

# Introduction

This Chapter describes the purposes and use of this Comprehensive Plan, the process through which this plan was developed, and some of the relevant data and studies that informed this plan.

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# The Plan as a “Living Guide”

## Why Plan?



La Crescent, like all communities, is buffeted by economic and demographic forces that can result in change over time. The purpose of this plan is to establish a shared vision for La Crescent that enables our community to adapt and thrive. We plan so that we can act and react in a changing world with a confident understanding of our common values and goals.

## Plan Maintenance



This planning document is a “living” guide for growth and change in the City of La Crescent. The plan represents the City’s best effort to address current issues and anticipate future needs; however, it can and should be amended from time to time if conditions warrant reconsideration of policies in this plan. If decisions are being made that are not consistent with this plan, then the plan has lost its relevance and should be amended. The process of amending the comprehensive plan should not be onerous, but it should trigger a brief pause to consider again the long term vision for the community. This plan’s value is dependent upon frequent use and occasional updates.



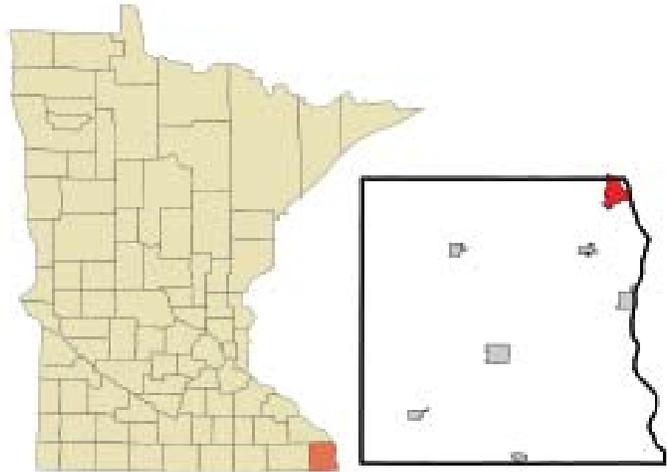
## Minnesota Comprehensive Planning

Comprehensive plans and land use plans are tools used by cities, townships and counties to guide local decision-making. The authority to plan is granted to Minnesota cities and townships by State Chapter 462: "The land use plan must provide guidelines for the timing and sequence of the adoption of official controls to ensure planned, orderly, and staged development and redevelopment consistent with the land use plan." (§462.357 Subd. 2(c)). In other words, comprehensive plans do not carry the weight of law in Minnesota, but they are used to inform other local mechanisms that do carry the weight of law, including subdivision and zoning ordinances.

The comprehensive plan is used by municipalities to inform the adoption and application of ordinances. It is also used to inform local budgeting processes and public investment decisions, and to support grant applications.

Common and recommended components of a comprehensive plan include:

- A statement of authority to prepare and adopt the plan (see above)
- Background data and analysis – including area history, a description of existing social, economic and physical (natural and man-made) conditions and trends, and economic and demographic projections (see Appendix B)
- Documentation of stakeholder's interests and involvement – these include interests of residents, public officials, and the business community (see Appendix A)
- Vision statement (or statement of desired goals and objectives) – desired Village outlook, generally 20 years from now (see Chapter 2)
- Future plan map or maps – these maps depict various components, including land use, transportation, community facilities, and housing areas (see Chapter 3)
- Plan Implementation – framework or schedule that describes specific measures to carry out the plan, the time frame for completion, and assignment of responsibility (see Chapter 4)



La Crescent, Houston County, Minnesota  
Source: Wikimedia Commons



## Plan Organization

The plan is divided into four chapters plus several important appendices, as described below:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Chapter 1 gives a snapshot of the City of La Crescent and discusses the role of this Plan, the planning process, and previous planning efforts.

### **Chapter 2: Vision, Goals, Objectives & Strategies**

Chapter 2 includes a vision for the future of the City, and goals, objectives and strategies for each element of the plan, including:

*Housing*

*Economic Development*

*Natural Systems, Open Spaces & Recreation*

*Downtown Enhancement*

*Community Facilities & Services*

*Transportation & Mobility*

*Collaboration & Partnerships*

### **Chapter 3: Land Use & Community Design**

Chapter 3 describes the desired future land use for La Crescent and the surrounding planning area and explores design strategies consistent with the Goals, Objectives and Strategies of Chapter 2.

### **Chapter 4: Implementation & Action Plan**

Chapter 4 describes the tools and procedures by which the plan will be implemented and provides a detailed timeline of action steps for successful implementation of the plan.

### **Appendix A: Community Surveys**

Appendix A includes summaries of the two community surveys that were given.

### **Appendix B: Community Indicators Report**

Appendix B is a compilation of data that describes the existing conditions, trends, and projections for the City of La Crescent. This data informs the planning process and should be updated from time to time to track progress and change in the City.

### **Appendix C: Plan Area Maps**

### **Appendix D: Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**

# The Planning Process

## Planning Process



This plan was developed over approximately 15 months, beginning in March of 2015 and culminating with plan adoption in July 2016.

Community involvement in the planning process is the foundation of an effective plan, and this process incorporated several methods to inform, involve and engage residents and other stakeholders.

### Planning Consultant

The City Council selected MSA Professional Services, Inc. (MSA) in January 2015 to help draft and assemble this plan. MSA collaborated with the Logistics committee throughout the process and was responsible for creating community surveys, drafting plan content, assembling maps and documents, and facilitating committee meetings.

### Logistics Committee

The planning process was coordinated by a core group of residents and City staff who helped schedule meetings, organize and promote events, ensure policy consistency throughout the plan, and oversee plan implementation methods.

### Project Web Page

The City maintained a page on the City website throughout the planning process with information about the plan, including schedule information and draft documents.

### Public Meetings

The planning process kicked off with a large public meeting on March 31, 2015 in the Community Room at Prince of Peace Church. About 100 people attended this meeting, which included a presentation by MSA about trends affecting community planning and featured Tom Thibodeau, Distinguished Professor of Servant Leadership at Viterbo University, who spoke about the importance of public conversations, engaging in our communities and getting to know our neighbors. Participants discussed the future of the La Crescent community and completed worksheets to share their concerns and aspirations for the future of the La Crescent community. Several themes emerged from those comments:



Public Meeting #1 on March 31, 2015

1. *La Crescent is a great place to raise a family; it is a safe, friendly, caring community.*
2. *La Crescent has great schools, teachers, facilities and student achievement, but there is a need for further investment in school facilities.*
3. *La Crescent benefits from having a small town feel while enjoying being close to important amenities including health care and retail options.*
4. *La Crescent lacks a robust Central Business District with local dining, entertainment, employment opportunities. There are opportunities to attract residents and benefit from pass-by traffic by offering more retail and service amenities downtown.*
5. *La Crescent has recreational and artistic amenities and has engaging beauty and scenic attributes. We can use these amenities to attract people, and we can do more to encourage walking, biking and other recreation in the area.*
6. *La Crescent has a limited supply of lots for new homes and there are few affordable housing options, especially for families and seniors. More housing options are needed.*
7. *La Crescent needs to articulate a vision around which all citizens can rally.*

A second public meeting was held in June 2016, again at Prince of Peace, to share and celebrate the completed draft plan. Committee chairs presented summaries of each plan topic. (to be completed...)

releases and news articles. Most of the questions on each survey were completed by at least 600 people, providing a high degree of confidence in the results. See Appendix A for a full summary of each survey, including assessments of who took the survey, by age and place of residence. At least 60% of responders to each survey were City residents, and comparisons between City residents and others showed few differences. A simplified summary of survey findings follows:

#### Survey 1 - Housing and Economic Development

1. Safety/low crime and price/affordability are the most influential factors of where people choose to live.
2. 65% of respondents have lived in La Crescent for >10 years.
3. A majority of respondents (90%) live in a home with 3 or more bedrooms.
4. If respondents were to move in the next 5 years, only 60% would want a home with 3 or more bedrooms.
5. 92% live in single family homes.
6. 92% own their homes.
7. A large majority (86%) believe their home is in good or excellent condition.
8. A large majority (84%) are happy with their current homes.
9. The perceived greatest need for improvement in the housing market is supply/availability (compared to cost or quality).
10. 59% of respondents expect to continue living in La Crescent for more than 10 years.
11. Regarding the need for housing in various categories, the highest number of respondents suggested the City needs more senior condos and apts, assisted living facilities for seniors, and affordable housing.
12. 26% percent think the city has too many high end homes, 19% think there are too many mobile home parks.
13. Most respondents spend weekdays in La Crescent (46%) or La Crosse (30%).
14. 58% believe their employment is secure in the next 3-5 years. Another 18% felt "somewhat secure".
15. 72% feel the availability of employment opportunities within La Crescent is lacking.
16. Respondents primarily patronize La Crescent businesses for groceries, gasoline and convenience retail.
17. Respondents want more sit down restaurants and downtown retail shopping/services.

Public Meeting #2 on June X, 2016

#### Content Committees

This planning process was unique in that it created a separate committee for each of the seven core planning topics to help craft goals, objectives, policies and actions. Each committee met at least four times, including an initial meet and greet and assignment of reading tasks, a meeting with MSA to work on a vision statement and broad goals, another meeting with MSA to work on the more detailed objectives and strategies (policies and actions), and a meeting with Plan Commission to discuss the draft plan content. The two committees working on Housing, Economic Development and Downtown Enhancement met October-December 2015. The four committees working on Community Facilities and Services; Transportation and Mobility; Natural Systems, Open Space and Recreation; and Land Use and Community Design met January-April 2016. All meetings were hosted at Prince of Peace Church.

#### Community Surveys

There were two community surveys conducted during the planning process to solicit information and opinions from residents and stakeholders, one in fall 2015 (October 30-November 18), and one in spring 2016 (February 10 to March 2). The surveys were offered online, but hard copies were also available. The surveys were promoted primarily via email, press

# The Plan as a “Living Guide”

18. When asked about local public funding to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities and related tourism, respondents were most strongly in favor of investing in hiking and canoeing & kayaking amenities.
19. Respondents believe retail/service supply and variety are inadequate in downtown La Crescent.
20. Only 8% are opposed to new, multi-story buildings Downtown.
21. What don't people want to see change in the downtown area? Common themes include small-town feel; the grocery store; and a sense of connection to nature, including downtown greenery and views of the bluffs and river.
22. What other communities do respondents like? The most popular answers were Lanesboro, MN and La Crosse, WI.
8. 21% of respondents rate local streets as “poor”.
9. 49% of respondents said more/better bike lanes or paths would make them more likely to ride a bike in La Crescent. 46% said more/better sidewalks would make them more likely to walk.
10. A majority of respondents would still not use public transit even if the following changes were made: employer subsidy of fare cost, employer shuttle from bus stop, lower total trip time, more convenient bus stop locations and more convenient pickup times.
11. 58% of respondents chose “maintenance of existing roads” as a high priority for transportation investments over the next 10 years.
12. The most desired bike and pedestrian safety improvement is “crosswalks near the elementary school”.
13. Additional safety improvements that respondents feel are needed to improve safety or convenience for drivers, bikers or pedestrians include promoting awareness of bikers & pedestrians and etiquette on sharing the road; adding sidewalk on Oak Street near schools to improve safety; adding bike and pedestrian facilities on Highway 6, and improving bike lane, crosswalk, bike/ped awareness on Elm Street.

## Survey 2 - Land Use and Community Design; Transportation; Public Infrastructure and Services; and Natural Systems, Open Space and Recreation

1. Respondents’ most common “very important” issues when it comes to land use and regulations are protecting public health and the environment (71%) and preserving the beauty of our natural surroundings (65%).
2. The most strongly supported locations for new housing in La Crescent are the Elementary School site (57%) and the downtown area (56%). 44% of respondents oppose or strongly oppose new housing on bluff tops or faces west or south of the City and 33% are unsure.
3. The most strongly supported changes if the land currently used for commercial and industrial along highway 14/61 were to change use over time is to convert it to more open space and passive recreation along waterways (73%) or more retail and service businesses (62%).
4. Respondents feel that City leaders should be more restrictive when it comes to property upkeep/cleanliness (48%) and billboards (38%).
5. 42% strongly agree and 33% agree that La Crescent should become a leader in green practices and ecological stewardship.
6. Common responses when asked if there are specific sites or areas in the City that respondents would like to see changed or improved through redevelopment include more/improved opportunities for outdoor recreation; improved waterfronts; housing or other new development on the school site if it is sold; making the downtown more vibrant and attractive to tourists; and adding more businesses.
7. 84% of respondents drive a personal vehicle 4-7 days per week. 94 % rarely or never use public transit.
14. 51% of respondents rated the aquatic center as an excellent service offered in La Crescent.
15. 60% of respondents said La Crescent should spend more money on public schools.
16. 55% of respondents said that the City should make no changes and should continue to use the current City Government Building as long as possible. 28% think a new City Government facility should be built for Police, City Hall and the Public Library.
17. 77% of respondents agree or strongly agree that park and outdoor recreational facilities around La Crescent currently meet their needs. Only 14.5% disagree.
18. The most widely used outdoor recreation facilities in the past year (with 10+ visits per respondent) include the Mississippi River, Old Hickory Park and Kistler Memorial Park.
19. The most common recreational activities respondents participate in include recreational walking (70%), swimming (64%), trail hiking (58%) and playground play (56%).
20. The top recreation amenities respondents would like to see expanded or improved in La Crescent include walking trails (45%), bike trails (33%) and kayak/canoe launch.
21. Only 10% or less of respondents oppose or strongly oppose various options to protect and/or expand access to the bluffs around La Crescent.

## Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission is the entity that will use this plan most frequently, not only as a source of policy guidance when reviewing development projects, but also to encourage the implementation of City initiatives described in this plan. The Planning Commission was involved throughout the planning process, including recommendation on process design and consultant selection, and then in the review and editing of draft plan content in the later phases of the project. Planning Commission members also served on and participated in the various Content Committees. Planning Commission recommended adoption of this plan by City Council on \_\_\_\_\_.

## City Council

City Council is responsible for setting and enforcing City policies, including final decisions on how taxpayer dollars are used. City Council approved the budget and scope for the development of this plan and adopted the completed plan on \_\_\_\_\_.

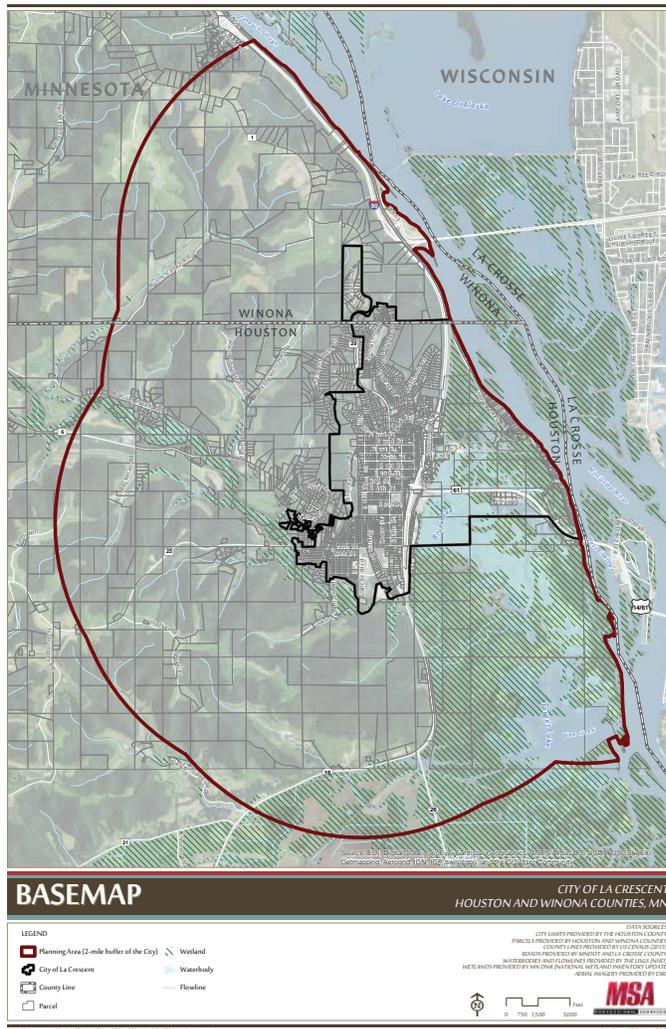
# A Snapshot of La Crescent

## Planning Area



The study area for this Plan includes all lands in which the City has both a short- and long-term interest in planning and development activity. As shown in *Figure 1.2 (below)*, the Planning Area includes all lands within the current municipal limits and within two miles of the current City limits. The City is approximately 2,221 acres (3.47 square miles). The entire Planning Area, including significant areas of undevelopable wetlands and bluffslands, is approximately 14,847 acres (23.2 square miles).

Figure 1.1: Planning Area Map



## Regional Context



La Crescent is located primarily in Houston County, plus a small portion in Winona County. It is the largest city in Houston County, by population, and the fourth largest municipality in the La Crosse-La Crescent two-county metro area, after the Cities of La Crosse and Onalaska and the Village of Holmen. La Crescent has many close ties to the City of La Crosse and the wider metro area, including economic, social and public services interdependence.

The region is known for its bluffs and the Mississippi River, which provide scenic beauty and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors. These features are also important constraints on development and growth, allowing little room for horizontal expansion.

## History



La Crescent was founded in 1851 and was originally named Camerons, by founder Peter Cameron. Cameron attempted to divert the Mississippi River to flow closer to La Crescent and bypass La Crosse, but passed away weeks before the project's scheduled completion date in 1857. The project was never completed. The second name of the City was Manton, but this was quickly changed to La Crescent to make the name sound more appealing to settlers. La Crescent was incorporated in 1857.

The City has a long history in the apple industry. This history began in 1856 with John Harris who was able to plant trees that could survive Minnesota's harsh winters. Due to Harris' accomplishments and the thousands of trees and hundreds of varieties he planted, he is known as the "Father of the Orchardists" in Minnesota. La Crescent continues to hold an annual Applefest to honor its long history in the industry.

Today La Crescent is known for its gourmet apple varieties which are unique to the region. The City is known as the "Apple Capitol of Minnesota".

## Key Community Indicators



The following pages present population and demographic trends for La Crescent. These data provide a foundation for the planning process. The data was collected from the U.S. Census Bureau, the American Community Survey (ACS), and local sources. See **Appendix B** for a full report on La Crescent's Community Indicators, including background information related to each of the plan's core topics.



Photo and history text source: <http://www.cityoflacrescent-mn.gov/about-lacrescent/history/>



**PEOPLE**



**HOUSING**



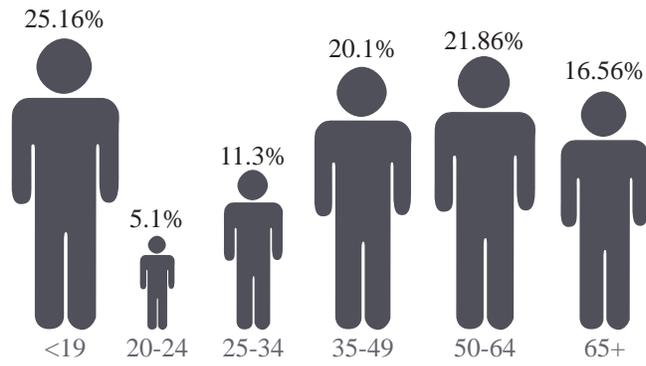
**TRANSPORTATION**



**ECONOMIC PROSPERITY**

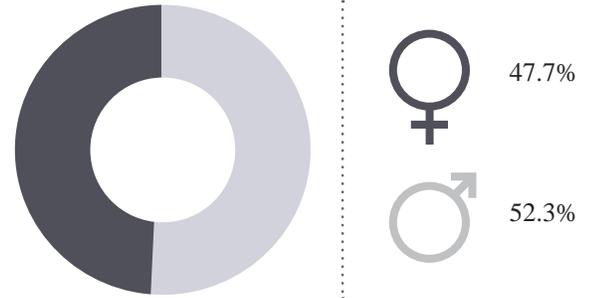
# A Snapshot of La Crescent

## People



### AGE

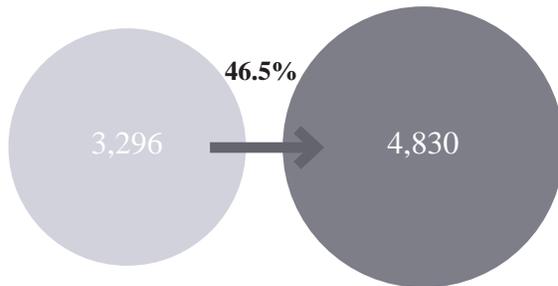
In 2010, the median age in La Crescent was 42.8; approximately five (5) years older than the median ages in both the La Crosse Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (36.6) and the State (37.4).



### GENDER

The breakdown between female and male residents in the City is average with an almost even split, although the females do outnumber the males by approximately 5%.

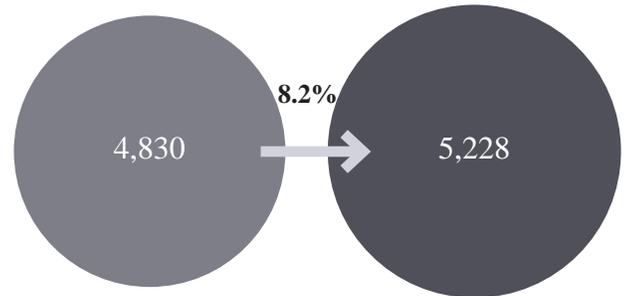
1970 - 2010



### 30-YEAR POPULATION CHANGE

From 1970 to 2010, La Crescent's population experienced expansive growth with more than a 45% increase- higher than the La Crosse MSA (36.4%) and the State (39.4%).

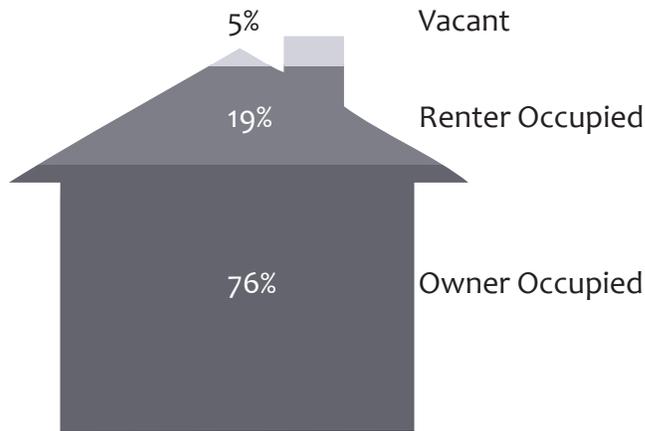
2010 - 2030



### 20-YEAR POPULATION PROJECTION

The 30-year projection for population is not as robust as the previous three decades, however, the City can expect a modest growth of around 8%. This is lower than the La Crosse MSA's projection (11.3%) and the State's projection (12.8%).

## Housing

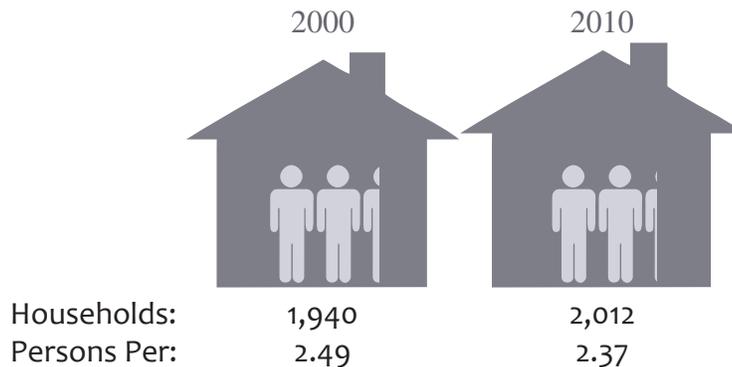


### 2010 OCCUPANCY

Nearly three-fourths (76%) of City residents live in owner-occupied housing. This percentage held steady over the last decade, despite the 2008 housing market crisis, suggesting a resilient local housing market. The rental vacancy rate (1.5%) is lower than what is considered a healthy rate of around 5%. This rate of vacancy indicates a lower number of choices for renters and that competition for units may have the undesired effect of driving rent prices up.

### AVERAGE MEDIAN VALUE

The value of a home is also an indicator to the strength of the housing market and in turn, the vitality of the community. La Crescent's housing market appears to be in good shape as the median value of a home in the City is \$159,000 and is slightly higher the La Crosse MSA's average value of \$155,600 but below the State's of \$187,900.



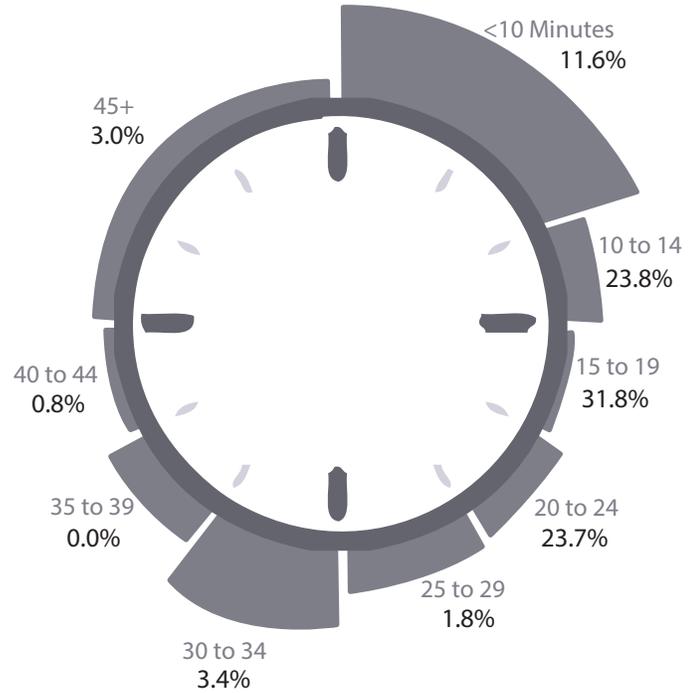
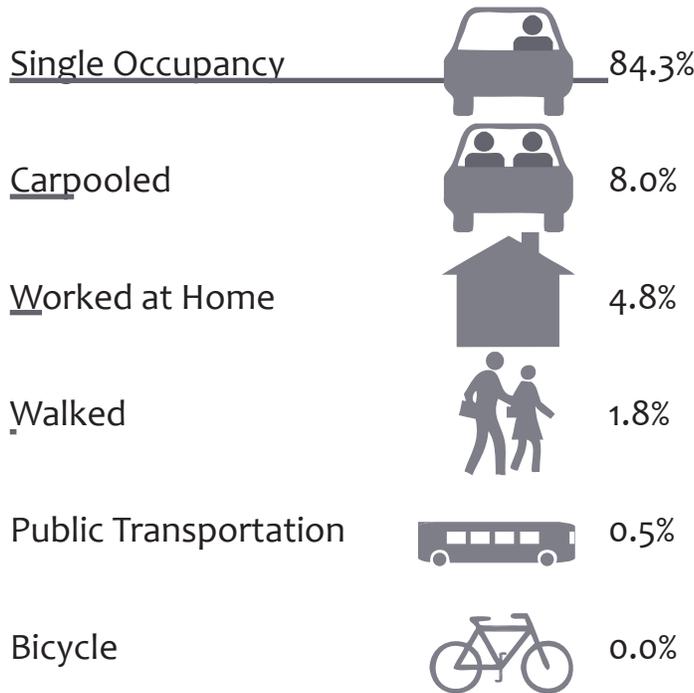
### HOUSEHOLD COUNTS

Household trends for the City of La Crescent show a 3.7% increase in households between 2000 and 2010, which was below that of the La Crosse MSA (10.1%) and the State (10.1%) for that same time period.

Nationally, the number of persons per household has been declining in recent decades which has been explained several way, including fewer children per family, an increase in single parent households, and an increase in life expectancy. In 2010, Lac Crescent was just below the National Average of 2.59 persons per household with 2.37 persons per household.

# A Snapshot of La Crescent

## Transportation



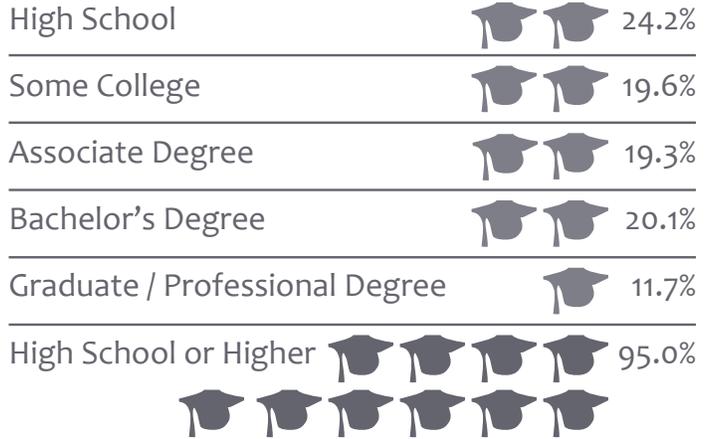
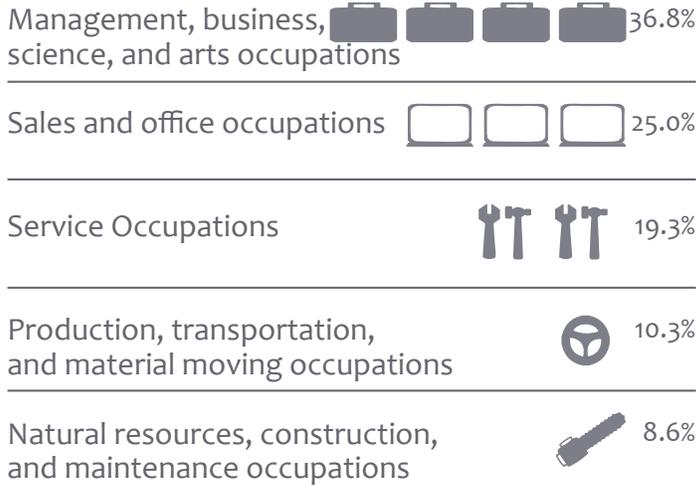
### COMMUTING METHOD TO WORK

Commuting in La Crescent is mostly done by car, with 84.3% of commuters traveling in a single occupant vehicle. This number is higher than the La Crosse MSA (79.0%) and Minnesota (78.0%). Only 8.0% of commuters in La Crosse carpooled to work, 1.8% walked, 4.8% worked from home and 0.5% used public transportation. There were no reports of residents bicycling as a method of transport to or from work.

### COMMUTING TIME TO WORK

Only 11.6% of La Crescent's working residents (age 16 and over) have less than a 10 minutes commute to work while nearly 80% percent drive between 10 and 24 minutes to work. This commute indicates a large percentage of residents working a short distance outside of La Crescent--mostly La Crosse where many employment options are located.

## Economic Prosperity



### OCCUPATIONS

Approximately three-quarters (71.4%) of workers in La Crescent earn a *private* wage and salary, similar to workers in the La Crosse MSA (69.3%) and the State of Minnesota (70.6%).

The major occupation group in La Crescent is the "Management, Professional & Related" category. Coming in second is "Sales & Office", while "Service Occupations" comes in third.

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment can provide valuable insight into the existing labor force, including availability of skilled and professional workers and demand for training opportunities. The percentage of La Crescent residents 25 years or older who have at least a high school diploma is a staggering 95.0%. The numbers show La Crescent has a highly educated workforce.

# Existing Plans

## City Plans and Studies

### City of La Crescent Comprehensive Plan - 1999

In 1999, the City of La Crescent adopted its Comprehensive Plan with a vision of maintaining the City's unique setting in the Mississippi River Valley by providing residents the ability to share and enjoy many rural and urban amenities without compromising quality of life. At the time the plan was adopted, population was expected to grow by 30% in the next 20 years. For this reason, growth management, preservation of natural features, orchards and open space which all make La Crescent unique are all important elements to consider for the City's future. Guiding principles and recommendations for implementation were developed to help the City to achieve its vision. Topics included: retaining its small-town character, encouraging commercial and industrial developments, preserving natural and scenic qualities, improving access, creating a viable commercial core and an attractive and safe place to live, and developing a connection to the river.

### Minnesota Design Team Recommendations- 2008

In 2008 the Minnesota Design Team, a group of volunteer architects and planners, worked with the City of La Crescent to help plan for its future. With the assistance of community members, the Design Team identified "likes, dislikes and opportunities" within La Crescent. Residents most liked the area's scenic beauty, parks, and city-wide amenities like the library and fine arts center. Dislikes included excessive billboards and certain development that residents felt poorly reflected the image of their community. Opportunities within the City included revitalizing La Crescent's downtown, preserving and enhancing natural areas and creating beautiful and innovative entryways to La Crescent. To realize the City's vision for its future, the Design Team made recommendations related to housing, bike trails, downtown, ecology, MNDOT, zoning, beautification, water access and opportunities for seniors. Recommendations were made for the short-, mid- and long-term.



## DOWNTOWN: LONG TERM IMPROVEMENTS

LA CRESCENT  
MINNESOTA DESIGN TEAM



SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2008

## **La Crescent Park and Recreation Plan - 2012**

The City of La Crescent updated its Park and Recreation Plan in 2012 to plan for the future of its park system. The plan identifies trends that will influence La Crescent's park system in the coming years such as the desirability of trails, non-traditional sports, a health-conscious population, dog ownership, safety concerns, demographics, diversity, aging population, changing family structures, environment/climate change, and increased interest in nature. Recommendations were made to improve and expand existing parks to meet the needs of park users based on these trends. Primary implementation goals include improving access to water, enhancing the entryway to the City, improving trails, creating a pedestrian bridge, establishing a dog park, acquiring additional parkland, and generally ensuring the City is developing high quality park and open space facilities that meet users' needs.

## **La Crescent Bike and Pedestrian Plan - 2013**

In 2013, the City of La Crescent completed a bike and pedestrian plan to improve these elements in and around the City. The primary principles of the plan include fixing infrastructure that needs repair, improving intersections for bicyclists and pedestrians, improving integration of bike and pedestrian-friendly policies in everyday activities, and developing a connected system for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the City. The plan recommends improvements that should be made in order to provide continuous, safe facilities for people travelling by a variety of transportation modes.

# Existing Plans

## Regional Plans and Studies



### Blufflands Design Manual - 1998

The Blufflands Design Manual addresses issues concerning growth and development within the Blufflands of Southeastern Minnesota. The manual illustrates the value of the Blufflands and discusses growth trends and the impact they may have on the area in the future. Growth management is discussed in three sections within the manual; a common vision, implementation tools to achieve the vision and a discussion on property rights and takings. The common vision connects the present actions being taken in the community with what the community envisions for its future. The manual focuses on communities returning to a traditional approach to development; avoiding isolated residential housing developments (urban sprawl) to preserve the community's identity and natural resources. The recommended tools to accomplish this vision vary from recommending comprehensive newspaper coverage of regional land-use issues to zoning ordinance recommendations. The third section, a discussion on property rights and takings, discusses two opposing viewpoints; protecting personal property rights and the importance of land use for the benefit of common the environment and society. It was intended that the tools and goals set forth in this manual be integrated into all future plans in the City to achieve the community's vision.

### Coulee Vision 2050 - 2013

La Crescent is an active participant and funding member of the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC), a regional transportation and land use planning entity. In 2013 the LAPC adopted a long-term, regional vision to inform future transportation investments. This plan highlights the important link between land use patterns and transportation needs, and it features principles to inform local plans and decisions.

#### Selected Transportation Principles

- Average commuting times, including all travel modes, will be maintained below 20 minutes.
- Growth will be accommodated without a significant increase in congestion through the use of many strategies, including road and highway improvements, traffic signal timing improvements,
- New/enhanced transit services, enhanced and expanded bike and pedestrian facilities, scheduling adjustments by major employers, and other approaches.
- Public and private landowners will reduce their subsidy of automobile use through a mix of strategies.
- Bike and pedestrian facilities will become ubiquitous.

#### Selected Land Use Principles

- New housing will continue to include a range of housing types and lot sizes, including a priority on single family lots smaller than ½ acre.
- The region places a high priority on infill development to enhance the utilization of existing urban infrastructure and enhance the concentration of uses so that more residents are within a 10-minute walk of their daily retail needs.
- New buildings and development areas will often include a mix of uses.
- Towns, villages and cities will pursue and approve boundary agreements that allow some growth in unincorporated areas.

## Goals, Objectives, Strategies

Chapter 2 presents a vision for the future of the community and describes the goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the vision.

Community Vision **2-2**

Housing **2-4**

Economic Development **2-8**

Downtown Enhancement **2-12**

Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation **2-16**

Community Facilities and Services **2-22**

Transportation and Mobility **2-26**

Collaborations and Partnerships **2-30**



# Community Vision

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## Community Vision Statement



2-2

*To be provided by the Comprehensive Plan Logistics Committee...*

## About the Visions, Goals, Objectives and Policies



Each section within this chapter contains a vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies established during the planning process based on public input and the information contained in Appendix C: Community Indicators. This section defines the goals, objectives, and strategies as follows:

**Vision Statement:** A vision statement describes future conditions and outcomes. Written in the present tense from a future perspective (approximately year 2035), the vision statements encapsulate the key themes and priorities of each section.

**Goal:** A goal is a long-term target that states what the community wants to accomplish. Written in general terms, the statement offers a desired condition.

**Objective:** An objective is a more detailed target end result necessary to achieve a more general goal.

**Strategy:** A strategy is a specific action or policy intended to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Not all strategies will be implemented by the City and some may require collaboration with other entities. Policies typically use words like “shall” or “will” to designate firm commitments by the City. All future actions and decisions made by the City should be consistent with these policies, unless unforeseen circumstances arise which make a policy impractical or impossible to adhere to. Such occasions should be rare and probably indicate a need to amend this plan according to the procedures identified in Chapter 4. Policies using the words “should,” “encourage,” “discourage,” or “may” are intended to serve as a guide for City decisions and actions.



# Housing

2-4

As the City grows and changes, housing must change to meet the needs of the population. This section of the plan should be used by City officials, property owners and developers to guide housing investment projects of all types and sizes.

## Housing Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The City of La Crescent is growing a diverse housing stock which is accessible to a wide variety of residents, including young professionals, first time home buyers, two and single-parent households, empty nesters, and the elderly. Housing density is increasing and more alternatives to single-family detached housing units are available. With the support of the City, property owners are modernizing or redeveloping older homes to fit contemporary needs, while in a manner that is compatible with the fabric of the neighborhood. All neighborhoods continue to be safe and attractive places to live with access to daily educational, retail and recreational needs.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The planning process revealed the following information related to housing that informs this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- The lack of available lots for construction or land for new residential subdivisions is a concern.
- The City currently has an adequate mix of detached single family homes and lot sizes, but typically at higher price points. The City currently lacks a supply of owner occupied housing between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in value as compared to the greater La Crosse MSA.
- Residents do not support new or expanded mobile home parks (only 4% of survey respondents thought La Crescent needed more mobile home parks).
- According to the survey, regarding the need for housing in various categories, the highest number of respondents suggested the City needs more senior condominiums and apartments, assisted living facilities for seniors, and affordable housing.
- There are concerns that the price of housing and lack of housing diversity is a barrier to young professionals, first time home buyers, new families and single-parent households. There is a desire to provide a range of housing types, styles and price points to allow those that wish to return, or move to, La Crescent an opportunity to do so.
- There are concerns that empty nesters and seniors are staying in their detached single-family homes longer than they may desire due to the lack of alternative housing options within the City such as independent living senior condominiums, apartments, and assisted living facilities that may be a better fit for their housing needs. This has led to a secondary concern that these homeowners are deferring home maintenance and modernization projects which may be contributing to the deterioration of the City's housing stock. The lack of other senior housing options forces these individuals to look to other communities to meet their housing needs even though they desire to stay in La Crescent.
- There is a desire to maintain safe and attractive neighborhoods that have access to parks and daily retail needs.
- There is a desire to increase retail, service and entertainment uses in the City, especially the Downtown, in order to improve the livability of the City for existing residents and to attract young professionals and new families.
- There is a desire to maintain a strong school system, including both the quality of education and facilities, to keep and attract new families in La Crescent.

## Goals & Objectives

### Goal

La Crescent offers safe, healthy, attractive and diverse housing options to people of all income levels, age groups and people with varied needs.

### Objectives

1. There will be an increased supply of housing that appeals to families with school-age children. This housing type is the highest priority for new units in the City, in support of school district success, especially in any new “greenfield” development projects.
2. There will be an increase supply and diversity of housing options to attract young professionals, including contemporary rental units near the Cental Business District.
3. There will be an increased supply and diversity of housing options for existing residents wishing to “age in place” and remain in La Crescent as their housing needs change.
4. Housing affordability in La Crescent will be successfully managed, such that new and existing residents can continue to find acceptable housing options with in the City.
5. Older homes will be rehabilitated, modernized and redeveloped to meet contemporary needs.
6. The zoning code will permit a variety of lot sizes, dwelling sizes, unit mixes, styles and densities.
7. La Crescent’s neighborhoods will be safe and attractive, with convenient access to daily educational, retail and recreational needs.
8. The Hokah-La Crescent Shool District will be strong, including the quality of both education and facilities, to keep and attract new families to La Crescent.
9. Current building and fire codes will be consistently enforced.

## Strategies

### Communication and Programs

1. Prepare a marketing campaign for the City focused on attracting and retaining new families and young professionals. The marketing campaign may include focus groups to gain a deeper understanding of why families choose to move to La Crescent, choose not to move to La Crescent, or choose to leave La Crescent.
2. Create user-friendly brochures and/or on-line guides to outline the permitting process for home improvement projects and available local, county, state, or federal housing programs that provide financial assistance with housing ownership or improvement projects.
3. Create a no cost or subsidized program that provides the services of an architect or home builder (e.g. initial consultations) to work with interested home owners to visualize potential home rehabilitation and modernization projects with priority given to owner occupied properties, older properties and low-income homeowners. Focus on those home improvement projects that will result in the best return on investment based on professional input.
4. Create a no or low-interest loan program geared toward construction projects that improve and modernize older properties in the City with priority given to low-income homeowners and owner occupied properties. The Small Cities Development Program through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development is a viable funding source for a local housing grant program if focused on low- and moderate-income residents.
5. Create rebate programs and other financial incentives, in conjunction with public and private partners, for homeowners undertaking energy efficient home rehabilitation projects. Priority should be given to owner occupied properties, older properties and low-income homeowners.
6. Maintain civic programs (e.g. Neighbors in Action) focused specifically on assisting seniors in single family homes with home and property maintenance. Consider how programs such as

these could be expanded to include volunteer or civic lead home modernization/construction projects.

7. Create a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and purchase land to develop rental and senior housing developments in areas identified for such uses in this plan. Issue a developer request for proposal to develop the specific housing desired.

### Land Use and Regulations

See also Chapter 3 for Land Use and Community Design strategies related to housing.

8. Enforce current building codes by inspection of new structures and voluntary reporting of unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions. The City will work with property owners to improve the quality of living and appearance of housing properties including removal of “junk” materials, and will enforce property maintenance and public nuisance ordinance as needed.
9. Maintain and enforce development design guidelines for all housing types that will maintain neighborhood character, property values and aesthetics over time and enhance the social function, health, and safety of City neighborhoods. *Refer to representative images of housing design strategies within this plan and zoning code regulations.*
10. Maintain a diverse mix of housing types, styles, sizes and affordability. New subdivisions should generally include housing for all ages and family types, but with priority to housing that appeals to families with young children. Redevelopment projects should consider opportunities to add unit types not common in the City (e.g. townhomes).
11. Infill and housing redevelopment should be compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood through appropriate transitions in housing density, styles, setbacks, heights, etc.
12. The City will work to improve walkability, lighting,

streets and sidewalks in existing neighborhoods. Sidewalks should continue to be required on both sides of all new residential streets. Easements for walking and biking trails should be secured to link new housing and park developments. Unconnected residential development (i.e. no pedestrian or bicycle facility connections to the rest of the community) is strongly discouraged.

13. Consider ordinances and programs that encourage the development of affordable and senior housing integrated with market-rate housing. Inclusionary housing ordinances can provide incentives to development with certain percentages of affordable or senior housing units (e.g. a density bonus allowing for more total units than otherwise permitted, or waiving fees on affordable or senior percentages of new development).
14. Residential development, especially multi-family and senior living developments, should be located in areas where there is safe pedestrian and bicycle access to park, retail and community facilities.
15. The City will promote the geographical dispersal of affordable housing throughout the community, and encourage development of affordable housing on transit routes and corridors.





# Economic Development

2-8

The La Crescent economy is a complex and evolving mix of production, sales and service-oriented enterprises. Local businesses are a source of income for residents and they respond to the purchasing needs of residents. This section of the plan should be used by City officials, business owners and developers to inform decisions and programs that affect business success in the City.

## Economic Development

### Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The City of La Crescent is growing a diverse and resilient local economy. Employment opportunities are increasing due to the growth of local businesses and the willingness of residents to start new enterprises. Retail, restaurant and service businesses are thriving due to population growth and an increase in recreation tourism, and residents can satisfy many of their weekly shopping and services needs within the City. It is apparent that the community values and celebrates the arts in La Crescent. These successes are the result of ongoing collaborations and communication between the City and private sector organizations.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to economic development that inform this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- The City enjoys convenient access to an interstate freeway and downtown La Crosse
- The City has many long-term family-owned businesses that anchor the local economy (though there is concern about succession planning)
- The cost of land is relatively high and the availability of land for growth is low.
- The bluffs and waterways are an underutilized economic asset – an opportunity for recreation tourism
- Tax and employment policy differences between Minnesota and Wisconsin are a challenge for commercial development here (commercial property taxes are higher, minimum wage is higher, workers’ compensation costs are higher, sales tax is higher).
- We don’t have many young professionals; we want our own kids to come back here to work and start businesses
- There is strong support for the enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities in the La Crescent area, especially hiking and canoeing/kayaking trails and trailheads. A majority (53%) of survey respondents supported local public funding support for expanded hiking amenities.
- Based on survey results, most area residents (72%) believe employment opportunities are “lacking” in the La Crescent area. A plurality of respondents (40%) believe the City should commit additional tax dollars to attract and retain jobs in La Crescent. Only 19% did not support this, while another 41% answered “No opinion” or “It depends”.

## Goals & Objectives



### Goal

Employment will grow in La Crescent.

### Objectives

1. Existing businesses will stay here and grow here.
2. Businesses will choose to relocate to La Crescent.
3. Local startups and entrepreneurship will increase.

### Goal

The City will continue to host a diverse and competitive workforce.

### Objectives

1. The school district will have an excellent reputation based on good facilities and strong academic performance.
2. Residents will have more local shopping and dining options.
3. People of all ages will be attracted by the prevalence of recreation opportunities.
4. The City will continue to demonstrate progressive policies and actions that appeal to young professionals, including support for sustainable energy and environmental stewardship.

### Goal

Recreation tourism will grow in La Crescent

### Objectives

1. There will be more businesses catering to outdoor recreation enthusiasts, including residents and visitors.
2. There will be more access to the region's highlands and lowlands/waterways, especially via trails and trailhead improvements.

## Strategies



1. Develop a Marketing and Promotion Plan to raise awareness within the La Crosse metro area that La Crescent is a great place to live. Enhance the City's presence in regional print, television and radio media. Highlight small town character, recreation opportunities, proximity to downtown La Crosse, and progressive commitments to public and environmental health.
2. Respond promptly and collaboratively with existing businesses seeking to remodel, expand, or move to La Crescent.
3. Collaborate with and support the Chamber of Commerce in efforts to maintain regular contact and communication with local businesses, especially manufacturers and other primary sector employers.
4. Identify and protect land for business growth, including redevelopment areas.
5. Continue to use Tax Increment Finance Districts to facilitate development, especially to assist redevelopment costs.
6. Continue to utilize Tax Abatement as a strategy to encourage business expansion.
7. *Consistently promote the availability of the Property-Assessed Clean Energy program (PACE), available through Houston County, to support business investment in energy efficiency and clean energy improvements.*
8. Support entrepreneurship by allowing and encouraging low-impact home-based businesses.
9. Work with the La Crescent-Hokah school district to increase connections with local businesses. For example, leverage local construction industry strengths with a program that enables students to build homes or garages.
10. Encourage local businesses to establish internship and apprenticeship collaborations with UW-La Crosse, Western Technical College, and Viterbo.
11. Take an active role in Downtown redevelopment by acquiring property and soliciting redevelopment



# Economic Development

## Strategies



2-10

proposals.

12. Actively pursue the development of a river trailhead on Blue Lake, including property acquisition and/or conversion from other uses if necessary.
13. Actively pursue the improvement of bluffland and lowland hiking trails and connections to those trails from downtown, including a bridge over 14/61.
14. Use the City and/or Chamber websites to promote local recreation opportunities.
15. Encourage the establishment of a recreation tourism booster group in the City to help promote local resources.
16. Join Explore La Crosse (the regional convention and visitors bureau) to promote La Crescent attractions.
17. Incorporate more recreation-oriented activities into Applefest or host new, standalone events focused on recreation in the bluffs and/or river/lake.
18. Continue to provide a Community and Economic Development Coordinator to support local business success, including guidance for new local businesses (start-up or relocations).
19. Maintain an active Economic Development Committee (EDC) to help guide the efforts of the Community and Economic development Coordinator.
20. Create a high-profile trail from the Mississippi River to Hokah via Downtown La Crescent, and build a coalition of municipal and state and federal agency stakeholders to support development of that trail.
21. Promote higher-intensity consumer-oriented commercial development of the Twilite St./Strupp Ave. area along the Pike, to take advantage of the high volume of pass-by traffic.





# Downtown Enhancement

2-12

Downtown La Crescent is the heart of the community - its economic and civic center, but there are mixed feelings about its quality and attractiveness. This section of the plan should be used by City officials, business owners and developers to inform development decisions and infrastructure design.

## Downtown Enhancement Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The Downtown area is thriving, with activity from morning to evening. A series of new buildings and uses have brought energy to the community and enhanced the character of the place while retaining a small town feel. Streetscape improvements, including more trees, planting beds, corner bumpouts and crosswalks have defined the downtown area and made it a very pleasant place to visit and walk around. Downtown is recognized as a central trailhead for river and bluff adventures, with convenient parking and safe walking and biking connections to popular trails.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The current planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to downtown enhancement that inform this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- Residents desire more retail and service businesses in La Crescent, especially sit-down restaurants and breakfast/café options.
- Residents value the existing downtown businesses, especially the grocery store and hardware store, but would like longer and more uniform hours of operation.
- Existing downtown development has weak urban form, including a prevalence of front yard parking, and single-story buildings with small windows facing the street. These characteristics don't attract visitors.
- Many residents wish to retain a small-town feel in the downtown area, as compared to and distinct from downtown La Crosse.
- Most area residents are comfortable with multistory buildings downtown (only 8% of survey respondents "opposed" or "strongly opposed").
- There is sufficient convenient parking downtown for current uses - 88% of survey respondents rated parking convenience "adequate" or "excellent".
- People like and want to maintain/restore trees and landscaping in the downtown area.

## Goals & Strategies

### Goal 1

New development on Main Street and Walnut Street in the Downtown Core will have urban character will be appropriate to La Crescent.

### Strategies

1. Most new buildings in these locations will be built to the sidewalk and all within 10' of the sidewalk.
2. New buildings in these locations will generally be at least 24' tall on all sides, and will include at least two functional stories.
3. All new buildings and significant renovations of existing buildings will have a large percentage of clear glass windows along the ground floor street façade to increase visual connections to and from the street.
4. There will be no off-street surface parking within 50' of an intersection and no parking that is closer to the street than an adjacent building.



### Goal 2

Downtown streetscaping will be improved to define and enhance the downtown character.

### Strategies

1. Improve key downtown intersections with corner bumpouts to slow traffic, increase landscaping, reducing the pedestrian crossing distance, and identify the core downtown area.
2. Keep downtown green with street trees, planting beds or grass, and/or planters.
3. Add dedicated bike parking racks throughout the downtown area.





# Downtown Enhancement

2-14

## Goal 3

The downtown district will be apparent and accessible to visitors from all directions

### Strategies

1. Improve signage identifying access to downtown, especially from the north.
2. Ensure that the pedestrian bridge of 14/61, when designed, is architecturally attractive and serves as a marker of downtown's location.
3. New downtown buildings will be visible from the highway due to their height.



## Goal 4

Downtown activity and retail/service market demand will be increased through the development of more residential units in the downtown area.

### Strategies

1. There will be upper story apartment units in some new buildings in the Downtown Core (Main and Walnut).
2. There will be new multi-unit buildings in a variety of formats (flats, townhomes) and serving a variety of market needs (senior housing, efficiencies, three-bedrooms) constructed in the Downtown Fringe and Downtown Mixed Residential areas.
3. *New mixed use buildings downtown will be supported by the use of Tax Incremental Financing (TIF).*

## Goal 5

Parking will remain convenient and free in the downtown area.

### Objective

1. Customers will be able to find parking within one block of their final destination at most times.

### Strategies

1. The City will maintain as much on-street parking capacity as possible to reduce the need for off-street lots, including existing angle parking.
2. The City will improve existing public parking lots downtown, including pavement quality and signage. As opportunities arise, the City will acquire and reserve parcels for additional off-street public parking, typically at the edge of the urban core.
3. There will be routine reminders for downtown business employees to reserve prime parking for customers by parking their own vehicles in secondary lots and streets.
4. *Consider adding electric vehicle charging stations in City-owned lots as part of the City's commitment to reducing dependence on fossil fuels*



## Goal 6

Downtown will be recognized locally and regionally as the civic heart of the La Crescent community.

### Strategies

1. Key civic buildings will continue to be located in the downtown core, including City Hall and the library.
2. Downtown streets will be closed for community events in every season, including parades, recreation events, car shows, arts festivals, etc.





# Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation

La Crescent is surrounded by exceptional natural features and maintains excellent park and recreation resources. This chapter describes the City's commitments to protect and enhance those features.

2-16

## Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The City of La Crescent is known not only for its exceptional driftless landscape, but also its commitments to clean air, clean water and environmental stewardship. By expanding public access to bluffs and waterways, and attracting businesses that serve recreation needs, the City has cultivated a reputation for outdoor recreation opportunities. Recreational users have become active participants in the sustainable management of the region's bluffs and waterways.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to natural systems, open spaces and recreation that inform this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- The City is surrounded on three sides by prominent bluffs. The bluffs to the north and west feature some urban development, and also parks that provide some access to these lands. The bluff to the south remains largely undisturbed.
- The City borders the Mississippi River, however the river itself is not visible from most parts of the City. Residents identified the river as their most frequent outdoor recreation destination - nearly 60% of survey respondents reported using it for recreation at least four times in the past year.
- Eighty percent of residents rate the City's parks as "Good" or "Excellent". The City has several parks that are very lightly utilized and little known, based on survey results, including North End Park, Harris Park, and Vollenweilder Park.
- Recreational walking is the most common recreational activity practiced in the City, according to the survey, and walking trails are the recreational amenity that the most people would like to expand or improve. The second most popular amenity for which improvements are desired is bike trails.
- Residents indicated strong support in the survey for bluffland protection and access; more than 60% favor more trails, private and public land acquisition, and increased regulation on development and tree cutting.
- Blue Lake is considered a high quality wetland by the US Fish and Wildlife Service because of the diverse species it hosts.

## Goals & Objectives

### Goal

Natural features and ecosystems in the La Crescent area will be conserved and restored.

### Objectives

1. Local waterway health will improve through enhanced management of both urban and rural stormwater runoff.
2. Blufftops overlooking and visible from La Crescent will be permanently protected from further development.
3. Existing residential development on blufftops and hillsides in and around the City will be obscured by mature trees.

### Goal

Public access to and recreational use of parks, blufflands and waterways will be expanded and improved in the La Crescent area.

### Objectives

1. There will be more hiking and biking trails and users in the bluffs around La Crescent.
2. There will be more access points to the wetlands north and south of the pike, and more non-motorized users enjoying those areas.
3. Public access improvements to natural areas will be designed to prevent or repair ecosystem damage and will be long-lasting with minimal maintenance requirements.
4. Downtown La Crescent will serve as a trailhead for a system of regional hiking, biking and boating trails.
5. Businesses tied to recreation uses will locate and thrive in La Crescent.
6. La Crescent parks will be accessible to all residents and highly utilized.
7. Parks and trails in the region will be clearly identified and easy to find and navigate.
8. As access to natural areas increases, there will continue to be wild and secluded places with limited human visitation.
9. Scenic views of the bluffs and wetlands will be enhanced through the removal of billboards.

### Goal

La Crescent will be recognized as a leader in environmental stewardship and natural resource conservation.

### Objectives

1. La Crescent will continue to be recognized as a leader in urban forestry.
2. *There will be both public and private investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency that reduce local use of and reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels.*
3. *Residents, local businesses, and peer communities will learn about and be influenced by the City's efforts to manage and mitigate its impacts on the natural environment through the GreenStep Program.*

### Goal

There will be recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities, in support of the health and well-being of our community.

### Objectives

1. City parks will include features accessible by wheelchair and/or by visitors with limited mobility.
2. The City's recreation programming will offer activities for residents of all ages and abilities.



1. Encourage and support efforts by federal and state agencies, and local authorities, to protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat in the backwaters of the Mississippi River located in proximity to the City of La Crescent. These backwaters extend in a “crescent” around the city, from the upper end of Shore Acres to below Barron Island, and include Blue and Target Lakes. Management actions to protect and enhance backwater habitat may include managing flows and hydraulic connectivity, increasing depth diversity in channels and backwaters, managing floodplain forests, invasive plant and animal management, and watershed management programs.
2. Support local and watershed-level water quality management activities that reduce nutrient, sediment, and other pollutant loads through point and nonpoint source pollutant control programs within the Pine Creek watershed. The City will also encourage and participate in watershed-level planning efforts.
3. Use and enforce the City’s sign ordinance to manage the size and brightness of signs, with particular emphasis on the protecting and improving scenic viewsheds.
4. Encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to install interpretive sign(s) at the canoe/kayak accesses planned near Chestnut Street and Twilite Street. Interpretive topics could include an introduction to the National Wildlife Refuge, the importance of Blue Lake as wildlife habitat and its function as part of the Mississippi River, and/or local history.
5. Explore construction of a birdwatching overlook along the shore of Blue Lake, including parking and interpretive signs. A key partner is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which identified this as a possible project in its 2006 Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Other partners may include FOR 78 (local Refuge Friends organization), corporations, and area service clubs.
6. Encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to install interpretive signage along the Wagon Wheel Trail. Interpretive topics may include the history of the Stagecoach trail, the trail’s recent and ongoing improvements, and the hydrology of the adjacent impounded backwaters.
7. Collaborate with La Crescent Township and private landowners to establish a contiguous trail network in the bluffs immediately surrounding the City for hiking, biking, showshoeing and cross country skiing. Identify former logging roads and current snowmobile trails as possible linkages between existing sites and trail segments.
8. Work with La Crosse area partner governments to enhance the use of bluffland trails in the La Crescent area, including identification of public access sites on regional bluffland maps and use of common trail signage standards.
9. Continue to collaborate with the Minnesota Land Trust to identify and pursue acquisition of bluffland sites for protection from development and public access improvements.
10. *Consider creation of a local conservation easement fund to acquire easements on privately owned bluffland property that will protect it from development or tree removal while allowing it to stay in private ownership.*
11. Establish the downtown area as a trailhead for hiking, biking and canoe/kayak adventures in and around La Crescent. Add features such as a prominent information kiosk about trails and access points, public-access bathrooms that remain open during daylight hours, bike racks and an outdoor bike repair station, and safe and well-marked bike routes between downtown and key parks and trails. Consider creation of an interpretive center with robust information about the region’s natural setting, apple history, and recreational opportunities, possibly as part of a new City Hall.
12. Establish a well-maintained, web-based source of information about outdoor recreation sites, trails, and amenities in the La Crescent area.
13. Highlight the City’s scenic and recreation

## Strategies



resources as part of a comprehensive promotion strategy to tell La Crescent's story and attract visitors, residents and investment.

14. Highlight in recreation promotion efforts, both externally and within the City, the location of Mississippi River access points, including Sportsman's Landing and the Upper and Lower I-90 landings.
15. Prevent tree cutting around homes on the bluffs by working with La Crescent Township, Houston County, and private landowners to establish and enforce strict regulatory limitations on tree cutting.
16. Plant more street trees in all parts of the City, and especially in newer neighborhoods.
17. Pursue and maintain Tree City USA designation.
18. Continue to use and implement the 2012 Park and Recreation Plan. Update that plan every 5 to 7 years, with an emphasis on improvements to the City's parks, trails systems, and water access points.
19. Maintain and implement a capital improvement schedule for all City parks that emphasizes trail development, signage improvements, and accessibility improvements.
20. Maintain participation in and Implement best practices encouraged by the Minnesota GreenStep program, which La Crescent joined in 2015.
21. *Create a community apple orchard in one of the City parks to celebrate the City's history and encourage local food production.*

### About Blue Lake...

Community survey results revealed that many residents are not aware that the shallow water body south of the pike is called Blue Lake. While a portion of Blue Lake is within the city limits, much of the lake, and Target Lake to the south, is owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and managed as part of the 261-mile long Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

Blue and Target Lakes and sections of other backwaters located in proximity to the city have been classified as having high value fish and wildlife habitat which is unique and irreplaceable on a national basis or in the ecoregion. Most notable and visible are the migratory bird species, including Wood Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Least and American Bitterns, Common Murrelets, Night Herons, Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, Black Terns and others.

To protect nesting birds, fish nurseries and furbearers, Blue Lake and the upper end of Target Lake were designated a seasonal Slow, No Wake Area by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006. Each year from March 16 through October 31, watercraft must travel at slow, no-wake speed and no airboats or hovercraft are allowed in this area. Year round public access continues, with an emphasis on non-motorized boats that cause less disturbance to this valuable habitat.

Ownership of the rest of the Mississippi River backwaters in proximity to the city is a mixture of private and public ownerships, including the City of La Crescent and Minnesota Department of Transportation.

State agencies who typically work with the two federal agencies on river habitat enhancement/restoration projects in the area include the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Depending on the jurisdiction, permits for wetland work are issued by the Corps, Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and/or Houston County through the Environmental Services Department.

### About the Billboards

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will remove billboards from Refuge-acquired land along Highway 14/61 after an existing use agreement with the sign company expires in 2022. The tract was acquired from willing sellers in 2004 with the use agreement in place.



# Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation

Future Trail Map, 2012 Park and Recreation Plan

2-20



Exhibit 6-3: Future Trail Map





# Community Facilities and Services

2-22

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.

## Community Facilities and Services

### Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***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.***

### Issue & Opportunity Observations



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 and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- 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. Protect people and property from natural and man-made disasters.
5. Community facilities and utility infrastructure will enhance the aesthetics of the community.
6. City staffing, technical skills, and available equipment will match the needs of the community and be provided in a cost efficient manner.
7. 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.
8. La Crescent area schools will be an integral part of community life, much more than simply a primary and secondary education service.
9. Information about La Crescent amenities, community events, and active city projects/meetings are accessible and promoted to residents and visitors.

## 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. Conduct routine engineering assessments of water, sewer, and stormwater systems to plan appropriately for repair needs, expansion options and enhanced environmental performance.
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 always 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



2-24

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 services.
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, such as remote sensors and automated controls, 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. *Hazard Mitigation and Climate Resilience will routinely be considered as part of the annual budgeting process; the City will consider and report on its preparedness to maintain public health and safety and protect public infrastructure during and following an extreme event.*
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. 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.
19. The City may partner with the school district to

## Strategies



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.

20. 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.
21. 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.
22. Consider developing a "sister city" to La Crescent to share and exchange ideas for community improvement projects.
23. 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.
24. *Track and report energy use in City buildings as part of the GreenStep program.*
25. *New City-owned buildings will use a green building framework to achieve superior environmental performance.*
26. *All new outdoor lighting on City properties will be energy efficient (e.g. LED lamps) and dark-sky compliant (i.e. no light shining toward the sky). Retrofitting of existing lights will be considered, especially when energy cost savings can offset the cost of the new lights. This may include the use of timers and/or dimmers in the parking lot of the ice arena.*
27. *Adopt a Sustainable Purchasing Policy for City*

*operations that directs, at minimum, the purchase of energy-star compliant equipment and paper with at least 30% post-consumer recycled content.*

28. *Reduce the City's need for paper and printing by providing meeting materials digitally to City Council and Committee members.*
29. *Maintain a Green Team Committee to pursue implementation of GreenStep initiatives. The Green Team should meet regularly to discuss progress and select additional actions, and it should report out to City leaders at least annually.*

### About the GreenStep Program

Minnesota GreenStep Cities is a challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability goals through implementation of 28 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific actions from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage innovation.



La Crescent joined this program in 2015.



# Transportation and Mobility

2-26

Transportation is an essential aspect of life. It is about the ability to readily and safely gain access to work, school, shopping, recreation, essential services and social gatherings. It is also an essential component of most economic activity and community infrastructure. This section of the plan should be used by City officials, residents, other government agencies, and developers to inform decisions that affect transportation in the City.

## Transportation and Mobility Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The City of La Crescent has a multi-faceted transportation system that enables the economic, environmental, and social functions of the community. Our street network is becoming safe and accessible for all users, regardless of age or ability, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and drivers. Infrastructure investments follow Complete Streets principles.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to transportation and mobility that inform this plan for the future of La Crescent. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- Safety is a high-priority concern, for all types of transportation in and through the City: walking, biking, driving, public transit or rail.
- Specific areas of concern include crosswalks near school sites, Oak Street, 7th Street/Frank J. Kistler Park; increased thru traffic, especially heavy truck traffic through town on CTH 6 and CTH 25 due to potential housing, industrial, and mining growth in Houston County; lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to existing housing off of CTH 6 and CTH 25; bike rider safety on STH 14/61 to La Crosse; access from N. 4th St and N. 2nd St. to the highway.
- Opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle improvements include completion of the Wagon Wheel Trail and bridge to Downtown; completion of connections to the Root River and Mississippi River Trail Bikeway; providing wider shoulders along highways and bridges during reconstruction projects to accommodate safer lane widths for bikers; continuing to secure right-of-way for future facility development; improving signage to improve safety by reducing driver and pedestrian/bicycle conflicts; filling gaps in the existing sidewalk and trail network.
- Most government agencies (City, County, State) lack sufficient funding to adequately maintain roadways let alone provide for expansion projects. A potential roadway expansion project is the extension of 7th Street to STH 16/S. Chestnut St. to alleviate thru traffic in town. Other desired improvements include providing scenic overlooks along the major highways and improving aesthetics along gateways into the City.
- Other transportation enhancement opportunities include weekend transit service to La Crosse; increasing transit-oriented developments; installation of real time GPS technology to enhance transit ridership; whistle-free train zones; and completing road diets to local streets to accommodate bike/ped users.
- According to the survey (question 11), 58% of respondents ranked Maintenance of Existing Roads the highest priority for transportation investments in the next 10 years, followed by Improvements to Off-Street Multi-Use Trails (22%), Improvements to Sidewalks (21%), Improvements to Bike Lanes (18%), Improvements to Public Transportation (10%) and New Roads or Connections within the City (10%).
- According to the survey (question 12), improving Crosswalks Near the Elementary School was the highest priority for bike and pedestrian safety improvements, followed by Improvements on Oak Street (sidewalk both sides and bike lane), Improvements to 7th Street (sidewalks), Biking and Pedestrian Lane on CTH 6 and Wider Shoulder-Designated Bike Lane on CTH 25.
- There are concerns regarding how new school site selection occurs and the cost to the community to retrofit or provide transportation facility enhancements that provide safe routes to school.

## Goals & Objectives



### Goal

La Crescent provides a safe, efficient, multi-modal and well-maintained transportation network that balances the needs of all users.

### Objectives

1. Traffic growth, and corresponding facility improvements, will be managed in balance with cost, pedestrian, bicycle and neighborhood impact considerations.
2. Biking and walking in La Crescent will be safe, enjoyable and efficient, especially in regards to providing safe routes to schools.
3. Create a well connected and safe regional trail system.
4. Alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips will increase as a percentage of all transportation trips within the City and to/from the rest of the La Crosse-La crescent metro area.
5. Roadways will be designed, maintained and reconstructed to meet the needs of all users and to correspond to the needs and demands of surrounding land uses within a hierarchical system of functional classification.
6. Improvements to collector and arterial streets within La Crescent will continue to meet interstate and intrastate travel needs in balance with impacts to City neighborhoods.
7. Local transportation facilities and investments will be coordinated with regional facilities and investments.
8. Transportation corridors and gateways will be aesthetically attractive and enhance the image of the community.

## Strategies



1. Implement the recommendations contained in the 2013 City of La Crescent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and future updates to that plan (attached as Appendix D). The City will review the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (Appendix D) when updating the City's Capital Improvement Plan and during annual City budgeting discussions to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects as may be reasonably addressed given budget constraints.
2. Gaps and safety deficiencies in the City's existing sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure will be systematically addressed through new facility construction. This will include both bike/ped improvement that run parallel to vehicle lanes (sidewalks, bike lanes, "sharrow" markings) and safety improvements for crossing vehicle lanes (crosswalks, curb bumpouts).
3. Improve street crossings with improved crosswalk markings, signs/signals, and/or curb bumpouts at the following high-priority locations as soon as possible:
  - Around the schools
  - 7th Street at Frank J. Kitstler Park
4. Complete a grade separated pedestrian and bicycle access across STH 14/61 to improve access to the Mississippi River and Blue Lake Marsh from the downtown area.
5. Follow Complete Street principals. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, including those County or State roadways which pass through La Crescent.
6. *Adopt a Complete Streets policy that includes not only transportation needs, but also incorporates standards for the provision of street trees and stormwater management strategies.*
7. The City encourages the development of neighborhoods that are oriented towards pedestrians and well-served by sidewalks, bicycle



- routes, and other non-motorized transportation facilities. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be designed to connect to adjacent developments, schools, parks, shopping areas, and existing or planned pedestrian or bicycle facilities.
8. Continue to work with regional and state organizations to create a well connected regional trail system, including connections to the Root River Trail and Mississippi River Trail Bikeway. These connections may start as on-road facilities with the goal of eventually achieving off-road facilities through incremental and systematic land acquisition and trail development. Priority improvements include connecting La Crescent to Millers Corner and then on to Hokah.
  9. Coordinate with local snowmobile associations and area landowners to consider possible utilization of snowmobile trails and trail corridors for hiking or biking opportunities.
  10. Promote the growth of the La Crosse Municipal Transit (MTU) system ridership in La Crescent. In collaboration with local and regional organizations, the City will host events that encourage and celebrate alternative transportation.
  11. Maintain a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to plan for the annual construction and maintenance of roads and other transportation facilities. Maintenance and safety improvement to existing roads should be prioritized over capital expenditures for new road construction. Annual transportation investments should also include funding for both traditional road improvements and alternative transportation modes such as bike trails, sidewalks, crosswalks, bike/ped signage, and transit facilities. Consider updating the CIP every year to create a rolling five-year plan.
  12. Roadway design will account for snow removal needs, including adequate terrace width between the street and the sidewalk.
  13. Roadway width should be designed based on the functional classification of the roadway and alternative transportation needs. The use of wide local streets in single-family residential neighborhoods should be avoided. Where existing roadway widths are deemed excessive the City may consider the use of a road diet during future reconstruction projects to accommodate facility improvements for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users. A road diet is a technique whereby the number of travel lanes, roadway width, or number of parking lanes is reduced in order to achieve systemic improvements often for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit users. Road diets can also be used to provide shared turn lanes and increased greenspace to reduce areas of impervious pavement. Areas to prioritize for future road diets include:
    - 3rd Street from Walnut Street to Elm Street.
    - Residential neighborhoods that do not have existing sidewalk facilities and existing natural (e.g. mature trees) or man-made objects (e.g. shallow building setbacks) make installing a sidewalk outside of the existing curb area impractical.
  14. When considering new development proposals the City may require development agreements that define the responsibilities of the City and the developer regarding any required improvements to City streets and funding of such improvements. The City may also require that the property owner, or their agent, fund the preparation of a traffic impact analysis by an independent professional prior to approving new development to better understand potential impacts from new development and potential mitigation efforts.
  15. The City encourages other adjacent local governments to consider requiring independent traffic impact analysis before approving potential developments that would significantly increase traffic on roadways through La Crescent to better understand potential impacts from new development and potential mitigation efforts.

## Strategies



16. When considering new development proposals the City will consider potential impacts to roadway traffic counts, accelerated maintenance needs/costs, public safety, and neighborhood impacts. The City should investigate opportunities to require developers to provide additional funds for long-term maintenance needs as part of the approval of new development or annexation proposals.
17. Where appropriate, the City may designate speed limits, weight restrictions, truck routes, or access restrictions to protect local streets and improve traffic flow and public safety for all users.
18. The City will work with La Crescent - Hokah School District to promote Safe Routes to School via education, evaluation and engineering, enforcement and encouragement (i.e. the "Five E's"). High priority strategies include:
  - Painting/marketing crosswalks,
  - Adding pedestrian crossing signs near intersections,
  - Adding more volunteer crossing guards,
  - Establishing a higher police presence before and after school.
19. The City will work with representatives from the Federal agencies, Department of Transportation, La Crosse Area Planning Committee, railroad companies, and surrounding Counties to raise awareness of local concerns when State and County highways or railroads in the area are slated for improvement. The City will inform the community about regional and state transportation projects and will encourage public involvement in regional transportation facility improvement planning. Enhancing safety of existing rail road facilities is an area of special concern.
20. Work with State and County agencies to provide scenic overlooks along their roadways to enhance regional tourism and recreation.
21. Work with State and County agencies to explore the possibility of extending 7th Street to STH 16/S. Chestnut Street to alleviate thru traffic in town and to complete a cost-benefit analysis of this potential facility, including impacts to adjacent property owners and the natural environment.
22. Work with State and County agencies to maintain aesthetically pleasing transportation corridors and gateways which reflect the community's charm and vision. This may include enhanced landscaping, artistic enhancements, clean-up of trash and debris, decorative lighting, improved community signage and removal of billboards. Areas to prioritize include:
  - Along the Pike from the Twilite area west into the City.



# Collaborations & Partnerships

2-30

City government exists within a complex network of public and private entities that influence community life and outcomes. Many of the goals, objectives and strategies in this plan note the need for cooperation and collaboration with other organizations. This section of the plan identifies several high-priority partnerships and offers strategies to support the success of those partnerships.

## Collaborations and Partnerships Vision Statement



Our community in 2035...

***The City of La Crescent is a collaborative participant in a variety of local and regional partnerships in the La Crosse-La Crescent region. The active participation in regional organizations has enhanced La Crescent’s integration into the regional economy and culture, and this has helped attract residents and business investment. A close working relationship between the City and the La Crescent-Hokah School District has enabled investment in the schools and helped to make them an asset for attracting families and growth. By establishing clarity about annexation policies and rural land use controls the City has maintained a working relationship with the Township of La Crescent while also protecting its growth area.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised. **These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- The City has many existing formal ties to the La Crosse metro area, including participation in the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility, and the La Crosse Wastewater Utility. It also has strong social and economic ties, especially as a place of employment for La Crescent residents.
- The La Crescent community is an area larger than the City, including residents of the Dresbach, La Crescent and Hokah Townships, and the City of Hokah, linked by the La Crescent-Hokah School District.
- The City needs to maintain its population above 5,000 to continue receiving Municipal State Aid
- The City has several Orderly Annexation Agreements with La Crescent Township, mutually approved by resolution in April 2015, that immediately annexed about 20 acres of developed residential parcels adjacent to the City. The agreements prevent further annexation of contiguous lands before 2021 except by landowner petition or mutual City and Township agreement.

## Goals & Objectives

### Goal 1

The City will work with La Crescent Township to enable continued growth and efficient public services.

### Objective

The City will ensure that new urban development within the immediate vicinity of the City occurs only within the City and on City services.

### Strategies

1. The City of La Crescent will not extend City sewer or water services to properties that are not located within La Crescent City limits. Property owners that want or need such services will be required to first annex to the City.
2. The City of La Crescent will not allow urban development to occur outside the City's boundaries if the property proposed for development is able to be served with City sewer and water services, either now or in the foreseeable future. The City will contest and initiate annexation proceedings of any such properties that are proposed for urban development outside the current City limits.
3. The City of La Crescent may pursue annexation of adjacent developed lands in La Crescent Township at any time, within the constraints of any existing orderly annexation agreements.

### Objective

The City will explore collaboration options with La Crescent Township to serve all La Crescent residents more efficiently

### Strategies

1. The City and Township will continue to share fire protection services.
2. The City of La Crescent will invite La Crescent Township to explore collaborations options, possibly including a long-term orderly annexation agreement or voluntary annexation of the entire township (merger)
3. The City recognizes that a new collaborative agreement between the City and Township could conflict with this plan, including the preceding annexation strategies. Where in conflict, such an agreement would supercede this plan.

### Goal 2

The City will be a strong partner with the La Crescent-Hokah School District.

### Strategies

1. Collaborate closely with the School District on issues related to expansion or improvement of school sites that are within direct City control, such as land use and access, utilities and traffic. Collaboration could include assistance with studies or infrastructure construction.
2. Collaborate with the School District, the Chamber of Commerce and others to promote the best qualities of the La Crescent-Hokah schools to prospective residents.
3. Utilize City communication tools to help share school-related news and outreach, when appropriate and requested by the School District.
4. Encourage and facilitate, as possible, connections and initiatives between local employers and the School District.

### Goal 3

The City will attract attention, investment, and growth through active participation in regional organizations and initiatives.

### Objectives

1. Seek bluffland protection and recreation improvements around the City in coordination with regional partners as described in The Blufflands Plan.
2. Maintain and enhance transit service through continued partnership with La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility.
3. Advocate for local interests and support regional initiatives through active participation in the La Crosse Area Planning Committee.
4. Participate in the La Crosse Region Convention and Visitors Bureau.

# B

## Land Use & Community Design

This chapter outlines the desired future land use for La Crescent and the surrounding planning area, including categories of land uses, development densities and design strategies consistent with the goals, objectives, and strategies of Chapter 2.

Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**3-2**

Future Land Use

**3-6**

Land Use Categories

**3-8**

# Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Decisions about the development of land have a long-term impact on the function and character of our community. This chapter establishes our preferences for where and how development should occur. Property owners, developers, and City officials should review these policies when considering development and redevelopment ideas.

## Vision Statement



***The City of La Crescent is growing, at a modest pace and in diverse ways. New housing has been created through limited westward expansion and through the redevelopment of obsolete buildings and sites in the City, especially near downtown. Redevelopment in the downtown core has brought new businesses and vitality to the area. New investment in the shoreland areas along the highways has improved the appearance of these high-profile corridors and enhanced connections to the marsh. With every project the City has worked with landowners to protect the natural environment and enhance public health, demonstrating the community's commitment to these core values.***

## Issue & Opportunity Observations



The planning process revealed the following issues and opportunities related to land use and community design. These statements are drawn from public comments, the Community Indicator Report, committee discussions and survey results. The list is meant as a summary of key points and not a list all issues or opportunities raised.

**These items informed discussion about the policy content of this plan, but these are not policies.**

- There are very few lots available in the City for the construction of new homes
- The supply of undeveloped land near the City is extremely limited due to the presence of waterways, wetlands and bluffs
- The City has allowed suburban residential development with private well and septic systems to occur in La Crescent Township in past decades, and has gradually been annexing those homes when septic systems fail and/or to maintain the City population above 5,000.
- The City supported Coulee Vision 2050, the long-term, regional transportation and land use plan created by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee. This plan envisions limits on new road construction, enhanced public transit systems, and more compact development patterns throughout the region (see the description in Chapter 1).
- Per the 2015/2016 community surveys:
  - residents want a more vibrant downtown, but also retention of the small-town feel and greater flexibility with how redevelopment occurs
  - residents want waterfront land along the highway corridors to transition to more recreation-oriented uses, more retail and service uses, and to have a higher aesthetic quality as compared to existing development
  - the preferred locations for new housing are within the City (ie through infill and redevelopment) and west along County Highway 6. Fewer than 40% support blufftop growth to the north in Dresbach Township, and fewer than 25% support blufftop development west or south of the City.
  - conservation of natural resources, enhancing recreation amenities and maintaining public health are seen as higher priorities than the attraction of businesses, jobs or residents

## Goals & Objectives

### Goal 1

La Crescent will see modest growth in population and property value, with only limited geographic expansion.

#### Objectives

1. Increase the frequency of successful infill and redevelopment projects that add value and increase the use of existing City parcels.
2. Developable land in La Crescent Township deemed feasible for eventual sewer and water extension will be reserved for future urban use.
3. Investment in housing will emphasize the attraction of families with children to live in La Crescent.
4. Investments in school facilities will be integrated and coordinated with neighborhood planning, to support both educational needs and community vitality.
5. If the La Crescent-Hokah Elementary School is relocated from its current location on South Oak Street, the existing site will be redeveloped for housing, with an emphasis on formats desirable to families.

### Goal 2

New development and redevelopment will maintain the City's small-town character and establish a reputation for environmental stewardship and investment in public health

#### Objectives

1. New development will be compact, to use land and infrastructure efficiently, but it will generally not be tall, meaning typically four stories or less.
2. The use of on-site stormwater management techniques will increase, especially including natural filtration and infiltration of stormwater runoff.
3. The use of sustainable building materials, energy efficient construction and sustainable energy systems will increase.

4. There will be no new development on blufftops within or visible from La Crescent.
5. New development and uses will not diminish the quality of the air we breathe or the water we drink.
6. Parkland and/or amenities will continue to expand, at least commensurate with neighborhood and population growth.

### Goal 3

Properties along the State and Federal highway corridors will be improved and redeveloped.

#### Objectives

1. Buildings will be improved or replaced with higher-quality materials and design.
2. Outdoor storage uses on these prominent sites will relocate and/or have improved screening.

## Strategies

3-4

1. To facilitate redevelopment projects the City will sometimes take an active role in the process, including direct purchase of parcels if redevelopment is unlikely to occur solely through private sector action.
2. *Amend the zoning ordinance to establish in an introductory section the foundational role of this comprehensive plan as a guide for zoning decisions.*
3. *Customize a model sustainable building policy that encourages green practices in new private development, and require compliance with that policy for any project receiving City financial support.*
4. *City standards will be revised to reduce stormwater runoff from new development; for sites less than one acre, retain the water quality volume of 1.1 inches of runoff from all impervious surfaces for new and fully-redeveloped construction sites.*
5. The City will pursue an Orderly Annexation Agreement with La Crescent Township to address multiple issues, including the reservation of certain parcels in Pine Creek Valley for future urban development on City sewer and water and the protection of visible bluff faces from any development of any kind.
6. The City will promote the efficient use of land by allowing and encouraging landowners and developers to use compact development strategies such as shallow front yard setbacks, attached residential units, and multi-story buildings.
7. The City will continue to use the zoning ordinance to facilitate the efficient use of land for vehicle parking, including provisions that enable the use of on-street parking, public lots, and shared private parking lots whenever those strategies can be shown to strike an appropriate balance between parking stall utilization and user convenience.
8. The City will work with property owners to create a master plan for all of the shoreland sites along the highways, including those on the east side of 14/61 and 16, and those on the south side of 14/16 ("the pike"). This could be one plan for all those areas (preferred) or a series of plans for specific clusters of parcels as projects and opportunities arise. The plan(s) should identify specific desired changes in site design, use and appearance that could occur incrementally or through wholesale site redevelopment.
9. Existing park spaces and amenities will generally be protected and maintained over time. Should the City ever consider replacing existing park space with a non-park, non-recreational use, there will be a careful review and public discussion about the proposal.
10. The City will work with the La Crescent-Hokah School District to ensure that major facility changes and investments are supporting neighborhood vitality. If the District decides to relocate the Elementary School, the City will take an active role in assuring that the parcel is redeveloped for compact, family-friendly housing.
11. Create an overlay zoning district to guide aesthetic improvements to the shoreland areas near the rail lines (west shore of the wetlands and Blue Lake).
12. Examine and revise the City's zoning standards to support improvements, expansions, creative redevelopment, and diversification of residential properties. Review past decisions to grant variances (especially with regard to setbacks, heights, lot coverage and accessory uses) as part of this examination. Consider the following possible revisions:
  - Adding duplex uses as a conditional use in R-1A, R-1B, and R1-C zoning districts.
  - Adding horizontally stacked duplexes and twindomimiums as a permitted use in the R2 zoning district.
  - Adding townhouses as a conditional use in the R-2 district.
  - Adding townhouses >6 units per structure as a conditional use in the R-3 district.
  - Increasing the number of permitted units for

multi-family dwellings in the R-3 district that can be built without requiring a conditional use permit from 8 to 50. Alternatively, remove restrictions that require a CUP based on the number of proposed units.

- Reducing minimum dwelling sizes to permit smaller more affordable houses (e.g. tiny homes) and apartment units.
- Modifying the existing requirement that all 1st floor residences must have individual entrances at street level in the CBD-1 and CDB-2 districts, to only those units that front a street.
- Adding townhouses as a conditional use in the CBD-1 and CBD-2 districts.
- Increasing maximum lot coverages to remove barriers to affordable housing, accessory dwelling structures, and/or reasonable additions.
- Allowing for a reduction in multifamily parking requirements to require only 1 parking space for 1 bedroom or efficiency units to remove barriers to creation of multi-family developments especially in the Downtown area.
- Examine zoning regulations for principal and accessory buildings as they apply to existing residential properties which become annexed to the City to remove barriers to building additions or new structures which are compatible with the existing lot size.
- Add allowances for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which are separate units on single-family lots that can be used by a family member or rented out. ADUs have their own exterior entrance and are typically located in backyards and/or above detached garages.
- *Add allowances for chicken and bee keeping in single family districts and food growing areas/gardens in multifamily districts, as part of a policy to encourage local food production.*

# Future Land Use

## Using the Future Land Use Map

The Future Land Use Map (next page) identifies categories of similar use, character and/or development density. These categories are described in the following pages, including explanation of the City's intent and design and development strategies for each.

This map and the corresponding text are to be consulted whenever development is proposed, especially when a zoning change or land division is requested. Zoning changes and development should be consistent with the use category shown on the map and the corresponding text.

Where uses in this map differ from the current use, it is not the general intent of the City to compel a change in zoning or a change in use. Except in instances when the City may actively facilitate redevelopment of a priority site, the City's use of this map will be only reactive, guiding response to proposals submitted by property owners.

There may be instances when a single development or redevelopment project is proposed on parcels spanning more than one land use category, for example Downtown Core Mixed Use and Downtown Residential. In these cases it is at the discretion of the City (typically the Plan Commission) to decide which category should apply to the project, and in most cases it should be acceptable to apply the more intensive land use category to the entire project area.

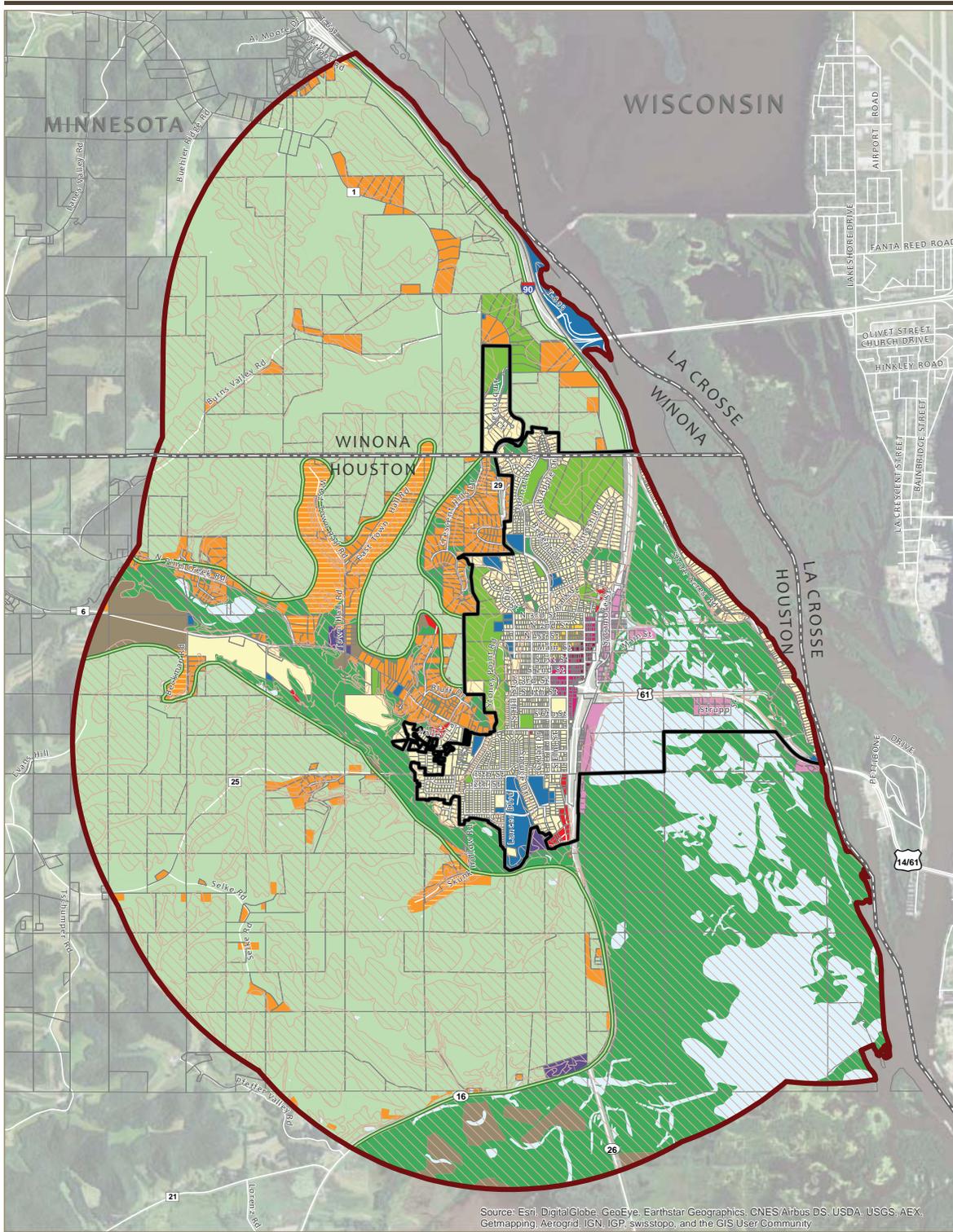
The map and text include land use policies for areas in the Townships of La Crescent and Dresbach within two miles of the current City limits. In a few areas this is an indication of future City growth. Most of this area will likely never be part of the City, but the City has interest in how these lands are used due to the possibility of impacts on surface water and groundwater quality, air quality, bluffland scenic vistas, and traffic through the City. As

## Amending the Future Land Use Map

It will from time to time be appropriate to consider amendments to the Future Land Use Map. For example, a project may be proposed that is inconsistent with the Future Land Use Map but generally viewed to be appropriate and desirable. The best practice in these situations is to amend the plan, so that the City can continue to act in accordance with its adopted plan. The following criteria should be considered before amending the map to enable development not previously anticipated.

- The proposed use is compatible with adjacent uses, especially existing residential neighborhoods.
- The proposed use will not adversely affect important natural features such as wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, scenic vistas or significant woodlands.
- The lay of the land will allow for construction of appropriate roads and/or driveways that are accessible by emergency vehicles.
- Provision of public facilities and services will not place an unreasonable financial burden on the City.
- There is a clear public need for the proposed change and/or the proposed development is likely to have a positive fiscal impact on the City.
- The proposed development is consistent with the general vision for the City, and the other goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan.

See the Implementation Chapter for the description of the process for amending the plan.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

## FUTURE LAND USE

CITY OF LA CRESCENT  
HOUSTON AND WINONA COUNTIES, MN

- |                     |                          |                         |                              |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Planning Area       | Neighborhood Residential | Downtown Mixed Use      | Conservation/Open Space      | Bluffland Conservation Area Boundary |
| City of La Crescent | Downtown Residential     | Downtown Core Mixed Use | Parks & Recreation           | Development Limitations              |
| County Line         | Rural Residential        | Commercial              | Blufflands Conservation Area |                                      |
| Parcel              | Rural Residential (New)  | Industrial              | Agricultural                 |                                      |
|                     | Shoreland Mixed Use      | Public & Institutional  | Water                        |                                      |

DATA SOURCES:  
CITY LIMITS PROVIDED BY HOUSTON COUNTY;  
PARCELS PROVIDED BY HOUSTON AND WINONA COUNTIES;  
COUNTY LINES PROVIDED BY US CENSUS (2013);  
ROADS PROVIDED BY MNDOT AND LA CROSSE COUNTY;  
AERIAL PROVIDED BY ESRI



0 750 1500 3000 Feet



# Future Land Use Categories

## Bluffland Conservation

The Bluffland Conservation (BC) category is intended to protect from development most of the blufflands immediately surrounding the City, and especially those bluffs visible from the City and the approaching highways.

The development of new housing is discouraged in areas designated as Bluffland Conservation Area. The preferred development density is no more than one (1) dwelling unit per twenty (20) acres of contiguous land under single ownership. In limited cases, the use of conservation subdivisions or cluster developments may be acceptable. The development of commercial and manufacturing uses is strongly discouraged in BC areas, with the exception of agricultural or recreational businesses.

The City is strongly opposed to any new buildings or site clearing on bluff areas visible from the City and the approaching highways, including all of the State and Federal routes.

Any new development in less prominent areas shall be located in order to minimize its visibility from the County highways and town roads, in order to protect these "secondary" corridors that today offer exceptional scenic beauty.

The City is opposed to any new mining, agricultural, or business uses in this area that would dramatically increase truck traffic through City neighborhoods.



*The Bluffland Conservation area is intended to protect the exceptional beauty of the La Crescent area*

## Rural Residential

The Rural Residential category identifies those areas in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction most suitable for the development of new housing on private well and septic.

New housing in the Township should only occur on lots of sufficient size and with soil characteristics for at least two septic system drain field sites. This will typically be at least two acres per dwelling unit.

### Preferred Design Strategies



*Minimize the visibility of rural homes by locating them away from main roads and behind forested buffers*



*Provide multi-purpose trails to link rural homes to the City*

## Neighborhood Residential



Neighborhood Residential (NR) areas are intended for housing with densities that range from three (3) to twelve (12) units per acre. Areas classified as NR (most of the City) will be predominately single-family detached units with the potential for some duplex, twindominiums, four plex, townhouses and multi-family housing (typically <8 units per structure). Though housing is the primary land use in most neighborhoods, healthy and balanced neighborhoods may also include other uses that support the needs of residents, including:

- Parks and recreational facilities
- Small municipal and institutional facilities (e.g. well house)
- Community centers
- Places of worship
- Schools
- Day care centers
- Small pockets of High Density Residential (typically located near major roadways) designed to be compatible with adjacent lower-density housing.
- Small commercial uses that serve neighborhood needs (typically located along major roadways) designed to be compatible with adjacent development.

### Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- CDD - Conservation Development District
- R-1A Low Density Residential
- R-1B Traditional Low Density Residential
- R-1C New Urban Low Density Residential
- R-1D Annexation Low Density Residential
- R-2 Single & Two Family Residential
- R-3 Multi-Family Residential (as described above)
- PUD Planned Unit Development

### Preferred Design Strategies



*Narrow lots and shallow front yard setbacks are encouraged, to use land efficiently*



*Front porches are encouraged on new homes, especially when built close to the street*



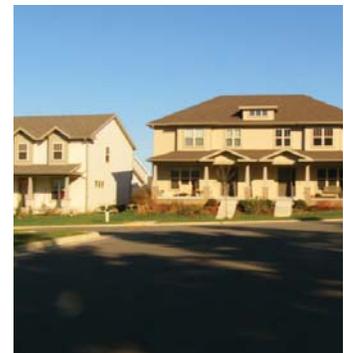
*Accessory dwelling units are one way to add new housing units to existing neighborhoods*



*Garages should be further from the street than the front door*



*Sidewalks and street trees should be used everywhere to enhance neighborhood safety and character*



*Various housing types and building sizes can be integrated within a healthy neighborhood*

# Future Land Use Categories

## Shoreland Mixed Use

The Shoreland Mixed Use (SMU) category is designated in the lowland areas east of highways 14/61 and 16, and on the south side of the pike. It is intended that this area will continue to function as the City's primary supply of highway-oriented land uses. It is further intended that this land use designation will allow a wide variety of uses while leading to improvements in the appearance and environmental performance of these areas.

Anticipated uses in these areas include:

- Wholesale and Distributing Facilities
- Industrial
- Retail Sales and Service
- Restaurants and Entertainment
- Professional Offices
- Civic and Institutional
- Park and Recreation
- Multi-Family Residential

Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- C-1 Highway Commercial
- C-PD Commercial Planned Development Overlay
- I - Industrial District
- R-3 Multi-Family Residential
- PUD Planned Unit Development

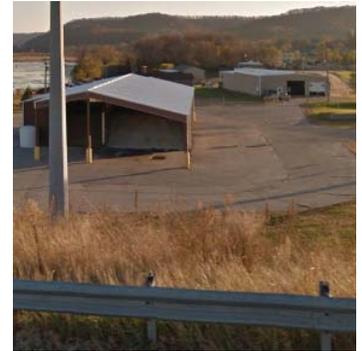
The City intends to prepare a master plan for the Shoreland Mixed Use areas that identifies strategies to improve public access to waterways, stormwater runoff quality, and the aesthetic appearance of buildings, sites, signage and lighting as visible from nearby highways and waterways. Any substantial improvement or complete redevelopment project should be consistent with that master plan. If no such plan exists, the property owner will collaborate with the City to prepare a concept plan for the immediate surrounding area before redevelopment proceeds, so that new investment is part of a strategic vision for improvement of this area.

Any substantial improvement or complete redevelopment project should consider the potential to highlight and utilize the adjacent wetlands (Blue Lake) as an amenity. This could include building and site design strategies that enhance views of this natural area.

## Preferred Design Strategies



*Storage and loading areas should be screened from view from the highways*



*Buildings that are lower than the adjacent highways should not have rooftop mechanical equipment*



*Signs in this area should be monument style and no taller than the tallest building on the site*



*On-site stormwater management methods should be used to protect the adjacent waterways*



*Exterior lighting should use full cut-off fixtures that prevent light trespass and glare, especially as seen from the marsh*



*Generous landscaping, preferably with native species, is strongly encouraged*

## Downtown Residential



The Downtown Residential (DR) area is intended for housing with densities that exceed twelve (12) units per acre. This area will be predominately multi-family attached units with the potential for some single-family attached, single-family detached, duplex, twindominiums, four plex, and other lower density housing developments.

Though housing is the predominant intended use, other uses that support the needs of residents may also be located in this area, including:

- Parks and recreational facilities
- Municipal and institutional facilities
- Community centers
- Places of worship
- Schools
- Day care centers
- Small commercial uses that serves neighborhood needs (typically located along major roadways) and designed to be compatible with adjacent residential development

### Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- R-1C New Urban Low Density Residential
- R-2 Single & Two Family Residential
- R-3 Multi-Family Residential
- PUD Planned Unit Development

## Preferred Design Strategies



*High quality, long-lasting materials are strongly encouraged*



*New single-family homes in this area should utilize small lots and minimal setbacks*



*Individual private entrances from the street are encouraged, when feasible*



*Frontporches are encouraged on multifamily housing, especially senior housing*



*Larger buildings should use various strategies to minimize apparent size, including projections, varied rooflines, etc.*



*Generous landscaping, preferably with native species, is strongly encouraged*



# Future Land Use Categories

## Downtown Mixed Use and Downtown Core Mixed Use



Two Downtown Mixed Use areas are designated, each intended to provide a unique mix of commercial, residential, public and related uses in a pedestrian-friendly environment.

A secondary area is designated simply “Downtown Mixed Use” and is most appropriate for CBD-2 zoning. Buildings may be set back up to twenty (20) feet in this area and single-story buildings should be allowed.

Anticipated uses in the Downtown include:

- Restaurants and Entertainment
- Retail Sales and Service
- Small Professional Offices
- Civic, Institutional and Schools
- Park and Recreation
- Live-Work Residential
- Attached Single-Family Residential (e.g. townhomes)
- Multi-Family Residential
- Senior Housing
- Assisted Living Facilities

Single-family detached housing exists in the DMU area in 2016, but this area is anticipated to transition over time to more intensive land uses.

### Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- CBD - Central Business Mixed Use District (CBD-1 and CBD-2)

The City desires redevelopment in the Downtown area that brings more uses and activity of all kinds, including more residential units and more commercial and office space. New development should create an urban form and character that is distinctively “downtown” while retaining a small-town feel. The design strategies on the following page illustrate aspects of the desired character (and are consistent with the design standards in the current CBD-1 and CBD-2 zoning districts).

The City desires a concentration of the most intensive new development within a limited area, including portions of Main Street and Walnut Street. This area is designated “Downtown Core Mixed Use” on the Future Land Use Map and is most appropriate for the CBD-1 zoning. To make this area distinctly “downtown”, buildings should be built to the front property line (no setback) without exception, and at least two stories tall whenever feasible. Multistory buildings are strongly preferred.

## Preferred Design Strategies



*Outdoor seating is encouraged for any restaurants or cafes throughout the downtown area, either on the sidewalk or on the restaurant site.*



*The street level of any commercial space should feature large windows to allow a strong visual connection between the street and the building.*



*Mixing uses in the same building is encouraged, including retail or office space on the ground floor, and residential or office space on upper floors.*



*Larger buildings should utilize design techniques that reduce their apparent height and width.*



*Signs should be modest in scale, complementary to the building architecture, and lighted externally.*



*Awnings are encouraged - they add architectural character, shelter pedestrians, shade the interior, and offer a signage opportunity.*



*Home-to-office conversions are a good transition use and design at the edges of the downtown area.*



*Parking should be no closer to the street than adjacent buildings and should be buffered from the sidewalk by landscaping and/or a low wall (3' maximum height).*



*Free-standing signs in the Downtown Mixed Use area should be "monument" style only, except signs along the state or federal highways, which may be taller.*

# Future Land Use Categories

## Commercial

Commercial (C) areas are intended for retail, service, and office uses that serve neighborhood, community and regional markets. Example uses include:

- Retail and service businesses
- Offices
- Clinics and health care facilities
- Hotels
- Restaurants and entertainment businesses
- Storage
- Gas Stations and convenience stores
- Automobile sales and services

The type, size and design of uses will be determined by site characteristics and market demand. For example, larger sites visible and accessible from US 14 and MN 16 will be suitable for convenience retail and may require highly visible parking. Areas along local collectors may be appropriate for smaller-scale commercial uses that require less visibility and less parking.

### Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- C-1 Highway Commercial District
- C-PD Commercial Planned Development Overlay
- PUD Planned Unit Development

## Preferred Design Strategies



*Awnings and canopies are encouraged at entrances to enhance shelter and architectural character*



*Pitched roofs and gables should be considered for all buildings, especially single-story structures*



*Service features such as garbage containers should be shielded from view in an enclosure compatible with the building architecture*



*Bringing a portion of the building close to the street is encouraged whenever possible*



*All commercial buildings are encouraged to use large windows to enhance visual connections and interior lighting*



*Monument signs are encouraged in all settings instead of pole signs*



*Parking should be separated from the building and the public sidewalk by landscaped buffer strips*



*Parking lot landscape islands can also collect and filter stormwater runoff*

## Industrial



Industrial areas are intended for light or heavy manufacturing, warehousing, distribution, wholesale trade, accessory offices, and similar uses.

### Generally Acceptable Zoning Districts include:

- I - Industrial District

Any new or expanded industrial use should have the following features to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses and the City's environmental stewardship principles:

- fencing and landscaping to reduce or eliminate the visibility of any outdoor storage or loading areas
- exterior lighting design that prevents light trespass to neighboring residential or natural areas
- reasonable limits on any objectionable sounds or odors
- on-site stormwater management practices that protect local waterways from excessive or polluted runoff

### Preferred Design Strategies



*On-site stormwater management methods should be used to protect local waterways*



*Storage and loading areas should be screened from view from adjacent lands, especially residential or natural areas*



*Exterior lighting should use full cut-off fixtures that prevent light trespass and glare, especially as seen from the marsh*



## Implementation and Action Plan

This chapter outlines how the vision of the plan will be implemented and how the plan should be amended in the future. This chapter also provides an action table with target completion dates and responsible parties.

Guiding Daily Decisions	4-2
Guiding Annual Decisions	4-4
Amending the Plan	4-5
Action Plan	4-6





# Guiding Daily Decisions



## City Roles & Responsibilities



Responsibility for implementing this plan lies primarily with City Council, City Planning Commission, and City Staff.

### City Council

City Council sets priorities, controls budgets and tax rates, and usually has the final say on key aspects of public and private development projects. The value and legitimacy of this plan is directly related to the degree to which Council members are aware of the plan and expect City actions to be consistent with this plan. Each council member should have a copy of this plan and should be familiar with the major goals and objectives described herein. City Council should expect and require that staff recommendations and actions both reference and remain consistent with this plan.

### City Planning Commission

Land use and development recommendations are a core component of this plan, and the Planning Commission has a major role in guiding those decisions. Plan Commission members must each have a copy of this plan and must be familiar with its content, especially Chapter 3: Land Use and Community Design. It is generally the responsibility of Planning Commission to determine whether proposed projects are consistent with this plan, and to make decisions and recommendations that are consistent with this plan. In cases where actions that are inconsistent with this plan are deemed to be in the best interest of the City, the Planning Commission should initiate efforts to amend the plan to better reflect City interests. This will help to reinforce the legitimacy of the plan as an important tool in City functions.

### City Staff

Key City staff and advisors have a significant influence on the selection and completion of all kinds of capital and operational projects. It is imperative that individuals in key roles know about, support, and actively work to implement the various strategies and actions in this plan. Specifically, the following people should consult and reference the comprehensive plan during budgeting processes, during planning for major public projects, and in the review of private

development projects:

- City Administrator
- Building and Zoning Official
- Community Development Director
- City Attorney
- Public Works Director

These key staff members are expected to know the various goals, objectives, strategies and actions laid out in this plan, and should sometimes reference that content in communications with residents and elected and appointed officials. The purpose of this extra effort is to strengthen staff recommendations and reinforce the plan as a relevant tool integral to City functions.

## Education & Advocacy



Implementation of this plan also depends, to a great degree, on the actions and decisions of entities other than City government. The Action Plan (see Section 6.4) indicates responsible parties that the City of La Crescent does not control or direct. These include, and are not limited to:

- La Crescent Chamber of Commerce
- City of La Crosse
- Houston County and Winona County
- The La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- The Bluffland Coalition
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

It is necessary to persuade these entities to be active partners in the implementation of the goals, objectives, and strategies of this plan. The following City activities can support this effort:

- Share this plan with each organization, including a memo highlighting sections of the plan that anticipate collaboration between the City and the organization.
- Take the lead role in establishing a collaboration
- Know and communicate the intent of relevant objectives and strategies - partner organizations need to understand and buy in to the rationale before they will act.

## Utilizing Existing Tools



Many of the strategies identified in this plan presume the use of existing City ordinances and programs. The City's key implementation tools include:

### Operational Tools

- Annual Budget Process
- Capital Improvement Program

### Regulatory Tools

- Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance
- Building and Housing Codes

### Funding Tools

- Tax Abatement
- Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Districts
- State and Federal Grant Programs



# Guiding Annual Decisions



4-4

## Link to Annual City Budget

The most important opportunity for this plan to influence the growth and improvement of the City is through the annual goal-setting, budgeting and capital planning processes. These existing annual efforts determine what projects will and will not be pursued by the City, and so it is very important to integrate this plan into those processes every year.

The compilation of actions in the next section is a resource to support decisions about how and where to invest the City's limited resources.

The following process and schedule is recommended:

- Monitoring and Evaluation will be undertaken at a regular or special Planning Commission in August of each year. Staff will review, in written form, the Comprehensive Plan implementation timeline and the related elements in the tentative capital and operating budgets. The Planning Commission will review and comment to staff and the Council with suggestions on: priorities, capital and operating budget funding; and the identification of elements of the Comprehensive Plan that the Planning Commission intends to build into their annual plan of work.
- The Council will receive the report of staff, with revisions, if any, along with the comments of the Planning Commission and be advised and act according. August was chosen as the month for the review since budgets have been prepared, to comply with the timeline for the preliminary levy, and yet they are not finalized allowing for revision while still in draft form.
- All are advised to consider the Comprehensive Plan when projecting budgets and plans of work for multiple years into the future.

## About the Action Plan

The following pages feature a compilation of actions identified in Chapter 2 to help the City achieve its various goals and objectives. Not all "strategies" in Chapter 2 are included here - policies on how to make decisions are not presented in these tables. In some cases the action has been edited for brevity. See Chapter 2 for the full version as well as the goals and objectives behind these actions.

### Deadlines

The "deadlines" identified to achieve these actions are not firm - rather they are indications of when the City may choose to pursue an action based on its importance or difficulty. Where multiple deadlines are noted, this indicates an ongoing or repetitive activity.

### Responsible Parties

Most of these actions require leadership and effort by multiple people and organizations. These tables indicate those parties considered necessary to implementation.

### Funding Sources

Most of these actions come with some cost. It is presumed that most could be supported by tax revenue from the City's general fund. Where other sources of potential funding may exist, such as grant programs, these are noted.

## Monitoring, Amending & Updating



Although this Plan is intended to guide decisions and actions by the City over the next 10 to 20 years, it is impossible to accurately predict future conditions in the City. Amendments may be appropriate from time to time, particularly if emerging issues or trends render aspects of the plan irrelevant or inappropriate. The City may be faced with an opportunity, such as a development proposal, that does not fit the plan but is widely viewed to be appropriate for the City. Should the City wish to approve such an opportunity, it should first amend the plan so that the decision is consistent with the plan. Such amendments should be carefully considered and should not become the standard response to proposals that do not fit the plan. Frequent amendments to meet individual development proposals threaten the integrity of the plan and the planning process and should be avoided.

Any changes to the plan text or maps constitute amendments to the plan and should follow a standard process as described in the following section. Amendments may be proposed by either the City Council or the Plan Commission, though a land owner or developer may also petition Plan Commission to introduce an amendment on their behalf. Amendments may be made at any time using this process, however in most cases the City should not amend the plan more than once per year.

The 20-year planning horizon of this plan defines the time period used to consider potential growth and change, but the plan itself should be fully updated well before 2036. Unlike an amendment, the plan update is a major re-write of the plan document and supporting maps. The purpose of the update is to incorporate new data and to ensure, through a process of new data evaluation and new public dialogue, that the plan remains relevant to current conditions and decisions. An update every ten years is recommended.

## Plan Amendment Process



In the years between major plan updates it may be necessary or desirable to amend this plan. A straightforward amendment, such as a strategy or future land use map revision for which there is broad support, can be completed in about six to eight weeks through the following process.

### Step One

A change is proposed by City Council, Plan Commission, or staff and is placed on the Plan Commission agenda for preliminary consideration. Private individuals (landowners, developers, others) can request an amendment through the City Administrator, who will forward the request to Plan Commission for consideration. Plan Commission decides if and how to proceed, and may direct staff to prepare or revise the proposed amendment.

### Step Two

When Plan Commission has formally recommended an amendment, a City Council public hearing is scheduled and at least two weeks public notice is published. Notice of the proposed amendment should also be transmitted as appropriate to other entities that may be affected by or interested in the change, such as La Crescent Township.

### Step Three

City Council hears formal comments on the proposed amendment, considers any edits to the amendment, then considers adoption of the amendment.

### Step Four

Staff completes the plan amendment as approved, including an entry in the plan's amendment log. A revised PDF copy of the plan is posted to the City web site and replacement or supplement pages are issued to City staff and officials who hold hard copies of the plan.



# Action Plan



Housing Actions		Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Prepare a marketing campaign for the City focused on attracting and retaining new families and young professionals.	X			Community Development Director, Chamber of Commerce	
2	Create user-friendly brochures and/or on-line guides to outline the permitting process for home improvement projects	X			Building and Zoning Official	
3	Create a no cost or subsidized program that provides the services of an architect or home builder to help interested homeowners visualize potential home rehabilitation and modernization projects		X		Plan Commission	
4	Create a no or low-interest loan program to help homeowners improve and modernize older properties in the City.		X		Plan Commission, City Council, local banks	
5	Create rebate programs and other financial incentives to support energy efficient home rehabilitation projects.		X			
6	Maintain civic programs (e.g. Neighbors in Action) focused specifically on assisting seniors in single family homes with home and property maintenance.	X	X	X		
7	Create a Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and purchase land to develop rental and senior housing in appropriate locations, especially around the Downtown area		X		City Council	
8	Examine and revise the City's zoning code to support improvements, expansions, creative redevelopment, and diversification of residential properties.	X			Plan Commission	
9	Consider amending the zoning ordinances to allow accessory dwelling units (e.g. units above garages	X			Plan Commission	
10	Consider creating new ordinances and/or incentive programs that encourage the development of affordable and senior housing integrated with market-rate housing.		X			

# Implementation and Action Plan



Economic Development Actions	Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
	2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1 Collaborate with and support the Chamber of Commerce in efforts to maintain regular contact and communication with local businesses, especially manufacturers and other primary sector employers.	X	X	X	Community Development Director	
2 Continue to use Tax Increment Finance Districts to facilitate development, especially to assist redevelopment costs.	X	X	X	City Council	
3 Continue to utilize Tax Abatement as a strategy to encourage business expansion.	X	X	X	City Council	
4 Work with the La Crescent-Hokah school district to increase connections with local businesses.	X	X	X	Community Development Director, Chamber of Commerce	
5 Encourage local businesses to establish internship and apprenticeship collaborations with UW-La Crosse, Western Technical College, and Viterbo.	X	X	X	Community Development Director, Chamber of Commerce	
6 Take an active role in Downtown redevelopment by acquiring property and soliciting redevelopment proposals.	X	X	X		
7 Actively pursue the development of access improvements to Blue Lake, including property acquisition and/or conversion from other uses if necessary.	X			City Administrator	
8 Actively pursue the improvement of bluffland and lowland hiking trails and connections to those trails from downtown, including a bridge over 14/61.	X	X		Public Works Director, City Council	
9 Enhance the City and/or Chamber websites to promote local recreation opportunities.	X			Office Assistant, City Administrator	
10 Encourage the establishment of a recreation tourism booster group in the City to help promote local resources.	X				
11 Collaborate with the La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote La Crescent attractions.	X	X		Community Development Director, City Administrator	
12 Incorporate more recreation-oriented activities into Applefest or host new, standalone events focused on recreation in the bluffs and/or river/lake.	X	X		La Crescent Apple Festival Inc.	
13 Create a high-profile trail from the Mississippi River to Hokah via Downtown La Crescent.		X		Public Works Director, Houston County	



Natural Systems, Open Spaces and Recreation Actions		Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to install interpretive sign(s) at new kayak accesses and along the Wagon Wheel Trail.	X				
2	Explore construction of a birdwatching overlook along the shore of Blue Lake, including parking and interpretive signs.		X		City Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	
3	Collaborate with La Crescent Township and private landowners to establish a contiguous trail network in the bluffs immediately surrounding the City.	X	X	X		
4	Work with La Crosse area partner governments to enhance the use of bluffland trails in the La Crescent area, including identification of public access sites on regional bluffland maps and use of common trail signage standards	X	X	X	Bluffland Coalition	
5	Continue to collaborate with the Minnesota Land Trust to identify and pursue acquisition of bluffland sites for protection from development and public access improvements	X	X	X		
6	Establish the downtown area as a trailhead for hiking, biking and canoe/kayak adventures in and around La Crescent, including an informational kiosk, public-access bathrooms, bike racks, etc.	X	X	X		
7	Establish a well-maintained, web-based source of information, and a broader, comprehensive promotion strategy, to share information about outdoor recreation sites, trails, and amenities in the La Crescent area.	X				
8	Prevent tree cutting around homes on the bluffs by working with La Crescent Township, Houston County, and private landowners to establish and enforce strict regulatory limitations on tree cutting.	X	X	X		
9	Plant more street trees in all parts of the City, and especially in newer neighborhoods.	X	X	X	City Council, Public Works Director	
10	Pursue and maintain Tree City USA designation.	X			Plan Commission, City Council	
11	Continue to use, implement the 2012 Park and Recreation Plan. Update that plan every 5 to 7 years.	X				
12	Maintain and implement a capital improvement schedule for all City parks that emphasizes trail development, signage improvements, and accessibility improvements.	X	X	X	Public Works Director, City Council	
13	Maintain participation in and implement best practices encouraged by the Minnesota GreenStep program	X	X	X	City Council, City Administrator	

	Downtown Enhancement Actions	Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Improve key downtown intersections with corner bumpouts to slow traffic, increase landscaping, reducing the pedestrian crossing distance, and identify the core downtown area.		X			
2	Add dedicated bike parking racks throughout the downtown area.	X			Public Works Director, Chamber of Commerce	
3	Improve signage identifying access to downtown, especially from the north.	X			Public Works Director, Chamber of Commerce	
4	Design, fund and build a pedestrian bridge over 14/61 to connect downtown to the waterfront and provide a visual indicator of downtown's location.		X		Public Works Director, City Council	
5	Improve existing public parking lots downtown, including pavement quality and signage.	X	X		Public Works Director, City Council	
6	Provide routine reminders for downtown business employees to reserve prime parking for customers by parking their own vehicles in secondary lots and streets.	X	X	X	Community Development Director, Chamber of Commerce	



Community Facilities & Services Actions		Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Review development ordinances and applications each year for consistency with changes in state or federal regulations, best practices, and environmental stewardship. Areas of special concern include renewable energy systems and greywater recycling systems.	X	X	X	Plan Commission	
2	Maintain a rolling Five Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) each year to plan for the annual construction and maintenance of community facilities.	X	X	X		
3	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.	X			Public Works Director, MnDOT, Houston County	
4	Work with energy providers, land owners, and other communities to support appropriate applications of renewable energy and utilization of on-site distributed energy generation.	X	X	X		
5	Work with surrounding counties, townships, state and federal agencies to adopt a Hazard Mitigation Plan		X		City Administrator	
6	Complete an organizational study to identify short and long term City staff needs.	X			City Administrator, City Council	
7	Maximize the community's capital investment in school facilities by making those facilities readily available, as feasible, for other uses and events that support social interaction and health within the community.	X	X	X	City Council, School District	
8	Engage local students in civic involvement and City operations. This may include student representation on City committees	X	X	X	City Council, School District	
9	Consider developing a "sister city" to La Crescent to share and exchange ideas for community improvement projects.	X			City Council	
10	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.	X	X	X	City Administrator, Office Coordinator	

# Implementation and Action Plan



Transportation & Mobility Actions	Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources	
	2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035			
1	Implement the 2013 City of La Crescent Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, including recommended sidewalk, bike lane and crosswalk improvements whenever a street is improved	X	X	X	Public Works Director	
2	Complete a grade separated pedestrian and bicycle access across STH 16/61 to improve access to the Mississippi River and Blue Lake Marsh from the downtown area.		X			
3	Create a well connected regional trail system, including connections to the Root River Trail and Mississippi River Scenic Trail.		X	X	Public Works Director, Houston County	
4	Continue to promote the growth of the La Crosse Municipal Transit (MTU) system ridership in La Crescent. In collaboration with local and regional organizations, the City will host events that encourage and celebrate alternative transportation.					
5	The City will work with La Crescent - Hokah School District to promote Safe Routes to School via education, evaluation and engineering, enforcement and encouragement (i.e. the "Five E's").	X	X	X		
6	The City will work with State and County agencies to provide scenic overlooks along their roadways to enhance regional tourism and recreation.				Public Works Director, MnDOT and/or County agencies	
7	Explore the possibility of extending 7th Street to STH 16/S. Chestnut Street				Public Works Director, MnDot	



Land Use and Community Design Actions		Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Amend the zoning ordinance to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	X			Plan Commission	
2	Create a master plan (or plans) for all of the shoreland sites along the highways, including those on the east side of 14/61 and 16, and those on the south side of 14/16 ("the pike").	X	X		Plan Commission, Property owners	
3	Create an overlay zoning district to guide aesthetic improvements to the shoreland areas near the rail lines (west shore of the wetlands and Blue Lake)	X			Plan Commission	
4	Amend the zoning ordinance in most residential districts to allow greater lot coverage	X			Plan Commission	

Collaborations & Partnerships Actions		Target Completion Year			Responsible Parties	Potential Funding Sources
		2017-2019	2020-2025	2025-2035		
1	Explore collaborations options with La Crescent Township, including a long-term orderly annexation agreement	X			City Council, La Crescent Township	
2	Collaborate closely with the School District on issues related to expansion or improvement of school sites that are within direct City control, such as land use and access, utilities and traffic. Collaboration could include assistance with studies or infrastructure construction.	X			City Council, City Administrator, School District	
3	Collaborate with the School District, the Chamber of Commerce and others to promote the best qualities of the La Crescent-Hokah schools to prospective residents.	X	X	X	Community Development Director, School District, Chamber of Commerce	