



Community Facilities and Services

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Local government is responsible for a broad array of essential services, from sewer and water service to park and recreation facilities, fire and police protection and public schools. The quality, efficacy and efficiency of these services have a direct relationship to quality of life for residents. While each of these services is individually managed and monitored, they are considered in the comprehensive plan to ensure that investment in these services serves the overall vision for the City.

Vision Statement

The City of La Crescent works to meet the community facility and service needs of all residents equitably. Facilities and services adapt to changes in technologies to improve levels of service, reduce costs and achieve more sustainable operations.

Issues & Opportunities

The planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to community facilities and services that inform this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions, agency interviews and survey results; they do not represent policy decisions. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised.

- There are concerns about the age, condition and space deficiencies for City Hall, Police Department, La Crescent-Hokah Elementary School, and Public Works Maintenance Facilities.
- The cost to extend water and sewer utilities to serve outward expansion of the City is a concern. Developers should pay for these service extensions.
- There are concerns related to recruiting qualified applicants to fill City staff positions and succession planning to enable smooth transitions when long-term City staff retire or leave for other positions. There is also concern regarding overall staffing levels keeping pace with service provision needs.
- The changing landscape of federal and state water and utility regulations present numerous challenges for the City including staying abreast of these regulations, implementing required improvements, and reviewing development plans for compliance.
- Opportunities may exist for constructing joint public works maintenance and storage facilities with the DOT, Houston County and La Crescent township as each entity has concerns regarding aging of facilities, space deficiencies, and costs related to building and maintaining individual facilities.
- According to the survey (question 15), based on respondents' satisfaction with various public services, 60% of respondents indicated they supported spending more money on Public Schools, the highest rated response and the only category to receive support for spending more than current spending levels.
- There are concerns regarding declining school enrollments and the impacts this presents to the community in terms of both attracting new families and decreasing school revenue.
- There are concerns that state imposed new school siting requirements, which require minimum acreages for open space, do not reflect the challenges of La Crescent's landscape. Relocating La Crescent-Hokah Elementary School to a site that meets one-size fits all open space requirements could mean locating the school at the edge of the City, which may increase costs to provide utilities and services to the site and increase transportation costs to provide safe routes to the school. A new school located at the edge of the community could also impact public health as less students may walk or bike to school than a facility centrally located to existing City neighborhoods.
- Keeping residents informed of existing community amenities, services offerings and engaged in meetings and events is an on-going challenge.

Goals & Objectives



Goal:

La Crescent provides reliable and high quality services, utilities, and facilities to meet the needs of current and future residents and businesses.

Objectives:

1. Public/private utilities and facilities will be managed to meet and exceed professional and governmental standards to protect and enhance public health and the natural environment.
2. Land use planning and development will support the efficiency and fiscal sustainability of energy, sewer, water, and stormwater systems.
3. Infrastructure maintenance and construction projects will be scheduled and financed to maximize cost efficiency and minimize cost fluctuation for taxpayers.
4. Public facilities and services will continue to meet the needs of residents and businesses, especially as new development increases demand for those facilities and services.
5. Protect people and property from natural and man-made disasters.
6. Community facilities and utility infrastructure will enhance the aesthetics of the community and new or renovated public buildings will incorporate a unified theme built around the City's brand.
7. City staffing, technical skills, and available equipment will match the needs of the community and be provided in a cost efficient manner.
8. La Crescent area school investments will keep pace with changes to the population and other districts in the region, to provide a reputation and outcomes that attract families to La Crescent.
9. La Crescent area schools endeavor to be an integral part of community life, much more than simply a primary and secondary education service.
10. Information about La Crescent amenities, community events, and active city projects/meetings are accessible and promoted to residents and visitors.

Strategies



Strategies:

1. Water quality standards will be strictly adhered to, including both drinking water standards and standards for stormwater returned to local waterways.
2. The City will consider possible impacts to surface and ground water quality and quantity during the review of new development proposals to protect and enhance public health and the natural environment. New developments should consider how impacts to the natural environment, energy systems and public health can be mitigated through new technologies (such as greywater recycling systems), sustainable site and building design practices.
3. Annually review development ordinances and applications for consistency with changes in state or federal regulations, best practices, and environmental stewardship. Areas of special concern include regulations allowing appropriate use of on-site, neighborhood, or community renewable energy systems and greywater recycling systems.
4. Keep current City engineering assessments of water, sewer, and stormwater systems resolving issues and planning for expansion, new development and increased environmental leadership. Review and keep current intergovernmental agreements with the City of La Crosse for waste water treatment.
5. The City will encourage compatible infill development, increases in housing density, and other practices that efficiently and cost effectively utilize existing infrastructure or minimize the cost per household to provide utility services.
6. New utilities and municipal infrastructure will not represent an unreasonable cost to the City - new development should pay for extensions or improvements to new utilities needed to service the development.
7. The City generally requires all development that relies on municipal services to be located within La Crescent's corporate limits. Non-farm development not served by public sanitary sewer and water is discouraged within areas planned for City growth, except as approved through intergovernmental planning or related agreements, to provide for the efficient and cost effective growth of the City.



Community Facilities and Services

Strategies



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8. The City will maintain a Five Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to plan for the annual construction and maintenance of community facilities. When possible the City will pursue grants, state or federal low interest loans to minimize the costs to update community facilities. Consider updating the CIP every year to create a rolling five-year plan.
9. The City will review intergovernmental agreements with the City of La Crosse to ensure that sewer service treatment capacity will not be a constraint on economic or population growth.
10. Meet with representatives from the DOT, Houston County and La Crescent Township to discuss planning for a future joint public works/highway shop, storage and maintenance facility. A space needs analysis should be jointly conducted for each entity including identification of potential suitable sites.
11. The City works through its Police Department and Fire Department to maintain high quality emergency services (i.e. fire, police, EMS) for City residents and businesses, and will review service provision levels with the appropriate departments/agencies annually. The City encourages opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation on emergency services, including reviewing, improving, and upgrading service provisions.
12. The City will work with representatives from energy providers to raise awareness of local concerns during the planning and siting of any major transmission lines, facilities, natural gas lines, community solar, wind towers or telecommunication towers. If such facilities are proposed, they should be located in an area safely away from existing or planned residential areas and should minimize disturbances to environmentally sensitive areas. Underground placement and co-location (or corridor sharing) of utilities is encouraged and the City will consider burying utility lines as part of street reconstruction projects to improve the aesthetics of the community.
13. The City will work with energy providers, land owners, and other communities to support appropriate applications of renewable energy and utilization of on-site distributed energy generation (e.g., solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, solid waste, and community solar) as a means of protecting the City and property owners against future fluctuations in energy costs and to support environmental stewardship.
14. Implement new technology within City facilities and construction projects that can provide cost efficiency, improved levels of service, and sustainable operations.
15. Ensure that residents and businesses continue to have access to high speed broadband technologies to enhance quality of life and community development.
16. The City will work with surrounding counties, townships, state and federal agencies to adopt plans, policies, and procedures that seek to minimize the threat and damage to people and property from natural and man-made disasters before, during and after such events. Natural disasters and disasters related to rail and truck corridors through the City are areas of special concern.
17. The City will lead by example when constructing new community buildings to have high quality structures that enhance community aesthetics. The City will consider the use of similar architectural design features for new or renovated City buildings that establishes a unified theme consistent with the community's branding efforts.
18. Complete an organizational study to identify short and long term City staff needs. The study should consider opportunities for cross training and continuing education to enable succession planning and career growth for City staff. The study should also consider the possibility of outsourcing or sharing staffing with adjacent government agencies to reduce costs or fulfill specific technical knowledge needs.

Strategies



19. The City and its residents support investments in the La Crescent-Hokah School District facilities, including the incorporation of sustainable building materials and energy systems. Improvements to the La Crescent Hokah Elementary school are a current priority.
20. The City may partner with the school district to consider jointly lobbying against the application of standardized state school siting requirements which would have a detrimental affect on public health, urban sprawl and the cost to build and provide services, including transportation facilities, to new school built in La Crescent.
21. The City will continue to collaborate with area schools to maximize the community's capital investment in school facilities by making those facilities readily available, as feasible, for other uses that support social interaction and health within the community, such as community meetings, neighborhood festivals, theatre productions, and adult sports.
22. The City will work with the school district to engage students in civic involvement and City operations. This may include student representation on City committees to foster the next generations of community leaders and to gather input from the youth of the community on City projects.
23. The City encourages local businesses to coordinate with area schools to establish internships and curriculum programs designed to match with local business needs.
24. Consider developing a "sister city" to La Crescent to share and exchange ideas for community improvement projects.
25. The City will consider the use of new technologies, such as mobile applications, to provide or make more accessible information to residents and visitors regarding community amenities, events and news related to city meetings, projects, and development review.