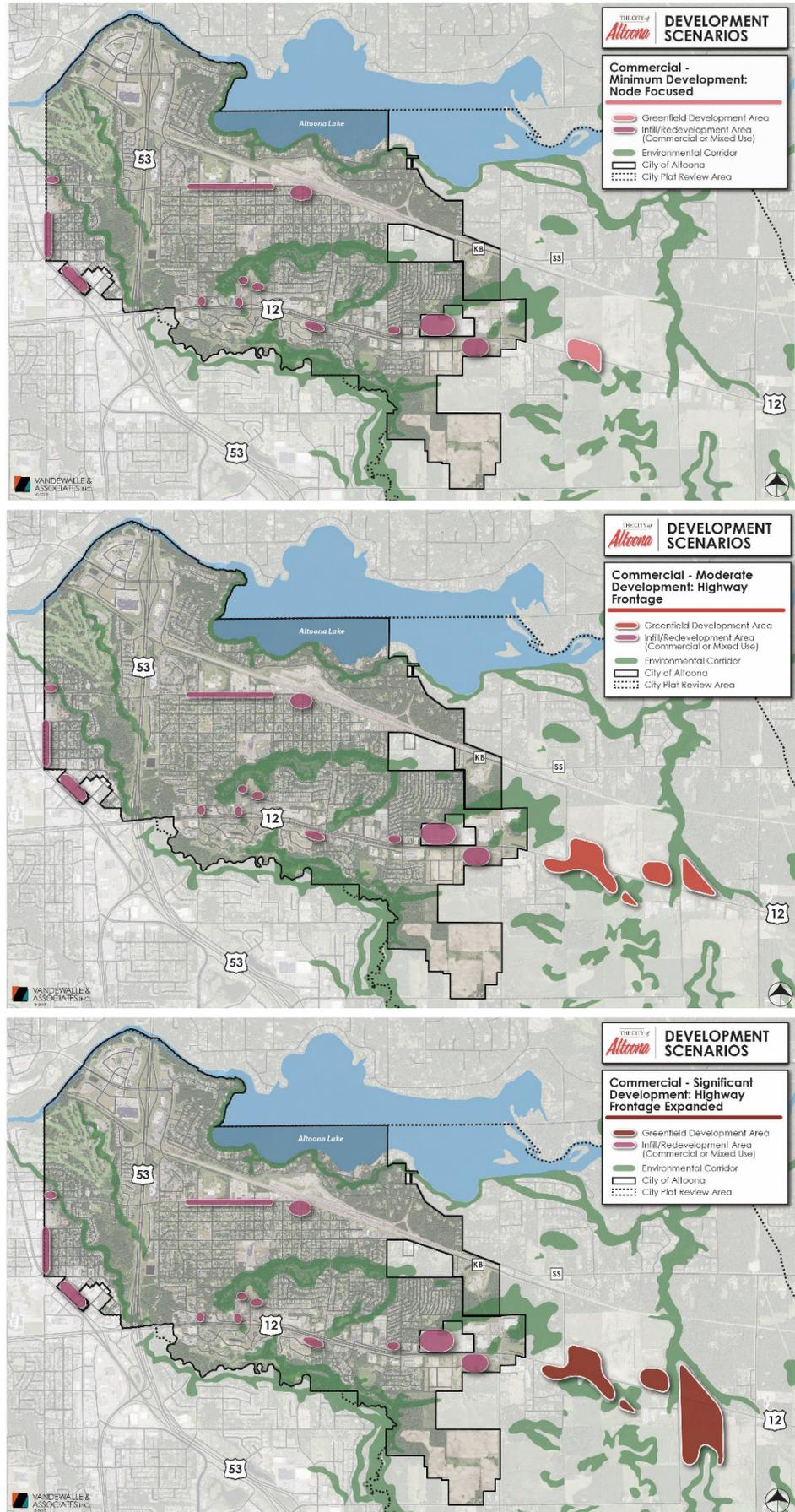


Figure 4.4. Alternative Commercial/Industrial Planning Scenarios



FUTURE LAND USE

Growth Considerations and Challenges

When developing Altoona’s Future Land Use Map, an important first step was to analyze the various factors that influence where the community can or should grow. Topography, drainage basins, natural features, public lands, utility capacity and availability, transportation connections, and neighboring jurisdictions all pose opportunities and constraints to Altoona’s future growth.

Natural Resources and Topography

Much of the City is bounded by surface water – specifically Lake Altoona, Otter Creek, and the Eau Claire River. These present the logical extent of future City growth to the north, west, and southwest. Additionally, Lake Altoona, Otter Creek, and the Eau Claire River each have environmental protection areas surrounding and contributing to them and present topographic challenges in some areas. There are also a few environmental protection areas running through the City and along the eastern edge of the growth area. Both protection of natural resources and topographic constraints must be considered as the City grows.

Municipal Service Potential

Maps 1 show the City’s 2021 Sewer Service Area (SSA) Boundary. This boundary, which includes the City and portions of the Town of Washington, depicts the area planned for urban development with a full range of services including public sanitary sewer, public water supply and distribution systems, higher levels of fire and police protection, solid waste collection, urban drainage facilities and streets with curbs and gutters, streetlights, neighborhood facilities such as parks and schools, and urban transportation systems. The SSA focuses on sewer and water utilities and is a process designed to anticipate the region’s future needs for water infrastructure for cost-effective and environmentally sound planning. It is generally understood that areas within the SSAs that are not currently located in the City of Altoona will be annexed into the City prior to development in order to access urban services.

Water capacity and public services also need to be considered in planning for future growth. As of 2022, the City was actively permitting additional sites for new well locations to help serve the growth experienced over the last decade and future growth anticipated over the planning period. Despite improvements in system efficiency, per capita water consumption has been increasing due primarily to the use of lawn irrigation systems.

The City completed a space-needs study in 2021 to analyze the City’s future public service needs in terms of facilities and employees. The City identified that additional staff and several new or expanded key public facilities are needed over planning period (See the Community Facilities section in Appendix A). Balancing future growth with the needs and constraints of public facilities, infrastructure, and resources will be vital to maintaining long-term fiscal sustainability for the City.

Transportation Connections

Altoona has historically grown outward from the railroad yard near the center of the City. The railroad presents challenges, as roads that cross the tracks are limited. Additionally, as development has continued to the south and east, traffic and access points on USH 12 have increased. Future north-south and east-west collector road connections will be needed within growth areas to help increase community connectivity (See the Transportation Chapter for more information).



Neighboring Jurisdictions

Any future growth of the City beyond its existing municipal boundary will require annexation. The policies and growth patterns of neighboring jurisdictions shape how and where the City can grow. For example, if new Town subdivisions are developed within Altoona's future growth area, this could cause impediments to future City growth and orderly development. Both the Town of Washington and City of Eau Claire border Altoona, and their respective Comprehensive Plans and existing land use patterns were reviewed in the development of the City of Altoona's Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map. Utilizing intergovernmental agreements to plan for these key growth areas will help provide direction and coordination in these efforts.

Future Land Use Categories

Map 3 provides recommended future land uses in the City of Altoona into the categories listed below. These future land use categories and the designation of property on the Future Land Use Map represent the desired future pattern of development in the City. It is important to note that these future land use categories do not directly reflect zoning; however, they are intended to be compatible with the City's zoning districts.

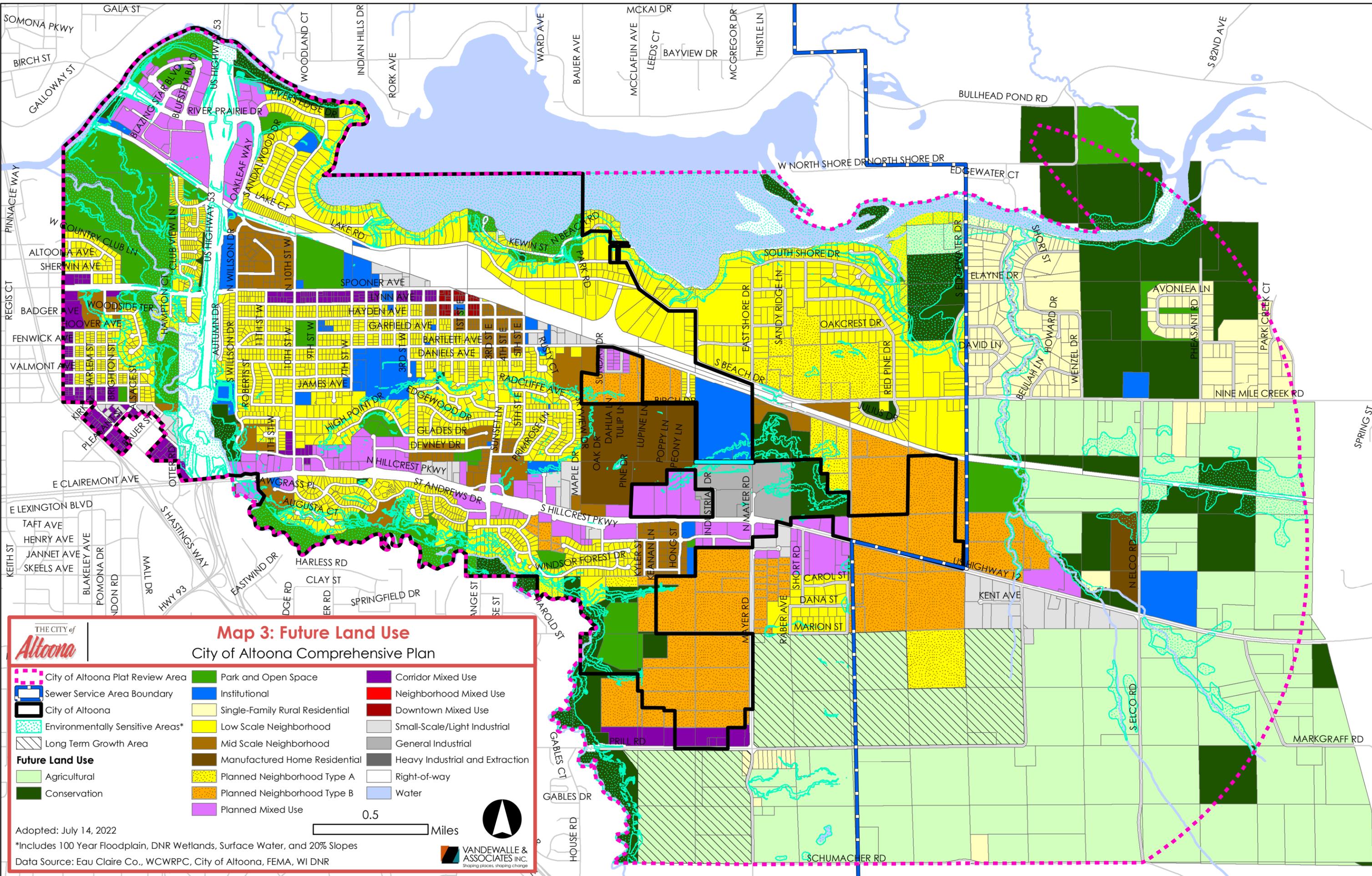
Not all land shown for development on the Future Land Use maps will be immediately appropriate for annexations, rezoning, and other land use approvals following adoption of this Plan. Given service demands and other factors, careful consideration to the amount, mix, and timing of development is essential. Altoona advocates the phased development of land that focuses growth in areas that can be efficiently served with transportation, utilities, public services, and community facilities.

What is a Future Land Use Map?

The Future Land Use map and related policies described below should be used as a basis to update the City's regulatory land use tools, particularly the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. They should also be used as a basis for all public and private sector development decisions, including annexations, zoning map amendments, conditional use permits, subdivision approvals, extension of municipal utilities, arrangement of transportation facilities, and other public or private investments. Changes in land use to implement the recommendations of this Plan will generally be initiated by property owners and private developers. In other words, this Plan does not automatically compel property owners to change the use of their land or grant the entitlements required for development to occur.

Wisconsin Statutes allow communities to plan for lands within their extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJ). Altoona's ETJ encompasses all land in the Town of Washington that is located within 1.5 miles of Altoona's current municipal limits. To effectively manage growth, this Plan identifies desirable land use patterns within the existing City limits and within unincorporated Town areas within the City's ETJ. This approach recognizes that Altoona (and regional) growth, public health, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and other dynamics described in this Plan are directly facilitated or impeded by the patterns of growth and land uses in adjacent unincorporated areas. For example, if lands adjacent to the City's boundary develop within the Town, there are limited opportunities for the City to potentially grow beyond that development due to impediments and constraints in providing future utility and infrastructure connections and contiguous annexation boundaries. Implementing many of the recommendations of this Plan will be greatly aided by intergovernmental cooperation, which is the focus of Intergovernmental Chapter of this Plan.

Although this Plan has been designed to accommodate a larger population than what is projected in the next 20 years, it does not assume that all areas depicted on the Future Land Use Map will develop during this period. Instead, the Future Land Use Map shows those areas in and around the City that are the most logical development areas, regardless of the absolute timing of development. The City advocates the development of a land use pattern that focuses growth in areas that can most efficiently be served by transportation and infrastructure facilities. The City must consider land uses beyond the immediate study period of 20 years to ensure cohesive and strategic long-term pursuit of the community's vision and values, and efficient outlook for infrastructure and services.



THE CITY of Altoona

Map 3: Future Land Use

City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan

City of Altoona Plat Review Area	Park and Open Space	Corridor Mixed Use
Sewer Service Area Boundary	Institutional	Neighborhood Mixed Use
City of Altoona	Single-Family Rural Residential	Downtown Mixed Use
Environmentally Sensitive Areas*	Low Scale Neighborhood	Small-Scale/Light Industrial
Long Term Growth Area	Mid Scale Neighborhood	General Industrial
Future Land Use	Manufactured Home Residential	Heavy Industrial and Extraction
Agricultural	Planned Neighborhood Type A	Right-of-way
Conservation	Planned Neighborhood Type B	Water
	Planned Mixed Use	

Adopted: July 14, 2022

*Includes 100 Year Floodplain, DNR Wetlands, Surface Water, and 20% Slopes

Data Source: Eau Claire Co., WCWRPC, City of Altoona, FEMA, WI DNR

0.5 Miles

VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES INC. Shaping places, shaping change

DETAILED FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGIES

Each of the future land use categories listed and shown on the Future Land Use Map (Map 3) are described below. The text under each listed land use category includes a description of that category, an outline of where that type of land use should be promoted, and the policies related to future development in areas designated under that category.

Compatible zoning districts are suggested; however, existing zoning districts and standards may not be adequate to achieve the characteristics described in each area. As indicated elsewhere in this Plan, the zoning ordinance is recommended to be amended to reflect the City’s values and goals.

The development intensities suggested in each category are provided as a range for the uses in the category, e.g., 3 to 8 dwellings per acre, and do not reflect the *average* intensity of the category. Thus, one part of the designated area may be 3 dwellings per acre while an adjacent or nearby area may be independently calculated as 8 dwellings per acre. This range is reflective of the recognition that land use and intensity are only two of the factors considered in planning future land use areas, and must also include design and performance characteristics.

Agricultural
Description: Agricultural uses, farmsteads, and other open lands at or below a residential density of 1 dwelling unit per 40 gross acres.
Compatible Zoning Districts: A-1
<p>Policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fully exercise the City’s authority to review proposed land divisions within the City’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction to help ensure the implementation of this desired future land use category. 2. Support land developments in this area only when they are clearly consistent with the category description and when proposed housing density is not greater than one residence (or other non-farm use) per 40 acres. 3. Do not extend sanitary sewer service or public water service into Agricultural areas until and unless the City changes the future land use category for such areas through a Comprehensive Plan amendment to the Future Land Use Map. 4. Work with Eau Claire County, the City of Eau Claire, and Town of Washington to implement the above policies and programs in a cooperative manner, where possible.

Long-Term Growth Area
Description: Land where the City may grow beyond the 20-year planning period, for which it is premature for the City to designate any particular type of future land use. Prior to the development within any part of the Long-Term Growth Area, the City will amend this Comprehensive Plan to recommend specific future land uses (beyond agriculture) and identify how the specific land use pattern would be served by transportation, utility, and other public services.
Compatible Zoning Districts: A-1
<p>Policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policies and recommendations on permissible uses for the Long-Term Growth Areas shall be the same as those listed for the Agricultural future land use category unless and until the City’s Comprehensive Plan is amended. 2. The City will use its extraterritorial land division review authority to ensure that any development proposed in these areas aligns with the long-term extension of the City’s growth pattern. 3. Prior to allowing more intensive forms of development within the Long-Term Growth Area, the City will, through the Comprehensive Plan amendment process, identify specific future land uses (other than agriculture) and how the specific land use pattern would be served by transportation, utility, and other public services.

Low-Scale Neighborhood
Description: Already developed, predominately residential areas recommended to generally maintain existing scale and character while providing a variety of housing options for new development to meet the needs of a diverse and growing population; building types could include single family dwellings, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), two-family homes, and, where appropriate, single family attached types such as twin homes or townhouses, and small multi-dwelling buildings by special permit.
Compatible Zoning Districts: R-1, R-2, TH, and R-3
<p>Polices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage residential development at densities of 3 to 8 homes per acre, including alley-loaded lots. 2. Leverage infill and redevelopment opportunities in these areas to promote a mix of low-scale residential densities that reflect the character of the neighborhood. Encourage twin homes, townhouses, and small multi-dwelling buildings in appropriate locations and require such buildings to be compatible in design with surrounding residences. 3. Update the City’s Zoning Ordinance to accommodate smaller lot sizes for single family, single family attached (twin and townhouse), and increased options for small-scale multi-family. 4. Promote rehabilitation and maintenance efforts of older neighborhoods. 5. Encourage housing designs which are attractive and emphasize the house in relation to the street (front porches, stoops, etc.), rather than the garage. 6. Promote architectural design of new development that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, including building and facade materials, building height, building bulk, setbacks, window and door styles and placements, roof designs, and colors.

Mid-Scale Neighborhood
Description: Already developed areas that are predominately multiple-dwelling structures, with future housing formats to include attached single family, and multi-dwelling structures up to 4 stories in height.
Compatible Zoning Districts: R-2, TH, and R-3
<p>Polices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage residential development at densities of 8 to 50 homes per acre. 2. Leverage infill and redevelopment opportunities in these areas to promote a mix of mid-scale residential formats. 3. Update the City’s Zoning Ordinance to establish options for small-scale multi-family, tiered multi-family districts by density, and high-density multi-family options. 4. Promote rehabilitation and maintenance efforts of older neighborhoods and buildings. 5. Encourage housing designs which are attractive and emphasize the house/building in relation to the street (front porches, stoops, etc.), rather than the garage. 6. Promote architectural design of new development that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood, including building and facade materials, building height, building bulk, setbacks, window and door styles and placements, roof designs, and colors. 7. Require that all proposed projects submit a detailed site plan, building elevations, landscape plan, lighting plan, grading/stormwater management plan, and signage plan prior to development approval. 8. Require housing developments to provide on-site open space areas that serve the needs of the project's residents, in addition to public park land requirements applicable to all residential development.

Planned Neighborhood Type A

Description: A carefully planned mix of single dwelling unit detached or attached, two-dwelling, multi-dwelling, small scale business, community facilities, and parks, recreation, and conservancy uses consistent with Traditional Neighborhood Design principles and forms of development at a minimum of 3 dwelling units per gross acre.

Compatible Zoning Districts: R-1, R-2, TH, R-3, and some C and C-1 uses

Polices:

1. Require minimum residential density of 3 dwelling units per gross acre, as site conditions allow.
2. Require Traditional Neighborhood Design principles for new neighborhood development. See detailed descriptions of this concept in the Housing Chapter.
3. Follow the policies listed above for Low-Scale Neighborhood land use categories for residential development within Planned Neighborhoods. For commercial and office development in Planned Neighborhoods, follow the policies for the Neighborhood Mixed Use land use category below.
4. Require compact growth, provide efficient services, and minimize farmland conversion by preventing Planned Neighborhoods outside the City limits and establishing Planned Neighborhood areas following annexation.
5. Utilize natural features to act as buffers between different land uses, when necessary.
6. Plan for interconnected road, trail, and open space networks within and between new, existing, and future neighborhoods.
7. Require a Detailed Neighborhood Plan in advance of development proposals.
8. Prohibit the use of cul-de-sacs except where topography or similar barrier dictates the need.
9. Encourage the construction of narrower local streets and alley-loaded lots in new neighborhoods, where possible, and require sidewalks along all streets. This increases the safety of neighborhoods for pedestrians and children.

Planned Neighborhood Type B

Description: A carefully planned mix of single dwelling unit detached or attached, two-dwelling, multi-dwelling, small scale business, community facilities, and parks, recreation, and conservancy uses consistent with Traditional Neighborhood Design principles and forms of development at a minimum of 6 dwelling units per gross acre.

Compatible Zoning Districts: R-2, TH, R-3, and some C and C-1 uses

Polices:

1. Require minimum residential density of 6 dwelling units per gross acre, as site conditions allow.
2. Encourage Traditional Neighborhood Design principles for new neighborhood development. See detailed descriptions of this concept in the Housing Chapter.
3. Follow the policies listed above for Low-Scale Neighborhood and Mid-Scale Neighborhood land use categories for residential development within Planned Neighborhoods. For nonresidential development within Planned Neighborhoods, follow the policies for the Neighborhood Mixed Use land use category below.
4. Require compact growth, provide efficient services, and minimize farmland conversion by preventing Planned Neighborhoods outside the City limits and establishing Planned Neighborhood areas following annexation.
5. Utilize natural features to act as buffers between different land uses, when necessary.
6. Plan for interconnected road, trail, and open space networks within and between new, existing, and future neighborhoods.
7. Require a Detailed Neighborhood Plan in advance of development proposals.
8. Prohibit the use of cul-de-sacs except where topography or other barriers dictates the need.
9. Encourage the construction of narrower local streets and alley-loaded lots in new neighborhoods, where possible, and require sidewalks along all streets. This increases the safety of neighborhoods for pedestrians and children.

Manufactured Home Residential

Description: Professionally managed arrangements of manufactured homes and associated amenities.

Compatible Zoning Districts: R-1

Policies:

1. Leverage infill and redevelopment opportunities in these areas to promote a mix of residential densities that reflect the character of the neighborhood.
2. Promote rehabilitation and maintenance efforts of the neighborhood.
3. Encourage housing designs which are attractive and emphasize the house in relation to the internal road (front porches, stoops, etc.).
4. Require Manufactured Home Residential developments to be professionally managed and provide adequate recreational open space within the neighborhood.

Single Family Unsewered

Description: Existing single family detached residential development served by individual on-site well and wastewater treatment (septic) systems and typically located outside of City limits.

Compatible Zoning Districts: None

Policies:

1. Exercise the City’s extraterritorial land division review authority to ensure that new Single Family Residential Unsewered development is not permitted within the City’s Extraterritorial Jurisdiction. It is recommended that an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Town of Washington be pursued to assist in this effort (See the Intergovernmental Opportunities Chapter for more information).

Neighborhood Mixed Use

Description: Small-scale office, service, institutional, or retail commercial uses and mixed residential uses in a pedestrian-oriented arrangement in structures compatible with the scale of the neighborhood context through building form, site design, and landscaping; typically, 2 to 3 stories.

Compatible Zoning Districts: C and C-1

Policies:

1. Encourage neighborhood-oriented retail, office, and service businesses in areas that will conveniently serve residential neighborhoods.
2. Require that all proposed commercial and office projects submit a detailed site plan, building elevations, lighting plan, grading/stormwater management plan, utility plan, and signage plan prior to development approval.
3. Require the use of high-quality building materials and designs that are compatible with residential areas, including: residential roof materials, such as shingles; generous window placements; and exterior materials, such as wood, cement board, vinyl siding, brick, decorative block, stone, and other approved materials.
4. Design street and driveway access to minimize traffic congestion and improve safety by limiting the number of and ensuring adequate spacing between access points.
5. Encourage minimum front setbacks, design buildings to pedestrians and not automobiles with building entrances facing the street, and locate parking in the rear of the building or on streets.
6. Consider updating the City Zoning Ordinance to establish a neighborhood-oriented zoning district that permits mixed use residential and commercial development by right with associated design requirements.

Downtown Mixed Use

Description: Pedestrian-oriented mix of retail, service, office, mixed use, and residential uses and pattern of development typical of a traditional downtown as it relates to placement, scale, and form of buildings, with building heights from 2 to 6 stories.

Compatible Zoning Districts: C and C-1

Polices:

1. Consider developing a Downtown Revitalization Plan to identify key opportunities and provide a detailed guide for implementation action steps to revitalize this area.
2. Explore property acquisition by the City to reserve key sites for revitalization or redevelopment.
3. Promote downtown as a unique commercial, civic, and social center.
4. Work with property owners and businesses to preserve, renovate, and modernize existing structures and sites.
5. Support the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services, offices, neighborhood retail and services, multi-family, and community uses.
6. Require that all projects submit and have approved detailed building elevations and site plans, showing the proposed locations of the building(s), parking, storage, loading, signage, landscaping, and lighting prior to development approval.
7. Promote truly mixed use development with residential above the first floor and design oriented to pedestrian and not automobiles.
8. Require the use of high-quality building materials and designs that are compatible with the area: engaging façade design, generous windows, defined customer entryways, and exterior building materials such as brick, decorative block, stone, or other related materials.
9. Consider updating the City's Zoning Ordinance to establish a Downtown Zoning District that would provide increased flexibilities for redevelopment in these areas through form-based standards, increased maximum heights, reduced setbacks, and mixed-use commercial and residential allowed by right.

Corridor Mixed Use

Description: Medium-scale retail, service, and residential uses in a pedestrian-oriented arrangement and generally located along corridors that serve the City as well as neighboring communities, with building heights from 2 to 5 stories.

Compatible Zoning Districts: C and C-1

Polices:

1. Control collector and arterial street access by limiting the number of and ensuring adequate spacing between vehicle access points. Promote cross-access between individual developments, as this will help avoid future congestion and traffic safety problems.
2. Promote the use of high-quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas, and building foundations, and require parking lots to be heavily landscaped.
3. Require high quality signage that is not excessive in height or total square footage.
4. Incorporate amenities such as benches, fountains, canopy shade trees, and public art wherever possible.
5. Design buildings and sites oriented toward pedestrians and not automobiles, locate parking in the rear or side of the building where possible.
6. Require the use of high-quality building materials and designs that are compatible with the area: façade articulation, generous windows, defined customer entryways, screened outdoor storage, and exterior building materials such as vinyl siding, brick, decorative block, stone, or other related materials.
7. Include facilities for bicyclists (bike storage racks, bike paths, etc.) in all development designs.
8. Consider updating the City's Zoning Ordinance to establish a redevelopment-oriented Zoning District that would provide increased flexibilities for redevelopment in these areas through design standards, increased maximum heights, reduced setbacks, and mixed use commercial and residential allowed by-right.

Planned Mixed Use
Description: High-quality and highly planned developments that include a wide range of indoor and outdoor retail, service, office, health care facilities, mixed use commercial and residential, multi-family residential, and institutional uses near USH 53 and 12.
Compatible Zoning Districts: C, C-1, and RP
<p>Polices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Promote active live-work environments through inclusion of identifiable centers of activity that can be compatible, mutually beneficial, and can be conveniently reached by a variety of transportation modes including walking and bicycling. Require the use of high-quality building materials and designs that are compatible with the area: pitched or flat roofs, façade articulation, generous windows, defined customer entryways, screened outdoor storage, and exterior building materials such as vinyl siding, brick, decorative block, stone, or other related materials. Include facilities for bicyclists (bike storage racks, bike paths, etc.) in all development designs. Control collector and arterial street access by limiting the number of and ensuring adequate spacing between vehicle access points. Promote cross-access between individual developments, as this will help avoid future congestion and traffic safety problems. Promote the use of high-quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas, and building foundations, and require parking lots to be heavily landscaped. Require high quality signage that is not excessive in height or total square footage.
Small-Scale/Light Industrial
Description: Small scale indoor manufacturing, assembly, contractor shops, and related office and accessory uses, with minimal outdoor activities or outdoor storage.
Compatible Zoning Districts: BP and I
<p>Polices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively market these areas for light, indoor manufacturing and assembly, warehousing, and office-related development. Encourage screened outdoor storage areas, parking lots, loading areas, and mechanical equipment from public view, including roof-top and ground equipment. Additionally, promote modest lighting, limited signage, and the creation of landscaped (or tree preservation) buffers where future industrial use areas abut existing or future residential areas. Update the Zoning Ordinance to provide redevelopment flexibility to promote appropriate scale, setbacks, and varying land use opportunities by right in these areas.
General Industrial
Description: Indoor manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution activities including accessory uses such as offices and outdoor storage. Uses in this category include large scale and/or intensive manufacturing, possibly with significant outdoor processing or storage, warehousing, distribution, office, and associated accessory uses.
Compatible Zoning Districts: I
<p>Polices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Require that all proposed industrial projects submit a detailed site plan, building elevations, landscape plan, lighting plan, grading/stormwater management plan, and signage plan prior to development approval. Screen parking lots, loading areas, outdoor storage areas, and mechanical equipment (i.e. air conditioners, ventilation equipment, etc.) from public view, including roof-top and ground equipment. Separate pedestrian walkways vehicular traffic and loading areas. Market these areas for employment generating manufacturing, warehousing, and distribution uses with compatible office uses. Update the Zoning Ordinance to increase the clarity and requirements for outdoor storage screening, building materials, and site design.

Heavy Industrial and Extraction

Description: Most intensive industrial, outdoor storage, disposal, quarries, gravel pits, clay extraction, peat extraction, and related uses.

Compatible Zoning Districts: None

Polices:

1. Consider the establishment of new Zoning Districts to accommodate and provide zoning regulations for heavy industrial, extraction, or similar high-intensity land uses to give the City the needed regulatory power outside of the Conditional Use Permit process.

Institutional

Description: Public or public-related land uses and buildings such as schools, cemeteries, places of worship, public buildings, and public utilities. These uses may be conducive to transition from less intense uses to other, more intense land uses.

Compatible Zoning Districts: All Districts

Polices:

1. Integrate institutional facilities into new neighborhoods and residential areas and provide an adequate distribution of institutional facilities throughout the City. Require site plan review and high-quality site design, building design, landscaping, lighting, and signage for all institutional uses.
2. Ensure that land use decisions and future growth are consistent with the community facility recommendations of this Plan in Chapter 7.
3. Consider reserving future sites for public facilities by identifying these areas on an Official Map.
4. Amend this Plan as necessary to accommodate future utility and community facility locations.
5. Update the Zoning Ordinance to establish an Institutional Zoning District for larger-scale institutional uses to address traffic peaks, outdoor lighting and activities, buffering from other land uses, and multi-modal transportation connections.

Park and Open Space

Description: Existing or planned park and open space facilities devoted to active or passive recreational uses such as playgrounds, play fields, play courts, park shelters, picnic areas, open space, golf courses, and recreation trails.

Compatible Zoning Districts: P

Polices:

1. Ensure all residents are within adequate walking distances of a park or recreational amenity, as described in the City's Place Plan.
2. Design future neighborhoods around and with prioritized pedestrian access to environmental corridors and parks without negatively affecting the environmental health of these areas.
3. Improve continuity and quality of bicycle and pedestrian connections between neighborhoods, parks, and schools.
4. Continue to implement the recommendations of the City's Place Plan. Update the plan every 5-years to remain eligible for WisDNR grants.
5. Consider creating a Parks and Recreation Zoning District to address outdoor lighting and activities, in addition to buffering and multi-modal transportation connections.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Description: Per the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Environmentally Sensitive Areas include slopes greater than 20%, identified WI DNR wetlands, the FEMA 100-year floodplain, and surface water. Environmentally sensitive areas are intended to be permanently preserved whether in private or public ownership through various restrictions on use and site alterations.

Compatible Zoning Districts: P

Polices:

1. In general, prohibit new development in mapped environmental corridor areas.
2. If development is proposed in areas where environmental corridors have been mapped, require developers or landowners to determine the exact boundaries of the environmental corridor based on the shoreland, wetland, floodplain, steep slope, or other natural feature(s) that comprise the corridor.
3. Continue to allow existing agricultural uses (cropping, grazing, or other preexisting agricultural uses) and passive recreation within environmental corridors, subject to the ongoing use of water quality and stormwater best practices.
4. Consider undertaking projects and management activities to restore native landscapes and protect watersheds.

Conservation

Description: Areas of environmental sensitivity, stormwater management, habitat preservation, natural open space, and surface water to be preserved from most human disturbance. These areas may include passive recreation amenities such as paved or unpaved trails.

Compatible Zoning Districts: P

Polices:

1. Prohibit new development in environmentally sensitive or flood protection and stormwater management areas. Continue to allow existing agricultural uses (cropping, grazing, or other preexisting agricultural uses) or passive recreational within these areas.
2. Promote public acquisition or conservation easements where the land is not presently publicly owned.

Right-of-Way

Description: Areas reserved for public infrastructure and uses such as transportation facilities, utilities, and green infrastructure.

Compatible Zoning Districts: None

Polices:

1. Consider reserving future sites for public facilities by identifying these areas on an Official Map.
2. Continue to adapt the City's Subdivision Ordinance to promote smaller street widths where practical, off-street trails, bicycle facilities, and sidewalks.

SMART GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Infill and Redevelopment

Redevelopment and infill development reinforce several other goals of this Plan such as compact development, maximizing use of existing infrastructure, and providing mixed use and housing development opportunities.

The City has recently completed the very successful development of River Prairie as a mixed use center that has established itself as regional destination for employment, housing, entertainment, recreation, and tourism. This area is an example of what a city can accomplish by exercising its agency to strategically owning and planning for development, thoughtful utilization of its resources, and partnering with development professionals for implementation. Building on this success, Altoona aims to continue its revitalization efforts in other areas of the City, including in the downtown and along Spooner Avenue, along USH 12, and on the west side of the City near Hastings Way and Fairfax Street. Each of these areas offers different opportunities for increasing densities, providing diverse housing and employment opportunities, integrating a mix of uses, generating new tax base, and promoting municipal fiscal sustainability through efficient service and infrastructure provision. It is recommended that corridor, small area, or master plans be completed in each of the areas to help the City identify opportunities and develop detailed action steps toward revitalization.

Downtown Altoona

Centered on Lynn Avenue between 1st Street W and 1st Street E, downtown Altoona is currently home to a wide mix of uses, including community facilities such as City Hall and the Library, U.S. Post Office, retail/commercial uses in traditional “downtown” style buildings, residential, and smaller-scale industrial uses. Though the development of this Comprehensive Plan, downtown Altoona was identified a priority revitalization area that has the potential to be a walkable and vibrant downtown area where residents come to gather, shop, and visit.

In order to transform the downtown, creative and coordinated planning is needed. This Plan recommends the preparation of a downtown master plan. A downtown master plan will assure the desired character is maintained, appropriate uses and strategies for redevelopment of key sites are identified, historically and architecturally significant buildings are preserved, and tools to promote redevelopment (e.g., TIF districts, zoning district amendment, brownfield cleanup procedures) are explored and implemented. This Plan recommends the following rehabilitation and redevelopment principles be considered in the downtown master planning effort:

- Facilitate and support infill and redevelopment within the downtown, particularly of multi-family, mixed use commercial and residential, public spaces, community-serving retail, restaurants, and destinations.
- Renovate and restore historic buildings. Encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- Continue to retain community facilities in the downtown area, including City Hall, library, and post office, while supporting public gathering spaces and special events. Explore expansions or upgrades of public facilities.
- Enhance public space and encourage walkability through streetscaping features such as benches, attractive lighting, landscaping, public art, and more.
- Encourage landscaping (trees, plants, berms) in private parking lots and other paved areas.
- Pursue environmental assessment and cleanup as needed, particularly in areas near the railroad tracks.
- Strategically acquire property to facilitate redevelopment consistent with the plan.



Downtown Altoona will be a focal point of revitalization efforts by the City over the planning period.

Old Altoona Neighborhoods

Altoona's original neighborhoods are found south of the railroad tracks and generally west and southwest of downtown. This area is characterized by small homes on a traditional street grid. "Old Altoona" presents a considerable infill development opportunity over the planning period. Additional housing could be accommodated in this area, especially nearby the downtown, by adding new medium density housing on vacant or underutilized sites or by combing lots to facilitate a small-scale multi-family redevelopment. This area is generally recommended for Mid-Scale Neighborhood on the Future Land Use Map.

Spoooner Avenue

A major east-west corridor that connects Altoona to Eau Claire, Spoooner Avenue is characterized by a mix of residential uses, older highway-oriented businesses, and public facilities. The south side of Spoooner Avenue is primed for redevelopment in the form of multi-family, mixed use formats (commercial and residential), community-serving retail, and restaurants. In the future, the corridor should become highly walkable and bikeable and should enable new development formats and businesses not currently offered in the City. This area is generally recommended for Corridor Mixed Use on the Future Land Use Map. Spoooner Avenue will be a priority for proactive revitalization efforts by the City over the planning period. As such, it is recommended for additional small area planning, which should be done in conjunction with planning efforts for downtown, described above.



USH 12

Serving as the main east-west arterial roadway through Altoona, USH 12 has evolved over time to include a variety of land uses, including large and small industrial and highway commercial with residential neighborhoods behind. There are a few remaining infill sites and redevelopment opportunities along the corridor, in addition to new development opportunities beyond the City's existing boundary. As the community has grown, traffic has increased along USH 12, creating a barrier for pedestrians and bicyclists. An in-depth corridor plan is needed along USH 12, especially as the City continues to grow to the east and desire to cross the highway increases. This plan should include infill and redevelopment sites, new development opportunities, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and transportation planning in coordination with WisDOT.

Hastings Way and Fairfax Street

Defining the western boundary of Altoona, Hastings Way and Fairfax Street directly abut the City of Eau Claire. Older highway commercial and industrial uses are present along these roadway frontages. This area presents several prime redevelopment opportunities for increased densities and mixing of uses. It is recommended that a revitalization plan for this area be conducted to spark and facilitate redevelopment. This effort should be undertaken in coordination with the City of Eau Claire.

Windsor Forest Neighborhood

A former landfill site is centrally located within the nearly built-out Windsor Forest Neighborhood, south of USH 12. It is surrounded by a mix of residential densities. The City is the owner and, together with the Town of Washington, steward of the former landfill site and the City has acquired several other lands adjacent. Following the preparation of a detailed neighborhood plan, this area could facilitate new mixed density residential development and potentially some smaller-scale commercial development, in addition to significant park and open space facilities.

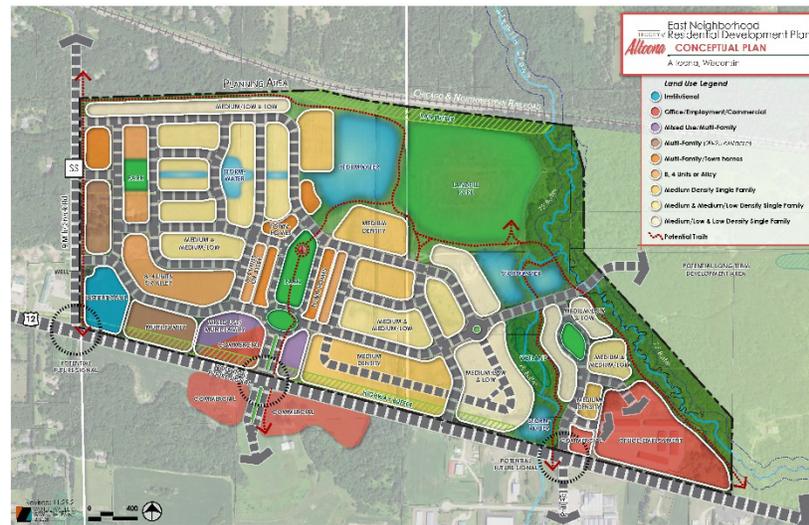
East Neighborhood Plan

The City owns an 83-acre greenfield site that was annexed into the City in 2022. Concurrently with the development of this Plan, the East Neighborhood Plan was also developed, mirroring many this Plan's vision, goals, and strategies. The Neighborhood Plan is intended to provide a conceptual development plan for the build out of the City-owned property and several other privately-owned properties in the vicinity. The plan features the integration of traditional neighborhood design principals with a goal of providing Altoona with new diverse housing options, mixing of land uses, park and open spaces, a multi-modal transportation network, stormwater management best practices, and alternative energy opportunities. The East Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 2022 and is anticipated to begin implementation in 2023.

Growth Areas Beyond the City's Boundary

Balanced with fostering new infill and redevelopment within its existing boundaries, the City will also need to consider growth beyond its boundaries to accommodate anticipated demand. Key future growth areas include areas to the south and east of the City along Nine Mile Creek Road, along Mayer Road, and either side of USH 12. Altoona can grow in the most efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable way by utilizing the Planned Neighborhood

Type B and Planned Mixed Use land use categories described above. As the City has done with the East Neighborhood Plan, each of these areas will also require detailed planning efforts and work with developers to promote mixed density formats, provide neighborhood-serving commercial development, integrate multi-modal transportation components, incorporate park and open space features, and deliver public services and utilities. Refer to the text box below for a recommended process for neighborhood planning. Additionally, due the growth pressures in Town, intergovernmental coordination will be helpful to ensure compact and sustainable urban growth. It is recommended that the City continue to work with Eau Claire County, the Town of Washington, WisDOT, and the School District in these planning and development efforts. To note, the City of Altoona and Eau Claire have an established Extraterritorial Plat Review agreement in areas where their ETJ authorities overlap, granting Altoona jurisdiction for lands east of Otter Creek and North of Schumacher Road.



Detailed Neighborhood Plans—A Recommended Process:

The following planning process has a proven track record of success:

Analysis: A wide variety of site-specific information must be collected about both existing and emerging conditions:

- A. Establish and confirm the full neighborhood design process, including the creation of an ad-hoc or blended oversight committee including and/or reporting to City staff, the Plan Commission, and City Council.
- B. Collect existing map and plan data for the area and its surroundings related to parcels, topography, soils, land cover and uses, utilities, transportation, recreation, public services, plan recommendations, zoning, and property ownership.
- C. Evaluate the existing and emerging real estate market.
- D. Employ meaningful public participation to help identify opportunities and constraints, and to help create a vision for the area.
- E. Conduct property owner, agency, and stakeholder interviews.

Plan: Based on the results of the Analysis phase, and under the guidance of the committee, adopt a Detailed Neighborhood Plan as derived from the consideration of a Preliminary Concept Plan, Alternative Neighborhood Plans, and a Refined Draft Neighborhood Plan:

- A. Refine and confirm the neighborhood vision.
- B. Draft and confirm a Preliminary Concept Plan depicting the general arrangement of land uses, development character, main roads and stormwater management facilities, pedestrian and bicycle networks, and the open space system.
- C. Produce and confirm one or more Alternative Neighborhood Plans for presentation and review by the public, stakeholders, agencies, and the committee.
- D. Produce and confirm a Draft Detailed Neighborhood Plan based on the responses to the Alternative Neighborhood Plans.
- E. Refine and adopt the Detailed Neighborhood Plan, and ultimately integrate it into the Comprehensive Plan as an amendment.

Implementation: Following Plan adoption, establish and apply the appropriate regulatory and procedural foundation to ensure full implementation:

- A. Facilitate developments consistent with the Plan.
- B. Require compliance with the Plan as a condition of annexation.
- C. Establish zoning districts and boundaries in compliance with the Plan.
- D. Review proposed land divisions, conditional use permits, and planned developments based on conformance with the Plan, including consideration of land use pattern, density/intensity, community character, and infrastructure recommendations.

Develop a Growth Phasing Plan

Due to the rapid growth experienced over the past decade and new growth projected over the next two decades, it is recommended that the City phase growth over time to ensure logical and cost-efficient expansions to community utilities and services. The growth phasing plan should include:

- An understanding of community growth and market trends as they continuously evolve over time. In between major updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Altoona should develop a regular tracking system of data, best practices, and evolving trends. This would include monitoring regional housing and economic data from WCWRPC, Eau Claire County, and the City of Eau Claire, regular City staff attendance of state and national housing and land use planning conferences, reviewing and archiving local and regional public and private sector housing market studies, and providing an annual update of this information to the Plan Commission and City Council.
- Inform future decision-making on urban expansion through an understanding of the City's capacity to provide public facilities, services, and utilities, in addition to the School District's capacity to meet added educational demands.

Consistent communication and information-sharing between City departments internally and externally with the School District will provide the ability to have the greatest understanding of needs, demands, and constraints.

- Provide flexibility in terms of private landowner interest in bringing new properties into the City and/or development of those lands, while accomplishing the central goals of this Plan. For example, a particular later-phase growth area may be ready for development sooner than would otherwise be allowed if the developer can successfully incorporate key City objectives related to housing affordability, mix of uses and densities, Traditional Neighborhood Design, multi-modal transportation connections, and integration of sustainable best practices.
- Reflect intergovernmental planning with the Town of Washington and City of Eau Claire. This can be accomplished through intergovernmental agreements. An inability to reach boundary agreements can adversely impact the City's ability to make logical expansions of its boundaries in a phased urban growth approach.

While the City's Future Land Use Map and this Plan overall aim to accomplish many of the recommendations stated above, the City can take further proactive steps to phasing growth beyond what this Plan can do and between major updates to it. This can be most successfully accomplished through continuous data tracking, information sharing, policy evaluation, and intergovernmental planning.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

"Community Character" is a term often used to describe the way a community looks, feels, and functions. A community's character is related to much more than where land uses are located. Rather, it is a function of the relationship between the built environment, natural environment, and people who live, work, and visit the community. Cities are usually comprised of different, but ideally compatible, components (downtown, residential neighborhoods, employment or shopping districts, etc.) that make up their overall character.

A wide variety of elements contribute to the creation of community character. They include geographic context, urban form, density and intensity, the built environments size and scale, architecture, signage, public furnishings and art, community spaces, accessibility, landscaping, views, and community entryways.

As Altoona continues to redevelop, revitalize, and grow, the community will be challenged to maintain and enhance its "small-community atmosphere." Specifically, it will be important for the City to establish and enforce standards that help ensure that new development and redevelopment projects have a positive impact on the way the community looks and feels to residents and visitors. Such standards should specifically address:

- Aesthetic components of development such as architecture and building materials
- Thoughtful integration of parks, natural areas, and gathering spaces
- Preservation of attractive community entryways and historic and culturally significant features

In recognition of these more complicated challenges, progressive planning practice has evolved into the realm of truly planning, protecting, enhancing, and creating the desired character of community development. Implementing these recommendations requires ongoing integration of this document in daily procedures, strategic planning, and policy decisions.



Characteristics of a Development Compatible with Community Character

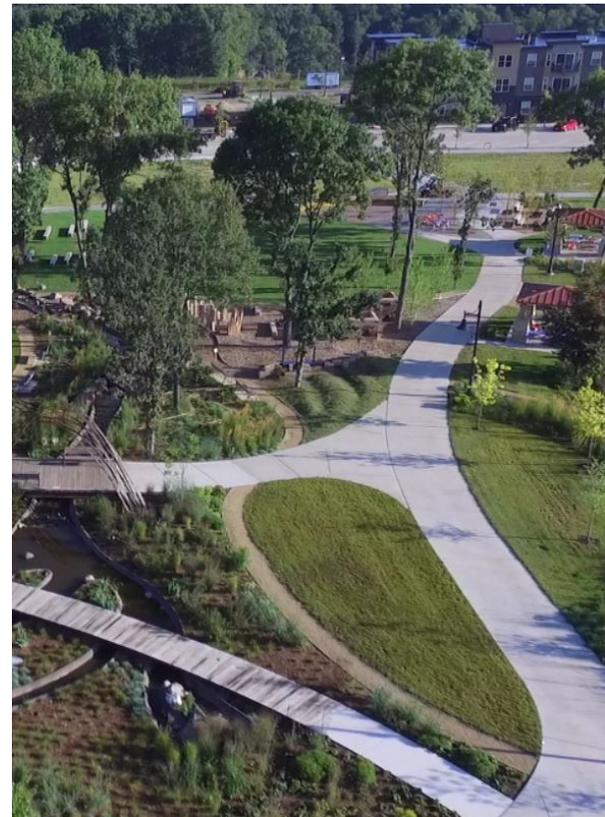
For a characteristic of a development to be “compatible” with community character, this means it reflects the City’s vision and values as described in this Plan and is relatable its physical context and surroundings. This does not require the proposed thing to be the same use, density, height, etc. as its neighbors. As communities grow, it is expected that new development will be of increased intensity and that existing neighborhoods and developed areas increase in scale and investment, and that these processes is not incompatible with the City’s vision or values. The role of the City is to ensure that this growth process does not result in unmanageable or objective nuisances or hardships, or conditions that are not consistent with the City’s overall vision and values.

For example, excluding or unreasonably restraining new development in existing neighborhoods due primarily to aesthetic preferences is inconsistent with the City’s charge to advance public health, safety, and general welfare, as well as the fiscal, social, and environmental goals articulated in this Plan.

Building Design. The thoughtful planning of building design can ensure that new development, infill development, and redevelopment all work to create a sense of place and strengthen community identity through context sensitive design. This can be done through historic preservation in key locations, design guidelines through overlay zoning districts for corridors or redevelopment areas (i.e. River Prairie design guidelines) that illustrate the scale, materials, and densities desired, providing incentives for the inclusion of sustainable best practices in new building design, and continuously reevaluating community ordinances and policies to ensure they reflect best practices, technology innovations, and the context of areas as they evolve overtime.

Site Design. The arrangement and features of a property or collection of properties closely affects how the property functions as a whole and contributes to the overall vitality of the community. Well-designed and maintained sites include pedestrian orientation, generous landscaping with native species, quality building materials, sight lines, lighting, historical or cultural elements, and public art. These features accentuate the building and its use, create visual interest, and contribute to a positive sense of place. This contributes to the City’s goals and objectives in many ways, such as by creating attractive neighborhoods and corridors, encouraging active transportation, managing water, and providing plant and animal habitats. Site design may also contribute to mitigating or managing less desirable aspects of a use, such as by screening or buffering characteristics of low appeal, reducing noise, or shielding outdoor lighting.

Neighborhood Design. Altoona’s older neighborhoods reflect many of the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design, characterized by a grid street network, diversity of housing types and formats, inherent walkability and bikeability, accessibility to parks and open space, and blending of compatible land uses including residential, community facilities, and commercial. Given the many advantages of Traditional Neighborhood Design, including a high degree of livability and reduced land consumption and preservation of open space, the City should continue to foster this development pattern within new neighborhoods, ensuring these principles are integrated into the design of Neighborhood Plans. (Refer to the Housing Chapter for more information about Traditional Neighborhoods Design).



Community Gateways. The primary entryways into Altoona are its visual “front doors.” Enhancing community gateways can be done through requiring high-quality landscaping, building design, signage, lighting, and public furnishings for new development. Additionally, the installation of high-quality public entry signs and/or public art can also be used to signify entry into the community.

Key Corridors. There are several heavily traveled key corridors that run through Altoona. Like community gateways, requiring high-quality new development and redevelopment with overlay zoning districts can help carefully control their appearance. Additionally, the integration of streetscaping enhancements can significantly improve the look, feel, and function of all multi-modal transportation users.

Signage. One of the most effective ways to begin integrating new signs into the community is through the update of the Sign Ordinance. Specifically, the ordinance should allow for more pedestrian-oriented sign types, separate public art from signage, create custom signage design standards for key corridors, and adapt to become content neutral per the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Public Art. Thoughtful integration of public art and furnishings into new developments and infrastructure projects (murals, sculptures, seating areas, interactive components, etc.) and proactively promoting the addition of public art on existing buildings (murals, temporary art installations, etc.) can help activate underutilized areas, promote community gathering, and increase tourism. An Arts and Culture Plan is one way to identify different opportunities, strengthen local partnerships, and establish an action plan for implementation of these elements throughout the community.

What is a Form-Based Code?

A Form-Based Code is an approach to local development regulation that addresses the relationship between building façades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in Form-Based Codes, presented in both diagrams and words, are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale of development rather than only distinctions in land use types. Unlike conventional zoning, which emphasizes regulation of land uses (and separating land uses), form-based zoning regulations emphasize the physical character of development (development “form”). Form-based standards do address land uses, but they focus on how development relates to the context of surrounding development. In particular, a zoning code with form-based standards considers the relationships between buildings and the street, pedestrians and vehicles, and public and private spaces.

Form-based standards are developed following a public design process, which creates consensus and a clear vision as it relates to which aspects of the community should remain, change, and be a model for future development, and big picture wishes. The updated code is the implementation of that vision. Form-Based Codes are drafted to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism. Ultimately, a Form-Based Code is a tool; the quality of development outcomes is dependent on the quality and objectives of the community plan that the code implements, the management of the code by local government, and the execution of the code by property developers.

Altoona has experience with administering form-based development standards. The River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards, although not strictly codified as zoning, is comprised of form-based standards to guide the implementation of the River Prairie Mixed Use District. In practice, many communities utilize a hybrid approach such as this, which retains some degree of land use control with the addition of specific, form-based standards.

For further reading on form-based codes, refer to [Form-Based Codes: A Step-by-Step Guide for Communities](#), a handbook developed by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning for use by communities in the Chicago metro area.



Chapter 5

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS



CHAPTER 5: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS



INTRODUCTION

The United States has a housing shortage, which has caused home prices and rents to climb sharply at the national, state, regional, and local levels. This has manifested itself differently throughout Wisconsin, with metropolitan areas experiencing growth in new housing units but struggling with housing affordability, while more rural communities are experiencing little or no housing growth whatsoever. The existing housing situation is a result of both a lack of supply and changing demands since the housing market collapse in 2008. The current housing climate has made it increasingly difficult for families to buy their first homes or to afford rent, and it has intensified the need for additional housing – particularly for quality housing options that families can afford.

The City of Altoona, unlike most other small Wisconsin communities, has experienced rapid population and housing growth over the past decade. The City has taken the lead in shaping this growth by fostering the development of new, unique neighborhoods with a distinct sense of place and by proactively working to diversify the community’s housing stock in terms of structure type and orientation, affordability, and occupancy status. Overall, housing and neighborhoods are key determinants in the community’s identity, sense of place, and quality of life.

What is Affordable Housing?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

What is Low-Income Housing?

Per HUD, low-income housing is determined by the percentage of a household’s annual income related to the median household income for that area. Low-income is defined as 80% of median family income for the area and very low-income is defined as 50% of median family income for the area. If the household’s annual income falls within these definitions, they are eligible for federally subsidized housing programs which are often administered at the county level.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Glossary of Terms

As of 2021, Very-Low Income (50% of Eau Claire County AMI) for a family of one person was \$28,000 and for a family of four was \$40,000. Moderate Income (80% of Eau Claire County AMI) for a family of one person was \$44,800 and for a family of four was \$64,000.

Source: Eau Claire County Housing Authority, 2021

What is Workforce Housing?

Workforce housing is homeownership, as well as rental housing, that can be reasonably afforded by households experiencing moderate to middle income and located in acceptable proximity to centers of employment. The most common definition of workforce housing comes from the Urban Land Institute, which defines workforce housing as: “housing that is affordable to households earning 60% to 120% of the area median income.” This term may be used by some to place housing in economic development terms and in an attempt to avoid misplaced stigmas of identifying something as “affordable” housing.

This chapter is intended to outline the goals, objectives, and policies related to the future of housing and neighborhoods in Altoona as the community continues to evolve. Recommendations serve to guide the future of housing policy, decision making, and programming. Background information, data, and existing plans related to housing and neighborhoods can be found in Appendix A.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Foster new diverse housing to accommodate the needs, desires, and lifestyles of existing and future residents of all incomes and life stages by implementing the recommendations of the Altoona Housing Action Plan.
- Apply Traditional Neighborhood Design techniques when approving or planning for new neighborhoods.
- Establish high-quality design standards for new multi-family housing developments.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Provide an equitable and sustainable diversity of housing types, densities, arrangements, and affordability levels to accommodate the needs, desires, and lifestyles of existing and future residents of all incomes and life stages.
2. Increase the amount, type, and availability of affordable and workforce housing options in the community.
3. Develop new neighborhoods that promote long-term fiscal sustainability in terms of utilities, infrastructure, and service provision.
4. Foster a sense of place within neighborhoods and create memorable places designed for people and interaction.

Objectives

1. Phase new residential development in a manner that is consistent with public utility and facility service capacity to create attractive and safe neighborhoods that are well-served by essential municipal services and facilities (sanitary sewer, municipal water, stormwater management facilities, police, fire, etc.).
2. Carefully plan new neighborhood development to provide a range of housing types, densities, and costs that promotes a high quality of life and healthy lifestyles for existing and future residents.
3. Support programs that assist in the rehabilitation and maintenance of the City's existing housing stock.
4. Promote infill and redevelopment practices to help diversify the community's housing supply.
5. Locate housing in areas that are served by full urban services, including sanitary sewers and public water, with convenient access to community facilities, employment centers, and multi-modal transportation infrastructure (see Chapter 7 for more information).
6. Work with housing advocates, regional entities, and developers to ensure land is available for the development or redevelopment of housing accessible to families experiencing low- to moderate- income.
7. Design neighborhoods that are oriented towards pedestrians and well-served by sidewalks, bicycle routes, and trails.



Policies

1. Design new neighborhoods in accordance with Traditional Neighborhood Design principles, as described later in this chapter. New neighborhoods should contain a wide mix of housing formats, costs, and tenancy in order to create well-balanced and varied neighborhoods with strong community ties. Each neighborhood should accommodate individuals and households of all sizes, ages, income levels, heritage, and lifestyles.
2. Plan and design new multi-family residential development to complement surrounding land uses and be an integral part of a cohesive neighborhood. Require high-quality design for all development.
3. Prevent monotonous “tract” housing by ensuring variations in architectural details and colors, preventing garages from dominating front or street side facades, and enforcing design standards recommended in this Plan.
4. Require Neighborhood Plans guided by the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design in advance of all new neighborhood development. Use detailed neighborhood development plans to tie the opening of new areas for development with continuity in infrastructure and the capacity of utilities and public facilities to accommodate such development.
5. Continue to require all residential developments to dedicate land, or pay a fee in lieu thereof, for public park, recreation, and open space acquisition and development.
6. Encourage initiatives that strengthen existing neighborhoods through maintenance of existing housing, creative reuse of vacant or underutilized buildings, infill development, mixing of uses, and maintenance and improvement of parks and right-of-way areas.
7. Encourage residential uses within the upper stories of buildings as part of infill, redevelopment, and new commercial/office development to increase the viability and vitality of the community.
8. Promote the use of water saving technology, renewable energy production, electric vehicle charging, onsite composting, and other sustainability best practices in existing and new neighborhoods.
9. Update the Zoning Ordinance to include small lot single-family development, a variety of multi-family densities by-right, and increased mixed-use options.
10. Implement the recommendations of the Altoona Housing Action Plan and update the plan by 2025.
11. Partner with regional entities to continuously evaluate regional housing needs, collaborate on programming efforts, and leverage alternative funding sources in order to meet unmet housing needs.
12. Provide training and educational sessions for local elected officials, committee members, municipal staff, and the public on local and regional housing data, evolving trends, and gaps and needs.
13. Utilize the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) provision to keep districts open an additional year at the end of their statutory life to create an Affordable Housing Fund, as enabled by state law.



STRATEGIES

Implement the Altoona Housing Action Plan

In 2018, the Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force was created to increase the collective understanding, identify constraints, investigate potential solutions, generate recommendations, and increase collaboration to address housing issues in the region. The City of Altoona played a role in the creation and coordination of the task force and the development of the 2019 Housing Report.

Based on the work of the Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force, the City established its own Housing Action Plan in 2019. This plan customized the recommendations of the Task Force to best fit the City of Altoona related to development regulations, policies, funding, partnerships, and civic opportunities. Each topic includes short, mid, intermediate, and long-range strategies for the City to addressing existing housing issues.

Key Implementation Strategies:

- Encourage housing choice and affordability that support overall community vitality through incorporating best practices in development regulations.
- Guide development decisions that expand housing affordability, quality, and choice through adapting public policies.
- Leverage resources to assist in the generation of affordable housing units and expansion of housing choice both directly and indirectly.
- Continue to expand regional collaboration around housing and related topics.
- Foster effective and sustainable civic engagement that achieves a healthy housing market that provides quality, affordable options.

It is recommended that Altoona continue to prioritize the strategies and action items of this plan through investment, regional collaboration, and policy revisions. The Housing Action Plan sets the stage for further work over the planning period. Monitoring progress and completing an update of the plan will be key components of successful implementation over the next decade and beyond.

Altoona's Plans in Action: Solis Circle

In 2019, the City purchased a former assisted living facility that had been vacant for several years, using funds generated from the successful McCann Drive Business Park Tax Incremental Financing District (TID 2), and converted the building into an affordable 25-unit apartment complex. Rents start at \$390 (including utilities) for efficiency, one, and two-bedroom units.

This project, called Solis Circle, was completed without the need for tax credits, federally subsidized rents, or formal screening criteria. The size of the building either did not qualify for these programs, or the fixed costs were not feasible to overcome. Instead, it leveraged the help of donors, sponsors, and advocacy groups.

This successful project is an example of how Altoona has taken a leadership role in addressing housing issues in the community and region using creative, unique, and non-traditional models. Building on this and other housing initiatives, the City can continue to implement the ambitious strategies outlined in its Housing Action Plan.



Promote Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles

In all future neighborhoods, the City intends to promote Traditional Neighborhood Design. The implementation of Traditional Neighborhood Design aims to:

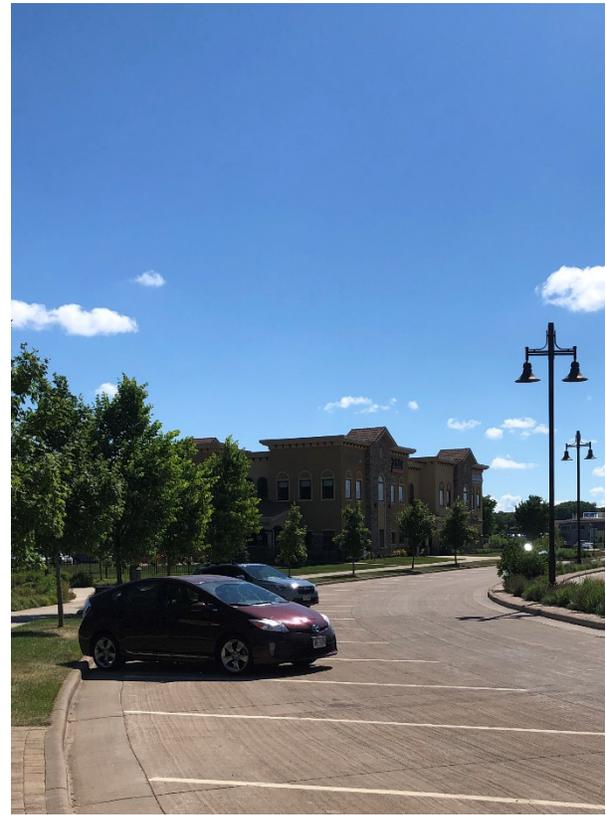
- Integrate a diversity of high-quality housing types to accommodate a variety of lifestyles, age groups, and financial capability.
- Ensure the long-term preservation of community character and high quality of life.
- Provide housing, parks, and schools with direct and efficient connections and within walking distance of shops, services, and jobs.
- Blend multi-modal transportation options into neighborhood design.
- Preserve environmental systems that define, sustain, and connect neighborhoods and communities.
- Reduce demand for fiscal resources needed for transportation, public infrastructure, services, and housing.

In the design and approval of new neighborhoods (subdivisions), the City and developers should ensure the adherence to the following Traditional Neighborhood Design principles:

- Establish Community Gathering Places: Design neighborhoods around community gathering places such as parks, public squares, outdoor dining establishments, schools, churches, and other community facilities.
- Provide Housing Variety: Ensure that a variety of housing types are included and arranged in a compact and interconnected form. Particular attention should be paid to the scale of buildings, walking distances, direct and efficient connections to amenities, and the design of other neighborhood features such as streetlights and signage.
- Advance Equity and Inclusion: Through creation of neighborhoods with a variety of housing formats, sizes, and price points, people from a diversity of age, family size, and wealth can live in proximity to improve social cohesion. Multi-family and renter-oriented housing formats are integrated into diverse neighborhoods rather than marginalized. Diverse neighborhoods are shown to improve community resilience and equity through shared investment, familiarity, and access to opportunity.
- Blend Land Uses: Integrate well-designed and cohesively incorporated commercial and office uses and other community facilities in appropriate locations, generally along busier streets and intersections to draw on a broader market.
- Promote Walkability: Design the neighborhood to facilitate pedestrian movement and enhance mobility within the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and other nearby destinations, such as parks, schools, and business and job districts. Provide sidewalks or paths along all streets, and multi-use trails in the environmental corridor and park network. Require street trees to be planted along all new streets with native species selected for canopy and climate resilience.
- Promote Connectivity: Interconnect streets, trails, drainageways, parkways, and similar facilities both within the neighborhood and to existing and future adjoining neighborhoods and development areas. Prohibit cul-de-sacs and dead ends, except in places where environmental features or topography requires them. The City should be a cohesive and contiguous grid of streets where each neighborhood completely and seamlessly connects to those around it.



- **Calm Traffic:** Design and manage neighborhoods as collections of places where people live, rather than areas to move through. Integrate design elements that slow vehicle movements to improve safety and livability, with features selected for the context. These may include accommodating on-street parking and permitting narrower streets to calm traffic and increase pedestrian safety, traffic circles, medians, and curb extensions. Integrate well landscaped medians and boulevards into neighborhood entryways and collector streets, using the City’s mature neighborhoods as a model. These new boulevards may also serve stormwater management functions. See Chapter 7 for more details.
- **Create Attractive and Active Streetscapes:** Incorporate site and building design strategies such as decreased setbacks, front porches, balconies, and other interesting architectural features that help create a safe, pleasant walking environment. Set back garages from the main body of the house wherever possible and incorporate alley-loaded garage options where practical. Locate vehicle access to prioritize pedestrian safety.
- **Highlight Natural Areas:** Integrate environmental features into the neighborhood as common open spaces for active or passive recreation, public gathering spots, or flood protection and stormwater management. Provide adequate vegetated buffers between development and natural features. Locate, design, and maintain storm water features as neighborhood assets.
- **Incorporate Public Health and Sustainability:** Use sustainability and public health as lenses in which all new neighborhoods are designed. This can be done through the thoughtful integration of sustainability best practices such as onsite stormwater management, renewable energy production, waste reduction, and energy efficient fixtures and building materials. Additionally, both the short-term and long-term public health impacts should be carefully considered through multi-modal transportation opportunities, mixing of compatible land uses, and prevention of isolated, standalone neighborhoods that are not fully integrated into the larger community.



Traditional Neighborhood Design Principles are intended to be inclusive of other similar terms and concepts that typically include and describe similar outcomes, such as creating well-designed “complete” neighborhoods where there are a diversity of housing types and cost, with a well-connected mobility system that focuses on ease of walking and bicycling, and that integrate public amenities such as schools and parks, employment, and services. Related concepts include “15-Minute City”, “complete city”, and “urban village”.

Implementing the design recommendations above will require Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance amendments or rewrites, coordination and collaboration with developers and landowners, and the development of detailed neighborhood plans for all new neighborhoods.



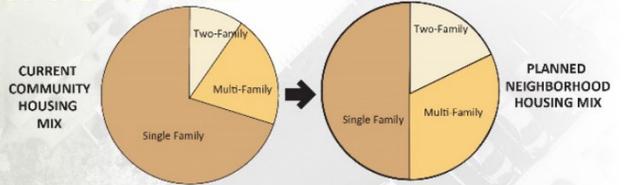
PLANNED NEIGHBORHOODS

Planned Neighborhoods provide attractive places to live, play and take care of day-to-day service needs.

Planned Neighborhoods support predominately single-family housing mixed with two-family homes, multi-family housing, institutional uses, parks, and neighborhood office and retail uses.

Characteristics of Planned Neighborhoods include:

- Mix of housing types and densities
- Mix of lot sizes: small lot (6,000 sf), mid-size (8,000 sf), and large lot (10,000 sf)
- Diverse ages & incomes
- Homes within a comfortable walk of parks and services
- Opportunity to center around plazas, parks, public spaces
- Streets connected internally and to larger community
- Neighborhood-wide multi-use path system with interconnected sidewalks, bike lanes, and routes
- Natural areas protected and made central to development
- Integration of neighborhood focal points such as schools, churches or shopping



A Single Family Homes



B Townhomes



C Two-Family



D Multi-Family – Apartments & Condos



E Neighborhood Mixed-Use



VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Figure 5.1. Planning Neighborhoods



TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD

Traditional Neighborhood design aims to enhance quality of life and community character through integrated multi-modal transportation options, diverse housing types, parks, schools, services, and jobs within walking distance of one another, preserving environmental systems, and reducing long-term demand for fiscal resources.

This can be accomplished by implementing the following guiding:

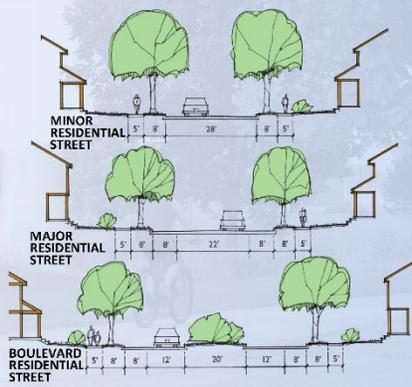
- Establishing community gathering places
- Providing housing variety
- Advancing equity and inclusion
- Blending land uses
- Promoting walkability
- Promoting connectivity
- Calming traffic
- Creating attractive and active streetscapes
- Highlighting natural areas
- Incorporating public health and sustainability



Streetscape



Single Family Parcel



Street Cross-Sections



Multi-Family Parcel

VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Figure 5.2. Traditional Neighborhoods

High-Quality Design Standards

To pursue the goals and objectives described in this Plan, design standards are recommended for all development. These standards may be achieved through Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance changes, the adoption of manuals such as the River Prairie Design Guidelines and Standards, or a combination of both. These design standards must complement, be integrated with, and align with Traditional Neighborhood Development Principles resulting in a coherent and complete approach to creating and curating highly functional, livable, sustainable, and attractive neighborhoods and places.

Multi-family housing is an important component of the community to provide a diversity of housing options, for both owner-occupied and renter-occupied situations. These formats are often chosen by senior citizens, younger residents, employees for local businesses, and individuals and families seeking this lifestyle option. Such housing can also be part of an overall economic development strategy. The design and scale of these formats should fit within the fabric of the community and surrounding neighborhoods. The City intends to review proposals for multi-family residential developments against the guidelines listed below.

- Incorporate architectural design and building scale that relates to the context of the surrounding neighborhood and community character. Encourage diverse building layouts (individual unit walk-ups and interior hallway design), high-quality exterior materials, architectural features, and varying densities and formats.

- Use brick and other natural materials on building facades. Avoid monotonous facades and box-like buildings. Incorporate balconies, porches, garden walls, varied building and facade setbacks, varied roof designs, and bay windows.
- Orient buildings to the street with modest front yard setbacks, bringing street-oriented entries close to public sidewalks to increase pedestrian activity. Include private sidewalk connections.
- Locate parking, dumpsters, and other unattractive uses behind buildings.
- For parking lots and garages:
 - Locate garage doors and parking lots so they are not the dominant visual element.
 - Screen parking areas from public view.
 - Break up large parking lots with landscaped islands and similar features.
 - Provide direct links to building entrances by pedestrian walkways physically separated from vehicular movement areas.
 - Large parking garages are undesirable, but where necessary, break up facades with foundation landscaping, varied facade setbacks, and recessed garage doors.
 - Utilize alleys and side-accessed garages wherever possible.
- Provide generous landscaping along:
 - All public and private street frontages and around all building foundations.
 - The perimeter of all paved areas and in islands within larger parking lots.
 - Yards separating land uses which differ significantly in intensity or character.
 - Around all outdoor storage areas such as trash receptacles and recycling bins (also include screening walls in these areas) and around all utility structures or mechanical structures visible from public streets or less intensive land uses.
- Provide onsite recreational and open space areas to serve the needs of residents. Whenever possible, develop contiguous rear yards as a unit to encourage use by building residents and guests.



Provide a Wider Mix of Housing Types, Sizes, and Costs Throughout the City

An overarching goal of this plan is to provide a greater variety of housing format and building quality housing for families in all life stages and income levels. Housing formats can include duplexes, townhomes, apartments, condos, single family residences, and more. Introducing a variety of building types – such as rowhouses, 2-, 3-, and 4-unit buildings, tiny homes, bungalow courts, courtyard apartment buildings, accessory dwelling units, live-work buildings, and multifamily dwellings above shops – greatly increases the housing options within a neighborhood. This approach supports the City’s vision and overarching goals in several ways. First, inclusion of a broad range of housing types and price levels within neighborhoods also fosters daily interaction among people of diverse ages, races, and incomes, thereby building a sense of community across various social groups and fostering more equitable access to employment and amenities. Diversifying housing options can give everyone more choices about where to live. It helps residents find appropriate housing within Altoona as their housing needs change, it increases diversity of residents and families who are attracted to Altoona, and it provides housing choices that are affordable to current and future residents. Finally, providing a mix of housing types is an essential component of mixed use neighborhoods and compact growth, other key goals of this Plan.

Site and neighborhood design is critical to ensure that these housing types interact well within neighborhoods with varied housing formats and scale. Most people interact with the urban environment based on what buildings look like and how large they appear. Dwelling unit density alone can be very misleading: two buildings of a similar size could have very different densities based on the lot area, dwelling unit size, or bedroom count of the building. Two buildings may be the same density or size and be received differently due to design characteristics such as porches, windows, materials, stepbacks, and other visual interest. Regardless of its residential density, a new building should fit well within the fabric of nearby buildings. Height, form, placement of entrances, location of parking, and the distance between buildings of different scales often best prescribe how new development will fit into the surrounding context. As described in the previous strategy, replacement of residential density measures in plans and ordinances with form-based standards such as building height, mass, and site arrangement could lead to more predictable outcomes for new development and in integrating within existing neighborhoods. Form-based standards place the focus of development regulation on the characteristics most directly related to achieving community goals and controlling aspects that may create concern or nuisances.

Life Cycle Housing. Although Altoona is growing with new residents, Wisconsin’s population is aging, with persons over 65 comprising the fastest growing segment. Housing must be provided to accommodate all stages of life and all abilities. Integrating life-cycle and accessible housing options within neighborhoods allows residents to upsize or downsize along with life milestones and changing situations without leaving the established social network of a neighborhood. The inclusion of more accessible housing across Altoona supports not only the residents themselves, but also visitors who may benefit from accessible features. This can include both accessible new construction, which already occurs, and retrofitting existing buildings. Older adults can stay in the neighborhoods of their choice if housing more appropriate to their changing needs is available throughout the city, especially in amenity-rich areas with good walkability and proximity to healthcare, basic needs, and programing and resources for seniors.

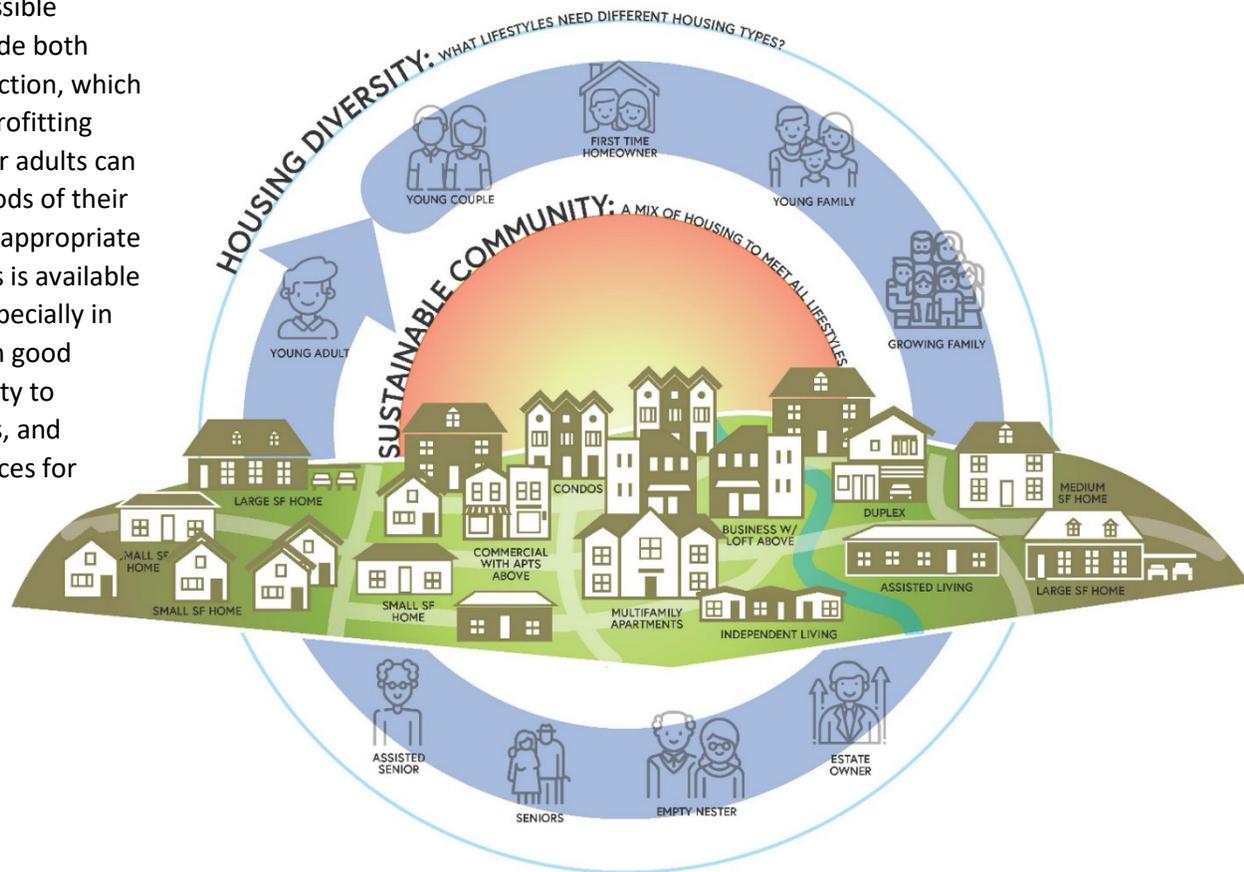


Figure 5.3. Housing Life Cycle

Affordable Options. Affordable housing was a consistently identified priority throughout the public engagement process, highlighting issues related to homelessness, housing cost burden, housing families experiencing low-income, housing attainable for older adults, and workforce housing close to employment. Affordable housing must go beyond simply options that are financially attainable. It must be clean, safe, well-designed, and fit the needs of the household. All housing, regardless of price, should meet standards of quality and provide a safe, healthy environment for those living there. True affordability must also consider proximity: lower-cost housing far from jobs and services may actually cost a household more than higher-cost housing that is close to jobs and transit due to transportation costs, and access to services, schools, parks, and other amenities that impact health and other quality of life outcomes.

Affordable housing should be distributed throughout the city and within areas that have access to transit, public services, and amenities for daily living. Integrating affordable housing into neighborhoods makes it more likely that the housing and residents contribute to a stable neighborhood and may result in better outcomes for residents, whereas concentrations of low-income housing tend to isolate residents and result in greater demands for services. New lower cost and subsidized housing should be located in areas that already have a high level of resources and amenities available at a range of income levels. Correspondingly, resources and amenities must also be equitably located throughout Altoona.

Ownership and Occupancy Types. Physical building type is only one aspect of housing variety. Different occupancy and ownership structures, including fee simple ownership, renting, owner-occupied two- and three- unit rentals, condominiums, co-housing, and housing cooperatives, are ways to provide residents with choices. While certain building formats lend to particular ownership and occupancy types, and this dynamic should not be overlooked, formats such as single-family detached homes that are often associated with ownership are also frequently renter occupied.

Throughout the planning process, some community members expressed concern about the increase in the development of housing types that are intended for rental. This is a common anxiety shared by residents who are may be skeptical of community change and recognize how our economic system is currently arranged such that home ownership is the primary method that families accumulate wealth and stability. The dramatic rise in rental housing types is the result of a confluence of factors experienced by most growing communities due to a generation of stagnant wages and rapidly rising housing costs. However, there are housing types that enable ownership while also creating scale that can improve affordability. If well-designed, these scaling opportunities also contribute to other community goals such as Traditional Neighborhood Design, walkability, and others.

These housing types include many of those formats as noted above, such as twin-homes, two-flats, townhouses, and small-lot single family. Unfortunately, these types are called “missing middle” because regions like Altoona and the Chippewa Valley have had very few of these housing formats constructed over the past several generations, although these types were common prior to mid-century suburban development trends and associated development regulations.



What is Missing Middle Housing?

“Missing middle housing” is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types scaled between single-family detached houses and larger apartment buildings. Missing middle housing is compatible in scale with most single-family residential areas, and can help meet the growing demand for urban living. Missing middle housing types contribute to a walkable neighborhood, require simpler construction types than larger buildings, and contribute to higher residential densities than single-family homes.

Despite the higher density, they have lower perceived density than other building types because the units are small and well designed. Housing types that should be considered as part of the missing middle include:

- Tiny homes
- Traditional small-lot single-family detached homes
- Side-by-side duplexes (two-family twin)
- Two-flat (over-under two-unit)
- Three-flat (three stacked units)
- Four-flat (2-up, 2-down)
- Townhouse / Rowhouse (single-family attached)
- Live-Work buildings (similar to rowhouses, but with small ground floor commercial spaces used by residents in the building)
- Accessory dwelling units
- Small apartment buildings

Source: *Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis*. Daniel Parolek.



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Chapter 6

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



CHAPTER 6: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the City has successfully diversified the community's tax base and increased the number of employment opportunities through new commercial, office, medical, mixed-use, and industrial development. Much of this growth has occurred in the development of River Prairie, due in part to its distinct locational and market advantages such as highway and river access, matched with a thoughtful mixed-use plan focusing on public space and applying design best practices.

Altoona's approach to economic development has primarily been to focus on creating a desirable place to live by providing excellent quality of life amenities, including parks, trails, library, and recreation programming, quality infrastructure, coordination with the Altoona School District and other community organizations, cooperation throughout the region, and to be accessible and nimble in responding to the business community. Active economic development programs undertaken by the City have focused on development and redevelopment of property, active facilitation of arts and culture programming, and leadership in regional efforts by Visit Eau Claire and Eau Claire Economic Development. Given larger market trends, including tremendous regionally growth, rising construction costs, and an increasingly mobile and competitive workforce, a key component of the City's economic viability will be its ability to facilitate diverse, afford, and quality housing opportunities in walkable neighborhoods.

Additionally, the City must also cultivate other economic development opportunities like the redevelopment of key sites, revitalization of built-out corridors, and providing mixed-use development opportunities within its growth areas. This chapter is intended to provide the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations that aim to promote the retention, stabilization, and expansion of the City's economic base. See Appendix A for an assessment of the City's economic base, strengths and weaknesses, and an inventory of environmentally contaminated sites within Altoona.



STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Develop and implement a Downtown Revitalization Plan and pursue the redevelopment of underutilized properties along key community corridors.
- Build on Altoona's arts and culture to grow the creative economy and spark new economic development.
- Focus on economic opportunities that are aligned with the community's environmental stewardship and social equity values. Pursue opportunities to facilitate new business investment in sustainable/green technologies and services, as well as opportunities for existing businesses to integrate environmentally and socially preferable practices, such as renewable energy, efficiency, high-performance construction, and mobility choices.
- Attract and retain diverse new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Assist in preparing the local workforce to be prepared for and adapt to economic changes.
- Utilize TIF and grants to foster the implementation of this Plan and drive future redevelopment, new development, and reinvestment throughout the community.
- Collaborate with regional and state economic agencies on growth initiatives.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

The City of Altoona has many existing assets it can leverage to foster new economic development, grow and diversify its tax base, and provide new employment opportunities for area residents aligned with the community’s environmental and social values. The graphic on the following page illustrates Altoona’s existing destinations, employment centers, redevelopment and new development opportunities, and regional location components.

City and Regional Economic Data Trends in 2020

	Altoona	Chippewa Valley Region
Top Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation and Material Moving • Office and Administration • Healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office and Administration • Sales • Transportation and Material Moving • Production • Food Production and Services
Fastest-Growing Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation and Material Moving • Finance • Construction • Healthcare • Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Finance • Transportation and Material Moving • Healthcare • Construction
Largest Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare • Transportation and Warehousing • Government • Professional and Technical Services • Finance and Insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare • Government • Manufacturing • Retail

Source: EMSI, 2021

Other Key Economic Data and Assets:

- Only 8% of the employed people who live in Altoona also work in the City; conversely, 49% of the employed people who live in Eau Claire County also work in Eau Claire County (2019).
- City of Altoona residents have a median 21-minute commute, which reflects the fact that many residents work somewhere else in the greater Chippewa Valley Region (2019).
- Of Altoona residents over the age of 25 years old, 90% have a high school diploma and 30% have a bachelor’s degree or higher (2019).
- While regional job growth has only increased by 0.7% between 2015 and 2020, the number of private sector jobs in Altoona has increased substantially with the completion of Woodman’s, Prevea Health, Staybridge Suites, expansion at Curt Manufacturing, and other development in River Prairie. Additionally, coupled with local population growth, the School District has also increased the number of public sector jobs in the City.
- Altoona School District enrollment increased by 18% over the past decade.
- Most businesses in Altoona are small (80%), with 19 or fewer employees. Within the region, there is a similar rate, with 83% of businesses having 19 or fewer employees (2020).
- The largest employers in Altoona include medical, communications, wholesalers, information, and finance businesses (2020).
- Employment projections developed by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for Eau Claire, Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix Counties combined between 2018 and 2028 indicate the projected fastest growing occupations include construction (18%), leisure and hospitality (9%), education and health services (8%), and professional and business services (7%).
- Altoona’s median household income was \$55,571 in 2019, and the median household income in Eau Claire County was \$59,476. Both have increased by nearly 30% over the past decade.

- The region is home to several employment concentrations including manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, medical service providers, and higher education institutions.
- There are several regional assets that help drive tourism and play a part in the area’s high quality of life, including:
 - Parks and trails (state, county, and local),
 - Music and culture (Pablo Center, UW-Eau Claire, many venues and festivals),
 - Water recreation (Altoona Lake, Eau Claire River, Chippewa River, etc.),
 - Higher education (UW-Eau Claire, Chippewa Valley Technical College, etc.), and
 - Historic and vibrant downtown destinations in the City of Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls.
- A few of Altoona’s highest-projected retail demand sectors over the next five years include apparel, vehicles, electronics, entertainment (restaurants, bars, recreation, etc.), and services (financial, health, insurance, etc.). While some of these sectors may already be served by the greater region or by new development in the City, future opportunities in these areas may present themselves as Altoona continues to grow.

Source: EMSI, 2021, U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, 2021.

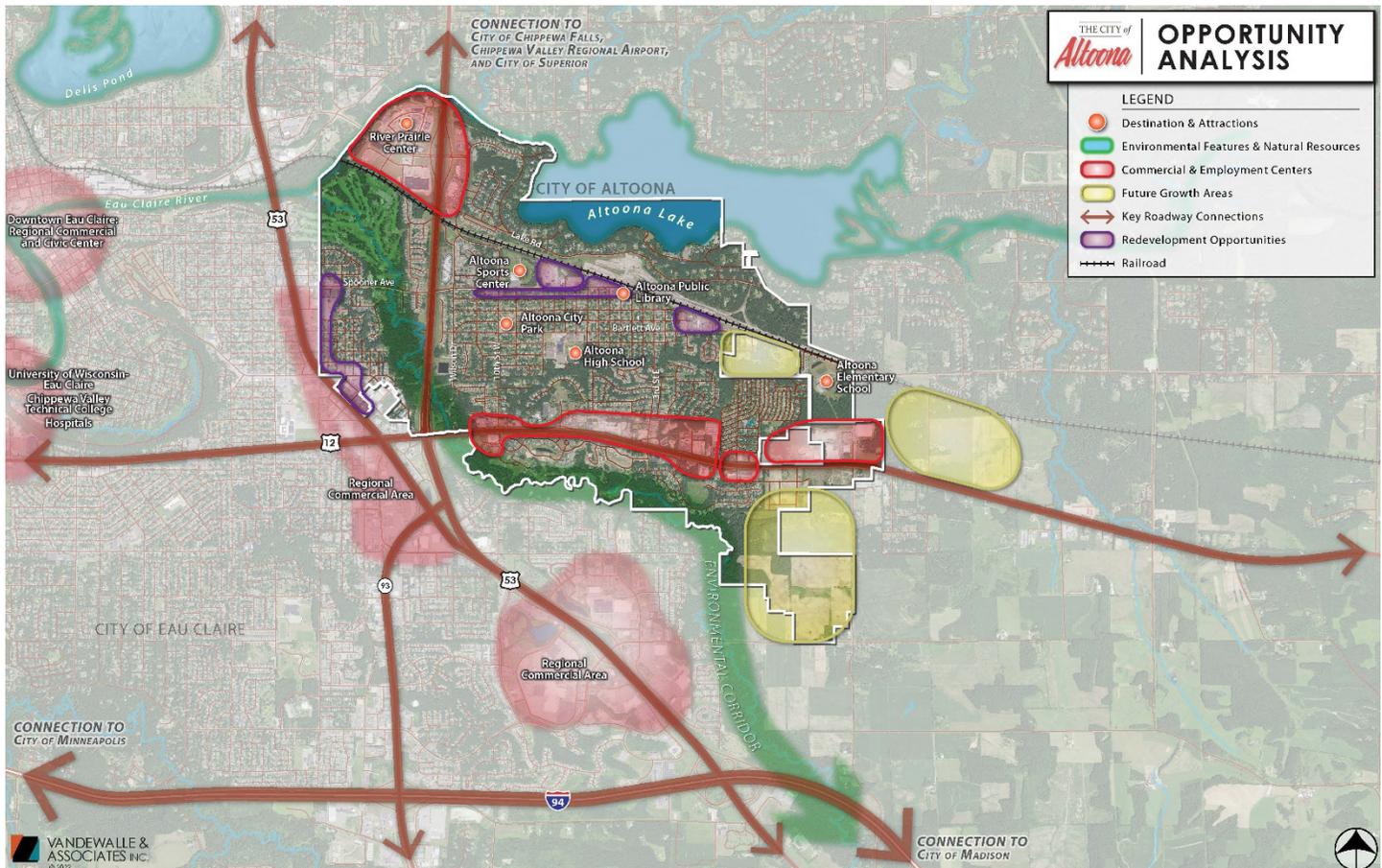


Figure 6.1. Opportunity Analysis

Economic Opportunity Analysis Takeaways

Altoona's economy is highly interconnected with the City Eau Claire and the greater Chippewa Valley region.

One of Altoona's greatest assets is its access to the region via key transportation corridors, which in turn provides City residents with the ability to work throughout the region.

With key investments and new development occurring over the past decade, the City's employment base has grown and diversified.

Within River Prairie and along the USH 12 corridor, a few large-scale employers have developed. However, most of Altoona's businesses remain small (fewer than 19 employees).

The community has great assets (lake, river, creek, parks, schools, recreational facilities) that are generally well distributed throughout the City. These assets provide residents with the opportunity for a high quality of life, attract tourists and visitors, and have been successfully leveraged to spark economic development and investment in the community over the past decade. There is an opportunity to replicate this in the future within key growth areas.

The City has both redevelopment (Downtown, Spooner Avenue, and Hastings Way) and new development (Mayer Road, STH 12, and 9 Mile Creek Road) opportunities that provide the ability to grow the community's tax base and increase local employers.

There are several existing large regional concentrations of retail and employment within the greater Chippewa Valley and developing between the City of Eau Claire and Minneapolis. This presents an opportunity for Altoona to continue to focus on attraction of small-scale manufacturing and community-focused retail and office that compliment those regional concentrations without being in direct competition with them.

ALTOONA'S DESIRED ECONOMIC FOCUS

Expanding on the local goals, objectives, and policies stated below, Altoona strives to offer affordability, high quality of life, and local employment and shopping opportunities. The City's desired economic focus moving forward is centered on:

- Increasing the quality of life for residents and attracting new residents by building on Altoona's locational, recreational, educational, cultural, and tourism assets.
- Promoting high-quality, compact, mixed-use, and enduring economic development projects in recognition of the limited supply of marketable lands for these purposes in the community.
- Prioritizing infill and redevelopment opportunities in areas where existing utilities and infrastructure are available.
- Facilitating new commercial, mixed-use, and employment opportunities in urban expansion areas to the south and to the east along USH 12.
- Fostering entrepreneurship and small business expansion that complement the community's existing businesses and character to avoid duplication of large-scale commercial and industrial development that is offered in other existing regional concentrations.
- Focusing on "triple bottom line" opportunities for economic development that aligns with environmental and social priorities.
- Improving racial and economic equity through removing barriers, integrating equitable development best practices, and focused coordination with corresponding agencies and advocacy organizations.
- Collaborating with local institutions to adapt and educate the local workforce to be prepared for new roles in manufacturing, technology, information, trades, and medical occupations.
- Increasing local artist spaces and showcasing their work at local events and through new public art features throughout the community.
- Increasing connections and involvement of diverse groups in local initiatives, events, and leadership roles.
- Revitalizing downtown to become a new community focal point and destination, in addition to growing opportunities for residents to both to live and work in the downtown.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Grow the local economy through high-quality, compact, sustainable, and mixed-use development.
2. Attract and retain local businesses, entrepreneurs, and skilled workforce.
3. Strengthen and diversify the City's non-residential tax base to serve the day-to-day needs of residents and grow local employment opportunities.

Objectives

1. Focus economic development efforts on infill and redevelopment opportunities in areas where existing utilities and infrastructure are available, particularly along key corridors and downtown.
2. Discourage unplanned, incremental strip commercial development along major community corridors such as USH 12.
3. Promote high-quality design for new development throughout the City.
4. Take the lead on revitalizing and reinvigorating downtown through redevelopment projects that foster an increased sense of community and establish new destinations in the area.

Policies

1. Implement the Future Land Use Map to provide sufficient areas for future commercial and industrial growth over the planning period.
2. Prohibit premature or rural development in areas that can't be efficiently served by infrastructure; reserve these areas for future urban commercial and industrial growth.
3. Support mixed-use and higher density development projects that integrate non-residential and residential uses into high-quality, unified places.
4. Require access plans as new development occurs along key corridors to maximize shared parking and driveways, improve traffic flow, provide and prioritize multi-modal transportation, and protect public safety.
5. Continue the strategic use of Tax Incremental Financing to promote infill and redevelopment, the expansion of existing businesses, new business development, and pursuit of environmental and social objectives.
6. Leverage regional collaboration and public-private partnerships to help promote investment, redevelopment, equitable development, and revitalization throughout the community.
7. Develop a Downtown Revitalization Plan, corridor plans, or small area plans for key investment and redevelopment areas in the City.
8. Identify opportunities for property acquisition where the City can utilize infill and redevelopment projects to advance its economic development, land use, housing, growth management, and related priorities.
9. Foster workforce development programs in partnership with local institutions such as the School District, Chippewa Valley Technical College, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, and others to focus on educating the current and future labor force to be prepared for and adaptable to future technological skills required.
10. Accentuate the city and region's outdoor recreation assets for quality of life and workforce attraction.
11. Seek opportunities to leverage the region's agricultural assets for agritourism, small business, restaurants and culture, and supply chain investments within and nearby Altoona.



12. Continue to frame the imperative on proactively creating diverse, affordable, and quality housing opportunities in walkable, healthy neighborhoods as an economic asset for workforce attraction and retention.
13. Address barriers in mobility and proximity by coordinating transit services with housing and economic opportunities to improve workforce availability to employment and services.
14. Seek opportunities to assist business start-up and expansion businesses owned by populations historically underrepresented, including women and persons of color to reduce disparities and improve economic equity.
15. Develop City standards for use of sustainability best practices in new economic development projects related to stormwater, energy efficiency, renewable energy production, transportation, and waste reduction.
16. Prioritize the incorporation of public art, community gathering spaces, landscaping, and high-quality signage downtown and along other key community corridors to foster a sense of place.
17. Leverage federal and state grants and COVID-19 response stimulus money for key economic and infrastructure projects. Use regional partnerships and collaboration to assist in this effort.
18. Continue to foster local entrepreneurs and promote the community as a regional destination for entrepreneurs and start-ups.
19. Partner with the regional stakeholders and local art-focused groups to increase artist spaces, education, events, and integration of art in public spaces.

STRATEGIES

Foster Revitalization and Redevelopment In Strategic Locations

This Plan recommends the revitalization and redevelopment of underutilized properties and areas to improve the tax base, foster diverse employment and housing opportunities, enhance community appearance, and boost sustainability efforts. Revitalization efforts should be considered where there is an opportunity to redevelop lands to a greater intensity and to provide a broader mix of uses that takes advantage of locational amenities, location efficiency, and access. Redevelopment is inherently more environmentally sustainable and fiscally responsible, as it utilizes existing utilities, infrastructure, and services.

In Altoona, there are several areas with significant redevelopment potential including downtown and along Spooner Avenue, Hastings Way/Fairfax Street corridor, and the USH 12 corridor. This recommendation focused on the methods and strategies that can be leveraged to plan for and begin fostering redevelopment in these areas. For specific land use recommendations and desired community character components see the Smart Growth Section within Chapter 4.

Overall, revitalization typically does not occur by itself. Instead, careful planning, site assessment, public-private partnerships, property acquisition, redevelopment incentives, and persistence over many years is required. The process often begins with conducting a detailed planning process to develop specific implementation action items. Typical components of a Revitalization or Redevelopment Plan include:

- A public participation process that involves stakeholders, property and business owners, and the public through small group meetings, workshops, surveys, and other interactive participation formats.
- Establishment of a future vision for the site, area, or corridor that guides what it looks and feels like, its role in the community, and amenities desired.



- Evaluating the planning area’s condition including size, visibility, viewsheds, access, building quality, existing use viability, adjacent land uses, topographic or environmental constraints, brownfield site assessment, and existing infrastructure and amenities.
- Conducting a regional and local economic opportunities analysis to focus on the City’s location, amenities, and business mix, as well as the assessment of the regional factors such as economics, transportation patterns, and intergovernmental relationships. These economic opportunities are further described in the Economic Opportunity Analysis section above.
 - This analysis should include possible assets and potential opportunities for development, redevelopment, revitalization, and economic development—looking not only at the boundaries of the area, but also linking it to the greater fabric and context of the area’s surroundings.
- Identifying goals and objectives for the area through cooperative efforts with residents, property owners and other key stakeholders. This step also typically identifies and prioritizes redevelopment sites within the planning area.
- Conducting a market assessment for key sites to determine the role of the site within the marketplace, provide demographic trade area information to assist in the solicitation of potential developers or site users, and identify the range of specific issues and challenges to site redevelopment.
- Identification of constraints to future revitalization in the area and methods for addressing and overcoming those hurdles moving forward.
- Preparing a redevelopment strategy and district concept plan map that identifies the highest and best land uses, site characteristics, design approaches, and implementation strategies for the planning area, with particular attention to priority sites.
- Research and documenting of potential funding sources for revitalization projects at the local, county, regional, state, and federal levels, in addition to the private sector, community organizations, and regional groups.
- Aggressively pursuing implementation through techniques such as adoption of a statutory redevelopment plan; establishment of a redevelopment tax increment financing district; possible brownfield remediation; possible site acquisition, consolidation, and demolition; and developer recruitment.

The City’s goals include utilizing this approach downtown and along Spooner Avenue, Hastings Way/Fairfax Street, and the USH 12 corridor to determine the specific action steps needed spark catalytic change in the area. The City has utilized a similar approach in the past through the planning and development of River Prairie. Using the steps listed above and the experience of the City in developing River Prairie, Altoona can realize the potential of new activity, investment, and amenities in these areas.

Strategic property acquisition. Another way the City can proactively implement the goals and objectives of this Plan is through direct property acquisition. Altoona has been active and successful in acquiring property for development, most notably River Prairie. Aside from the unique circumstances and characteristics of that once-in-a-generation enterprise, the city also acquired 1.6 acres from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation that is now 53 dwellings, identified 4 acres of surplus property that has been sold and entitled for 24 for-sale townhouses, and acquired two blighted properties comprising about 0.5 acres in the downtown and it is currently completing environmental testing and site preparation.



Additionally, the city purchased 83 acres of property outside of the city along Nine Mile Creek Road and US Highway 12 to control the land use and timing of development. The City has worked with nearby property owners to create the East Neighborhood Concept Plan to envision land uses in the area and has budgeted for extending sewer and water utilities in 2022. For more details on the East Neighborhood Plan, see the Land Use and Community Character Chapter.

Further, the city owns about 4 acres of developable property adjacent to the closed Windsor Forest Landfill (which is also under city ownership), and worked with a UW-Madison student to complete a concept plan for the area envisioning a “pocket neighborhood” of diverse housing types and parkland on and around the landfill. The City is currently working on potential public-private partnerships to further plan and develop the property.

In terms of future opportunities, the city should also continue to actively scan for and consider property acquisition as a core practice in guiding the development of the city and pursuit of the goals in this Plan. Benefits and intended outcomes of this approach may include:

- Instigate and catalyze development activities in priority areas, such as Downtown, Spooner Avenue, and Hastings/Fairfax corridors.
- Allow the city to control land uses to instigate higher intensity development, and development with specific desired characteristics such as sustainability and affordability.
- Facilitate development of housing types and mixed-use buildings that are not present or uncommon in the market.
- Prepare for public-private partnerships.
- Address known, potential, or perceived barriers to development, such as obsolete buildings or brownfield conditions.
- Reduce developer risk by creating sites prepared for development.
- Depending upon the condition of the property and intended use, grant and state program funds may be available to offset certain costs.

Layer tools and incentives. The City has a variety of tools and incentives to facilitate development. As the City completed with River Prairie and is now pursuing in the Windsor Forest Neighborhood and future East Neighborhood, the City can combine land acquisition with creating a detailed plan, remove development barriers, and create opportunities and partnerships for development that exceed what is likely to otherwise occur. By layering tools and incentive programs in one specific area, the City was able to attract high quality development projects that are consistent with this Plan.

Altoona has an unusually strong position for a small city in property acquisition and development, due to its success and experience in River Prairie and other examples noted above. This has resulted in high-performing TIF districts where resources may be leveraged for acquisition in the short term, the planned created of an Affordable Housing Fund when districts close, and use of land acquisition and redevelopment reserve funds to recycle resources in an ongoing strategy. Due to the current success in the City’s TIDs, no new district can be created until existing districts are closed, but the City can plan ahead for how future districts may be designed and prepare years-ahead for land acquisition and infrastructure investments.



Develop and Utilize an Equitable Development Framework

Practices of city development, including housing, transportation, and economic programs, have resulted in historic wealth and health disparities between people of different heritage and social status. While only a few of the myriad of factors contributing to inequities in our society are strongly within the ability of local governments to eliminate or correct, Altoona is committed to pursuing city development, and economic opportunities specifically, with a lens directly focused on addressing these challenges to create a community where the benefits of society are broadly and equitably shared.

This strategy, perhaps more than any other in this Chapter, will require the City to coordinate and partner with other organizations and levels of government to identify barriers and direct resources to intentionally and deliberately pursue more equitable outcomes in how development and business activity occurs and how the costs and benefits of these choices managed. The City recognizes that the conditions and opportunities to realize the benefits from economic growth vary across the City geographically, due to proximity and access to opportunities and amenities, as well as vary by the resources available to people to recognize and utilize opportunities. Throughout this Plan, the City recognizes that a place-based approach must be matched with a people-approach to create a high quality of life that is accessible and attainable for all residents. The goals and policies in this Plan reflect the City's core values of pursuing and achieving equity not only of opportunity, but of outcomes.

Equitable development strategies that show evidence of success include small business expansion, accessible jobs and skills development, strengthening family financial health, and fostering quality neighborhoods. These strategies target resources to those with the greatest need and collectively address the interacting barriers to opportunities that often occur in disadvantaged communities. Understanding these conditions, removing or overcoming barriers, and aligning resources will require diligent and committed work by the City with its partnering organizations in the region. When implemented, the strategies would be designed to remove barriers and facilitate access to opportunities, such as pursuing and investing in industries and businesses that provide entry-level living-wage jobs, providing support in matching workforce development programs with employers, and prioritizing transit improvement to connect mobility-limited populations with centers of employment and services.

Equality vs. Equity

Equality means each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and allocates resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. While the terms equity and equality may sound similar, the implementation of one versus the other can lead to dramatically different outcomes for marginalized people.

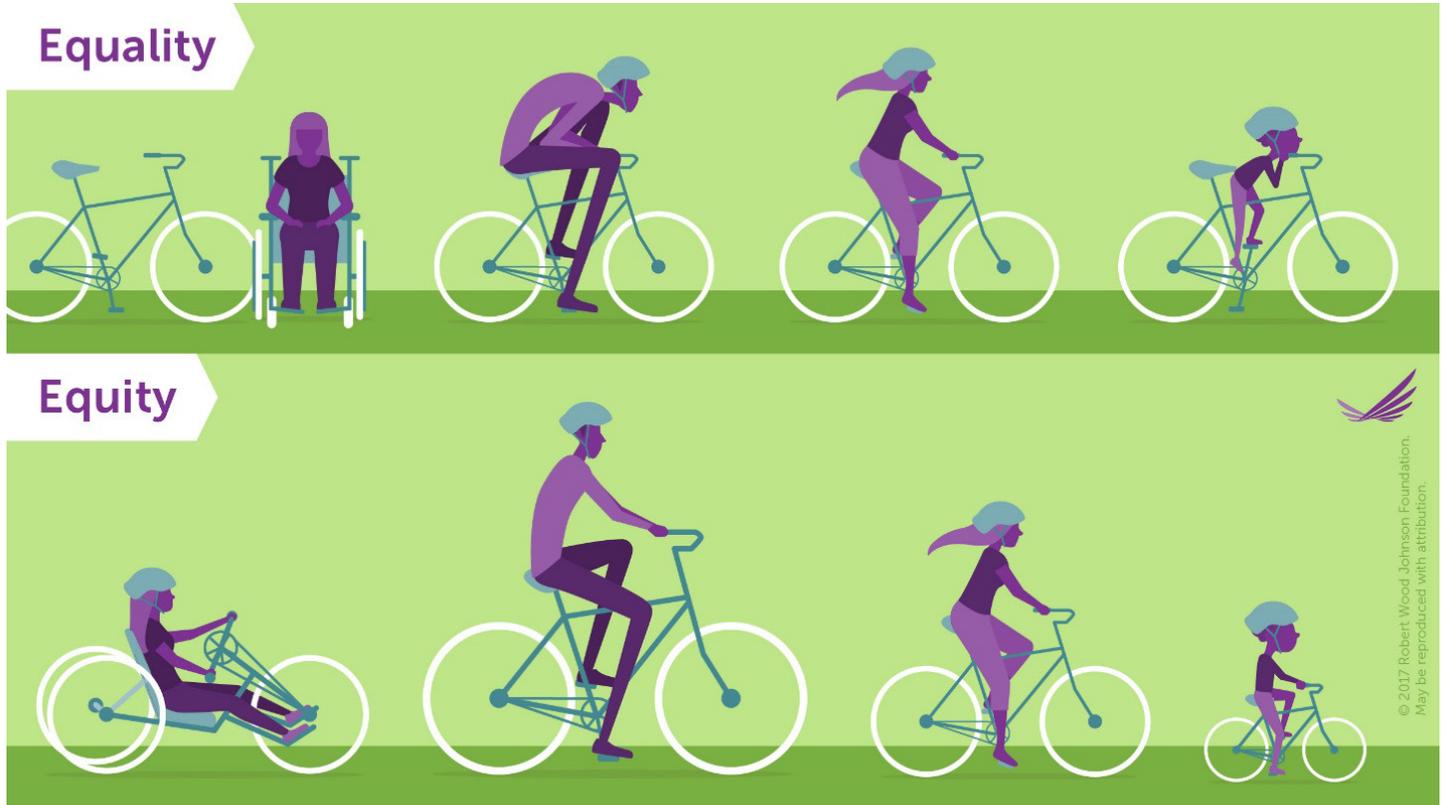
In order to create progress toward a more equitable community, the City must intentionally remove barriers and create systems that are restorative, that support historically marginalized people meet their needs and make progress toward shared prosperity.

Equitable economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color, populations that have historically been marginalized and have not equitably realized the benefits of growth and development. Through accountable public action and investment, equitable development strategies grow quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth. The result is a stronger, more competitive city and region.

The City should work with its partners to develop an Equitable Development Framework to guide decision-making. An Equitable Development Framework is way of thinking about and creating a type of economic development system that results in inclusive, equitable growth. The Framework would include specific strategies that create opportunities for

disadvantaged communities. Some strategies that have been employed in other places include investment in affordable housing and support for small business development. The Framework would also include defined and measurable outcomes such as livable wages and higher retention of locally-owned business. These strategies and outcome are simply examples, as Altoona’s Equitable Development Framework would be tailored to conditions specific to Altoona and the region. It would also be guided by community assets, local and regional business clusters, needs of the local population, and an understanding of where inequities have been greatest. While some equitable development practices are known, Altoona’s framework and selection of strategies will be created inclusively with historically marginalized populations and implemented collaboratively.

Figure 6.2. Equality vs. Equity Comparison



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Visualizing Health Equity*, 2017.

Integrate and Advance Sustainability and Climate Objectives

Studies conducted by the World Resources Institute, United Nations, U.S. Chamber of Commerce among many others describe adapting to a changing climate as a tremendous economic opportunity for growth in addition to improving quality of life. Business and government response to climate change mitigation and adaptation are generational shifts that are expected to create unique economic development opportunities for new businesses, new markets, and increased efficiency, waste reduction, and risk management. Communities, regions, and firms that are able to adapt to the changing climate and successfully capture opportunities in rapidly expanding markets for new products and services will be better positioned for overall community vitality. As urgent and systemic as the challenge of climate change is, successfully addressing these challenges must be viewed as an opportunity.

The City should recognize that every business and sector is already impacted by climate and corresponding changes in the market. The City can position its economic development priorities, focus, and tools to target known and emerging solutions. In addition, the City and its collaborators should stay current on emerging opportunities and threats in order to adapt its strategies.

Triple Bottom Line Finance Tools

An example of a tool that the City can leverage and utilize to advance these objectives is through Property Assessed Clean Energy Programs (PACE). This is an innovative program that enables property owners to obtain low-cost, long-term loans for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation improvements. Projects financed using PACE can generate positive cash flow upon completion with no up-front, out-of-pocket cost to property owners—eliminating the financial barriers that typically prevent investment in revitalizing aging properties. The term of a PACE Financing may extend up to the useful life of the improvement, which may be 20 years or more, and can result in cost savings that exceed the amount of the PACE Financing. The result is improved business profitability, an increase in property value, and enhanced sustainability. *Source: PACE Wisconsin*

In Wisconsin, PACE is utilized to contribute financing to affordable housing projects, commercial renovations, and new business development. Facilitating the use of PACE in Altoona can improve business expansion, reduce costs for residents and businesses, and improve environmental performance.

To facilitate and enhance the use of PACE, the City can promote the use of this program and also provide access to companion and local programs. The City water utility and storm water utility may be leveraged to create incentives in making efficiency and resilience improvements. TIF programs could also be utilized to encourage the use of PACE as an additional financing tool and/or attaching performance requirements to access TIF resources that PACE may be utilized to achieve.

Spark Economic Development by Building on Altoona's Arts and Culture

The City has worked hard over the past decade to increase, highlight, and integrate arts and cultural components within existing neighborhoods, redevelopment projects, and new developments. Economic development activities should continue to build on these initiatives while creatively seeking new opportunities.

The creative economy is a dynamic component of the region's overall economy that leverages human creativity and ideas to create and develop intellectual property, knowledge, and technology. Industries often associated with the creative economy include artists, musicians, makers, and designers, which are an important source of commercial and cultural value in a community. This community is often comprised of entrepreneurs and small businesses that generate local investment and contribute to community identity. However, utilizing creativity and new information to improve or create new products and services are possible in any industry.

One way for Altoona to support and coordinate a successful environment that helps to grow specific aspects of the creative economy is through the development of an Arts and Culture Plan. This place-based plan can help develop a vision and action plan focused towards strengthening and growing the local arts and cultural assets and their impact on the greater community. Key strategies that could be further explored through this process include:

- Partnering with regional stakeholders and local art-focused groups to increase artist spaces, education, events, and integration of art in public spaces.
- Establish and support existing advocacy groups that could help lead these efforts in conjunction with public and private partners.
- Inventory community assets and identify opportunities for new public art, cultural events, and education activities.
- Gather baseline data to determine benchmarks and inform goal setting.
- Strengthen the connections between existing School District and City programming.
- Prioritize the integration of placemaking components into new development and redevelopment projects.

The City can leverage its experience with the River Prairie development and programming of its public spaces as a model for how to successfully support economic development through the thoughtful incorporation of arts and culture. The City can also lean on other communities that have successfully taken this approach with adopted Arts and Culture Plans such as the City of Waupaca, City of Madison, and others to learn from proven examples. Conditions are favorable for Altoona to continue to improve its arts and cultural environment and support the local creative economy to drive overall community vitality and economic opportunity in the City.

Strategically Utilize Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

To help implement the recommendations in this Plan, the appropriate and thoughtful use of TIF will place Altoona in a much stronger position when working to create new community amenities, infrastructure, and with developers and business owners. TIF may also allow the City to vie for the types of projects that might not otherwise be possible without it, projects of a scale and quality that can change the local market and generate other quality projects.

TIF is one of the few economic development tools in Wisconsin where a local government can leverage financial resources to contribute to an economic development strategy or project, such as infrastructure investment, removing barriers, and contributing to characteristics that produce specific public benefit. This may include preparing sites for development, investing in affordable housing opportunities, integrating sustainability features, and creating public amenities that attract investment and contribute to placemaking. The City may consider creating a TIF policy or guide that encourages, requires, or provides additional support for integrating sustainability and equity benchmarks into projects as a condition for city financial participation.

The City should utilize the following strategies within existing and potential new TIF districts that could be created over the planning period. Below are six strategies and best practices the City can continue to employ in managing TIF districts for maximum impact:

- 1) Regularly Reviewing TIF Plans and Individual TID Parcels: On an annual basis, this includes reviewing adopted TIF Plans with the City's Comprehensive Plan as conditions change to ensure continuity between the documents. It also includes ongoing parcel-by-parcel management. Every spring, when new preliminary assessments are released, each parcel in every district should be reviewed to be sure the assessment includes the correct properties and has accurately captured the values. Valuation tasks include:
 - Review each parcel assessment to be sure it includes correct properties and accurate values.
 - Compare year-over-year changes in values by parcel.
 - Be sure to complete checks before the tax roll is certified in August.
- 2) Update Cashflow Projections: For a complete picture of each district's true financial state:
 - Update the TID's long-term cashflow projections annually.
 - Continually determine:
 - ✓ Where and when new increment will come from
 - ✓ How much it will be
 - ✓ What costs will need to be incurred to support projected development
 - ✓ How to structure any associated borrowing most efficiently
- 3) Communicate with Property Owners, Partners and Prospective Developers/Businesses: The best ways to keep communication open include:
 - Annual outreach to owners of prime sites to reconfirm interest and expectations of sale prices.
 - Assisting owners with listing their property on Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's LocateInWisconsin list of available sites.
 - Offering to provide some development contacts and/or to solicit developers/buyers.
 - Maintaining up-to-date communications with partner economic development organizations.
 - Providing partners with current information and marketing materials on available sites.

- Providing a map and information on available sites on the City website that is easy to locate from the homepage.
 - Update stakeholders as TID and community-wide conditions change related planned infrastructure projects, other proposed public investments, or available grant opportunities as they become known.
- 4) Have a Well-Defined Process for Getting Deals Done: To create a well-defined process:
- Clearly define roles for the staff, Plan Commission, and City Council.
 - Describe the process in writing, distribute it to all involved, and review it every few years making changes as needed.
 - Provide guidance and answers to prospective developers/businesses early in the process to clarify what is and is not appropriate within a district.
 - Offer direction to developers about how (and whether) to move forward.
- 5) Engage the JRB as a Full Partner: Best practices for communication with members of the Joint Review Board including adding the following to the required JRB annual meeting:
- Providing an up-to-date accounting of each district’s current and projected finances in an easily understood format.
 - Sharing the City’s strategies for the promoting growth in the District and what is anticipated over the next year.
 - Discussing any potential needs for district amendments or creating new districts.
 - Encouraging members to ask questions and state preferences on what they would prefer to see.
- 6) Continuously Monitor Other Opportunities: Overtime, the City must monitor changes to property ownership, tax delinquency, or new properties coming on the market in key locations. This due diligence provides an understanding of changing conditions and where potential opportunities may arise for public-private partnerships, property acquisition, or the potential creation of a new TID. Working with Eau Claire County and other regional economic development organizations provides the most efficiency in these monitoring efforts.

Collaborate on Regional and State Economic Growth Initiatives

Altoona’s future economic health depends not only on what can be done solely through local efforts, but how well the City collaborates, communicates, and connects with county, regional, state, and federal partners, initiatives, and programs.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and future economic recovery, existing state and federal grant programs have been infused with new funds, and it is anticipated that new programs may also be created, as part of the federal government’s massive economic recovery stimulus packages. One of these was the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which was signed in the spring of 2021. ARPA provided money directly to local governments to help with revenue loss, pandemic response, employment disruption, economic development efforts, infrastructure upgrades, and more. The City should remain apprised of all possible programs during this rapidly-evolving program, and work toward identifying and seeking resources from the programs that are most applicable to implementing the economic development and other recommendations of this Plan.

There are several ways the City can proactively prepare for future funding opportunities as they present themselves. This includes identifying projects that are ready to implement but are waiting for resource availability, identified in adopted plans or reports, incorporated into policies, and have quantitative analysis to support their need. A few such projects could include:

- Continue planning, analyzing, and assessing future utility, infrastructure, service, and community facility needs.
- Development of a Downtown Revitalization Plan, corridor redevelopment plans, or neighborhood plans.
- Continuing to complete regular Park and Open Space Plans and other such plans that require updating to maintain grant eligibility.
- Creating new sustainably, climate action, equity, or public health plans or partnerships, such as a Climate Action Plan or Environmental Determinants of Health framework.

- Revising policies or establishing new policy initiatives that support potential grant funding applications like a Complete Streets policy, Health In All Policies approach, or becoming a certified Bicycle Friendly Community or Wisconsin Healthy Community.

Another trend in both funding and economic development is the movement towards regional approaches for economic growth and coordination, as opposed to having different communities in the same county or region competing for the same businesses and industries. Several regional entities are designed to do just that. These include the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Eau Claire Area Economic Development Cooperation, Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Eau Claire. Working with these regional groups will help advance local initiatives in the most effective and efficient manner by leveraging regional resources, partnerships, and coordination.

Regional coordination is an area where the Chippewa Valley has established activities and is a strength. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, communication and coordination across many activities, especially economic development, was very active. The advent of the pandemic emergency response and recovery efforts focused, deepened, and in some ways broadened coordination efforts to include many other segments of the community. Altoona should continue to build these relationships between local and regional stakeholders to advance regional economic development initiatives and generate new implementation resources locally.



Attract Diverse New Businesses and Prepare the Local Workforce for Changes

Business attraction and workforce preparedness are additional economic strategies, along with growing new businesses and retaining/expanding existing businesses. Attracting new businesses, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers will help expand the local economy and provide a sustainable economic future. Techniques for attracting new businesses, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers are often similar to those used to retain existing businesses and workers. The City has a range of these and other tools at its disposal that it will utilize. Strategies include:

- Build on the community’s support of existing local businesses and those that cater to local customers to attract new locally-oriented businesses.
- Implement the City’s economic strategy to attract technology, innovation, small retail/restaurants, and information businesses and entrepreneurs, in addition to educating and preparing the local workforce to fill the roles of the future.
- Develop an inventory of a broad range (e.g. size and location) of sites which are already improved with streets, sanitary sewer, and water services and are ready for construction.
- Continue to utilize a predictable and streamlined approach to development approvals.
- Identify and market specifically to target clusters (as described in the Economic Opportunity Analysis above) that relate to the City’s existing businesses or capitalize on the community’s place-based assets.
- Continue to work with Eau Claire County Economic Development and other similar entities in the formation of groups organized around particular business/industry clusters to guide schools in providing appropriate workforce training and help policy makers understand industry requirements for success.
- Define and identify the workforce skillsets available within the community, and market the City’s quality labor force, highlighting skills, dedication, and availability as workforce assets.

- Grow the local entrepreneurial base through regional collaboration with educational institutions and other economic development-focused groups or organizations.
- Continue to be an active member of Eau Claire County Economic Development Corporation, Momentum West, and other economic growth focused coordination agencies.
- Continue to collaborate with Visit Eau Claire to increase tourism by leveraging the cultural and recreational assets of the region to attract new and support existing restaurant, entertainment, and lodging options.
- Adapt to economic, technology, and workforce shifts as they continue to evolve and change through regional collaboration, infrastructure investment, local planning initiatives, and understanding the needs of local employers.

Workforce Shifts

Over the next decade, it is anticipated that technology will continue to dramatically change the national, regional, and local economy. By 2030, it is projected that up to 24% of jobs in Eau Claire County could be displaced by automation and other technological advancements; however, it is projected that the County's overall net job growth will be 5-10%. As a national trend, displacement is projected to be much lower in large metro areas with more robust and diverse economies, high-growth industries, and better-educated populations.

The occupations that are projected to be most impacted by automation include jobs in office support, food service, production work, and customer service and retail. Conversely, health professionals, legal professionals, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) occupations are projected to increase the most by 2030. Based on the City's occupational data in Appendix A, 15% of Altoona's labor force was in a production-based occupation in 2019, and therefore, job losses in these areas could have a considerable negative impact on the local and regional workforce.

As automation and the ability for machines to take on a wider range of tasks increases, more and more people may need to move into new roles, companies, or industries. Additionally, almost all jobs will continue to evolve over the next decade with a different mix of tasks and greater reliance on technology. Some of the most important ways to prepare for these changes will be to create more rewarding jobs, build better learning systems, and develop new career pathways.

Source: McKinsey Report: The Future of Work in America (2019)

Provide Quality and Accessible Youth Development Opportunities

Workforce development has long been part of a traditional economic development strategy to prepare people for the employment opportunities of the future. This focus has traditionally been on creating employer-sponsored training programs, and in tailoring college and technical programs to respond to the needs of local employers and connecting people who have experienced barriers to employment to those programs, as mentioned above. While Altoona's economic development focus has been on facilitating overall quality of life amenities, the City contributes to regional organizations that specialize in workforce development programs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed stark preexisting challenges in the cost of and access to quality childcare and youth development programs and services. When children are sick and unable to attend childcare programs, or the care providers themselves are sick, closed, or otherwise unable to look after children on short notice, working parents may be unable to work or experience reduced productivity as they worry after their children's wellbeing. Childcare is a hands-on, close-contact activity, and the impacts of Covid-19 have resulted in deepening shortages of childcare workers and interruption in their ability to be available. Disruptions in childcare arrangements can thus lead to staffing challenges and harm businesses' bottom line.

Insufficient childcare options can prevent parents who wish to work from doing so, with mothers and low-income families often bearing the brunt of this challenge. Among parents who wish to work, child-rearing tends to interfere more with women’s labor supply and employment outcomes. This leaves potential economic growth unrealized, as women’s labor force participation is significantly associated with economic growth. To the extent women, persons of color, and low-income households are most impacted by lack of affordable and quality childcare, expanding childcare opportunities is also a direct economic and racial equity strategy.

Stable childcare supports businesses with a more reliable and productive workforce. Childcare decisions are hugely consequential, whether it’s how families purchase care and what type of care to how these decisions affect the family breadwinners’ employers and then, the broader economy.

High-quality early care and education provides critical socialization and learning opportunities when the brain is developing rapidly and is particularly responsive to the outside environment. Young children in pre-Kindergarten programs experience positive developmental outcomes and are better prepared for school, scoring higher than their peers on standardized measures of reading, spelling, math, and problem-solving skills. Economically, supporting early childhood education increases workforce availability of parents short-term, and long-term helps children develop their human capital and prepares them for more productive lives.

The City can utilize both traditional as well as creative economic development tools and strategies to assist in the support of childcare services. The City can also identify and remove barriers to locating childcare facilities and encourage these critical uses in residential areas. This is both a short-term and long-term strategy to improve equitable economic opportunity and quality of life for area residents.



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Chapter 7

TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



CHAPTER 7: TRANSPORTATION, UTILITIES, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



INTRODUCTION

The past decade of rapid population growth in Altoona has placed significant pressure on the community’s infrastructure and service capacity. In response, the City has invested in several new studies, plans, and large-scale projects. Additionally, as Altoona grows outward and upward, new challenges and opportunities arise in connecting, integrating, and funding the infrastructure, utility, and transportation network.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations that aim to facilitate a safe, efficient, and sustainable utility, transportation, infrastructure, and community facility network over the planning period. See Appendix A for an inventory of existing facilities, projects, plans, and related data.

What is Social Equity and Cohesion?

As defined in the City of Altoona Place Plan, Social Equity and Cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept, the complexity of which is undergoing increased recognition and study by practitioners to better understand how the built environment is deterministic of uneven racial and economic equity. Quality public spaces positively contribute to public health and economic vitality, as well as safety, youth development, opportunity, mobility, and general quality of life. Therefore, in order to pursue this vision and operationalize values, communities must affirmatively orient public realm priorities to ensure all residents have equal access, and indeed focus additional resources into areas of the community where historically marginalized peoples reside to eliminate inequities, achieve social justice and equitable outcomes.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Incorporate climate resilience and adoption into infrastructure planning.
- Proactively plan for and implement new utilities and community facilities that promote sustainability, climate resiliency, equity, fiscal responsibility, and public health.
- Improve multi-modal transportation accessibility, safety, and connectivity.
- Prepare for transportation technology changes through adapting policies, information sharing, and infrastructure improvements.
- Continue to work with the Altoona School District on future land use planning decisions and establishing neighborhood-scale schools.
- Develop, adopt, and enforce a city-wide official map to align transportation and land use strategies.
- Implement the Altoona Place Plan and complete an update in 2025.
- Utilize tactical urbanism to test infrastructure enhancement and investment opportunities.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in Chapter 2: Issues and Opportunities.

Goals

1. Provide a safe, efficient, and interconnected multi-modal transportation system that meets the needs of all users, prioritizes bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities, promotes public health, and decreases reliance on the automobile.
2. Make informed and strategic investments in utilities, infrastructure, community facilities, and public services to balance fiscal responsibility with maintaining and improving residents' high quality of life.

Objectives

1. Ensure all residents are provided equitable access to public services such as police and fire protection, utilities, transportation accessibility, education, and parks and open space.
2. Utilize compact growth patterns that maximize the use of existing utilities and facilities within the City, and plan for an orderly, logical, and cost-efficient extension of municipal utilities and facilities in planned growth areas.
3. Require pedestrian-oriented neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices as new development occurs and existing areas are revitalized.
4. Actively participate in and coordinate multi-jurisdictional transportation, utility, infrastructure, and community facility system improvements in the City's planning area (including Eau Claire County, Altoona School District, the City of Eau Claire, the Town of Washington, and the State).
5. Support regional transit services in Altoona and throughout Eau Claire County.
6. Provide equitable access to quality parks, recreation, library space, and open space facilities and services designed to meet the needs of all age groups in Altoona.
7. Plan for interconnected new neighborhoods and development that results in safe and convenient access to existing development and prevents isolation by major transportation corridors.
8. Address climate change, public health, and sustainability through the adaption of policies, integration of best practices, conducting planning processes, and resource allocation.



Policies

1. Promote infill development, redevelopment, and revitalization of areas that use existing utility systems and roads, and are close to existing community facilities such as schools, parks, and other public investments.
2. Continue the five-year Capital Improvements Program that sets priorities for completing public infrastructure, utility, and community facility project, which can be funded from available fiscal resources.
3. Establish and enforce a Citywide Official Map to reserve sufficient rights-of-way for future arterial and collector streets, pedestrian and bicycle paths, parks, utility infrastructure, and bridges.
4. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy that requires multi-modal elements as part of every roadway infrastructure project. Integrate United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, National Association of City Transportation Officials, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, and Wisconsin

Department of Transportation guidelines, best practices, and performance measures into the policy to facilitate true complete streets.

5. Implement the Altoona Place Plan, utility and community facility studies, and regional transportation, utility, hazard mitigation, and sustainability plans. Complete and coordinate on updates to these plans over the planning period. Many of these plans are summarized in Appendix A.
6. Coordinate with other governmental units to avoid the duplication of services and promote shared services, facilities, and planning, where appropriate.
7. Work cooperatively with the School District in planning for new or upgraded school facilities and notify the School District of major residential developments that may affect school funding and programming.
8. Any future remodeling, renovation, or new construction of a City facility should consider the financial feasibility of incorporating renewable energy sources, sustainable building practices, and LEED Certification standards. Where feasible, the City should consider implementing such features.
9. Partner with UW-Extension, Eau Claire County, neighboring communities and school districts, and local groups to organize opportunities to educate the public on sustainability, climate resiliency, equity, and public health.
10. During future right-of-way upgrades and improvements, establish bike paths or lanes, integrate canopy trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, traffic calming devices, seating, bicycle parking, public art, wayfinding signage, and stormwater management features.
11. Require all new streets to include both pedestrian and bicycle facilities, encouraging street designs with traffic-calming elements that minimize traffic volumes and speeds through and in residential neighborhoods.
12. Encourage connectivity by requiring new subdivisions to provide multiple vehicular access points whenever possible, and prohibit the construction of cul-de-sacs, except when extreme topography or existing development patterns necessitate their use. In these instances, other alternatives to cul-de-sacs should be explored, and bicycle and pedestrian connections should be attempted.
13. Promote bicycling and walking by providing bicycle and pedestrian educational programs such as bicycle rodeos through partnerships with the School District and Police Department.
14. Incorporate electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in public parking areas and remove obstacles to incorporating EV charging stations in private parking areas.



STRATEGIES

Incorporate Climate Resilience and Adaption into Infrastructure Planning

Investments in infrastructure are long term. The City's roads, drinking water, energy, stormwater, and wastewater systems – everything that supports our lives and livelihoods – will be subjected to climate conditions substantially different than those they were designed for, over most of their future service life. In many cases, these future climate conditions could significantly impact infrastructure performance, and may result in service disruptions, failures, and costly retrofits.

Identifying and developing climate change adaptation strategies will improve infrastructure planning, design, management, and operation under these future conditions. Also, the construction and operation of infrastructure have itself a substantial environmental footprint, increasing the greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change. Climate

change mitigation actions can reduce this footprint and help reduce the magnitude of future climate change from infrastructure. In addition, these resilience and adaptation strategies have multiple benefits that yield other positive returns to risk management, water quality, preserve habitat and natural systems, aesthetics, and others.

Many of these contributing strategies are incorporated throughout this plan:

- Integrate and increase green infrastructure
- Prioritize non-motorized mobility
- Preserve environmental corridors and steep slopes
- Incorporate future climate projections into utility planning
- Facilitate building efficiency and distributed renewable energy systems
- Support weatherization and updates to older homes and structures

Altoona will incorporate the latest climate projections and utilize mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency strategies into all infrastructure activities.

Develop, Adopt, and Enforce a City-wide Official Map

As of 2021, Altoona had an adopted Official Map, which only includes a few key locations within the City, mostly concentrated in future growth areas along USH 12. It is recommended that the City complete a City-wide Official Map process based on the recommended improvements as shown on Map 4. This includes recommendations from the City's Safe Routes to School Plan, Place Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and existing Official Map:

- A future planned right-of-way network surrounding USH 12 on the far southwest side of the City and its planning area.
- 7th Street in front of the High School needs improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- 10th Street and 3rd Street are barriers due to speed and volume of traffic; increased intersection improvements are needed.
- Increase options for students to walk and bike to and from the Elementary School.
- Establishment of the Otter Creek Greenway to protect the corridor for wildlife habitat and viewing, in addition to a multi-use trail.



What is an Official Map?

An Official Map is a plan implementation tool authorized under Wisconsin Statutes (Section 62.23(7)) for adoption by cities and villages. An Official Map is a municipal ordinance that may be used to show alignments of future roads, expanded rights-of-way for existing roads, and other planned public facilities like trails and parks. When land development is proposed in a location that the Official Map has identified for a future public facility, the city or village may obtain or reserve land for that future facility through public dedication, public purchase, or reservation for future purchase.

Cities and villages generally use Official Maps to show future highways and bypasses, other future arterial and collector streets, trails and parkways, and suggested wider rights-of-way for some existing major streets. They rarely show planned minor streets, as their locations are usually difficult to determine in advance of development.

Wisconsin Statutes attach some unique authority to Official Maps. For example, a city or village may require that no building permits be issued within land shown for a future public facility on its Official Map. In addition, a community may require that no subdivision or land division may be recorded unless its arrangement conforms to the Official Map. These and related provisions may apply within both the municipal limits and within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Improve Multi-Modal Transportation Accessibility and Safety

Since the 1950s, right-of-way infrastructure has been primarily designed to accommodate vehicular travel and only secondarily accommodated the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

Infrastructure design should reflect the values and behavior the community wants. This has been expressed as safe, economical, environmentally responsible, and convenient choices that also support personal health and an enjoyable urban environment that culminates in a high quality of life. These goals indicate that reorienting the transportation system to prioritize walking, biking, and transit use for all people is a top priority. This macro goal means rethinking both transportation and land use with a long-term, generational goal of realizing this vision.

Altoona should proactively reorient its public rights-of-way to serve users of all travel modes. This means that the design, construction, and upgrade of new and existing facilities must involve the thoughtful implementation of multi-modal transportation facilities. One way to ensure this takes place is through the adoption of the Community Streets Policy, which would require that any new roadway project incorporate multi-modal transportation elements based on best practices and performance measures provided by federal and state agencies. Specific multi-modal elements to consider and implement over the planning period include:

Rethinking street patterns and design. Incorporate traffic-calming measures through narrower street widths (28-32 feet), Traditional Neighborhood Design principles, high level of connectivity on-street parking, on-street bicycle facilities, curb extensions and bump-outs, speed bumps, raised crosswalks, changes in pavement texture, and generous boulevards.

Active Travel

Active travel, meaning walking or bicycling for transportation, is considered the most sustainable form of personal mobility. The environmental benefit is ten times greater than substituting a typical gasoline vehicle for an electric vehicle powered by renewable power. In addition, cutting down automobile use reduces other energy intensive infrastructure, energy, and supply chain impacts. Further, walking and biking are proven to improve physical and mental health and cost far less than driving.

To realize these benefits, people do not need to transition immediately and completely to being "car free." A good start is simply by substituting short trips for walking and biking. Electric assist bikes, or e-bikes, are another good option for active transportation. E-bikes utilize a small motor to assist the rider to navigate topography and extend a rider's range (i.e., the distance the rider can comfortably bike). The availability and declining cost of e-bikes, along with expanding cycling infrastructure, can rapidly improve residents' abilities to choose bicycling for more transportation trips in the immediate term.

When it comes to calming traffic in cities, the reality is that engineering—not education or enforcement—is the single biggest influence on the success. The desired speed and behavior is achieved not by passively posting a sign or painting lines, but by actively engineering means that force drivers to reduce their speed and increase their vigilance.

Enhancement intersections for all users. Shorten crossing distances, increase visibility for all users, add street furniture, establish signalized intersections, facilitate on-street bicycle turning movements, and incorporate refuge medians in long-distance and high-volume intersections.

Improve local and regional bicycle facilities. Depending on the local level of service demands on the roadway, either increase on-street bicycle facilities or develop off-street multi-use paths. Bicycle facilities should be physically separated or protected from automobile lanes whenever possible. Bicycle routes should be well maintained and designed to be as free of possible safety and comfort impediments such as uneven pavement, abrupt curb ramps, and conflict points with pedestrians or motorists. Additionally, continue to prioritize projects that fill gaps in the existing network and create a well-integrated regional network. Finally, implement local and regional plans to increase network connectivity, safety, and user-friendliness and pursue becoming a designated Bicycle Friendly Community.

Prioritize sidewalks in new development and within the existing network. Require sidewalks on both sides of all existing and proposed streets, identify and prioritize infilling existing gaps within the sidewalk network, develop and implement a City-wide Sidewalk Plan, and implement local and regional plans. Revisit facility standards and stringently evaluate infrastructure projects to ensure every detail supports safe, convenient, and enjoyable walking and bicycling.

Increase public transit options. Public transit, such as buses, paratransit, rideshare, and others provides essential means of transportation for people without the ability, means, or desire to drive, walk, or bike. Additionally, it provides a more environmentally-friendly means of transportation as compared driving a single-occupancy vehicle. Use of transit is also associated with healthier and more active lifestyles, as people who use public transportation get significantly more daily physical activity, simply from walking between transit stops and their destinations. Increasing the number of routes, frequency, types, and options for public transit throughout the City is critical to providing truly multi-modal transportation, more equitable transportation access, and healthier lifestyles. This will require continued coordination and planning with the Eau Claire Transit and direct investment by the City of Altoona.

Update Site Design Requirements. The City primarily controls transportation conditions through the design and maintenance of public right-of-way, such as roads and sidewalks. However, the design of property determines the convenience for pedestrians to navigate to and from their destinations, the quality and availability to bicycle parking,

League of American Bicyclists – Bicycle Friendly Community

The League of American Bicyclists annually awards communities throughout the U.S. as diamond, platinum, gold, silver, or bronze Bicycle Friendly Community. This is a program designed to recognize and award municipalities that have taken steps to actively support, encourage, and accommodate bicycling for transportation and recreation.

It is recommended that Altoona strive to become a more bicycle-friendly community through an official designation. This can be done by implementing and advancing the recommendations of the Altoona Place Plan and Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The League of American Bicyclists applies local-level criteria and metrics through its designation process in which the City can apply in its future infrastructure projects and provide insight on gaps in the services it currently offers.

A recent study published by the WISPIRG Foundation in 2019 titled “Millennials on the Move” explores the lifestyles preferred by many young people across Wisconsin. The study polled Wisconsin college students and found that 75% said that it was important for them to live in a place with non-driving transportation options after graduation. Overall, many people’s preferences are changing when it comes to transportation and providing increased multi-modal transportation options and connectivity will be one way to increase the retention and attraction of young people over the next 20 years.

(Source: WISPIRG Foundation, Millennials on the Move)

and the overall enjoyment of the environment. The public influences these arrangements through development standards with a property is developed, as well as the mobility choices in “voting with their feet”. Updating development standards to incorporate walking and bicycling best practices ensures that the entire network from end-to-end is of high quality.

Expand, Rehab, and Install New Utilities and Community Facilities

As Altoona continues to grow, it will place increasing demands on its municipal facilities. Through this planning process, specific utilities and community facility improvements or additions were identified. Additionally, the City should continue to utilize a Capital Improvement Planning process that includes 5- and 10-year time horizons to carefully anticipate needs and opportunities and to allocate resources to implement the recommendations below.

Utility or Facility	Recommendations
Water Supply	Implement the recommendations of the Water Utility Service Study.
Sanitary Waste Service	Implement the recommendations of the Water Utility Service Study.
Stormwater Management (Quality and Quantity)	Coordinate with the City of Eau Claire on wastewater treatment planning. Work with WCWRPC to update the Urban Sewer Service Area Plan and require all amendment to the plan be reviewed and approved by the WCWRPC.
Public Transit	Continue to enforce the City’s Stormwater Utility and Stormwater Utility Credit Policy. Update the City’s Stormwater Management Ordinance following the completion of a City-wide Stormwater Management Plan.
Public Works	Coordinate with Eau Claire Transit to implement the Transit Development Plan.
Public Library	Relocate the Public Works Departments to the Eau Claire County Highway Department site on Spooner Avenue. Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Municipal Facilities Space Needs and Facility Assessment Study.
City Administration	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Municipal Facilities Space Needs and Facility Assessment Study. Consider a library development impact fee to contribute to meeting facility service benchmarks.
Parks, Recreation, and Trails	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Municipal Facilities Space Needs and Facility Assessment Study.
Schools	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Place Plan and Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Conduct a park impact fee study and revise the parkland dedication fee ordinance, consider creating a park improvement fee.
Police	Continue to collaborate with school district staff to assess projected student growth from City development and identify potential sites for new school sites, as needed.
Fire and EMS	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Municipal Facilities Space Needs and Facility Assessment Study.
Waste Disposal and Recycling	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Municipal Facilities Space Needs and Facility Assessment Study.
Community Forestry	Create new waste reduction, recycling, and composting educational programming and policies.

Prepare for Transportation Technology Changes

As transportation technology continues to rapidly evolve, it will be important for Altoona to be prepared to accommodate changes. Over the past few years, bike-share, ride-share, and car-share have all become prevalent throughout the United States, and potentially the most revolutionary change is also rapidly approaching, automated self-driving vehicles. While it is impossible to know what the exact outcomes of transportation technology changes will be, the City can continuously evolve its ordinances, procedures, and planning to accommodate these changes. This could be as simple as an ordinance change to allow car-sharing or electric car charging stations in public parking lots, or it could be as significant as redesigning public facilities and infrastructure to better accommodate self-driving vehicles.

Additionally, smart transportation infrastructure is another rapidly evolving topic related to the future of transportation. Smart transportation infrastructure relies on the “internet of things,” which is the integrated systems of devices that collect real-time and traditional data while also communicating that data to the greater network. Smart transportation infrastructure can involve smart streetlight and smart traffic light technology that improves performance by responding to traffic and weather conditions in real time. It can also involve sensors in roadways that not only guide autonomous vehicles, but also to increase roadway efficiency and safety. Over the next two decades, planning for and implementing smart infrastructure within roadways will be key to laying the groundwork for a smart transportation system. As of 2021, most smart transportation infrastructure was being implemented into the interstate highway system and large metropolitan areas, but it is now beginning to become more prevalent throughout the country. As more devices are implemented, tested, and proven to be successful, they will become increasingly cost-effective for smaller communities to integrate.

The next two decades will see rapid changes in the way people use transportation, and Altoona will have to be prepared and flexible enough to continuously evolve as new challenges arise. While we do not yet know exactly what transportation will look like in the coming years or its potential implications, there are some preliminary considerations to plan for:

- **Updating Infrastructure.** Autonomous vehicles rely heavily on lane striping and signage in the roadway to navigate and function effectively, and so it may become increasingly important for cities to uniformly upgrade and maintain these features. Additionally, in future roadway projects, considerations could be made for off-street or on-street staging facilities for autonomous vehicle pick-up and drop-off, instead of traditional on-street parking, parking lots, or parking garages. Finally, smart infrastructure investments should be considered in all future roadway projects, especially on major arterials. Enhanced data gathering, connectivity, and communication will make for more efficient and safe roadways. Adapting to this new technology will be key over the planning period.
- **Changing Revenue Sources.** Incorporating high-capacity electric vehicle charging stations within municipal parking lots could promote and accommodate ridesharing and become a new revenue source for the City. Also, over time, traffic violation revenue may decrease significantly because of overall safer roadways. It may be appropriate to intermittently budget for lower revenue totals from this source to avoid dramatic changes to local resources.
- **Proactively Addressing Inequities.** The initial phase of autonomous vehicle integration may disproportionately disadvantage lower-income individuals who may not be able to afford the technology. Potential adjustments to traffic enforcement practices and/or other tax policies may be necessary to curb this inequity.
- **Technology Systems.** As many larger governing bodies increasingly integrate intelligent transportation systems (ITS), it will be important for Altoona to participate in data collection and sharing, in addition to utilizing wireless and cloud-based technologies within their own practices (smart transportation infrastructure).

- **Electric Vehicle Policies.** While there are multiple policy changes that may be required over the planning period to reflect transportation technology changes, one that can be addressed right away is removing barriers to alternative fuel vehicles. This can be done through:

- Incentivizing new multi-family or commercial developments through increased development intensity opportunities or reduced parking requirements to include electric car charging stations within their onsite parking areas.
- Encouraging electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be incorporated into new and existing homes.
- Allow car-sharing spaces and electric car charging stations in public parking lots.
- Over time, convert the City’s vehicle fleet to more energy efficient, electric, and alternative fuel models.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations

In 2020, there were 345,000 electric vehicles sold in the United States, an increase of over 30% from 2019 sales. Overall, there are now 1,500,000 electric vehicles on U.S. roads and over 31,000 electric vehicle charging stations. Typical locations for EV charging stations include restaurants and retail stores, shopping centers, gas stations, hotels, office parks, multi-family buildings, and public parking lots. It is anticipated that sales will increase over the planning period, and it is important to plan for public locations suitable for EV charging stations, in addition to reducing barriers to installing them on private property. Some communities have even developed requirements for EV charging stations within new development or, at a minimum, installing the infrastructure during construction that will be needed to accommodate stations in the future.

(Source: Blastpoint, 2021)

Continue to Coordinate with the School District on Future Planning Decisions

With the rapid growth experienced in Altoona over the past decade, the Altoona School District has needed to expand its facilities and staffing to meet the demands of a growing population with many new young families. The City and School District have had a longstanding working relationship, which involves notifying the School District of residential development projects, safe routes to school programs, and direct involvement of both parties in ongoing planning processes.

Schools are catalysts for creating community as children’s activities, daily social interactions, and community projects are methods for creating connections and establishing strong neighborhoods. Beyond their impact on the character of neighborhoods and housing values, schools serve their primary purpose of educating youth and preparing them to participate in the workforce and contribute to society. Schools are also among the largest employers in the area, creating stable middle-income jobs that can be embedded in neighborhoods.

Schools and other civic and institutional uses should be embedded in neighborhoods and accessible to residents, not isolated in remote locations. Neighborhoods should be designed and planned in conjunction with existing and future schools and civic uses at their center and seek complementary synergies. Smaller schools connect and better serve the neighborhood and walkable schools can support daily activity and healthier children and staff. New schools should be sized and located to be easily accessible by children, parents, and staff on foot or bicycle. When well placed in neighborhoods, schools can provide amenities to the community, such as outdoor spaces and potential for after-hours community or recreation uses.



The Altoona School District campus includes the Intermediate, Middle, and High School as well as the Administration offices integrated into a traditional neighborhood. This campus is a tremendous asset that allows many residents to be in close proximity to the school, with a traditional neighborhood street and sidewalk grid that provides multi-modal transportation accessibility. The City and district have ongoing activities to coordinate Safe Routes to School and other programs to further improve conditions. The school campus currently hosts the Altoona Compassion Coalition food pantry that collects and distributes food assistance, an excellent example of community cooperation. St. Mary's Catholic School is also located in the traditional central neighborhoods of Altoona with integrated into the fabric of the community.

The Altoona Elementary School was completed on a new site in 2016 on the edge of the City without the ingrained traditional neighborhood and without a larger planning effort for its vicinity. The site was acquired and designed to allow for future expansion. The City has worked with the School District to plan around this newer site, including improving infrastructure and focused pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

As the City continues to grow and new neighborhoods are planned, the City and School District should plan and coordinate very intentionally to create complete, compact neighborhoods with future schools in strategic, central locations. It is recommended that the City continue to coordinate land use and development decisions with the Altoona School District's long-range planning efforts. As enrollment changes, it is likely that the School District will need to consider the acquisition of land for one or more new schools. The City intends to work with the School District to proactively identify appropriate sites for a school before land costs escalate and or other development occurs in the most desirable areas.

Utilize Tactical Urbanism to Test Infrastructure Improvements

Instituting changes to the built environment to improve walking, biking, or other conditions can be costly if not incorporated into a regularly-schedule project. Rather than designing a new intervention and hoping it will work as intended, tactical urbanism is an approach to utilizing using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change.

Potential measures can be tested to see how they perform and are received by the community. For example, protected bike lanes can be created by placing traffic barrels or some other physical barrier that can be easily removed, and matched with outreach efforts, encourage people to utilize the new route. If this is well received, the City could consider utilizing a more permanent intervention such as concrete barricades or including a design in the next road project.

Some measures may be short-term by design, such as seasonal opportunities to create outdoor spaces in the summer or arranging snow and other features to program areas for winter. For example, pop-up retail is often known as a sidewalk sale create visual interest and interaction by drawing people to the area. Block parties and food trucks can be used to create social engagement events that are intended to build community rather than testing a potential change to the physical environment. These tactical experiments can test changes to infrastructure, parks, support community building and economic development strategies with modest investment.



Implement the Altoona Place Plan

The Altoona Place Plan provides the vision, guiding principles, goals, and implementation strategies for the community's parks, outdoor recreation, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The plan analyses facility needs and service demands to identify implementation strategies for upgrades and expansions to existing facilities and creation of new facilities. Additionally, to remain eligible to receive federal and state grant monies, the plan must be updated every five years.

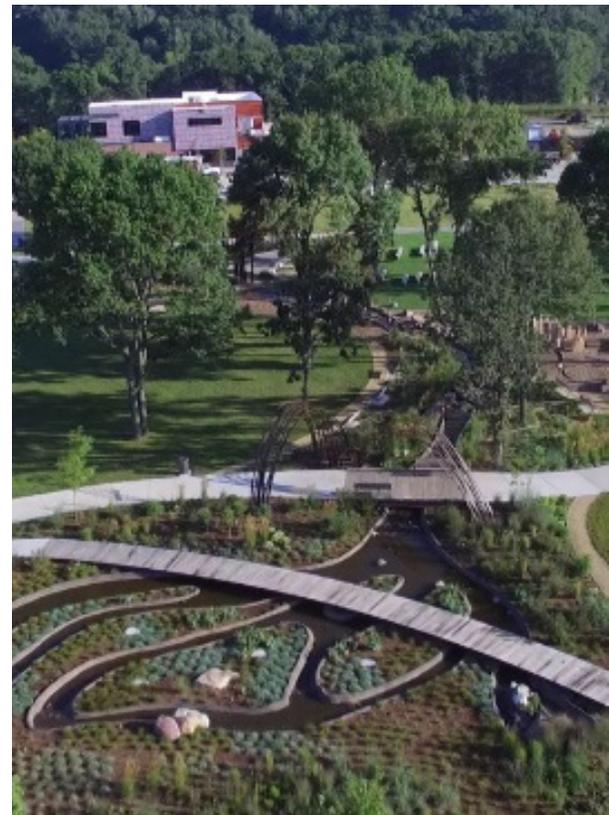
The Place Plan has five overarching and foundational public realm objectives, which include:

- Maintain and improve public health and quality of life for all residents.
- Improve environmental stewardship, natural systems, aesthetics, and climate mitigation and resiliency.
- Improve municipal fiscal and structural performance.
- Provide active and passive recreational opportunities in all seasons.
- Facilitate economic development.

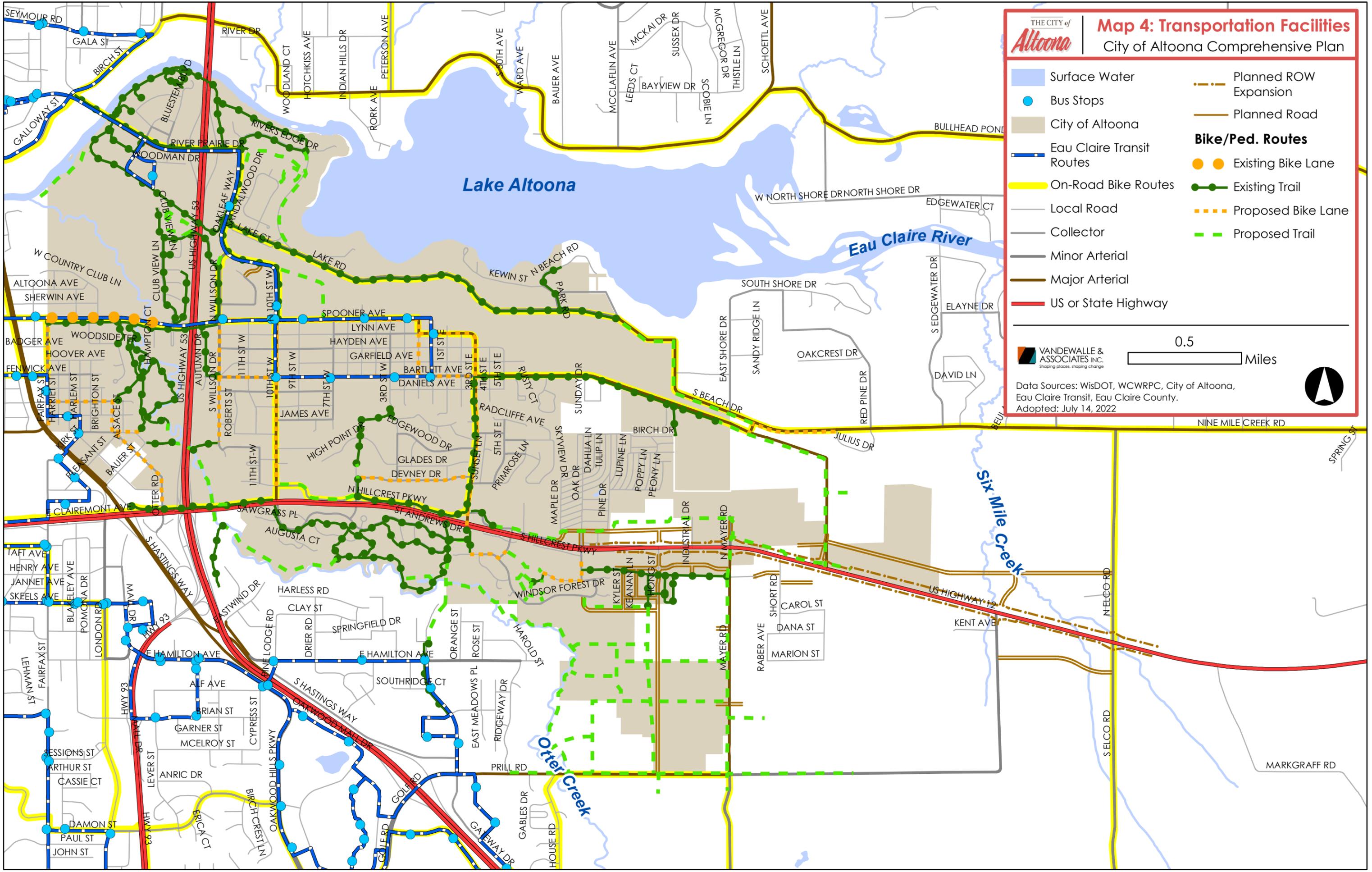
This Plan and the objectives of the Place Plan align strongly in connecting and integrating public open space throughout the community to foster improved public health and quality life, advance environmental stewardship and climate resiliency, promote fiscal sustainability, and drive economic development opportunities.

There are also several project prioritization principals in the Place Plan that aim to implement the objectives stated above and advance many of this Plan's goals, objectives, policies, and strategies, these include:

- Enhancing network connectivity of all public spaces and natural areas.
- Integrating equity into the location, design, and access of public space spaces.
- Targeting investment in facilitates and amenities with the highest potential impacts.
- Being cost efficient to improve the fiscal and structural performance of the City.
- Reinvesting in existing infrastructure through continuously evaluating and monitoring facilities and programming.
- Strengthening collaborative partnerships to fund future programs and facilities.
- Being innovative and adaptive through trend-based programming.
- Leveraging all available resources, including the private sector and volunteer groups, to provide funding, maintenance, and land acquisition.



Additionally, as noted above, the City has conducted Safe Routes to School planning that has identified existing multi-modal transportation barriers to and from community facilities. In combination with this work, the City has also been involved in the Chippewa Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and is currently working on a City of Altoona Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which will provide strategies for continuing to improve active transportation opportunities throughout the community. Finally, as noted in the following chapter, there is an opportunity to continue to connect natural resources with recreation and tourism. Furthering all these initiatives and aligning these plans will both assist in many of the City's economic development and natural resource preservation goals, but also play a role in advancing many of this Plan's overarching goals for climate action, social equity, and economic vitality. This City will continue to implement the Place Plan and the other related plans within this strategy and update the Place Plan within the next five years.

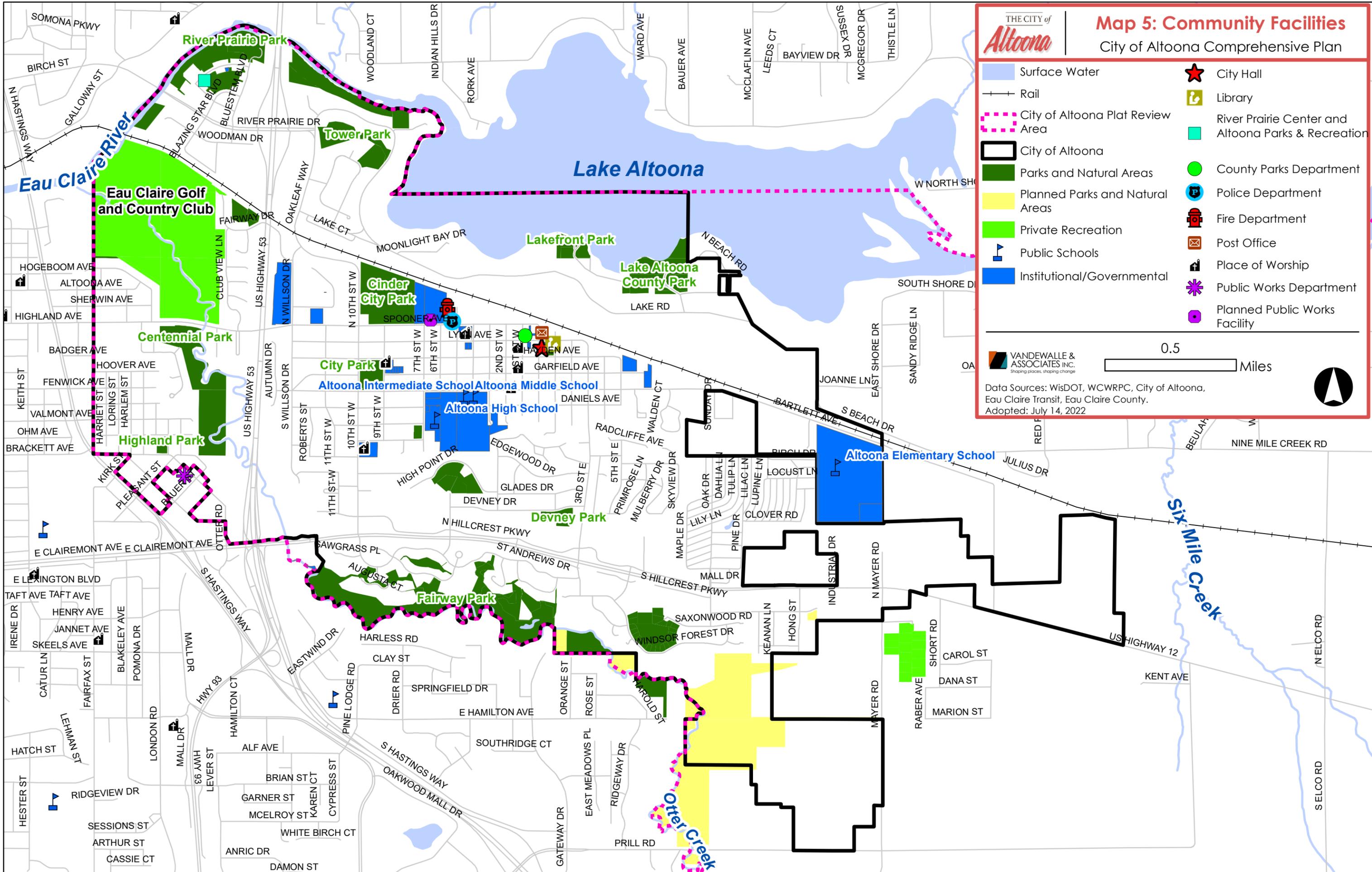


- Surface Water
- Bus Stops
- City of Altoona
- Eau Claire Transit Routes
- On-Road Bike Routes
- Local Road
- Collector
- Minor Arterial
- Major Arterial
- US or State Highway
- Planned ROW Expansion
- Planned Road
- Bike/Ped. Routes**
- Existing Bike Lane
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Proposed Trail

0.5 Miles

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Shaping places, shaping change

Data Sources: WisDOT, WCWRPC, City of Altoona, Eau Claire Transit, Eau Claire County.
Adopted: July 14, 2022



THE CITY of Altoona

Map 5: Community Facilities

City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan

Surface Water	City Hall
Rail	Library
City of Altoona Plat Review Area	River Prairie Center and Altoona Parks & Recreation
City of Altoona	County Parks Department
Parks and Natural Areas	Police Department
Planned Parks and Natural Areas	Fire Department
Private Recreation	Post Office
Public Schools	Place of Worship
Institutional/Governmental	Public Works Department
	Planned Public Works Facility

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0.5 Miles

Data Sources: WisDOT, WCWRPC, City of Altoona, Eau Claire Transit, Eau Claire County.
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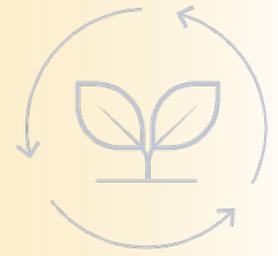


Chapter 8

AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES



CHAPTER 8: AGRICULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES



INTRODUCTION

An integral component of the City's high quality of life is the preservation and improvement of its surrounding agricultural and natural resources. Part of Altoona's identity is defined by its local and regional amenities such as Lake Altoona, the Eau Claire River, Otter Creek, woodlands, open space, and surrounding rural landscape. As growth pressures increase on all sides of the community and within it, there is an ever-increasing need to proactively protect and enhance these features and resources over the planning period.

This chapter is intended to provide the goals, objectives, and policies related to both agricultural and natural resource preservation, protection, and improvement. It also details a set of key recommendations to help advance or achieve them. Background information, data, and existing plans related to agricultural and natural resources can be found in Appendix A.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Advance the City's role in climate resilience and sustainability through the implementation of stormwater best management practices and the preservation of natural and agricultural resources.
- Limit development within the City's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction and foster a compact development pattern within the City's boundaries.
- Connect natural resources with recreational opportunities and tourism.
- Support long-term farmland preservation efforts outside of the City's future growth areas.
- Improve and preserve urban biodiversity through well-integrated and connected greenways, forests, vegetation, native plantings, and gardens.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Protect the health, integrity, sustainability, and quality of natural resources and ecological systems for the benefit of present and future generations.
2. Work with the surrounding municipalities to preserve and protect agricultural uses from premature, inefficient, or potentially damaging development in mutually agreed areas.

Objectives

1. Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and isolated natural areas from new development.
2. Advance the City's role in becoming a more sustainable, energy-conscious, and climate resilient community through regional partnerships and development of local policies and plans.
3. Promote compact development patterns within the City's Sewer Service Area and maintain a hard edge between urban development and the countryside.
4. Discourage land uses, land divisions, and activities that may conflict with agricultural uses or adversely affect farm investments in long-term farming areas outside of the City's long-term growth areas.
5. Prioritize the preservation of productive agricultural soils and environmentally sensitive areas in the City's planning area as a factor in decisions on future community expansion.

Policies

1. Use the City's extraterritorial subdivision review and Official Map to prevent premature rural development and work with surrounding communities to encourage an orderly, efficient development pattern that minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses. Within the City, encourage compact new development as well as infill and redevelopment within the City to preserve lands outside of the City's growth area for agriculture, natural resources, or open space.
2. Control and limit the creation of scattered rural home sites and subdivisions that are not served by public water and sanitary sewer within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
3. Carefully consider the location of prime farmland and environmentally sensitive areas before making decisions on the expansion of urban services or community growth.
4. Work with Eau Claire County on any future updates to the Hazard Mitigation Plan, Farmland Preservation Plan, Land and Water Resource Management Plan, Forest Land Use Plan, and County-wide Comprehensive Plan.
5. Require natural resource features to be depicted on all site plans and preliminary plats and certified survey maps in order to facilitate preservation of natural resources. These should include wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, drainageways, and wooded areas. Once identified, establish maximum clearance or removal standards for these features and require onsite mitigation where those standards cannot be met.
6. Use the City's Zoning, Subdivision, and Official Map to protect waterways, shorelines, wetlands, and floodplain areas within the current City limits and extraterritorial area.
7. Enforce erosion control and stormwater management standards to facilitate maximum infiltration of stormwater volume using Best Management Practices such as rain barrels, infiltration swales, pervious pavement, rain gardens, and green roofs.
8. Establish municipal and City-wide renewable energy and carbon emission goals as part of a Climate Action Plan or by pursuing certification by a rigorous and independent sustainable community program.
9. Develop sustainable infrastructure standards and preferred strategies so that developers understand what are acceptable for meeting water quality and quantity control objectives.
10. Reduce pavement/impervious surface area through use of porous pavements wherever possible (streets, walkways, drives, parking lots, patios, etc.).
11. Encourage the use of green infrastructure, natural landscaping, and similar development practices that enhance the integration of natural systems in the built environment and support awareness and enjoyment of these systems.



STRATEGIES

Advance Stormwater Best Management Practices

Continue to integrate Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) wherever possible to mitigate the negative impacts stormwater runoff can have on downstream properties and waterways, especially Lake Altoona, Otter Creek, and the Eau Claire River. Stormwater BMPs aim to control runoff volume by managing precipitation as “close to where it hits the ground” as possible, thereby facilitating infiltration of precipitation into groundwater and evaporation of water back into the atmosphere. This approach decreases peak stormwater quantities and improves the overall quality of the stormwater that does enter streams and lakes. The City should promote, and in certain cases require, the following BMPs:

Partner with local and regional interest groups and the WisDNR to promote water quality protection activities. In addition, assist in watershed restoration and planning to improve water quality in Lake Altoona and Otter Creek. This can be done by implementing many of the recommendations below.

Maximize permeable surface areas. This technique focuses on reducing the impervious footprint of development sites and breaking up large, paved areas with permeable surfaces and/or natural ground cover and vegetation. Since the impacts of stormwater runoff are far more effectively managed by natural systems, such as wetlands and forest ecosystems, than by pervious ground cover that has been altered by construction or other human impacts (e.g. front lawns), the preservation of environmental corridors will go a long way in mitigating stormwater impacts. Where paved surfaces are necessary, these areas should be graded so they drain to infiltration areas. This approach also includes the incorporation of narrower widths for local neighborhood streets that will never carry large traffic volumes or high-speed traffic, and the development of narrower lots, which are typically associated with less impervious street and sidewalk surface per lot.

Continue to utilize progressive construction site erosion control practices. Construction sites generate a significant amount of sediment runoff if not managed properly. Under current state laws, erosion control plans are required for all construction sites that are larger than one acre. It is recommended that the City continue to enforce erosion control ordinances and techniques for the protection and continued improvement of water quality. In particular, progressive erosion control systems should be components of new development sites. These techniques include providing silt fencing surrounding the construction project, minimizing the amount of land area that is disturbed throughout the construction process, and quickly reestablishing displaced vegetation.

Retrofit existing stormwater outlet points. There are a few areas of the City where storm water is directed into natural systems such as Lake Altoona and Otter Creek with little treatment or slowing. These areas of the City were developed prior to greater awareness and concern for how storm water from human landscapes impact natural systems, in terms of quality, temperature, and rate of flow. The City should consider retrofitting these areas with green infrastructure features, including upstream within the catchment area, to improve water quality.

Manage Salt. Salt is utilized to manage pavement conditions through the long Wisconsin winter by public agencies on roadways, and by residents and businesses in their drive areas. Unlike some other contamination of storm water, some of the salt dissolves in the water and it is not removed in conventional storm water ponds. Some storm water features that hold water until it evaporates rather than reaches natural water bodies remove salt, but salt still impacts these



facilities. In addition, salt negatively impacts areas near roadways such as boulevards and drainageways that are not controlled by infrastructure. Salt has increasingly been recognized as a cumulative stress pollutant that is changing the chemistry of Wisconsin waterways. Agencies are seeking to reduce salt use and identify strategies to effectively manage pavement in ways that limit salt pollution. These include applying a salt brine solution rather than dropping solid salt, and using alternatives such as a solution containing beet juices. The City should continue to seek ways to reduce salt use, and to design and manage infrastructure to limit the impacts of salt on the environment.

Incorporate infiltration and retention areas in new development. Where stormwater basins are necessary to effectively manage runoff, such basins and associated conveyance routes should be carefully integrated into the surrounding development pattern and should incorporate native/natural edge vegetation whenever possible to ensure the aesthetic and functional integrity of the site. Facilities should be regarded as assets for enhancement, beautification, and interest instead of relegated as undesirable site requirements. Other infiltration techniques include:

- **Rain gardens:** A rain garden is a landscaping features that are designed, located, and installed for the purposes of capturing stormwater runoff and allowing it to infiltrate back into the ground. The City may codify rain garden design standards and allow them to apply toward meeting landscaping requirements.
- **Rain barrels:** A rain barrel collects and stores the water that drains from rooftops to prevent it from running offsite. A hose can be connected to the barrel, and the collected rain can be used to water the lawn or garden or to wash the car. Barrels can also be set to slowly empty themselves, allowing the water to filter back into the ground. It is recommended that the City develop a rain barrel program and provide residents with information about how and where they can purchase their own rain barrels.
- **Permeable pavers:** Pavement and/or concrete is typically impervious, forcing water away from it. Permeable pavers aim to change that by allowing water to seep through the pavement itself or providing gaps for the water to seep into. Both methods allow stormwater to be controlled at the source, while helping to reduce runoff and increase the filtering of the water. Permeable pavement is a rapidly evolving and improving technology that offers a new form of onsite stormwater management. The City may integrate permeable paver standards into its Zoning Ordinance and standard engineering specifications to encourage use where appropriate.
- **Retention ponds:** Retention ponds are designed to filter out sediment and other solids from stormwater, while also retaining runoff on-site. These ponds usually have some water in them most of the time to allow materials in the water to separate out and sink to the bottom. These are typically used in larger-scale developments or subdivisions. Several existing retention ponds exist in the City, and are necessary to continue to be utilized in site-specific situations moving forward.
- **Bioswales:** A bioswale is a small-scale combination of a detention pond and vegetate buffer strip. It is typically designed to be sloped, so that it both filters the water through organic materials that make up the buffer, while also containing the water during rain events. Bioswales are typically dry most of the time, other than directly after rain events or snow melts. These swales can be attractively landscaped combining rain garden techniques to create a more ecologically, visually, and hydrologically valuable asset. Overall, they remove pollutants, silt, and other debris that might be in the water, while also mitigating peak stormwater flow. The City may integrate bioswale standards



into its Zoning Ordinance and standard engineering specifications to encourage use and count toward meeting site landscaping requirements.

- **Green (vegetated) roofs:** This stormwater feature effectively act like sponges, absorbing water from rainstorms that would otherwise run off the roof. Green roofs also function as filters, removing pollutants from rainwater. They can also have a dual function in facilitating solar panels or recreation space on rooftops. The City may consider adopting green roof standards and evaluate integrating them into future municipal facility projects.
- **Vegetated buffer strips and berms:** Locating areas of vegetation either alone or in combination with landscaping berms around properties helps restrict the off-site flow of water. Also, the addition of organic material into soil aids in the decomposition and filtration of pollutants.

Leverage resources, adapt policies, and develop plans. Altoona has a Stormwater Ordinance, Stormwater Utility, and Environmental Resources Ordinance to manage the interaction of water through the community and implement many of the elements above. The utility exists to provide much-needed resources to address larger-scale stormwater dynamics in the community. The City should also consider the development of a Green Infrastructure Plan to help identify existing issues, provide defined standards for the integration of green infrastructure into new and existing developments, and establish action steps for increasing green infrastructure best practices throughout the community.

Overall, the City will continue to focus on maximizing pervious surfaces and minimizing the potential for groundwater and surface water contamination. Stormwater systems will be designed as an integrated system of green infrastructure, features of visual interest and ecological value, and avoid long underground conveyance and large regional facilities were ever possible.

Improve and Preserve Urban Biodiversity

Many species of wildlife can coexist successfully within and on the fringes of cities if community plans recognize and maintain the necessary habitats and conditions. It is also important to reduce conflict between the built environment and the natural environment. For example, birds can collide with glass clad buildings, and runoff from lawns and pavement impairs soil and surface water quality. As the City becomes more developed, preservation of urban biodiversity is not only essential for protecting wildlife and the natural environment, but it also adds richness to urban life.

Community Forestry. Over the past decade the City has continued to expand its community forestry capacities. Earlier in the decade, the City's efforts were focused on preparing for and combatting the spread of Emerald Ash Borer, but activities were limited in terms of tree trimming and new planting activities to improve or maintain overall urban trees. The City now has a focused effort and resources on tree planting and capacity in city staff to proactively maintain a forestry program.

The benefits of a robust urban forest and tree canopy are many. Urban forests help to filter air and water, control storm water, conserve energy, create shade, regulate temperature, absorb and store carbon, and provide animal habitat. They also add beauty, form, and structure to urban design. By reducing noise and providing places to recreate, urban forests strengthen social cohesion, spur community revitalization, and add economic value to our communities.



The City should complete a tree inventory and create an urban forestry plan. This process will identify and describe ecologically sound strategies and an action plan for achieving the City’s goals of creating and maintaining a robust and healthy tree ecosystem. This plan may also inform the update of policies and standards for landscaping in private development.

Preserve and Improve Greenways to Support Habitats. Linking parks and open spaces is not only valuable for humans. An interconnected greenway system also allows wildlife to move among habitats and to have greater habitat extent to support their population and respond to stresses in the environment. Improving biodiversity supports wildlife, such as pollinators and birds, in many ways. Greenways should be kept as “natural” as possible. Multi-use paths should be designed to allow people to access and enjoy these areas while minimizing impact. In addition, it is essential that the City continues to analyze greenways and open spaces to determine changes to enhance them. Some of the primary methods for enhancement include bank stabilization, habitat restoration, minimizing compaction of soil, managing storm water runoff, creating and preserving buffer areas, and reducing invasive species.

Integrate Vegetation. There are many ways the City and the community can improve the built environment to enhance urban biodiversity. The City should seek opportunities for well-integrated greenspace in developed areas and encourage trees and native plantings in boulevards, remnant properties, along stormwater facilities, and transportation corridors. Urban life is significantly enhanced with the addition of shade-providing trees and water filtering vegetation.

Replace Lawns with Native Plantings and Gardens. The traditional suburban lawn is comprised of non-native species, requires significant time, water, and energy to maintain, and does not contribute to local wildlife. Most lawn areas are mowed, but otherwise not utilized for recreation or other uses. Many lawn areas could be transitioned to more ecologically valuable, visually interesting, resource efficient, and lower maintenance conditions. Strategies could include the addition of pollinator gardens, food gardens, rain gardens, native grasses, and flowers. These native lawn substitutes create a similar appearance but are more ecologically productive and require less maintenance.

As described in the Place Plan, nature is not only in parks and open spaces, it can be found throughout the community. Even the street trees and plantings between buildings can support biodiversity and act as a nearby nature access point for residents. Altoona supports the integration of vegetation into the built environment. Building site standards should be revisited to integrate ecologically sound and practical requirements and guidance to improve where and how green infrastructure is utilized. Methods such as rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, and urban agriculture should be integrated wherever possible to support biodiversity and increase equitable access to the myriad positive health benefits associated with contact with nature.

Foster a Compact Development Pattern to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Agricultural Resources

From time to time, development proposals for areas in the Town near to the City’s municipal limits have permitted large-lot residential development. This type of large-lot development impedes the City’s ability to provide municipal facilities in an efficient, cost-effective manner. This type of development also consumes agricultural land at a much faster rate (up to 25 times faster) than more compact development within the City.



Altoona will promote a compact development pattern, focusing on techniques that reduce the amount of land required for additional growth such as infill development, redevelopment, Traditional Neighborhood Design, and higher density new development. In addition to helping keep development out of productive agricultural areas, woodlands, and environmentally sensitive areas, a compact and sustainable development pattern will benefit regional water quality, facilitate multi-modal forms of transportation, provide more affordable housing options, promote public health, and will be less expensive to serve with public utilities and services. In general, private well and septic development in areas within the long-term growth areas and the ETJ is strongly discouraged.

This Plan includes the following policies and approaches to support the City’s vision and values through a compact development pattern within its ETJ:

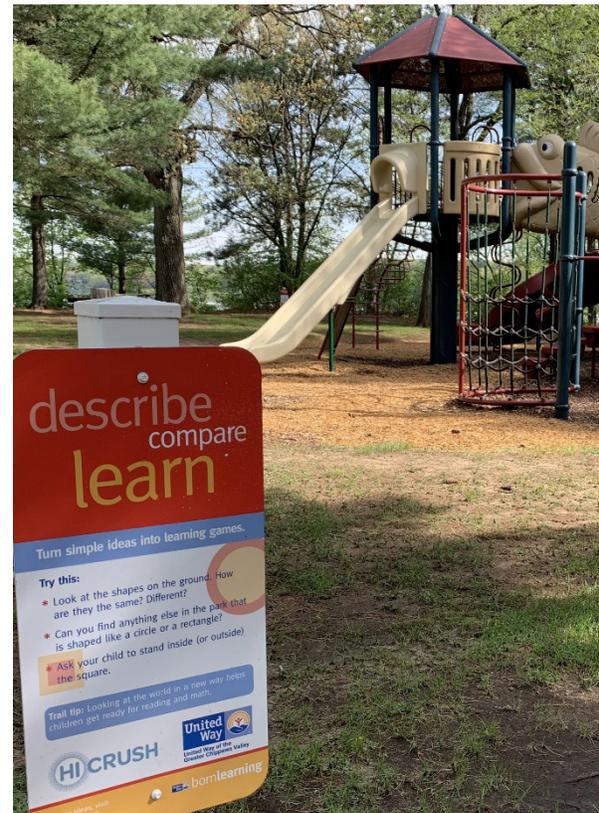
- Encourage the Town of Washington and Eau Claire County to adopt and implement land use plans that emphasize agricultural preservation, allow very limited amounts of development (1 dwelling per 40 acres), and protect natural resources in areas.
- Discourage the creation of scattered homes sites and subdivisions not served by public water and sanitary sewer within Altoona’s extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- Exercise ETJ plat review authority as established by state statutes.
- Do not approve subdivisions (five or more lots) within the ETJ, except in mutually agreed upon areas.

The City will continue to proactively protect environmentally sensitive areas with strategies including:

- Enforce zoning and subdivision regulations that require all natural resource features be depicted on site plans, preliminary plats, or certified survey maps in order to facilitate the preservation of natural resources.
- Continue to update local green infrastructure standards to reflect technology changes and best management practices, as stated above.
- Use public acquisition, dedication, or conservation easements to preserve critical natural resource areas, particularly in critical watershed areas and adjacent to existing parks and natural areas.
- Utilize the Official Map to protect environmental corridors within the City limits and its ETJ.
- Update, maintain, and enforce the City’s Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance.

Link Natural Resource Preservation with Recreational Opportunities and Tourism

Altoona has a significant opportunity to leverage its high quality natural resources to support recreation and tourism. One way to accomplish this is through increasing passive recreation options within existing resource areas. Natural resource preservation areas can serve as important components of the City’s overall park and recreation system, providing opportunities for outdoor education, relaxation, and exercise. Such areas also maintain and enhance the beauty of a community or neighborhood and serve a variety of ecological functions by providing habitat for wildlife, enhancing water and air quality, and providing natural flood control.



Additionally, the City has a unique opportunity to capitalize on the combination of its current draw to tourists and its outstanding natural resources and open spaces. Linking natural resources protection to its tourism base presents opportunities, including:

- Work with the WisDNR, Eau Claire County, and other local and regional groups to increase interpretive signage and wayfinding within natural areas to provide educational opportunities.
- Improve Lake Altoona access via existing parks. Both Eau Claire County (Lake Altoona Park) and the City of Altoona (Lake Front Park) have parks located on the shores of Lake Altoona. These parks can be further enhanced to increase tourism as regional destinations, providing direct access to the lake.
- Continue to enhance the Otter Creek corridor, working with Eau Claire County, the City of Eau Claire, and WisDNR to develop and connect trails and passive recreational opportunities.
- Use River Prairie as a model for successfully integrating natural resources within a large-scale development project that could be replicated in the future. Additionally, continue to enhance the recreational, educational, and public gathering opportunities that River Prairie provides in serving as a regional destination.

The City will continue to implement the Place Plan and collaborate with other regional entities on the implementation of their park, open space, natural resources, bike and pedestrian, and other plans to accomplish the above strategies.

Support Farmland Preservation Efforts in Eau Claire County

Eau Claire County's Comprehensive Plan, Farmland Preservation Plan, and Land and Water Resource Management Plan all identify long-term farmland preservation as a key priority. The County has instituted and administered various strategies for achieving this goal, including Exclusive Agricultural Zoning Districts, designating Farm Preservation Areas and Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA), assisting WCWRPC with administering Sewer Service Areas and environmentally sensitive areas, and several other programs to assist local farmers. As part of this effort, the City will remain informed and involved on any future updates to the County's Comprehensive Plan, Farmland Preservation Plan, and Land and Water Resources Management Plan, in addition to Farmland Preservation Programs administered by Eau Claire County.

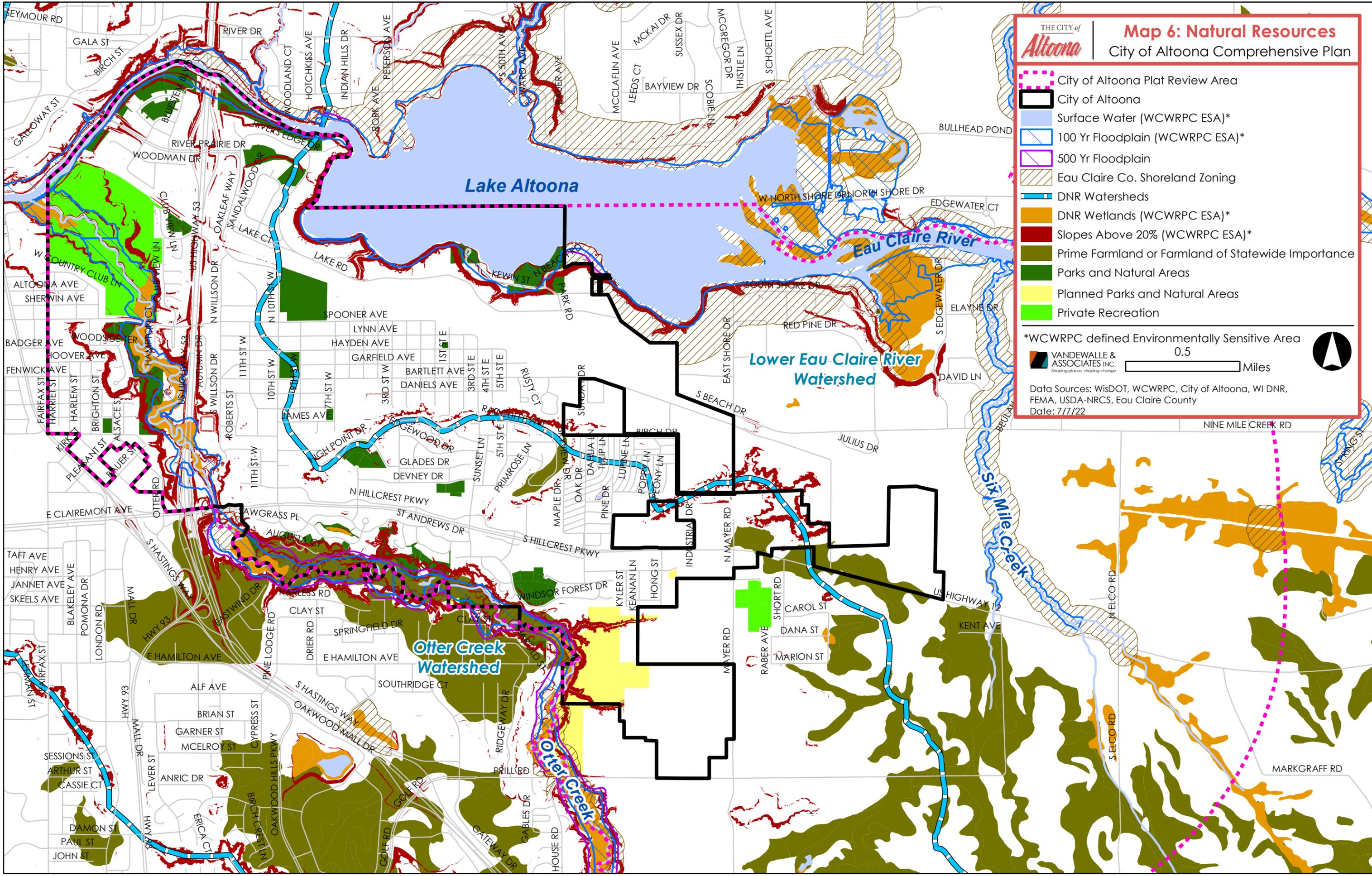
- City of Altoona Plat Review Area
- City of Altoona
- Surface Water (WCWRPC ESA)*
- 100 Yr Floodplain (WCWRPC ESA)*
- 500 Yr Floodplain
- Eau Claire Co. Shoreland Zoning
- DNR Watersheds
- DNR Wetlands (WCWRPC ESA)*
- Slopes Above 20% (WCWRPC ESA)*
- Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Parks and Natural Areas
- Planned Parks and Natural Areas
- Private Recreation

*WCWRPC defined Environmentally Sensitive Area

0.5 Miles

VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES INC.
Shaping places, shaping change

Data Sources: WisDOT, WCWRPC, City of Altoona, WI DNR, FEMA, USDA-NRCS, Eau Claire County
Date: 7/7/22





Map 7: School District Boundaries

City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan

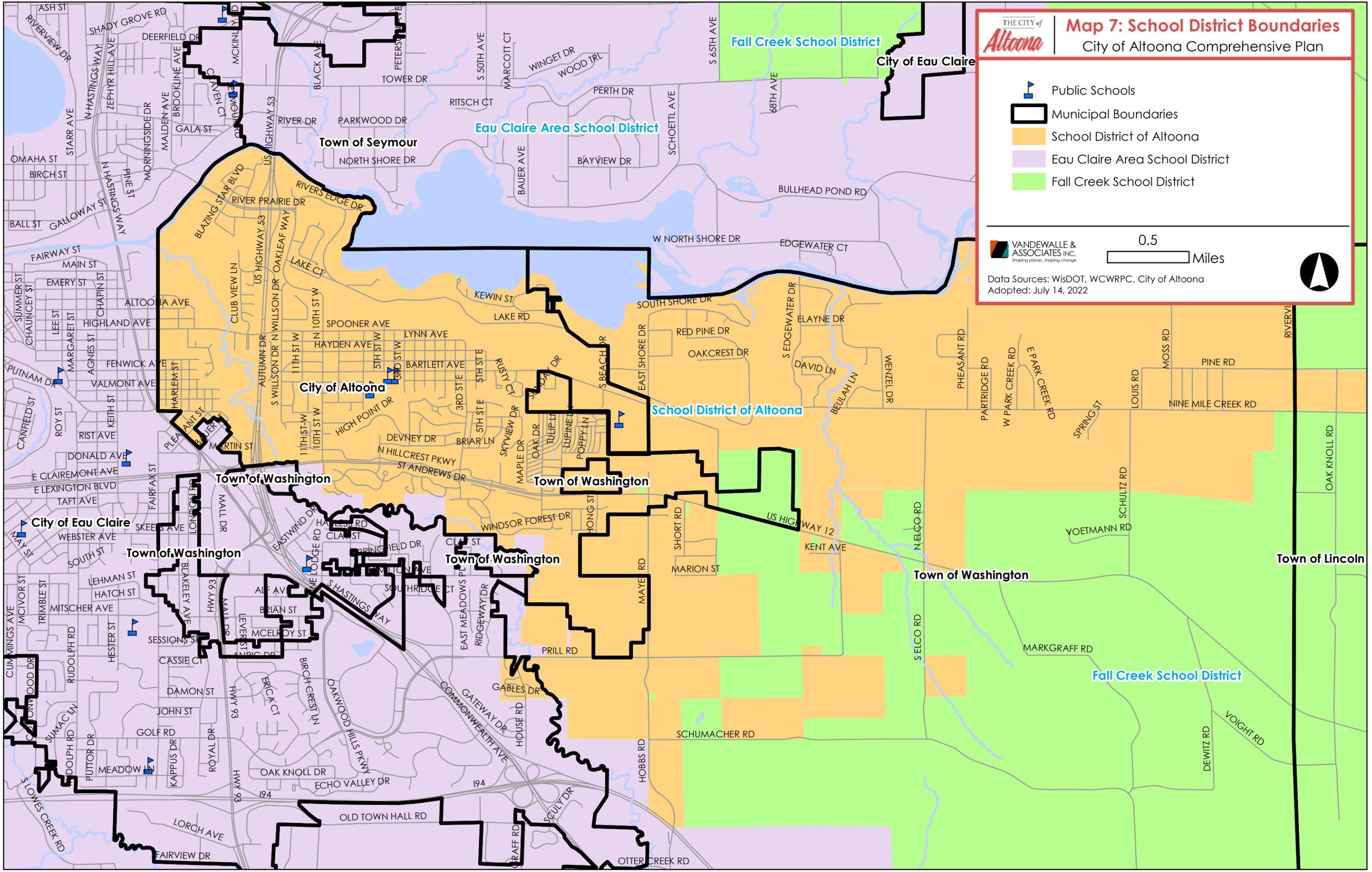
- Public Schools
- Municipal Boundaries
- School District of Altoona
- Eau Claire Area School District
- Fall Creek School District



0.5 Miles



Data Sources: WisDOT, WCWRPC, City of Altoona
Adopted: July 14, 2022



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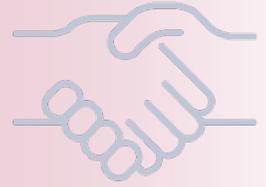


Chapter 9

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES



CHAPTER 9: INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES



INTRODUCTION

Intergovernmental cooperation is the relationships, the culture of collaboration, and the formal or informal agreements in which officials of two or more jurisdictions communicate visions, coordinate on plans and policies, and address and resolve issues of mutual interest. Many longstanding challenges related to land use, transportation, natural resources protection, and more have been difficult for a single jurisdiction to address, as they exist within regional systems, independent of municipal boundaries. For this reason, they will require action and cooperation with other jurisdictions within the region. As noted throughout this Plan, Altoona has many different overlapping, adjoining, or abutting governmental jurisdictions. Without communication, coordination, and partnerships with these entities, it will be impossible for the City to fully achieve the vision, goals, and recommendations of the public as summarized in this Plan.

This chapter is intended to promote consistency between this Plan and plans for neighboring jurisdictions, provide opportunities for increased collaboration and partnerships, and promote efficiencies between jurisdictions. All regional context and existing plans related to neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions can be found in Appendix A.

STRATEGIES SUMMARY

- Collaborate on regional initiatives.
- Engage in proactive and regular coordination with adjacent and overlapping governments and entities.
- Develop, implement, and enforce long-term intergovernmental agreements with neighboring municipalities.
- Participate in state-wide groups on topic-specific initiatives and in general government coordination and effectiveness.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICES

Definitions of goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations are found in the Issues and Opportunities Chapter of this Plan.

Goals

1. Establish and maintain mutually beneficial intergovernmental relationships and agreements with surrounding jurisdictions.

Objectives

1. Work with surrounding communities to encourage an orderly, efficient land use pattern that minimizes conflicts between urban and rural uses and preserves farming, open space, and natural resources in mutually agreed areas.
2. Encourage collaboration and coordination among the City of Altoona, Eau Claire County, City of Eau Claire, and the Town of Washington regarding planning initiatives, utilities, and development policies.
3. Continue to build upon existing and establish new partnerships with neighboring governments, Altoona School District, Eau Claire County, and State agencies on providing shared services and facilities.
4. Work with the Altoona School District on school district planning, transportation, potential school siting, joint recreational spaces and programming, workforce development, equity, diversity and inclusion efforts, and other areas of mutual concern.



Policies

1. Consider additional joint services and facilities where consolidating, coordinating, or sharing services or facilities will result in more efficient service provision or cost savings.
2. Cooperate with other governments and nonprofit agencies on planning for natural resources, recreation, climate action, sustainability, housing, social equity, public health, transportation, and other regional systems that encompass more than just the City of Altoona's boundaries.
3. Actively monitor, participate in, and review and comment on other future planning initiatives that are undertaken by overlapping or are adjacent to entities.
4. Pursue intergovernmental boundary agreements with the City of Eau Claire and Town of Washington.
5. Work to resolve identified and possible differences between the City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan and plans of adjacent communities.
6. Exercise extraterritorial authority where necessary to protect City interests or where intergovernmental cooperation efforts do not yield desirable results. Only extend public utilities and services to lands that have been annexed into the City of Altoona.
7. Partner with the Altoona School District and other local educational institutions on planning for future facilities and boosting workforce development.
8. Continue to participate and partner with the various local and regional economic development organizations.

STRATEGIES

Pursue Intergovernmental Agreements with the City of Eau Claire and Town of Washington

Altoona should initiate and participate in intergovernmental discussions with surrounding governments with the goal of achieving consistency among comprehensive plans and implementation programs. These discussions would ideally result in formal intergovernmental agreements committing each community to the mutually acceptable outcomes of these discussions.

In general, formal agreements help communities minimize competition for development, ensure that future development is of high quality and appropriately managed, provide all parties with a greater sense of certainty on the future actions of others, and promote municipal efficiency in an era of diminishing government resources. Formal intergovernmental agreements may cover:

- **Municipal Boundary Agreements:** Intergovernmental boundary agreements frequently suggest limits or guidelines to long-range city annexation, generally in exchange for some compromises from a participating town. Such compromises may include the town's agreement not to legally contest any annexation petition that is within the agreed annexation area and/or to limit town development in the possible future annexation area. Provisions for future maintenance, upgrades, or extensions of roads affected by annexations are often also covered in intergovernmental agreements. A boundary agreement can define future boundaries or areas of land use controls where two or more cities and villages jurisdictions overlap.
- **Sewer Service Area Agreements:** Some intergovernmental agreements include provisions that define where public sewer and/or water services may be extended and where they may not over the term of the agreement. These areas largely define where more intensive urban (publicly sewerred) growth may occur. Some agreements include



provisions that do not allow intensive development with onsite waste disposal (septic) systems in such designated or planned areas.

- **Future Land Use Agreements:** Frequently, intergovernmental agreements include maps or descriptions that specify future land uses or development densities considered acceptable or unacceptable. Some agreements also include provisions that the communities will then amend their comprehensive plans to be consistent with the future land use provisions in the agreement, or to not amend their comprehensive plans in a manner that would be inconsistent with the agreement. Mutually acceptable, more detailed arrangements with all neighboring jurisdictions would come into effect with a potential intergovernmental agreement.
- **Shared Services Agreements:** As budgetary constraints continue to evolve over time in the region, intergovernmental agreements for services may become increasingly critical. For example, shared agreements could be for police, fire, EMS, parks, sanitation, utilities, and other services. Cooperation and a collaborative approach to evaluating the service needs of the entire region may point to the need for increased service-based agreements between the City and neighboring jurisdictions.

Any one or combination of the intergovernmental agreements listed above should specify the length of time that it is applicable. Twenty years is a typical timeframe (e.g., through 2042), as this corresponds with the comprehensive plan time horizon. Occasionally, agreements have provisions for automatic extensions if neither party decides to withdraw. Most agreements also include provisions for periodic review and possible amendments if both parties agree. This keeps the agreement top of mind and allows for adaptations as conditions change. It is recommended that the City actively pursue intergovernmental agreements following adoption of this Plan.

Collaborate On and Take a Leadership Role in Regional Initiatives

Because many of the City's goals and objectives relate to issues that extend beyond municipal boundaries, Altoona intends to maintain an active and open dialogue with surrounding communities, jurisdictions, and entities. A few specific opportunities to participate in regional initiatives include:

- **Economic Development.** Various economic development organizations such as the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (WCWRPC), Eau Claire Area Economic Development Cooperation, Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce, Visit Eau Claire, and Momentum West work beyond the boundaries of Altoona to advance economic development efforts. It is recommended that the City continue to play an active role in all regional economic development activities.
- **Natural Resources, Parks, and Trails.** Inherently, these amenities transcend boundaries in terms of their location, jurisdiction, and connectivity. Because they play a pivotal role in providing a high quality of life to residents and act as regional tourism amenities and destinations, it is recommended that Altoona continue to work with WisDNR, WCWRPC, Eau Claire County, the City of Eau Claire, and others to enhance the connectivity, protection, and useability of these assets.

Intergovernmental Agreements Under Wisconsin Law

There are two main types of intergovernmental agreements under Wisconsin Statutes. The first is available under Section 66.0301, which allows any two or more municipalities to agree to cooperate for the purpose of furnishing services or the joint exercise of any power or duty authorized under State law. While this is the most commonly used approach, a "66.0301" agreement is limited by the restriction that the municipalities must be able to exercise equal powers. Another second type of intergovernmental agreement is a "cooperative (boundary) plan" under Section 66.0307 of Wisconsin Statutes. This approach is more labor intensive and ultimately requires State approval of the agreement, but the "66.0307" approach does not have some of the limitations of the "66.0301" agreement format.

An increasingly common approach is for communities to first enter into a "66.0301" intergovernmental agreement, which in part directs the communities to then prepare a "66.0307" cooperative plan covering issues such as boundary changes.

- Transportation. Within the City of Altoona, there are local, county, and state roadways. Maintaining, planning, and improving these roadways requires coordination between local, county, and state jurisdictions. As the City continues to grow, evolve, and change, it is increasingly important to evaluate needs and collaborate on major projects to increase efficiency and effectively allocate resources. Additionally, as the City's demands for public transit services evolve overtime, Altoona should continue to collaborate with Eau Claire Transit on regional bus and paratransit service provision, planning, and funding.
- Education. The Altoona School District boundaries cover nearly the entire City and extend into the Town of Washington. It is critically important for Altoona and the School District to continue to partner together on future planning, school siting, services, and workforce development efforts, as recommended throughout this Plan. Additionally, there are several area higher-education institutions near Altoona, including the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, University of Wisconsin-Stout, and Chippewa Valley Technical College. It is recommended that the City continue to partner and work with these entities, focusing on regional initiatives.
- Sanitary Sewer. Altoona relies on the City of Eau Claire wastewater treatment plant to serve the City's sanitary sewer demands. The plant was improved in 2014 to handle anticipated demand through the year 2030. If significant growth continues in the region, additional improvements to the system may be required. Proactively working with Eau Claire on sewer capacity is necessary to preserve capacity for growth.
- Climate Action, Sustainability, Equity, and Public Health. There are many local and regional groups working on various projects and programs related to advancing these initiatives. As documented throughout this Plan, Altoona should play a key leadership role in advancing these topics as at the local and regional level to improve health outcomes, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and waste, increase energy efficiency, improve social equity, evaluate and expand equitable services, and prepare for climate change.
- Housing. Building on the work already completed through the Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force and City of Altoona Housing Action Plan, the City Altoona can continue to play a leadership role in partnering with regional entities to continuously evaluate regional housing needs, collaborate on programming efforts, and leverage alternative funding sources in order to better align housing development with community goals and values and to meet unmet housing needs.



Contribute to Statewide Initiatives

Local government services and duties are diverse and complex, ranging from infrastructure to policing, economic development to parks and recreation. Encouraging city staff and officials to participate in and contribute to state-wide initiatives and professional associations are tools to maintain city services and activities consistent with current best practices. This participation is also valuable to contribute to dialogue among and between governments and their partners on issues that transcend any single jurisdiction. This participation can also result in learning about examples of creative and innovative actions or activities to bring back to Altoona.

The City and staff currently or recently contribute to several statewide efforts, including those sponsored by the Wisconsin League of Municipalities, Local Government Institute of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Local Government Climate Coalition, Wisconsin City-County Managers Association, Wisconsin Treasurers Association, and many others. The City should continue to encourage and support participation in state-wide initiatives and professional associations to benefit the community and region.

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Chapter 10

ACTION PLAN



CHAPTER 10: ACTION PLAN



INTRODUCTION

To advance the vision and goals of this Plan, specific actions will be required based on the strategies described in each individual chapter. This chapter provides a roadmap for the City with prioritized action items for implementation, including potential partners and timing. Further detail about how this Plan can be used, monitored, amended, and updated over the planning period is provided in Appendix A.

STRATEGIES

Figure 10.1 provides a detailed list and timeline of the major actions that the City intends to complete to implement this Plan. Often, such actions will require substantial cooperation with others, including other jurisdictions, governments, and groups. This list is not exhaustive. It includes the strategies and recommendations that are likely to be near-term actions. The City Council may choose to pursue additional actions or prioritize other actions as conditions change.

The table has four different columns of information, described as follows:

- **Topic:** The first column identifies the chapter or topic area of this Plan where additional information regarding the recommendation may be found or more generally describes the overarching category in which the Action Item falls under.
- **Action Item:** The second column lists the specific steps, strategies, and actions recommended to implement key aspects of the Plan.
- **Potential Partners:** The third column implies that City staff will take the lead on most (if not all) Action Items, but also lists other agencies, groups, or entities who would be a valuable partner in the pursuit of accomplishing that Action Item.
- **Implementation Timeframe:** The fourth column responds to the comprehensive planning statute, which requires implementation actions to be listed in a stated sequence. The suggested timeframe for the completion of each recommendation reflects the priority attached to the recommendation. Each timeframe is defined as follows:
 - **In Progress** means that the Action Item has been initiated or addressed at some level, but it is not yet complete and remains an implementation priority corresponding to strategies in the Plan. In Progress status often used for Action Items that were identified in past Comprehensive Plans or have been long-established objectives of the City. These Action Items should be continuously reevaluated to make sure that progress is being made.
 - **Short** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 5 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Medium** means that the Action Item should be pursued over the next 10 years, following the adoption date of this Plan.
 - **Long** means that the Action Item should be pursued 10+ years, following the adoption date of this Plan.

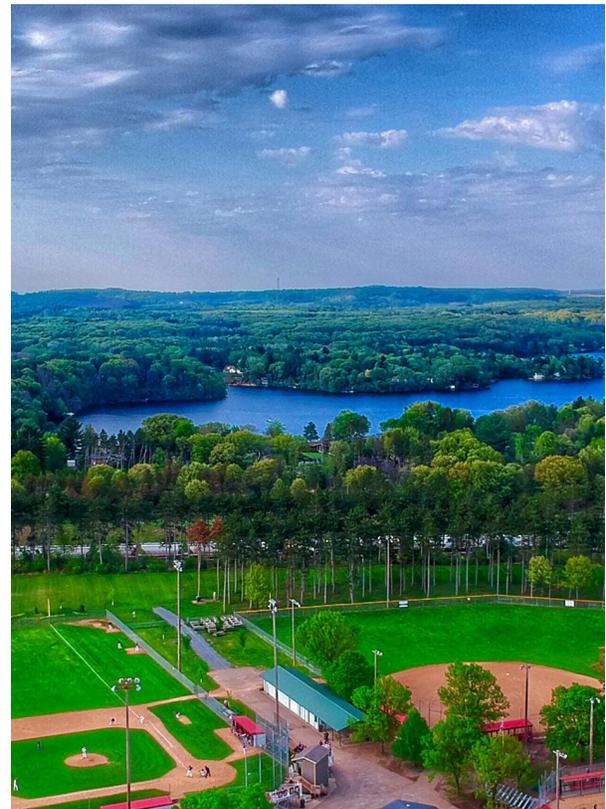


Figure 10.1.: Implementation Action Items

Topic	Action Item	Potential Partners	Time Frame
Land Use and Community Character	Identify environmentally contaminated sites in the City and develop community strategies to advance the cleanup of those sites.	Delta Institute, WI DNR	Ongoing
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Grow existing and develop new community events that celebrate the community’s diversity, culture, and history.	Eau Claire Public Arts Council	Ongoing
All	Participate in county, regional, and state updates to existing plans and development of new plans.	County, WCWRPC, and state	Ongoing
Land Use and Community Character	Require Neighborhood Plans in advance of all new neighborhood development that are guided by the principles of Traditional Neighborhood Design.	Developers and property owners	Ongoing
Land Use and Community Character	Use the Future Land Use Map as the basis for all public and private sector development decisions and land use change, including annexations, zoning map amendments, conditional use permits, subdivision approvals, and extension of municipal utilities.	City	Ongoing
Economic Development	Contribute to partnerships between local institutions and employers on workforce development training.	School District, UW-Eau Claire, local businesses	Ongoing
All	Continue to identify opportunities for property acquisition to guide land use, housing, economic development and other goals.		Ongoing
Housing and Neighborhoods	Implement the recommendations of the City of Altoona Housing Action Plan. Consider updating the plan in 2025.	Regional Housing Task Force	Ongoing
Land Use and Community Character	Exercise the City’s authority to review of any future subdivision within its extraterritorial jurisdiction.	City	Ongoing
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Leverage county, regional, state, and federal opportunities for grants and alternative funding sources to support transportation and community facilities projects.	County, WCWRPC, City of Eau Claire, state	Ongoing
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Continue to use and update the City’s Capital Improvement Plan and annually review for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan	City	Ongoing
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Implement the City of Altoona Place Plan. Update the plan in 2025 to maintain consistency with 5-year WI DNR funding requirements.	WCWRPC, County, City of Eau Claire	Ongoing
Implementation	Complete an annual <i>Progress Update</i> tracking the implementation of this Action Plan, incorporating these actions into the City Annual Work Plan.		Annual

Topic	Action Item	Potential Partners	Time Frame
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Complete a Climate Action or Renewable Energy Action Plan to complete an audit of current conditions, establish a baseline, and create renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions goals and action items.	Xcel Energy, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, Eau Claire, County	Short
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Provide increased in-house City staff training on sustainability and climate action best practices.	County, WCWRPC, UW-Eau Claire	Short
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Increase use of communication platforms and public education events on sustainability and climate action.	School District, UW-Eau Claire, other local groups	Short
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Expand community involvement of young people and marginalized communities in City processes.	School District	Short
All	Foster new local advocacy groups to take a leadership role in assisting to implement this Plan.	Local groups	Short
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Partner with local health organizations to develop and implement a framework for integrating a health in all policies approach.	County, local health care providers	Short
All	Rewrite or update the Subdivision Ordinance, Zoning Ordinance, and Sign Ordinance to reflect the recommendations of this Plan.	City	Short
Land Use and Community Character	Integrate health outcomes and determinants into future neighborhood, corridor, and other land use plans and infrastructure projects.	County	Short
Land Use and Community Character	Work with the Altoona School District on future school locations and expansions.	School District	Short
Economic Development	Create a TIF policy or guide that encourages, requires, or provides additional support for integrating sustainability and equity benchmarks into projects as a condition for city financial participation.	UWEC/UW-Extension, Wisconsin Local Government Climate Coalition	Short
Economic Development	Study opportunities and strategies to support expanded access to affordable and quality childcare.	UWEC/UW Extension, County, School District, regional employers	Short
Economic Development	Create an Equitable Development Framework	City of Eau Claire, UWEC/UW-Extension	Short
Economic Development	Complete a Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Developers and property owners	Short
Housing and Neighborhoods	Conduct or provide training opportunities for City staff and officials on housing to stay up to date on this constantly evolving topic.	UW-Eau Claire/UW-Extension	Short
Housing and Neighborhoods	Establish an Affordable Housing Fund by adding another year to any future expiring TIF district.	City	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Develop and adopt a City-wide Official Map to reserve land for future city facilities and infrastructure.	WCWRPC	Short

Topic	Action Item	Potential Partners	Time Frame
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Adopt a Complete Streets Policy that requires all future street projects to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian facilities.	City	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	During all future remodeling, renovation, and new construction projects of municipal facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate LEED certified standards into building and site design • Install electric car charging stations • Add green roofs and solar panels • Convert the City's fleet to electric or alternative energy vehicles 	City	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Develop and implement a sidewalk infill plan to identify and prioritize filling gaps in the existing network, leveraging the WCWRPC's recently completed sidewalk audit.	City	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Conduct a development impact analysis and create a community impact template to utilize in evaluating development proposals.	UW-Extension, WCWRPC	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Develop and implement a tree inventory and an Urban Forestry Plan	City, WI DNR	Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Consider a library impact fee to contribute to meeting facility service benchmarks.		Short
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Conduct a park impact fee study and revise the parkland dedication fee ordinance, consider creating a park improvement fee.	City, WCWRPC	Short
Agricultural and Natural Resources	Develop and codify raingarden, permeable paver, bioswale, green roof, and other green infrastructure standards.	UW-Eau Claire/UW-Extension, WCWRPC	Short
Intergovernmental Cooperation	Establish intergovernmental boundary agreements with the Town of Washington and City of Eau Claire.	Town of Washington and City of Eau Claire	Short
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Establish a new community garden and support a local Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.	UW-Extension, FairShare CSA Coalition	Medium
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Create an annual sustainability award to showcase local successes and built awareness.	WCWRPC, Economic Development Cooperation, Chamber of Commerce	Medium
Livability, Sustainability, and Health	Become a designated Wisconsin Healthy Community.	County	Medium
Economic Development	Complete Corridor Plans for Spooner Avenue, USH 12, and Hastings Way/Fairfax Street.	Developers and property owners	Medium

Topic	Action Item	Potential Partners	Time Frame
Economic Development	Complete a City of Altoona Arts and Culture Plan to increase collaboration with the arts community and prioritize future public art installments.	Eau Claire Public Arts Council	Medium
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Establish new public safety education events related to bicycling (i.e. Bicycle Rodeo).	WCWRPC, local groups	Medium
Transportation, Utilities, and Community Facilities	Become a Bicycle Friendly Community as designated by the American League of Bicyclists.	City	Medium
Agricultural and Natural Resources	Complete a stormwater management and/or green infrastructure plan.	UW-Eau Claire/UW-Extension, WCWRPC	Medium
Agricultural and Natural Resources	Create a local rain barrel program.	City of Eau Claire, County	Medium
Agricultural and Natural Resources	Expand educational programming within the City's parks and natural areas.	School District, County, City of Eau Claire, UW-Extension, Beaver Creek Reserve	Medium
Implementation	Complete a full update the City of Altoona Comprehensive Plan by 2032.	City	Long