

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR THE

CITY OF LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN

2003-2004



APRIL 15, 2004

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The City of La Crosse's Economic Development Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

The City of La Crosse's economy has evolved over the past several decades, changing from an economy with a strong reliance on a manufacturing base to one that is much more diversified. All would agree that the only real constant in today's economy is change and that the City has weathered these economic changes pretty well. However, the changes yet to come will be much more intense and long-lasting and will reach across all business sectors; so the City must take the necessary steps now to ensure that the local economy remains strong and diverse. The single most important step that the City has taken is the completion of this Economic Development Strategic Plan for the City of La Crosse.

A number of items point to the need for this Economic Development Strategic Plan. Whether it is the recent closure of several large employers, including the G. Heileman Brewing Company, La Crosse Footwear, and the Fleming Companies, Inc. or the recent announcements by several large employers to undertake expansions or move corporate headquarters just outside of the City, or to move jobs overseas; the City must be better prepared for the changes to come.

A look at the City's population and housing trends also shows that the City is not growing as well as the rest of La Crosse County, nor the State or Nation for that matter. And while most of the jobs in the area are still located within the City, more employees live outside the City causing stress for the region's environment and transportation systems. This trend poses difficult challenges for the City as the jobs start following the residents. The lure of raw land and easy access to Interstate 90 are contributing to this phenomenon and those announcements by the large employers are symptoms of this larger problem. This Strategic Plan acknowledges this and recommends actions for making the City of La Crosse more attractive for employment, population and housing growth. If the City can do a better job of retaining and growing our existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and make the City more attractive for residential development, this Strategic Plan will be considered a success.

In addition to these examples, creating an overall economic development strategy was also mentioned in the City's first Comprehensive Plan in decades, *Confluence*, in order to better deal with these and other issues related to the growth and development of the City. The Strategic Plan and *Confluence* work in tandem to improve the overall health and vitality of the City.

With these issues and challenges in mind, Mayor John D. Medinger appointed the 14-member Blue Ribbon Committee to undertake the task of creating this Strategic Plan. This group has been meeting regularly since August 2003 and has studied a whole host of issues such as the City's land availability, the continued restructuring of the economy away from manufacturing, the importance of technology, and the competition from other area communities for jobs and tax base to name a few. The Blue Ribbon Committee also sponsored four focus group meetings to explore how well the City of La Crosse was communicating with and serving the local business community. The resulting Economic Development Strategic Plan for La Crosse is a culmination of their efforts and sets the goals and actions for the City's Economic Development program for the next several years.

Several long-term themes emerged from this strategic planning process, including that the City must act as a catalyst for maintaining and enhancing the area's quality of life; that the City must collaborate with area governments and economic development groups; and that the City must work to assist local companies both large and small.

With these long-term themes in mind, the Blue Ribbon Committee recommended three “Strategic Directions” for the City as well as goals and actions to implement these themes. The following is a listing of these Strategic Directions and goals for the City’s Economic Development program, with the specific details and actions listed in the Strategic Plan starting on Page 6.

Strategic Direction No. I -- City Hall Improvement. The Blue Ribbon Committee found that the City government needs to do a much better job of communicating with and serving the business community. The following are goals for improving City Hall as it relates to business assistance:

- Goal A. Create a service-oriented, can-do attitude in City Hall.
- Goal B. Improve communication with the local business community and larger community about business and development issues.
- Goal C. Streamline the City Council approval process without compromising public input and local, state and federal codes.
- Goal D. Market the assets of our community.

Strategic Direction No. II -- Downtown Revitalization is Key for the Region. The Blue Ribbon Committee feels that the Historic Downtown offers so much already and has the potential to become even more than it is today. The redevelopment of the Downtown benefits the entire region. The goals related to continuing Downtown revitalization include:

- Goal A. Fully utilize and improve the riverfront as a unique activity center.
- Goal B. Promote the Downtown as a place to work, live, shop and play.
- Goal C. Make high priority Downtown redevelopment sites ready.

Strategic Direction No. III -- Development & Redevelopment Priorities. The third Strategic Direction looks at the City geographically and identifies areas for development and redevelopment. The goals are as follows:

- Goal A. Complete the following tasks in order to make redevelopment sites ready.
- Goal B. Prioritize efforts to create and maintain vital neighborhoods in the City.
- Goal C. Work to ensure transportation mobility.

It is envisioned that this Strategic Plan will be implemented over the next several years by closely adhering to the actions identified in the Plan. The action grid starting on Page 15 identifies who will be responsible for implementing the various actions and also the resources that will be necessary to make this all happen.

In addition, the Blue Ribbon Committee strongly believes that there must be a steering group who will pay attention to the Plan’s progress and make sure that these recommendations are carried out. Similar to what happened with the successful implementation of the City Vision 2000 Downtown Master Plan using the Downtown Project Management Team, the Blue Ribbon Committees feels that a committee should be appointed who will meet at least once a year to review the Strategic Plan’s progress and identify upcoming projects and resources for the Strategic Plan’s implementation.

Introduction

The main purpose of the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan is three-fold: (1) to understand the key economic development trends and challenges the City faces; (2) to understand the local economy and past City economic development efforts; and (3) to make recommendations for what types of actions the City should focus on for business and employment creation and retention and for enhancing the City's economic base.

Because the City has in the past and continues to utilize various tools for its Economic Development Program, the Strategic Plan should also help to coordinate and prioritize the use of the various tools and resources. To do all of that, the Strategic Plan should provide the long-term strategy for the City's economic growth and development along with short-term actions to achieve that strategy.

Besides the three-point purpose described above, other important elements of the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan should include (in no particular order): helping to provide an educated and high-quality work force and ensuring that people are paid a living wage--this is especially important because of the critical role education plays in strengthening the local economy; providing information and expertise about the City's role in business creation and retention; ensuring that there is sufficient land and available sites for development and redevelopment; making sure that the City's regulatory and political processes are effective and efficient; assisting the Common Council in prioritizing where and when City resources are used for infrastructure and development/redevelopment projects; fostering communication and collaboration between the City, other governmental entities and the business community; and ensuring that the City's high quality of life continues including working and partnering with the La Crosse School District and post-secondary institutions. The Strategic Plan will be the guiding policy document for the City's Economic Development program.

Background & Issues

In order to best understand the purpose of the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan, one must first understand where the Strategic Plan fits within the larger context of the City's Economic Development program. Throughout its history, the City has assisted many companies large and small, has created industrial parks and has been a major player in the local economy. The City has also and will continue to support our excellent local educational system and workforce development programs. The City's Economic Development program encompasses the total of all of the City's efforts and activities at working with the private sector in creating and maintaining businesses and jobs and in enhancing the City's economic base. Such efforts include:

- Providing low-interest loans and tax credits;
- Providing technical and other assistance;
- Building infrastructure including streets, parking, sidewalks, trees, lighting, public furniture, and utilities;
- Redeveloping key properties; and
- Enhancing the community's larger quality of life including education, recreation, and cultural amenities.

April 15, 2004 Recommended Plan

Critical for the City's continued growth and development will be how it handles those key trends and challenges that are yet to show themselves. Currently, we are facing several issues and trends, as summarized here. The following list was excerpted from the City's Comprehensive Plan, known as *Confluence*. These issues and challenges include:

- Land availability, because of the lack of raw land for new industrial development;
- Ensuring a living wage employment, because many people feel that wages are too low and that it is difficult to find employment with health benefits;
- The technology sector is key to the future, because of the greater reliance on technology for all types of jobs;
- The continued restructuring away from manufacturing tells us that the City must have a diversified economy;
- The central business district should continue being a white-collar job incubator;
- The importance of developing an overall economic development strategy for the City, which is being addressed through this Strategic Plan;
- Providing the proper balance between commercial, industrial and residential land uses to ensure that the City retains and attracts both jobs and residents;
- The redevelopment of brownfields and other underutilized sites which is related to our lack of raw land;
- The competition from other area communities for jobs and tax base; and
- Brain drain, because the City is losing many of its university and technical college graduates.



The University of Wisconsin at La Crosse

Economic Trends

A number of indicators point to the fact that the City is not doing as well as the rest of La Crosse County, the State of Wisconsin or the United States. A more detailed reporting and analysis of La Crosse's economy is provided in Appendix 1.

However, a brief review here of year 2000 U.S. Census information indicates that while the City of La Crosse is growing in both overall population (1.60%) and new housing units (6.39%) since 1990, the City's rate of growth for both trails the rest of La Crosse County (17.91% & 23.09% respectively), the State of Wisconsin (9.65% & 12.91%), and the United States (13.15% & 13.34%). The City's housing stock is also older than those other places of comparison and the City's rate of owner occupied housing is around 50%, well below that percentage for the rest of La Crosse County, which has nearly 80% of its housing being owner occupied.

The City's per capita income trails La Crosse County, the State and the Nation and the rate of growth since 1990 trails La Crosse County. These Census numbers all show that the City is not capturing as much growth as the rest of La Crosse County, has older and less owner occupied housing stock and has a larger number of poorer residents.

Similarly, the City's growth in the civilian labor force since 1990 mirrors its growth in population and housing, as the City's rate of growth (6.08%) trails the growth rate for the rest of La Crosse County (20.69%), the State (13.98%) and the Nation (11.50%). In the year 2000, while most of the jobs were still located within the City of La Crosse, more of those employees lived outside of the City and commuted to work to a much greater extent than in 1990. And while our labor force continues to grow, there is trouble on the horizon. According to the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board's *State of the Workforce Report 2003*, "Labor demand will outstrip supply somewhere around years 2006-2007."

In addition to the shift of employees outside of the City, the City's economic base continues to shift away from the manufacturing sector. By far the largest increase in employment was in the service sector, where the number employed increased by over 71% from 1990 to 2000. Other significant changes included decreases in the wholesale, retail, and transportation & utilities sectors, and a 16.64% increase in the education and health sector. Of note, the manufacturing sector declined by nearly 10%. The growth in the City's labor force does not compare as favorably to the growth in the rest of La Crosse County. Besides the overall growth rate, the remainder of the County gained those employed in manufacturing jobs from 1990 to 2000, while the City lost nearly 10% in this sector. The services and the education & health sectors also grew at faster rates in the rest of the County.

All of these indicators reinforce the need for this Strategic Plan.

The Vision

The Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee's vision is that in the very near future, because of the implementation of the goals & actions contained within this Economic Development Strategic Plan, the City of La Crosse will be known as:

- The Place with hard-working, innovative, knowledgeable employees who work with their minds and their hands;
- An Historic Rivertown, with a vibrant Downtown where people live, work, shop, and play;
- A Center of Health and Wellness;
- A Center for Learning, including higher education and outstanding public and private schools;
- The Social Capital of the region, for cultural amenities, shopping, and recreation; and
- The Place for housing choices in interesting and safe neighborhoods.

Process & Focus

As a part of the process to create the City's Strategic Plan, the Blue Ribbon Committee hosted several focus group meetings to understand a number of issues, including how the City works with the local business community. The purpose of the focus group meetings was to hold a sincere, open dialogue about the City of La Crosse, its past economic development efforts, problems and issues facing the City, and ideas for solutions to these problems. In short, the Blue Ribbon Committee learned that the City needs to do a better job at how the City serves and communicates with the business community.

In order to accomplish this objective of better communication and better service, there must be a cultural change at City Hall. This new culture will be characterized as one that has an open, dynamic, and positive can-do attitude. With the City government showing this leadership, the private sector will respond. Three long-term strategies will guide the City in its actions toward economic development. These guiding strategies are that the City will:

- Act as a catalyst to maintain and enhance the quality of life and the special assets we enjoy here; and use these qualities and assets as economic development tools for retaining and expanding existing businesses and for attracting new people and jobs to the City; and
- Collaborate with La Crosse County government and the other surrounding Cities, Towns, and Villages and other public and private entities on economic development and related issues. Key will be to promote the coordination of efforts and activities of the various public and private economic development entities in order to eliminate any gaps in service or duplication of efforts.
- Assist companies both **large** and **small** and work to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses equally.

A key for retaining our existing businesses will be for the City to "grow our own." That means the City must do the things necessary to help our local entrepreneurs and small businesses prosper and expand. This help can come in a variety of forms, such as supporting our local educational systems and workforce development programs, helping them find start-up and investment dollars, assisting them in their land and space needs, helping them through the permitting and Common Council processes, providing loans and tax credits when necessary, and getting similar businesses together (i.e. clusters) to see if there are mutual benefits.

In order to attract new businesses, the City must define and market our professional and skilled labor force and local educational system, our quality of life and the things that make us unique. The City must also ensure that our services, i.e. the Common Council processes, codes and permitting, and communication are working properly so that new business inquiries are handled promptly and professionally.

Business Sectors

As a part of this Strategic Plan, the Blue Ribbon Committee has identified several business sectors for retention, expansion and attraction. These targeted business sectors include: specialized manufacturing, food products and processing, information technology & related companies, printing & related companies, education, tourism, professional services, health care, and transportation; however this list of sectors is not meant to be exclusive, as the City's economy is comprised of many businesses not currently placed in one of the aforementioned sectors. Please see Appendix 2 to this Strategic Plan for a full discussion about the City's business sectors.

The targeted sectors represent the cluster of business and related companies which can build upon one another and take advantage of economies of scale and their close proximity to each other (See the *Fostering Cluster Development in Wisconsin Report* for additional information and language about the importance of business clusters and their positive impacts at the State level). For each individual business sector, the City will:

- Devote funding and technical assistance. Several of the State of Wisconsin's identified clusters are very important to the local economy such as food products and processing, printing, small engine manufacturing, tourism, and information technology. The City's responsibility should be to help coordinate the State's efforts with these local industry clusters and identify local needs for funding and technical assistance.
- Establish regular communication between the City and each local cluster group. This will include setting up regular meetings with each cluster and the Mayor, City Executives and Common Council.
- Research and track local economic information and trends. Provide relevant information via the City's web site and economic development newsletter concerning local economic development information and trends, City programs, vacant and available land and building space, and other information.

Strategic Directions

The resources of the City of La Crosse allocated to economic development will be most effective when focused in three Strategic Directions: City Hall Improvement, Downtown Revitalization, and Development and Redevelopment Priorities. The three Strategic Directions are defined by goals and specific actions, including the timing, resources, and leadership responsibility. The structure for presenting the strategies is as follows.

Strategic Direction Number I -- City Hall Improvement. The City is actively and extensively involved in economic development and it is a given that the City will continue to be actively involved at the local level. The City needs to do a better job of communicating with and providing service to the business community. Through the efforts of the Blue Ribbon Committee and the results of the focus group meetings held with business and community leaders, several goals for the improvement of City government have been identified. These are:

Goal A. Create a service-oriented, can-do attitude. A service-oriented attitude is one in which the City is responsive to business questions and issues, and works sincerely to be of service. In order to be successful, the Mayor, City Council, and City Executives must embrace this service-oriented attitude. In order for this cultural change to happen, the City will need to understand what a service-oriented attitude means and how it can change how the City provides service. It is believed that the Common Council must take the lead in order to make this happen.

Actions:

1. Engage a service and organizational expert/consultant to work with the Mayor, City Council and City Executives to audit the City's service delivery, committee structure and review processes; to suggest changes and improvements, and how this attitude can positively change the City's business environment.
2. Designate a point person (the Economic Development Planner) who regularly meets and communicates with the business community to relay information about programs, concerns, problems, etc., and acts as a liaison.
 - a. Create a "code green" process for networking City departments and the private sector when a business inquiry is received or an important business issue is identified. Code green is an industry term for helping a business, similar to a "code blue" in the health care field -- everyone drops what they're doing to help out.
 - b. Post information on the City's website related to "If you want to start a business" and "If you want to move here."
 - c. Redesign the City's web site to provide contact and program information, application forms, meeting dates/times and process, and a data base of available land and buildings.
 - d. Develop a way to measure the City's progress with focus groups, surveys, comment forms, etc.
3. Provide technical and financial assistance.
 - a. Assist businesses in obtaining critical start-up funds and venture capital by working with the local angel investors group.
 - b. Continue providing incentives and other assistance to both retain and attract businesses including the Upper Floor Renovation Loan and Small Business Development Loan programs, tax credits through the Western Wisconsin Technology Zone and City of La Crosse Community Development Zone, Tax Increment Financing, etc.

- c. Continue support of and partnering with the local educational systems.
- d. Continue working with the various economic development entities to provide technical and financial assistance, including the UW-L Small Business Development Center, the La Crosse Area Development Corporation, Downtown Mainstreet Inc., SCORE, the Greater La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, the La Crosse Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, Western Wisconsin Technical College, the Coulee Region Business Center, Workforce Connections and Workforce Development groups, and the Mississippi Valley Labor Management Council.
- e. Create a “first call for help” manual for La Crosse entrepreneurs. As an example, “First Call for Help” is a local directory of social service providers that presents information and contacts about the various local programs.

Goal B. Improve communication with the business community and larger community about business and development issues.

Actions:

- 1. Establish better communication channels with the business community by:
 - a. Hosting a quarterly roundtable meeting with the Mayor, City Council, City Executives and business clusters to educate them about the City’s business assistance efforts, to assess how the City is performing, to generate ideas of how the City can assist them and help them deal with the issues they are confronting.
 - b. Developing and distributing a regular City economic development newsletter.
 - c. Participating in regular local meetings with business and service organizations.
- 2. Develop a media strategy.
 - a. Implement the Marketing Strategies & Tools project for developing the base media packet and the marketing materials for the City and Downtown La Crosse (Currently underway with Interact Communications). This action to also include providing program information to existing businesses.
 - b. Develop press releases and press packets, La Crosse Tribune articles and guest columns highlighting the City’s quality of life and business success stories. Develop similar strategies for television and radio.
 - c. Educate businesses and citizens about the City’s business assistance efforts and the complexities of development issues.
- 3. Design and implement an annual City business awards program in order to recognize and appreciate our business community. Collaborate with the other economic development entities awards programs.
- 4. Host a “Business After 5” like reception at City Hall. Make sure that new businesses are invited and recognized.

Goal C. Streamline the Common Council approval process without compromising public input and local, state and federal codes.

Actions:

- 1. As mentioned in Goal A. Action 1, the service and organizational expert/consultant will also study the Common Council process and committee

structure as a part of an overall review of the City's processes to determine possible improvements, etc. in the system.

- a. Continue the recent use of a "buddy system" to help guide development proposals through the process. The buddy system involves private partners helping a development or business request through the Council process.
 - b. Use the City's website to inform the community of meeting dates and times, who to turn to for questions and City Department responsibilities. A longer term action should include upgrading the City's website so that people can apply and pay for permits, pay bills and fees, etc. on-line.
2. Create a brochure/pamphlet to explain the Common Council process, the types of legislation handled by the various committees and the times of committee meetings.

Goal D. Market the assets of our community. Besides marketing La Crosse to other areas, an important aspect of marketing the community is an educational component which describes local business success stories and educates the community about what the City does to assist these local businesses in their growth and development.

Actions:

1. Market the Strategic Plan and the recommendations contained herein.
2. Develop and fund a comprehensive external marketing strategy, along with the necessary tools, to attract new jobs and people to La Crosse. This is presently being accomplished in conjunction with Downtown Mainstreet Inc. and Interact Communications.
3. Develop a comprehensive internal strategy to provide information to existing businesses concerning City economic development efforts and programs such as mailings, guest columns, etc.
4. Participate in regional marketing efforts, collaborate with other communities and find a way to pool resources together to market the Coulee Region.



The Eagle Statue in Downtown La Crosse's Riverside Park

Strategic Direction Number II -- Downtown Revitalization is Key for the Region. Historic Downtown La Crosse is the regional activity center for the greater La Crosse area, serving as the center for finance, communications, government, employment, culture, and entertainment. Since 1993 the City of La Crosse, Downtown Mainstreet Incorporated (DMI), and the private sector have been implementing the City Vision 2000 Master Plan for Downtown revitalization. A major goal of the Plan is to reestablish an emphasis on the Mississippi River and the role of the riverfront in the community. Since the adoption of the City Vision Plan there has been public and private investment of over \$130 million in Downtown La Crosse. The efforts of the last decade were rewarded in 2002 as the City and DMI received a 2002 Great American Main Street Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for their successful efforts in Downtown revitalization through historic preservation.

As the City, DMI and the private sector enter the next phase of redevelopment and revitalization for Downtown, there are a number of goals the City should focus on:

Goal A. Fully utilize and improve the riverfront as a unique activity center.

Actions:

1. Support and coordinate with the City Vision 2020 Downtown Master Plan update to continue seeking opportunities for businesses and activities on the riverfront that bring people together such as restaurants, recreational, entertainment, and cultural uses.
2. Encourage the redevelopment of the area south of Piggy's restaurant into a mix of uses that could include a corporate headquarters, professional offices, restaurants, residential, entertainment, etc.
3. Continue connecting and extending the Riverwalk.
4. Establish better connections, both physical and visual between the Downtown and the Mississippi River.

Goal B. Promote the Downtown as a place to work, live, shop and play.

Actions:

1. Address the parking perception/situation by implementing the Downtown Parking Advisory Committee's recommendations including recommendations such as the "Park Smart" campaign for businesses and their employees, clear signage to direct drivers to ramps and lots and alternate parking areas, adding capacity to the Main Street and La Crosse Center ramps, and installing angle parking to name a few.
 - a. Identify methods for encouraging private businesses and educational institutions to create non-surface parking.
 - b. Negotiate leases with parking ramp users to require employee parking on the upper levels, leaving the lower levels for customers and visitors.
2. Continue developing the Downtown as an incubator for technology and related companies by working with companies such as First Logic, Logistics Health, and Financial and related industries.
3. Support and coordinate with DMI. Provide both technical and financial support.

4. Encourage businesses to advertise together (i.e. Downtown restaurants).
5. Encourage more outdoor seating and social activities.
6. Work with the local festivals to accommodate their needs and to encourage fest-goers into the Downtown.
7. Encourage the development of residential units. The upper floors of Downtown buildings are a vast untapped potential for creating additional housing units. Steps should be taken to ensure that these floors are made to be economically viable including the continued utilization of the City's Upper Floor Renovation Loan program and by reviewing building codes and permitting issues.
8. Implement the recently completed UW-Extension's Downtown La Crosse Retail Market Analysis Report.

Goal C. Make high priority Downtown redevelopment sites ready.

Actions:

1. Create information packets for each redevelopment site that contain contact and other relevant information, funding sources, and a list of approved uses for each site in strong partnership with the business community.

Redevelopment Sites:

The Blue Ribbon Committee has identified a number of properties in the Downtown that will be a high priority for redevelopment and reuse including:

1. The Park Plaza site on Barron Island
2. The future Transit Center site
3. The area south of Piggy's restaurant
4. Xcel Energy site as a gateway to Downtown
5. The County-owned former Montgomery Ward's site
6. The Sara Lee warehouse/Machine Products/MAPCO buildings along 2nd Street
7. The warehouse at 2nd and King Streets
8. In addition, 5th Avenue South is mentioned for having the potential for becoming an arts district with the La Crosse Community Theatre, galleries and shops already located there. This issue should be explored through the City Vision 2020 Master Plan.

Strategic Direction Number III -- Development & Redevelopment Priorities. This section of the Strategic Plan looks geographically at the City and where and when various key sites should be developed and redeveloped, the importance of La Crosse's neighborhoods and transportation mobility. Because the City is bound by the bluffs and the river, the City must use its land resources and plan for transportation improvements very wisely and efficiently. The City should aggressively explore all available financing options for redeveloping the following sites including the use of condemnation, brownfield grants, and others.

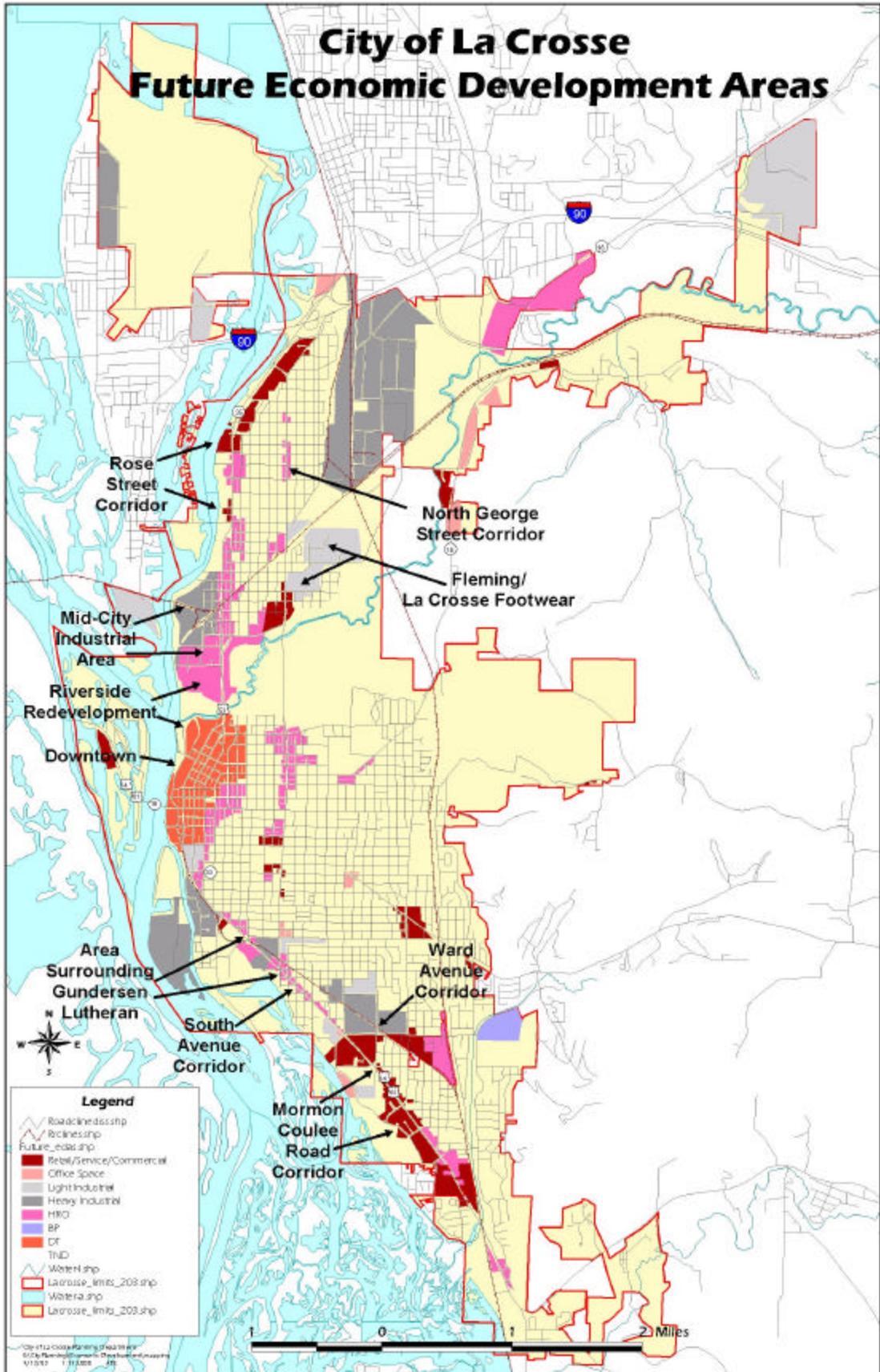
Goal A. Complete the following tasks to make redevelopment sites ready.

Actions:

1. Develop information packets with vital information for each redevelopment property, including preferred land uses and design concepts. See the map on the following page for the locations of these sites.
 - a. Riverside Redevelopment Project (Causeway Area) including the Mobil Oil property.
 - b. La Crosse Footwear facilities.
 - c. Fleming facilities.
 - d. The area surrounding the Gundersen-Lutheran hospital complex.
 - e. Specific sites within the City's Tax Incremental Finance and Redevelopment Districts.
2. Sponsor a developer conference to promote La Crosse and these sites.
3. Develop an "area plan" for each development and redevelopment area and corridor to explore acceptable future uses, density and urban design issues. In order to improve urban design and corridor aesthetics, work to create a City-wide "Mainstreet" program for the City's commercial areas and corridors and complete a "First Impressions" study with UW -Extension.
 - a. Rose Street from Interstate 90 to Downtown La Crosse.
 - b. Ward Avenue corridor.
 - c. Mormon Coulee Road/South Avenue corridor.
 - d. North George Street.



A rendering of proposed improvements to Copeland Avenue



Goal B. Prioritize efforts to create and maintain vital neighborhoods in the City.

Actions:

1. Create a City commission that specifically addresses neighborhood revitalization in high-priority neighborhoods. An example of their duties could include:
 - a. Directing the implementation of the Neighborhood RENEW program (Restore Everyone's Neighborhood Effectively & Win).
 - b. Working with the neighborhood associations to implement the four neighborhood plans.
 - c. Helping to re-establish "anchor" businesses and small commercial centers in the neighborhoods.
 - d. Working and partnering with the local school district and schools.
 - e. Continuing support and celebration of neighborhood associations and neighborhoods through efforts such as the City's replacement housing and housing rehabilitation programs, Habitat for Humanity, Coulee Cap and events such as block parties.

2. Identify innovative neighborhood housing solutions such as:
 - a. Identifying areas for housing renewal that can include a mix of housing types in collaboration with local developers and realtors.
 - b. Creating a local non-profit housing redevelopment organization.
 - c. Encouraging walking by providing sidewalks, trails and other pedestrian amenities in all new development and redevelopment projects City-wide.

3. Focus on the Mormon Coulee area in the City for a new planning initiative, including Waterford Valley and Gerrard developments.

4. Build a neighborhood on the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus for retirees. As an example, St. Mary's in Winona is completing a project like this.



Tyler Street replacement houses

Goal C. Work to ensure transportation mobility.

Actions:

1. Support regional transportation solutions such as the Midwest Regional High Speed Rail Initiative, the expansion of and improvements to the La Crosse Mass Transit Utility, increased river transportation, and increased connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle trails and amenities.
2. Balance the need for street and highway expansions and widenings and their impacts with the critical importance of neighborhood preservation and the protection of La Crosse's neighborhood character.



Construction of the new Mississippi River Bridge

April 15, 2004 Recommended Plan

<u>Implementation Action Grid</u>	<u>Timing & Responsibility</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>
<i>Business Sectors/Clusters:</i>		
Devote funding and technical assistance to local business clusters--coordinate the State's efforts and identify local needs	Immediate & CP	State of Wisconsin resources
Establish regular communication between the City and each local cluster group--establish regular meetings	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Existing resources
Research and track local economic information and trends	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Create & maintain database of vacant office space & info.	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
<i>Strategic Direction No. 1</i>		
<i>Create a service-oriented, can-do attitude:</i>		
Engage service and organizational expert/consultant to work with Mayor, City Council & City Executives	Immediate & M, CC, CE	\$25,000 in 2005 budget
Designate a point person who meets with the business community	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Create process for business inquiries and business issues	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Post information on the City's website	Immediate & CP, IST, L	Existing resources
Redesign the City's website to provide contact and program information, forms, meeting date/times	Immediate & CP, IST, L	Existing resources
Develop a way to measure progress	Mid-term & CP	Existing resources
Provide technical and financial assistance	On-going & M, CC, CE	Existing resources
Assist businesses in funding needs	Mid-term & CP	Existing resources
Continue providing incentives and other assistance	On-going & M, CC, CE	Existing resources
Meet with La Crosse School District officials	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Existing resources
Continue working with economic development agencies	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Create a manual for entrepreneurs	Mid-term & CP	\$5,000 in 2005 budget
<i>Improve communication with the community:</i>		
Establish better communication channels with the business community	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Host quarterly roundtable meetings with business clusters and Mayor, Council and City Executives	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Existing resources
Develop a regular City economic development newsletter	Mid-term & CP	Existing resources
Participate in regular local business group meetings	On-going & M, CC, CE	Existing resources

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<u>Implementation Action Grid</u>	<u>Timing & Responsibility</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>
Develop a media strategy	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Existing project with Interact
Implement Marketing Strategies & Tools	On-going & M, CP	Existing project with Interact
Develop press releases and packets	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Educate businesses and citizens about business assistance efforts	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Design and implement an annual City business awards program	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	\$500 in 2005 budget
Host a "Business After 5" like event at City Hall	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	\$500 in 2005 budget
<i>Streamline the Common Council approval process:</i>		
Study the common council process	Immediate & M, CC, CE	\$25,000 in 2005 budget (see previous item)
Continue the use of the buddy system to help development proposals through the process	On-going & Private	Existing resources
Use the City's website to inform about meeting dates/times, etc.	Mid-term & Clerk, IST, L	Existing resources
Create a brochure/pamphlet to explain the Common Council process	Mid-term & Clerk	\$500 in 2005 budget
<i>Market the assets of our community:</i>		
Market the Strategic Plan	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Develop external marketing strategies and tools	In process & CP	Existing project with Interact
Develop internal marketing strategies for existing businesses	In process & CP	Existing project with Interact
Participate in regional marketing efforts	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	New resources TBD in 2005

Timing:

Immediate will take place immediately up to one year.

Mid-term will take place within the next one to two years.

Responsibility:

CC = Common Council

CE = City Executives

Clerk = City Clerk

CP = City Planning

IST = Information Services & Technology

L = Library

M = Mayor's Office

Private = Private sector

PU = Parking Utility

UW-L = Univ. of Wisconsin-La Crosse

April 15, 2004 Recommended Plan

<u>Implementation Action Grid</u>	<u>Timing & Responsibility</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>
<i>Strategic Direction No. II</i>		
<i>Fully utilize and improve the Riverfront as a unique activity center:</i>		
Support and coordinate with the City Vision 2020 Master Plan	Mid-term & CP	Existing resources
Encourage the redevelopment of the Listman Mill site	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future capital budgets
Continue connecting and extending the Riverwalk	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future capital budgets
Establish better connections between the Downtown and the River	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future capital budgets
<i>Promote Downtown as a place to work, live, shop and play:</i>		
Address the parking perception/situation and implementation of Parking Advisory Committee's Report	Mid-term & PU	Future capital budgets
Continue the Downtown as incubator for technology -- meet with Downtown high-tech companies	On-going	Existing resources
Support and coordinate with DMI	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Future operating budgets
Encourage businesses to advertise together	Immediate & Private	Private resources
Encourage more outdoor activities	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Future operating budgets
Capitalize on the various festivals	Immediate & M, CC, CE	Future operating budgets
Encourage the development of residential units -- schedule informational sessions on historic building codes	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future capital budgets
Implement the retail market strategy	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future operating budgets
<i>Make high priority redevelopment sites ready:</i>		
Create information packets for each Downtown site in partnership with businesses	Immediate & CP	Existing resources

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<u>Implementation Action Grid</u>	<u>Timing & Responsibility</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>
<i>Strategic Direction No. III</i>		
<i>Complete the following tasks to make redevelopment sites ready:</i>		
Develop information packets	Immediate & CP	Existing resources
Riverside Redevelopment project		
La Crosse Footwear facilities		
Fleming facilities		
The area surrounding Gundersen-Lutheran		
Specific sites within TIF and Redevelopment Districts		
Sponsor a developer conference to promote La Crosse	Mid-term & CP, Private	\$5,000 in 2006 budget
Develop an area plan for each area/corridor including a City-wide Main Street program	Mid-term & CP, Private	Future operating budgets
Complete a "First Impressions" study with UW-Extension	Immediate & CP	Future operating budget
Rose Street from I-90 to Downtown		
Ward Avenue corridor		
Mormon Coulee Road/South Avenue corridor		
North George Street		
<i>Prioritize efforts to create and maintain vital neighborhoods in the City:</i>		
Create a Neighborhood Commission to address neighborhood revitalization	Mid-term & M, CC, CE	Future operating budgets
Identify innovative neighborhood housing solutions	On-going & CP, CE	Future capital & operating budgets
Focus on the Mormon Coulee area for a new planning initiative	Immediate & CP	Future operating budgets

Timing:

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<u>Implementation Action Grid</u>	<u>Timing & Responsibility</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>
Build a neighborhood on the UW-L campus	Mid-term & CP, UW-L	Future capital budgets
<i>Work to ensure transportation mobility.</i>		
Support regional transportation solutions	On-going	Future capital budgets
Balance the need for street expansion/widening with neighborhood preservation and protection of neighborhood character	On-going	Future capital & operating budgets

Timing:

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