



# TOWERS AREA MARKET STUDY

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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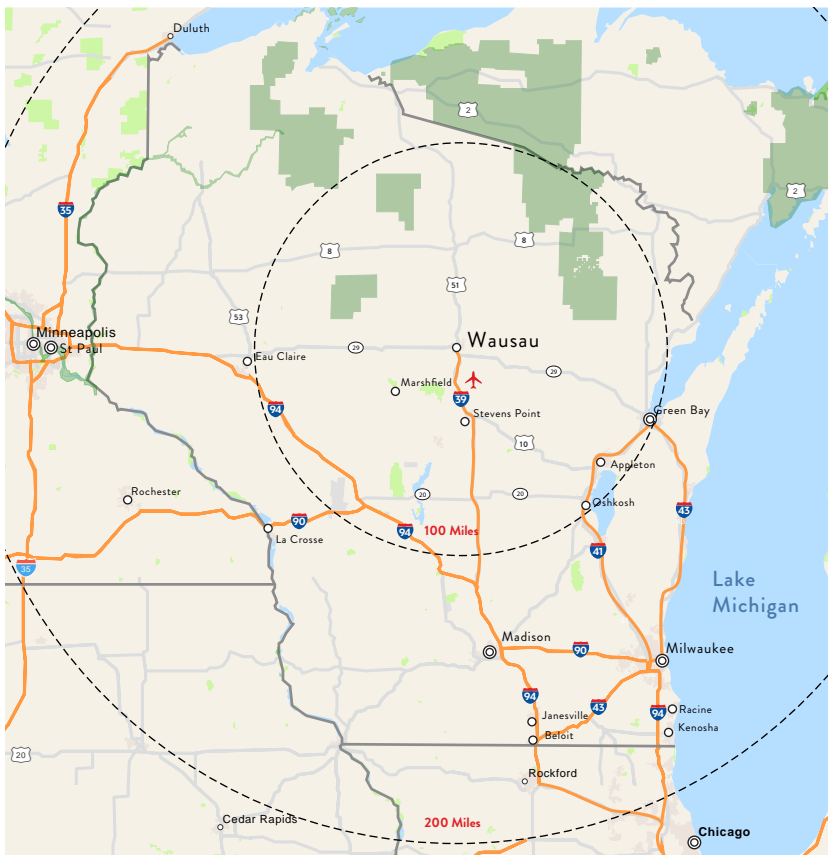


# INTRODUCTION

Downtown Wausau continues to adapt to past and current market realities. In the 1980's, facing increasing competition from more suburban locations, downtown leaders transformed an eight block area of downtown into the Wausau Center Mall. In the early 2000's City leaders and investors executed several catalytic projects downtown including the Jefferson Street Inn, the 400 Block, the Dudley Tower, and the Eye Clinic of Wisconsin. Today, several new projects are underway, primarily north of the core downtown including the Aspirus Clinic, YMCA expansion, Cloverbelt Credit, and River Life, a planned mixed-use development on the riverfront. Looking ahead, the City anticipates new investment and redevelopment within the Towers Area over the next two to four years as a final decision is made regarding the future of the McClellan ramp.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to identify potential downtown redevelopment opportunities within the Towers Area and to provide recommendations to accommodate future anticipated parking demand. The concepts identified in this report do not represent a preferred vision for the study area, rather they are intended to provide inspiration and stimulate future discussion among City staff, elected and appointed officials, business leaders, property owners, residents, and other groups with a stake in the future of downtown Wausau.

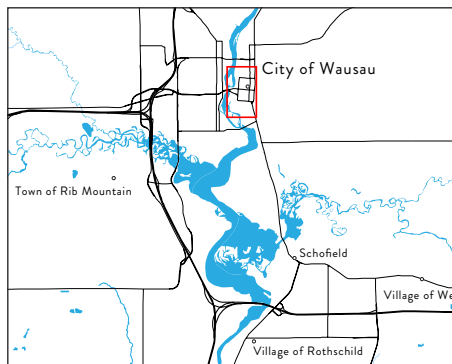
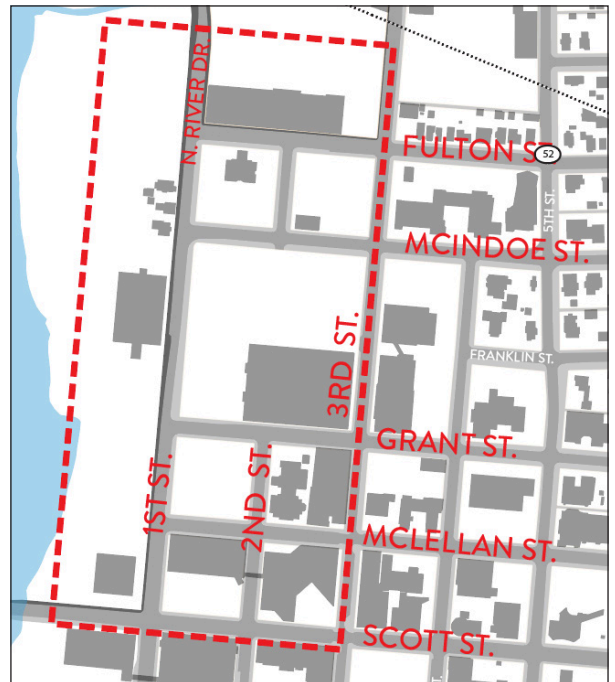


*Wausau is located within a short drive of several large midwestern cities, and serves as a regional hub for a large portion of northern Wisconsin. Because workers are increasingly mobile, amenity rich communities like Wausau have the potential to draw in people who want to work remotely while enjoying easy access to outdoor recreation.*

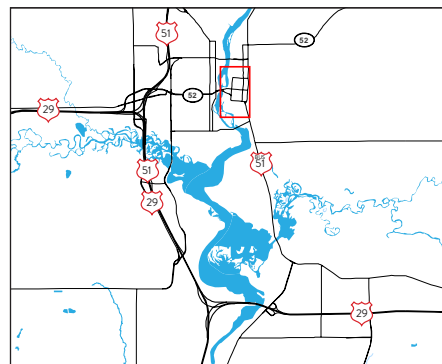
The study area is bounded by Scott Street to the south, McIndoe Street to the north, 1st Street to west, and 3rd Street to the east.

Within that area the project team analyzed the “Central Towers Area” in greater depth. The central towers area lies immediately adjacent the intersection of N 1st Street and McClellan Street and includes a mix of office, structured parking and surface parking.

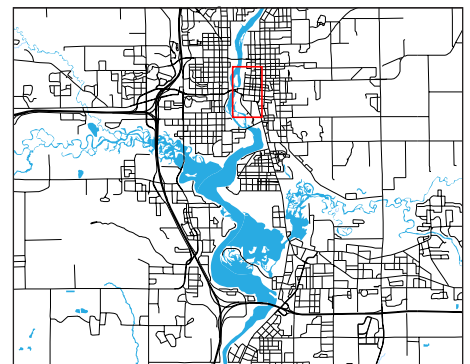
Beyond the central towers area are a diverse mix of uses including a Main Street retail district along 3rd Street which includes retail, restaurants, and a downtown grocery store. On the northern edge of the study there is a growing number of fitness and health related businesses.



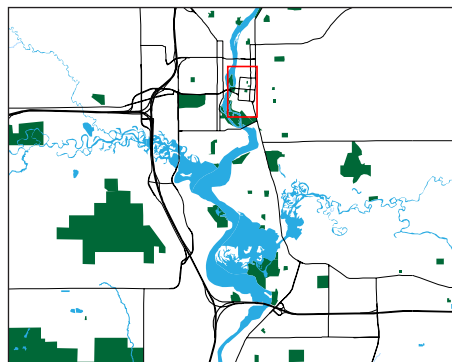
**Region:** Downtown Wausau is located within close proximity to several municipalities.



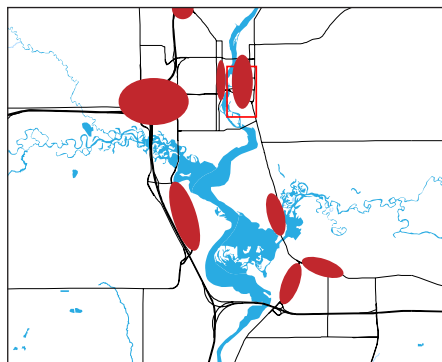
**Major Roads:** Downtown Wausau is highly accessible via multiple State and federal highways.



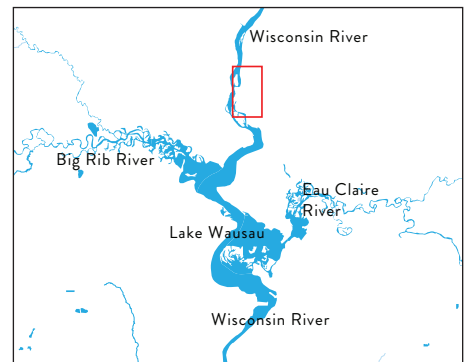
**Streets:** Downtown Wausau’s gridded street pattern connects to adjacent neighborhoods, primarily to the north and east.



**Outdoor Recreation:** Downtown Wausau is within a 15-minute drive of several of the Midwest’s premier outdoor recreation destinations including Rib Mountain/Granite Peak and Sylvan Hills.



**Commercial Districts:** Downtown Wausau is within a 15-minute drive of several distinct commercial districts offering a wide selection of products, services, and eating and dining opportunities.



**Water:** Downtown Wausau is located along the Wisconsin River, with direct access to hundreds of miles of river.

## Planning Process

The study team analyzed market and physical conditions, reviewed prior reports, met with stakeholders, and conducted additional field work to prepare a set of recommendations for the study area. Key milestones included:

- **May 2nd 2019 Project Kick Off Meeting** with Stakeholders. Downtown tour with City staff.
- **June 7th 2019 Stakeholder Meeting.** The project team met with stakeholders to discuss hopes and concerns for the project area.
- **June 8th Site Visit and Field Work.**
- **September 10th 2019 Stakeholder Meeting.** Reviewed and discussed draft concepts. Public open house.
- **December 2nd 2019 Stakeholder Meeting.** Discuss and receive feedback on draft plan.
- **December 17th 2019 Plan Commission and Economic Development Committee presentation.**
- **February 11th 2020 City Council presentation.**

## Summary of Prior Planning Efforts

Several prior studies were reviewed by the consultant team in order to provide context for the current study. See Appendix: Downtown Today Report Towers Area Plan & South Riverfront for more detail.

(insert plan cover pages)

### Wausau Strategic Economic Development Plan (2019)

This plan establishes priorities for regional economic development efforts, several of which relate to the study area. A key opportunity identified in the report is development of new housing options, including downtown and urban residential, to help retain talent and support existing workforce

### Wausau Center Urban Design and Transportation Master Plan (2019)

This study identified street network and intersection improvements to increase access to key destinations, add



recreational value, and help activate the waterfront. In addition to identifying several 1-way to 2-way conversions, a significant recommendation is to realign the intersection of W Washington Street and S River Drive.

### **City of Wausau Comprehensive Plan (2017)**

Sites within the study area were identified as having the potential to be utilized for mixed use housing, office, and retail.

### **Wausau Center Mall Analysis (2018)**

There are 91,769 people within a 20-minute radius of downtown. Average household size is 2.4 and median household income is \$56,227.

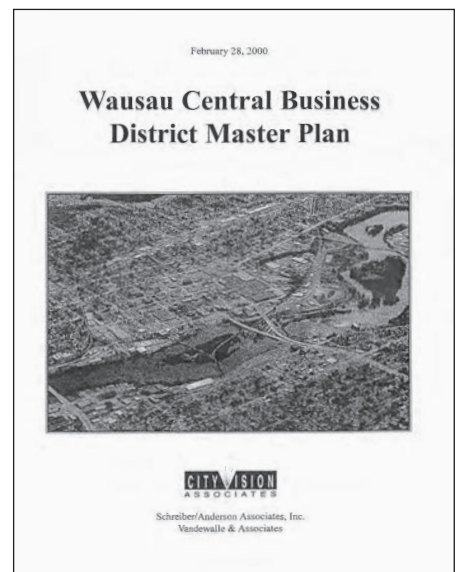
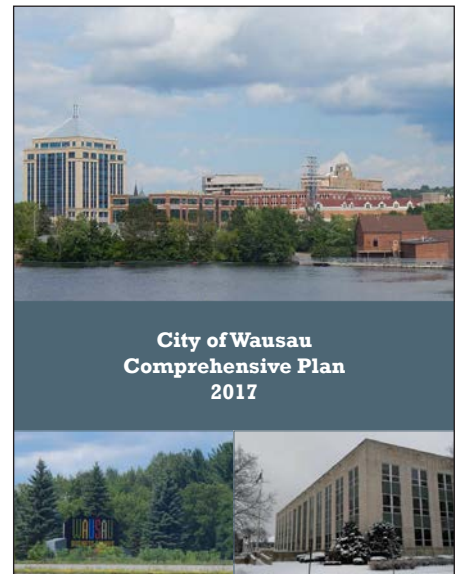
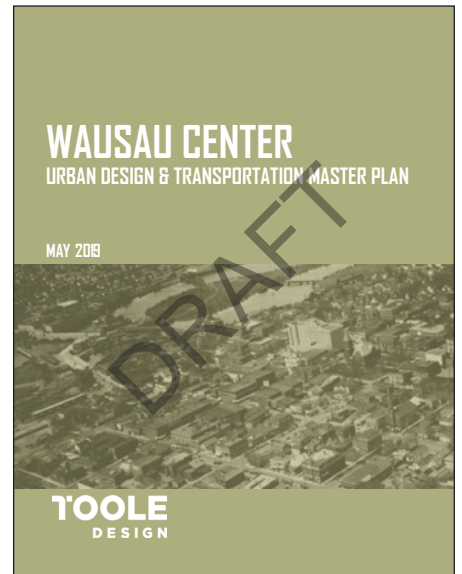
### **Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2015)**

This study identified bike lanes and other improvements in the study area. These were further refined in the 2019 Urban Design and Transportation Master Plan for the Wausau Mall area.

### **Central Business District Parking Analysis (2014)**

The study concluded that most of the study area has adequate parking supply, on- and off-street, to support the economic vitality of downtown.

### **Central Business District Master Plan (2000)**





# PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

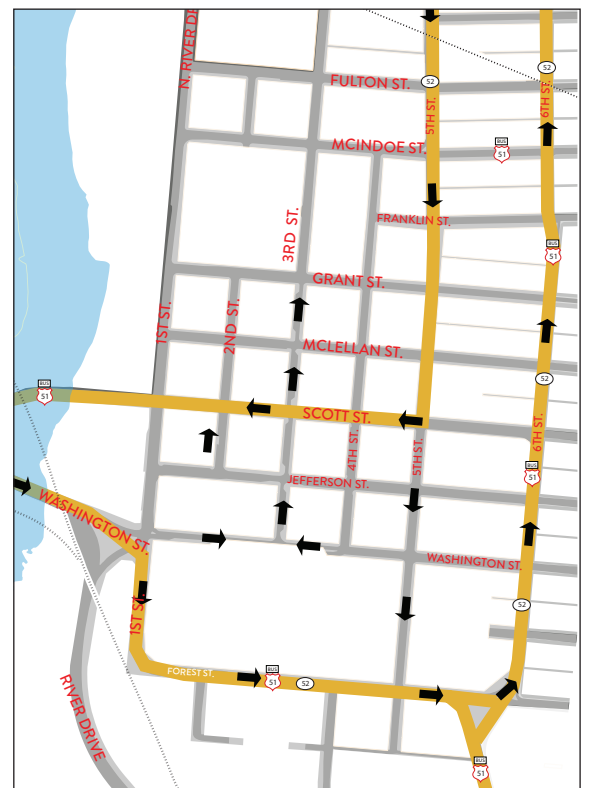
## Mobility + Parking

### Vehicular Network

The downtown street network is dominated by two one-way pairs carrying the largest volumes of traffic along US 51 and STH 52. These arterial streets feed a mix of local streets with significantly less traffic volumes. The traditional grid pattern of blocks and streets which originally shaped downtown Wausau has been replaced in areas of the downtown with much larger “superblocks,” primarily for the purpose of redevelopment.

### Traffic + Access

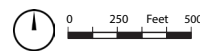
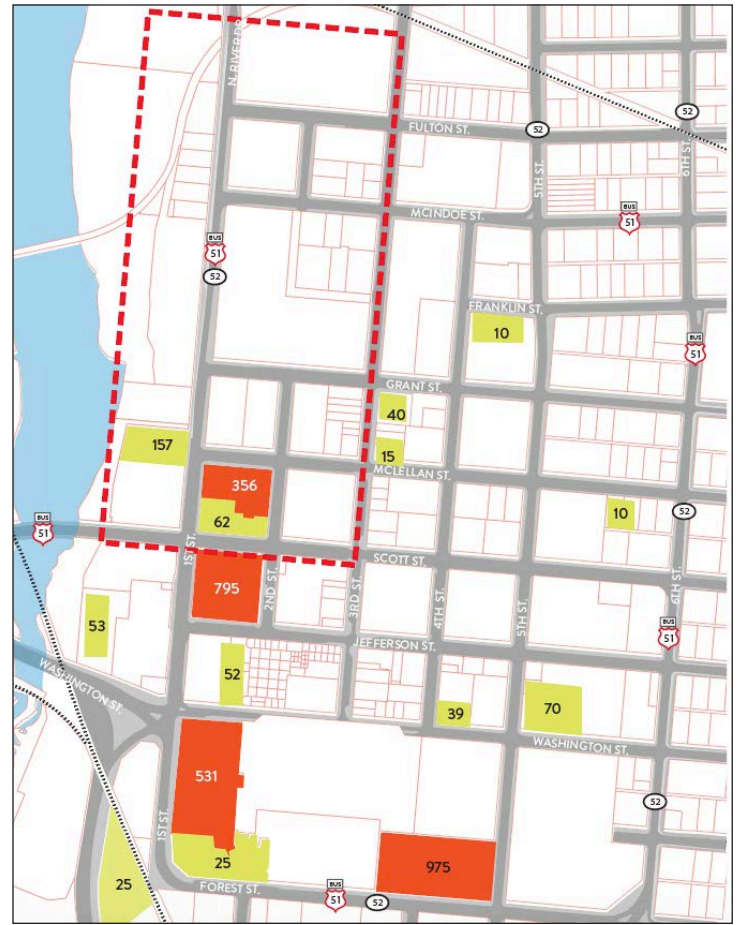
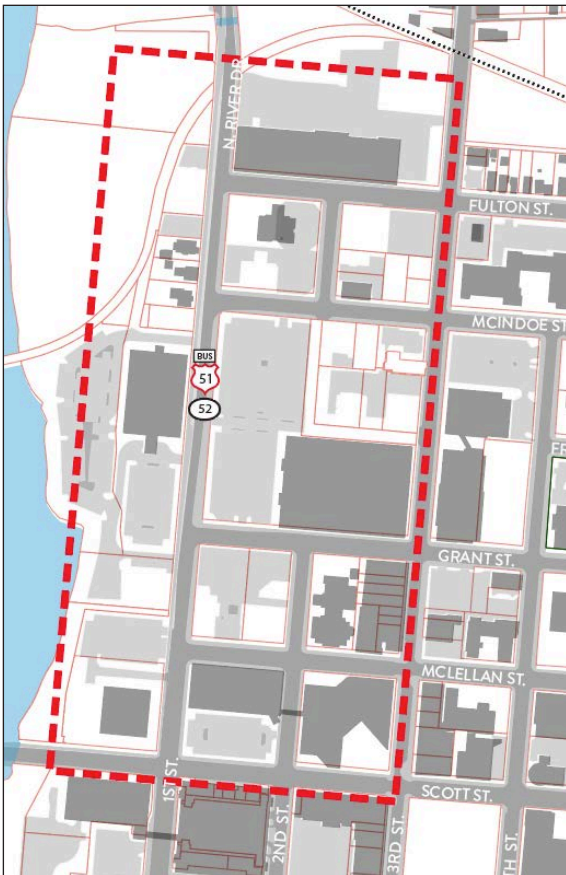
- Traffic volumes range from 9,500 average annual daily trips (AADTs) on BUS 51 near Washington Street to the single thousands on Grant Street and 3rd Street.
- 3rd Street between Washington Street and Grant Street is the primary retail and pedestrian oriented district.



## PARKING

The City of Wausau maintains an extensive system of public parking downtown. There are approximately 3,626 spaces available, which includes four parking ramps, 16 surface lots, and 300 street meters. Within the area bounded by McIndoe St (north), 4th St (east), Washington St (south) and Wisconsin River (west) there are 1,559 parking spaces in off-street parking facilities. Based on the 2017 Parking Study there are a little over 500 parking spaces available within these boundaries at peak usage times.

However, despite the excess supply, there are on-going concerns regarding downtown parking. A key issue is the design and functionality of the Jefferson Street ramp. Upper ramp levels are underutilized and some downtown users do not feel comfortable utilizing the facility. A second concern is the lack of available street parking to support the 3rd Street retail corridor. The McClellan Street ramp is scheduled to be demolished within the next 3-4 years, prompting concern over available, skyway-connected parking to serve major downtown employers.



EXISTING OFF-STREET PUBLIC PARKING

- PARKING LOTS (PUBLIC)
- PARKING RAMPS (PUBLIC)

*Surface parking (shaded) is both an asset and a liability, providing access to important destinations but also interrupting and undermining the pedestrian environment which draws people to cities in the first place.*

## LAND USE

The Towers Area is a mix of commercial, civic, and residential uses. The potential development sites border a downtown that has developed a concentration of businesses that enable it to draw visitors and will serve as amenities for workers or residents in the area. The river offers a different set of amenities, including its recreational and scenic qualities along its shores. The downtown area contains about eleven percent of all jobs in Marathon County, with a disproportionate share of office-based activities, and arts, entertainment, and recreational employment. The past decade has brought modest increases in many of these industries.

To the north of Scott Street there is a mix of several office and medical buildings, public parking, the Church of the Resurrection Catholic Church, and three single family residences along 1st Street. A combined estimated \$40M investment is being made into YMCA expansion and Aspirus clinic on the northern edge of the study area.

## Future Land Use

The City’s official Future Land Use Map for this area identifies it as City Center, a designation intended to promote “an area of dense development and a mix of employment, commercial, and residential uses. It would include civic spaces for community gatherings and events. It would also be an area that is lively and designed for pedestrian access. Growth, development, and increased density would be encouraged.”





## ZONING

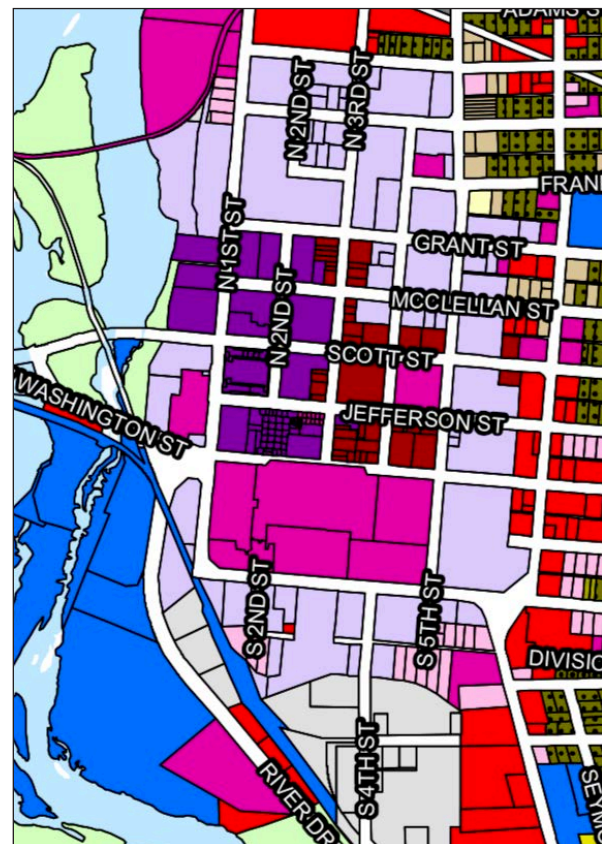
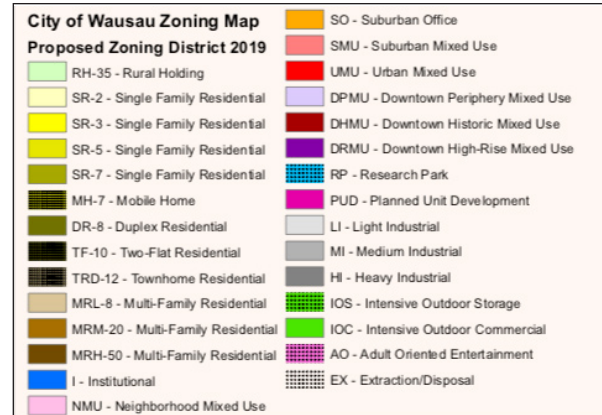
**The immediate towers area is proposed as DRMU-Downtown High-Rise Mixed Use.** This district is intended to permit large-scale established commercial, office, and institutional development at an intensity which provides significant incentives for infill development, redevelopment, and the continued economic viability of existing development. The district is also intended to retain the existing high-rise characteristics of the Central Business District without compromising the historic development areas. Residential uses are intended to occur at a minimum approximate density of 20+ dwelling units per acre.

**The area north of Grant St is proposed as DPMU-Downtown Periphery Mixed Use.** This district is intended to permit both large- and small-scale established commercial and institutional development at an intensity which provides significant incentives for infill development, redevelopment, and the continued economic viability of existing development. The district is also intended to act as a buffer between the historic and high-rise characteristics of the Central Business District and the lower-density residential neighborhoods surrounding it, however minimum height, maximum parking, and minimum floor area ratios will be required. These requirements will facilitate higher density development than the existing buildings within the district. Residential uses are intended to occur at a minimum approximate density of 10 dwelling units per acre.

**Most of the 3rd Street Corridor is proposed as DHMU-Downtown Historic Mixed Use.** This district is intended to permit mid-scale downtown commercial development at an intensity which provides significant incentives for infill development, redevelopment, and the continued economic viability of existing development. The district is also intended to retain the existing “Main Street” characteristics of the core blocks in Wausau’s historic downtown. Residential uses are intended to occur above the first floor at a minimum approximate density of 10 dwelling units per acre.

Representative principal uses permitted by right in all three of the districts include:

- Single family living arrangement
- Apartments with limited commercial
- Mixed-Use Building
- Live/work units
- Office
- Personal + professional services
- Indoor sales or service





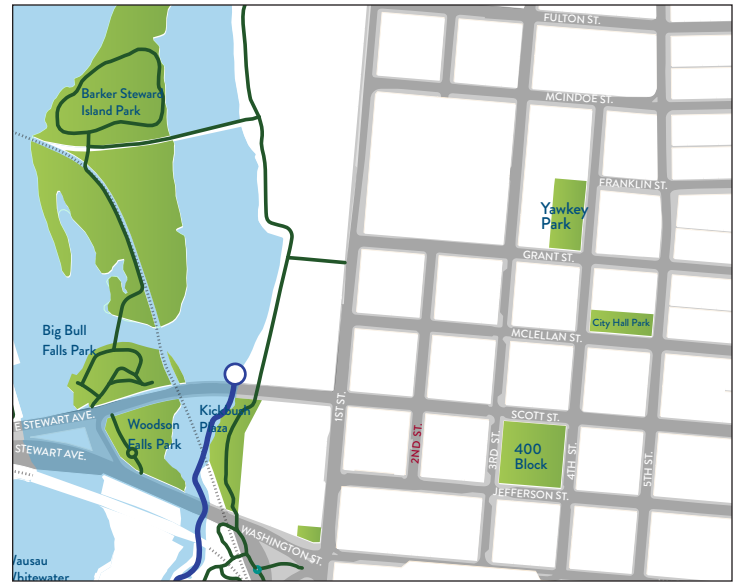
## PARKS, TRAILS, OPEN SPACE

Key features of the existing parks, trails, and open space network include:

**The 400 block.** The City’s main plaza is a popular special event space and outdoor gathering area located immediately southeast of the study area between 3rd and 4th Streets between Jefferson Street and Scott Street.

**Plazas.** There are several other small plazas and parks scattered throughout downtown. However, they remain somewhat disjointed from one another, which minimizes their collective impact on the public realm downtown.

**The River Edge trail** is the backbone of a growing trail system that runs north-south along the Wisconsin River. There are opportunities to strengthen connections from the existing trail network and waterfront into downtown.

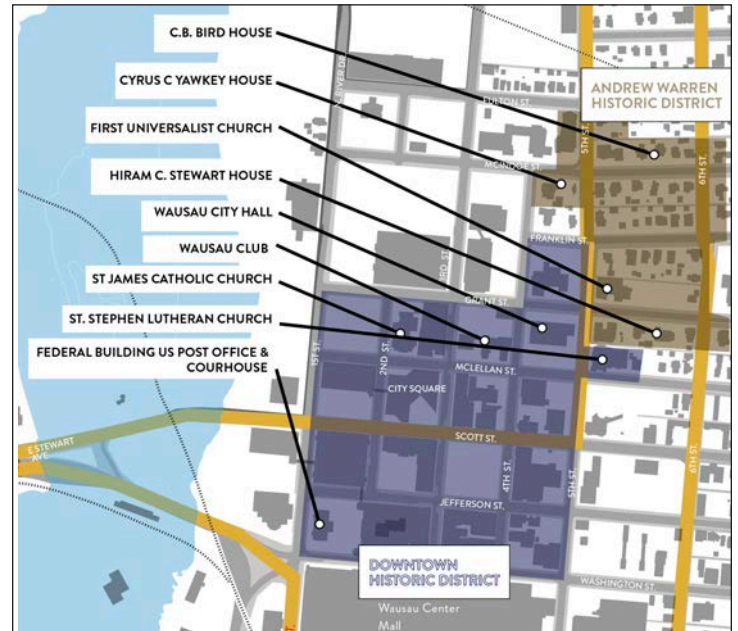


## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The City has two historic districts bordering downtown. The Downtown Historic District, an area of approximately 100 buildings bounded by Washington Street to the south, N 1st Street to the east, Grant Street to the north and N 5th Street to the west is more commercially oriented.

The Andrew Warren Historic District is located just northeast of downtown Wausau and is named after a sawmill owner who once owned most of the land comprising the district. This 10-block district includes 59 buildings, most of which are houses. The houses were built between 1868 and 1934 and include a diverse mix of late 19th century and early 20th century homes. (City Comprehensive Plan).

There are several historic landmarks and places listed on local, State, and federal historic registers.



# MARKET CONDITIONS

The analysis supports a combination of uses that can be developed within the Towers Area including:

**Approximately 200 to 300 units of mid-market rental housing, priced from \$600 to \$1,200 per month.** This may include some affordable units and units for seniors. These should be targeted for development in mixed-use buildings in the Towers area.

**A range of 84,000 to 112,000 square feet of office space within the Towers area.**

**About 5,000 square feet of commercial (retail, dining, and services) space annually within the downtown,** the majority of it provided in the Towers Area on the ground floor of mixed use buildings.

## TARGETED OPPORTUNITIES

### Demand for Residential

The Towers Area still offers the experience of downtown living with less immediate access to the river, greenspace, and recreational amenities. Rental housing can be developed in this area (including within vertically-mixed use buildings) to target downtown workers and other tenants who want to live downtown, but at a middle price point. Development of these units may utilize program such as Section 42 Tax Credits for some portion of the total units. Some portion of the total may also be targeted to senior housing.

Underground or structured parking should still be provided as an amenity as well as to reduce the overall footprint of the development. Finishes can be mid-tier, but renters will still appreciate conveniences such as dishwashers and in-unit laundry, and amenities like balconies.

There is a projected need for about a net increase of 350 rental units leasing between \$600 and \$1,200 per month. As with higher-end units, more can be developed as existing units age, and new buildings are able to compete on location, design, and amenities. A similar number of these mid-tier apartments – 200 to 300 – could be added in the downtown area over the next decade.



## Demand for Office

Aside from the question of whether the Wausau Center Mall may be redeveloped to create office space, there is a second issue that casts shade on the potential to add significant new office space in either of the two redevelopment areas. While there has been employment growth in Marathon County (and downtown Wausau) since 2002, over the next decade, the number of people in their working years will decline by about 4,500. This is consistent with the findings of the 2017 Metro Region Economic Development Assessment prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, which projected a shortage of 4,000 workers by 2026.

Employment in core office-based industries (information, finance and insurance, real estate, professional, scientific, and technical services, management of companies, and health care, grew by 6,303 jobs from 2002 to 2017, or an average of 420 jobs per year. Downtown Wausau has captured about 44.6 percent of that growth, or an average of 187 jobs per year.

That pace is not expected to be sustained. The Wisconsin Department of Commerce has projected a six percent rate of job growth for the northcentral region, including Marathon County. If that rate is used, the county could be expected to add 1,255 new office-based jobs through 2029, with 560 of those in downtown Wausau, assuming the downtown maintains current share of growth. Assuming that the average office worker occupies 150 to 200 square feet (including an allocation for common areas), this would result in demand for 84,000 to 112,000 square feet of new office space over the next decade.

There may be fluctuations in demand for office space as office-based industries generally expand or contract. Individual businesses may also make locational choices that can alter the general distribution of jobs. A business on the outskirts of the city, for example, may choose to build or lease new space in the downtown. This will be particularly true as some of the older office space in the region may become obsolete or less competitive in relation to new office buildings. This could add to the demand for downtown offices.

**The Towers area is an attractive location for office uses. The proximity to commercial businesses, and particularly restaurants and other services, will be attractive to potential tenants. In general, younger workers have a preference for workspace in a mixed-use, walkable environment.** Nearby housing will be an additional attraction. To be competitive, these offices will still need to

be able to provide adequate free parking, as a majority of workers will still commute to the site.

## Demand for Commercial Space

While the mall may struggle to fill vacant space, the opposite is true of the remaining traditional mixed use blocks in the downtown, mostly on 3rd Street, but extending to some intersecting streets as well. There are many restaurants along with stores selling clothing, jewelry, books, food, antiques, sporting goods, and gifts, among other things. The few vacancies that occur are reported to fill quickly. This concentration of businesses is stronger to the south, in the vicinity of the mall, but does extend to the Towers Area, where there is a greater concentration of large office buildings. Civic and cultural attractions such as the City Square, Grand Theater, art museums, YMCA, city hall, and several churches are also located in this area.

The downtown is an attractive environment for these mostly independent businesses, which seek an eclectic specialty shopping district and prefer the flexibility to operate outside the structures of a typical mall contract. **An annual increase of three or four new businesses would create demand for about 5,000 square feet of new commercial space annually.** These numbers can be supported or increased by initiatives the City and its partners can consider, such as developing pop-up retail or restaurant space, offering technical assistance to emerging retail stores and restaurants, or other programs to incubate new commercial businesses.

The Towers area, as an extension of 3rd Street, has the potential to capture most of the demand for new commercial space. This should be developed at the street level in vertically-mixed use buildings. While much of the parking demand will be met in structures, it will be important to provide some short-term on-street parking in the immediate vicinity of storefronts.

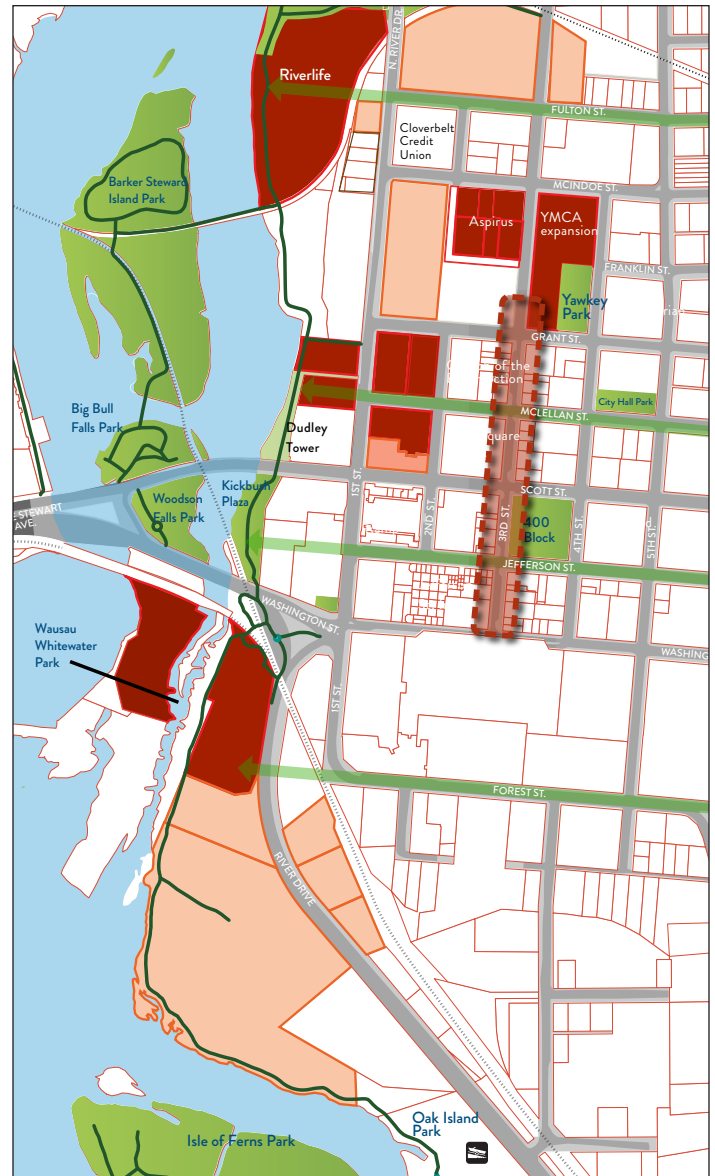
# FRAMEWORKS

The frameworks summarize the results of prior and current planning efforts into a coherent diagram. With a more holistic understanding of future planned improvements, decision makers and investors can more effectively shape and respond to evolving market conditions.

## REDEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The redevelopment framework identifies mobility, parking, parks/open space, and redevelopment opportunities within the study area. The proposed development scheme seeks to leverage existing assets (proximity to employment, river, outdoor recreational assets) to support the creation of new downtown neighborhoods. The key components of the redevelopment concept include:

1. New residential and mixed-use development in close proximity to downtown amenities including shopping, eating, entertainment, employment, and outdoor recreation along the Wisconsin river. A residential spine along N 1st Ave to N River Drive and River Life provides a strong customer base for a thriving 3rd Street commercial district, and may support a limited number of neighborhood commercial establishments, mainly eating and dining, as part of future mixed-use developments.
2. New office development at the terminus of McClellan Street complementing the existing Dudley Tower.
3. Pedestrian oriented green streets as well as new trail connections, plazas, and open space linking existing and proposed downtown neighborhoods to the river.
4. Distributed parking solutions which minimizes the need for new large, single block structured parking.
5. Preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings.
6. Street oriented buildings and well designed streets create comfortable outdoor rooms supporting outdoor dining and entertainment uses.



REDEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

# STREET TYPE FRAMEWORK

## Boulevard (River Drive)

- Wide sidewalks for strolling, tree-lined and closely spaced; broad medians and street-oriented buildings create an outdoor room effect; mix of housing types and densities may be present.

## Community Connector (5th & 6th, Forest)

- Links neighborhoods across the City and region
- Higher traffic volumes

## Main Street (3rd, Washington)

- Narrow traffic lanes, on-street parking, and small corner radii help slow traffic and make pedestrians feel safe
- Mixed-use and walkable; street-oriented buildings invite people to shop, eat, and explore

## Downtown Streets (Multiple)

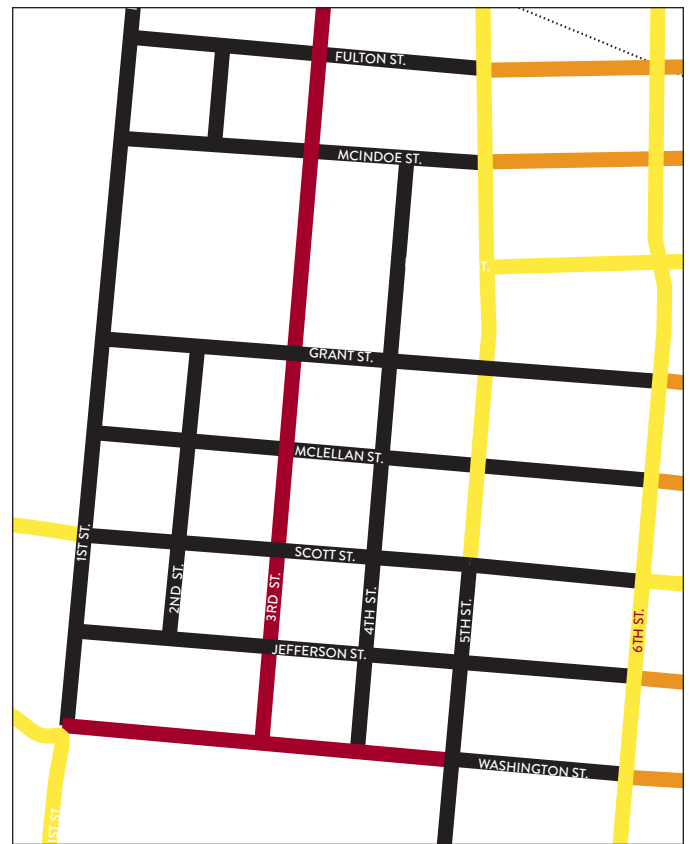
- Buildings form a continuous street wall, and building heights are in proportion to street widths
- Wider sidewalks and on-street parking.

## Neighborhood Streets (Multiple)

- Narrow, tree-lined streets typically include at least one side of on-street parking; narrower sidewalks; green terrace
- Slower traffic speeds, tree canopies, and front porches facing the street encourages biking and walking

## Green Streets (Fulton, McClellan, Jefferson, Forest)

- This plan defines green streets as those which provide environmental benefits, in addition to social and economic benefits. In the context of a growing downtown, with limited R-O-W, the focus is more on providing street trees at closely spaced, regular intervals than it is about providing significant stormwater management benefits.
- These streets should invite walking and promote sociability. They are human scaled, connected to the river via unique pedestrian passage ways including plazas, pedestrian bridges, staircases, and trails.



Green streets treatments are proposed for Fulton Street, McClellan Street, Jefferson Street, and Forest Street.





## VEHICULAR CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

The circulation framework identifies opportunities to improve the flow of cars, bikes, and pedestrians in the study area. Key Features:

**S1) 1-way to 2-way conversions.** This would likely require transfer of roads from WisDOT to the City.

**S2) Extend Fulton Street.** The second phase of Riverlife residential development will occur at the terminus of Fulton Street.

**S3) Intersection reconstruction.** A significant realignment of River Drive with Washington Street will improve connectivity between downtown and the river and north-south along River Edge trail system.

**S4) Extend 4th Street.** To better utilize parking structures around the mall extend 4th street to connect to existing parking garages.

**S5) River Drive Boulevard.** Reconstruct River Drive as a boulevard to support new residential development and create a new neighborhood with direct access to the waterfront.

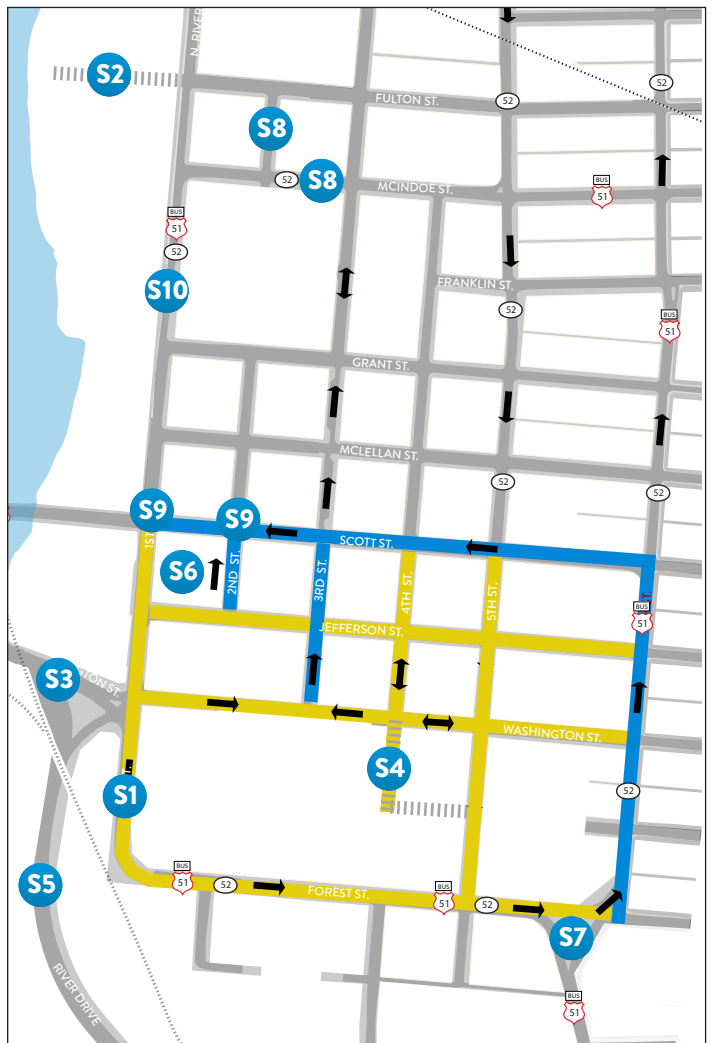
**S6) Investigate opportunities to improve access and functionality of the Jefferson Street ramp.** Evaluate potential benefits of converting 2nd Street from a 2-way to 1-way.

**S7) Proposed roundabout.**

## PARKS + OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

The only proposed park addition to the study area is the reorientation of the planned Diocese Park so that its longer edge fronts McClellan Street.

**The park can play several important roles in terms of helping spur redevelopment.** By providing a green oasis in a dense urban center it can attract residents. By providing a place to eat outside during the day it can attract office workers. It can serve as a spark for the creation of a new urban neighborhood envisioned along 1st Street. It can help attract modest amounts of retail or new eating and dining establishments.



## BIKE + PED CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK

The bicycle and pedestrian framework identifies opportunities to enhance non-motorized transportation opportunities.

Key features:

**B1) Wausau Whitewater Park.** The Whitewater park will include expanded viewing areas, a pedestrian bridge, and a mix of seasonal and year-round activities. New trail connections will link W Washington Street to a pedestrian bridge across the Wausau Whitewater Park to the proposed farmer's market and event plaza.

**B2) \*Bike Lanes.** Implement road diet with bike lanes on 1st Street between Washington Street and Grant Street.

**B3) \*Bike lane on 1st Street from Grant Street to Franklin Street.** Right-of-way is too constrained to add facilities. Recommend bike lane when reconstructed.

**B4) Expanded trail network through Riverlife development connecting to 1st Street.**

**B5) Strengthen existing pedestrian passage past library to Kickbush Plaza.**

**B6) New pedestrian connection to River Edge Trail system.**

**B7) Elevated or enhanced pedestrian connection between South Riverfront neighborhood and the Wausau Center Mall area.**

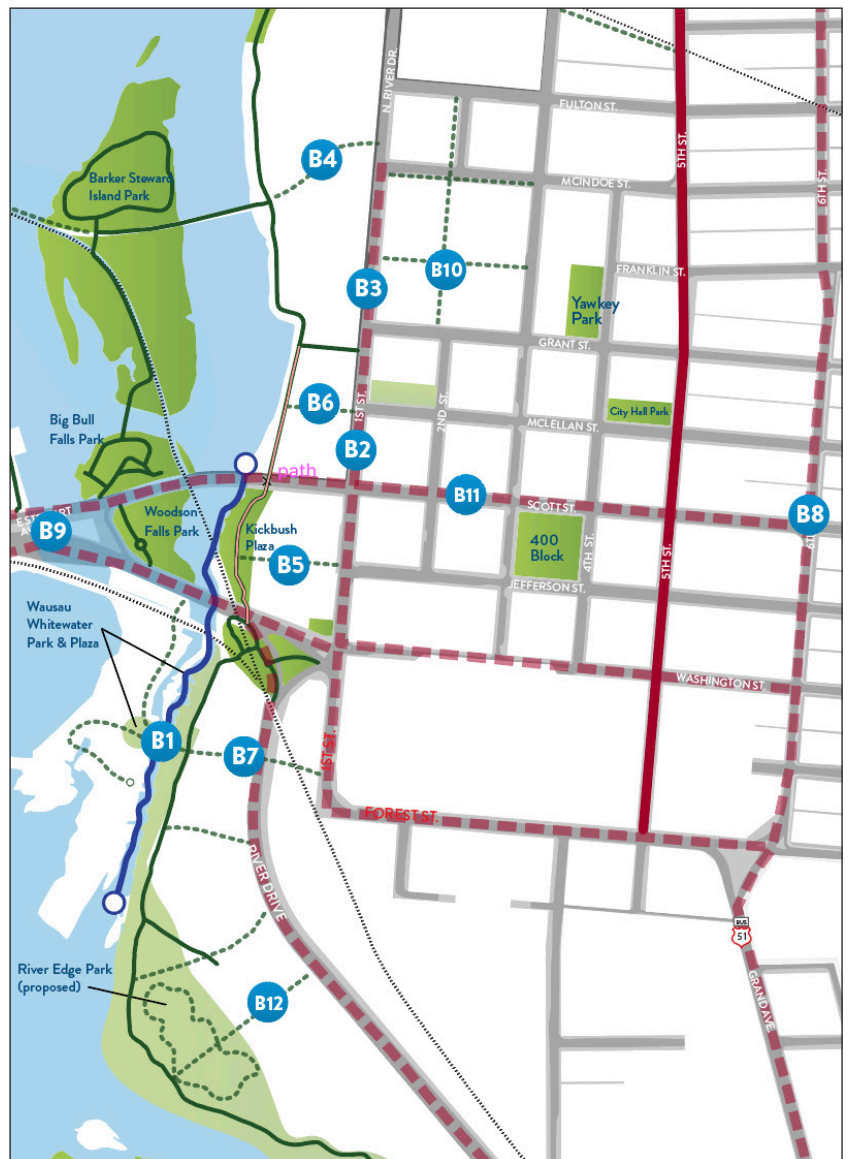
**B8) \*6th Street road diet (3 lanes to 2).** This will match northbound capacity with southbound capacity on 5th Street and affords room for a buffered bike lane to match the southbound bike lane on 5th.

**B9) \*Stewart Avenue Bike Lane.** Existing bridge is too narrow to add bike lanes. Recommend adding when reconstructed. Alternatively, perform road diet.

**B10) Mid-block pedestrian passages.** Encourage private developers to provide mid-block pedestrian passages especially on large super blocks such as the one bounded by Grant Street, 1st Street, McIndoe Street, and 3rd Street.

**B11) Expand trail network off of River Edge Trail spine to link new development sites to the riverfront.**

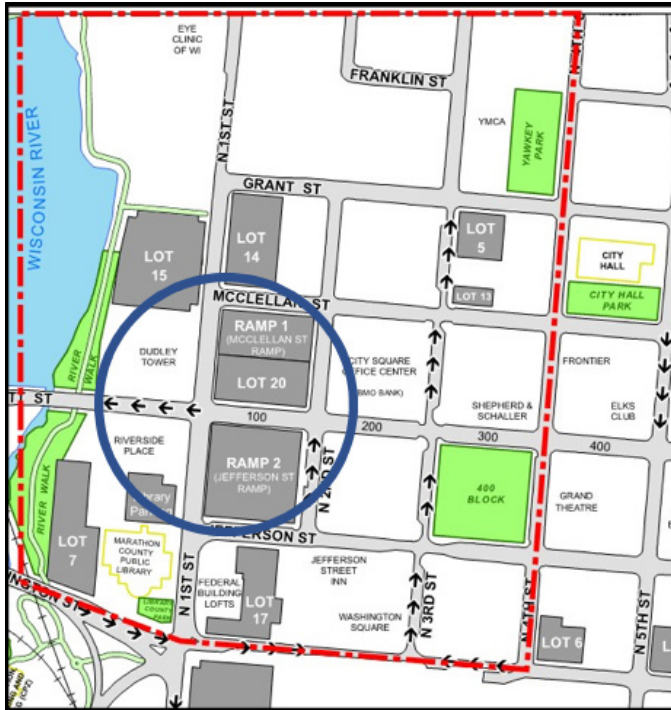
\*Source: Wausau MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan



# PARKING FRAMEWORK

## Development Area

The larger area, generally bounded by McIndoe St (north), 4th St (east), Washington St (south) and Wisconsin River (west), was identified to develop a more thorough understanding of the parking situation.



Within the larger area, there are 1,559 parking spaces in off-street parking facilities. Based on the 2017 Parking Study there are a little over 500 parking spaces available within boundaries at peak usage times.

### Available parking during morning hours

- Minimum available – 513 Spaces
- Maximum available – 617 Spaces

### Available parking during afternoon hours

- Minimum available – 511 Spaces
- Maximum available – 649 Spaces

## Future Parking Demand

The City has determined that the McClellan parking garage is nearing the end of its service life and will likely be demolished by 2024. The site is a prime redevelopment location. The McClellan garage and adjacent parking lot, collectively, contain 418 parking spaces. The loss of these spaces could be absorbed by the available parking within the area based on the peak parking availability provided in the prior study. The most likely location for vehicles is the adjacent Jefferson garage that is currently 49% utilized and has approximately 400 empty spaces at peak times.

**While the existing parking supply could likely absorb the current parking demand without the McClellan Garage and lot, any substantial new development would require additional parking. The additional parking could be integral to the development site, most likely through structured parking incorporated into the development.**

A small portion of the parking demand could be accommodated in the underutilized mall garages, but a strategic pricing strategy would be required to move people willingly. For the new development to be accepted by the community, on-site or near-site parking is the best option. This is especially true for residential parking.

The potential land use options identified for this study include office, residential and retail building space. The following development scenarios were used to estimate future parking demand. The scenarios are not based on specific projects, but broad conceptual ideas. The parking ratios are from the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and National Parking Association (NPA) guidelines.



Wausau Development Parking Estimates						
Development Scenarios	Office Space	Retail	Residential	Estimated Parking Demand	Approximate Available Parking*	New Parking Spaces Needed
	Square Foot	Square Foot	Residential Unit			
	1 / 250 sq. ft.	1 / 200 sq. ft.	1.5 / unit			
Scenario 1A	0	0	100	150	100	50
Scenario 1B	0	5,000	100	175	100	75
Scenario 1C	80,000	2,500	100	483	100	383
Scenario 2A	0	0	200	300	100	200
Scenario 2B	0	5,000	200	325	100	225
Scenario 2C	80,000	2,500	200	633	100	533
Scenario 3A	0	0	300	450	100	350
Scenario 3B	0	5,000	300	475	100	375
Scenario 3C	80,000	2,500	300	783	100	683

\*After removal of the McClellan garage and lot, there are approximately 100 parking spaces available in the immediate area. All development scenarios shown would require more parking than can be accommodated with the current parking supply.

The table above presents nine hypothetical development scenarios and the net parking impact of each assuming the McClellan ramp is removed.

**Scenario 1**

Each of the scenarios assumes an additional 100 units of housing introduced into the study area. 1B also assumes 5,000 square feet (SF) of new commercial. The residential and retail components (1A and 1B) potentially could be incorporated into parking lots or moved to the mall garages. Scenario 1C introduces 80K SF of additional office space and would require additional structured parking.

**Scenario 2**

Each of the scenarios assumes 200 additional units of housing. It would be difficult to accommodate 2A and 2B into surface parking lots. It would require almost an entire city block to build a 200-space parking lot. Scenario 2C adds 80,000 SF of office and would require additional structured parking.

**Scenario 3**

Each of the scenarios assumes 300 new units of housing are introduced into the study area. 3B assumes 5,000 SF of new commercial. Scenario 3C assumes 80K SF of new office space is constructed. All three options in Scenario 3 would require structured parking to accommodate the parking demand.

## Parking Supply and Administration

Over the past few decades, downtowns have once again become a desired location for living, working and entertainment. Downtown revitalization across the country has created activity and development, drawing people back to urban cores. New development opportunities and changes in the way people move about communities have changed the way municipalities approach parking and transportation. The scope of this parking review is high level. Without a deep investigation of the City of Wausau policy and parking goals we are unable to explore the full potential of the operation and recommend tasks associated with achieving future growth. However, the following national parking trends and best practices should be considered as Wausau considers how parking intersect with development opportunities.

**Mixed-use buildings with parking as a component (many times a minor component on a sq. ft. basis) that allow a development to provide on-site parking are becoming more common. Full block parking structures, similar to the Jefferson garage, are less common in urban settings.**

The public parking supply should have various price points to accommodate the needs of patrons:

- Prime locations near parking generators should be priced the highest due to convenience.
- Low cost or no cost parking on the perimeter should be available to cost sensitive patrons. This could include shuttle service depending on the distance and weather.
- Pedestrian access with continuous sidewalks, good lighting and wayfinding signage are essential to link parking to destinations.

Generally accepted parking policy is to price premium parking spaces the highest, with further away parking spaces at a lower cost. On-street parking is the premium parking in a downtown setting. Free on-street parking, with paid off-street parking creates abnormal usage patterns because people seek the free parking first and fill those spaces.

The goal of parking rates is to balance parking demand based on consumer choice. When rates are properly applied, patrons choose where to park based on their needs and willingness to pay. This balance, from higher priced premium parking to free perimeter parking, encourage turnover and create availability for patrons. Most patrons want predictability, not free parking. They would rather know where to find a spot and pay, than have to search

several locations for “free” parking. A free parking space defeats its purpose if always occupied.

The only way to make free, time limited parking on-street function properly is through regular enforcement to ensure people don’t overstay the time limits. Cities with this approach risk being labeled as heavy handed with parking tickets.

**Some municipalities have utilized Public / Private Partnerships (P3) to bring additional public parking into the inventory.** As part of the development and site plan approval process, the developer agrees to add public parking as part of the project. This may allow the City to add a small number of spaces (50-200) to their current supply, without committing to a large parking structure.

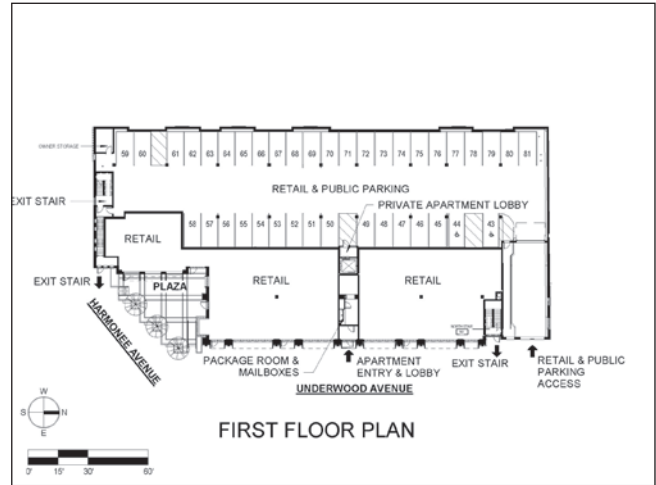
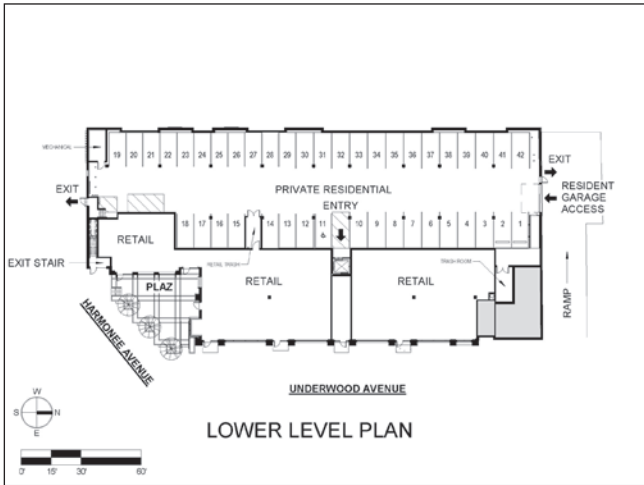
- The City pays the developer a set fee per additional parking space for construction and has long-term administrative control of the spaces.
- The City has a long-term lease for the spaces and has administrative control throughout the lease. The long-term concerns arise from determining:
  - Quality of design and construction for public parking – City should have Owners Representation during development phase.
  - Daily operational responsibilities and costs
  - Assurances of public and private use of the combined facilities.
  - Structural maintenance responsibilities and costs.

**P3’s allow cities to add parking inventory without the large scale land and financial investment of a parking garage.** However, they do have risks and the City must protect the public interest through strong agreements and a long-term plan to manage the parking assets.



ABOVE: Harmonee Square, located in the village of Wauwatosa, is a three-story mixed use development that includes 30 apartments and 7,500 square feet of first-floor commercial space.

BELOW: Harmonee Square mixed-use development example providing retail and public parking on first floor, with private residential parking on lower level. This concept applied in Wausau could help provide more convenient ground floor parking for 3rd Street shoppers.





**Even though people choose to live in downtown and urban settings, they do so with the idea of easy access to their vehicles.** While some residents may be willing to walk a few blocks to store their vehicles, most want on-site or close proximity parking. The lack of proximal parking can be more of a hindrance in marketing downtown residential units than the added cost of having to pay for parking on-site.

**Generally, the cost of structured parking (debt service plus operations) exceeds the revenue generated.** While there are several variables to consider, a garage needs to generate \$150-\$200 per space, per month to be self-sustaining. Supporting these rates can be a challenge. Municipal parking operations utilizing revenue from off-street garages, surface parking lots, on-street meters and citation revenue can often meet the debt obligations of a parking structure.

**There are over 1,000 available parking spaces in the mall garages south of Washington St.** These spaces are not in close proximity to the development zone and may be considered too long of a walk by some users. However, these spaces could provide a low cost option for price sensitive parkers if there were no longer inexpensive parking in the study area.

These spaces could have greater acceptance if there were significant differences in cost between on-site parking at the new development, and the mall garages. Significant may be at least \$50 - \$75 per month.

**Based on the analysis described above, the parking framework identifies potential improvements to help solve for parking within the downtown, with a focus on the Towers Area.**

P1) Incorporate parking into new development including but not limited to River Life.

P2) Evaluate future need for structured parking at this location. If needed, consider providing as part of a mixed-use parking structure with a residential component.

P3) Enhance the image of the Jefferson Street Ramp including pedestrian improvements along street frontage.

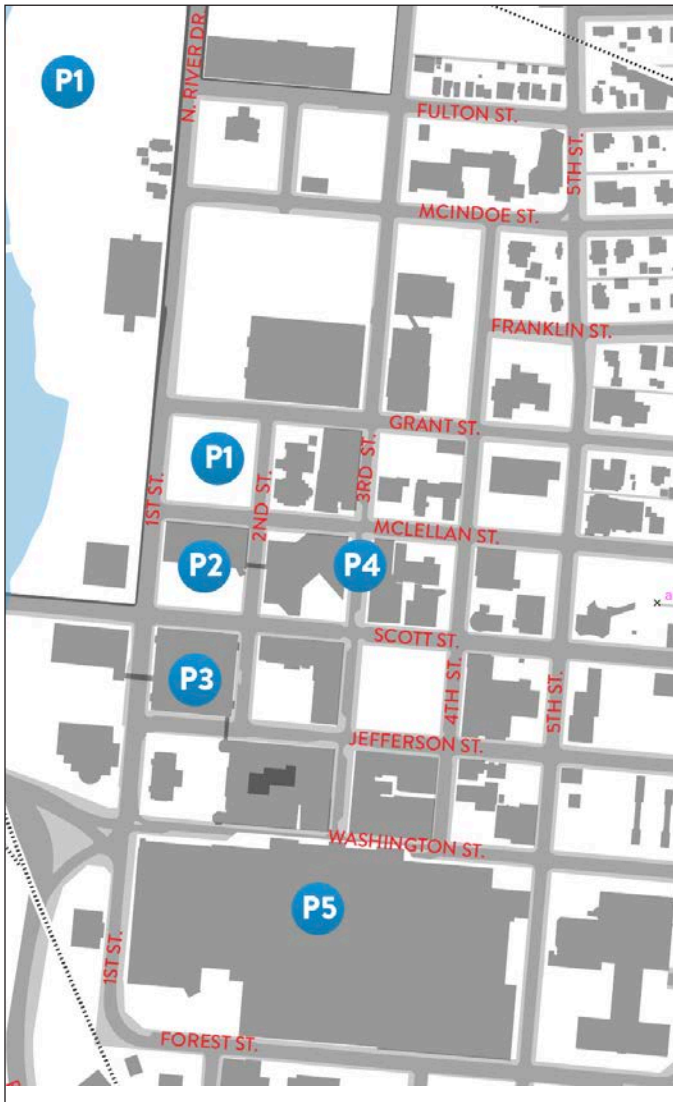
P4) Evaluate effectiveness of current free parking policy in meeting the needs of downtown retail and restaurant businesses.

P5) Identify opportunities to increase utilization of Mall site parking ramps.



ABOVE & BELOW: Bridge and Stocking Development in Grand Rapids. It includes a grocery store, garage, medical office space, residential and general office.





ABOVE: Pedestrian walk links new downtown residential and office development to Chippewa River in downtown Eau Claire, Wis.

# REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

## VISION

The 2000 Central Business District Master Plan sought to position downtown as the “nerve center of retail trade, financial transactions, and government activities in the region.” This plan recognizes the critical role that central business district functions continue to play in our downtown, bringing thousands of workers into the heart of the City every week day. However, this plan also places emphasis on future residential development as critical to the future success of downtown Wausau. This plan envisions a thriving “central social district” that attracts downtown residents and employees looking for easy access to jobs, outdoor recreation, eating, shopping, and entertainment venues.

Carefully planned and executed residential and mixed-use developments in the Towers Area and beyond will create a vibrant urban neighborhood with access to walkable amenities downtown and along the river, as well as convenient vehicular access to regional shopping, health care, and outdoor recreational amenities.

## GOALS + OBJECTIVES

By reviewing, discussing, and prioritizing the challenges and opportunities facing the study area, community leaders can continuously refine specific goals and strategies to help guide future decision making and communicate effectively with the public, downtown businesses, and downtown investors. The following goals and objectives were derived from stakeholder and public feedback, as well as a review of prior documents and input from City staff and elected officials.

1. Create additional tax base for the City
2. Support new residential and mixed-use development
3. Support existing and planned office uses
4. Develop and execute a parking strategy to support growth
5. Improve mobility and access to the river
6. Design and construct a high-quality public realm
7. Strengthen visual connections to the river





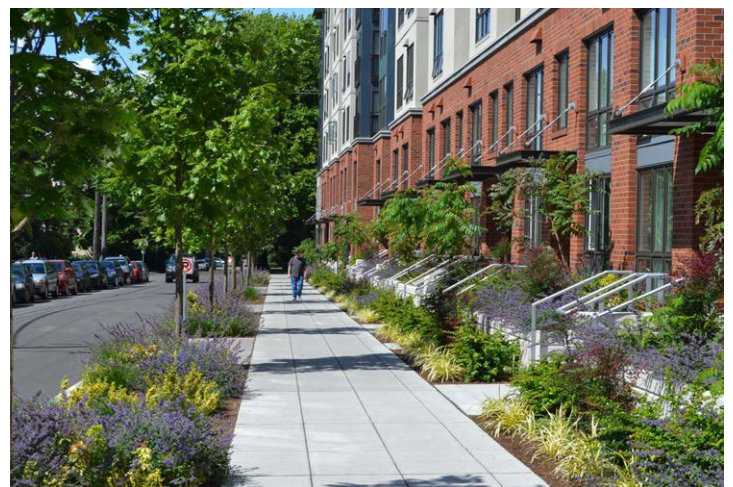
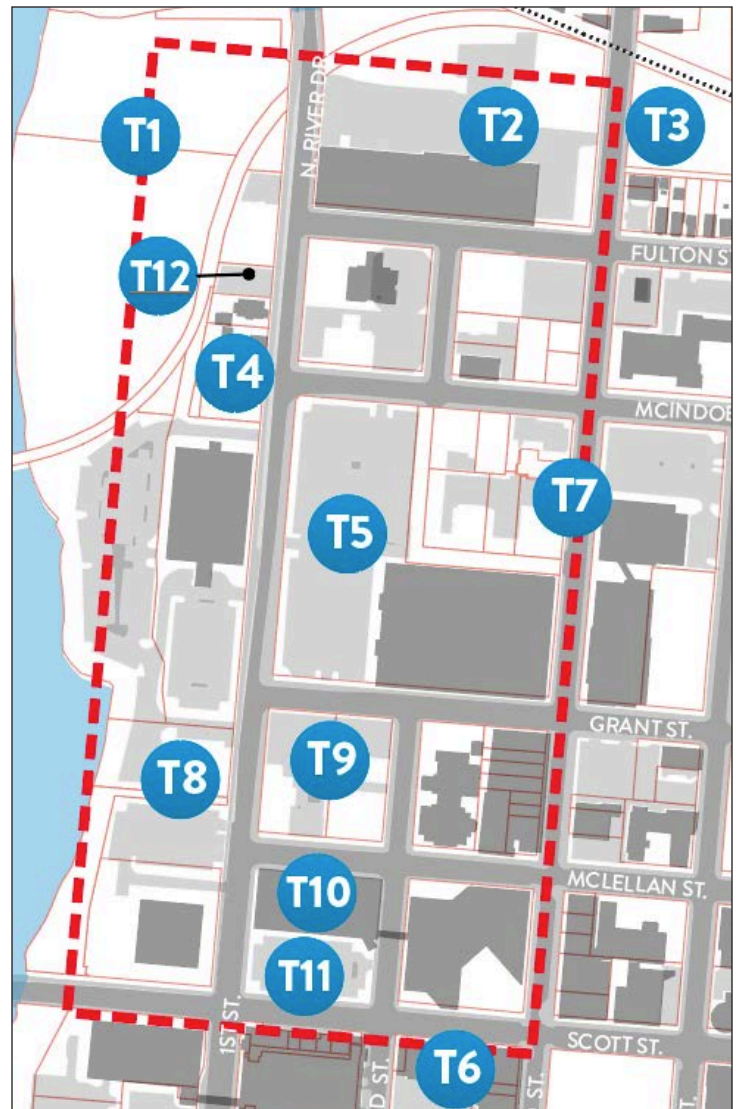
## REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The City's 2000 Master Plan identified higher density residential development adjacent the river north of Scott Street. This concept plan also recommends apartments for the Towers Area. The redevelopment opportunities framework identifies shorter term (<3 years, dark red shaded parcels) and longer term opportunities (>3 years, light orange shaded parcels).

**T1) Riverlife South.** This portion of the overall Riverlife development contains a vacant 4.8-acre site which is permitted and being developed as an upscale residential neighborhood within walking distance of amenities. Higher density apartments with limited commercial space will be developed on both sides of an extended Fulton Street west of 1st Street.

**T2) ABC Supply Company.** A building supply company currently occupies this roughly 4-acre site north of Fulton Street between, bounded by N River Drive and 3rd Street. Because of the large site, potential longer-term redevelopment opportunities may include medium density multi-family residential, commercial, or mixed-use development. A variety of housing products such as low-rise apartments, townhouses, duplexes, or pocket neighborhoods may be considered for this site given its location at the edge of downtown and proximity to existing neighborhoods.

Buildings should be sited to take advantage of both the proposed green corridor along Fulton Street, as well as the existing trail on the north side of the site providing direct pedestrian access to Riverlife. The site is zoned Urban Mixed Use district, intended for established commercial corridors, that are or are planning to become mixed use in character. The district allows for a variety of employment, retail, and community service opportunities, while allowing some residential uses at an approximate density of up to 36 dwelling units per acre.

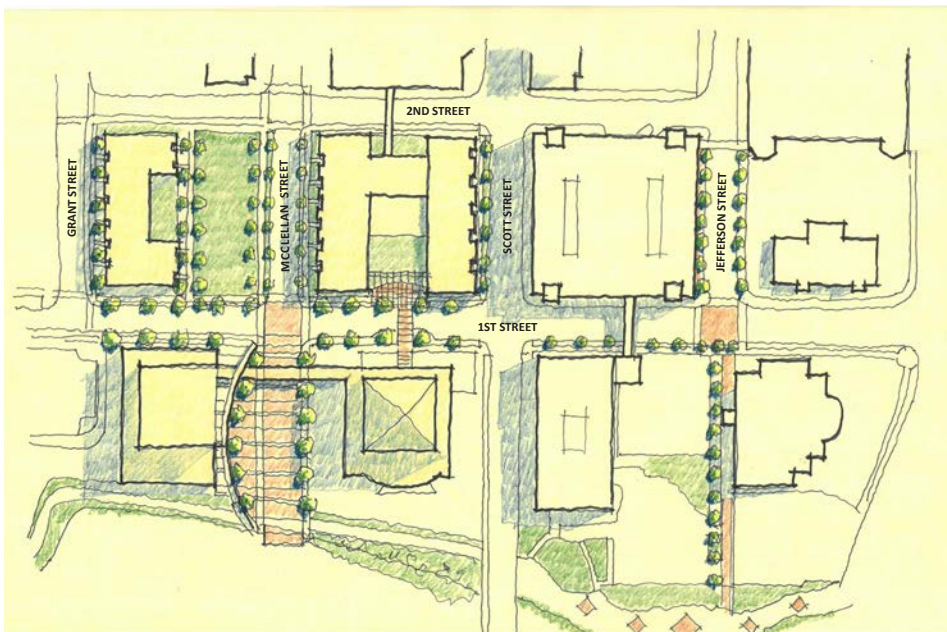






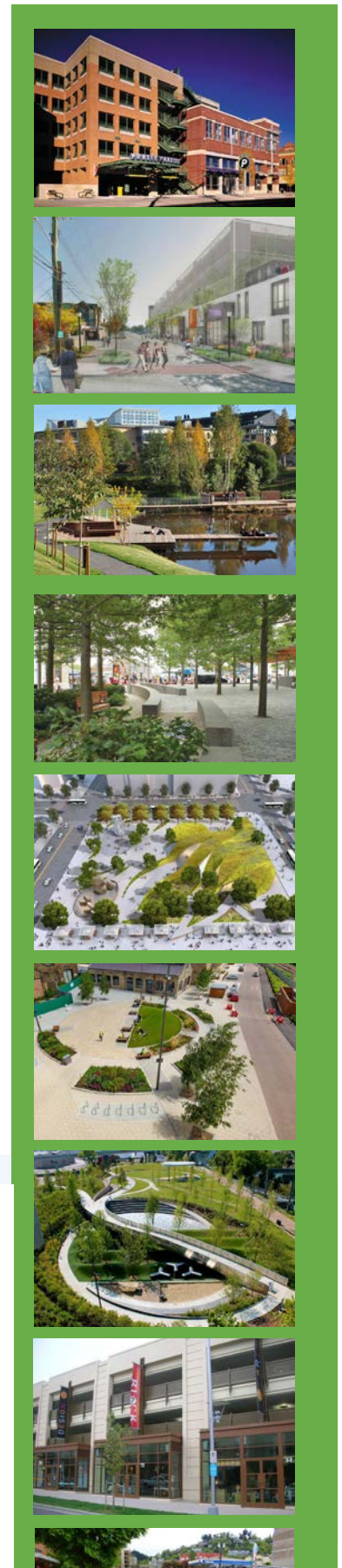
**CENTRAL TOWERS AREA-EXISTING**

Jefferson Street ramp underutilized  
 McClellan Street ramp nearing end of useful life  
 Development opportunities at 1st/Scott, 1st/McClellan  
 No strong connection to river



**CENTRAL TOWERS AREA-POTENTIAL FUTURE**

Strengthen Jefferson street Riverwalk connection  
 McClellan Street potential central Riverwalk Plaza  
 Church Block green benefits future adjacent developments  
 Mixed use developments with Decentralized parking





**T3) 3rd Street & Fulton Street.** This site, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre, fronts 3rd Street just south of the railroad tracks. The site contains a couple existing single-story commercial buildings near Fulton Street, with open land to the north bordering the railroad tracks. Proximity to the neighborhood commercial node just north of the railroad tracks and nearby trail access to the river makes this an attractive location for residential development, possibly row homes or townhouses oriented toward 3rd Street. The site is zoned Urban Mixed Use district.



**T4) Historic single family homes.** The three older single-family homes on 1st Street provide a window into the history of the neighborhood north of downtown and should be preserved. This site is part of the Riverlife planned unit development and zoned Single Family Residential.



**T5) 1st Street surface parking lot.** This site, approximately 2.5 acres in size, is currently used for surface parking. As new development occurs to the south and north, this site may become more attractive for redevelopment. Medium density residential or mixed-use development would complement a growing concentration of residential and office uses, such as 3-4 story apartments with one or two levels of above grade parking below the concrete deck. This site is zoned Downtown Periphery Mixed Use.



**T6) Landmark Hotel.** A Madison-based developer proposes to renovate the former hotel and downtown Wausau landmark using a combination of funding sources.







**MCCLELLAN STREET-POTENTIAL FUTURE**

- Strengthen Jefferson street Riverwalk connection
- McClellan Street potential central Riverwalk Plaza
- Church Block green benefits future adjacent developments
- Mixed use developments with Decentralized parking





**T7) Aspirus Clinic and YMCA.** Aspirus is building a new clinic and YMCA has recently expanded their downtown campus.

**T8) Dudley Tower surface parking lot.** This site (approximately 1-acre) is currently used for surface parking. Potential redevelopment includes a second office tower connected to the Dudley tower via a skywalk, establishing a compelling gateway to the river. A pedestrian plaza would connect McClellan Street to the river trail network. This site is zoned Downtown High-Rise Mixed Use, and permits large scale commercial, office, and institutional development as well as mixed residential/commercial uses.

**T9) Former Diocese school block.** This block, which formerly housed a Catholic elementary school, is bounded by 1st Street, Grant Street, 2nd Street, and McClellan Street. It is approximately 1.35 acres and is being used for surface parking. Its location provides great access to nearby amenities and could serve as a catalytic development for downtown Wausau. If successful, it could anchor future residential development by creating a high impact social activity node with open space and limited commercial offerings such as a café catering to new downtown residents and workers.

Potential redevelopment includes medium density residential development fronting a new park along McClellan Street. This redevelopment site would physically and visually connect strongly with the river via a green corridor connection that incorporates a new public plaza in conjunction with a second Dudley Tower direct west of N 1st Street. The intersection of McClellan and N 1st Street would serve both as a neighborhood hub, as well as a destination attraction for downtown visitors, drawing additional foot traffic west off of 3rd Street down McClellan to the river.

**T10) McClellan parking ramp.** This site, approximately .7 acres, is currently occupied by the McClellan parking ramp, which provides direct access to the City Square Office complex via a skyway. Potential redevelopment opportunities include a new parking structure, medium to high density residential, or mixed-use development. This site is primed for redevelopment following successful execution of development on the former Diocese school block.

**T11) Scott and 1st Street.** This site, approximately .7 acres, sits adjacent the McClellan Street ramp and is currently used for surface parking. Potential redevelopment opportunities include office or medium to high density residential development. This site is zoned Downtown High-Rise Mixed Use, and permits large scale commercial, office, and institutional development as well as mixed residential/commercial uses. Traffic impacts and microclimate may limit residential development appeal.

**T12) Riverlife townhome**  
Potential redevelopment  
network.



...y south of Fulton Street.  
...to the River Edge trail







# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The City's primary focus should be on incentivizing desired and market driven development that reflects the community's values and future aspirations. The City has control of the McClellan Street parking ramp block, as well as the former Diocese elementary school block within the central towers area. Careful implementation planning will foster intelligent decision making and ensure that new development complements existing uses and parking concerns are pro-actively addressed.

site is not feasible, the City should utilize a RFEI process to identify additional developers with interest in the site. The McClellan block is another potential site for residential or mixed-use development.

**4) Determine feasibility of a second office tower north of the Dudley Tower.** The site has strong potential synergy with the proposed residential developments in the immediate vicinity. The McClellan green corridor and outdoor plaza would create a compelling location for a new office building. Alternatively, this site remains highly attractive for new residential development as well. The City should establish a positive working relationship with the property owner and investors to identify and address key issues such as financing a potential skyway to a second tower, public access and ownership of the proposed outdoor plaza, and how best to address future parking needs.

**5) Pro-actively plan for the demolition and redevelopment of the McClellan ramp.** The existing ramp will need to come down within the next four years, so the City should determine if a replacement ramp is needed within that time frame.

The City should continue to update parking assumptions and utilization rates as new development occurs, and compare those results with the parking demand estimates presented in this plan. If a new parking structure is warranted, the City should consider utilizing a PPP approach or incentives to help finance it, ideally as part of a new mixed-use development. This approach may be more cost effective than financing a new, entirely city-owned structure while providing a better parking experience.

**6) Implement framework recommendations.** Key recommendations to enhance the desirability of Towers Area redevelopment opportunities include:

- Design and construct planned green corridors as depicted in redevelopment framework
- Design and construct Diocese Park in conjunction with proposed residential development
- Establish bike lanes on N 1st Street
- Establish new pedestrian connections to River Edge trail

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**1) Market potential development opportunities.** Using the results of this study, the City should pro-actively engage local and regional investors in order to share the vision and identify potential project partners. This can be done formally through Requests for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for city-owned properties, and informally through discussions with local investors and presentations to the downtown business community. An annual 'State of the Downtown' event can showcase development trends and opportunities to local and regional developers and investors.

**2) Meet with downtown property owners to discuss redevelopment concepts identified in this plan.** Identify potential opportunities and challenges associated with the plan's vision.

**3) Support new downtown housing development.** The redevelopment site with the greatest short-term potential is the former Diocese elementary school block and should therefore be a priority. Key to success will be the integration of the Diocese park open space to the development. If the current development proposal for the



## TIMELINE

### PHASE 1 (2020 to 2022)

- Redevelopment of former Diocese block into residential or mixed-use development
- Construction of new downtown park as part of former Diocese park redevelopment
- Monitor parking impact as development occurs within the study area
- Determine feasibility of second office tower

### PHASE 2 (2023 to 2025)

- Demolition of McClellan parking ramp
- Redevelopment of McClellan block to include public parking as part of mixed-use development

### ON-GOING

- Market potential development opportunities
- Share and discuss plan concepts with downtown property owners and investors

BELOW: The 102 Luxury Apartments in downtown De Pere, Wis.

