

AUTHENTIC ASHLAND

PART ONE

A Comprehensive Plan for Ashland, Wisconsin

February 2017

Letter to the Community



As planning consultants, we've had the pleasure of working with residents and business stakeholders in over 325 communities in 44 states – places large and small that range from mountain resorts, to coastal tourist towns, to declining manufacturing hubs. Few places we've visited have a natural setting as special as Ashland's. And few are lucky enough to have a core of citizens as devoted to their downtown, their neighbors, their ballfields, their history, and to one another as Ashland.

Indeed, your city has much to work with as it plans for the future. A beautiful shoreline. Exquisitely proportioned residential blocks. A real Main Street at a time when authenticity has never been more elusive and desired. A caring and professional local government with a stable balance sheet. Businesses with a commitment to good corporate citizenship. An excellent small private college. Resident leadership. Entrepreneurs. And all surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of pristine northern Wisconsin wilderness. What Ashland residents may not have in terms of retail opportunities found in Duluth or Eau Claire is more than made up for by peerless quality of life measures.

At the same time, Ashland is a city in transition, facing difficult challenges that require both immediate and sustained attention. Some of these challenges are relatively new, such as the impact of the internet on local retail. Others have been developing for decades, like the changing nature of manufacturing and labor and the shift to a knowledge-driven economy.

Such transitions are neither all good nor all bad – but they are transformative and require communities to adapt. To this point, many of the economic and related assumptions that once held true for Ashland, and which worked well for Ashland, no longer do. To ensure Ashland points itself in the right direction, the community will need to adjust on a number of fronts.

A Highly Skilled Workforce Matched to Tomorrow's Economy

One especially important area where adaptation will be necessary has do with education and knowledge. Communities need to have an ever higher percentage of knowledge workers and highly skilled labor in order to compete for jobs and to become economically stable. Since cities don't directly create jobs, or directly match the level of education and skill in a workforce to the marketplace, a range of efforts to increase the probability that Ashland is poised for job growth must be put into place. To grow such probabilities, the community will need to promote ever higher levels of educational attainment by everyone, doing whatever it can to position Ashland as a community where entrepreneurs – of whatever stripe – will be able to find the workforce quality they need.

Leveraging Ashland's Natural Setting Through Preservation

A second area where adaptation will be critical has to do with natural resources. Like the country as a whole, Ashland's vitality was achieved on the basis of a resource extraction economy. Labor and technology aligned with this approach to finance Ashland's initial settlement and subsequent expansion. Today, however, the economy is grounded in knowledge and services, and natural resources have become a different kind of golden goose – one more valuable the less it's used. Ashland will gain in prosperity in direct proportion to how well it stewards its natural setting. The community will need to ensure the shoreline and the surrounding lands become more pristine each year through conservation and stewardship, more benevolently accessible each year through investments in connections, and more a part of everyday life each year.

Focusing Limited Resources for High Impact

Third, Ashland residents today are older, on average, than ever before. Many are on the cusp of turning the keys of the city over to a new generation who will have to confront a range of challenges that, while long in the making, have evolved subtly and often imperceptibly. Many of these challenges are both physical and financial.

- Over the last 40 years, the city's infrastructure – roads, trees, traffic lights, sidewalks – has aged. Once sized for a larger city, the reality today is that there are fewer families in Ashland to take adequate care of everything. The community needs to become wiser about how it allocates scarce resources when trying to maintain more infrastructure than is easily affordable.
- Over this same time period, the city's level of care has ebbed and flowed. Now on the rebound, West Main Street and Chapple Avenue are as picturesque as any street found in any small town in America.



Yet even as such jewels as the Ashland Baking Company, City Hall, and the South Shore Brewery serve as beacons for a new Ashland, problematic and regrettably recent development – including at the intersection of Ellis and Lake Shore Drive – can impede the kind of durable vitality Ashland needs to work towards. Every building and every street and every intersection is an opportunity to reinforce how special Ashland is. The community must find a way to redevelop in a manner that communicates the city's unique charm and history.

- Likewise, the level of care and stewardship of public as well as private property along Lake Shore Drive, Sanborn, Golf Course Road (SR137), and Ellis is well beneath the standard needed for Ashland to communicate pride to the wider market. Slipping standards and marginal design all send the wrong message to anyone traveling these routes, whether resident or visitor. Each mile of main corridor in and out of Ashland is a tell, signaling to all just how special Ashland is. Or, if poorly cared for, just how remarkable and worthy of affection Ashland is not. Because investors follow investments, when the main signal being sent is that the community isn't taking care of itself, few others will. The community must come together and embrace and double down on raising standards.

By design, Ashland's new, state-of-the-art comprehensive plan helps direct community energy where economics and demographics render it most needed.

- Towards the work of right-sizing smartly and reconnecting along the way. Getting the number of houses and commercial buildings in line with Ashland's size and capacity to properly tend to them.
- Towards the work of reconnecting the many world-class amenities in Ashland – its historic downtown and its matchless lake shore – while slowly polishing them so their beauty is more evident.

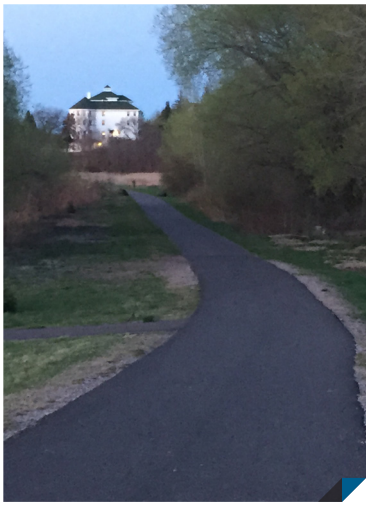
This plan is the culmination of months of hard work by a steering committee of residents and business stakeholders, young and old, new and long-time residents alike. It reflects the input of hundreds through surveys and more than two dozen kitchen table conversations where people spoke passionately about the Ore Dock, the city's murals, the library, and where concerns about jobs and wages and neighborhood quality were discussed. It also reflects the city's financial situation, specifically its fund balance and the many demands placed upon taxpayers. As such, this is less a "what to do" list than a "on what basis should we make decisions" plan.

czb

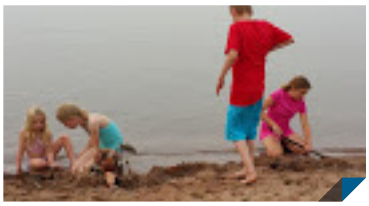
WHAT WE ARE
PROUD OF:









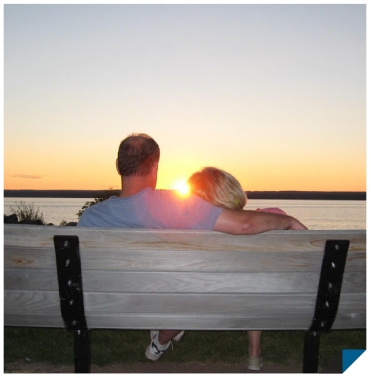
















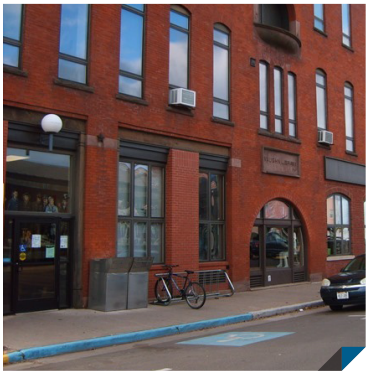










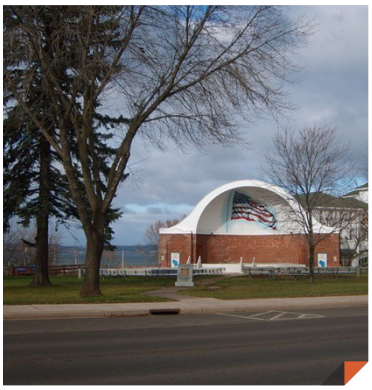








WHAT WE **CAN'T LOSE**:

















WHAT WE **CAN IMPROVE UPON**:









PHOTO CHALLENGE

We asked the Steering Committee and all residents of Ashland to send us photos that represent what we are proud of, what we can't afford to lose, and what we can improve upon. We appreciate the many residents that submitted their photos by way of email or on the Authentic Ashland website. Included on this page are a few of those photos that help us to better understand our community.

Acknowledgements

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How to Use this Plan

Planning is another way to describe the work of prioritizing. Indeed, no work is more critical to the future of a city than the effort it takes to decide – in the present, as a community – what requires attention, with what urgency, and why.

Boiled down, this means deciding which roads need to be paved today, and which ones can wait until tomorrow; whether to invest in beautifying the entrance into Ashland from Duluth along Highway 2, or, instead, from the east, or possibly both, and in either case, to what level of finish. It means deciding what, if anything, should be done about slipping standards of care by some residential property owners; what if anything should be done in response to the city's declining population and property values; what if anything should be done about the roughly 15 acres of fallow real estate between Beaser and MacArthur just south of 3rd Street near downtown; and what if anything might be done to address the overall economic trajectory of the city as it transitions from ore processing and then manufacturing to services and tourism.

Such work is both critically important and potentially difficult, for whenever two roads need attention but funds only exist to do one – for example – either one will have to wait, or both will be done at the same time, but to a lower standard. Inasmuch as planning is prioritizing, planning is the work of determining which of the many goals the community has are deemed really important, and which of those are determined to be really really important.

For this reason, good planning, above all else, answers the "why" question.

Knowing and having a community come to an agreement on why it may be investing in code enforcement, for example, is what makes a plan durable. Why right-size the housing stocks? Why focus investment on Main Street? Why preserve the Ore Dock? Why implement a conservation buffer? Why beautify the entryways? By agreeing on the "why", a community is well equipped to confront opportunity costs and make trade-off decisions in a case-by-case manner.

Good plans help a community make decisions within their means that simultaneously further the on-going work of adapting to a changing world. Good plans respond to what is known, in the case of Ashland, an aging and smaller population in a world transitioning from manufacturing and labor to knowledge and services. At the same time, good plans are flexible enough to help a community respond to what is unknown.

This plan provides a framework for choosing how to deploy limited resources – and how to do so in ways that align with the community's values and vision. It's a framework that provides a five-step approach to understanding Ashland's situation and how to apply its values and planning principles as filters for making sound decisions that will help realize the community's vision.

2015 →

1 BASELINE IMPERATIVES

Population Loss
Falling Property Values
Downtown Vacancy
Unsightly Entryways
Fractured Pathways

2 VALUES ASHLAND WILL APPLY

Environmental Stewardship
We will take care of the natural setting.

Citizenship
We will be an accountable community.

Neighborliness
We will be engaged residents.

Cultural and Architectural History
We will protect and preserve our heritage.

3 PLANNING PRINCIPLES TO BE APPLIED

We will come together to prioritize.
We will take actions that increase our finance self-sufficiency.
We will act in environmentally sustainable ways.
We wil re-organize our city spatially.

4 DECISION MAKING FILTERS FOR MANAGING ASHLAND ON A DAILY BASIS

Are we physically reconnecting?

Are we rightsizing Ashland to get demand and supply into healthy balance?

Are we re-using our land and materials sustainably?

Are we re-investing in our neighborhoods?

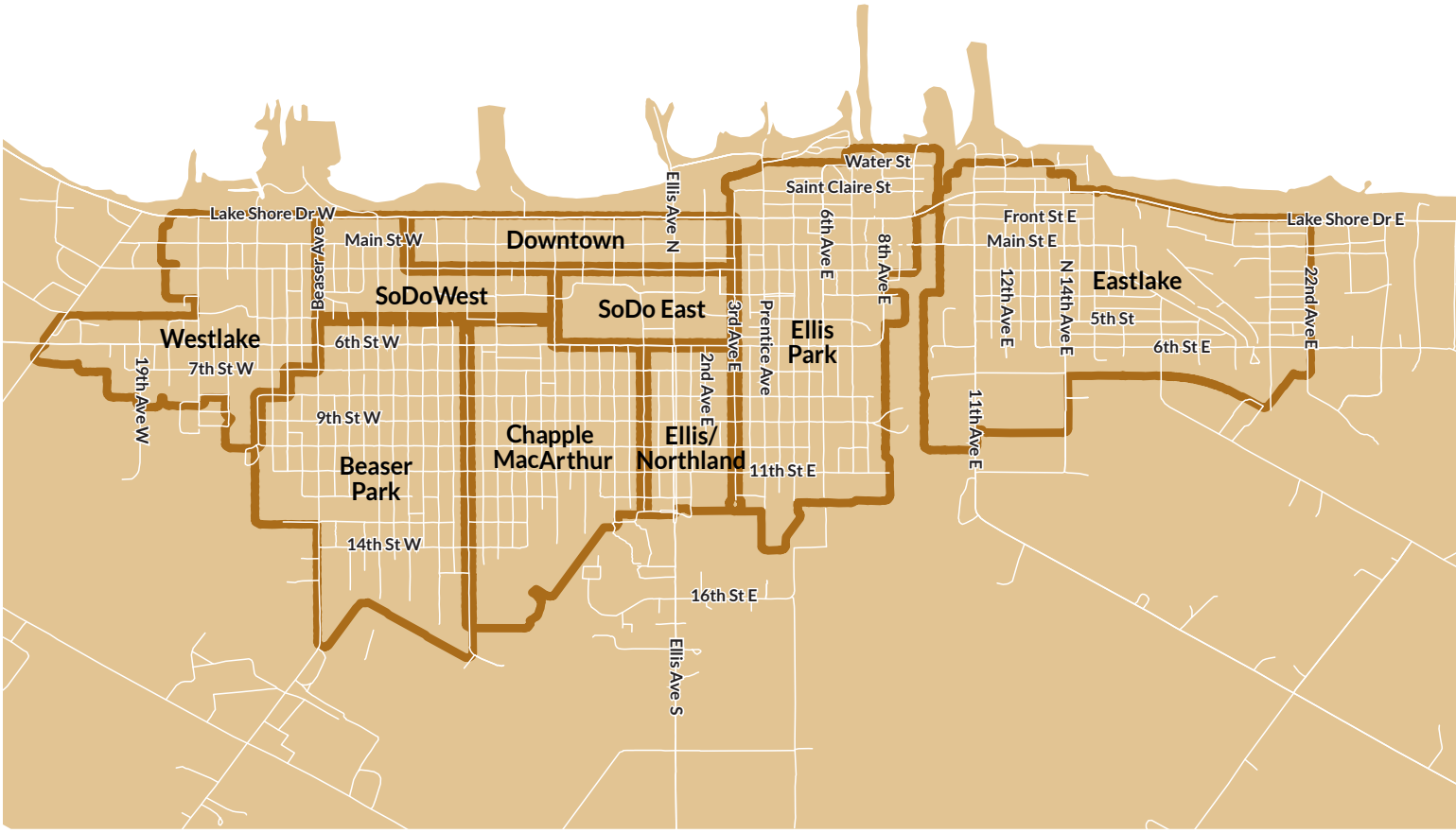
Are we re-imagining our entryways?

5 NEAR TERM PRIORITIES

Make Downtown Work
Strengthen the Housing Market
Protect and Leverage the Shoreline
Knit Ashland Together
Place-based Economic Development
Sustainability

→ VISION

Ashland Neighborhoods



Like many small towns, Ashland may seem too small to divide into neighborhoods. After all, it's a city of just 3,500 households. Nevertheless, housing markets, even in a small community, are often just a few blocks in size – each subarea having its own history and identity and reputation. So when it comes to developing strategic actions for a city's overall housing market, precision and a sensitivity to scale are needed.

This plan subdivides Ashland into smaller districts, or neighborhoods. On one hand, this serves the purpose of creating manageable geographies in which to work, measure baselines, evaluate progress, and help with implementation. On the other hand, and of greater importance, it recognizes that residential life – as viewed through the eyes of the average resident – rarely extends much farther than a block or two from one's home.

In Ashland, where the average residential block is about 320x720 feet and has five homes on either side of the street facing one another, most families will know most people on their street. Ashland has ideal residential densities to support a vibrant community life. Across America, at densities similar to those found in Ashland, residential communities tend to share a common identity inside areas with about 400 families – or about every 60 acres in Ashland. This works out to 20-25 blocks, with a walking distance corner to corner of about 15 minutes. Organizing a neighborhood larger than this is difficult. Yet inside such an area, and within groups of 200-500 families, considerable gains are possible, and so this plan is built around a framework of nine Ashland neighborhoods, each distinct, each of a size conducive to organizing, and each with its own history and special future.



Thinking about Ashland's smaller geographies in this way provides frameworks for:

1. **Understanding the different market conditions impacting the city's ability to address issues of housing and neighborhoods.** A one size fits all solution, while simple to understand and easy to apply, will waste scarce resources and fail to achieve desired outcomes.
2. **Sequencing implementation activities.** In the likely event the city is unable to accomplish all of its goals at once, differentiated neighborhoods create an opportunity to better understand which activities should take place in which areas of the city and in which order according to resource availability and readiness of the neighborhood.
3. **Neighborhood organizing.** In a Healthy Neighborhoods strategy, which the city is recommended to employ, neighborhood leadership development and cooperative action by neighbors are critical. As a starting point, Ashland residents need to know who their neighbors are – beyond the people on all sides of their own homes, or even on their blocks. Neighborhood boundaries give residents a defined area in which to work and from which to draw collaborators.

Ashland's Context for Planning

What forces are influencing how Ashland looks and operates today – and how it plans for the future?

A city rich with assets

Ashland is a small city with an outstanding collection of natural, cultural, and historical assets. These assets, among others, give the city a foundation for a competitive and vibrant future – to be a place that draws, retains, and nurtures people from diverse backgrounds because of the lifestyles and economic opportunities it offers.

Educational institutions that reflect a commitment to ecology and place, including Northland College and the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College.

A downtown filled with history and creativity, with numerous architectural landmarks, a historic district on the National Register, and a growing tradition of public art.

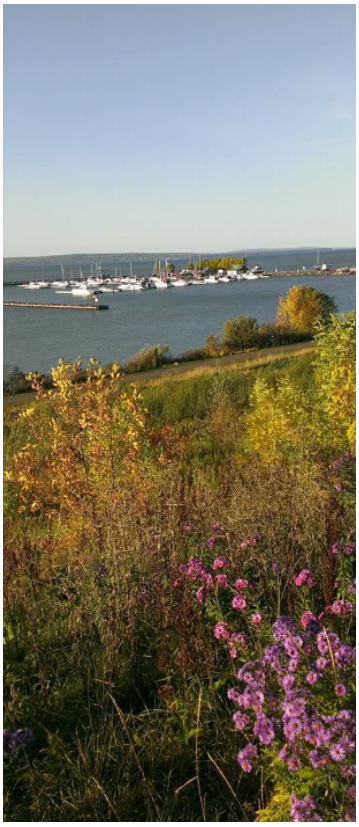
A region of uncommon natural beauty, from Chequamegon Bay, to the Apostles Islands, to the deep boreal forests.

Distinctive and adaptable features of the city's economic heritage, including the Ashland Ore Dock's base and its future as a unique civic space.

A gridiron street network that provides the building blocks for a walkable, neighborly, and well-connected community.









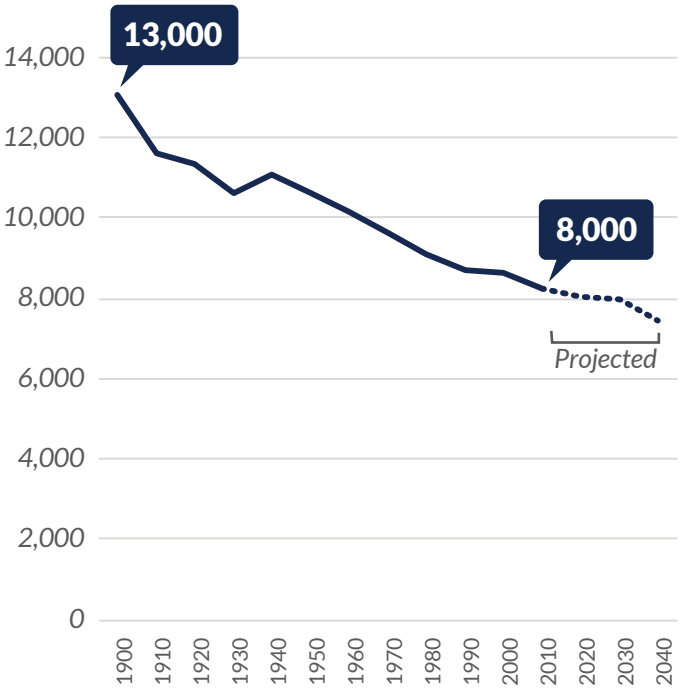


A shrinking city in flux

Amidst Ashland's assets, much has changed over the course of its history. The economy today is very different from the one that stimulated development, growth, and migration a century ago. The population is smaller and changing – producing trends that present both challenges and opportunities.

Ever fewer Ashlanders

Ashland's population has fallen by over 37% since its peak in 1900 – a slow, steady shrinking process that is projected to continue through 2040 if current demographic and migration trends persist.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration.

A rapidly aging population

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of Ashlanders aged 55 to 64 grew by over 60% – by far the fastest growth rate for any age cohort and a reflection of the Baby Boom generation's size and influence. At the same time, there was an 18% drop in the number of people under age 25, and the median age for the entire city rose from 36 to 40.

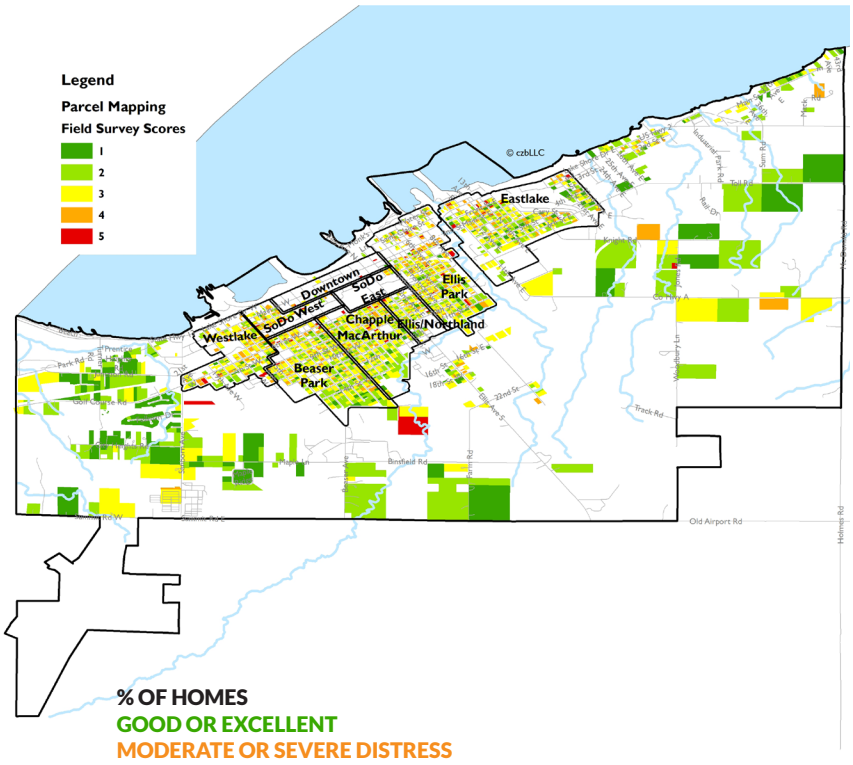
Near-average, but rising, poverty rates

Ashland's 16.1% poverty rate in 2014 – only slightly higher than state and national poverty averages – was down from the 19% rate experienced during the height of the Great Recession. But it was still higher than 2000's 12.7% rate and could represent a new normal for the city. This may be tied to the Baby Boom cohort entering retirement – but it may also be related to stagnant incomes. The median household income in Ashland in 2014 ($39,257) was nearly 8% lower than it would have been if incomes had risen at the pace of inflation since 2000.

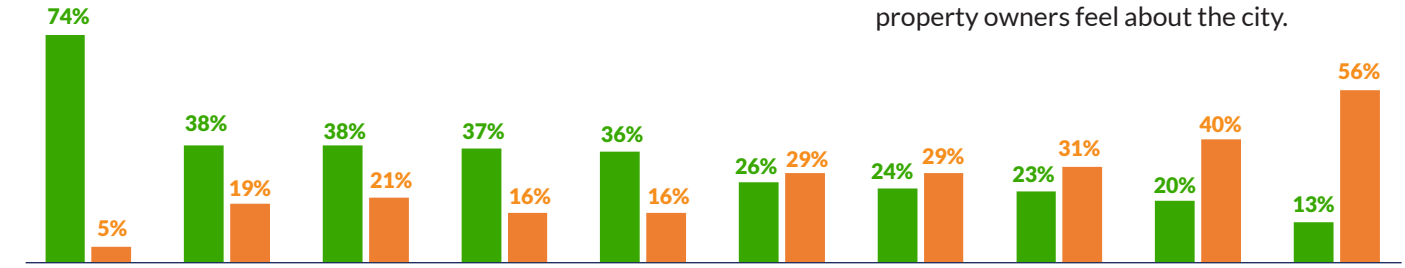
Better educated – but will they stay?

The proportion of Ashland adults with a bachelor's degree or higher rose from 21% to 29% between 2000 and 2014 – putting it ahead of Wisconsin and on par with the U.S. average for educational attainment. This is positive news and means that Ashland does a fair job of competing for this population in northern Wisconsin. But college graduates, especially those in the 25-34 age range, have options and gravitate to places that match their desired lifestyle. This puts communities that provide excellent quality of life at a decided long-term advantage, while those that don't fall increasingly behind.

Neighborhoods where deferred maintenance is mounting



While several of Ashland's neighborhoods show signs of health and stability due to steady reinvestment by property owners, housing conditions in the city are highly uneven and act as a damper on the strength and desirability of neighborhoods within the city's traditional gridiron. Within those nine neighborhoods, fewer than half of the homes surveyed during the fall of 2015 were in excellent or good condition – and in five neighborhoods, the number of homes exhibiting moderate or severe signs of distress outnumbered the good or excellent homes. Citywide, only 10% of homes were found to be in excellent condition, while a clear plurality – 42% – exhibited adequate but modest levels of upkeep. Over the next decade, that sizable portion of the city's housing stock could tip either way as the cost of catching-up on deferred maintenance mounts – with much depending on how confident and proud existing or potential property owners feel about the city.



	Conservation Buffer	Ellis/ Northland	Eastlake	Chapple MacArthur	Beaser Park	Ellis Park	Westlake	SoDo East	SoDo West	Downtown
% OWNER OCCUPIED	72%	64%	75%	61%	70%	52%	69%	71%	20%	6%
AVG. SALE PRICE, 2005-2014	$148,291	$89,644	$72,024	$95,730	$94,119	$67,593	$65,769	$56,200	$68,372	$112,500
% OF HOUSING UNITS ABANDONED, 2010	2.2%	4.3%	1.3%	2.1%	4.9%	3.8%	1.7%	0.0%	1.2%	5.2%

DEMAND

Healthy to Moderate — Moderate to Weak

Source: czbLLC and US Census Bureau.

Disconnections and imbalances to address

A Disconnected Shoreline:
While the Lake Superior shoreline was once well-integrated to the downtown core, today's Highway 2 does a better job enabling cars to move through the community that it does connecting the lake to the community. **There is a need for coherence and continuity along the shoreline and for reconnecting the lake to downtown in a sensitive yet vibrant manner.**

An Oversized Downtown:
While Ashland's downtown was accurately sized to local buying power in the early 20th Century, that demand has been reduced (population loss) and leaked (internet, big box retail), leaving a footprint that is too large and struggling to cope with excess supply. **There is a need to reduce the size of downtown so that it matches current and near-future demand and creates a stable and strong market for commercial and residential space.**

Underutilized Industrial Land:
While the industrial sites near downtown were once a substantial provider of jobs and downtown patrons, employment and occupancy has fallen and there's now a sizable area abutting downtown that is substantially vacant or underutilized. **There is a need to adaptively re-use these parcels in ways that increase the city's capacity to retain and attract strong households and entrepreneurs.**

Sprawl without Growth:
While most of the community used to live within walking distance of near-downtown jobs and Main Street shops, residential development further from downtown now exacerbates the challenges posed by excess housing. **There is a need to curtail sprawling residential development and orient residential life back towards the core.**

Ashland's Values and Vision

We in Ashland value and will work to protect and strengthen our natural setting and resources; our small city character and our sense of community; our heritage; our arts, architectural roots, and recreational assets; and our economic prosperity. We view these as interconnected systems.

Ashland's Values

Ashland's core values are our community's most deeply held beliefs and they explain, and in many ways are, the basis for our vision.

They answer the question "Why is that your vision?" Why? Because we value and will protect the lake and the lakeshore – it is the defining feature of our natural beauty and creates our sense of place. Because we have a strong sense of community, one comprised of neighbors we know and trust. Because we are proud of our North Woods small-town lifestyle. Because our history and culture is very important to us. Because we believe deeply that economic opportunities for the next generation are essential for the development of our community.

Ashland's Vision

vibrant
connected
sustainable

Our vision is what we are working towards; the kind of community and place we want Ashland, Wisconsin, to become after years of hard work, sacrifice, and collaboration. Through planning and the daily work of implementation, our vision answers the question, "What are we ultimately trying to achieve?"

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When we come together to evaluate our assets, we agree that our waterfront, our downtown, and our trails are paramount. When we come together to evaluate our pressing issues, we are in agreement about the importance of taking proper care of our infrastructure, working to revitalize downtown, and stewarding our lakefront while reconnecting it to our downtown.

Living Our Values in Ashland

We in Ashland value and will work to protect and strengthen our natural setting and resources; our small city character and our sense of community; our heritage; our arts, architectural roots, and recreational assets; and our economic prosperity. We view these as interconnected systems.

Authentic Ashland means environmentally sustainable

We choose to be stewards of our setting along the pristine shores of Lake Superior and amid the wilderness of Northern Wisconsin

WE WILL MAKE POLICIES AND TAKE ACTIONS TO:

- Help protect and make vital the expanse of rich and fertile countryside that surround Ashland so that it will remain visually beautiful and ecologically sustainable;
- Ensure the lake is an amenity that serves a wide range of recreational and commercial needs including swimming, boating, fishing, running and walking along the shoreline trails, and that the lake continues to be the centerpiece of our beloved view shed;
- Encourage business growth that leverages the surrounding agricultural resources;
- Protect Lake Superior and continue efforts to physically and civically connect Ashland with this great lake; and
- Create accessible connections to our natural resources.

IT MEANS **WE WILL NOT**

- Take actions or be a party to actions or be silent about actions that undermine the agricultural and natural environment in the region; or
- Take any actions that fail to both protect and enhance the ecological state of Lake Superior.

Authentic Ashland means neighborliness and citizenship.

We choose to double down as good neighbors, strengthen our civic bonds, and ensure that our city's balance sheet is strong

WE WILL MAKE POLICIES AND TAKE ACTIONS TO:

- Protect and enhance the vibrancy of civic and economic life in our downtown;
- Encourage entrepreneurial efforts within our vibrant business districts, using creative ideas and technological advancements to maintain and grow an educated, skilled, and industrious workforce;
- Abate distress and decline;
- Reinforce our long-term financial health; and
- Cultivate the city's position in the on-going renaissance of northern Wisconsin.

IT ALSO MEANS **WE WILL**

- Invest our resources towards encouraging pride of home ownership in Ashland;
- Identify and reach out to the diversity in our population that has defined us for hundreds of years;
- Work energetically and genuinely to re-engage the Native American community; and
- Ensure the community is genuinely and consistently consulted on matters that may determine the direction of Ashland.

IT MEANS **WE WILL NOT**

- Pursue projects that provide immediate financial gain to the city budget but that fail to align with community values and priorities.

Authentic Ashland means we like who we are and we honor who we were.

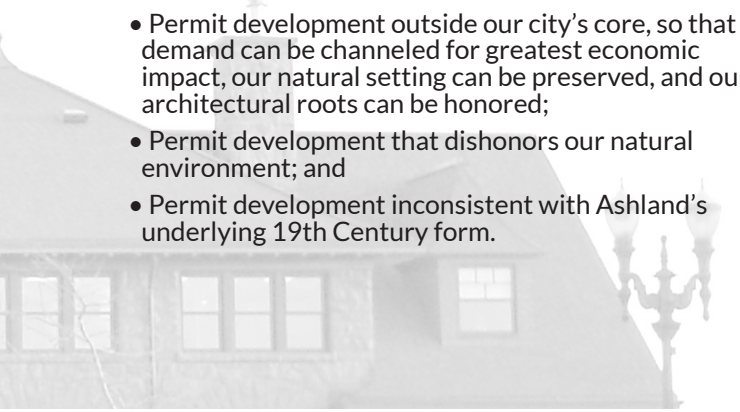
We choose to significantly invest our time and resources in our arts, in our cultural history, and in our architecture

WE WILL MAKE POLICIES AND TAKE ACTIONS TO:

- Promote the arts and other creative resident-led initiatives;
- Protect and enhance our physical form, our architectural heritage, and how our built environment supports our community and nurtures us civically;
- Prioritize the preservation of our historic and architectural assets and integrate them wisely with new development;
- Further stimulate downtown as a regional center of activity;
- Connect cultural and architectural assets to the neighborhoods and to each other;
- Enhance opportunities to play and recreate within the City; and
- Improve accessibility to public spaces and recreational amenities for residents and visitors.

IT MEANS **WE WILL NOT**

- Permit development that physically disconnects the shoreline from downtown, the college campus from the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown, and the neighborhoods from one another;
- Permit development outside our city's core, so that demand can be channeled for greatest economic impact, our natural setting can be preserved, and our architectural roots can be honored;
- Permit development that dishonors our natural environment; and
- Permit development inconsistent with Ashland's underlying 19th Century form.



Ashland's Planning Principles

This is the way we will make decisions. This is how we will evaluate the known challenges we face, as well as what's not foreseeable today, so that we will make progress towards our vision. We have to prioritize; everything cannot be equally important. We have to become financially self-sufficient and able to pay our own way. We must become genuinely sustainable from an environmental perspective. And on all things we must take a balanced portfolio approach – some years making gains on the environment, and other years making progress on other things we value.

Principle 1:
Ashland Must Prioritize

We understand that the work of reconnecting and revitalizing Ashland is expensive and time-consuming, and that prioritization is a necessity. We will have to make trade-offs –giving some to get some.

We will make policies and take actions that orient scarce resources towards rebuilding the middle market and towards preservation of our core assets: downtown, our college, our hospital, our lake shore, and our rich architectural heritage.

We will not deploy scarce resources on a worst first basis, whether in the work of catching up or keeping up with the challenges of managing Ashland.

Principle 2:
Ashland Must Be Financially Self-Sufficient

We are a proud community and that means we in Ashland commit to paying our own way.

We will stabilize our public finances; maintain control of our own community by seeking to pay our own way first before looking to other entities (county, state, federal, whomever) to pay for our community infrastructure and amenities; ensure we have a healthy fund balance to be able to tackle unanticipated problems as they arise; and do what it takes to retain and attract middle income households to support the local economy and the city's fiscal health.

We will not look continually to the State of Wisconsin and to the federal government as our default first tendency to pay for what we would prefer to not underwrite ourselves. While support from outside entities can be helpful and while we have made contributions to those pools of funding, they often come with rules and restrictions that – however unintentionally – can undermine our ability to put Ashland first.

Principle 3:
Ashland Must Be Environmentally Sustainable

We in Ashland conserve and protect our natural resources by actively adhering to the precautionary principle.

We will reduce our environmental footprint; and shift the entirety of the burden to developers to prove any new proposal will do no harm from the present and opposite mandate for the community to prove that development would.

We will not approve projects for economic gain only; or approve projects with known detrimental impacts on the environment.

Principle 4:
Ashland Must Be Spatially Re-Organized for the 21st Century

We understand that the city's population has shrunk and that infrastructure, buildings, and open spaces must be properly scaled and arranged to match Ashland's 21st century economic and demographic realities.

We will focus public resources and concentrate existing and new demand (for housing, retail, and office space) into areas that will increase vibrancy and economic strength. By creating critical mass in a smaller spatial footprint – instead of spreading public investment and private development thinly around the city – Ashland can adjust to market realities and maintain the feeling of a vital small town. Strong connections between the areas of activity will keep the city feeling like a physically coherent community.

We will not add new public infrastructure or amenities, nor facilitate private development outside of specific areas of activity just because space exists to do so. We will not ignore the reality that scarcity – of buildable land, of houses, of retail space – contributes to higher property values.

Applying the Planning Principles

When applying these principles – prioritization, self-sufficiency, sustainability, and spatial reorganization – we will do so in ways that achieve **reconnection**, that **right-size** our market, that **re-use** our heritage and our architectural traditions and materials, and that **re-orient** residential life towards a **reinvestment culture**. In this commitment we will **re-imagine** Ashland according to and by our planning principles.

Physically reconnecting, over time, the Lake Superior shoreline to the everyday fabric of the lives of the community.

This will mean having to rethink Lake Shore Drive, the shoreline, downtown, the trail system, and commerce. For this, the community will need to embrace the long-term vision of a downtown that is distinct yet connected seamlessly to the shoreline. This will require that the objective of re-weaving downtown to the shoreline and vice-versa is embraced by the community as a priority, because it will take time and significant expense to achieve. And while the state may be a partner on a new approach to handling traffic along Lake Shore Drive and sharing in the expense of redevelopment that prioritizes pedestrian access, the community should expect to shoulder a substantial portion of any future costs.

Rightsizing downtown to better fit current and near-future demand for retail and office space.

Downtown used to service the retail and office demands of a larger community and those in the surrounding area who didn't have as many options as they do now. The area market can access the internet and large super centers such as the Walmart on 26th when something is desired, Bayfield provides unique retail and services, and Duluth is only 90 minutes away. The net of the internet, excellent retail nearby, and suburban options, combined with population loss, is a reduced aggregate demand for downtown Ashland's 32 blocks. In today's economy, 12 to 14 blocks is a far more realistic scale. This will necessitate concentrated investment in the dozen-plus blocks between Ellis Avenue and 9th Avenue West, and Lake Shore Drive and 3rd Street East, and a disposition strategy for the 18-20 blocks for which there is no current market. The community will need to co-create the regulations and policies that encourage investments in the core while transitioning the balance of downtown space into a holding pattern conducive to alternative future uses. Patience will be needed.

Re-Using the aggregate of the near-downtown older industrial spaces that are too many and too large for current usage and which, by their emptiness and location, separate residential living from downtown commercial and civic life.

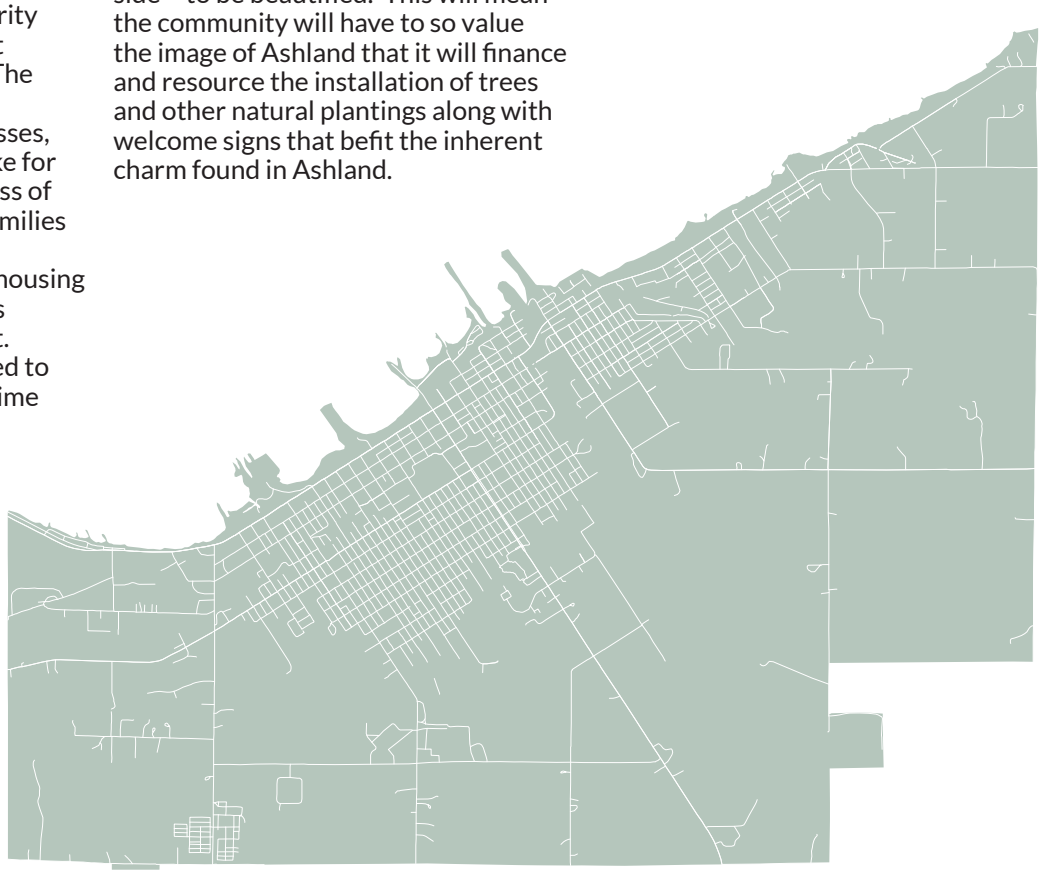
Adaptively re-using these sites that are prevalent in SoDo East and SoDo West will mean shifting from manufacturing usage and zoning to recreational, residential and light commerce. Temporary uses can hold the market steady, provide valuable space to the community, and not unintentionally close-off options. This will require significant investment by the community for redevelopment activities, such as the financing, construction, and management of a community center or other similar future endeavors.

Re-orienting residential life and reinvesting in Ashland's neighborhoods so that the homes are more valuable and fully express the pride of ownership, and so that public infrastructure is optimized.

Ashland's peak population was more than a century ago, yet the majority of the residential structures that served that population remain. The resulting combination of falling demand, too much supply, job losses, and demographic change all make for a weaker housing market. The loss of 1,916 people - or roughly 700 families - since 1960 means excess units needed to be absorbed into the housing market. It means current owners need encouragement to reinvest. And it means existing homes need to be creatively marketed to first-time buyers.

Re-imagining the entryways into and out from Ashland, so they project and reinforce confidence and beauty.

Too often, the entryways into beautiful and charming Ashland are neither beautiful nor charming. This undermines the marketing reach of the community and weakens the confidence of longtime residents and business stakeholders. It will be critical for each of the entry corridors – starting with Route 2 on the west side – to be beautified. This will mean the community will have to so value the image of Ashland that it will finance and resource the installation of trees and other natural plantings along with welcome signs that befit the inherent charm found in Ashland.



Ashland's Priorities

To realize an Authentic Ashland that is more vibrant, connected, and sustainable than it is today, it will be necessary to prioritize and focus – to channel limited resources in ways that are likely to yield results by having a positive influence on community confidence and on public and private investment behaviors. Six priorities – all of which relate to each other in significant ways – have been identified through the comprehensive planning process, along with action steps that Ashland can pursue to make progress on each priority.

These priorities and recommended actions align with existing conditions and opportunities, as well as the community's values and planning principles. They are not, however, an inviolable "to do" list. As conditions change and new opportunities present themselves, the community should feel empowered and obligated to revise these priorities and recommendations through a steadfast application of its values and principles.



Make Downtown Ashland Great

Tightly focus public and private investment in downtown Ashland to cultivate a healthy, vibrant market for commercial and residential space.



Protect and Connect the Lake

Continue to link the city and its people to Lake Superior by developing a collection of exceptional and connected public spaces.



Knit the Urban Fabric Together

Leverage the city's gridiron street network, pedestrian scale, and gateway opportunities to make the city as welcoming, walkable, and cohesive as possible.



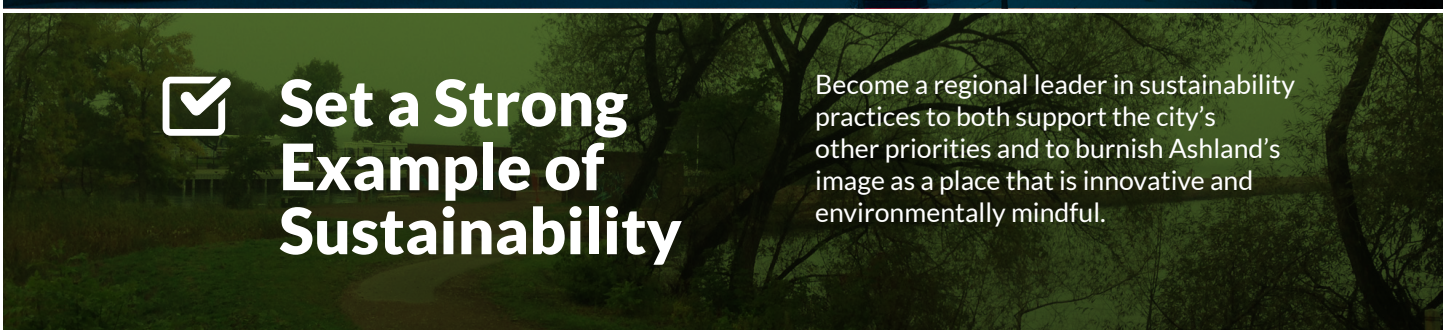
Strengthen the Housing Market

Make Ashland a city where neighborhood pride is widely evident, where housing options are broad and appealing, and where residential investment is focused around the city's historic core.



Promote Place-Based Economic Development

Treat the city's quality of life and educational assets as the building blocks for attracting and retaining skilled individuals and for cultivating new economic activity.



Set a Strong Example of Sustainability

Become a regional leader in sustainability practices to both support the city's other priorities and to burnish Ashland's image as a place that is innovative and environmentally mindful.

Ashland's Priorities

Make Downtown Ashland Great

WHY IT MATTERS

Ashland's downtown is remarkably intact and remains the center for civic, if not economic, activity within the community. Strengthening the businesses on Main Street is essential if the city is going to attract entrepreneurs and younger families – and capture their dollars. The aesthetics of downtown have steadily improved over the years owing to the work of the Chamber of Commerce and its ongoing efforts to beautify Main Street with planting and banner programs. Where historic building fabric has been lost over the years, the community-wide mural program has been wildly successful in bringing these newly exposed facades back to life.

But there are still too many underutilized buildings and vacancy rates that are too high for the downtown to truly thrive. There are still too few shops and too few residents living in the downtown in the available second and third stories of many of the buildings. Moving forward, Ashland must shrink the geography of the downtown and increase its economic incentives to fully realize downtown's potential as the heart of the city.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

The city is at a crossroads: either spatially reorganize the entire community around the downtown as the core or allow individual projects outside this area to whittle away the energy and funding necessary to revitalize the downtown. It is essential that all community organizations collaborate and focus their resources to fully realize this endeavor. This plan recommends a multi-faceted approach to revitalization including economic incentives for catalytic projects that will create a stronger sense of place:

1 Focus resources to have a more rapid, transformative impact

Establish a targeted revitalization zone

2 Boost downtown's coordination, marketing, and investment capacity

Implement a state affiliated Main Street Program

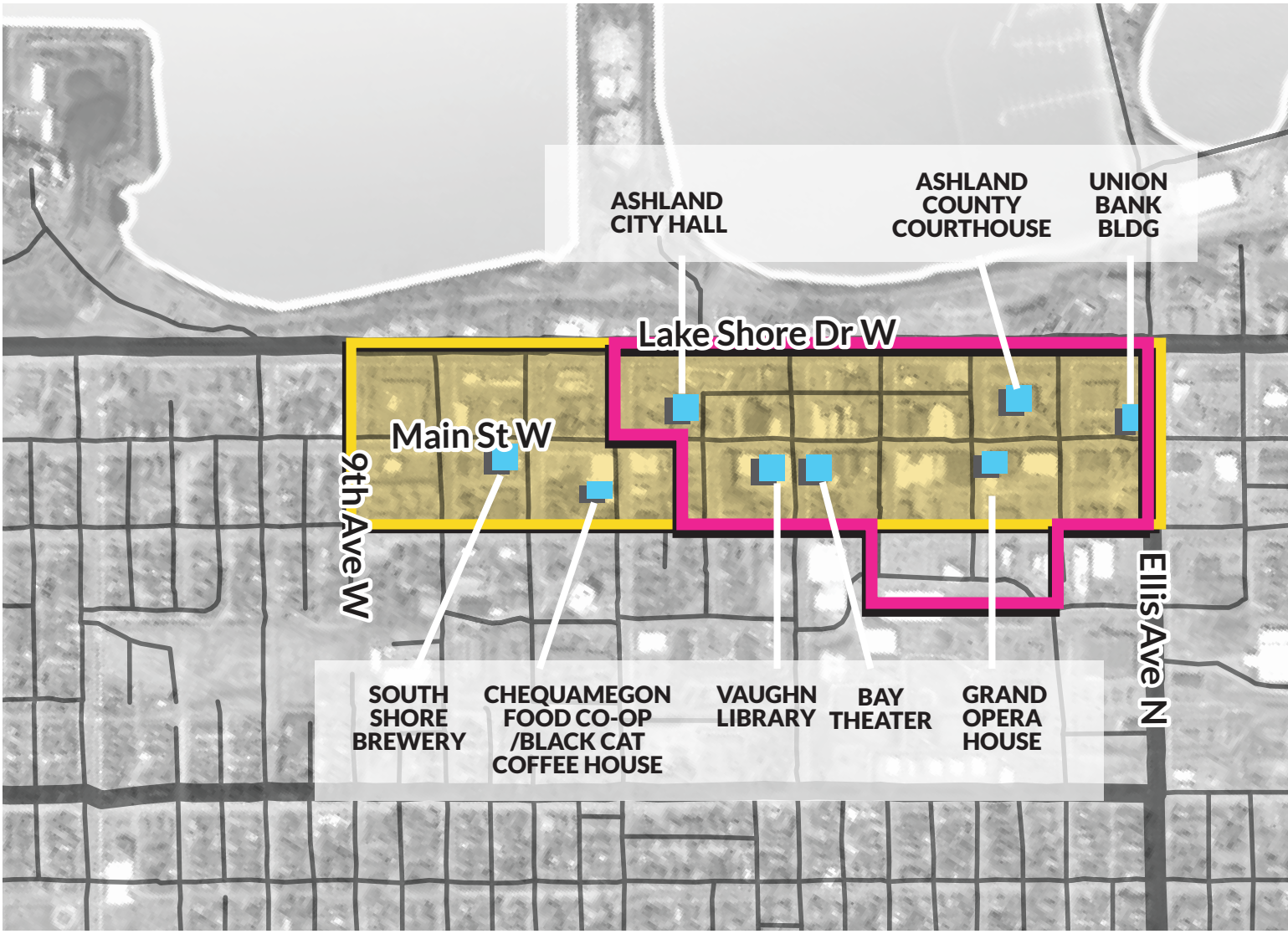
Strengthen and expand the Second Street Historic District to leverage funding

Market downtown's abundant parking opportunities

Explore the opportunity to create a Business Improvement District (BID)

3 Protect downtown by making good land use decisions citywide


MANUFACTURERS



TARGETED REVITALIZATION ZONE

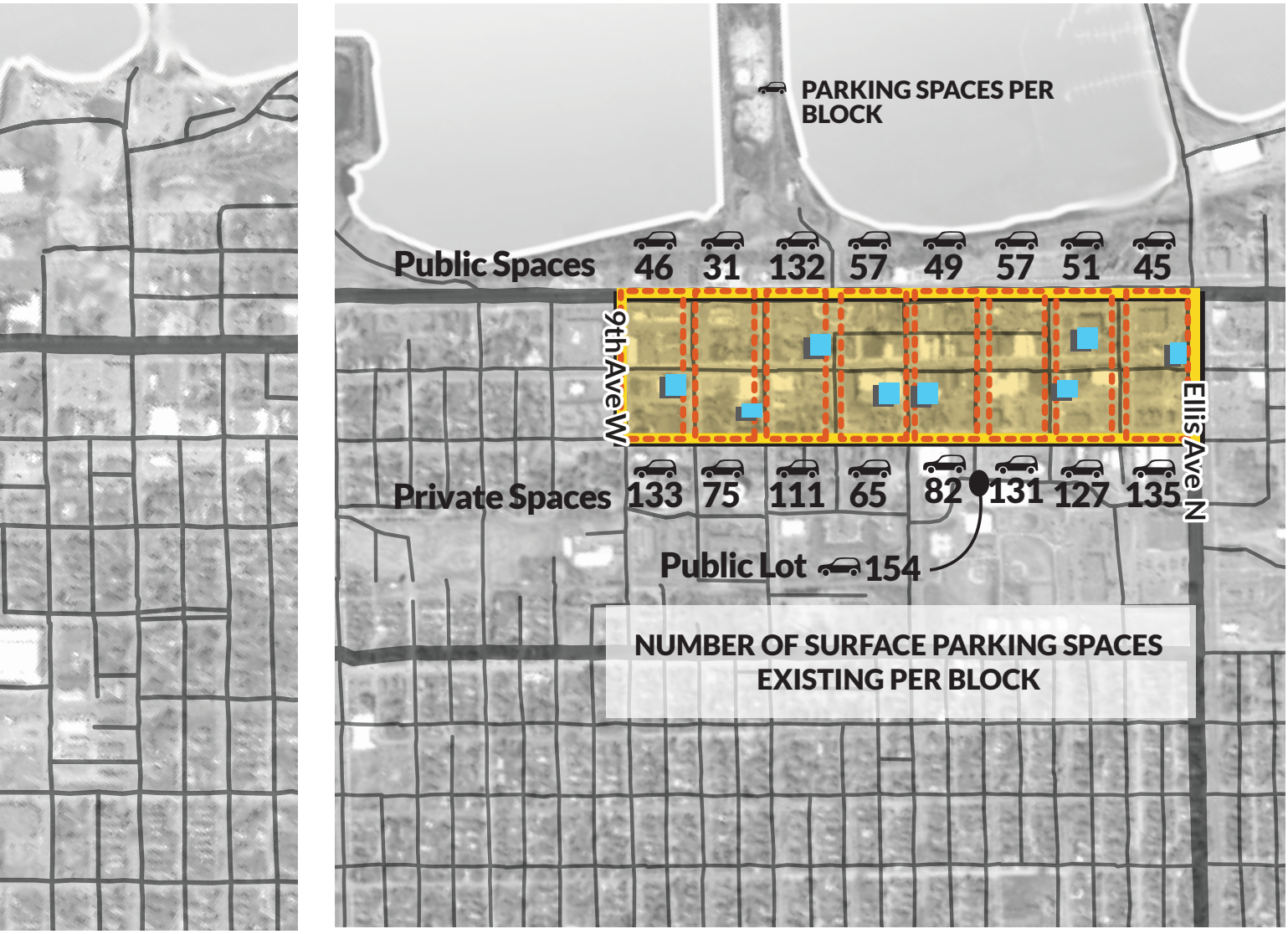
WEST SECOND STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

1 Focus resources to have a more rapid, transformative impact

The current, or more accurately, historic configuration of downtown extends from Stuntz Avenue to 10th Avenue West – at 16 linear blocks, an overwhelming geography for a small town's Main Street/Downtown. Ashland is a city that has shrunk in population by almost 40% over the past 100 years and so should downtown. A strong historic core provides opportunities for retail and office development as well as new and rehabilitated residential development.

Establish a targeted revitalization zone

The historic building fabric that exists along Main Street most accurately defines the geography of the downtown today – the area between Ellis Avenue and 9th Avenue West represents what is functionally serving as present day downtown. This is the area that should be targeted for infill, historic preservation, new business and mixed-use opportunities.



2 Boost downtown's coordination, marketing, and investment capacity

The City of Ashland and the Chamber of Commerce have done solid work to position downtown for success. To advance to a new level, however, greater capacity is needed to market downtown Ashland, coordinate projects and improvement, leverage available resources for renovation and redevelopment – and to make sure that high standards are both set and adhered to.

Implement a state affiliated Main Street Program

The city does not currently participate in the National Main Street Center's (NMSC) programs. But it should – and doing so would open opportunities for technical assistance and networking with successful communities across the state.

The National Main Street Center is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a partnership that illustrates the important connection between a successful Main Street and historic preservation.

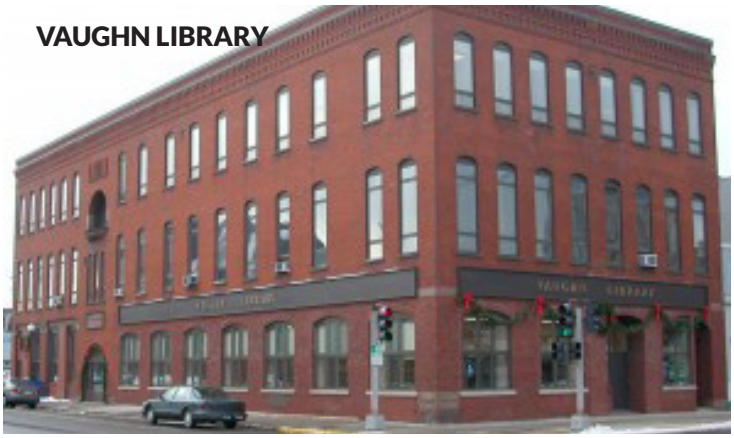
Ashland's Main Street is the downtown; a district populated by historic buildings, challenged by storefront vacancies, the location of a variety of parades and festivals, the home to City Hall and other civic institutions, and in need of revitalization. Coupling the Main Street program with the newly identified downtown geography provides focus for the community in terms of revitalization efforts and would enhance the Connect Communities Program that is currently in place with the Chamber of Commerce.

Strengthen and expand the Second Street Historic District to leverage funding

At a local level, historic preservation is the practice of protecting or preserving sites and structures that reflect local history. At the core of historic preservation is cultural preservation that allows us to better understand the place in which we live. But a deeply held love affair with our past (nostalgia, aesthetics, quality, etc.) is not the only reason Ashland should embolden its historic preservation programs; it's about the money. The federal and state historic tax credit program is considered the largest community reinvestment









program in the country and use of these tax credits for an approved rehabilitation project in Ashland could cut the total rehabilitation costs by 40%; in many cases making a project financially feasible – with healthy return on investment – when it was not previously so.

Many of the buildings in downtown are located within the West Second Street Historic District and are locally and nationally designated structures (43 historically significant or contributing structures). The use of tax credits could serve as the necessary gap financing that determines whether a building is renovated or not.

Market downtown's abundant parking opportunities

The vibrancy of downtown depends upon the success of local businesses that in turn depend upon visibility and accessibility to the local consumer. Parking is an essential element to this accessibility. Ashland's downtown is fortunate to have significant parking opportunities, both on street and within city-owned lots. With over 600 public parking spaces available (and over 800 private spaces) within the downtown district, the city should consider marketing efforts to ensure that residents and visitors understand its availability and rebut the oft-heard statement that parking is not available.

Explore the opportunity to create a Business Improvement District (BID)

The appeal of a Business Improvement District (BID) lies in its inherent ability to synthesize individual businesses into a single entity that manages and assists the businesses as a whole. This structure allows smaller shops to realize greater marketing possibilities that would otherwise not be possible if they were solely acting on their own. The BID could work with downtown Ashland businesses to set uniform hours of operation, organize promotional activities, carry out necessary maintenance, etc. Based on Wisconsin law, Ashland may establish one or more BIDs within the community and create an assessment methodology, typically a self-imposed tax, which is collected by the city and forwarded to the BID to fund ongoing operations.



GRAND OPERA HOUSE



BAY THEATER

The federal and state historic tax credit programs can provide up to a combined 40% of the equity needed for rehabilitation costs to qualifying historic structures. Often, this provides the gap financing that takes a project from infeasible to feasible.

Suppose a developer wants to redevelop a Main Street building with ground floor retail and upper floor apartments. It would cost $200,000 to purchase the building, which has suffered from years of deferred maintenance. **Does the project make sense on paper?**



WITHOUT historic tax credits →

The cost estimate for rehabilitation is $300,000.

The developer's initial pro-forma shows a shortfall in projected revenue (rents) when compared to rehabilitation expenses, borrowing costs, and property taxes. →

PROJECT NOT FEASIBLE

WITH historic tax credits →

The cost estimate for rehabilitation that meets federal standards for historic preservation is $350,000.

With federal and state historic tax credits providing approximately 35% of the equity needed for rehabilitation costs (or about $122,500), the developer's initial pro-forma shows a slight profit that is just enough to give this project the green light.

With the historic tax credits, projected revenue (rents) will pay down the borrowed money for construction costs. →

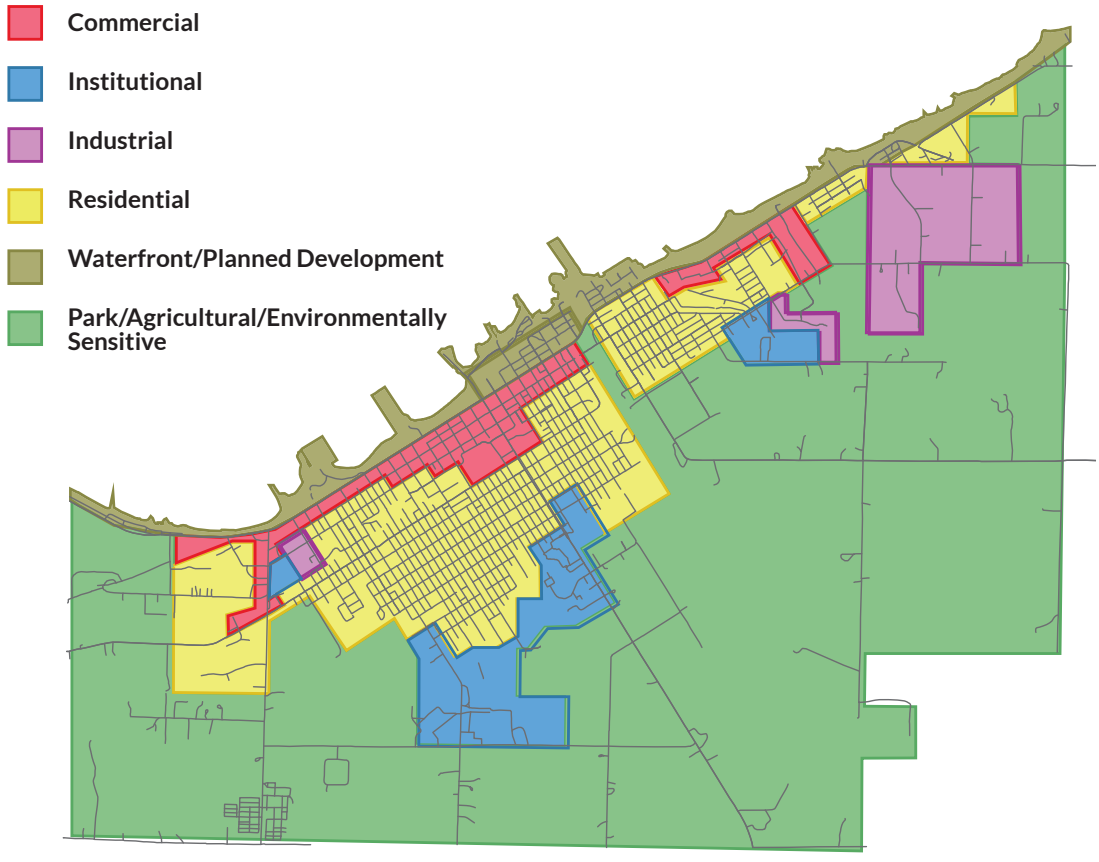
PROJECT FEASIBLE

3 Protect Downtown by Making Good Citywide Land Use Decisions

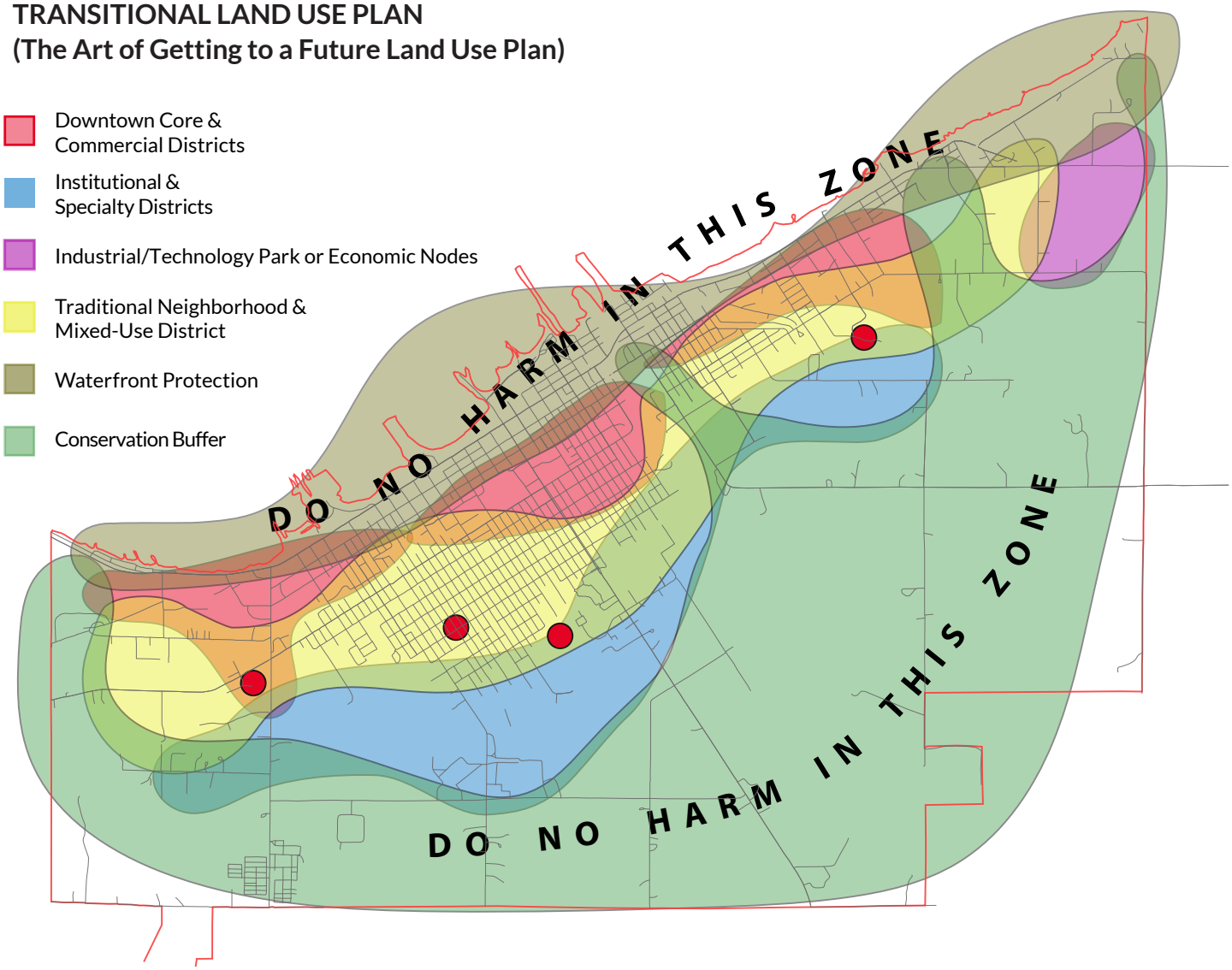
Downtown is the core of the community and its viability is incrementally strengthened or weakened by every single land use and zoning decision. Every property that is developed or up zoned to allow for commercial development or given a conditional use permit to develop outside of the downtown has an impact. Without question, warehousing or industrial facilities do not belong in the downtown. Properly dispersed neighborhood retail shops or grocers/ markets or local "waterholes" do not detract from the downtown and are in fact essential to walkable neighborhoods. But office development and commercial development that draws workers and visitors and shoppers away from the traditional heart of the City gradually erode the need for and viability of the downtown. As Ashland moves forward with land use and zoning code amendments, we must recognize the direct correlation these decisions will have on the downtown.

The future land use plan (addressed in detail in Part 2 of the Comprehensive Plan) is included below. The three-part sequence is designed to illustrate the existing land use plan with a general progression to the desired future land use plan. It is difficult to pinpoint exact future uses so the following represents the progression from what the current situation is on the ground to the desired land uses – a community that protects its waterfront and conservation buffer areas while developing the core with a major commercial node, neighborhood service nodes, residential surrounding, and educational/institutional/health services in nodal development patterns on the southern boundary of the residential core. The waterfront area and the conservation buffer should be protected from development. Any rehabilitation or replacement structures within these zones should have strict design guidelines to ensure their quality, specifically the waterfront area.

EXISTING LAND USE PLAN



TRANSITIONAL LAND USE PLAN
(The Art of Getting to a Future Land Use Plan)



Downtown Core & Commercial Districts
While a variety of commercial uses make up the majority of these districts, these areas should increasingly be populated by mixed-use development. Residential development and/or offices on the upper floors of retail establishments are encouraged within these districts. Residential development is, and should be, designed at higher densities in these areas. Buildings should front the rights-of-way and begin to move away from the post-WW2 development pattern that situated buildings behind large expanses of parking lots. While the reversal of this outdated development pattern will take time, all new construction must be required to adhere to the new and more desirable setbacks and zoning should be adjusted accordingly. The Commercial Nodes (identified by the red circles) illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan represent commercial opportunities within the existing residential areas of the community. These are those neighborhood "centers" that provide restaurant or retail opportunities within the neighborhoods and at an appropriate scale (see Traditional Neighborhood & Mixed-Use Districts below).

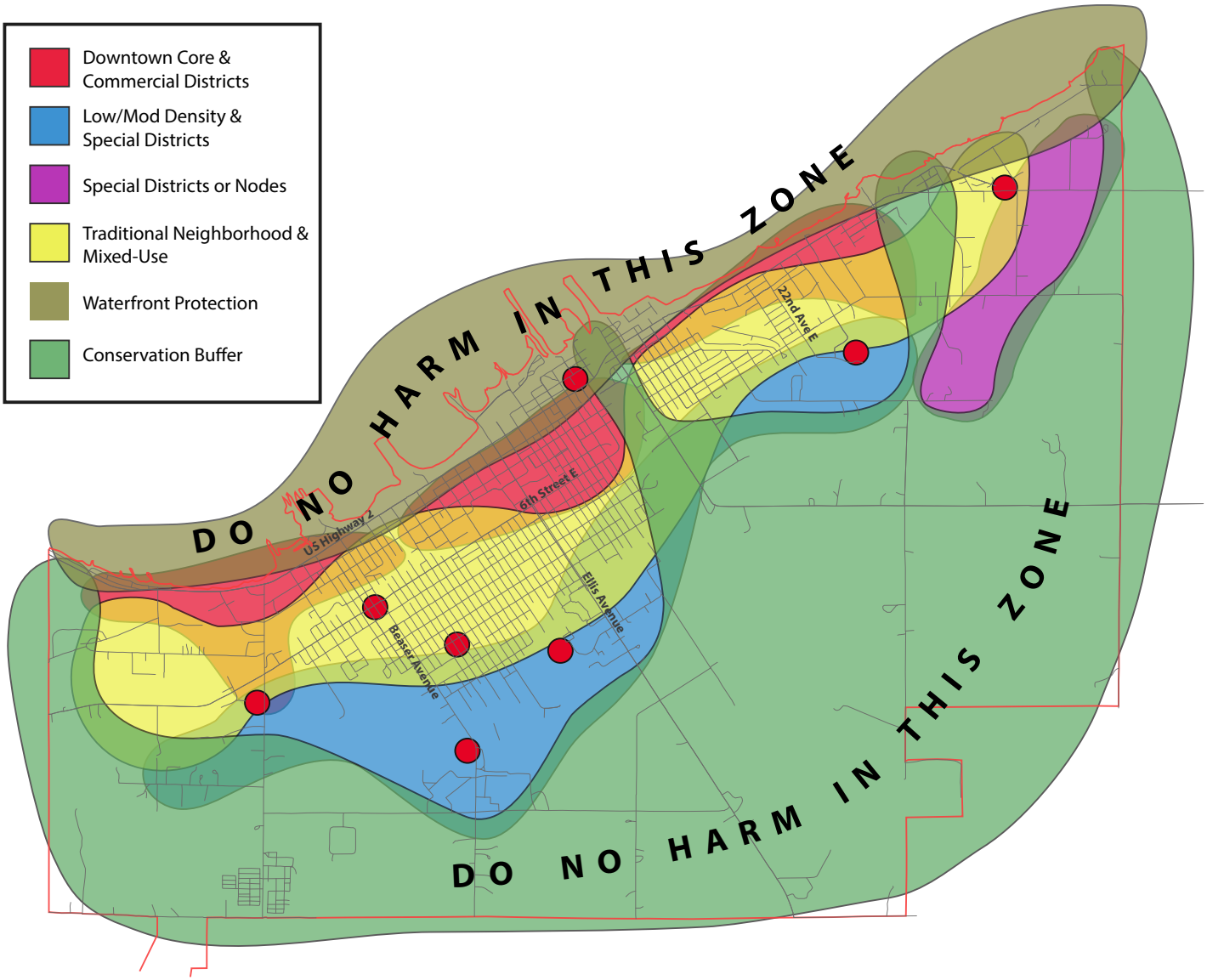
Institutional & Specialized Districts
Hospitals, medical centers, colleges/universities and public facilities make up the majority of uses within the institutional and specialized districts. Parks and playgrounds are appropriate secondary uses within these areas and are encouraged. The City's Planning Department or Planning Commission should consider small retail and restaurant/café uses on a case-by-case basis – for example, a lunchtime café near a hospital is a prime opportunity. This is especially true given the need (reduce traffic trips) and desirability (convenience) to provide such services in close proximity to these popular employment centers.

Industrial/Technology Park or Economic Nodes
Industrial/technology facilities tend to be concentrated in specific zones as a result of delivery/pick-up and transportation needs (as well as the size of buildings needed for fabrication of materials) and should be limited to specific sites within the community as noted. Landscaping and screening requirements should be strongly implemented and enforced in these areas.

Traditional Neighborhood & Mixed-Use Districts
Single-family housing is the primary building typology in the traditional neighborhood districts. Duplexes and townhouses are often interspersed within these areas and provide a greater range of housing options for households of various income levels. Neighborhoods are not typically considered for mixed-use opportunities but it is strongly recommended that the community begin to consider small cafes (coffee shops, tea houses, bakeries, etc.) or a local mom-n-pop hardware store or pottery or art shop. The Commercial Nodes (identified by the red circles) represent these opportunities. A community cannot always predict where a need, or opportunity, for such will arise but we should plan for it. The Planning Department and Planning Commission can and should lead the way to allow these minor changes to the black-and white-framework that currently defines zoning in the United States.

Conservation Buffer
The area surrounding the core of the community – the downtown, the neighborhoods, the institutions and industrial sites – should be protected from development for the foreseeable future. This will encourage and guide infill development that will be integrated with the existing built fabric as well as provide a buffer between Ashland and it's neighbors.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN



A land use map at this scale cannot illustrate all existing or desired conditions on the ground level within neighborhoods, it is recommended that Ashland look to create opportunities for small commercial opportunities (e.g. coffee shop, bakery, café, etc.) to be scattered throughout the residential neighborhoods. More specifically, the city should consider the allowance for small neighborhood retail and restaurants as a conditional use in the residential zoning districts. The random "neighborhood commercial districts" included on the third map are not site specific, but rather indicative of the opportunity to scatter these uses throughout the community.

The Five First Steps to Downtown Revitalization

1. Downtown Needs a Champion
Every revitalization effort needs a champion, someone to initiate the effort, capture the community's vision in an on-the-ground effort, and fight every step of the way. Revitalization efforts are hard. Really hard. City Hall can't, and shouldn't, do it all. The same is true of the Chamber of Commerce. Ashland needs a "downtown person," a "main street person" to serve in this role. Affiliating the downtown with the National Main Street Center (NMSC) and hiring a local representative, a Main Street Coordinator, are necessary if change and revitalization are truly desired for downtown.

2. Increase Activity
People are drawn to other people, even more so than they are drawn to beautiful buildings or plazas in cities. An evolutionary trait reminding us that we find comfort and safety in the presence of others or the simple social desire to spend time with our fellow community members? Either way – make things happen in downtown. Provide opportunities on a regular basis for the community to gather. Hold parades. Encourage dining decks in sporadic on-street parking locations (thus "widening the sidewalk") for outdoor dining in front of restaurants. Consider similar hours of operation for businesses to encourage crossover trips. Program this space known as downtown.

3. Make Getting and Staying There Easy
Parking is essential for any downtown. And Ashland has plenty of it. With almost 1500 surface parking spaces identified within the nine-block stretch of downtown (including 154 "overflow" spaces near the Bay Area City Center - and less than a five minute walk away; Ashland has an abundance of parking. Advertise this asset. Market it. Sell it. This parking, coupled with easy access for pedestrians and cars via two-way streets laid out in a traditional grid pattern, refute any argument that these are to blame for downtown's current condition. It's 2017 and the challenge for downtown Ashland is not parking. It is not accessibility. It is creating a reason to be there, both day and night.

4. Think Residential(ly)
Given the choice, people prefer to shop near where they live. If the underutilized second and third floors of many of the buildings along Main Street are rehabilitated to provide living space, a built-in clientele for the downtown businesses will be created. Whether for young residents needing an apartment or empty-nesters needing step-down housing and less square feet to maintain or new student housing for Northland College, downtown is the ideal "neighborhood" in which to live. Remember, first comes residential development; retail follows. Incentivize residential development and realize the power of this magnet to attract commercial development.

5. Focus on the Pedestrian
Downtown has good bones. The buildings, many of which are historic, range in height from two to four stories on average. They front the sidewalk; parking is to the rear. The street pattern and sidewalks remain much the same as they did 75 years ago. Highway 2, Lake Shore Drive, was designed for the car and functions accordingly. Protect and ensure that Main Street remains for pedestrians. Cars do and always will coexist on Main Street, but the emphasis should be on the pedestrian. Upgraded amenities such as benches, lighting, street trees and trash receptacles are important elements for the pedestrian experience. The aesthetic of Main Street and its historic character should continue to be protected with design guidelines that reinforce this unique sense of space and further encourage a variety of users to take to the streets. Jane Jacobs said it best, "this is something everyone knows: a well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. A deserted city street is apt to be unsafe."








STOP

Ashland's Priorities

Protect and Connect the Lake

WHY IT MATTERS

The city's new logo says it best: "Find yourself next to the water." The importance of Lake Superior and the Chequamegon Bay to the City of Ashland cannot be overstated. The lake is symbolic in terms of the unique geographic setting it provides as well as the opportunities it presents for the city's economic and recreational base. The lake was Ashland's historic gateway to the world as iron ore and lumber were amassed at the lakeshore for transfer to ships – and it will be equally influential to shaping the city's future.

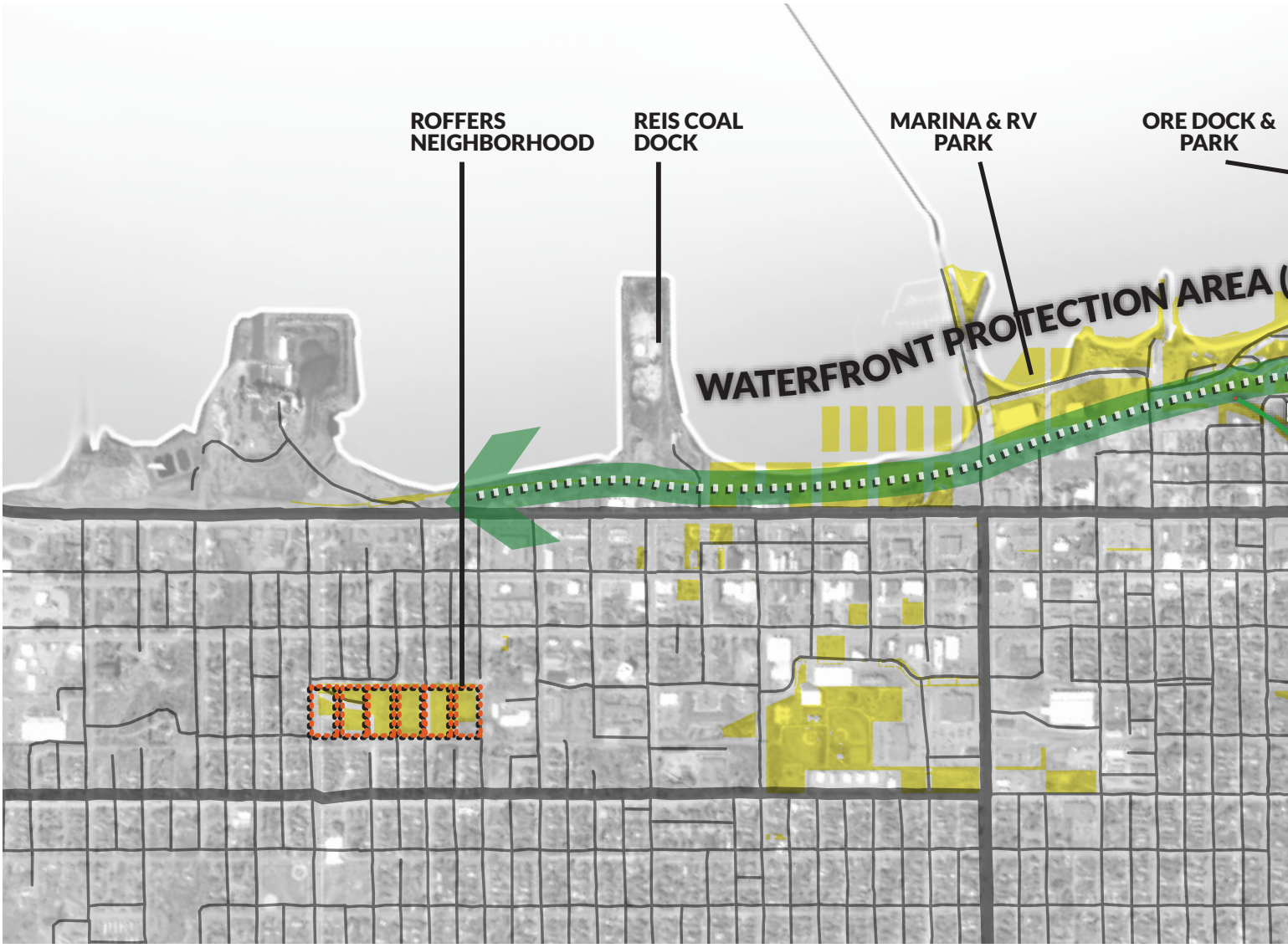
Find yourself next to the water.
ASHLAND
visitashland.com WISCONSIN

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

For the lake to shape Ashland in the 21st Century, it must be treated in ways that stimulate demand for the city's downtown and neighborhoods. This means that high-quality connections and access to the lake are profoundly important. The following are examples of projects that would enhance the lakeshore and its connections to the city:

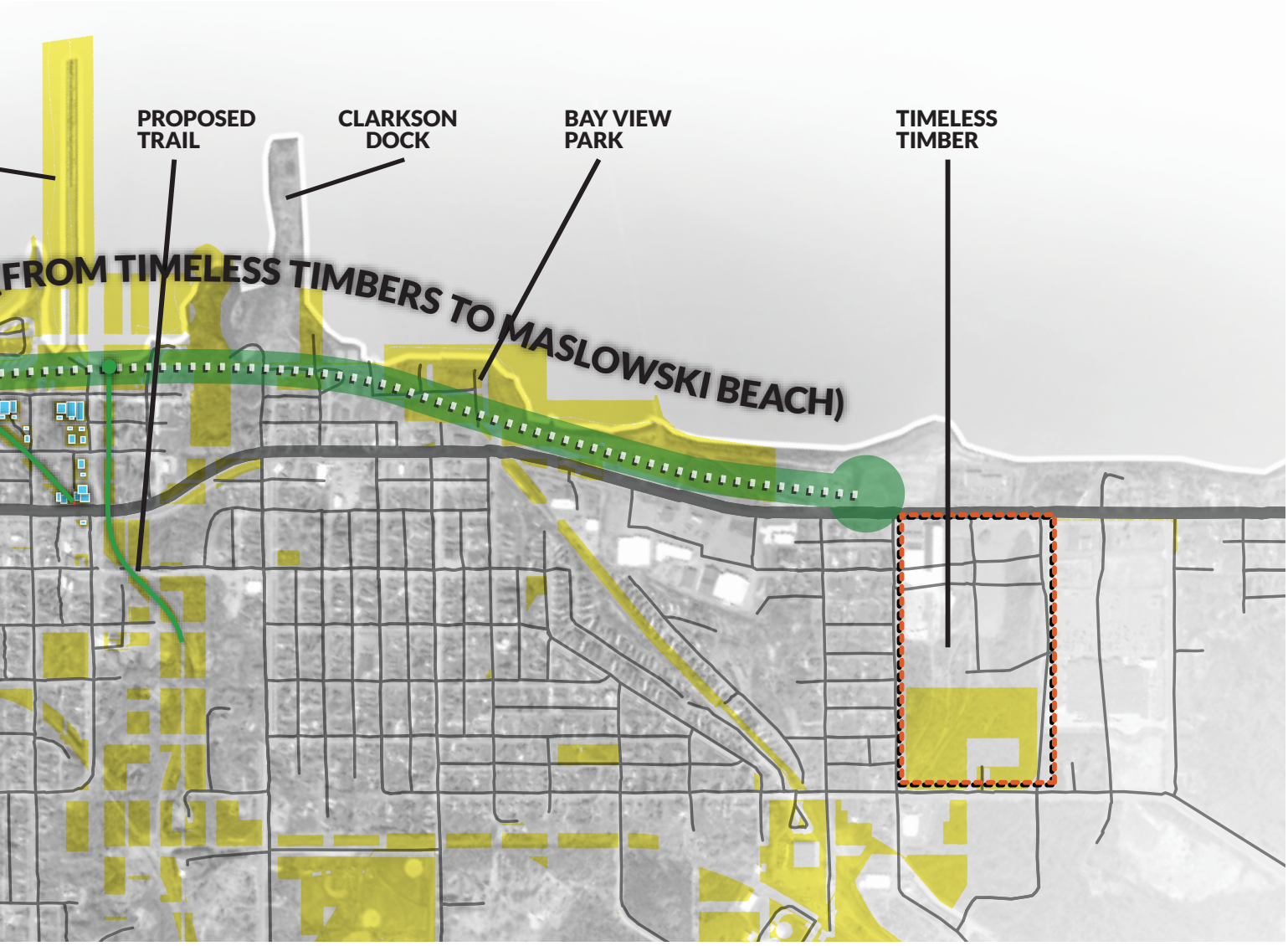
1. **Capitalize upon the Waterfront Trail as a protection area**
2. **Complete the ore dock and park project**
3. **Ensure that the reuse of the superfund clean up site protects the integrity of the lake**





1 Capitalize upon the Waterfront Trail as a protection area

Beyond the former industrial docks and piers that serve as "fingers into the lake" are those connections that tie the urban form of Ashland to the lake – trails. Most notable is the Waterfront Trail, extending approximately 3.5 miles from Maslowski Beach to just east of Bay View Park. This segment of Ashland's shoreline serves as the city's playground along the waterfront and should continue to be protected. The city has significant land holdings within this area and has been instrumental in reclaiming much of this land from its prior industrial uses and converting to public use and recreational amenities that are widely used today. The city should continue to lead these efforts to ensure that future generations of Ashlanders will continue to have access to and enjoy the waterfront.



The Waterfront Trail combined with the city's existing land ownership in this area offers a variety of opportunities to better connect these assets while providing space for housing and mixed-use developments that would contribute to the community's economy. The following maps illustrate the existing conditions, the city's land ownership, and the possible mixed-use and residential developments that could be constructed on land sold by the city with strict design requirements.

CITY-OWNED PARCELS

PROPOSED TRAILS

NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CITY OWNED & POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

Ore Dock - Focused Planning Area



CITY-OWNED PARCELS

BUILDINGS

NEW DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CITY OWNED & POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT AREAS



Source: Ore Dock Consultants – Proposed Design (March 2016) SmithGroupJJR

2 Complete the ore dock and park project

The recent design work by SmithGroupJJR is indicative of the kind of high quality design efforts that should be explored for all aspects of the waterfront. Formerly known as the Soo Line Ore Dock, this structure extends almost 2000' into Lake Superior, and carries with it a unique historical connection to Ashland. The demolition of the superstructure in 2013, while controversial, provided the city yet another opportunity to reconnect the residents of Ashland to the water. The completion of the ore dock, in phases, must be a priority for the city and be viewed as an opportunity to showcase the city's shoreline.

3 Ensure that the reuse of the superfund clean up site protects the integrity of the lake

The area around the Ashland Marina and Kreher RV Park was once the home of the city's wastewater treatment plant. Today, the marina and the RV park provide recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. The Superfund site is the approximately 10+ acres of land between the marina and the RV park that is in the process of being cleaned up for redevelopment purposes. The current proposal to utilize this area for an expanded marina, event space, an amphitheater, and possible boat storage appears to be informed by community input to date and is in line with the city's highest core value – protect the city and area's natural beauty. The lake is central to this effort.

Ashland's Priorities

Knit the Urban Fabric Together

WHY IT MATTERS

Connectivity is the basis for good neighborhoods, social interactions, a good economy, and just about every aspect of our lives. Today "being connected" is most often associated with the Internet, but it is also essential to our physical world and to creating places where people want to put down roots, buy a home, or open a business.







HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

While Ashland's historic street grid provides excellent connectivity within most of the city, there are some gaps that can be improved upon by implementing a few important missing elements:

1. **Add Connections from the Waterfront Trail to the Tri-County Corridor Trail**
2. **Reimage the City's Entryways**
3. **East Meets West – Connect the Neighborhoods**
4. **Capture Views to the Lake Along North/ South Street Corridors**

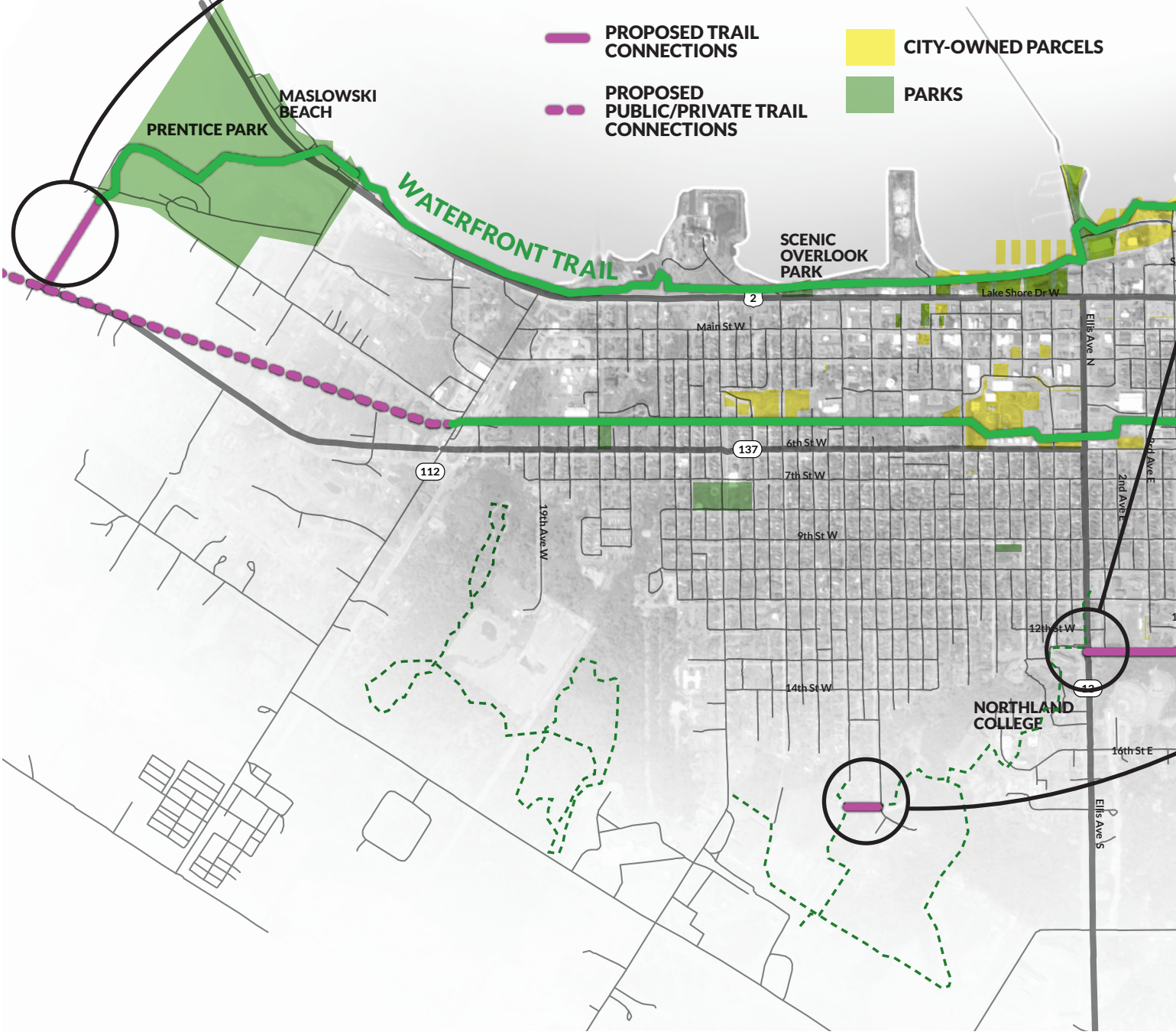

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1 Add connections from the Waterfront Trail to the Tri-County Corridor Trail

The Waterfront Trail is more than a trail. It is much more than the crushed gravel and asphalt that make up its physical surface; it is a spine that links the entire lakeshore. But it goes even further. It connects to and is integrated, almost seamlessly, with the Tri-County Trail – a regional trail that extends 60 miles west. to Superior, Wisconsin.

Three locations stand out in terms of needing a new north/south connection to get people from the Waterfront Trail and back to the Tri-County Trail.

1. The first notable disconnect is at **Maslowski Beach where the Waterfront Trail ends.** Improved signage for the existing trail connection south into Prentice Park and along Park Road through the length of the park is needed. Once across Wipperfurth Road is a private dirt road/trail that continues south where it ties into the Tri-County Corridor trail. Negotiations with the private property owner would be necessary to execute this proposed connection.



2. The second and more difficult connection is **from Ellis Avenue and 12th Street West (and the bridge over Bay City Creek) along Bay City Creek to Ore Dock Park**. While most of this proposed trail is located on city-owned land, there would be some necessary land acquisition and/or easements needed primarily as the trail moves east from Ellis Avenue along the 12th Street West un-built right-of-way and meanders along the creek.

3. There is a small section of the private trail network that could benefit from a possible public private partnership with Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College, Northland College, a private landowner, and the City of Ashland. The **missing trail connection is located between 9th Avenue West and MacArthur Avenue** on the southernmost end where each street essentially terminates. This connection would allow WITC students access to the trails on the Northland campus and ultimately link the students to the proposed trail along Bay City Creek that connects to the lake.



Ashland's Waterfront Trail is a unique asset









Soo Line and trestle structure crossing Lake Shore Drive (prior to demolition in 2013).





Conceptual entryway features on Lake Shore Drive at Stuntz Avenue (looking west) that incorporates architectural elements from the original trestle structure that carried the Soo Rail line over Lake Shore Drive to the ore dock.

2 Reimage the city's entryways

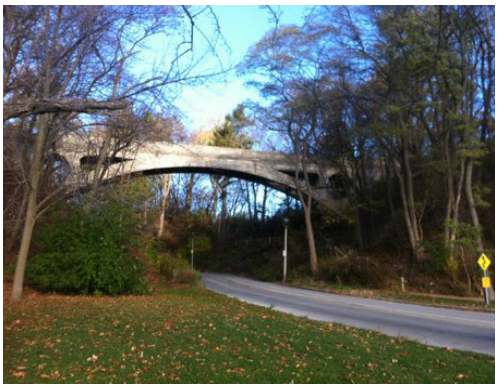
Highway 2, or Lake Shore Drive, is the primary east/west corridor through Ashland and despite its efficiency to move traffic effortlessly through the city, this arterial creates a significant divide between the fabric of the city and the Lake Superior shoreline. It is notable that a review of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation data (2011) revealed an Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) count of approximately 12,000 vehicles…and only four (4) pedestrians and zero bikes over a 16-hour period. This arterial was built to do one thing – move vehicles.

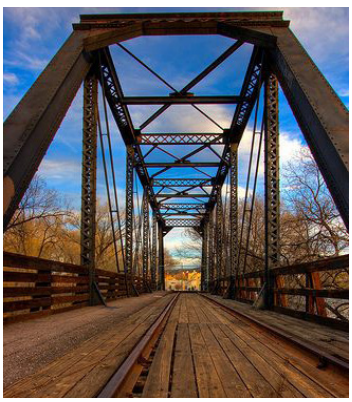
At present, the entryways into the community along Lake Shore Drive are understated at best, completely absent at worst. For visitors, it is not clear when you have arrived in Ashland from the east or west side. Aesthetic improvements that include trees and enhanced crosswalks at "gateways" could frame the highway as you enter. Such improvements often create the illusion of "narrowing the road," which induces slower traffic speeds as vehicles move through town.



3 East Meets West – Connect the Neighborhoods

The Bay City Creek riparian corridor that effectively divides the Ellis Park neighborhood from the Eastlake neighborhood has long challenged Ashland. While the disconnect is certainly not purposeful, the result is that the Eastlake neighborhood is only connected to the downtown, the community center and park, the hospital, and the colleges by way of Lake Shore Drive or Main Street East. In addition to the recommended trail connections previously noted, the city should explore opportunities to extend a right-of-way over Bay City Creek effectively bridging the gap between 7th Avenue East and 11th Avenue East. One possible connection to consider is 6th Street East over Bay City Creek. 6th Street East is the City's primary collector and would create an effective connection to the Eastlake neighborhood with no disturbance to existing neighborhood structures.





Precedent images for 6th Street connection bridge structure.

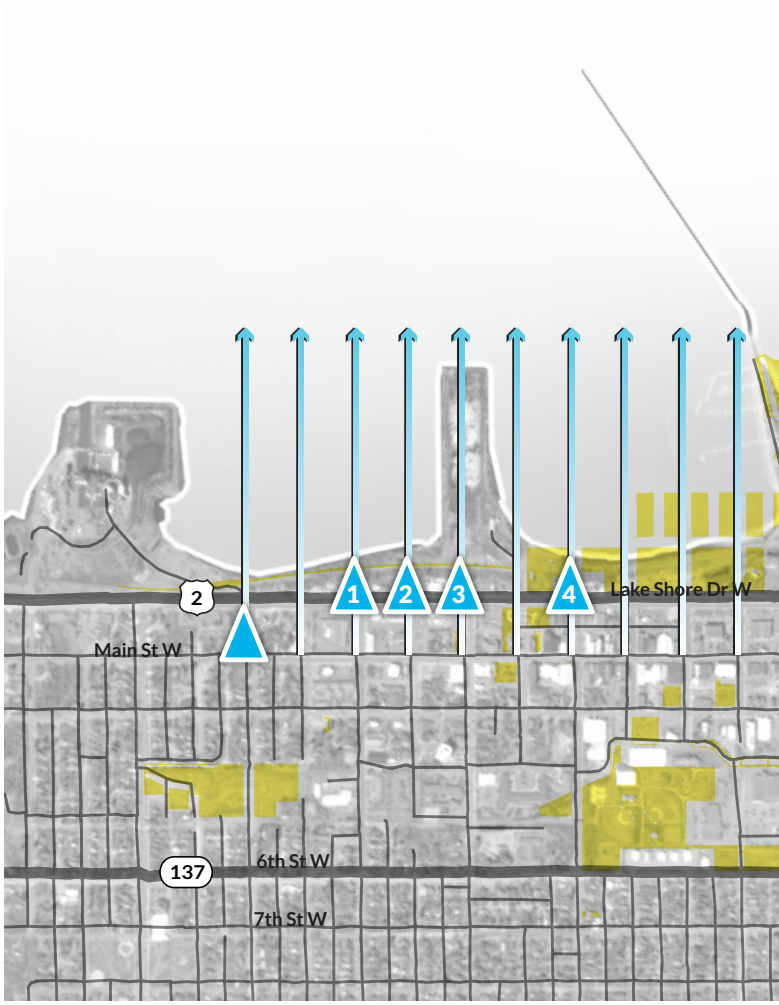


The photo above illustrates the power and beauty of the views to the lake along non-obstructed rights-of-way (11th Avenue West, as an example).

4 Capture views to the lake along north/ south street corridors

Ashland must capitalize on the opportunities that the city's rights-of-way provide for experiencing the lake by preserving viewsheds along its north/ south streets. Specifically, the area noted as the Waterfront Protection Area extending from Bay View Park to Maslowski Beach should be protected with revisions to the zoning ordinance (e.g. setbacks and lot coverage) to ensure quality views to the lake along these corridors.

The map below notes four primary view corridors along north/south rights-of-way that have been compromised due to poorly located structures on the waterfront. This is not to suggest that the city take action to buy or relocate any of these sites (although the two that are vacated could be candidates for acquisition) but rather work with these owners to properly locate new structures at time of planning/zoning review when changes are requested in the future.



The blue view corridors illustrate extensions of the city's street grid and should be protected with enhanced zoning on the waterfront side of Lake Shore Drive. There are four noticeably obstructed view corridors along the west side of the downtown: 9th Avenue West, MacArthur Ave, Chapple Ave, and Vaughn Ave.




Water St
Saint Claire St
Front St E
Main St E
Lake Shore Dr E
Ellis Ave N
5th Ave E
7th Ave E
22nd Ave E
3rd Ave E
6th St E
N 14th Ave E
2nd Ave E
11th


2


3


4

Ashland's Priorities

Strengthen the Housing Market

WHY IT MATTERS

A shrinking and aging population, a lack of investment in older homes, and a mismatch between the housing types that buyers want and what Ashland offers has resulted in a housing market dynamic that does not benefit the city's future. Where newer, more marketable housing has been built, it has only drawn demand away from the city's core neighborhoods – which increasingly struggle. Diffused demand notwithstanding, Ashland's neighborhoods are attractive, walkable, and often conveniently located – exactly what emerging generations of homeowners want, if the homes themselves are upgraded. This is the opportunity Ashland cannot fail to seize because Ashland's housing and neighborhoods are inextricably linked to its future. A collection of neighborhoods with excellent bones are destined to decline unless the housing stock within those neighborhoods can be changed to meet the needs of Ashland's desired future residents, many of whom are residents already but may be drawn away from the city at some point.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Ashland should pursue actions that positively and strategically influence the housing market so its neighborhoods become marketable, brand-enhancing assets instead of the liabilities they are otherwise destined to be. Successful interventions must simultaneously do the following:

1. **Diversify existing stocks through creative infill development at the intersections of weak and middle strength blocks, and within middle strength blocks**
2. **Rebalance supply and demand by thinning excess supply through locationally-precise demolition and establishing a conservation buffer**
3. **Pursue strategic demolition to remove excess housing supply and relieve downward pressure on property values**
4. **Impose intensive standard-setting code enforcement on middle market and weaker blocks**
5. **Encourage owner-reinvestment on blocks of middle market and strong market strength**
6. **Develop disposition strategies for large land holdings that reinforce other strategies in this plan.**



Successful interventions must consciously prioritize the retention of strong households on middle strength blocks, as well as definitively marketing home ownership opportunities to new graduates of Northland and new employees of Memorial Medical and other employers.



1 Diversify and Upgrade via Infill Housing

Because Ashland's city core is not overly dense, and because there are fairly sizable swaths of unused land (especially within only a few blocks of downtown), the strategic assembly of relatively few parcels and redevelopment at higher densities is possible. Redevelopment could take the form of apartments, townhomes, or other attached and/or new housing types in the local market. As development on the periphery has shown, there is a market for new housing product in Ashland. As a demographically different Ashland emerges over time – one with younger professionals seeking housing near downtown and more elderly people downsizing or seeking lower maintenance – newer housing can fill the needs that the city's current housing stock cannot.

The market for new housing types in Ashland is untested. The local market will not absorb large numbers of new units all at once. The low absorption rate means projects will need to be built gradually and with fewer units per project, perhaps 2-8 units at a time. It will be difficult to achieve economies of scale, so per unit constructions costs will be high compared to sales prices or rents. In order to build the first few projects, to prove that it can be done, the city will need to provide subsidy in the form of land, tax incentives, cash or all three.

Location: SoDo East and West provide the best opportunity for infill housing for the following reasons:

Excellent location near downtown and Fifth Street Corridor

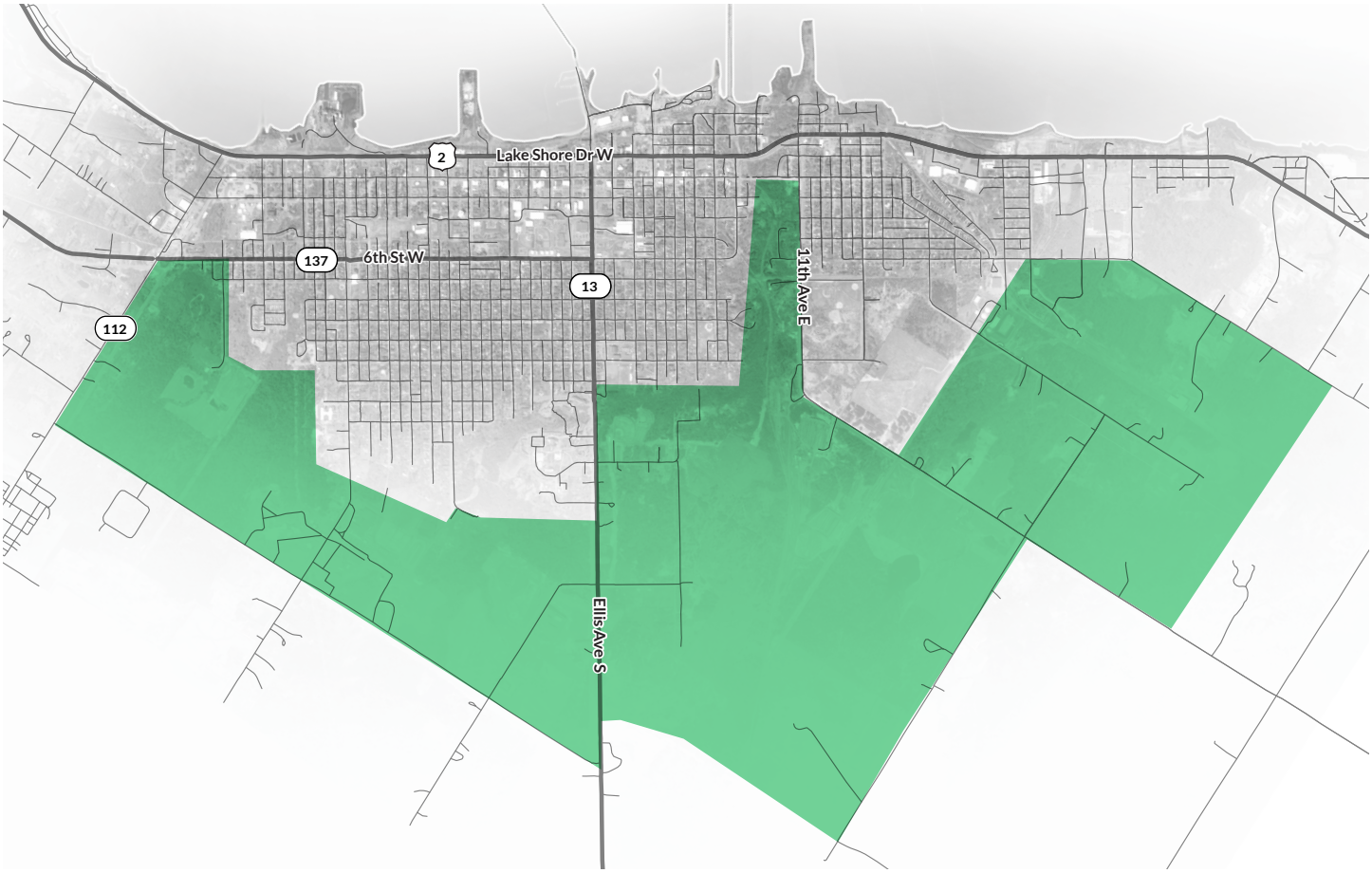
Availability of vacant or underutilized land

Connective corridors between middle-market neighborhoods and downtown

Infill efforts should be focused, to the greatest extent possible, along Chapple, Vaughn, and Ellis. Infilling these locations, as opposed to other opportunities in the SoDo areas, accomplishes the following:

Adds value to the new units by taking advantage of convenient north south access to downtown, the lake, and Northland.

Beautifies and fills in key north south connective corridors which are seen regularly by Ashland residents and influence the way residents perceive the city. New infill can send a positive message to the Ashland market as well as help reconnect downtown with core neighborhoods to the south.

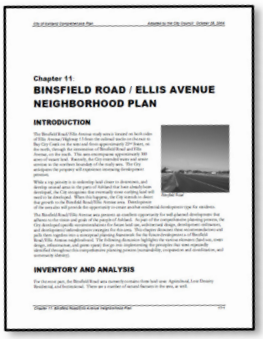


2 Conservation Buffer

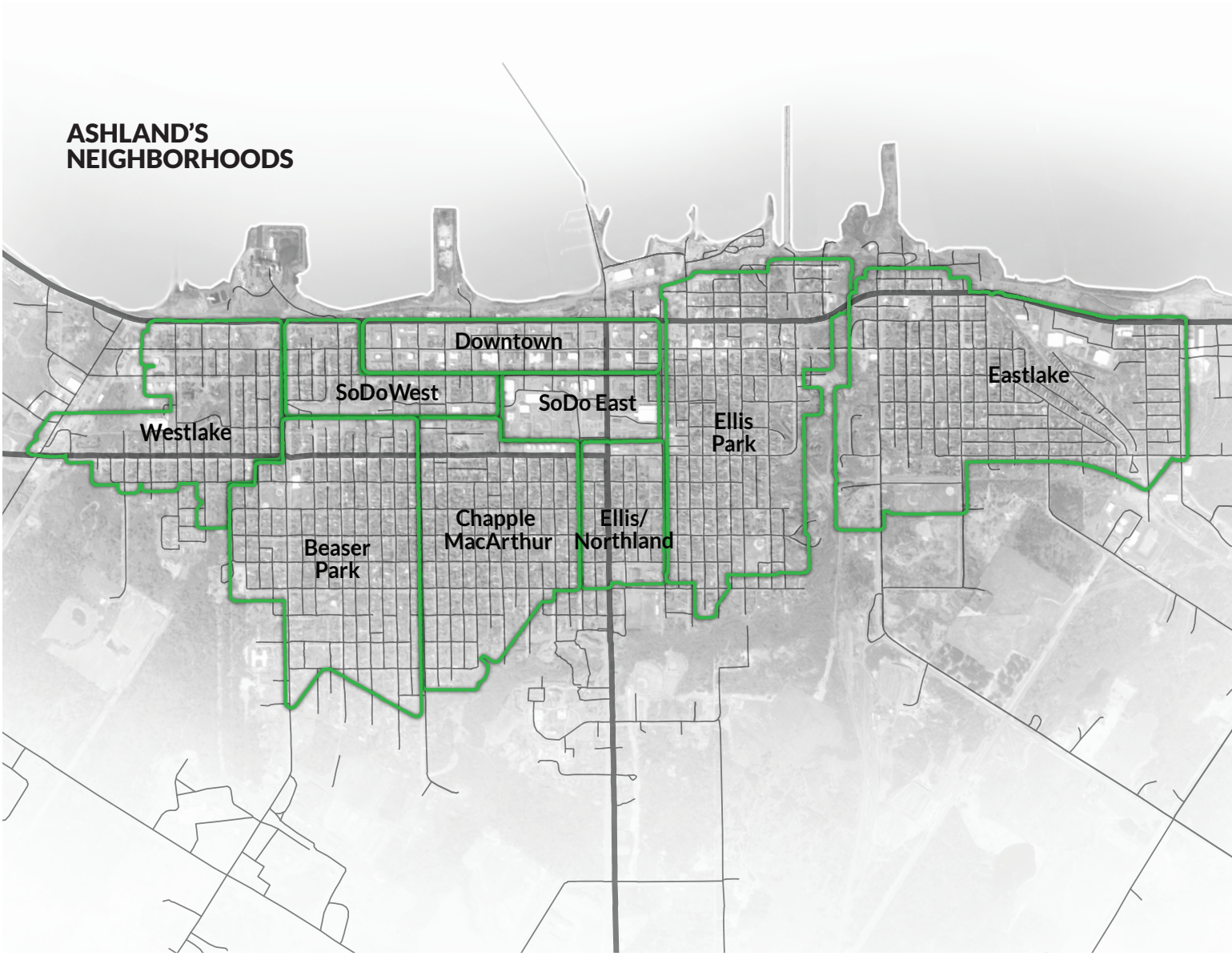
As core neighborhoods and their houses have become less marketable, Ashland households with purchasing power have pursued newer homes on larger lots on the city's periphery. While it may only be fewer than a dozen new homes each year, this new construction represents Ashland's own version of sprawl. The new development on the periphery diverts housing demand from the city's core. In addition, new water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure – even if paid for up front by the builder – becomes a future cost to be borne by the community as it ages. As new residential development has occurred on the city's edge, buildings and infrastructure in the core of the city have been left to deteriorate. These deteriorated neighborhoods represent a significant future liability.

Ashland should establish a conservation buffer around the southern part of the city and end residential development there. By ending peripheral development, the city can refocus its public and private resources back into the core, thereby providing new housing opportunities and dealing with previously deferred issues of deterioration. Housing demand is the lifeblood of Ashland's neighborhoods, and every ounce of housing demand must be diverted back into the city's core neighborhoods.

Important Change from 2004 Plan


Chapter 11:
BINSFIELD ROAD / ELLIS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN
INTRODUCTION
INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The city's comprehensive plan from 2004 recommends the redevelopment of nearly 300 vacant acres at the intersection of Ellis Avenue and Binsfield Road as a neo-traditional neighborhood. While sound from a neighborhood design perspective, the recommendation was built on an assumption of future growth that did not come to pass. The 2004 plan did not foresee that Ashland's population would shrink and its housing market would remain weak. This plan update recommends leaving the area undeveloped for the planning horizon. The idea of a new neighborhood at Binsfield and Ellis may be revisited if market conditions improve and if the city's core neighborhoods have been revitalized.

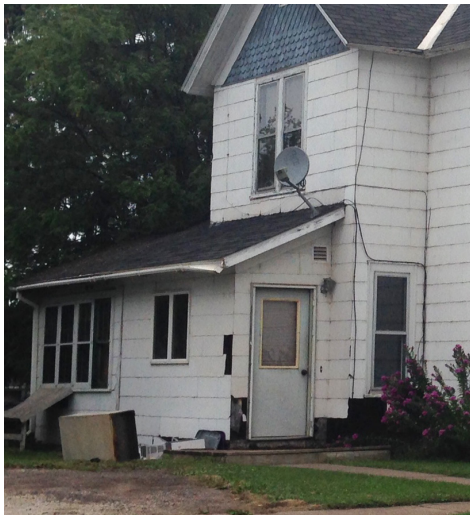


3 Strategic Demolition

In neighborhoods with weak demand like Eastlake, Westlake, and Ellis Park, revitalization is not realistic in the short term, or perhaps even in the long term. Values are too low to justify reinvestment. The city, in order to preserve neighborhood order and safety of the structures in those areas, should develop a strategy for acquisition and demolition of properties that are not likely to be restored and that rob surrounding properties of value. These are the neighborhoods where the majority of the worst rated properties exist. By removing structures with moderate-to-severe levels of distress – which received ratings of 4 or 5 during a citywide property survey in 2016 – a certain type of stability may be in reach.

The same should be done, but on a much more surgical basis, in middle market neighborhoods such as Beaser Park, Chapple MacArthur, and Ellis Northland. In these middle neighborhoods, there are very few if any structures with a 5 rating. More prevalent are those with a 4 rating which are holding back otherwise healthy blocks with well-kept homes. Where they are found, the deteriorated buildings are obvious candidates for code enforcement action or potential acquisition and removal.

From a real estate market perspective, the removal of excess housing units also reduces the oversupply that puts downward pressure on property values.





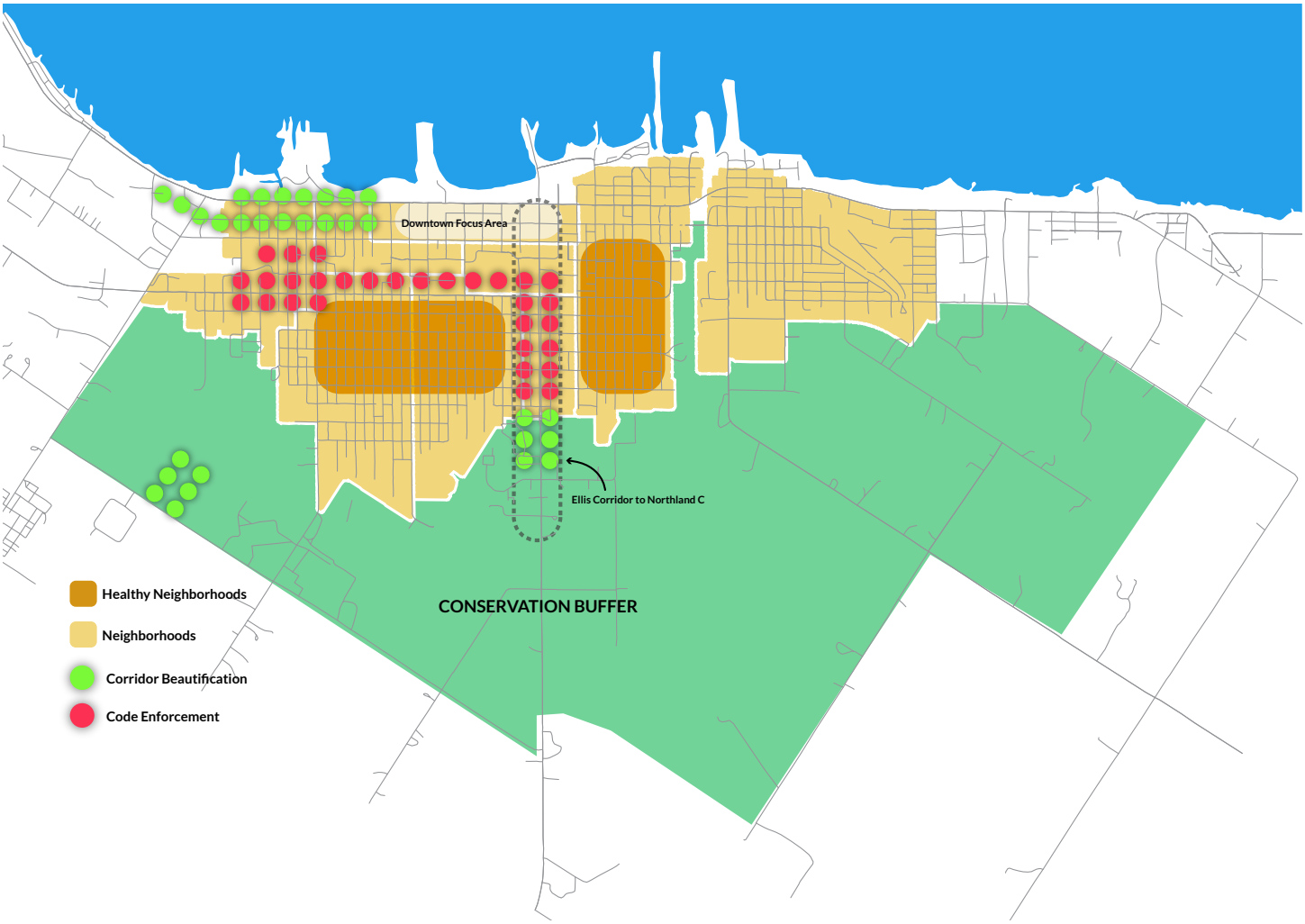
4 Strategic Code Enforcement

It is rare that code enforcement actions result in a property making a strong positive contribution to a block or neighborhood. Rather, the aim of code enforcement is minimum compliance with building safety codes. Within this context, code enforcement can neutralize the worst effects of deteriorated buildings on their neighbors and help to build a floor for acceptable standards of maintenance.

Weak Demand Neighborhoods: In the weaker neighborhoods where compliance with building and safety codes is less likely to be achieved due to more difficult economics, code enforcement actions may result in city acquisition of problem properties. These acquisitions are likely to be demolition candidates.

Middle Neighborhoods: In middle neighborhoods where the economics are generally better for landlords and owners, it may be easier to achieve the desired result of a code compliant building. The ideal targets of code enforcement actions in middle neighborhoods are properties that are threatening an otherwise stable block. It is critical that code enforcement neutralize any threat to property owners who are responsible actors or who are trending in that direction.

Corridors: In much the same way that code enforcement helps preserve property owner confidence in middle neighborhoods, it can also support community pride and market perception by cleaning up key corridors in the city. Internal corridors like Ellis Avenue or 6th Street must not be allowed to deteriorate lest they begin to reinforce a negative self-perception by Ashland residents.



Intersections and corridors for Healthy Neighborhoods strategies

5 Healthy Neighborhoods

Healthy Neighborhoods is a market oriented approach to neighborhood stabilization and revitalization. It focuses on building pride, capacity, and resident leadership which all support neighborhood and market health. Practitioners of the approach, which has been used in cities as varied as Baltimore, Battle Creek, and small towns across western New York state, believe a healthy neighborhood is one in which it makes sense for residents to invest their time, energy, and money. Healthy Neighborhoods, when successfully implemented, positively influences the cycle of neighborhood investment.

Healthy Neighborhoods is best applied in middle market neighborhoods where residents have both the willingness and ability to take action to celebrate and improve their homes. Activities typically include home improvement grants and loans for upgrades that make a visible difference on a block; small block beautification projects completed by groups of neighbors; and social activities that develop neighbor relationships and build positive feelings about living in the neighborhood. Successful city collaborations are possible when city departments partner with neighborhood groups. In Healthy Neighborhoods work, city governments do not do things FOR neighborhoods; government does things WITH them. Financial incentives, whether in the form of small grants to homeowners or discretionary improvements to public property and infrastructure by the city, are not entitlement programs. They are not low income housing subsidies. They are not the answer to a code enforcement action. They are targeted investments made in neighborhoods where property owners are putting their own skin in the game and doing the right thing.

To implement a Healthy Neighborhoods program aimed at preserving or restoring market health, the city should:

Support existing or help develop new neighborhood organizations using the neighborhood boundaries in this plan. The city can help by providing coordination capacity for neighborhood groups and co-creating work plans.





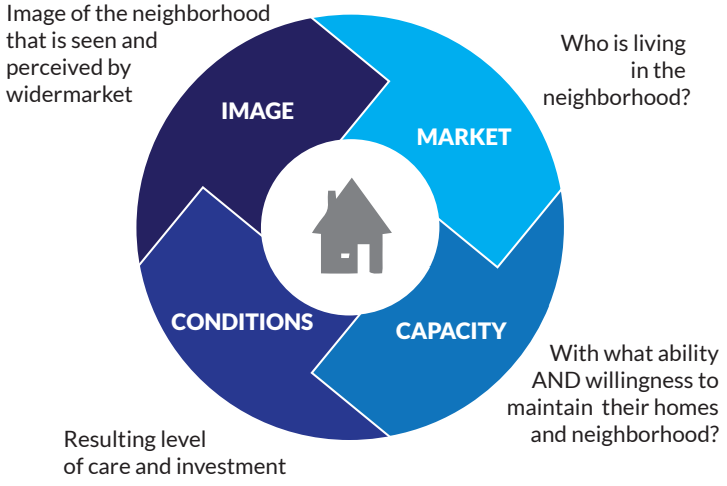


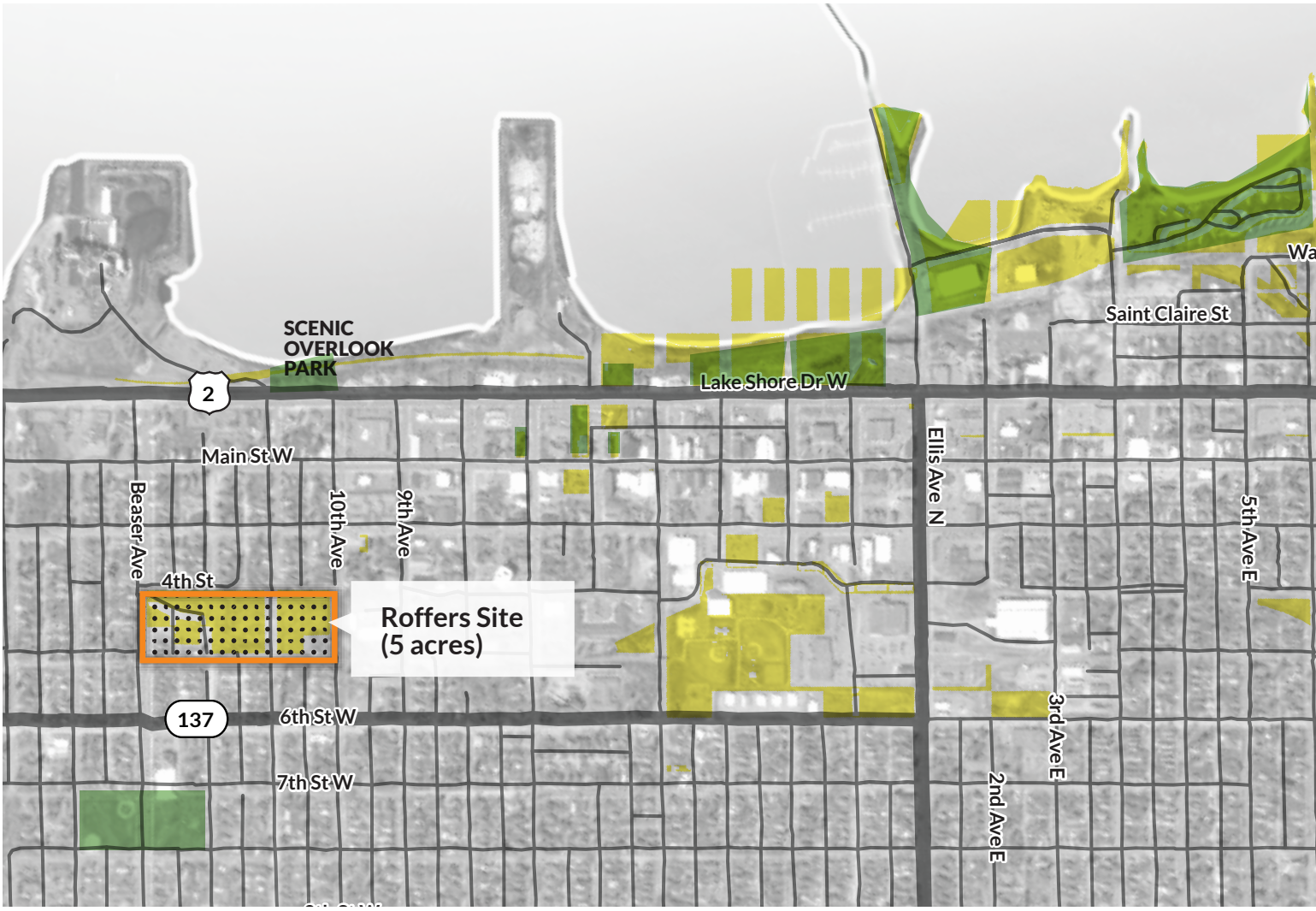


Craft concise, time limited, and market appropriate work plans for each of the city's neighborhoods and work with all city departments and neighborhood groups to implement them. The first neighborhoods in which to start are Beaser Park, Chapple/MacArthur, and Ellis/Northland. A strategically prioritized and targeted list of activities should focus on neighborhood organizing across entire neighborhoods, but also housing and block improvement projects on key corners and highly traveled streets that will be easily seen by the maximum number of Ashland residents. Visibility matters because image matters.

Develop flexible incentives and grant programs for home improvement projects and block projects. The city's Housing Improvement Program represents a very meaningful start in the right direction, but it must be fully aligned with a Healthy Neighborhoods philosophy and additional funding should be raised from both public and private coffers.

czb Cycle of Neighborhood Investment and Disinvestment





6 Careful Disposition of Vacant Land

The City of Ashland owns the Roffers site (approximately five acres) located between 9th Avenue West, Beaser Avenue, 4th Street, and the 5th Street Corridor, as well as the Timeless Timbers site (approximately 35 acres) on the city's east side on Lake Shore Drive East, just west of 22nd Avenue East.

The city's ownership of land is a position of strength in terms of guidance and direction for future development. In this case, the City certainly has the opportunity to sell this land to a developer to build within the parameters of the Zoning Ordinance. Concerns regarding the weak market and the quality of development that may be adhered to upon the sale are valid. Market forces may not build what is in the city's best long-term interests.

To guide the destiny of these sites in ways that align with other strategies in this plan – to create new housing opportunities, to attract young entrepreneurial talent, to refocus development into the core – the following concepts should be considered when discussing land disposition for these two strategic areas.

Community Land Trust

A community land trust (CLT) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that is legally chartered in the state in which it is located. Typically, CLTs acquire land or are deeded land from a municipality to provide land for housing development that meets one or more local needs, including affordability. The CLT does not sell the land, but rather leases land to those who intend to build a house on the property. In this way, the CLT keeps the cost of homeownership to a minimum by taking land costs out of the mortgage equation. The CLT retains an option to repurchase any residential (or commercial) structures located upon its land, should their owners ever choose to sell. The resale price is set by a formula contained in the ground lease that is designed to give present homeowners a fair return on their investment, while giving future homebuyers fair access to housing at an affordable price. By design and by intent, a CLT



is committed to preserving the affordability of housing and other structures – one owner after another, one generation after another, in perpetuity. A CLT may be a viable option for land disposition from the city to qualified homeowners.

The Great Ashland "Land Rush"

The city's ownership of land on the Roffers and Timeless Timber sites could also provide an opportunity to either give land away or sell at a discounted value to new residents. In an effort to attract young entrepreneurs to Ashland, the city could offer the land to potentially new residents that agree (1) to build a home on the property within a specified amount of time, (2) to live in the house for a minimum period of time, and (3) agree to work or start a business within the city. The city would maintain first right-of-refusal on sale of the property and would likely incorporate deed-restricted language similar to what is seen in most CLTs. Various cities throughout North America have looked to attract talent to their locality and grow their economy via land offerings of a similar nature.

CITY-OWNED PARCELS

PARKS

VACANT PARCELS

Ashland's Priorities

Promote Place-Based Economic Development

WHY IT MATTERS

Ashland has nearly every traditional tool for economic development in place and ready to go. For example, it has numerous shovel-ready development sites at the Ashland Industrial Park, a full-service business incubator in the heart of the city at the Ashland Enterprise Center, and several revolving loan funds providing access to low-interest capital.

Having these tools in place is important – and they keep Ashland on par with hundreds of competitor communities in the region that have similar economic development toolkits. But economic development today is less about luring new businesses with land and sewer lines and more about providing a level of community character and quality of life that convinces skilled individuals to put down roots and invest their talents in local enterprises.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Ashland should build on its strong foundation of economic development tools by making investments in place-based assets that, in combination, will make the city a distinctive place where people, ideas, and capital converge in ways that are intrinsic to northern Wisconsin and the shores of Chequamegon Bay. The following are examples of actions that align with this place-based strategy and the principles of this plan:

1. **Implement this plan's "quality of place" initiatives**
2. **Leverage Northland College's environmental mission**
3. **Stimulate entrepreneurial interaction**


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OFFICE BAR







1 Implement this plan's "quality of place" initiatives

Several priorities in this plan seek to strengthen one's experience of downtown Ashland, the lakeshore, and the city's neighborhoods. These initiatives must be recognized as fundamental to the city's economic future – and not as bells and whistles that might be nice to have someday. If Ashland's cityscape is of a consistently high quality and offers residents an exceptional quality of life, the city will attract and retain entrepreneurs and skilled workers who can broaden the city's economic range and strengthen its financial capacity.

2 Leverage Northland College's environmental mission

Northland College is an institution that is engrained in Ashland and its regional geography – a level of rootedness that is reflected by the college's mission to promote understanding of the environment and sustainable practices. This place-based mission can be leveraged to both strengthen the college and to cultivate economic activity in Ashland.

Business plan competitions are just one way that colleges and communities are working together to support entrepreneurial students while cultivating economic activity. An annual **Ashland/Northland Business Plan Competition** could follow this model by helping Northland students develop plans for businesses with an environmental focus, with winning plans receiving financial and technical support to get started in Ashland. If well promoted and publicized, a competition would also burnish the image of Ashland as a place of innovation and opportunity.

3 Promote collaborative entrepreneurialism in downtown Ashland

Improving the vibrancy of Ashland's urban environment and boosting student engagement in the local economy are both ways to promote greater levels of interaction and collaboration – both of which are critical components of "innovation districts" that exist or are emerging in many larger cities. While Ashland lacks many of the building blocks of that are needed for a true innovation district, there are ways to build a stronger culture of experimentation and collaboration in downtown Ashland that utilize existing assets.

For example, adding a "makerspace" within the Ashland Enterprise Center – a place where entrepreneurs can share resources for designing, testing, and building products – can be an effective way to bring together people with a diverse set of skills and backgrounds and provide them with access to specialized equipment and technical assistance. The Ashland Enterprise Center, an industrial/office facility, could also be broadened to include one or more refurbished retail spaces along Main Street – giving upstart retail-oriented businesses an opportunity to get started in modern space with flexible lease terms.

Past and Future Economic Development

As Ashland looks forward to new opportunities for economic development, the partnerships with local industry and organizations must remain strong. The continued growth of tourism should be embraced, as should the strength of the industries that built the community and continue to innovate on an international scale. The past and the future of the community are not mutually exclusive but rather inextricably connected.





AADC
ASHLAND AREA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ashland: We Make Stuff by the Lake

Steeped in a history of industrial innovation emboldened by a strong midwestern work ethic, Ashland should begin to reimagine what its future might look like. And one lens through which to view this future is the Maker Movement.

The Maker Movement is a contemporary culture where young entrepreneurs combine their technological prowess with a do-it-yourself spirit that can expand hobbyists and artisanal ventures into true businesses enterprises. The movement represents an ideology that believes the next generation of manufacturing wisdom is more likely to bubble up from local experiments rather than trickle down from legacy institutions.

The Brookings Institution (in a report dated January 4, 2017) calls it "an authentic social movement of hackers and tinkerers, [that] has grown increasingly consequential in recent years as a new generation of designers and entrepreneurs has employed online tools, 3-D printing, and other new technologies to 'democratize' manufacturing and reinvigorate small-batch production and sales." **Brookings goes on to recommend the following five-step process for cities interested in pursuing this type of economic development (see below).**

So let's begin to imagine the next generation of American manufacturing in Ashland.

1. Start organically

Local stewards of this movement must recognize that the most robust opportunities start organically, with intentional initiatives following in a supporting role. Cities can begin to identify the local maker scene and should map what is happening. They should then look for gaps and problems that require attention. In Ashland, one could imagine finding local start-ups ranging from handcrafted boat-making enterprises to new underwater drones to new organic or bio robotic mechanisms designed to clean freshwater lakes.

2. Make space for makers

"Making requires a place to make, after all: a workshop or a studio, ideally one that is 'open' for collaboration." Such spaces do not simply provide space and equipment such as 3-D printers and Computer Numeric Control (CNC) machines, but also offer workshops and courses and should function the way social clubs did for previous generations – bringing together people with shared purposes an values. Could an innovation district evolve in downtown Ashland? Yes.

3. Engage community colleges, universities, and national laboratories

Higher education and research institutions offer resources that can benefit any "industrial renaissance" associated with the Maker Movement. Opportunities for networking, idea sharing, and industry partnerships are important to any business. Such a partnership with Northland College or Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College is possible in Ashland.

4. Pull in the private sector

Just as the entrepreneurs of the Maker Movement must partner with the public sector and local colleges, they need resources and talent and knowledge that lie within the private sector. Bretting Manufacturing is a leader and innovator in the paper industry and could offer a wealth of knowledge to young entrepreneurs.

5. Experiment with new forms of education and training

The hands-on, do-it-yourself tenet of making is increasingly being recognized as essential for conveying modern technical know-how while encouraging creativity. Access to modern production tools may excite involvement of the city's young students. The Dream Factory, a maker lab, or fab (fabrication) lab, at the Elizabeth Forward Middle School in Pittsburgh "encourages students to dream, create and make by providing the materials, tools and teachers to make dreams into reality. At the Dream Factory, students can learn robotics, engineering, design and programming with state of the art tools that they wouldn't otherwise have access to, including laser cutters, 3-D printers, microcontrollers and even a functioning TV studio with green screen." It is hard to imagine a student that would not benefit from access to these amenities.

Ashland's Priorities

Sustainability

WHY IT MATTERS

As a small city with a walkable downtown, traditional neighborhoods, an extensive trail network, the Chequamegon Food Co-op – with 2,400 member-owners, and a local college focused on sustainability, Ashland is well-positioned to become a regional and state leader in small city sustainability. Getting there will take additional commitments from leaders and residents of Ashland to protect its environmental assets while strengthening the parts of the city that make an environmentally sustainable lifestyle possible.

In 2005, the City of Ashland adopted a resolution - the Eco-Municipality Designation Resolution - that committed the City to forward-thinking policies relative to ensuring a sustainable future. Only a handful of American cities adopted similar resolutions, putting Ashland in a leadership position. The City should be commended for this commitment and should utilize the resolution on a regular basis when enacting new citywide policies.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

By applying the principles and implementing the priorities outlined in earlier sections of this Comprehensive Plan – such as investing strategically in Ashland's downtown, investing in Ashland's existing neighborhood infrastructure rather than building new neighborhoods on the periphery of the city, weaving and connecting segments of the community together, and protecting the lake and its shoreline – Ashland will be taking significant steps towards making the city more environmentally sustainable and fiscally strong.

Several recent actions by the city are moving it in the right direction.

Ashland's Recent Sustainability Initiatives

Compact of Mayors: In 2015, Mayor Debra Lewis signed an agreement for Ashland to comply with the Compact of Mayors, "the world's largest cooperative effort among mayors and city leaders to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, track progress, and prepare for the impacts of climate change." This agreement commits Ashland to study its greenhouse gas emissions and climate hazards and develop a plan to address climate change within 3 years or less.

Resolution to protect water quality: The City Council passed a resolution to protect the city's water, air, and overall well-being from the potentially harmful impacts of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the Chequamegon Bay region.

Bike Trail Connected: In late 2015, the final leg of the Ashland Rails to Trails System (ARTS) was completed, linking Maslowski Beach and Prentice Park to the rest of the trail system. Residents and visitors can now ride, run, walk or skate on 11.5 miles of paved trail in and around the City of Ashland.

Ashland/Northern State Power Lakefront Superfund Site: The city is in the process of finalizing a land use plan based on community input for post-remediation use of the site. The intent is to make the community's desires known so that the site can become a usable community asset.

Maslowski Beach: With funding from Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the city is working with Northland College on the Maslowski Beach Water Quality Education Project.

Roffers Site: Final funding for the clean-up of a roughly 4-acre brownfield site in the heart of an established residential district in Ashland is being secured. The clean-up is anticipated for summer 2016, and the site should be ready for development shortly after.

Major Street Repairs: Plans have been set in place for the much needed repaving of 6th Street, a large thoroughfare through Ashland, also known as Highway 137. This project will incorporate new utility infrastructure, as well as new sidewalks on one side of the street.

Additional steps may include adoption or adaptation of the following practices:

1 Provide rebates for home retrofitting.

Examples: City of Portland, OR (Clean Energy Works); City of Philadelphia, PA (Greenworks Plan)

Goal: Ensure that 20% of Ashland's homes are retrofitted to be more energy efficient by the year 2020.

2 Prioritize energy efficient improvements and updates to city buildings and facilities.

Goal: Require that all building and facility upgrades meet the highest possible efficiency standards.

3 Institute a mandatory recycling and composting ordinance.

Examples: City of San Francisco, CA

Goal: Send 80% of the city's waste to recycling and composting facilities, rather than landfills.

4 Create easy ways for residents and businesses to opt into renewable energy.

Examples: Austin, TX (Austin's Green Choice program); Seattle, WA (Seattle City Light)

Goal: Offer all city residents and businesses a choice with their electric bill to buy part of their energy from renewable sources.

5 Promote green spaces within Ashland.

Examples: New York, NY (PlaNYC - 2011)

Goal: Ensure that all residents of Ashland live within a 10 minute walk of a park.

6 Increase access to local food.

Examples: Cleveland, OH (Ohio City Farm)

Goal: Develop and support a city farm that can provide fresh food to the Ashland community and educate the community about food production.

7 Promote alternative modes of transportation.

Examples: Boulder, CO (GO Boulder)

Goal: Get 40% of municipal employees to take alliterative modes of transportation to work; create "Bike to Work" or "Bike to School" days in Ashland.

8 Increase options for solar panels and solar farms in Ashland.

Goal: Update Ashland's Unified Development Ordinance to reflect the Great Plains Institute's zoning recommendations.

Getting Started

Fundamentally, this plan is about building upon the community's values and applying clear principles and strategic thinking when deciding how to allocate limited resources. As such, the projects and actions summarized here, which are recommended to advance Ashland's six priority initiatives, should not be treated as a static checklist but as a "pattern book" for implementation that identifies strategies and projects that, under current conditions, will create the foundation for all future efforts. As conditions change, so too should the slate of strategies and projects.

TIMELINE
S Short (1 year)
M Mid (1-3 years)
L Long (>5 years)
O Ongoing (continual efforts)

COSTS
$$$$ ($5mn +)
$$$ ($3mn - $5mn)
$$ ($1mn - $3mn)
$ (<$1mn)
M (Marginal Coordination Costs)

WHAT	
Make Downtown Great	Establish a targeted Revitalization Zone
	Implement a state affiliated Main Street Program
	Implement Historic Tax Credits as a means to revitalize Main Street's historic structures
	Strengthen and expand the Second Street Historic District to leverage funding
	Market downtown's abundant parking opportunities
	Explore the opportunity to create a Business Improvement District (BID)
Protect and Connect the Lake	Capitalize upon the Waterfront Trail as a protection area
	Complete the ore dock and upland entryway area
	Ensure that the reuse of the Superfund clean up site protects the integrity of the lake
Knit the Urban Fabric Together	Add Connections from the Waterfront Trail to the Tri-County Corridor Trail
	Bay City Creek trail connection
	Maslowski Beach, via Prentice Park, to the Tri-County Corridor Connection
	Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center - trail connection and loop
	Reimage the city's entryways
	East Meets West – Connect the Neighborhoods
	Capture views to the lake along north/south street corridors
Strengthen the Housing Market	Diversify and Upgrade via Infill Housing
	Conservation Buffer
	Strategic Demolition
	Strategic Code Enforcement
	Healthy Neighborhoods
	Careful Disposition of Vacant Land
Promote Place-based Economic Development	Implement this plan's "quality of place" initiatives
	Leverage Northland College's environmental mission
	Promote collaborative entrepreneurialism in downtown Ashland
	Complete an Economic Development Strategic Plan
Set a Strong Example of Sustainability	Provide rebates for home retrofitting
	Prioritize energy efficient improvements and updates to city buildings and facilities
	Institute a mandatory recycling and composting ordinance
	Create easy ways for residents and businesses to opt into renewable energy
	Promote green spaces within Ashland
	Increase access to local food
	Promote alternative modes of transportation
	Increase options for solar panels and solar farms in Ashland

WHEN	WHO	HOW MUCH
S	City, Downtown Businesses	M
S	City, Downtown Businesses, WEDC, Chamber of Commerce	M
M	City, Downtown Businesses, WEDC, Chamber of Commerce	M
M	City, Historic Preservation Board	M
M	City	M
M	City, Downtown Businesses, Chamber of Commerce	M
M	City, Planning Commission	$
M - L	City	$$$$
M	City	$$
O	City	Varies
L	City	$$$
M	City	$
M	City	$$
L	City, WDOT	$
L	City	$$$$
L	City	$
O	City, Neighborhood Organizations	$$
O	City, Planning Commission	M
M	City	$
S	City	M
L	City, Neighborhood Organizations	$
O	City	M
O	City	$
S	City, Northland College	M
S	City, AADC, AEC, WITC, Northland College	$
S	City, AADC, AEC, Chamber of Commerce, Ashland Business Alliance, WIN-LS, Northland, Workforce Development	M
M	City	$
M	City	$$
S	City	M
M	City, Northland	M
O	City	$
L	City, Local Businesses, Northland	$
O	City, WDOT	$
L	City, Business Community	M

AUTHENTIC ASHLAND

PART ONE

A Comprehensive Plan for Ashland, Wisconsin

February 2017

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