

# VISION for a VITAL Downtown

The Oconomowoc Downtown Revitalization Plan & Market Analysis provides a series of recommendations aimed at sustaining a healthy and economically viable downtown for the City of Oconomowoc. Historically the heart of the City and of Wisconsin's Lake Country, Downtown Oconomowoc offers challenges and opportunities for community leaders as they seek to position the downtown for continued success and a vital community and regional role.

The primary purpose of the Revitalization Plan is to provide comprehensive, market-based recommendations for improvements to transportation, wayfinding, parking, land use, redevelopment, streetscape/urban design and open space to strengthen and sustain Downtown Oconomowoc. The plan is intended as a tool to guide short-term and long-term investment decisions by the City, public agencies, developers, business owners, property owners and others that will minimize the impacts of uncoordinated planning decisions and parcel-by-parcel development.

The Oconomowoc Downtown Revitalization Plan & Market Analysis was developed over early 2003 to mid-2004 as part of a thorough public review and input process. A Steering Committee was established to coordinate the project, review consultant recommendations and solicit public input on plan findings and recommendations. A total of 21 meetings were held during the planning process to discuss the recommendations, and to solicit public feedback and input. The resulting plan represents a true community-based vision for the future of the downtown.

## Vision Statement

Downtown Oconomowoc is the historic center and heart of the community where all facets of community life come together: retail, services, government, neighborhoods, employment, transportation and recreation. More than any other part of the city, the downtown defines Oconomowoc as a community. Over the next 20 years, there will need to be changes to strengthen the downtown by capitalizing on its unique assets — its natural beauty, cultural heritage, friendly and inviting businesses, and secure position as the Heart of Lake Country. City officials, business leaders, property owners and residents all recognize the importance of strengthening the social, cultural and economic position of the downtown for the betterment of everyone. By working together to define our collective vision for the downtown, we will make the City of Oconomowoc a more welcoming, attractive and vibrant place to live, work, shop, learn and play.

## Planning & Revitalization Goals

The primary goal for the Oconomowoc Downtown Revitalization Plan and Market Analysis is to create a comprehensive long-range vision and implementation strategy for the redevelopment and economic restructuring of Downtown Oconomowoc. Other key goals of the plan include:

- Establish Downtown Oconomowoc as an important multi-use activity center for the community and the region including recreational, cultural, residential, retail, entertainment, office, high-tech business and government land uses.
- Improve public access to the downtown through improvements in the street network, parking, multi-modal transportation (i.e. automobile, pedestrian/bicycle improvements, and bus/commuter rail connections) and wayfinding.
- Balance the need for efficient automobile circulation with improvements aimed at strengthening the historic downtown core as a pedestrian-oriented business district.
- Preserve the historic character of Downtown Oconomowoc while accommodating new urban infill development.
- Reinforce Downtown Oconomowoc's role as the Heart of Lake Country through better utilization of the lakes and lake frontages.
- Establish a complimentary and synergistic relationship between Downtown Oconomowoc and Pabst Farms through coordinated business mix, joint marketing and transportation linkages.
- Improve connections between downtown and community destinations such as the YMCA, the public library, the community center, schools, city parks, recreational trails and neighborhoods.
- Identify new development within the Downtown T.I.D. to fund public improvements for streets, parking, transit, pedestrian and bicycle access, and public space development.
- Promote environmentally friendly improvement strategies.
- Build partnerships between the State, local government and the private sector to accomplish revitalization goals.

City of Oconomowoc  
Wisconsin



# Downtown

## Revitalization Plan & Market Analysis

Adopted June 2004

## Involving the Community in the Planning Process

In early 2003, the City of Oconomowoc retained the consultant team of Schreiber/Anderson Associates, The Taurean Group and BEST Real Estate Group to prepare a downtown revitalization plan and market analysis. The plan focused on the downtown area generally defined by Lac La Belle and Fowler Lake on the north, Fowler Street on the east, Summit Avenue and the Canadian Pacific Railway on the south, and Worthington/City Park on the west.

A project Steering Committee was formed that included representatives from various groups within the downtown and larger community including Alders, the Oconomowoc Chamber of Commerce, business owners, property owners, developers, residents, and the City of Oconomowoc Community Development Authority and Bureau of Economic Development. In order to ensure that plan recommendations were technically sound, a Technical Resource Committee (TRC) was formed, consisting of City staff from various areas of expertise. The consultant team met with the Steering Committee and the TRC throughout the planning process and received valuable input which helped shape the plan recommendations.

A total of 21 meetings were held during the planning process to discuss the plan and solicit public input. These meetings included three community forums and two educational forums, six steering committee meetings, six work sessions with City Staff or the Technical Resource Committee, two City Council Updates, and two Plan Commission meetings including the final public hearing. In addition to the public meetings, over 30 interviews were conducted with individual business owners, property owners, developers and residents both before and during the planning process to solicit their input and ideas.

While the plan emphasizes a long-term physical development framework, the process has also focused on short-term development actions which can produce synergistic impacts and that have the potential to reposition the downtown economy and heighten investor confidence. The implementation of plan components such as the WisDOT improvements to the public streetscape and the East Wisconsin Redevelopment District are already moving forward.



Community forums provided city residents and downtown stakeholders with the opportunity to discuss key issues and share their goals and ideas regarding the future of the downtown.



## Assessing the Downtown Marketplace

The plan's market analysis process utilized regional market and demographic data, a comprehensive business inventory, interviews with downtown business owners, and "on the ground" research and observation. The analysis identified viable business and development opportunities for all sectors of the downtown economy that together can form a sustainable mixed-use center for the community and the region. Highlights of the market analysis include the following:

- **Residential Growth:** The Downtown's lakefront location and historic character present a number of opportunities for housing development. Expected increases in local households with only one or two individuals, higher incomes, senior citizens, and no children may signal a demand for condominiums, senior housing and small single-family units in the downtown district. Contrary to the City's periphery, these new households will likely demand smaller building footprints and access to cultural activities and festivities in the downtown. In their buying decision, these individuals will look to be a part of a "downtown experience" that makes their home unique from other developments around Oconomowoc.
- **Employment:** The importance of the downtown district as a place of employment cannot be underestimated. In fact, data shows that downtown employs nearly 5,000 people from outside of the district. Though retail employment accounts for approximately 25% of this total, other industries are as important, if not more so, to the vitality of the downtown economy—including finance, insurance, real estate, services, and manufacturing. As a result, it is critical that downtown Oconomowoc work to retain and grow this diverse job base by providing appropriate infrastructure, economic incentives, and attractive physical environs.
- **Retail Competition:** Because the downtown depends on peripheral households for sales in its primary retail categories, new development closer to the outskirts of Oconomowoc will provide more alternatives to consumers and, as a result, increase the competition for downtown retailers. With increasing competition for consumer dollars, the downtown retail market may find its best strategy to be a niche oriented one. It is important to create an "experience economy" in the downtown that offers a wide variety of retail offerings that make it unique and distinct from Pabst Farms' proposed town center and traditional strip-development.
- **Organization and Management:** It is critical that the downtown take an organized, focused approach to development in order to remain competitive. The market analysis and the overall implementation strategy emphasize the need for an active association to assist with business recruitment/retention, retailer and service business support, joint marketing, uniform hour issues, and events planning.

## Business Owner Interview Responses

- When asked if they have met their business expectations in Downtown Oconomowoc, most businesses felt they were doing fairly well.
- When asked if there was a need for more retail businesses in the downtown, the responses certainly indicated an interest in a more diverse, specialty mix.
- When asked their opinion on the visual presentation of the downtown today, most businesses felt that the more effort was needed to improve the look and image of downtown physically.
- When asked what physical changes they would like to see in Downtown Oconomowoc, they felt that property owners must take better care of their buildings, back areas of the buildings should be cleaned up, and basic up-keep of the downtown should be improved.
- When asked their thoughts on pedestrian access and safety in the downtown, most businesses felt that pedestrian access was a problem for their customers.
- When asked their thoughts on downtown parking, most businesses felt that there is a very real—or perceived—problem that needs to be addressed.
- When asked about traffic issues in the downtown, most businesses support the bypass because of the volume of semi traffic and the related noise.
- When asked what would be the most valuable change or effort to undertake, they suggested: more parking, organization and involvement, façade and physical improvements to properties; improve the image of downtown.



Above: View of Existing Area by City Hall  
Below: Concept for City Square



Left: View of Existing Parking Lot  
Below: Concept for Waterfront Park

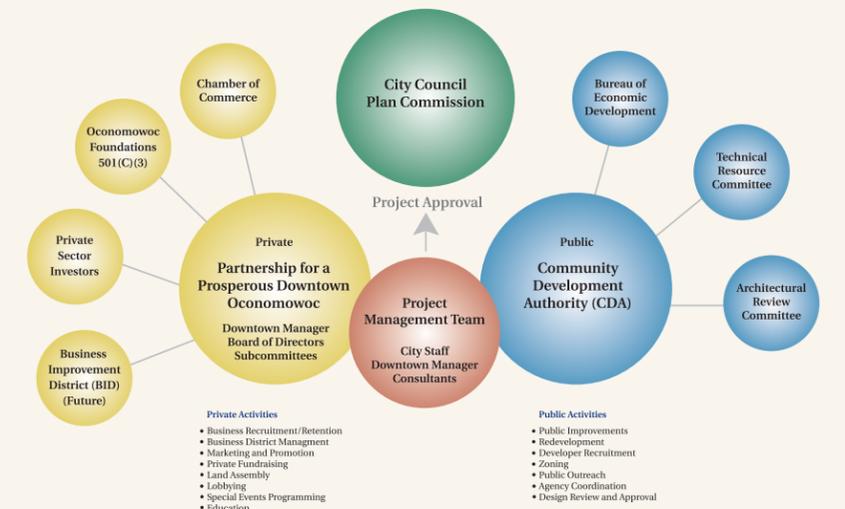


## City Hall/City Square

The City Hall/City Square concept proposes a public city square/pedestrian plaza located at what is now St. Paul Street. This public square will accentuate the landmark City Hall building and connect it visually to its lakefront location. The plaza acts as a visual gateway to lake country, establishing a new vista onto the lakes and allowing for significant public access to Fowler Lake from East Wisconsin Avenue. Directly adjacent to this proposed plaza is the St. Paul Street/East Wisconsin Avenue Redevelopment Area. The plan recommends that a vital mixed-use space be designed for this important site in order to animate and frame the public plaza.

## City Hall/Fowler Lake Waterfront

This proposed park offers the potential for a dynamic lakefront open space within the downtown. The waterfront park space is proposed as a passive recreation area connected to Memorial Park and City Beach Park via a continuous lakefront path or boardwalk starting west of St. Paul's Church. The park will also act as an activity center for downtown programming and special events. Creation of this open space is possible through a reconfiguration of existing surface parking lots that is projected to increase the number of current parking spaces. Additional amenities include landscaping and pedestrian walkways, placement of a bicycle trailhead, consolidation of the loading and servicing areas along the backs of buildings to approve the view from the lake, and rehabilitation of rear entrances as a significant secondary entrance for businesses in order to take advantage of the new park's retail-supporting potential.



- Private Activities**
- Business Recruitment/Retention
  - Business District Management
  - Marketing and Promotion
  - Private Fundraising
  - Land Assembly
  - Lobbying
  - Special Events Programming
  - Education

- Public Activities**
- Public Improvements
  - Redevelopment
  - Developer Recruitment
  - Zoning
  - Public Outreach
  - Agency Coordination
  - Design Review and Approval

## Downtown Oconomowoc Implementation Organization

The plan defines implementation organization and prioritizes the public and private sector activities and responsibilities that will be needed to achieve the community's goals and vision for the downtown. This dynamic public/private partnership will play a key role in the plan's success and in the revitalization of the downtown.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Steering Committee

- Bob Duffy, Bureau of Economic Development Director, City of Oconomowoc
- Maury Sullivan, Mayor, Bureau of Economic Development
- Gary Kohlenberg, Fmt, Mayor, Community Development Authority, Bureau of Economic Development
- T. Lindsay Jones, Alderman, Community Development Authority, Bureau of Economic Development
- John Gross, Alderman, Community Development Authority
- Michael Day, Community Development Authority, Architectural Commission Chair
- Peter Schwabe, Community Development Authority
- Tenley Williamson, Community Development Authority
- Florence Whalen, Community Development Authority
- Laura Rowe, Community Development Authority
- Joe Snyder, Alderman, Bureau of Economic Development
- Scott Antonneau, Alderman, Bureau of Economic Development
- Jerry Erdmann, Bureau of Economic Development
- Stephanie Phillips, Bureau of Economic Development & Oconomowoc Area Chamber of Commerce
- Beverly Bartel, Community Development Authority, Downtown Business Owner
- Cliff White, Ad Hoc - On the Deck
- Rich Borg, Ad Hoc - Inn at Pine Terrace

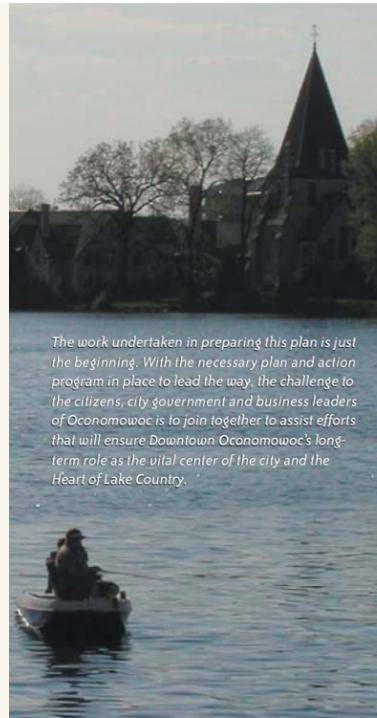
### Technical Resource Committee

- Dan Jarocki, Electric Utility
- Roland Town, City Planner
- James Lamp, Engineering
- Mark Frye, Utilities
- George Langohr, Public Works
- Tom Steinbach, Wastewater Utilities
- Diane Gard, City Administrator
- Sarah Kittsmeil, Finance Director
- Stan Suggen, City Engineer, Ruckert Mielke
- Dominic Frinzi, Information Systems/GIS
- Kimberly Caughran, Parks, Recreation & Forestry

### Planning, Design & Market Research Team

- Tim Anderson, Principal, Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc.
- Nick Lelack, Senior Project Manager, Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc.
- Regina Gullicksrud, Project Planner, Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc.
- Mike Robbins, Ph.D., CRE, The Taurean Group, LLC
- Sean Robbins, Management Partner, The Taurean Group, LLC
- John Norman, Partner and Technology Manager, The Taurean Group, LLC
- Deb Ersland, Principal, BEST Real Estate Group, Inc.

The work undertaken in preparing this plan is just the beginning. With the necessary plan and action program in place to lead the way, the challenge to the citizens, city government and business leaders of Oconomowoc is to join together to assist efforts that will ensure Downtown Oconomowoc's long-term role as the vital center of the city and the Heart of Lake Country.





## Key Master Plan Recommendations

**A Blueprint for Revitalization**

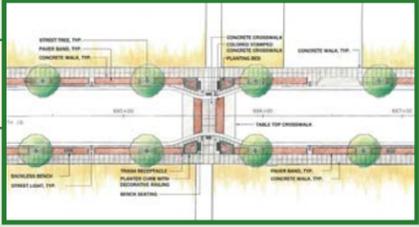
Plan recommendations are organized into five primary categories: streetscape and open space, land use and redevelopment, transportation and wayfinding, parking, and design guidelines. Key recommendations are highlighted on the map above and keyed to the descriptions below.

In order for the revitalization plan to succeed, many of these separate recommendations must be implemented in close coordination and conjunction with each other. The City Square and Fowler Lake Waterfront examples described on the other side of this publication show how the plan's streetscape, open space, redevelopment, transportation, parking and urban design recommendations come together to create dynamic new revitalization opportunities that build on the community's priorities and preferences for the downtown.

## Streetscape & Open Space

## Redevelopment & Land Use

- S1** The City Hall/Fowler Lake Waterfront is proposed as a passive recreation area in the downtown which will be connected to Memorial Park and City Park via a continuous lakefront path or boardwalk starting west of St. Paul's Church. The park will also act as an activity center for downtown programming and special events.
- S2** Public space improvements around City Hall.
- S3** Pedestrian alley/walkway with full pedestrian amenities.
- S4** Improvements to City Park including reconstruction of existing community center, and reorganization of existing parking to expand lakefront open space.
- S5** Lakefront Promenade between City Park and St. Paul's Church with full pedestrian amenities
- S6** Excursion boat/water taxi dock in Memorial Park.
- S7** Wisconsin Avenue streetscape enhancements will improve downtown urban design character as well as pedestrian connections and safety.



- R1** Mixed-use redevelopment with retail storefronts fronting on Wisconsin Avenue. Residential on upper floors. Rear alley access to enclosed parking. Open space at St. Paul and Silver Lake Street intersections. Shared parking.
- R2** Redevelopment with ground floor retail and upper story residential use.
- R3** Infill development on Village Green site to create a new mixed-use building with ground floor retail and upper story residential or office space and enclosed parking
- R4** Mixed use redevelopment with rowhouses fronting on Pleasant Street to compliment the adjoining residential character.
- R5** Redevelopment to include a community theater recalling the historic theater.
- R6** Potential infill with the reconstruction of Cross Street. Shared parking.
- R7** Potential redevelopment with reorganization of parking, access, and open space. Shared parking.
- R8** Long-term residential redevelopment contributing to a downtown entrance feature at the intersection of Silver Lake Street and Summit Avenue.
- R9** Infill development between Silver Lake and Fowler Street to create a pedestrian-oriented retail district.
- R10** Adaptive reuse of St. Jerome's Church and School. Shared parking.
- R11** Long-term redevelopment for expanded parking and residential use.
- R12** Mixed use redevelopment for residential and commercial use. Retail/entertainment uses fronting on Lac La Belle. Enclosed and shared parking. Dedication of lakefront for public walkway, open space and boat docking.



## Transportation & Wayfinding

## Parking

- T1** Provide a mid-block crossing between Main Street and Walnut Street along East Wisconsin Avenue. This is currently an over-large block from a pedestrian perspective, and a mid-block crossing would facilitate pedestrian access to shops on both sides of the street, the lakes and parking areas.
- T2** Provide crosswalk improvements including colored and textured pavements and pedestrian warning lights and signage. Also expand sidewalk widths to 12 feet, including terraces, along Wisconsin Avenue and Main Street. This extension of the pedestrian zone will improve pedestrian circulation and comfort in the downtown while increasing the capacity of the sidewalk to support outdoor cafes, sales and events and streetscape amenities.
- T3** Implement a series of street improvements to alleviate traffic congestion on Wisconsin Avenue and Main Street while offering easily identified and accessible parking to Downtown visitors and employees. Improvements include a new roundabout and realignment of Silver Lake Street.
- T4** Water-taxi or excursion boat service is proposed for Memorial Park to bring visitors and commuters downtown from across Lac La Belle.
- T5** The plan proposes a system of bicycle trails and facilities to connect the downtown with the community and region. The proposed system variously unites and segregates pedestrian and bicycle movements through the downtown.

- P1** Parking expansion along Collins Street and the Rail Corridor.
- P2** Reconfigure on-street parking spaces to increase the supply.
- P3** Reconfigure all parking lots to increase parking supply.
- P4** Potential future parking ramp.

**Parking Management Strategy**

The following represent recommended components of a parking management strategy which can assist in mitigating the parking demand in downtown Oconomowoc.

- Improve parking signage, clearly identify entrances to parking.
- Develop a comprehensive parking strategy for Downtown that addresses how adequate parking can be provided for customers, employees, residents and special events.
- Tighten the parking restrictions placed on convenient on- and off-street parking spaces to a time limit of one to two hours to ensure use by shoppers and other visitors to the Downtown. Downtown employers and retailers can allocate spaces located at the periphery of downtown parking areas through a permit system
- Strengthen parking enforcement
- Redirect Park and Ride users away from the core retail district by eliminating 10-hour parking spaces. An alternate location adjacent to downtown should be found, possibly at the corner of Third and Main Streets.
- Encourage biking, walking and other alternative transit options to relieve the stress on both the downtown environment and on the parking supply.
- Allow long term parking for residents to increase second-story utilization.
- Coordinate business servicing and loading through shared facilities, and structure servicing times around peak travel times for the downtown.

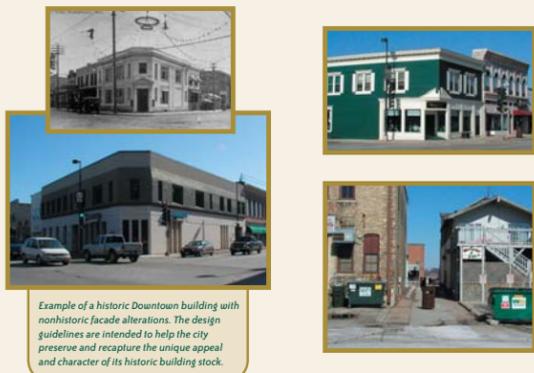
## Design Guidelines

Downtown Oconomowoc's historic buildings, lakeside location, and cultural tradition provide a strong foundation for establishing a unique urban design character and continuity. Design themes and styles should reflect this rich past and draw on topics such as the casual elegance of the lake country resort destination, the rail and water transportation linkages, the prosperity at the turn of the century, cultural events such as the premier of the "Wizard of Oz," and the connections to industry and commerce both as a playground for wealthy industrialists and the home of blue collar workers employed in national distributing industries such as Carnation and Brownberry.

General Design Guidelines were prepared for Downtown Oconomowoc to address how new development and rehabilitation can preserve and enhance the area's unique historic character, helping to establish a truly distinctive destination for shopping, entertainment, employment and residential living. The plan's design guidelines provide recommendations for:

- Preservation of historically significant buildings.
- Rehabilitation of commercial and residential buildings to enhance their traditional design features and better relate to Fowler Lake and Lac La Belle.
- How new infill development can complement the scale and character of the adjoining historic buildings and maintain the integrity of the historic blockface.
- The preferred scale, style, and placement of building signage throughout the district.

Implementation of these design guidelines will result in an attractive visual character for the City and instill a sense of community pride. Property owners are encouraged to maintain, preserve, restore or reconstruct those special architectural features that contribute to the historic character of the downtown.



Example of a historic Downtown building with nonhistoric facade alterations. The design guidelines are intended to help the city preserve and recapture the unique appeal and character of its historic building stock.

While the design guidelines generally supplement the urban design standards laid out in the City's existing overlay zoning code, the plan recommends creating a Historic district for the downtown area containing the greatest concentration of historic properties. Further analysis to delineate the exact boundary of this historic overlay zoning district is also recommended. The proposed district may need to extend beyond the formal study area to ensure complementary infill and rehabilitation of adjacent, non-historic properties.

Various priorities for the implementation of design improvements to the study area emerged through the public planning process, including the following:

- D1** The area around the Four Corners is historically and culturally significant to the identity of Downtown Oconomowoc. These guidelines strongly suggest that the buildings surrounding the Four Corners be maintained and, when possible, preserved and upgraded. The Village Green and the buildings that border it should be redesigned to better reflect the area's historic identity and to create vistas onto Fowler Lake.
- D2** Upgrade the character of the lakefront and improve the connection between the lakes and the downtown commercial core via vistas and open space corridors.
- D3** Improve the rear areas of buildings that front the lakes and the South Parking Lot.
- D4** Maintain the historic character of the commercial core along Wisconsin Avenue and Main Street.

