

City of La Crescent
Planning Commission
Meeting Notice



October 30th, 2023 - 5:30 P.M.
LA CRESCENT COMMUNITY BUILDING
336 SOUTH FIRST STREET

Agenda

1. Call To Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Approval of October 3rd, 2023 Meeting Minutes
5. Public Hearing: Active Transportation Corridor Plan for Hwy 16 to Miller's Corner – Action Item
6. Public Hearing: Walnut Street Corridor Plan – Action Item
7. Planning commission related updates from planning commission appointed city council member
8. Discussion of various applications types to be heard before the Commission and role of Staff and Planning Commission Members
9. Adjourn

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING
PLANNING COMMISSION, CITY OF LA CRESCENT, MINNESOTA
OCTOBER 3rd, 2023

The Planning Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on October 3rd, 2023 in the City's Community Building located at 336 S. 1st Street.

Item 1. Call to Order

Chair Greg Husmann called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Item 2. Pledge of Allegiance

Members recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item 3. Roll Call

Upon a roll call taken and tallied by the Sustainability Coordinator, the following members were present: Chair Greg Husmann, Vice Chair Mike Welch, Dave Coleman, Dave Hanifl, Jerry Steffes, and Ryan Stotts, and Christopher Langen. Ex-Officio City Council Representative Cherryl Jostad was present. Community Development Director Larry Kirch and Josh Tarrence, Building Inspector were also present. City Engineer, Tim Hruska of WHKS was present.

Item 4. Approval of the September 5th 2023 Planning Commission Minutes

Dave Coleman made a motion to accept the minutes from the September 5th meeting. Mike Welch seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote taken and tallied by the Comm Sustainability Coordinator, the following Members voted in favor thereof, viz;

Mike Welch	Yes
Dave Hanifl	Yes
Ryan Stotts	Yes
Greg Husmann	Yes
Chris Langen	Abstain
Jerry Steffes	Yes
Dave Coleman	Yes

and none voted against the same. The motion was declared duly carried.

Item 5. Planning commission related updates from the appointed city council member

Council Member Jostad provided an update on city council actions that would be relevant to the planning commission including: the short-term rental ordinance, and the Dog Park and referral of the location back to the Park and Rec Commission for consideration of a different location.

Item 6. Presentation and discussion for the Active Transportation Corridor Plan for Hwy 16 to Miller's Corner

Community Development Director Larry Kirch made a presentation about the Active Transportation Corridor Plan from Hwy 16 to Miller's corner. Discussion followed the presentation.

Item 7. Presentation and discussion for the Walnut Street Corridor Plan

Community Development Director Larry Kirch made a presentation about the Walnut Street Corridor Plan. Discussion followed the presentation.

Item 8. Adjourn.

The Chair noted that a special meeting would be on October 30th, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. to present the Walnut Street Corridor Plan and the Active Transportation Corridor Plan from Hwy 16 to Miller's corner. The public will be invited to attend. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:14 PM.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Larry Kirch, Community Development Director 

DATE: October 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Active Transportation Action Plan

At the Planning Commission Meeting on October 3rd, 2023, staff presented the draft of the Active Transportation Action Plan. This plan covers the corridor between the new Wagon Wheel Bicycle Pedestrian Bridge and Miller's Corner. No action was taken by the Planning Commission at this meeting as the item was on the agenda as a presentation and discussion item only.

The city applied for and received technical assistance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Active Transportation Program. MnDOT selected a consultant team to work with the city to study the corridor of U.S. Highway 14/61 and Tunk Highway 16 to Miller's Corner for bicycle and pedestrian users (active transportation). The plan and planning process was fully funded by the Minnesota DOT Active Transportation Program. The purpose of the corridor planning project was to develop a plan from the Wagon Wheel Bridge to Miller's Corner to improve the connectivity and safety of bicyclists and pedestrians in the corridor. The corridor planning was supported in the City's adopted Downtown Vision and Strategic Plan.

The City of La Crescent's created a technical committee for this project that included 26 people including citizens, the Houston County Engineer, city staff, MnDNR and MnDOT staff. The major effort of the committee concluded in May. The technical committee recommended approval of the Action Plan in September.

The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council on the draft plan. City staff will give a short presentation on the draft plan as recommended by the technical committee followed by a Public Hearing. The Commission may choose to recommend approval, denial or continue to their next meeting. The City Council will also hold a public hearing on the plan. To date, there have not been formal comments on the draft plan from MnDOT District 6.

A copy of the city's application to MnDOT is attached for informational purposes.

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Active Transportation Program

2022 Planning Assistance Grant Application

This document is provided for offline use in developing answers to grant application questions. **Final applications must be [submitted online](#) by 5 p.m. on Friday, June 10, 2022.**

Please see the application guide on [MnDOT Active Transportation grants page](#) for instructions and resources to fill out this application. Portions marked with “*” indicate that a section is required.

Part 1: Project Lead Contact Information*

Contact Name: Larry Kirch

Contact Title: Community Development Director

Project Lead Organization Name: City of La Crescent, Minnesota

Project Lead Organization Type: City

Street Address: 315 Main Street P.O. Box 142

City, State, ZIP: La Crescent, MN, 55947

Phone: (507) 895-4096

Email Address: lkirch@cityoflacrescent-mn.gov

Applicant Organization Name: City of La Crescent

Applicant Organization Type: Local Government-City

Part 2: Planning Assistance Requested*

Please review the following types of planning assistance available in the application guide. Select the type of planning assistance you are interested in from the following types of planning assistance.

___ Active Transportation Plan (combined plan focused on walking, bicycling, and other types of human-powered or human-speed mobility)

___ Bike Plan or Bicycle Master Plan (plan focused on bicycling)

☐ Pedestrian Plan (plan focused on walking)

☒ Active Transportation Corridor Plan (plan focused on active transportation modes within one transportation corridor)

☐ Parks and Trails Master Plan (plan focused on active transportation related to parks and trails)

☐ Active Transportation plan update (if requesting an update, please explain why this is needed below)

☐ Other plan update (Please enter type of plan)

Where would the planning efforts be focused on?

☐ Citywide

☐ Countywide

☒ Corridor

☐ Regional or multi-county

☐ Other

Explain Why you are requesting the planning assistance ranked above and the need for this type of Planning Support for Your Community. (City, County, Multi-County, corridor, regional/multi County, or Plan update):

The lack of a Root River Trail connection between La Crescent (Wagon Wheel Trail (WWT) terminus) and the cities of Hokah and Houston has been seemingly unsolvable for nearly 30 years. The cities and region need to define a safe corridor between Walnut Street (WWT bridge terminus) and Miller's Corner (Mn 16/26). The WWT bike/ped bridge is being completed over U.S. Highway 14/61 this summer into downtown La Crescent. Connecting the region from the WWT to La Crosse, WI and to the MRT/USBR 45 and the Root River Trail has been a long-term goal of the cities and county as a way to address transportation inequities of underserved populations. The La Crescent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update (2017) identifies the connection from downtown La Crescent to Miller's Corner as a critical link but lacks an implementable corridor plan (p. 59). Houston County and the three cities are in the process of entering into a formal agreement to complete the RRT trail corridor.

Are there any policies in the communities that affect people walking or biking? (e.g. complete streets policy, no biking policies, etc.):

The city adopted a complete streets ordinance in 2020 (Ordinance 536), Safe Routes to School Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update (2017) and is currently updating the Parks, Open Space and Trails Plan.

Part 3: Community Information*

The following demographic information is **REQUIRED** for each City applying for planning assistance. Please be thorough, applications with answers such as Unknown or N/A will not be considered. If more than 5 Cities are included, use an additional spreadsheet to complete the data for all Cities that will be included in the plan.

City Name #1: La Crescent

City Population #1 5,276

City Name #2:

City Population #2: Click here to enter text.

City Name #3: Click here to enter text.

City Population #3: Click here to enter text.

City Name #4: Click here to enter text.

City Population #4: Click here to enter text.

City Name #5: Click here to enter text.

City Population #5: Click here to enter text.

Part 4: Equity – Reaching Priority Populations

A) MnDOT’s Active Transportation Program aims to achieve equitable outcomes by funding initiatives that prioritize communities who are more likely to rely on active transportation, are more vulnerable to unsafe traffic conditions, or have experienced historic disinvestment. (30 points)

The Active Transportation Equity Score uses 15 indicators to identify locations in Minnesota that likely have a greater need for Active Transportation investment. Points will be awarded to applicants proportionally based on equity scores as part of the program’s goals to advance transportation equity in Minnesota.

Calculations of equity scores will be conducted by MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation staff. The scores to be used can be viewed on [MnDOT’s Active Transportation Equity Score Web App](#). This app allows viewers to preview scores throughout the state and develop an understanding of how scores will be calculated. See the Planning Assistance Application Guide for more information about how your score will be calculated.

B) How will this project advance equity in your community? (10 points)*

A downtown to Miller’s corner corridor plan project addresses the four (4) equity considerations of the Active Transportation Program. Important destinations from downtown La Crescent include: Dresbach, Dakota, Winona, etc., (north), Brownsville, New Albin, IA (south), and Hokah, Houston and the Root River Trail (west), La

Crosse, Wisconsin and its trails, along with Wisconsin trail system (east). Addressing an existing barrier: Completing a viable corridor plan in cooperation with the Minnesota DOT along the Great River Road (U.S. 14/61/Minnesota 16 to Minnesota 26) where two National Scenic Byways and one State Scenic Byway intersect that is also the MRT and USBR 45 and that connects to the incomplete Root River Trail is a long-standing regional and community goal. Significant bicycle trail investments have been made at the I-90/U.S. 14/61 interchange that continue into La Crescent and now intersect with the Wagon Wheel Trail but there is a critical gap south of the city of La Crescent to create a safe connection to the extension of the Root River Trail at Miller's Corner. Within and adjacent to the corridor, there are two low-moderate income areas and connecting these areas to a network of trails and paths corrects a barrier to cycling and walking by residents of these two mobile home park communities. Bringing rural communities together: The cities of Houston, Hokah, La Crescent and Houston County are finalizing an intergovernmental agreement to cooperate on the completion of the Root River Trail. The county and the three cities will work closely with the Minnesota DNR, Minnesota DOT, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife to acquire the necessary right-of-way or easements for the construction of a multi-use trail. The trail will bring many rural SE Minnesota Trail towns together paralleling the Bluff Country Scenic Byway (MN 16). Investing in previously disinvested communities: Houston County and Hokah have been losing population for over a decade. The lack of a complete Root River Trail has transferred economic opportunity further west to Rushford, Peterson, Whalen, and Lanesboro. Residents of La Crosse and the surrounding area routinely shuttle bikes past La Crescent and Hokah to bicycle the RRT from Rushford to Lanesboro and further west and south. Those bikers take their economic impact with them as they drive past our communities.

Part 5: Project Need

A) Please describe the barriers and community need for this planning effort? How will this plan advance Active Transportation infrastructure and get more people walking and biking? (15 points)*

The city of La Crescent has undergone a 20-year process to implement the Wagon Wheel Trail from the West Channel of the Mississippi River to the soon to be completed \$4.5 million dollar connector bridge over U.S. 14/61 into the downtown. The extension of the Root River Trail has been even more challenging starting with the transfer of the rail bed to the property owners and the corridor issue along Minnesota 16 with the beautiful bluffs and wetlands and the rail bed constraining the corridor. The county and three cities are now, more than ever, galvanized to make the Root River Trail connection a reality. The lack of a viable and safe corridor from downtown to Miller's corner is part of the "missing middle" of infrastructure needed to complete a RRT connection. The three cities and county are determined to jointly work with property owners, the MnDNR, MnDOT and the US Fish and Wildlife to secure the corridor from Miller's corner to Hokah and on to Houston. A complete corridor will bring local residents, commuters, through bikers, and recreational riders in both directions along the entire corridor. The off-road portions of the trail network will provide a safe and comfortable setting for bikers, walkers, strollers of differing ages and abilities. Completing both an in-town route and a safe route along Minnesota 16 will enable more people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the benefits of walking and biking. The highway is only used now by fearless bike riders, but a well-designed corridor will bring out more recreational and casual riders of all ages and abilities. The lack of a clear, viable and implementable plan for the section between downtown La Crescent to Miller's Corner has held back the larger effort to connect the RRT to Miller's corner.

B) Active Transportation Planning is a strategy that supports healthy and safe communities. Describe how this plan fits into and/or supports larger community goals? (5 points)*

A sizeable number of La Crescent residents and City staff have been part of many larger coalitions for healthy communities for many years (La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership). The city has a very active Safe Routes to School program and continually implements projects outlined in the SRTS plan. The city continues to implement the 2017 Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan and this corridor plan is identified in that plan as a needed next step to support a more healthy and safe community. La Crescent, although a small community itself, will assist the County and MnDOT with this project and ensure that the project enhances the health and safety of all our residents and visitors. The County and the three cities have been frustrated for years in seeing how the RRT has made the communities along the western end of the trail healthier and more vibrant. From an economic standpoint, the completion of a connection will open our area to an additional visitor base from Wisconsin communities and other parts of Minnesota who are now bypassing two of the three cities. The goal of the County and cities is to build on the vibrancy created by connecting all the towns in SE Minnesota and Western Wisconsin. The corridor from La Crescent to Hokah is now only utilized by the most skilled cyclists. The general population and most importantly, underserved populations are not served at all.

Part 6: AT Team Members and Local Support

A) Stakeholders or Active Transportation Team

Members of a local AT team should be involved before, during, and after the AT planning process in your community. Please mark the following individuals currently on your AT team. Please provide names where available.

Is your AT committee established?*

☒ Yes, we have a team pulled together who has met about AT

☐ No, the list below is proposed partners for this project

Name and Title of Team Leader: Larry Kirch, AICP, CTP, PTP, Community Development Director

B) Active Transportation Team Roster (20 points)*

Team Members:	Please list name and title:	How will this team member contribute to plan development and implementation with their organizing or unique perspective?
City staff (planners, public works, city manager)	Bill Waller, City Administrator	Project Liaison with City Council, County, Hokah, Houston Officials
	Larry Kirch, Community Development Director	Project Lead
Bicycling or walking group representative	Jason Ludwigson	City Sustainability Coordinator and BPAC Member from the 2017 Bike Ped Plan Update
Safe Routes to School or School representation	Beth Theede	Community Education Director (ISD 300)
	Jeff Copp	Elementary Principal (ISD 300)
Toward Zero Deaths representative	Officer Cody Bellock	TZD Coordinator LCPD
SHIP/public health practitioners	Linda Larson	Community Health Professional (retired) – La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership
	Kimberly Rommes	Health Educator Houston County Public Health PHEP SHIP TZD Coordinator
Elected Officials	Teresa O'Donnell Ebner	Council Member and SRTS Planning Team
Community Members	Maseray Bangura	Member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
	Bob Spencer	La Crescent Rotary Apple Blossom Bike Tour Event Committee

Team Members:	Please list name and title:	How will this team member contribute to plan development and implementation with their organizing or unique perspective?
Priority Populations (Seniors, Youth, People of Color, People with Disabilities, etc)	Steve Gund Beth Theede (listed above)	People with Disabilities (Lions Club) Community Education Director, coordinating programs for residents of all ages and incomes, i.e. Senior Hiking Club, Youth Nature Hikes
Other team members (write-in):	Carl Ekern Abby Kemp Linda Larson (listed above)	Physical Education Teacher Elementary School (ISD 300) Past SRTS coordinator, current High School guidance Counselor (ISD 300) La Crescent Bike Shoppe – non-profit group providing bike maintenance, bike safety, bike giveaways to those in need, and other projects promoting a healthy biking lifestyle
Other team members (write-in):	Peter Fletcher, La Crosse Area Planning Committee (MPO)	Bring regional transportation planning perspective via the MPO

Part 7: Existing Conditions and Implementation Support

A) Using the 6Es (equity, education, encouragement, engagement, engineering and evaluation) briefly discuss the activities related to AT that are currently underway (or happened within the last two years) in your community, city or county. (5 points)*

The City of La Crescent has implemented many activities related to the 6E's in the SRTS plan and continues to strive to improve the 4 equity considerations. Equity: Two mobile home communities in La Crescent can have much-improved access to community services, facilities and businesses if this corridor gap is corrected. The City of La Crescent submitted a Letter of Interest on May 12th to the Blandin Foundation to design an information area at the new bridge terminus to recognize the vibrant Indigenous history at that site. La Crescent continues to improve the connection from/to La Crosse over the West Channel Bridge on US 14/61 to provide a safer route for bicycle commuters who work in La Crosse, as well as recreational bikers looking for a wider range of experiences, services and accommodations. In July the City of La Crescent is completing a \$4.5 million dollar bike-ped bridge over US 14/61. The La Crescent Community Bike Shoppe received \$5K SHIP grant for a repair station, bike rack, and benches at the new bridge terminus. The City is paving two portions of the Wagon

Wheel Trail this summer and repairing the area near the West Channel Boat Landing at the start of the trail. Encouragement and Engagement: The city continues to partner with ISD 300 and La Crescent Montessori and STEM school to host fall walk to school day and spring bike to school day. The La Crescent Police Department is implementing the use of an E-Bike to better engage with citizens during daily patrols and community events and to promote bike safety. A SHIP grant purchased neighborhood bikeway signs (2019). The City expanded bike lanes on the west side of Elm with a mill and overlay project in 2019 and bike sharrows were painted on 3rd street (MnDOT). The Elementary school (ISD 300) was awarded SHIP grant funds for the purchase of 2 additional bike racks. The City works with the La Crescent Rotary in hosting the Apple Blossom Bike Tour which encourages families and bicyclists of all abilities to participate in routes through our beautiful bluff country. Education: The Elementary School teaches bicycle safety each spring in conjunction with Bike to School Day. Engineering and Evaluation: In the summer of 2021 a demonstration project was completed at the intersections of 4th Street and Elm and 6th Street and Elm to design safer crossings for all, especially young pedestrians and bikers on their way to school. The City is paying for engineering for the Elm Street improvement projects and submitting for a SHIP grant this Fall.

B) What is your Team's vision for a successful AT plan Outcome? What do You Expect to accomplish after the planning process? How will you ensure implementation of the plan and who will be involved? (10 points)*

Success would be a viable alternative for a safe and complete bicycle and pedestrian route from downtown La Crescent to Miller's Corner. Once the planning process is complete, the city of La Crescent will seek funding at the state and federal level to complete the design and construction documents and then funding for construction. The master plan to connect with the RRT is a long-term goal that will call for support from the Minnesota DOT, Houston County, the cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston, and the La Crosse Area Planning Committee. Key assistance will be needed from elected officials and legislators. bicyclists, walkers and the traveling public will be the beneficiaries of these efforts.

Part 8: Letters of Support


Please attach the following letters of support (5 points):

1. City staff or City administrator letter of support from each City that will be covered in the plan and/or a County official letter if this will be a County or Regional level plan.*
2. Letter of support from the local partner (Pedestrian/Bicycle group, Local Public Health, SRTS (Safe Routes to School) or TZD (Toward Zero Deaths) committee, etc.)



MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Larry Kirch, Community Development Director 

DATE: October 30, 2023

SUBJECT: Public Hearing: Walnut Street Corridor Plan

At the Planning Commission Meeting on October 3rd, 2023, staff presented the draft of the Walnut Street Corridor Plan. No action was taken by the Planning Commission at this meeting as the item was on the agenda as a presentation and discussion item only.

The city funded the corridor plan with funds from the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) under their Local Studies Program. The LAPC is the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The purpose of the planning project was to develop a plan for Walnut Street from South 3rd Street to North 4th Street and to Veterans Park. The planning process involved obtaining both community-wide input and input from residents and businesses along the corridor including the new hotel, tavern and the event center north of N. 4th Street. The goal of the project is to gain community consensus on a plan for the corridor.

City of La Crescent Walnut Street Corridor Planning Proposal - September 19, 2022

Project Overview

The city would like to re-imagine the Walnut Street corridor into a walkable/bikeable complete street that meets the needs of downtown businesses, community residents, and visitors. The city identified in its 2017 Downtown Plan, a vision of the downtown as a trailhead to a regional system of interconnected walking, biking, hiking trails in the community including the bluffslands, streets and waterways. With the 2022 completion of the Wagon Wheel bicycle and pedestrian bridge over U.S. 14/61, one important linkage has been completed. The next critical linkage is from the bridge landing at Walnut St. and 1st St. north to Veteran's Park (one of the access points to the City's bluffland trails) and the new La Crescent Area Event Center and Best Western Hotel. Walnut Street has sidewalks on only one side of the street and has no accommodations for safe biking. There are neither walking nor biking accommodations that connect safely to the park or the event center. This planning project would engage residents and property owners in the planning of a complete street connection, including options to provide for safe driving, transit, truck route, parking, walking and biking in this corridor while balancing the needs of all stakeholders.

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The City of La Crescent's Economic Development Commission (EDC) served as the project steering committee for the planning process. The EDC has reviewed the draft final plan on October 2nd and again on October 16th, 2023. The EDC recommended approval of the Walnut Street Corridor Plan on October 16th, 2023 with the following additions:

- 1) All lighting must be Dark Sky compliant;
- 2) More modern light fixtures are preferred and should be like those depicted on Page 23 as the city has chosen those already for the Wagon Wheel Bike-Ped bridge area;
- 3) Light fixtures should accommodate cameras, banner arms, possible hanging baskets, wifi capability, etc.;
- 4) Add more angle parking on the east side of Walnut Street north of the new coffee shop up to N. 1st Street;
- 5) Continue to carry the 10' multi-use path on the west side of Walnut Street into the downtown, if possible, in the final engineering design;
- 6) On the east side of Walnut Street, do not put the sidewalk directly behind the curb so to allow for both snow storage and boulevard trees;
- 7) As part of the implementation of the plan, the city needs to address the two-hour parking zones;
- 8) The city should reconstruct the alleys on the east and west side of Walnut Street between Main Street and S. 1st Street (between Quillin's and the hardware store) and between the laundromat and pizza parlor);
- 9) The burial of overhead wires is not addressed in the plan and all the overhead wires should be buried during construction;

The Planning Commission will make its own separate recommendation to the City Council on the draft plan. City staff will give a short presentation on the recommended plan as recommended by the Economic Development Commission, followed by a Public Hearing. The Commission may choose to recommend approval, denial or continue to their next meeting. The City Council will also hold a public hearing on the plan. The plan does need to be adopted by the end of 2023 to satisfy the LAPC's Local Studies Program requirements.