

Downtown Plan

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This plan was adopted by the Common Council in January of 2007, following a year-long planning process, and has been incorporated into the City of Appleton **Comprehensive Plan**.

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Executive Summary

This 2007 update to the City of Appleton's Downtown Plan charts a course for continued vitality of the City's central business district and surrounding neighborhoods. The update reflects maturation of the City's downtown revitalization program, which has achieved exceptional results since the original Downtown Plan was completed in 1995. It contains a review of current and past activities by the city and its partners, which have been taken to implement the 1995 plan.

Downtown stakeholders and the broader community were given a strong voice in preparing this plan. Several focus group meetings and public meetings were held during the planning process. These provided input on issues and opportunities which were considered by the community to be important enough to address in the plan. A workshop was held to consider alternatives for uses, development patterns, community character, and other issues. This community input led to a recommendation to add a new sentence to the downtown vision, recognizing the distinctive nature of downtown as a place to live.

Downtown Appleton is the heart of the Fox Valley, a destination for entertainment, business, shopping, education, and recreation. The downtown is unique within the region and contains activities which are themselves unique. It is the center of decisions regarding community and economy; it is busy, vital, and attractive. Downtown is the premier urban neighborhood in the Fox Valley, offering an exceptional quality of life to its residents. Downtown Appleton is interesting and exciting to work in, fun to be at and live in, the pride of the Fox Valley.

The 2007 update to the Downtown Plan has revised the pattern of sub-areas in the downtown. The most significant of these is an expansion of the planning area to include a segment of Richmond Street, which has been proposed as a location for neighborhood-level retail and services serving residents of the downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. Other changes focus redevelopment into mixed-use and residential districts north of the core downtown, with some pockets of redevelopment south of the core.



Providing additional public spaces in the downtown, including parks, plaza, and greenways, is an important component of the plan. Additionally, the plan seeks to connect these with the downtown and neighborhoods outside of the downtown through a system of trails, both along the Fox River and along the railroad passing through the northern part of downtown.

The update has recommended a series of initiatives with associated strategies for implementation. There are a total of six initiatives, including urban design, tourism/arts/entertainment, neighborhood and residential development, business and office development, transportation and parking, and downtown management. It concludes with an implementation matrix for these strategies.

The plan also includes recommendations for design in the downtown overall, as well as specific sites or types of development.

Introduction

The City of Appleton adopted its plan for the downtown area in 1995. That plan was subsequently amended in 1996, 1999, and finally in 2001. The plan has effectively guided revitalization and redevelopment actions of the City and its partners. By most measures, the plan has succeeded in helping to restore the vitality of the downtown district. Nearly all of the significant initiatives contained within the plan have been implemented. In acknowledgement of this, the community has recognized the need to update its downtown plan to adopt new strategies which will build upon its past success.

This update follows the approach taken in the original Downtown Plan. It assesses current progress toward revitalizing the downtown and discusses the major concerns and opportunities raised by downtown stakeholders and the community at large. These comments were obtained through an extensive public participation effort conducted during the planning process.

Recommended actions are laid out through a series of initiatives with accompanying strategies. These are compiled into an implementation matrix in the final section of the plan. Design recommendations are provided in an attached appendix.

Background

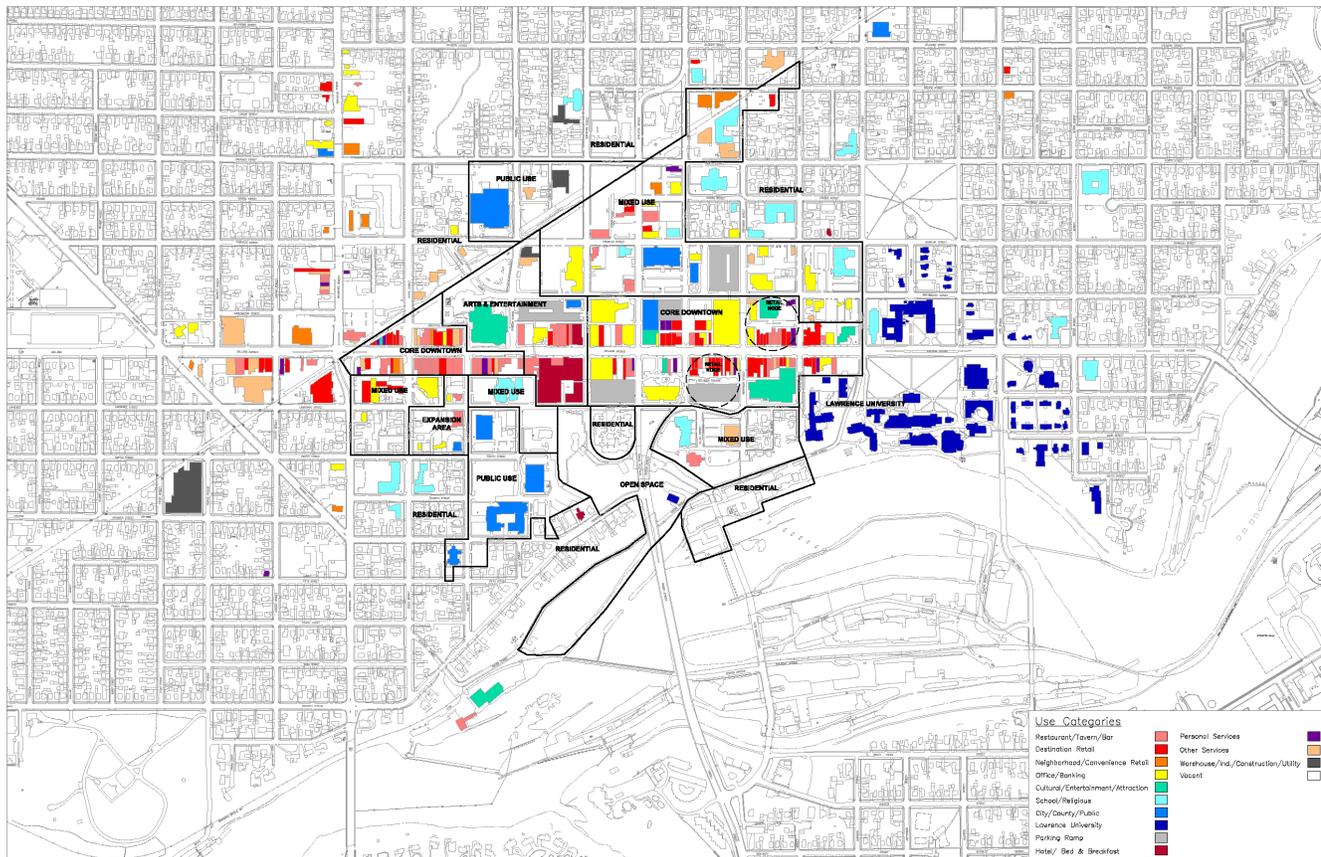
This update to the Downtown Plan recognizes extensive prior planning efforts. Among these are the 1995 Downtown Plan and several other studies discussed in this section.

1995 Downtown Plan

This plan established a vision and objectives for the downtown. It also describes a decision framework of initiatives and goals, and a set of strategies it proposed to attain those goals. As a key step to achieving its vision, the plan established sub-areas including the downtown core, arts and entertainment, mixed-use, residential, and public use districts. Proposed strategies were tied to these districts.

The major initiatives and strategies in the plan include:

- Urban Design Initiative: Establish a visual context for the downtown
 - Create entryway features at Richmond, Appleton, and Drew Streets
 - Increase public art within the downtown
 - Establish a system of downtown “identity streets”
 - Improve the streetscape on College Avenue and connected streets
 - Rehabilitate historic and original building facades
 - Enhance urban greenways and parks in the downtown
 - Enhance Houdini Plaza/Soldier’s Square as the civic gathering place



Sub-Areas in the 1995 Downtown Plan

The City has made some improvements to the downtown gateways and is continuing to follow this strategy. It has been slower in providing public art, although a project is currently being planned (Pillars of Our Community) to install tile in the pillars of the Oneida Street bridge, in Jones Park. The *Master Plan for Jones Park and the Fox River Properties*, adopted in 2006, also includes recommendations for art and historic installations.

Public and private investment has led to defined identities for parts of the downtown, especially the West End (entertainment district) and the retail node on the eastern end of College Avenue in the downtown. Creation of "identity streets" has been further addressed through streetscaping in the Greenprint for Downtown. Streetscape improvements have been made to College Avenue, although other streets are still lacking.

Improvements have been made to several of the façades of commercial buildings in the downtown area. Along the Fox River, several historic mill buildings have undergone extensive renovation, and there is a strong organization committed to preserving the character of the Historic Third Ward.

The City of Appleton is currently planning reconstruction of Houdini Plaza. This space has become a centerpiece of popular downtown programming including a summer concert series and the farmer's market. Reconstruction will provide a space more suited to these and other activities. In 2006 the City adopted a *Master Plan for Jones Park and the Fox River Properties*. The plan includes recommendations for improvements to Jones Park, re-use of the former water treatment plant site as a public park, and improved connections between downtown and the river.



- Tourism, Arts, and Entertainment Initiative: Increase the role of downtown as a place for entertainment and tourism.
 - Establish an arts and entertainment district that includes:
 - A trade and convention center
 - A large music facility
 - A performing arts hall
 - A cinema
 - Nightclubs
 - Hotels

Appleton has succeeded in establishing an arts and entertainment district which has, for the most part, become the cultural center of the region. The City has been successful in expanding the Children's Museum and constructing the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. These have helped to attract a number of exceptional restaurants to the west end of downtown. The Copperleaf Boutique Hotel has added additional lodging in the downtown.



Not all of Appleton's entertainment-related initiative have been successful. In 2006 The Big Picture, a large-format movie theater, closed its doors due to a low volume of customers.

The City is currently assessing the feasibility of constructing a convention facility, considering the downtown and other locations. Preliminary results shared by city staff indicate that there is a market, and that the downtown is the preferred part of the community for such a facility.

- Housing Initiative: Support the image of downtown as a busy and vital place, increase the desirability of downtown as a residential neighborhood, and strengthen the link between downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods.
 - Create sites for new residential development in and adjacent to the downtown, focusing on the railroad corridor
 - Rehabilitate and maintain existing housing stock adjacent to downtown, focusing on the West Franklin Street area and along Dunlop and Bates Streets
 - Preserve and enhance historic neighborhoods, focusing on the Oak Street Block and the Third Ward neighborhood



Appleton has had success in preserving some of its downtown neighborhoods, such as the Historic Third Ward. Encroachment of governmental and commercial uses into this neighborhood has been curtailed. Other neighborhoods, particularly north of the downtown, present a mix of good and deteriorating housing. While there is a market for residential development taking advantage of Jones Park and the Fox River, redevelopment in other parts of the downtown has been slow. Units in Richmond Terrace are selling more slowly than anticipated, although this may be more closely related to some aspects of the development, rather than the desire of the market for downtown housing.

- Business and Office Development Initiative: Improve downtown development by focusing on and attracting the local business community.
 - Create an office support area for smaller building
 - Create/define retail niches for downtown sub-areas, focusing on East and West College Avenue, the Avenue Mall, and specialty nodes
 - Protect existing retail blocks on College Avenue
 - Coordinate downtown business support groups

- Encourage local entrepreneurs to bring or expand their business downtown

Appleton has recovered from the relocation of major downtown office users to office parks on the edge of the community. In fact, many of the new office tenants indicate that the downtown is a very desirable place to be located, as it is the sort of vibrant community space desired by many of their younger employees. Filling vacant space has been a de facto priority in recent years, however, there is an increasing perception that new office space is needed.

Downtown is home to over sixty retailers. Several niches have formed, including home furnishings and arts businesses. These businesses are almost entirely located on College Avenue. Retail locations have not deepened to include secondary streets or even most side streets.

- **Transportation and Parking Initiative:** Focus on user friendly streets and parking facilities as an important feature of a successful Downtown.

- Establish a parking policy that addresses plan elements
- Consider street closures to gain development space
- Modify circulation patterns and one-way street system
- Designate an Amtrak station site for the proposed Madison-Green Bay Amtrak route
- Create an enclosed pedestrian connection from the entertainment district to the Avenue Mall



Parking remains a contentious issue for the downtown. Many businesses perceive a shortage of parking and a reluctance for employees and patrons to pay to park in public parking ramps.

Appleton has undertaken studies, and implemented measures to modify the street pattern as it existed at the time of the 1995 plan. Community input has suggested a need to address some areas of congestion within the downtown and immediate vicinity.

Amtrak does not serve Appleton, and there are no plans at present for any form of commuter rail. As a result, the recommendation to identify a station site has not been implemented. Likewise, the City has determined that it is not advisable to construct an enclosed pedestrian connection.

Greenprint for Downtown Appleton

This 1998 streetscape enhancement plan was prepared by Appleton Downtown Inc., and encompasses College Avenue between Badger Avenue and Drew Street. The project includes major gateways to the downtown business district. Project design elements include lighting, pavers, planting, street furniture and amenities. Each gateway is unique, but incorporates regional materials as a unifying element. This plan is being implemented in an incremental fashion.

Some of the opportunities focused on in the project include:

- Creation of a distinct character for different zones
- Development of a new image of Appleton as the urban center of the Fox Valley
- Improvement of traffic flow from one-way to two-way
- Improvement of the greenspace system and linkages to the Fox River
- Encouragement of residential development downtown
- Improvement of the physical setting for downtown events and programming

Target Niche Analysis, Business Identification, and Implementation Plan for Downtown Appleton

This study was commissioned by Appleton Downtown Inc. in 1999 to gain an understanding of the specific opportunities for retail revitalization in downtown Appleton. The study was intended to identify specific retail market niches and tenant types, and strategies for general economic vitality in the downtown. The major recommendations of the study include:

- Recruitment and retention of retail and office uses including:
 - children-oriented stores
 - home furnishings stores
 - gourmet food stores
 - music and arts businesses
 - specialty goods
 - specialty services
 - convenience and low-end retailers
 - business support services
- Targeting children-oriented businesses for the Avenue Mall, with physical alterations to reflect this theme
- Development of the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center
- Development of a small performance venue (400 to 800 seats) for non-mainstream acts
- Development of a central programmable public space at the center of the commercial core
- Promotion of office development in the downtown
- Promotion of hotel development in the downtown
- Promotion of residential infill with a range of prices
- Provision of management support to locally owned businesses
- Organized effort to recruit and direct new tenants and developments to the downtown

Parks and Recreation Master Plan: 2005-2009

This plan, a periodic master planning of the entire Appleton parks system, was designed to help city officials and staff improve the services offered by the parks system and to increase the effectiveness of maintenance and services. The plan recommends facility and programming improvements, as well as funding and partnership opportunities.

Major recommendations of the plan which relate to the downtown area include:

- Pursuit of partnerships with the County and School District
- Exploration of opportunities for recreational developments connected to the possible opening of the Fox River Locks
- Continued development of multi-use trails that connect to other recreation opportunities and other municipal and regional trails
- Leading in developing Appleton's "Green Infrastructure" to promote ecological health

Riverfront Trail Connection Study

The purpose of this 2004 study was to review previously adopted plans and define riverfront connections for bicyclists and pedestrians. The study evaluated several proposed trail segments and makes recommendations for design, management, and construction priorities on these segments.



The highest priority segment begins at Vulcan Heritage and heads west along an abandoned railroad spur, through Lutz Park and on to Alicia Park. The segment also offers potential partnerships with the Yacht Club restaurant. The second priority segment begins at Jones Park and heads west along Water Street, veers south at the Oneida Street bridge, and then west along the riverfront and back along Water Street to Vulcan Heritage Park. The third priority segment runs east from Jones Park through the Lawrence University Campus along the riverfront to Lawe Street, over the Lawe Street Bridge, and then connects to the North Island Trail.

Focus Fox River: A Master Plan

This plan, created in 2001 and amended in 2003, serves as a guide to redevelopment and reinvestment along the Fox River in the City of Appleton. The plan describes a set of initiatives and goals, along with strategies for achieving these goals. The major initiatives and strategies include:

- **Aesthetic, Historic, and Ecological Character Initiative:** Maintaining the balance between urban land uses and ecological features.
 - Expand on the Fox River's role in regional plans, including the Fox River Locks System, Fox River Heritage Parkway, and the Fox-Wisconsin Rivers Heritage Corridor Project
 - Balance ecological needs with existing and future development
 - Enhance the quality and reduce the ecological impact of development along the riverfront
 - Preserve the historical significance of the riverfront, focusing on the College Avenue Historic District, the Appleton Locks 1-3 Historic District, and the Appleton Lock 4 Historic District
 - Promote the riverfront as a destination, using new and existing design elements to create an identity
- **Access Initiative:** Define, expand, and enhance access to the riverfront.
 - Create a wayfinding system for the riverfront using directional signs, informational kiosks, and interpretive signs
 - Promote modes of transportation unique to the riverfront including the electric trolley and boating (both short and long term access)
 - Improve street access to the riverfront through the modification of existing streets and improvement of the streetscape
- **Public Ownership of the Riverfront Initiative:** Expand the publicly owned and accessible land along the riverfront
 - Increase and expand multi-modal transportation opportunities around the riverfront using multi-purpose trails, pedestrian paths, and ADA accessible ramps and walkways

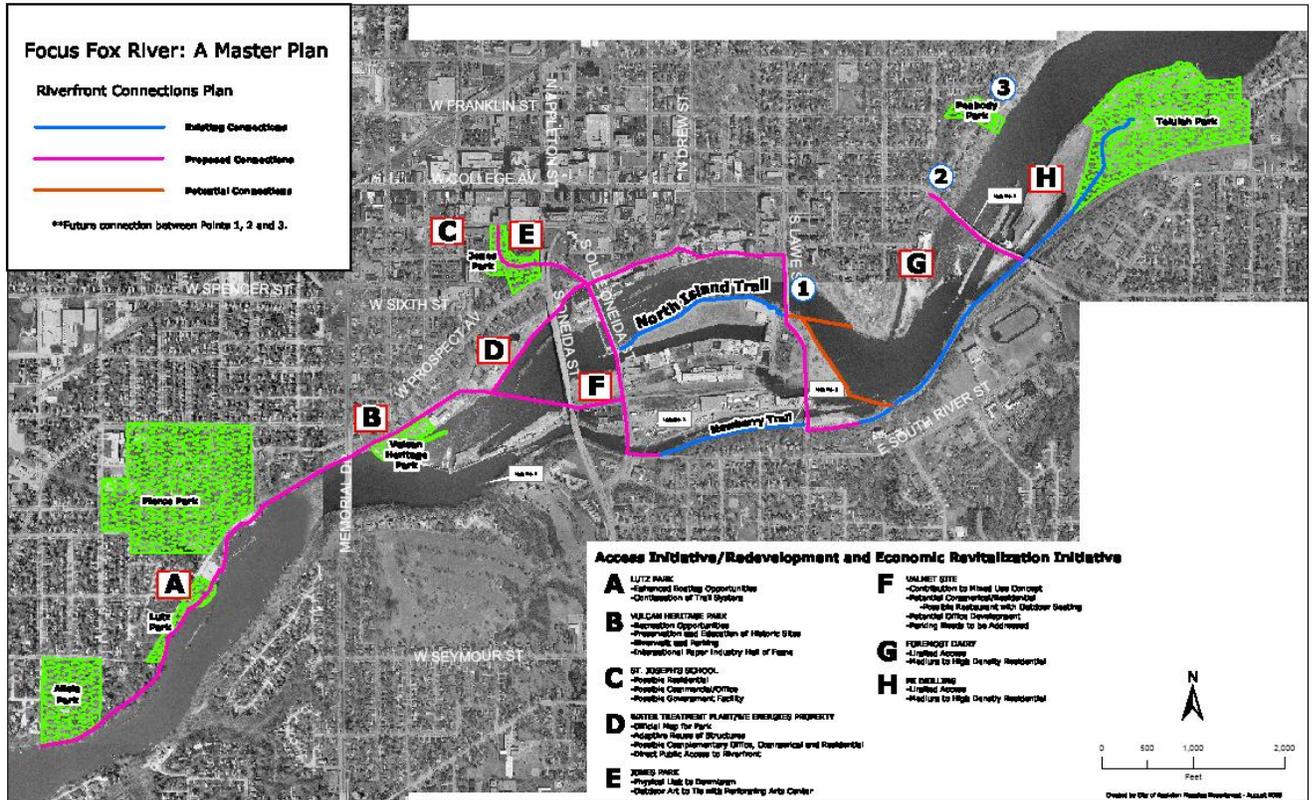
Create opportunities for education about the history of Appleton and the Fox River, focusing on the riverfront running from Pierce Park to Telulah Park

- **Redevelopment and economic revitalization initiative:** Adaptive reuse and redevelopment along the riverfront, with the City purchasing and leasing out property where applicable
 - Designate redevelopment opportunities along the riverfront, focusing on the Water Treatment Plant/WEPCO site, the Valmet site, the M-I Drilling site, the Foremost Dairy site, and the St. Joseph's School site
 - Improve public parks as an integral part of the riverfront, focusing on Lutz Park, Edison Heritage Park, and Jones Park

Multi-Modal Transportation and Parking Study for Appleton's Riverfront

The purpose of this 2002 study was to determine if the types of development and redevelopment proposed in *Focus Fox River: A Master Plan* can be accommodated, and the impacts of accommodation. Analysis of the redevelopment sites was based on traffic flow and parking availability.





Fox River Plan

The study found that development at the MI Drilling site had the potential to impact traffic during the evening rush hour, especially at the intersection of College Avenue, Walter Avenue, and John Street. The study recommended that the level of development on the site be reduced or access moved to Newberry Street. Additionally, the study recommended that the East College Avenue Bridge be widened to four lanes. The study recommended adding a second southbound lane on Meade Street at College Avenue to alleviate existing traffic problems.

The study proposes that development at the Valmet site be scaled back to allow for adequate parking. Also, additional parking should be developed at Lutz Park, either through purchase of adjacent properties or through the widening of Lutz Drive. The study also states that the use of transit or trolleys will probably not reduce vehicle trips to the riverfront, but a trolley could become a riverfront attraction.

Richmond Street Corridor Study, 1999

The Richmond Street Corridor is an important entry corridor into the Downtown. The Corridor consists of mixed commercial and residential development, and the Corridor Study proposes redevelopment along the same lines. The Study proposes redevelopment sites, north of the Good Company parking lot, the southeast corner of Franklin Street, the Transmail building site, the southwest corner of Harris Street and the Zwicker Block. The Study also recommends improvement of the mid-block mini-mall. Other recommendations include:

- Establishing a design review district
- Coordinating entryways
- Linking the Corridor with the Downtown Streetscape Plan
- Screening the railroad and rears of buildings

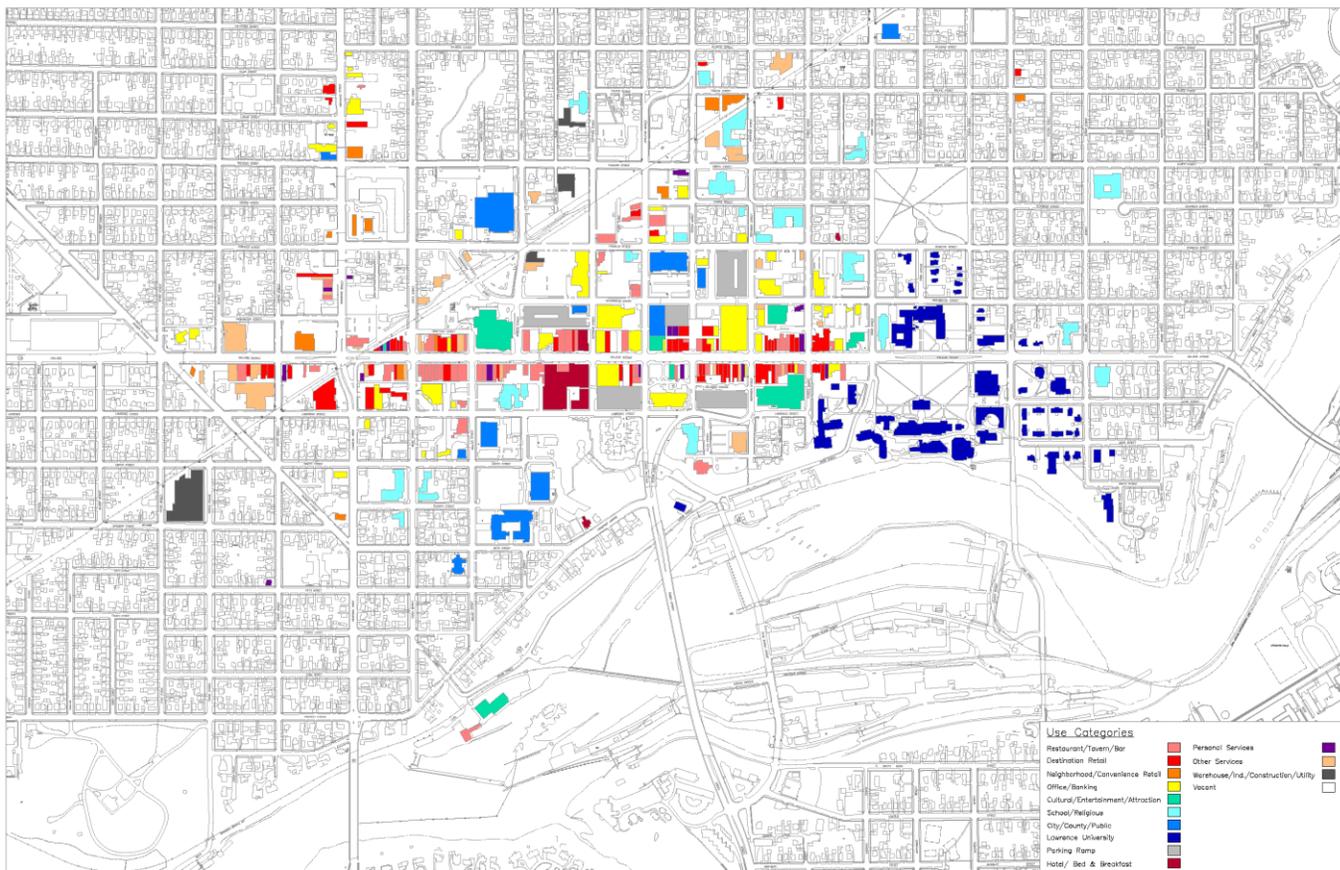


- Encouraging mixed uses in new developments
- Encouraging architectural styles that reflect the Downtown
- Landscaping
- Developing land uses accessible by pedestrian and vehicle traffic
- Developing a unified sign program
- Retrofitting problem properties

Existing Uses

The consultant team completed a thorough inventory of uses in the downtown and surrounding area in August of 2006. These uses are grouped into broad categories and depicted in the map on page 14 (a larger version of this map is included in Appendix A).

The existing uses reflect the clustering of similar businesses which has occurred, in part naturally, and in part through the efforts of the previous plan for downtown. Retail has clustered on the eastern end of downtown, with a smaller concentration near Richmond Street. Retail uses are almost exclusively located on College Avenue. Restaurants and taverns are distributed throughout the downtown, but are concentrated in the entertainment district along with the two hotels.



Zoning

The study area includes a variety of zoning designations, not all of which are consistent with the intent of the sub-areas identified in the 1995 Downtown Plan. Additionally, staff from the City of Appleton have discussed



past difficulties associated with parking requirements in the C-2 zoning district along Richmond Street. Assembling property to provide parking has not always been feasible, thus hampering redevelopment. Portions of this area are very similar in character to the core downtown, where off-street parking is not required. A map of the existing zoning within the downtown area is provided in Appendix A.

Public Participation

At the outset of the planning process the City of Appleton established an extensive public participation process to solicit community input into the plan. The consultant team, with the participation of City staff and Appleton Downtown, Inc., conducted a series of stakeholder focus group meetings designed to identify issues which would need to be addressed in the plan. These stakeholder groups included representatives of downtown restaurants and taverns, downtown retailers, primary employers with downtown offices, non-profit and government organizations, and entertainment venues.

The downtown focus group meetings were followed by two public meetings. The first of these was intended to provide an opportunity for the community at-large to offer input into the early stages of the plan. The second meeting was conducted as an open house and workshop to explore alternative visions for uses and parts of the downtown.

Final opportunities for public input included presentations of the draft and final plans to the Plan Commission prior to its adoption.

Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings / Public Input Meeting

A total of five stakeholder focus group meetings on the downtown were held in July and August of 2006. These were followed by a public meeting. Input from the various groups was remarkably consistent. These comments have been grouped around similar themes. The first set of comments relates to uses in the downtown area.

- Downtown needs more “family friendly” restaurants
- The retail establishments are too scattered downtown and should be grouped together for easier shopping
- Downtown needs an anchor store, such as a grocery store or a home goods store, serving daily shopping needs
- There should be more residential opportunities within and adjacent to downtown

Several comments related to the operation of private businesses in the downtown are listed below.

- More of the stores and restaurants located in the downtown should be open on Sundays
- Establishments downtown should conduct more marketing and advertising
- Downtown businesses should improve their exterior signage
- The smoking ban has had a negative impact on downtown

The following comments pertain to public spaces and fixtures in the downtown.

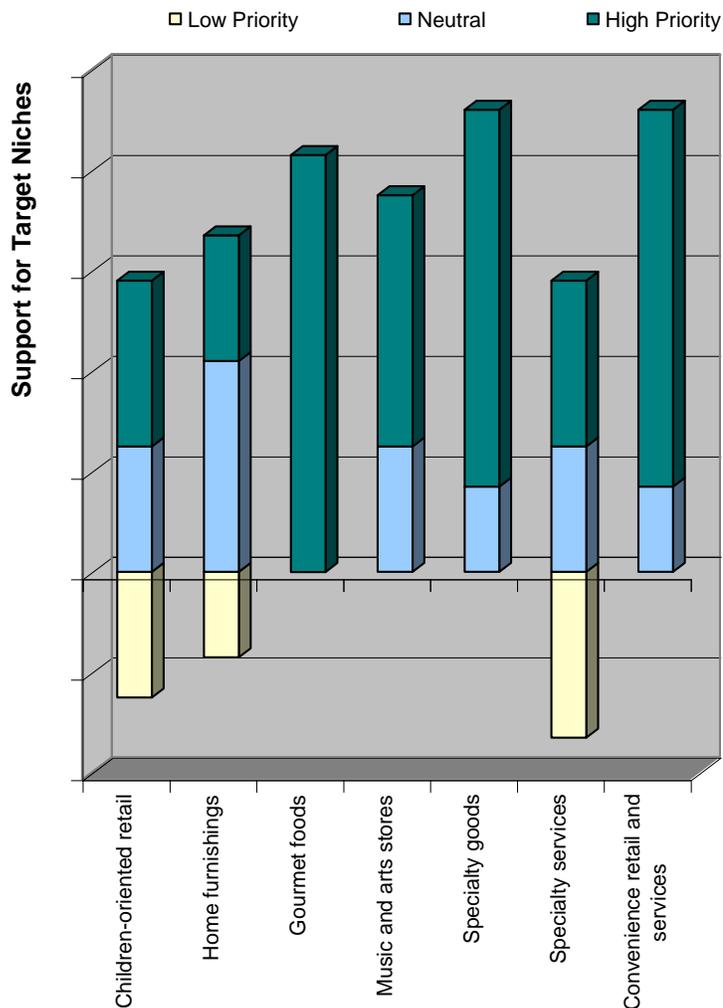
- There is a desire for more usable green space in the central area
- There needs to be a link from Downtown Appleton to Jones Park and the Fox River
- Sidewalks need to be kept clean and free of trash
- More garbage containers and cigarette receptacles are needed throughout downtown
- Convenient and accessible parking should be a priority for the downtown
- More public restrooms are required
- Significant historical information should be displayed and interpreted in public places in the downtown



- Downtown is an ideal location for the City to provide public art
- Signage for parking in the downtown should be more prominent
- Parking meters should be shut off from 6:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m.

The last set of comments focuses on programming in the downtown.

- Civic events (i.e. Octoberfest & License to Cruise) have a tremendous impact, and should be scheduled more frequently
- The Farm Market should be a year round market
- There should be a downtown art fair along College Avenue
- There should be ethnic festivals held downtown
- Thursday night concerts in Houdini Square are popular and should continue



Public Open House

The open house and workshop was held at the end of September, 2006. This meeting began with a brief presentation, after which participants circulated among four station presenting ideas and concepts related to urban design, parks and connectivity, policy issues, and neighborhood development. A variety of interactive tools, including surveys, comment cards, image boards, and mapping exercises helped guide participants in providing input. They were further assisted by a member of the consultant team who staffed each of the stations.

Policy Issues

Participants were asked to review and provide their thoughts on the vision statement and the target niches identified for downtown. Appleton's vision statement for the downtown was:

Downtown Appleton is the heart of the Fox Valley, a destination for entertainment, business, shopping, education, and recreation. The downtown is unique within the region and contains activities which are themselves unique. It is the center of decisions regarding community and economy; it is busy, vital, and attractive. Downtown Appleton is interesting and exciting to work in, fun to be at and live in, the pride of the Fox Valley.

This vision was supported in general terms. Sentiment for change centered on the idea that the existing vision does not recognize downtown as a place to live. Other comments spoke of the need to create green spaces and to preserve the downtown's historic structures.

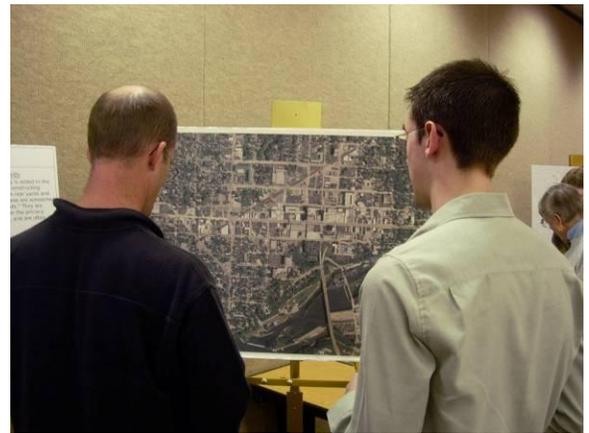
A survey was used to assess community support for the various types of niche retail identified in the 1999 targeting study. Of these, gourmet foods is seen as the top priority, followed by specialty goods and convenience retail. Home furnishings, specialty services, and children-oriented retail businesses received the lowest priorities. The results of this survey likely reflect the interest of some attendees, who may have been residents of nearby neighborhoods, to have retail which meets their frequent shopping needs in close proximity to their



homes. This was also expressed as a need if future residential redevelopment is to occur in the downtown area.

Neighborhood Development

The workshop attendees viewed boards which described various types of low-density, mid-density, and high-density residential infill and redevelopment formats. They also viewed images of mixed-use development, from small to large scale. Each of the residential formats corresponded to a different-colored adhesive dot. Participants were asked to place one of these dots on an aerial photograph, over the location where they thought redevelopment should occur in that format.



The greatest support was shown for rowhouse-style and mid-density residential development. Rowhouses are typically not more than two or three stories high with four to six attached units. Mid-density development is generally not more than three stories high with twelve to sixteen total units per building. There was no support for high-density residential. Geographically, participants mixed these two compatible uses, and recommended locations roughly bounded by Richmond, North, Appleton, and Washington Streets. A second cluster was located north of Lawrence Street between Memorial Drive and Walnut Street, and a final cluster was found at the south end of Morrison Street on the bluff overlooking the Fox River.

Mixed-use development was favored on a mid-density scale similar to the favored residential development formats. Sites favored for mixed-use development included Richmond Street between College Avenue and Atlantic Avenue, and Washington Street from Richmond Street to Oneida Street.

Parks and Connectivity

Image boards were used to show different types of open spaces including pocket parks, plazas, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and urban greenspaces. Comment cards were provided to gain feedback on these. A mapping exercise allowed people to identify locations where they thought these features may be appropriate.



There is considerable support for incorporating more public spaces into the downtown and the surrounding neighborhood. Making connections within this area and to outlying parts of the city is also seen as critical to the vitality of the district. The idea of a rail-trail through the north part of downtown and into adjacent neighborhoods received several positive comments, as well as observations that it should be lighted to ensure safety. Connecting to the Fox River is also seen as an opportunity to enhance the downtown.

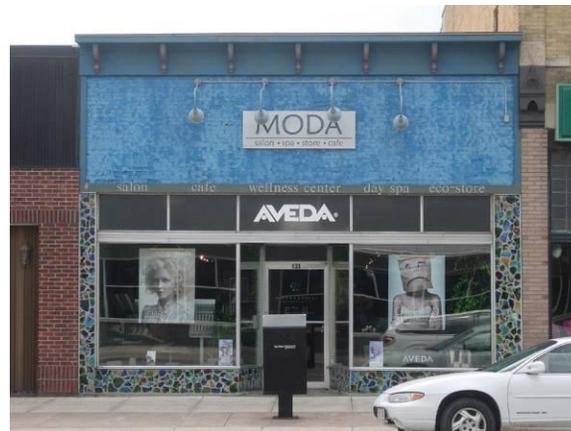
The mapping exercise reinforced the written comments. Participants showed a desire to connect to the Fox River and to provide more connections through the downtown and into surrounding neighborhoods. While the mapping results indicate a desire for more parks or green spaces in the downtown area, there are no clear ideas of where these should be located.

An image board was also used to present ideas for Soldier's Square. Attendee comments show that the space is valued by residents, who also feel that it is presently underutilized. Placing shops along the north wall of the parking garage, providing an open-air marketplace in a pedestrian-only space, allowing outdoor food vending and dining, and improving the rear entrances of the shops on College Avenue all received multiple positive comments. Additional comments applying to both Soldier's Square and Houdini Plaza were to provide more trees and to remove the dumpsters which occupy the space.

Urban Design

Participants in the workshop were shown image boards depicting design elements and activities representing "lively streets." They were then asked to provide comments on their perceptions and opinions of the features and activities shown, whether any of these were considered to be appropriate for downtown Appleton, and where in the downtown they might be located. The comment cards also solicited broader input on design issues related to the downtown.

While cautioning about over-reaching, the overall sentiment favored introducing elements to liven up the public and private streetscape. Ideas included decorative lighting such as holiday lighting, more living plants and flowers in warmer months, and more evergreen trees and shrubs. Color was seen as an effective way to make the street seem more vibrant, although there were also concerns that too much color or colors which were too loud could detract from the desired environment. The Moda spa was pointed to as a good example of the use of color on a downtown building.



There is strong support for rehabilitation of the historic buildings in the downtown area. New buildings should have a varied façade, with nooks, corners, and alcoves to stimulate interest. Building design should work to create activity on the street. Large expanses of glass or walls without openings create a "dead zone" on the sidewalk, as is found in front of the Radisson Hotel.

Downtown Vision

Based on input received from the community, the vision for downtown has been revised to better reflect its role as a desirable place in which to live. The vision for downtown is:

Downtown Appleton is the heart of the Fox Valley, a destination for entertainment, business, shopping, education, and recreation. The downtown is unique within the region and contains activities which are themselves unique. It is the center of decisions regarding community and economy; it is busy, vital, and attractive. Downtown is the premier urban neighborhood in the Fox Valley, offering an exceptional quality of life to its residents. Downtown Appleton is interesting and exciting to work in, fun to be at and live in, the pride of the Fox Valley.

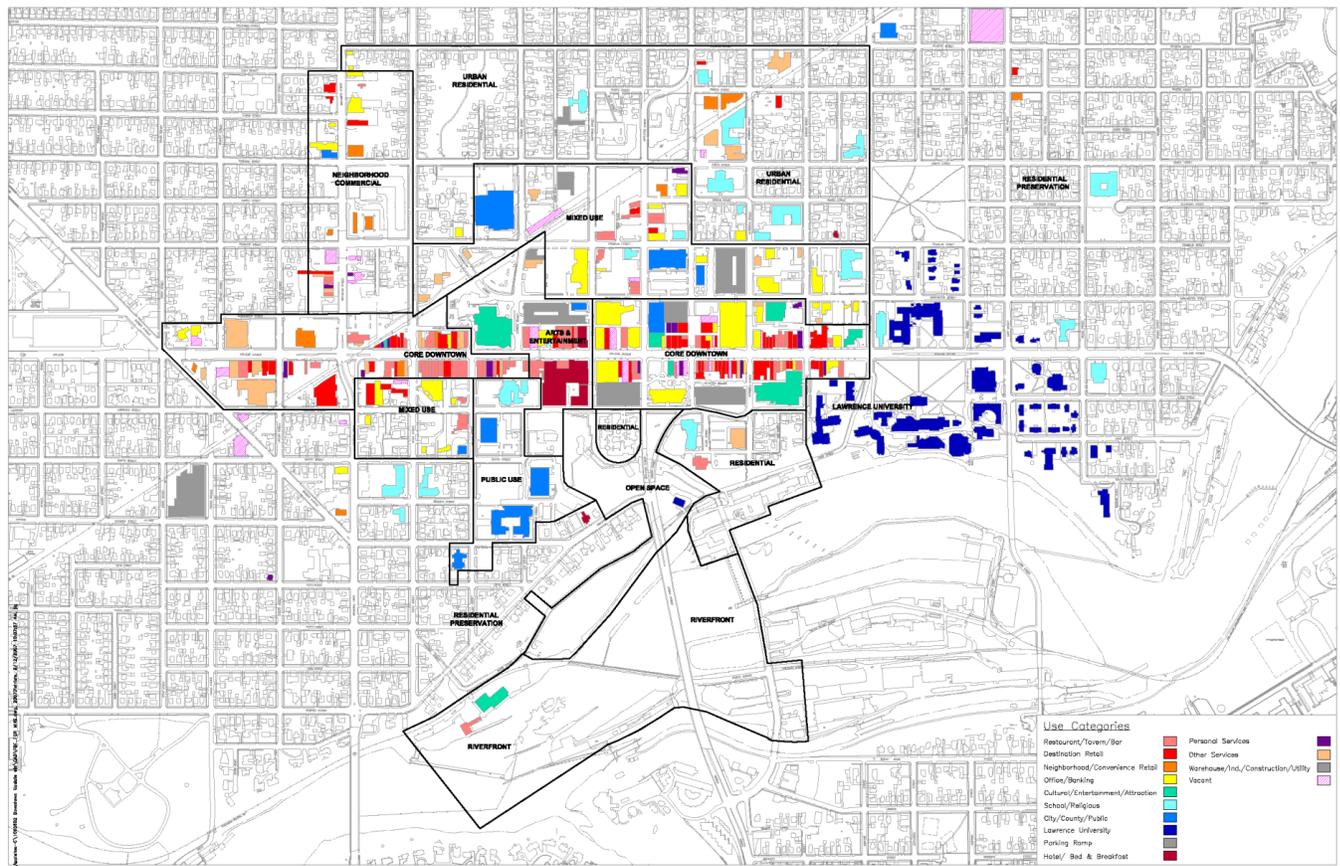
Planning Framework

This plan continues the practice of using sub-areas in the downtown as a planning framework, which was established in the 1995 downtown plan. The boundaries of these planning areas have been updated to reflect changes which have taken place in the past decade, as well as community desires for the downtown. Planning areas include the core downtown, arts and entertainment, mixed-use, public use, neighborhood commercial, and residential districts. These are depicted on the map on the following page.

Core Downtown District

The core downtown district includes those blocks fronting on College Avenue, from Richmond Street east to Drew Street. This district includes the largest downtown buildings along with a majority of its most historic ones. It is the first focus of public and private efforts to maintain the vitality of Appleton's central area, and will attract the most vibrant of the downtown's retail, restaurant, and office businesses. The most viable loca-

tions for retail in the core district are on the east end, while restaurants will locate closer to the entertainment district on the west end. Office uses should be located on upper levels and side streets.



The downtown core includes Houdini Plaza and Soldier's Square. Houdini Plaza is the central public gathering space in the downtown. The city of Appleton is currently preparing to renovate the plaza to improve its appearance improve its functionality for the kinds of programming which take place there.

Soldier's Square is presently an underutilized space which could be better used to promote the vitality of the downtown. Doing so will require an investment in renovating or reconstructing the parking ramp which creates the south wall of the square. This ramp should incorporate small ground floor retail spaces which front on a pedestrian plaza. Likewise, the rear façades of the College Avenue buildings should be improved to address this space. The plaza may also be used to provide a location for outdoor dining, vending, or a seasonal open-air market which may operate in the summer, and at certain other times of the year such as prior to the Christmas holidays.



Examples of outdoor vending

These improvements to Soldier's Square can help to create depth to the primary retail area within the downtown, helping to bring retail beyond College Avenue and onto the side streets. Additionally, as the spaces constructed in conjunction with the parking ramp are likely shallow and not very large, they may be ideally suited to business start-ups. Along with street vending opportunities, these can be part of an economic development initiative to promote retail entrepreneurship.

Office uses should be encouraged on the upper floors of buildings throughout the downtown core. They may be selectively encouraged on the first floor on side streets. The first floor area of buildings on College Avenue should be preserved for retail. Offices create customers for downtown businesses. This is particularly true of the restaurants.

Arts and Entertainment District

Appleton has made substantial investments in arts and entertainment venues within its downtown area. These include several museums along with the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. Businesses in the downtown which are closely tied to these investments include the two hotels and many taverns and restaurants. Downtown's destination retailers also benefit from the customer traffic brought in by these attractions.

The 1995 plan identifies an arts and entertainment district at College Avenue and Division Street. In the update, this district remains the same except for the identification of a potential site for a convention center on land owned by Outagamie County south of the Radisson Hotel.

Mixed-Use District

Two areas for mixed-use development are identified in the plan. The larger of these is north of the core downtown district, and it includes most of the blocks on both sides of Franklin Street. The second area is located south of the core downtown, on either side of Lawrence Street between Memorial Drive and Walnut Street. A portion of this latter area was previously denoted as an expansion area for the public use zone.

The mixed-use districts should serve as a transitional zone between the downtown core and residential neighborhoods. They are an appropriate location for office, business and personal services, and retail uses on the ground floor, with office or residential uses on upper levels.

Downtown is an ideal location for large office-based businesses. These may be accommodated in existing buildings, or may be ideally suited to occupy new buildings constructed in the Mixed-Use District.

Public Use District

The public use district includes the county buildings and public safety building between Walnut Street and Jones Park. This plan proposes that these buildings be redeveloped as a distinctive public campus, better utilizing the available space by putting parking underground and designing future buildings to relate to each other and create a well-defined civic space.

Neighborhood Commercial District

The neighborhood commercial district is a new feature in the updated plan, directly responding to the demand for retail and services which serve the needs of downtown and neighborhood residents. This district includes four blocks of Richmond Street from Lawrence Street north to Atlantic Street. Neighborhood-oriented uses may also be found in the Core Downtown. Examples of neighborhood retail and services already found within this area include drug stores, auto parts stores, and banks. This district may accommodate mixed uses.

Residential Districts

Residential areas near the downtown may be places where preservation and restoration dominate, or they may be places in which to encourage redevelopment for higher densities. To the north of downtown is a district labeled "residential transitional." This is an area in which redevelopment may be encouraged in selected



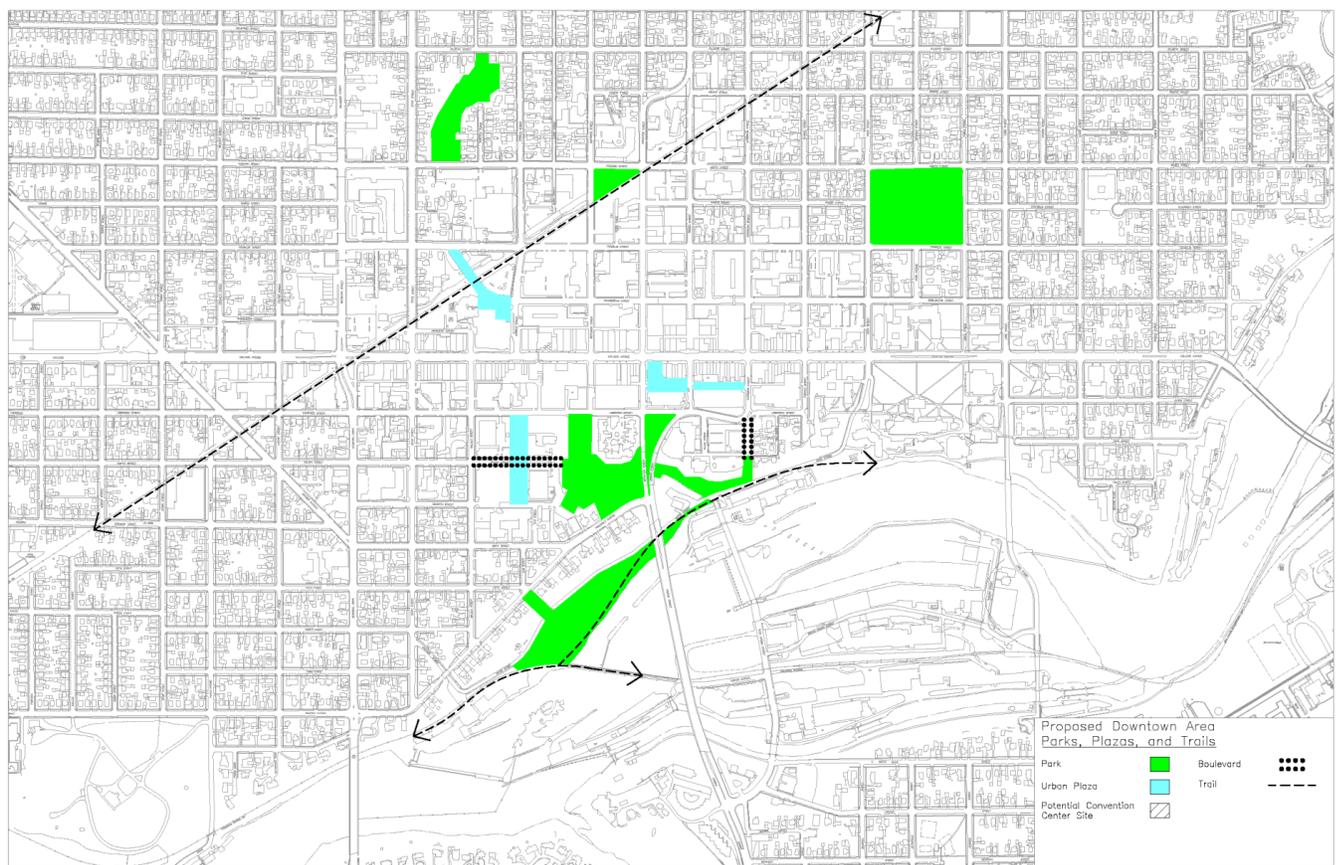
locations, either to replace aging properties or to replace some of the existing commercial uses. Some mixed-use development may be permitted in appropriate locations within the district, such as along Appleton Street.

The Historic Third Ward is identified as a location for residential preservation. The intent within this neighborhood should be to preserve and restore the historic architecture and residential character of the neighborhood. The neighborhood is a very desirable location for family housing close to the downtown.

There is another residential area identified at the south end of Morrison Street. This area currently includes both commercial and residential uses. These properties may be desirable for redevelopment due to the views of the Fox River available from the bluff. Mixed-use development may also be appropriate in this part of the downtown. This use would tie into, and help preserve the small residential pocket on Oak Street and Kimball Street, which is presently isolated from other residential uses.

Open Space and Connectivity

Public open space was highly desired by all downtown stakeholders. Existing and proposed public spaces in or near the downtown are depicted on the map below. These include parks, urban plazas, boulevards, and paths.



In addition to the path system planned for the Fox River Corridor, an opportunity has been identified to develop a rail-trail in the northern part of the downtown, connecting to adjacent neighborhoods. Rails-with-trails have been developed successfully in other communities around the country.

Future development at the south end of Morrison Street should secure public access to the top of the bluff, providing overlooks of the river below, and tying into Jones Park. Jones Park should be further connected with the neighborhoods above by redevelopment of Morrison Street, and the portion of Eighth Street within the county campus, as a boulevard. The triangular site formed by Packard Street, Superior Street, and the rail-road track would be another location in which the city could add downtown green space.

Improvements to Houdini Plaza and Soldier's Square have already been noted. As a part of any effort to create a stronger identity for the public use district, another plaza should be developed in this area. Finally, there is an opportunity to re-use the remnants of Washington Street to create a third urban plaza, perhaps including a pedestrian underpass of the railroad tracks. There is a definite need to reestablish an acceptable pedestrian crossing at this location.



Path developed along active rail line



Pedestrian underpass and plaza

Initiatives

Appleton has designed its initiatives for the downtown around six common themes. These are:

- Urban Design Initiative – policies and projects to create an identity and improve the appearance of downtown
- Tourism/Arts/Entertainment Initiative – policies and projects to develop cultural attractions and promote travel to the downtown
- Neighborhood and Residential Development Initiative – policies and projects to foster new residential development and create healthy neighborhoods surrounding the downtown
- Business and Office Development Initiative – policies and projects to support existing businesses in the downtown and to attract desirable new ones
- Transportation and Parking Initiative – policies and projects to maintain convenient access to the downtown
- Downtown Management Initiative – policies and programs to ensure that resources are available to continue to advance the vitality of downtown

This section of the Downtown Plan expands upon these initiatives to recommend strategies which will help the community to achieve its vision for the downtown.

1 Urban Design Initiative

Downtown is an urban place, but is also the cultural, social, and civic heart of the community. It has an image different from other parts of the city. It is a distinctive place.

The character and the quality of public and private spaces in the downtown should reflect the importance of the district to the community. This character takes in the broad pattern of composition and uses in the district, the urban form of its buildings, the significance of its public buildings and gathering spaces, and streetscape enhancements.

The following strategies are intended to create a downtown physical environment which meets the expectations of Appleton residents.

1.1 Continue development of entry features on major routes into the downtown

Entry features should announce to people that they have arrived in the downtown. These features may be at different scales according to the level of traffic, or whether they are intended for automobile or foot traffic. The primary entries to downtown are located on College Avenue, Richmond Street, Appleton Street, Oneida Street, and Memorial Drive. Signage, landscaping, monuments, lighting, banners, and other design elements may be used to create entry features along these streets. Smaller signage can be used on other streets entering the downtown.

Bicycle and pedestrian routes entering the downtown should also have entry features signifying arrival at the downtown. The Fox River Corridor, Jones Park, and the trail system proposed for the rail corridor are locations where entry features can be installed.

- Install entry features at primary entries to the downtown
- Install signage at secondary entries to the downtown
- Provide entry features along path systems connecting to the downtown
- Coordinate with the Fox Cities Way Finding Signage Program

1.2 Establish design guidelines for redevelopment and renovation projects in the downtown

The appearance of buildings in the downtown will have tremendous impact on residents' and visitors' impressions of the downtown. Appleton should craft design guidelines to give building owners and developers direction as to how their buildings should look. Different guidelines may be appropriate for historic buildings, renovation projects for non-historic buildings, or new construction. They may address building orientation, segmentation of the façade, materials, height, and other characteristics. Design guidelines may also apply to the site, particularly with regard to landscaping and the location of parking. General design criteria for the downtown are identified in Appendix B.

The façade grant program managed by Appleton Downtown, Inc. has helped to encourage restoration of several buildings in the downtown core. This program should be continued. The City and Appleton Downtown, Inc. may pursue other sources of government and foundation support to expand its façade program.

- Establish design guidelines for historic properties, renovation of non-historic properties, and new construction in the downtown
- Continue and expand the façade grant program

1.3 Create a public use campus south of Lawrence Street between Walnut Street and Jones Park

The presence of City of Appleton and Outagamie County offices in the downtown is an important statement of the local government's commitment to maintaining the vitality of the district. Balancing the needs of these operations with other neighborhood concerns has not always been an easy task, yet these offices can enhance the downtown by providing a well-defined civic campus. Future City and County expansion should occur on the existing site and seek to replace surface parking with underground parking.

While still providing an attractive street façade, buildings should be oriented toward a central plaza running north from the courthouse to Lawrence Street. An east-west boulevard, either on the current Eighth Street alignment or north of it, should align with a new entrance to Jones Park. The site of the newly-developed parking lot on Lawrence Street should be recognized as one of the most desirable potential locations for a convention/expo center.



- Redevelop the City and County properties in the public use district to create a campus surrounding a civic plaza

1.4 Implement streetscaping projects to create downtown "identity streets"

Streetscaping serves to add visual interest, helps to orient pedestrians and motorists, and reinforces a brand identity for the location. Streetscaping is an appropriate tool to achieve these goals on several key corridors in the downtown.

Streetscaping on College Avenue has largely been completed. Other corridors where streetscape improvements should now be considered include Richmond Street and Appleton Street.

Maintenance of the streetscape is equally important as installing it in the first place. A poorly maintained streetscape, littered streets, tattered banners, and damaged or missing furnishings can quickly turn off potential customers.

- Continue streetscaping efforts on College Avenue, Richmond Street, and Appleton Street.
- Provide continued maintenance and replacement streetscaping elements

1.5 Install sculpture, murals, and other art in public locations throughout the downtown

Countless places have installed art in public places as a means to promote the arts, celebrate community history, or add visual appeal. Appleton has some examples of this such as the statue in Soldier's Square, the Appleton Aurora, or the planned tile installation under the Oneida Street bridge.

Sculpture, murals, paintings, light shows and other techniques have been used to bring art into public spaces. Some communities have developed their public art around themes. Rapid City (the "gateway to Mount Rushmore") has life-sized bronze statues of all of the presidents on corners in its downtown. Chicago's "Cows on Parade" became an enormous tourist attraction now being repeated by several other cities. Cawker City, Kansas (home of the world's largest ball of twine) took a tongue-in-cheek approach, hanging reproductions of masterpieces incorporating a ball of twine in the windows of many of its downtown buildings.

Appleton may take a similar approach, identifying locations for both permanent art installations, and other locations in which art exhibits may rotate throughout the year. Standards should be established to clarify preferred formats and content. Priority may be given to local artists to use these sites. A variety of government and private grant sources may be available to fund this initiative.

- Establish criteria for public art installations, including preferred formats and preferences for content
- Identify locations for permanent or traveling art installations
- Secure funding for public art installations

1.6 Expand and enhance the system of urban parks, plazas, and trails in the downtown

Public spaces make cities more livable by offering opportunities for exercise, gathering, activities, or simply relaxation. Downtown offers the widest variety of these places, from small pocket parks to open green spaces. These can be successfully integrated into the district in a way that enhances the urban fabric of downtown and provides convenient access to residents, workers, and visitors to the downtown, no matter where they may be.

Appleton has recently completed a master plan for Jones Park, which includes plans to convert the former water treatment plant on the Fox River into a public park. Two more parks, City Park and Arbutus Park, are located north of downtown. Public plazas include Houdini Plaza and Soldier's Square, both of which have been identified for improvements. This plan further notes the potential to create a trail system along the Fox Valley and Western rail line, to add new green space in this corridor, to



create an overlook at the end of Morrison Street, and to develop civic plazas on the Outagamie County property and on the closed portion of Washington Street at the railroad track.

- In addition to public space, private redevelopment may be required to provide quasi-public spaces. Examples of these include outdoor seating areas, passages, or green spaces.
- Implement the recommendations of the *Master Plan for Jones Park and the Fox River Properties*
- Acquire property and easements to develop a path and green space along the railroad corridor
- Construct enhancements to Houdini Plaza and Soldier's Square
- Acquire property or easements to allow construction of an overlook on the bluff at the south end of Morrison Street
- Develop a civic plaza in the public use district
- Develop a plaza and underpass of the railroad on the Washington Street right-of-way, connecting from Franklin Street to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center

2 Tourism/Arts/Entertainment Initiative

Tourism creates business opportunities in the downtown. Visitors to the community stay in downtown hotels, shop in downtown stores, and eat in downtown restaurants. These visitors help to maintain the district's vitality past normal business hours and on into the evening. Recent investments such as the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center have helped to increase the flow of tourists to the downtown. As Appleton looks forward, it needs to recognize and be ready to seize additional opportunities to attract visitors. Opportunities for the City include both leisure and business travel.

2.1 Maintain the vitality of the arts and entertainment district

Several public and private elements need to work together to create an attractive arts and entertainment district. Public and non-profit arts organizations, such as the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center and the Appleton Arts Center, are the district's anchors and the key to its health, but private businesses play an equal role. A cluster of galleries and related businesses are essential to a successful arts district. Quality restaurants further add to the district by catering to people attending events or simply shopping the downtown. Finally, there is the physical place itself, and the experience it offers to visitors.

The city has multiple partners with which it will work to support these activities. Its core responsibility will be to ensure that the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center carries on its tradition of bringing high quality live entertainment to the community. Appleton Downtown, Inc. plays an additional role in supporting marketing which helps to create a brand identity and awareness for downtown's arts cluster.

- Provide support to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Appleton Arts Center, and other arts resources in the downtown
- Continue and expand marketing efforts which raise awareness of the arts in downtown Appleton

2.2 Pursue opportunities to attract more artists and arts-related businesses to the downtown

Cities across the country are fostering their arts communities through programs targeting artists. The most aggressive places offer sales and income tax exemptions, housing and studio space, and programming to attract customers. While not all of these tools will be available to Appleton, the city may explore artist-in-residence programs and downtown loft/studio space for artists.

Artist-in-residence programs provide lodging and other support to traveling artists, who then have the opportunity to practice their art in a new environment. Artists may be from elsewhere in the country



or anywhere in the world. In exchange for this support, the artist typically provides a piece of work, lectures, classes, or other services.

Many artists find it makes economical sense to live and work in the same place. This can be a problem when looking in the conventional housing market, though, as typical residential space may not be suited to the needs of artists or existing zoning may not permit the use. Artists typically need spaces with high ceilings, large windows, and adequate ventilation systems. Glass, ceramics, and metal artists may have additional needs which won't be suited to a typical apartment or condominium. Cities both larger and smaller than Appleton have sought to overcome these problems by providing live/work space specifically tailored to this market.

Several locations in the mixed-use district north of the core downtown may be suited to creating live/work space for artists. Of these, perhaps the best options are on the triangular block formed by the railroad track, Franklin Street, and State Street. This location is in close proximity to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center and would have access to the public plaza proposed for construction on the remnant of Washington Street.

Several models exist for creating artist live/work spaces, and some non-profit organizations may be potential partners for Appleton. Artspace is one such non-profit developer. Based in Minneapolis, the organization has several such buildings around the country.

- Establish a downtown artist-in-residence program
- Explore the feasibility of creating live/work or studio space for artists

2.3 Create new venues for arts activities in the downtown

Large audiences for Appleton's downtown summer concerts in Houdini Plaza are a testament to the popularity of arts. As more events are hosted in the downtown and the number of attendees continues to grow, there will be an increased need for performance space to accommodate them. This need may be largely addressed in Jones Park, where the recently adopted plan has identified a site for an outdoor performance stage, and through renovation of Houdini Plaza. In addition to this, the City should continue to discuss the needs of Lawrence University, and be prepared to partner on future performance space which may also be used by the City.

- Construct the performance space proposed for Jones Park and Houdini Plaza
- Coordinate development of performance space with Lawrence University

2.4 Advance efforts to establish a convention/expo center in the downtown

Meeting and convention planners have indicated that many potential events are forced to look elsewhere because there are no large convention/expo centers in the Fox Cities. Appleton is currently examining the feasibility of constructing a facility to meet this need. This study should examine the costs along with the expected benefits of hosting more and larger events.

An investment on the scale of a convention/expo center should be sited to best utilize the City's infrastructure and provide the greatest possible return. The downtown is the only location which should be considered. It provides the hotel rooms, restaurants, shopping, transit, and activities which are demanded by event planners when booking activities. This advantage may be further compounded by siting the convention/expo center on Lawrence Street south of the Radisson Hotel. That site, owned by Outagamie County, can be developed to provide views and direct access to Jones Park, with its performance space and path to the Fox River. An alternative site may be the northeast corner of College Avenue and Division Street.

- Continue feasibility analysis and planning for a new convention/expo center in downtown Appleton
- Partner with Outagamie County to secure use of the desired site
- Redevelop the north end of the county's campus for the convention/expo center



3 Neighborhood and Residential Development Initiative

Appleton desires a downtown which is as conducive to living as it is to businesses. The community envisions mid-density residential and mixed-use redevelopment in several locations surrounding the core downtown district. The Historic Third Ward will be preserved as a predominantly family-oriented neighborhood of restored older and historic homes. North of the downtown, pockets of attractive older homes will be preserved and rehabilitated, while other areas are identified for redevelopment. Townhouse, condominium, and apartment units will offer a variety of housing options in an attractive urban setting. These new residences will be served by neighborhood retail and services in close proximity to housing.

3.1 Encourage mixed-use and mid-density residential redevelopment on under-utilized or marginal sites on the edge of downtown

Additional housing in the downtown area will contribute to extending the hours of activity on downtown streets, and create more customers for downtown businesses. There has been little new housing in the downtown since the 1995 plan was adopted. Whereas that plan suggested that housing was a lower priority for downtown, market trends appear to support, and downtown is now ready to make this initiative one of its higher priorities.

A disproportionate share of the housing which has been recently added in the downtown area has either utilized programs for low- and moderate-income housing or been intended for the elderly. As Appleton moves forward it will need to provide a majority of its future units at market rate. These may still target a broad spectrum of buyers and income levels.

Getting the “right product” will be critical both to finding a willing market and gaining community acceptance of higher-density housing and mixed-use development. The public participation process resulted in a clear preference for mid-density housing, meaning four to about twenty units per building, at a height of no more than three or four stories for solely residential buildings. The most popular housing was constructed to resemble individual rowhouses.

City participation may be necessary to help spur this development. Other activities proposed for these areas, such as the open space and connectivity enhancements, and business development which creates more demand for services, will help to make the area more desirable. Still more direct assistance may be required for individual development projects, at least until the market has been established. Targeted property acquisition and solicitation for developers is a common way cities promote redevelopment. Other investment may take the form of street and utility improvements or streetscaping and other environmental enhancements. The city may also sponsor or contribute to a marketing program aimed to improve perceptions of downtown living.

- Identify appropriate sites for redevelopment
- Assess potential strategies and appropriate city investment in redevelopment sites
- Ensure that redevelopment projects comply with the proposed design guidelines

3.2 Preserve and enhance historic neighborhoods adjacent to downtown

All of the areas surrounding downtown contain some housing which is attractive and helps to create a sense of history within the neighborhood. Even in places where large-scale redevelopment is contemplated, efforts should be made to preserve these homes and to have new construction harmonize with them.

One of these pockets of homes is located south of the YMCA and east of Morrison Street. Although there are only a few homes here, several of them are good examples of Victorian design. Other locations may be found north of the downtown, beginning at Franklin Street. Housing rehabilitation programs should be targeted to these areas.

The Third Ward is one of Appleton’s oldest and most historic neighborhoods. An active neighborhood organization has led efforts to restore and gain recognition for its distinctive character. The neighborhood has been threatened at times by intrusion of non-residential uses which may break up its historic and residential feel. The City should maintain its existing policy of discouraging such encroachment.



Furthermore, the City should work with the neighborhood to create a more defined sense of place within the neighborhood, and promote it as a place for families to live near downtown.

- Identify existing pockets of housing where rehabilitation and preservation will be the focus of the City's housing initiative
- Enhance and promote the Third Ward as a historic neighborhood and a location for family housing

3.3 Continue both public and private redevelopment along the Fox River Corridor

The Fox River is one of the region's outstanding natural amenities. Recent renovation and redevelopment projects along its shores have met with a great deal of success. The community supports a mix of private and public uses along the river. In the public realm, the community looks forward to demolition of the former water treatment plant and conversion of the space into a new city park. It also anticipates completion of the riverwalk with its connections to downtown. Private redevelopment may occur on other former industrial properties along the river.

- Implement plans for the water treatment plant site and for the riverwalk
- Encourage continued private investment to redevelop industrial sites along the river

3.4 Promote development of a neighborhood commercial district on Richmond Street to meet the basic shopping and service needs of downtown and nearby residents

Current residents in the neighborhoods surrounding downtown do not have convenient access to all neighborhood-level retail and services. This is particularly true of groceries. The retail and services which do exist are predominantly on Richmond Street north of College Avenue. This is an appropriate location, as it has good traffic, is easily accessed by neighborhoods both north and south, and does not cause competition for destination-oriented retail in the core downtown.

As with other downtown streets, Richmond Street should be enhanced with streetscaping which helps to define an identity for the street. Design guidelines for this street may also be different, given the types of uses desired. Redevelopment in the district may be purely commercial or mixed-use. As with the downtown, it should be scaled and developed to be walkable, however, this area should be convenient to customers traveling by car.

The city further can support growth of this neighborhood shopping district through a campaign of retail attraction. The first step should be to complete a detailed market survey and analysis to identify the shopping of nearby residents, determine the market potential, and identify appropriate targets for attraction. The City should work with property owners and developers secure their cooperation and to improve sites which will be attractive to the desired tenants. Finally, the City may initiate a program of retail business attraction.

- Conduct a market assessment for neighborhood-level retail and services and identify appropriate targets for the district
- Work with property owners and developers to prepare sites tailored to the desired uses
- Conduct a retail attraction campaign

3.5 Amend the Zoning Code to facilitate redevelopment in the Mixed-Use District and in the Richmond Street neighborhood commercial area

A majority of the proposed mixed-use and neighborhood commercial (Richmond Street) districts is zoned either CBD, Central Business District or C-2, General Commercial District. Neither of these zoning districts may be well adapted to the kinds of development desired in these areas. The CBD district allows for full lot coverage, with no open space and no parking required, and permits building heights up to 200 feet. The C-2 district, on the other hand, establishes a less urban feel than may be desired in these areas, and requires substantial parking which may be difficult to provide on small sites.



This plan recommends creation of two new zoning districts. The mixed-use zoning district would be applied to those areas generally north of Washington Street and south of Lawrence Street which have been identified for mixed-use development. The district would encourage buildings built to the sidewalk, but require some open space and parking for any residential units in the development. Buildings should not exceed four or five stories in height.

The urban commercial district would also permit mixed uses, but should be designed to better accommodate retail uses which generate automobile traffic. Parking requirements, however, should be substantially less than in other commercial zones. Buildings should be set close to the street with parking to the rear and side. Their maximum height should be no more than two or three stories tall. The district would be applied to properties on Richmond Street where neighborhood-serving commercial uses are proposed to be located.

Additional recommendations related to these proposed districts are included in Appendix B.

- Establish a mixed-use zoning district
- Establish an urban commercial zoning district

4 Business and Office Development Initiative

While Appleton's downtown continues to compete with outlying areas as a location for office uses, some businesses have found downtown offers more to both their business and to employees. They have especially noted that younger employees find the downtown setting to be appealing, and all employees enjoy the access to restaurants, services, and entertainment in the downtown. This environment is the unique selling point for downtown. It can be equally appealing to home-grown businesses and to corporations seeking branch sites. Downtown Appleton should be among the top business locations pitched by local and regional economic development agencies.

4.1 Monitor retail trends and look for emerging market niches for downtown

A niche market analysis was prepared for the downtown in 1999. This analysis has served the City well and is still a valid tool to be used in determining prospects for the downtown.

Retail markets change relatively frequently. Most retail segments go through a cycle as their popularity increases. Small independent entrepreneurs usually flourish in the early stages, growing to create a critical mass of retail stores. This success attracts larger operations, often chain stores, who begin to compete and capture an ever larger market share. Smaller stores adjust to compete, yet some close and others evolve to find the next emerging market.

Appleton needs to monitor changes in the market locally and nationally, to identify at what point a niche matures and also to capture and promote emerging opportunities. Target market research should be re-evaluated on an annual cycle. Professional assistance should be obtained to update the update the analysis at least every tenth year, and more frequently if major disruptions occur.

- Establish a schedule to review and update market research for the downtown

4.2 Sustain the retail niche clusters which have formed downtown

Many cities have adopted an approach to economic development which focuses efforts around strategies for cluster of primary industry sector companies. These strategies are not intended to create a cluster, but to accelerate its growth. They are collaborative efforts involving the government, business organizations, and often civic and non-profit organizations. This same approach is suited to the retail niche clusters which have formed, or may in the future arise in Appleton.

Cluster strategies typically identify marketing as a high priority. Both businesses and government enjoy being known as a good location for a particular kind of business. It is no different with retail, and the efforts of Appleton Downtown, Inc. and other organizations tout the strength of the Appleton's downtown retail niches. Taking this strategy to the next level, events developed around these clusters can further build the city's reputation and market recognition.



Other retail cluster strategies may be determined through Appleton Downtown, Inc's Retail Market Committee.

- Establish retail cluster steering committees
- Identify development and support strategies specific to each cluster
- Carry out marketing and events which build market recognition for downtown's retail clusters

4.3 Protect the existing retail blocks on College Avenue

A pedestrian retail environment can only be successful when there is a critical mass of retail shops which are concentrated geographically, and not broken up by expanses of non-retail uses. These characteristics may be seen in the retail node which has developed on the eastern end of College Avenue in the downtown, and to a lesser extent on the west end. This strategy recognizes the importance of preserving the three ingredients which have made this node a success: 1) a concentration of retail uses; 2) a pattern of development with small storefronts and frequently-spaced openings; and 3) the historic architecture of the downtown's buildings. These the integrity of these traits must be maintained to secure the future health of these retail nodes.

An effort should be made to educate property owners regarding the importance of favoring retail uses in their buildings. In a healthy retail district, retail will pay a higher rent for available space. By collectively working to maintain retail uses in their buildings, individual owners will realize a benefit through these higher rents. The City may pursue greater control over the uses permitted by right within these nodes through its zoning ordinances.

There is once again an important relationship between downtown buildings and the vitality of the retail district. At a basic level, this is as simple as providing transparent facades that let shoppers see into the store and entrances which are spaced closely enough to feel convenient to shoppers. This generally means a distance of thirty to fifty feet.

Appleton's historic commercial buildings bring a truly unique design feature to the district. Built in many styles over a period spanning more than a century, they create an environment which, although it is attempted, cannot be replicated in new development. Preserving and restoring these buildings should be seen as fundamental to the "one-of-a-kind" shopping experience of downtown Appleton.

- Discourage non-retail uses within the downtown's retail nodes
- Preserve a pattern of small storefronts with frequent openings to the sidewalk
- Preserve and restore downtown's historic storefronts

4.4 Add depth to retail nodes by encouraging new businesses on side streets and on Soldier's Square

College Avenue stretches about three-quarters of a mile from Richmond Street on the west to Drew Street on the east. This is too far to be perceived as conveniently walkable for most shoppers, and is why nodes of retail have developed at either end of the street. Appleton's best prospect for adding more retailers and broadening its market pull will be to add depth to these nodes. This can be done by encouraging retail on side streets, and especially Oneida, Morrison, and Durkee Streets. Additional depth may be created by redeveloping Soldier's Square. As noted in the plan, Soldier's Square can become a pedestrian mall with small shops fronting a parking deck and College Avenue buildings opening their backs to it, and vendors or events in the plaza between them. This concept is explored graphically in Appendix B. It should be noted that since the parking ramp is owned by the YMCA, they will need to be included as a partner in this project.

- Encourage retail development along side streets
- Redevelop Soldier's Square as a pedestrian-oriented retail space



4.5 Encourage entrepreneurial business development in the downtown

Downtown's retail and service business community is largely comprised of independent business owners. This is one of its strengths, as it creates a unique environment and these businesses have the flexibility to quickly respond to change. At the same time, it can be difficult for entrepreneurs to start their business, and businesses such as these have a high rate of failure. Appleton should address these issues by providing education and support to its entrepreneurs and small businesses. While several organizations may be providing general support to businesses, their programs are often not tailored to retail. Appleton may need to partner with these organizations to develop training programs and business support initiatives around retail businesses.

Start-up costs are another factor in business formation. New businesses often seek locations with comparatively low rents, and still may face issues due to cash flow. Appleton may see its proposed investment in Soldier's Square as an chance to provide low-cost retail space for entrepreneurs. The retail spaces fronting the parking ramp will be small, and not well suited to many retail businesses. For starting businesses, however, the issue of space may be of less importance than cost and a location with good traffic. As the business gains clientele it can move to another, larger location in the downtown.

- Work with business development organizations serving the region to provide education and support to retail entrepreneurs
- Create low-cost retail incubation space within small shops lining the outside of the Soldier's Square parking ramp

4.6 Create opportunities for smaller offices and business services to locate in a mixed-use district north of the core downtown

This plan has endorsed continuation of past initiatives to attract corporate and other office tenants to downtown locations. A variety of other businesses and professionals will cater to the needs of these primary employers. It will be desirable to the downtown to develop locations for these uses in close proximity to their clients. As Appleton also has a strategy of maintaining the integrity of its downtown retail nodes, these business services should be steered to the mixed-use district. This is a transition zone from the residential districts to the more intensely developed downtown core. The design of buildings and parking should reflect that role. In places near multi-storied office building it may be appropriate to construct new mixed-use buildings from four to six stories in height. Where the mixed-use zone borders two- and three-story buildings, new buildings should be built to a similar height. Business and personal services, professional offices, general offices, restaurants, and some retail uses would be appropriate for the mixed-use zone.

As with residential redevelopment, the City may spur redevelopment to create these spaces by identifying priority locations for redevelopment, investing in public facilities which may help to spur redevelopment, and providing targeted incentives for key projects.

- Identify priority sites for mixed-use development and evaluate available incentives

4.7 Maintain an environment favorable to large businesses in the downtown

Downtown benefits from the presence of several companies with a large employee base. These companies occupy a good share of the available space in the downtown area. They help to support downtown and community organizations, and their employees are an important source of customers for downtown restaurants, retailers, and other businesses.

- Maintain regular communication with the downtown's larger employers and respond to their needs to remain and expand in the downtown.
- Promote downtown as a desirable location for large office-based businesses to locate.

5 Transportation and Parking Initiative

The transportation and parking initiative is intended to guarantee access to and through the downtown for all forms of transportation, and sufficient, appropriately-located parking in the downtown area.

5.1 Review and establish a parking analysis process that addresses plan elements

Whether it is a reality or not, parking is always perceived to be a problem. The issue is further complicated by changes in the downtown or surrounding areas which may increase or decrease demand for parking, or simply shift the demand to another location within the downtown area. Implementation strategies in this plan such as redevelopment of Soldier's Square and promotion of a mixed-use district will also have an impact on the need for parking.

Appleton should work with stakeholders to establish a process for reviewing its parking needs and management practices on a regular basis, to be aware of changing demands and make informed choices for future parking investments.

- Establish a process for reviewing parking needs

5.2 Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to and through the downtown

There has been a growing trend for cities to make access and safety improvements which make travel easier for bicyclists and pedestrians. Appleton residents have been very supportive of these measures. Several opportunities exist to make it easier for bicyclists and pedestrians to access and move around the downtown area.

This process should begin with an audit of the existing transportation network. It should assess the existing transportation network, including roads, paths, bike lanes, sidewalks, and any other assets. Potential impediments or gaps in the network should be noted. The audit should also identify safety concerns such as busy intersections lacking signals or crosswalks. The ultimate goal of this process will be to map safe bicycle routes and lanes, to detect sidewalk and pedestrian safety needs, and discern additional opportunities for off-street paths.

Two off-street paths have already been identified in this and other plans. These are the riverwalk on the Fox River, and a bicycle/pedestrian path along the railroad corridor.

- Construct the riverwalk along the Fox River and path connections through Jones Park
- Develop a walking and bicycling path in the railroad corridor north of downtown
- Prepare a bicycle and pedestrian safety audit and map a system of on- and off-street routes through the downtown
- Provide locations for secure bicycle storage in the downtown

5.3 Endorse a system of public transportation centered on downtown

Appleton and the broader region have a good public transportation system. The City recently constructed a central hub in the downtown, next to the public library. From here buses connect to most parts of Appleton and surrounding cities. In addition to the regular bus routes, Appleton began offering a downtown trolley in 2006. This has been popular with the community and was discussed during several public input sessions.

- Continue to support public transportation serving the downtown



6 Downtown Management Initiative

Strategies related to ongoing management of the downtown and the revitalization process are grouped within this initiative. While not necessarily as tangible as some of the other strategies in the plan, they are nevertheless vital to the process of creating a vibrant downtown.

6.1 Update the Downtown Plan as initiatives are completed or new opportunities arise

In planning for the future it is impossible to recognize every possible outcome or opportunity. Plans, then, are general guidelines and should be continually re-evaluated in the light of present circumstances. Appleton's organizations with a role in downtown revitalization should establish a process of annual review to measure progress in implementing the plan, to assess priorities for investment of their resources, and to consider changes which respond to current situations. The entire plan should be completely updated on a ten-year cycle.

- Establish a process for reviewing and updating the downtown plan

6.2 Uphold support for Appleton Downtown, Inc. and the Business Improvement District

These organizations have been critical to restoring vitality to the downtown. With broad support from property owners, businesses, community organizations, and city government, these organizations have been effective in coordinating the interests of all of these stakeholders. Appleton Downtown, Inc. has further served as a leader in implementing the initiatives of the Downtown Plan. These organizations should be recognized for their role in creating a vibrant downtown.

- Ensure continued support for Appleton Downtown, Inc. and the business improvement district

6.3 Coordinate the activities of downtown support groups

Downtown is fortunate to have many diverse organizations committed to maintaining its vitality. Appleton Downtown, Inc. has provided the leadership necessary to coordinate their activities and to form the partnerships necessary to implement plans for the downtown. This important role needs to be continued.

- Reinforce the role of Appleton Downtown, Inc. as the point of coordination for organizations supporting the downtown

6.4 Ensure the cleanliness and safety of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods

Downtown Appleton is perceived by residents to be a clean and safe place. Still, there are areas of concern. Several comments pertained to trash and cigarette butts in a few places in the downtown. A small number of people expressed perceived safety concerns in Jones Park and along the railroad track. Planned improvements to Jones Park and the proposed path along the tracks will help to alleviate these concerns by making these places more visible and visited. Cleanliness may be addressed in part by providing additional cigarette cans in the downtown and by educating businesses to take responsibility for keeping the sidewalk in front of their stores clean.

- Implement plans for Jones Park and the railroad corridor path to address safety concerns
- Conduct a campaign aimed at keeping the downtown clean

Implementation

Appleton has designed its initiatives for the downtown around six common themes, each of which has a number of strategies associated with it. Some of these strategies may apply to more than one initiative, but each is listed in only one location in the report. The following implementation table presents a brief description of each strategy along with identifying the organizations that will be involved in executing it.



Urban Design Initiative

Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Develop entry features on major routes into downtown	Entry features are planned and installed	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Establish design guidelines for renovation and redevelopment projects	Design guidelines are adopted	City of Appleton (Plan Commission)
Create a public use campus south on the county city and property next to Jones Park	Plans for the area reflect a unified approach and create identity	Outagamie County City of Appleton
Implement streetscaping projects to create downtown "identity streets"	Targeted streetscaping is installed	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Install public art in downtown locations	Adopt art guidelines and target art installations	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Expand and enhance the system of urban parks, plazas, and trails in the downtown	Identified improvements are completed	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc. Private developers

Tourism/Arts/Entertainment Initiative

Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Maintain the vitality of the arts and entertainment district	Continued success of existing venues	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc. Fox Cities CVB Appleton Art Center Fox Valley Performing Arts Center
Pursue opportunities to attract artists and arts-related businesses	Establish strategy for arts/artist recruitment	Appleton Downtown, Inc. Appleton Art Center Fox Valley Performing Arts Center
Create new venues for arts activities	Reconstruction of Houdini Plaza and new stage in Jones Park	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc. Appleton Art Center Fox Valley Performing Arts Center
Advance efforts for a convention/expo center downtown	Completion of feasibility study, implementation of recommendations	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc. Fox Cities CVB



Neighborhood and Residential Development Initiative

Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Encourage mixed-use and mid-density residential redevelopment on under-utilized or marginal sites in the downtown area	Redevelopment is occurring on targeted sites	City of Appleton Private developers
Preserve and enhance historic neighborhood adjacent to downtown	Neighborhood vitality preserved	City of Appleton Neighborhood organizations
Continue public and private redevelopment along the Fox River Corridor	Public and private redevelopment continues	City of Appleton Private developers
Promote development of a neighborhood commercial district on Richmond Street	Redevelopment in the Richmond Street corridor	City of Appleton Richmond Street businesses Private developers
Amend the Zoning Code to facilitate redevelopment in mixed-use areas and on the Richmond Street corridor	Zoning Code is amended	City of Appleton (Plan Commission)

Business and Office Development Initiative

Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Monitor retail trends and look for emerging market niches	Niche study is updated	Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Sustain retail niche clusters which have formed downtown	Retail niches grow in strength	Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Protect the existing retail blocks on College Avenue	Retail remains the dominant use	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc. Property owners
Add depth to retail nodes by encouraging new businesses on side streets and on Soldier's Square	Redevelop Soldier's Square	City of Appleton YMCA Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Encourage entrepreneurial business development	New initiatives for entrepreneurs	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Create opportunities for smaller offices and business services to locate in a mixed-use district north of the core downtown	Redevelopment of properties in the mixed-use area	City of Appleton Private developers
Maintain good communications with larger employers in the downtown	Regular meetings with large companies	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.



Transportation and Parking Initiative

Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Review and establish a parking analysis process that addresses plan elements	Parking analysis process is identified	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections	Recommended facilities are constructed	City of Appleton
Endorse a system of public transportation centered on downtown	Maintain or increase current levels of service	Valley Transit City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.

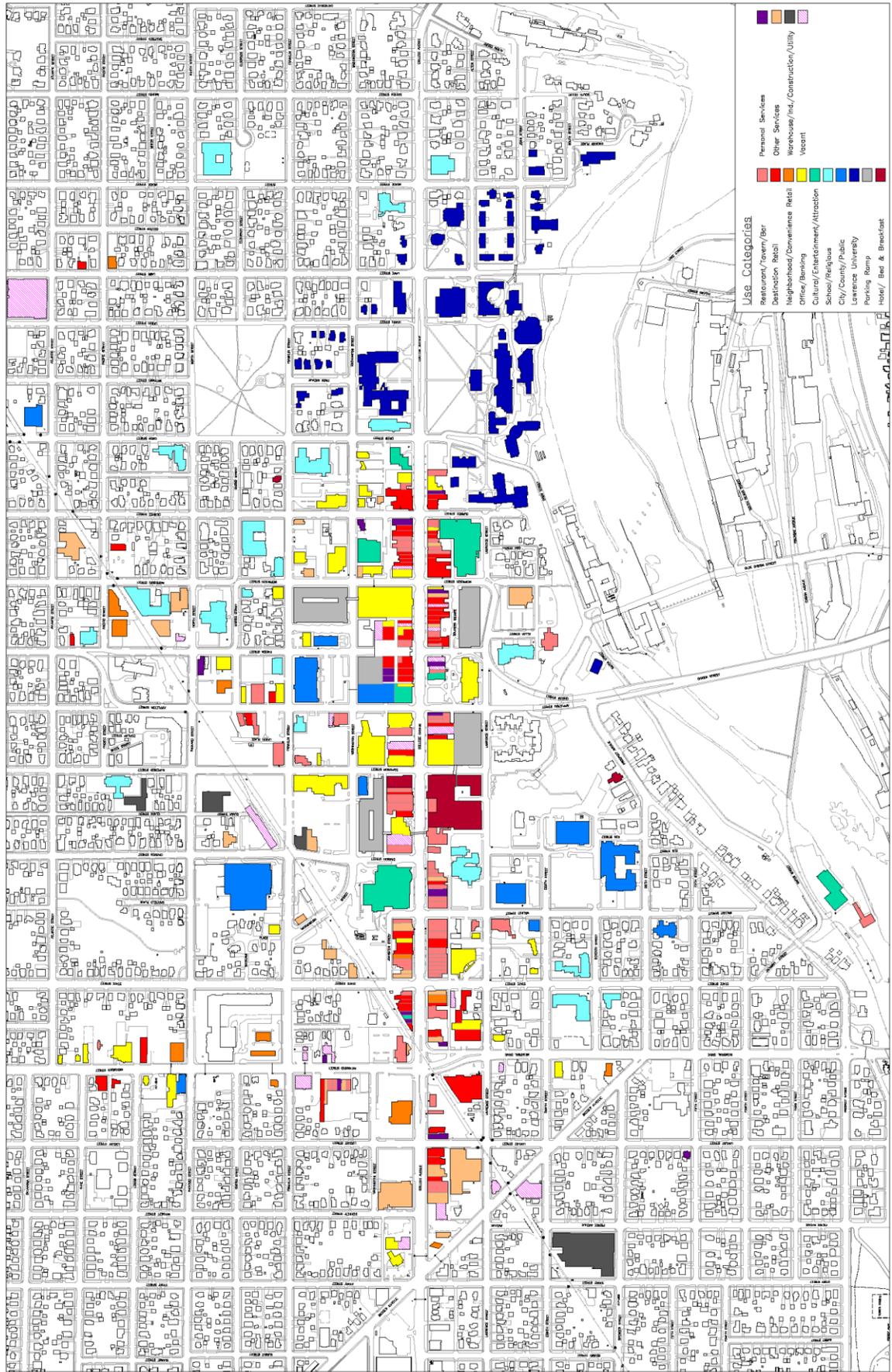
Downtown Management Initiative

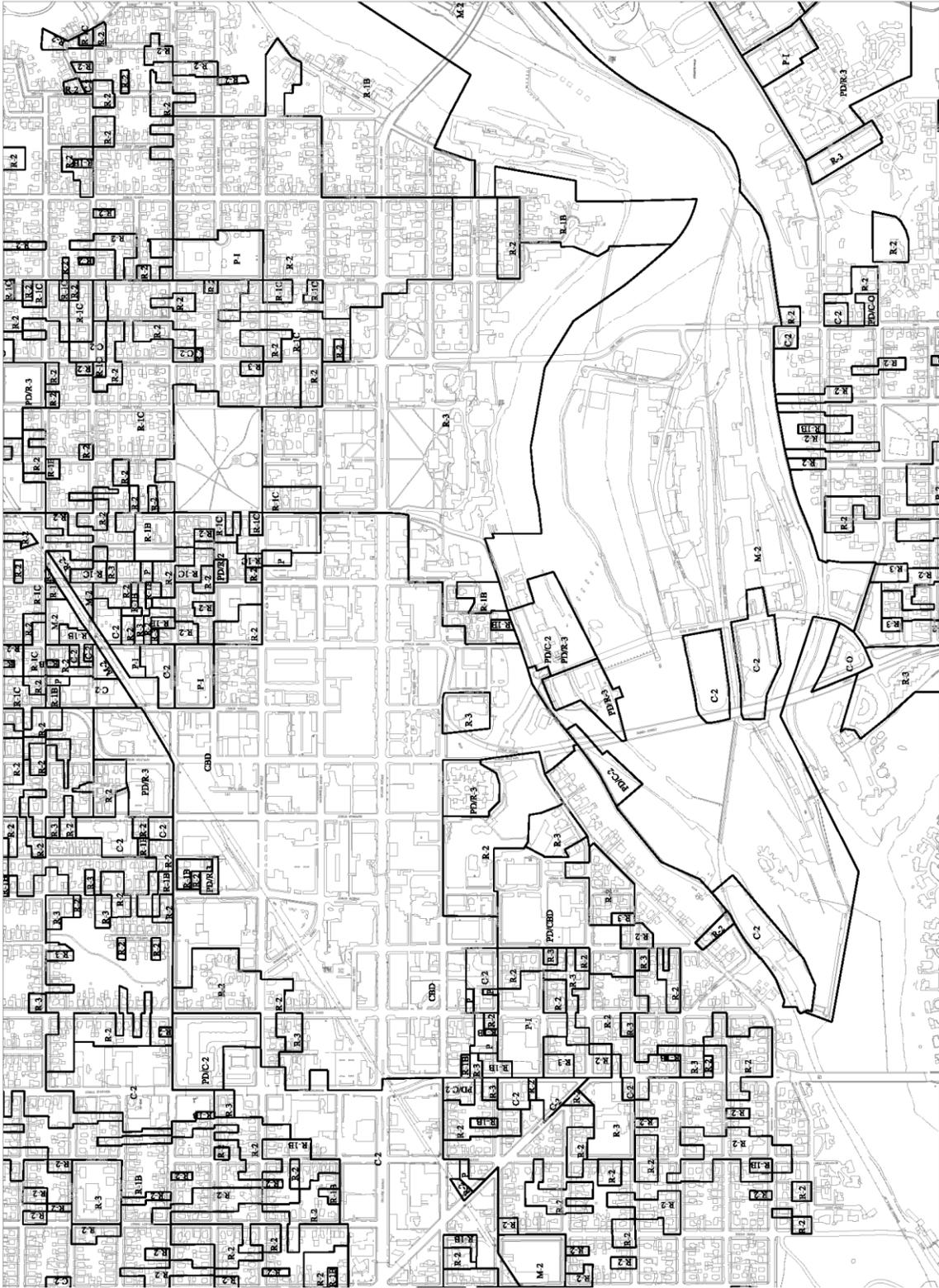
Strategy	Measurement	Organization(s)
Update the downtown plan as initiatives are completed or new opportunities arise	Annual review process is established	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Uphold support for Appleton Downtown, Inc. and the business improvement district	ADI and the BID are maintained or expanded	Appleton Downtown, Inc. Business Improvement Dist. City of Appleton
Coordinate the activities of downtown support groups	Cooperation between organizations	Appleton Downtown, Inc.
Ensure the cleanliness and safety of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods	Areas are seen as clean and safe by residents	City of Appleton Appleton Downtown, Inc.

Downtown Appendix A: Maps

The following pages contain maps that describe conditions existing at the time of the 2006 plan update, or depict recommendations contained within this plan.



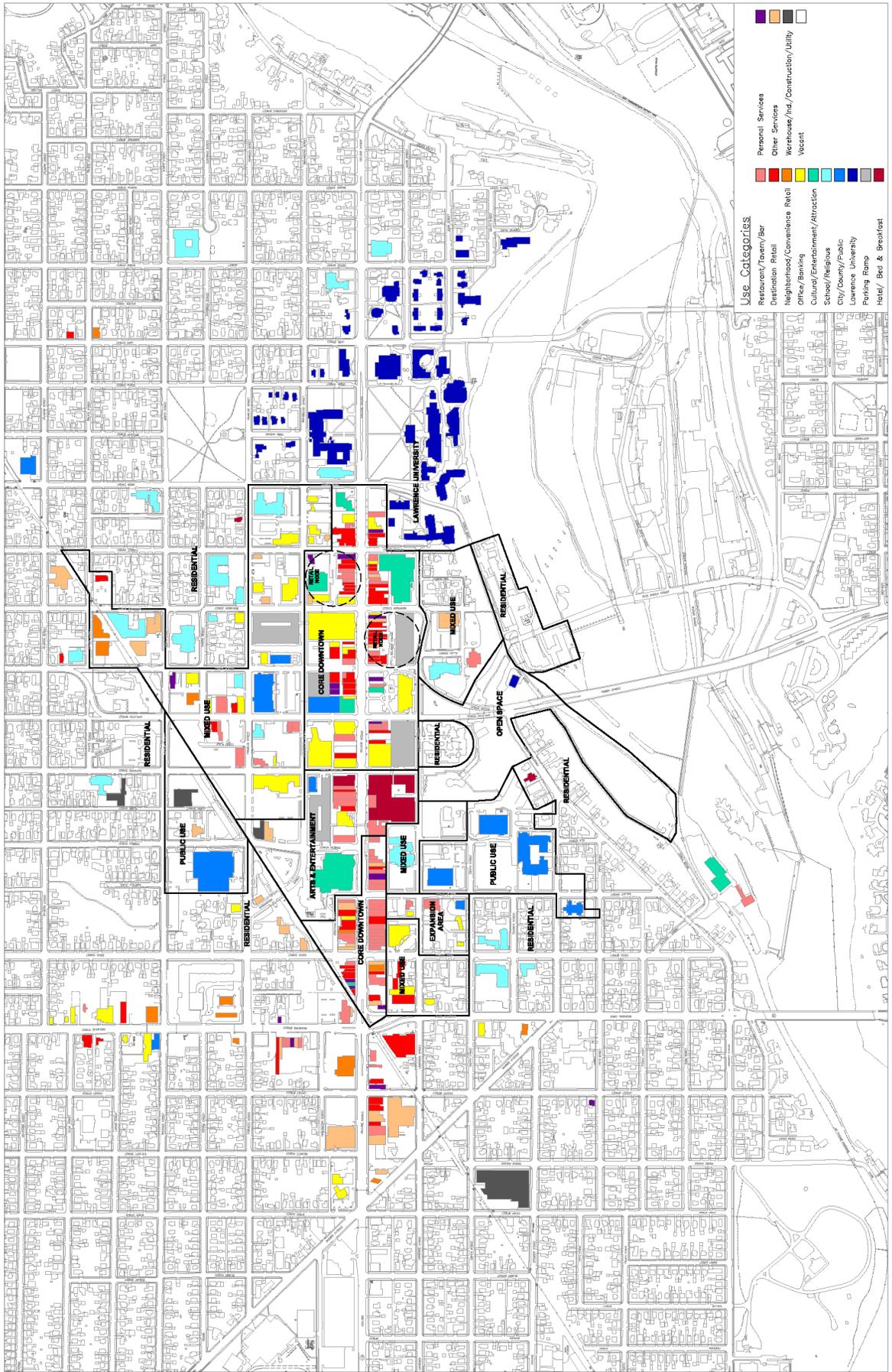


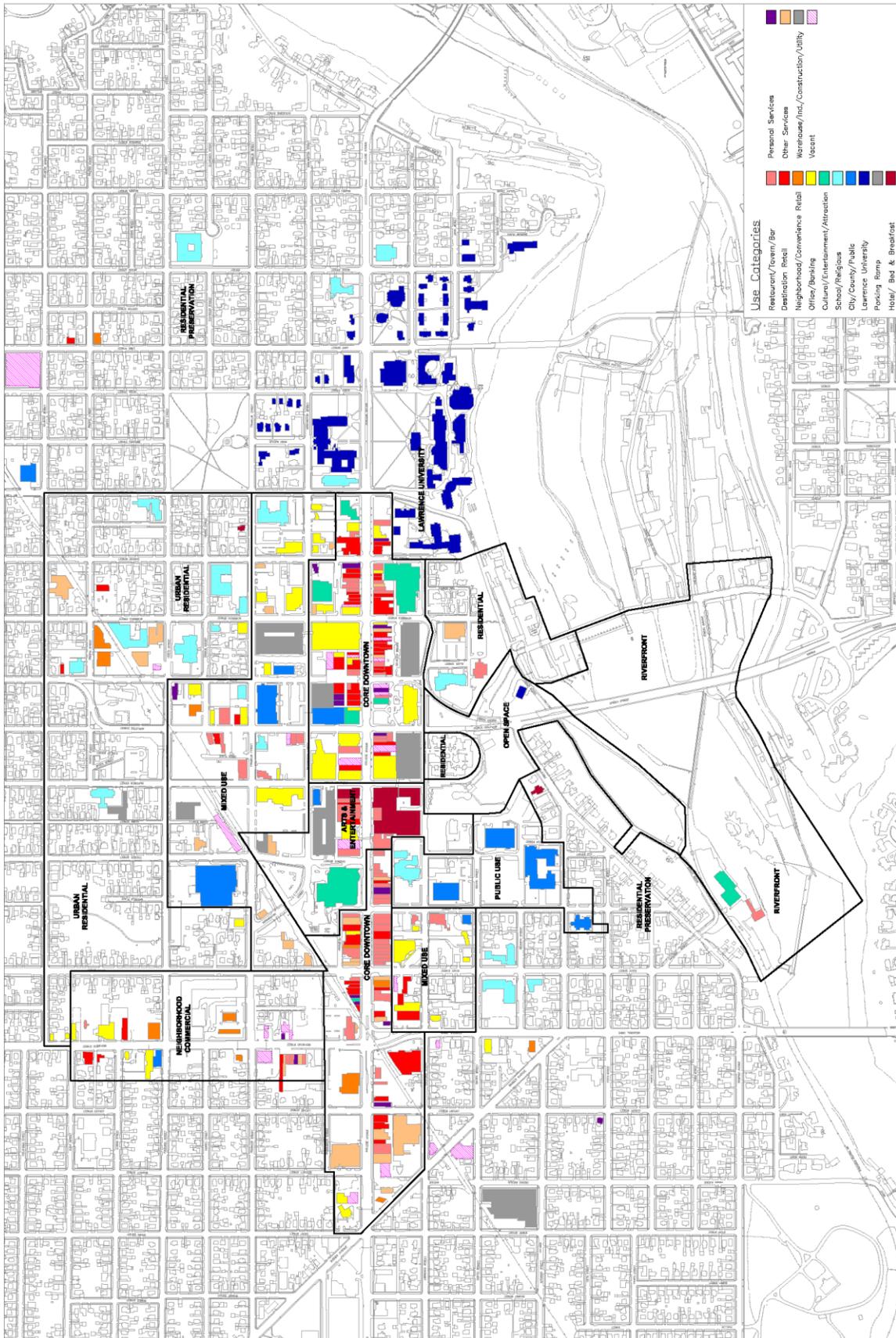


Downtown Area Zoning Districts

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>CBD: Central Business District
 R-1A: Single Family District
 R-1C: Central City Residential District
 R-3: Multifamily District</p> | <p>C-2: General Commercial District
 R-1B: Single Family District
 R-2: Two Family District
 M-2: General Industrial District</p> |
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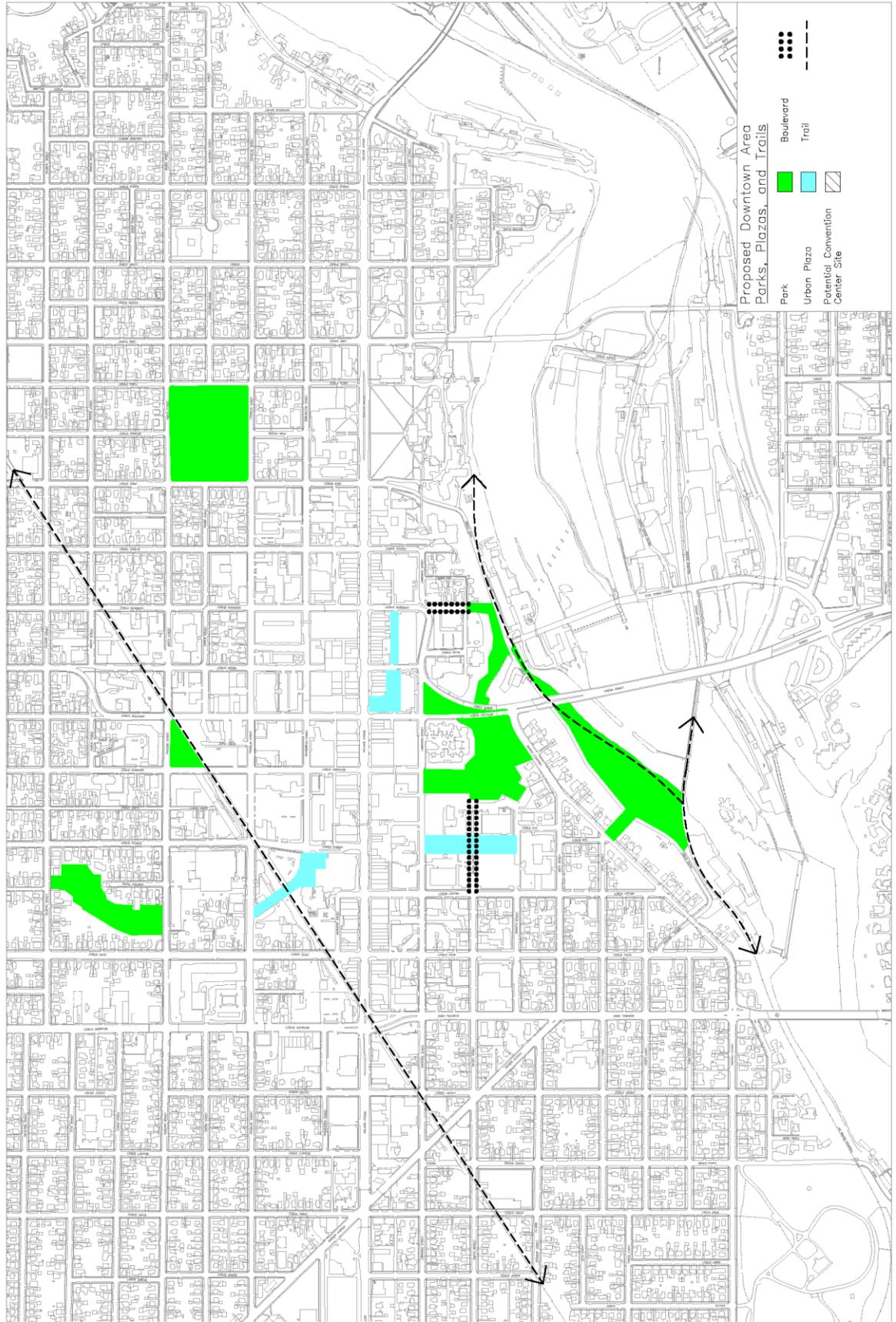






Downtown Districts in the 2007 Downtown Plan





Proposed Parks, Plazas, and Trails in the Downtown Area

