

# West Riverside District Plan



May 10, 2011



**RESOLUTION**

**RESOLUTION APPROVING THE WEST RIVERSIDE DISTRICT PLAN.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Eau Claire adopted a Comprehensive Plan on September 27, 2005, in accordance with the provisions of Wis. Statutes, Section 66.1001; and

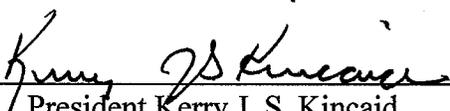
**WHEREAS**, the Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan calls for the City to support and coordinate the preparation of a master plan for the area around Luther Hospital, including the Oxford Avenue redevelopment corridor; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan Commission approved the work program for the West Riverside District Plan which included an advisory committee and coordination with the RDA and Waterways and Parks Commission; and

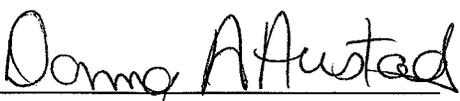
**WHEREAS**, the City Council finds the West Riverside District Plan to be consistent with said Comprehensive Plan; specifically the Downtown Chapter, Objective 13 (Medical Center District), and the Land Use Chapter, Objective 4 (Residential Neighborhoods) Policy 4. – Neighborhood Planning.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of the City of Eau Claire that the City Council hereby approves the West Riverside District Plan as a guide to be used in consideration of future improvements and planning within the study area.

Adopted,  
May 10, 2011

(SEAL)   
President Kerry J. S. Kincaid

(SEAL)   
City Manager Mike Higgins

(ATTESTED)   
City Clerk Donna A. Austad

# *West Riverside District Plan*

## **City Council**

Kerry Kincaid, President  
Larry Balow  
David Duax  
Thomas Kemp  
David Klinkhammer  
Mark Olson  
Jackie Pavelski  
Bob Von Haden  
Thomas Vue  
Dana Wachs  
Andrew Werthmann

## **Plan Commission**

David Duax  
David FitzGerald  
John Hibbard  
Jack Kaiser  
Rick Kayser  
David Klinkhammer  
Brian Larson  
Thomas Pearson  
Joseph Seymour

## **Waterways and Parks Commission**

Oscar Brandser  
Jonathan Case  
Jeff Guettinger  
Gene Johnson  
Roxie Owens  
Jason Rathbun  
Leon Salander  
Bob Schneider  
Bob Schraufnagel  
Richard Spindler

## **Redevelopment Authority**

Ted Barr  
Mike DeRosa  
Martin Green  
Jeff Halloin  
Michael Huggins, City Manager  
Thomas Kemp  
Janine Wildenberg

## **Project Advisory Committee**

Mark Blaskey  
Jon Case  
Kathy Costa  
Mike DeRosa  
Barbara Fredricksen  
Jesse Gillette  
Barb Gosch  
Jack Kaiser  
Aaron O'Donahue  
Jenna O'Donahue  
Dennis Olson  
Mary Pica-Anderson  
John Schepke  
Ezra Zeitler

## **City Staff**

Brian Amundson, Director of Public Works  
Phil Fieber, Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry  
Michael Huggins, City Manager  
Pat Ivory, City Planner  
Mary Rosenau, Administrative Assistant  
Michael Schatz, Director of Economic Development  
Darryl Tufte, Director of Community Development

## **Consultants**

Peter Musty, Urban Design  
Josh Suess, Mapping  
William Weber, AICP, Management and Planning



City of Eau Claire  
203 South Farwell Street  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54702-5148  
715-839-4914  
[www.eauclairewi.gov](http://www.eauclairewi.gov)

**2011**



# *West Riverside District Plan*

<b>Plan Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Analysis of Conditions</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Introduction and Purpose .....	7
The Study Area .....	7
Neighborhood Character .....	10
Prior Related Plans .....	12
Comprehensive Plan .....	12
West Bank Area Redevelopment Plan .....	14
West Side Arterial Street Study .....	15
Eau Claire Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan .....	15
North Barstow Area / Medical District BID .....	16
Demographic Profile .....	17
Land Use and Development .....	21
Existing Land Use .....	21
Central Riverfront Location .....	21
Business and Industry .....	22
Road Pattern .....	22
Railroads .....	24
Housing .....	24
Retail and Service Businesses .....	24
The Riverfront .....	25
The Oxford Avenue Corridor .....	25
The Madison to Fulton Street Neighborhood .....	26
Local Institutions .....	27
Buildings and Development .....	29
Pattern of Zoning, 2010 .....	30
Housing Tenure .....	34
Building Conditions .....	36
Streets .....	38
Bus Routes .....	40
Bicycling and Walking.....	41
Former Railroad Corridors .....	43
Natural Features .....	44

<b>Summary of Major Planning Issues</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Vision Statement</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>Guiding Principles for the District</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>Policies for the West Riverside District</b> .....	<b>52</b>
Use of This Plan .....	52
The Role of the Public and Private Sectors.....	52
Summary of the Pattern of Land Use .....	52
Madison–Cameron Street Corridor .....	55
Land Use .....	55
Site Design and Architecture .....	55
Focal Points .....	57
North Bellinger Street Retail Area .....	57
Phillips Senior Center and Eau Claire Montessori School .....	57
Ager House .....	58
Western Cameron Street .....	58
Luther-Mayo Hospital and Vicinity .....	59
The Southeast Neighborhood .....	60
The Near North Neighborhood .....	60
The Northern Neighborhood .....	61
The Chippewa Riverfront .....	61
Path Link .....	61
South of Madison Street .....	61
Madison Street to Platt Street .....	62
Platt Street to Maple Street .....	62
Maple Street to the Old Railroad Trestle .....	62
Neighborhood Links to the Riverfront .....	63
Riverfront Park and Trail Design .....	63
Oxford Avenue Corridor .....	67
Land Development .....	67
Site Design along Oxford Avenue .....	69
Relationship to the Riverfront Linear Park .....	70
The Madison – Oxford Intersection .....	71
Streets and Utilities .....	71
Use of Undeveloped Park Land at First and Cedar Streets .....	71
Multiple-Use Trails .....	73
North-South Corridor .....	73
East-West Corridor .....	73
Half Moon Lake .....	73
Residential Neighborhood Improvements .....	74

Neighborhood Organization ..... 74  
 Residential Neighborhood Zoning ..... 74  
 Commercial Zoning on Third Street ..... 75  
 Housing Rehabilitation ..... 76  
 Additional Actions by the Housing Division or Housing Authority ..... 77  
 Off-Street Residential Parking ..... 77  
 Street Maintenance ..... 77  
 Street Trees ..... 77  
 Appearance Awards Program ..... 77  
 Code Violations and Crime ..... 78  
 Code Enforcement Process ..... 78  
 Code Enforcement Program ..... 78  
 Certified Eau Claire Landlord Program ..... 80

**Summary of Actions for the West Riverside District Plan ..... 81**

**List of Figures**

1 Study Area ..... 8  
 2 Aerial Photograph of the Study Area ..... 9  
 3 Existing Land Use, 2009 ..... 23  
 4 Existing Zoning, 2010 ..... 31  
 5 Pattern of Buildings ..... 33  
 6 Housing Tenure ..... 35  
 7 Exterior Housing Conditions Survey ..... 37  
 8 Street Classification ..... 39  
 9 Street Conditions ..... 39  
 10 Bus Routes ..... 40  
 11 Sidewalks and Paths ..... 42  
 12 Former Railroad Corridors ..... 43  
 13 Natural Features ..... 45  
 14 Land Use Plan ..... 54  
 15 New Buildings and Parks ..... 56  
 16 Enhanced Pedestrian Routes to the Riverfront ..... 64  
 17 Road Alignment and Land Development Options for Oxford Avenue ..... 72

**List of Tables**

1 Selected Demographic Characteristics ..... 19  
 2 Street Classification ..... 38  
 3 Major Recommended Actions ..... 81

## Summary of the *West Riverside District Plan*

The *West Riverside District Plan* was prepared by the City of Eau Claire as a guide for public improvements and regulations, an inspiration for private investors and owners, and a framework for further studies.

The boundaries of the West Riverside District Plan were established as:

- Just north of the railroad trestle and Marshall Street
- 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the west
- The Chippewa River on the east
- Just south of Fulton Street on the south.

Those boundaries are depicted on Figures 1 and 2.

### Major Planning Issues

The major questions that were discussed and resolved during this district planning process are summarized below. A full description is presented on pages 47 through 49.

- **Oxford Avenue Corridor:** How should land in the northern Oxford Avenue corridor be redeveloped?
- **Riverfront Park and Trail:** Should a riverfront linear park with paths be extended from the Chippewa River State Trail bridge to the former railroad trestle?
- **Residential Neighborhood:** What should be done to stabilize or improve conditions in the residential neighborhoods?
- **Residential Zoning:** Should the R-3 and R-4 zoning that predominates in the residential neighborhoods be changed to a less intensive residential district?
- **Madison Street Corridor:** Should the housing in the Madison Street corridor be redeveloped to other land uses? Should the oldest of the commercial buildings be redeveloped? Should future buildings be brought up to the sidewalk along Madison Street or should surface parking be allowed there?
- **Neighborhood East of the Hospital:** Should parts of the neighborhood east of Bellinger Street evolve to higher residential densities and, perhaps, retail, office or hospitality land uses?
- **Business Development:** What additional businesses are desired in the District?
- **Arts:** Should the District use the arts (visual or performing) to promote redevelopment, enhance identity and build social organization?

- **Northern Railroad Corridor:** Should the City negotiate to purchase the former railroad corridor along the northern edge of the District for the purpose of building a bicycle / pedestrian trail?
- **Property Maintenance:** What should be done to improve the maintenance and appearance of buildings, yards and alleys?
- **Neighborhood Organization:** What should the City do, if anything, to help organize a neighborhood association for the area north of Madison Street?

**Madison- Cameron Streets Corridor:** Land development along Madison Street should continue to evolve to a mixture of small retail and service businesses, offices, and potentially, housing above commercial space. Buildings in this corridor may be up to four stories in height. The Bellinger-Mappa block may undergo redevelopment. Additional off-street parking may be created west of Babcock Street for the Phillips Senior Center, the Montessori School and the historic Ager House. The single-family housing along Whipple Street may eventually be redeveloped to housing above shops or multi-family housing. The Ager House and adjacent public open space will be preserved. The outdoor storage at the First Supply Eau Claire should either be screened much better or removed for redevelopment. Public art or monuments should be located along Madison Street to announce arrival and focus. See pages 55 through 58.

**Luther-Mayo Hospital and Vicinity:** If additional facilities are added to the Luther-Mayo Hospital complex, they are expected to be within the boundaries of its present property. Fulton Street will remain the southern edge of the medical campus. See page 59.

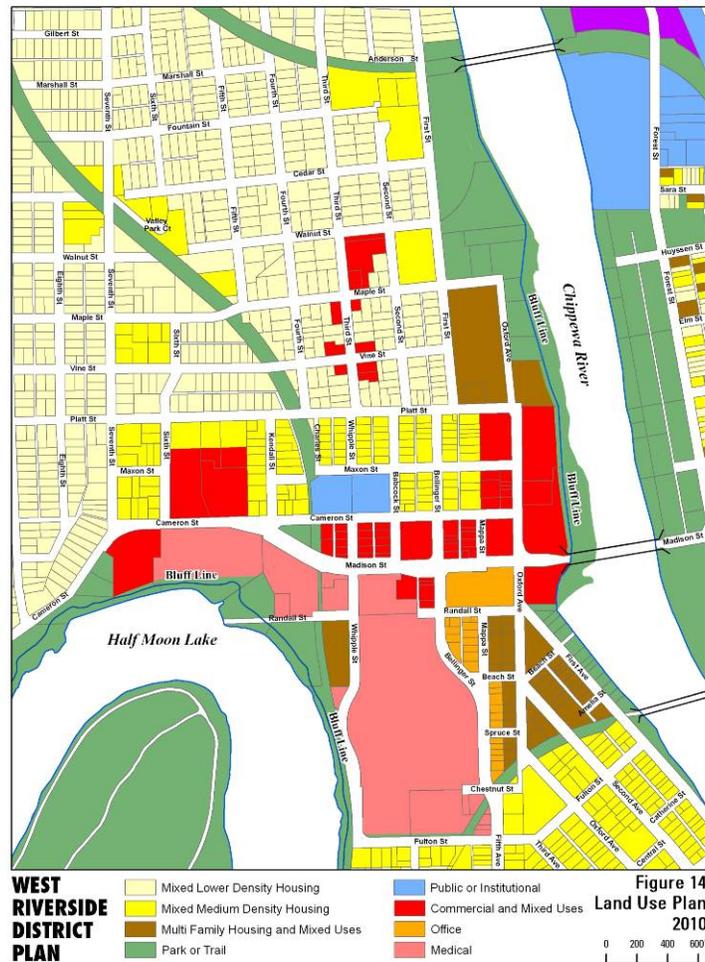


Figure 14  
Land Use Plan  
2010

**Southeast Neighborhood:** New multiple-family housing will be encouraged between the West Riverside Office Building and the multi-use trail. Property facing Bellinger Street, including the triangular block south of Randall Street, may be redeveloped to small offices, especially those medically-related. The industrial buildings near the multi-use path should be redeveloped to housing. See page 60.

**Near North Neighborhood:** The residential neighborhood between Platt and Cameron Streets should retain its present scale and character. See page 60.

**Northern Neighborhood:** North of Platt Street, only a few isolated changes are proposed in the pattern of land use and development. There are three parcels of wooded land on steep slopes that could be used for housing, along with two aging industrial sites. See page 61.

**Riverfront:** There should be a continuous band of park space along the riverfront wide enough, at a minimum, for a paved pedestrian and bicyclist path along the top of the river bluff. This riverfront park may be substantially wider north of Platt or Maple Streets. See pages 61 to 63.



**Figure 15**  
New Buildings and Parks

**Oxford Avenue Corridor:** Property along the Oxford Avenue corridor should be redeveloped to take advantage of its views to the proposed riverfront park and the river itself. Land uses may include small shops and service businesses, offices, and multiple-family housing. Some housing may be located over commercial spaces. Surface parking should be minimized in favor of locations underneath buildings. Refer to pages 67 to 70.



Image of the potential future Oxford Avenue looking north from Maxon Street and the Children's Theater.

**Bicycling and Walking Paths:** There are three former railroad corridors crossing the District, one of which has already been converted to a bicycling and walking path. The other two should also be used as recreational trails. A path for walking and bicycling should be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake. See page 73.

**Neighborhood Links to the Riverfront:** Fountain, Vine and Fulton Streets should be improved as east-west connections from the residential neighborhood to the river. Along all three streets, sidewalks should be rebuilt as needed, pedestrian street crossings striped, gaps filled in the pattern of street trees, and decorative lighting installed. Refer pages 63-64 and Figure 16, Enhanced Pedestrian Routes to the Riverfront.

**Riverfront Park and Trail Design:** The desired boundaries of the planned riverfront park are expected to be set during a subsequent planning process. This park land may be purchased by the City using a variety of funding sources. When planning the park and trail, care should be given to providing a comfortable relationship to the housing planned adjacent to the trail; a variety of active and passive recreational activities should be anticipated; some areas should be returned to natural conditions; links to the neighborhood and city-wide trail system should be included; High quality materials should be used. See pages 63 to 66.



Image of the proposed riverfront trail with adjacent housing, looking north into the park.

**Kessler Park:** North of Maple Street, the riverfront park could broaden substantially, coming all the way west to First Street. In exchange, Kessler Park could be sold for housing development and its functions moved east of First Street. Kessler Park will be retained until replacement land is acquired and improved. The decision on moving Kessler Park will be made by the Council after considering all factors.

**Undeveloped Park Land at First and Cedar Streets:** This property is undeveloped and probably not needed for park purposes. Consequently, the City should either sell it for housing development (with some design standards) when the market is ripe or develop it with affordable housing through the housing Division of the Community Development Department. See page 71.

**Neighborhood Organization:** The City should encourage and aid the creation of a neighborhood organization that can advocate for the interests of the District.

**Residential Neighborhood Zoning:** Upon adoption of this District plan, City staff will initiate a process of examining the zoning of every residential property in the neighborhood for the purpose of potentially adjusting that zoning to a less intensive category. See pages 74-75.

**Housing Rehabilitation:** Private housing rehabilitation will be encouraged and assisted by the existing rehabilitation programs administered by the Eau Claire Housing Division and by the Housing Code Compliance Program of the Eau Claire City-County Health Department.

**Code Compliance:** The City will continue to support those owners who wish to maintain an attractive neighborhood through continued and intensive enforcement of City regulations on building and yard maintenance, parking, trash and other nuisances. The Eau Claire Police Department will continue to offer the Certified Landlord Program.

**Sustainable Surface Water Management:** The City will continue to practice sustainable surface water management during site redevelopment, public improvements, park design and public maintenance, as prescribed by its City-wide plan for runoff control.

## Analysis of Conditions and Issues

### Introduction and Purpose

The *West Riverside District Plan* was prepared by the City of Eau Claire as a guide for public improvements and regulations, an inspiration for private investors and owners, and a framework for further studies.

The City of Eau Claire has prepared similar plans for other neighborhoods and districts, and this document fits into that collection. Each district plan builds on the broad policy direction established in the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan* (2005) but each is more detailed than the City-wide plan. District plans also provide many opportunities for citizen participation on matters close to home.

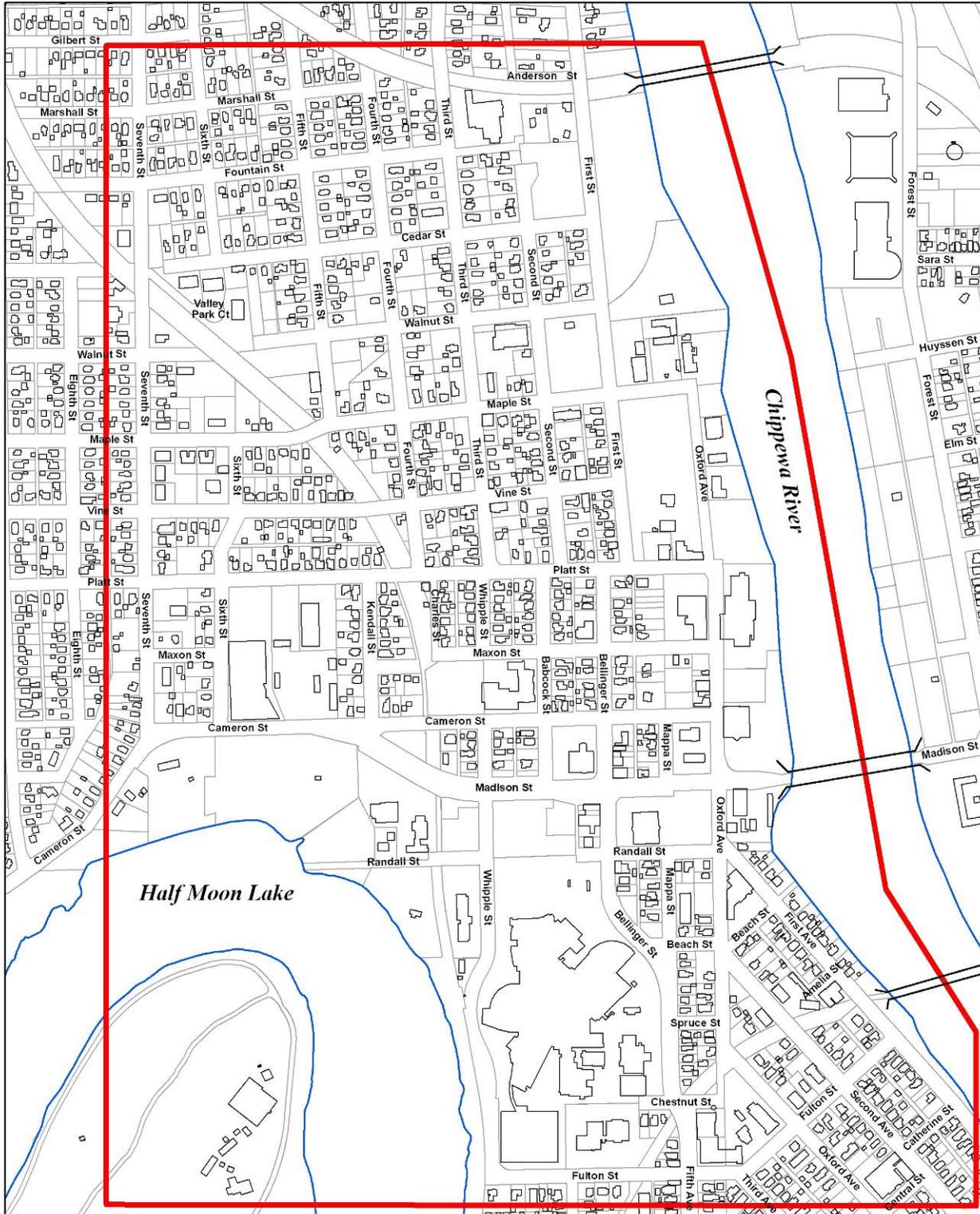
This document was prepared in 2010, beginning with this analysis of conditions and issues in the Spring and concluding with the plan element in the Fall. Methods of analysis included reviewing past plans that influence the study area, interviewing residents, owners and officials who are knowledgeable and interested in the future of the district, mapping key physical conditions, and walking and photographing the entire district. Clearly describing the planning issues was the major emphasis of the first phase.

### The Study Area

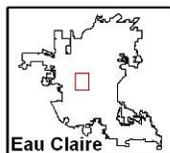
The boundaries of the West Riverside District Plan were established as:

- Just north of the railroad trestle and Marshall Street
- 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the west
- The Chippewa River on the east
- Just south of Fulton Street on the south.

Those boundaries are depicted on Figures 1 and 2 on the following pages. Figure 1 also displays the pattern of streets, street names and building outlines. Figure 2 is a recent aerial photograph that conveys many details not available on the line maps of this document.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

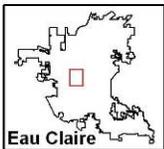


- Study Area
- Building Footprints

**Figure 1  
Study Area**  
0 200 400 600'



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**



 Study Area

**Figure 2  
Aerial Photograph**

0 200 400 600'

## District Visual Character

### Housing



### Institutions



**Businesses**



**Parks and Open Space**



## Prior Related Plans

Four prior plans by the City of Eau Claire have a bearing on the West Riverside District Plan:

- *The Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan* (City of Eau Claire, 2005)
- *The West Bank Area Redevelopment Plan* (Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority, 2008)
- *The West Side Arterial Street Study* (City of Eau Claire, 1991)
- *Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan* (City of Eau Claire, 2010).

## Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan

**Future Land Use Plan:** The portions of the District south of Madison Street are planned for commercial development along with the property east of Mappa and First Streets up to Maple Street. Other locations planned for commercial development include the frontage of Third Street from Walnut to Platt Streets and the property east of 6<sup>th</sup> Street between Platt and Cameron Streets.

There are two blocks planned for public parks along First Street and a block planned for school use at Babcock and Cameron Streets.

The rest of the District is guided as Medium and High Density Housing, which includes small-lot detached houses, duplexes, townhouses, 4-, 6- and 8-unit buildings with individual exterior entrances, and all forms of apartment buildings.

**Downtown Plan:** The Downtown chapter of the Comprehensive Plan encompasses the entire District south of Cameron Street and that portion north of Cameron Street that is east of Bellinger and First Streets, a total of approximately 35 blocks. That portion of the downtown is termed the Medical Center District in the downtown plan.

The primary policy direction is to “encourage the development of the Medical Center District as a health services area anchored by the Luther Midelfort Hospital medical campus, related office uses and convenience retail and support businesses.”

Supportive and related policies are:

- **District Plan:** Create an overall coordinated development plan that links the future expansion and use of the (former) City Parks and Recreation building, the West Riverside office building and the LE Phillips Senior Center to the long-term master plan for the Luther-Midelfort (Mayo) Medical Center campus.
- **Hospital Involvement:** Encourage the hospital’s involvement in the development of the surrounding commercial area in a way that promotes a pedestrian-scale community commercial district.
- **Riverfront Trail:** Extend the riverfront park and trail system along the western frontage of the Chippewa River
- **Riverfront Land Use:** Plan “appropriate” land use adjacent to the riverfront park. Line the river with public parks and walkways or land uses that benefit from the

location such as apartment buildings, offices and restaurants. Ideally, there would be a public open space corridor between the top of the river bluff line and the adjacent private river-oriented development. Do not use riverfront land for parking or other outdoor storage. Buildings should not present their worst sides to the rivers.

- **Southern Boundary:** Recognize Fulton Street as the southern edge of hospital expansion. The commercial areas along Madison Street and Oxford Avenue and adjacent to the hospital should be kept as clustered and compact as possible.
- **Madison Street Businesses:** Encourage the economic orientation of the Madison Street commercial area as a neighborhood retail area that supports both adjacent residential neighborhoods and provides services to hospital employees, patients and visitors. Retail and food businesses serving area residents and hospital users should be encouraged to locate along Madison Street.
- **Redevelopment and Improvement:** The downtown plan also indicates that the portion of the District east of Bellinger Street has potential for redevelopment while adjacent neighborhoods should be protected and improved.
- **Former Railroad Corridors:** Linear parks should be extended from the downtown into adjacent neighborhoods and beyond via the former railroad corridors.
- **Housing:** Encourage the development of a variety of well-designed housing options for employees of the district.
- **Parking:** Encourage future parking for the hospital complex to be provided by multi-level parking structures. Discourage additional surface parking on either Madison or Bellinger Streets.

**Street System Plan:** A loop of streets that circles the downtown and passes through the West Riverside District should be improved with special features. Those streets are Bellinger, Madison, Farwell, Lake and Fifth. The recommended improvements include wider sidewalks, trees in grates, pedestrian scale lighting and banner arms, decorative paving in crosswalks, a decorative railing a landscape buffer along edges of parking lots, and directional signage.

**Parks and Trails Plan:** The two existing park sites along First Street at Maple and Cedar Streets are supported by the *Comprehensive Plan*. Only the Maple Street property, Kessler Playground, is presently developed although the level of improvements is minimal. The other site is open but unimproved. Overall, the quality of active parks in the District is low.

Half Moon Lake Beach provides swimming opportunities, a changing building and a parking lot on the eastern shore of that gorgeous body of water.

City park land is planned to be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake.

Multiple-use trails are planned along both frontages of the Chippewa River, around Half Moon Lake and along both of the abandoned railroad corridors that cross the District. The

trail planned along the riverfront would be a branch of the City recreational trail, which is built along the western riverfront and has a trailhead in Phoenix Park at the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers.

Paved paths presently exist along (1) the eastern bank of Half Moon Lake and (2) from the Half Moon Lake trail to the river bridge that is part of the City recreational trail. A portion of the latter trail is on a former railroad grade.

### **West Bank Area Redevelopment Plan**

The Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority adopted a Redevelopment Plan for 38 acres of the West Riverside District on May 7, 2008. The boundaries of the West Bank Project Area are:

- North: The former railroad corridor
- East: The Chippewa River
- South: Madison Street
- West: First Street from the former railroad corridor south to Platt Street; Mappa Street (extended to Platt Street).

The stated vision for the West Bank Project Area is:

“The ultimate build-out of the West Bank Project Area is envisioned as a mixed-use activity center that integrates civic and cultural land uses, housing, office and retail businesses, and community event and meeting facilities. Commercial and medical land uses will best be developed and served at the south end along Madison Street as this area has the highest traffic counts and easiest access for person travelling to or past the area. Large community facilities should also locate in this area to take advantage of the higher volume traffic capacity of Madison Street. Mixed residential / commercial land uses may be provided further north along Oxford Avenue between Platt Street and Maple Street. Ground floors of multi-story structures along the riverbank should take advantage of vistas of the Chippewa River. The area north of Maple Street is best used only as open space and residential development of such specialty residential land uses as extended stay units. Such residential land uses will be able to take advantage of the vistas of the riverfront and future pathways along the riverbank.”

Riverfront Properties: “This redevelopment district fronts along the Chippewa River and there is neither developed access nor publicly improved access to the riverbank area. Inspection of the riverbank found poor quality trees, thick and scrub undergrowth and trash. The City’s *Comprehensive Plan* encourages the improvement of all riverbanks for public access within the City. The City has provided improved pedestrian and bicycle trails along the Chippewa River and the Eau Claire River as well as along the shores of Half Moon Lake. This project will continue this course and seek to provide continuous access north from Madison Street to the north end of the project area. This will require either the purchase of river front property or whole parcels from property owners in order to allow public access. The Redevelopment Authority will seek to complete projects that enhance the riverfront with public access, trail ways, overlooks and other riverbank improvements.”

Public Infrastructure: “Because parts of the area are prone to flooding, the need exists to construct more permanent storm water retention and filtering facilities in this area. No other additional public utilities will be needed because the existing infrastructure is adequate. It is anticipated that Oxford Avenue will be redesigned and reconstructed based on the final redevelopment plans.”

The project area is zoned into three districts:

- Central Business District Planned (CBDP)
- Light Industrial (I-1)
- Heavy Industrial (I-2)

The redevelopment plan anticipates that the entire project area may be rezoned to Central Business District to allow redevelopment with a combination of the land uses allowed in that zoning district.

### **West Side Arterial Street Study**

This 1991 study examined numerous options for routing north-south traffic west of the Chippewa River, improving roads and bicycling facilities and adjusting the functional classification plan.

Ultimately, the recommend arterial route was not fully implemented. Instead of designating First Street (north of Platt Street) as a Minor Arterial road, Third Street was chosen and improved.

South of Madison Street, Bellinger Avenue was also designated as a Minor Arterial road, consistent with the recommendation of the study, and improved.

### **Eau Claire Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan**

The *Eau Claire Bicycle and Pedestrian System Plan* acknowledges the existing paths along the riverfront south of the Chippewa River State Trail bridge, the path that extends westerly from that bridge to Half Moon Lake and the path along the eastern shore of the lake up to Madison Street.

Future off-road bicycle paths are planned along the western shore of the Chippewa River, around Half Moon Lake and along the former railroad corridor that is now owned by the City (extending north from Madison Street to intersect with another, privately-owned railroad corridor). At the present time, the plan does not indicate a future bicycle route along the former railroad corridor that extends westerly from its crossing of the Chippewa River.

The plan also shows a future bicycle path on the former railroad bridge over the Chippewa River. That path would link to a trail along the east side of the river and also extend to Mt. Simon Park and the planned Dells Pond trail. The former railroad bridge is owned by the City and expected to be redecked in 2012 for bicycling and walking.

Finally, the plan designates Madison and Vine Streets and Bellinger Avenue as Primary On-Street Bicycling Facilities. Improvements in these corridors will depend on the unique characteristics of each street and may include striped lanes, painted edge lines, shared-lane markings, wide curb lanes or “sharrows.” (A sharrow is a symbol painted on the street in lieu of lane markings that indicate the legal and appropriate lane of travel for a bicyclist and cue motorists to pass with sufficient clearance. See page 38 for an illustration of a sharrow.)

### **North Barstow Area / Medical District Business Improvement District**

A Business Improvement District (BID) was established in 2006 under Wisconsin law encompassing the business districts on the western and eastern sides of the Chippewa River including the Madison-Cameron Streets corridor and vicinity of the Luther Midelfort Hospital.

A BID is a means for owners of contiguous taxable commercial or industrial properties to be specially assessed by the City at a rate determined by the Directors of the BID for expenditures described in the annual operating plan of the BID. (Tax exempt properties may also contribute.) Eligible expenses include development, redevelopment, maintenance, operation or promotion of the BID. Participating property owners elect a Board of Directors.

As of 2011, all of the major investments of this BID have been focused on the North Barstow redevelopment area.

## Demographic Profile

A review of the 2000 US Census data for the study area revealed the following facts. Although the data were ten years old, it is reasonable to assume that the relationships remain approximately the same in year 2010 as they were in 2000. Table 1 displays the selected Census statistics for the two Census Block Groups that cover the West Riverside District.

In the West Riverside District in the year 2000:

**Population:** The population was about 3 percent of the City's population, or 2,192 persons.

**Households:** The number of households was approximately 4 percent of the City's households, or 988 households.

**Race:** The racial composition closely reflected that of the entire City.

**Gender:** The gender distribution was very similar to that of the entire City.

**Age:** The age distribution of the males closely reflected the age of the males across the City. However, the age distribution of the females was significantly younger than that of the entire City. The percentage of people aged 65 or older in the District closely reflected that of the entire City.

**Household Size:** The average household size was significantly smaller than that of the entire City.

**Household Composition:** There was a significantly higher percentage of one-person households area than in the overall City. By the same token, the percentage of two-or-more person households in the study area was lower than that of the entire City.

**Non-Family Households:** The percentage of non-family households was significantly higher north of Madison Street than it was for the entire City. South of Madison Street, the percentage resembled that of the overall City.

**Families:** The number of families as a percentage of all households was significantly lower north of Madison Street than it was for the overall City. South of Madison Street, the percentage was somewhat lower in the study area than it was across the City.

**Family Size:** The average family size north of Madison Street was significantly higher than it was for the overall City. South of Madison Street, it was approximately the same as the overall City.

**Living with Spouse:** The percentage of males who were married but living without the spouse was significantly lower than for the overall City; the same relationship applied to

females in the study area. Both of those differences were greater north of Madison Street than south of Madison Street.

**Travel to Work:** The mode of travel to work was very similar to that of the entire City.

**Household Income:** Median household income was approximately 68 percent of that for the larger City.

**Poverty:** The percentage of households with annual incomes below the federally-defined poverty level was significantly higher in the study area than it was for the overall City.

**Housing Vacancy Rate:** The housing vacancy rate closely mirrors that of the City, approximately 3 percent.

**Home Ownership:** The percentage of owner-occupied housing units was significantly lower than the City as a whole.

**Housing Composition:** There was a higher percentage of duplexes, and building with 3 to 9 housing units, than City-wide. Likewise, the percentage of single-family housing was much lower than that of the overall City.

**Housing Value:** The median value of the housing units was approximately half to two-thirds of the City-wide average.

**Table 1  
Selected Demographic Characteristics**

	North of Madison Street Census Tract 12 Block Group 2		South of Madison Street Census Tract 14 Block Group 5		City of Eau Claire	
Total Population	664	1%	1,528	2%	61,704	100%
Race	664		1,528		61,704	
Population of one race:	655		1,488		60,914	
White alone	588	89%	1,343	88%	57,657	93%
Black or African American alone	2	0%	14	1%	429	1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	4	1%	22	1%	337	1%
Asian alone	56	8%	106	7%	2,259	4%
Some other race alone	5	1%	3	0%	209	0%
Population of two or more races:	9	1%	40	3%	790	1%
Hispanic or Latino	8	1%	8	1%	619	1%
Total:	664		1,528		61,704	
Male:	318	48%	724	47%	29,342	48%
Female:	346	52%	804	53%	32,362	52%
Households	298	1%	690	3%	24,016	100%
Total White Households	279	94%	663	96%	23,173	96%
Age by Gender						
Male:	318		724		29,342	
19 and younger	88	13%	194	13%	8,386	14%
20 through 64	230	35%	530	35%	20,956	34%
65 and older	26	4%	58	4%	2,781	5%
Female:	346		804		32,362	
19 and younger	77	12%	211	14%	8,933	14%
20 through 64	224	34%	492	32%	28,920	47%
65 and older	176	27%	396	26%	10,078	16%
Average household size	2.21		2.19		2.38	
Household Type						
1-person household:	122	41%	267	39%	7,202	30%
Male householder	52		127		2,874	
Female householder	70	57%	140	52%	4,328	60%
2 or more person household:	176	59%	423	61%	16,814	70%
Family households:	83	28%	330	48%	13,567	56%
Married-couple family:	45	15%	215	31%	10,664	44%
With own children under 18 years	26	9%	93	13%	4,763	20%
No own children under 18 years	19	6%	122	18%	5,901	25%
Other family:	38		115		2,903	
Male householder, no wife present:	9		31		662	
With own children under 18 years	2		15		382	
No own children under 18 years	7		16		280	
Female householder, no husband	29	10%	84	12%	2,241	9%
With own children under 18 years	22	7%	57	8%	1,513	6%
No own children under 18 years	7	2%	27	4%	728	3%
Nonfamily households:	93	31%	93	13%	3,247	14%
Male householder	43		53		1,734	
Female householder	50		40		1,513	
Households with one or more people 65 +	62	21%	118	17%	5,092	21%
1-person household	42		59		2,512	
2-or-more person household:	20		59		2,580	
Family households	17		58		2,491	
Nonfamily households	3		1		89	
Households with no people 65 years and over:	236	79%	572	83%	18,924	79%
1-person household	80		208		4,690	
2-or-more person household:	156		364		14,234	
Family households	66		272		11,076	
Nonfamily households	90		92		3,158	

Table 1 – Continued

	North of Madison Street Census Tract 12 Block Group 2		South of Madison Street Census Tract 14 Block Group 5		City of Eau Claire	
Families (as a percentage of all households)	83	28%	330	48%	13,567	56%
Population in Families	280	42%	997	65%	40,525	66%
Average family size	3.37		3.02		2.99	
Marital Status	661		1,297		50,700	
Male:	390	59%	620	48%	23,971	47%
Never married	292		252		9,860	
Now married:	53		265		11,713	
Married, spouse present	36	5%	235	18%	10,964	22%
Married, spouse absent:	17		30		749	
Other	6		18		189	
Widowed	11		12		560	
Divorced	24		15		479	
Female:	271		677		26,729	
Never married	174	64%	279	41%	10,091	38%
Now married:	29		239		11,777	
Married, spouse present	29	11%	231	34%	10,891	41%
Married, spouse absent:	0		8		886	
Separated	0		8		250	
Other	0		0		636	
Widowed	27		88		2,395	
Divorced	41		71		2,466	
Means of Travel to Work	487		887		32,721	
Car, truck, or van:	421	86%	846	95%	28,759	88%
Drove alone	396		703		25,973	
Carpooled	25		143		2,786	
Public transportation:	9	5%	32	8%	547	3%
Bicycle	9	5%	0	0%	236	1%
Walked	19	11%	9	2%	2,206	13%
Other means	18	10%	0	0%	182	1%
Worked at home	11	6%	0	0%	775	5%
Median household income in 1999	\$ 24,801		\$ 25,357		\$ 36,399	
Income in 1999 below poverty level:	214	32%	211	14%	7,757	13%
Housing Units	312		733		24,753	
Occupied Housing Units	312		733		24,753	
Occupied	312	100%	705	96%	23,911	97%
Vacant	0		28		842	
Tenure	312		705		23,911	
Owner occupied	63	20%	314	45%	13,727	57%
Renter occupied	249		391		10,184	
Units in Structure	312		733		24,753	
1, detached	85	27%	397	54%	14,237	58%
1, attached	0	0%	28	4%	994	4%
2	95	30%	192	26%	3,025	12%
3 or 4	76	24%	78	11%	2,313	9%
5 to 9	21	7%	38	5%	1,495	6%
10 to 19	0	0%	0	0%	647	3%
20 to 49	35	11%	0	0%	747	3%
50 or more	0	0%	0	0%	743	3%
Mobile home	0	0%	0	0%	552	2%
Median value	\$ 48,600		\$ 62,600		\$ 92,800	

## **Land Use and Development**

This section of the District analysis describes the pattern of land use, the current zoning regulations and the pattern and nature of buildings and related site improvements. Identifying opportunities for continued evolution in the pattern, intensity and appearance of land development is an important task of this section. Refer also to Figure 3.

### **Existing Land Use**

The pattern of land use in the West Riverside District reflects its history of development from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century through today. As a consequence of the forces at work in each era over the past 150 years, builders of housing, business or industry have taken advantage of this central location differently over time. These long cycles of change continue today, and it is one of the roles of this planning project to anticipate and prepare for the next foreseeable era.

### **Central Riverfront Location**

A major factor in the development of the West Riverside District is its central location along the Chippewa River in Eau Claire. Lumber milling was the industry that gave birth to this community as numerous mills were established along the Chippewa River to process the multitudes of logs that were floated down from the northern forests over a period of approximately 70 years. The river powered those great engines along both banks above the confluence with the Eau Claire River where the banks were relatively low. Landforms in the river valley were reshaped to accommodate the mills and related development, and much sawdust and other by-products were deposited as fill, a practice which today affects the suitability of some sites for buildings. After the decline of the logging era in Eau Claire, the river dam was built to provide electrical power for the region and the nearby paper mill on the east bank.

The near west side declined as a center of retail trade and industry in Eau Claire as water power and river transportation faded, the northern forests were depleted, the network of major roads and railroads evolved and other local centers grew in prominence as a result of these and other factors.

Today, West Riverside continues to benefit from its central location but has not fully evolved to a new position in the community. The central civic and business district is on the eastern side of the Chippewa River, most retail trade is located on the periphery of the region along the major highways, and industry has also grown where highway access and open land are abundant.

## **Business and Industry**

In response to the lumber mills, many related businesses were established nearby in the industries of wood products, transportation, and retail sales and services. Housing for workers was located within walking distance of the mills. Since there were few, if any, land use regulations until the early- to mid-20th Century, businesses and industries were sometimes located near and among housing. The city grew outward in a very loosely organized pattern such that locations that were once on the edge of town or along a rural lane are now deep within a central neighborhood.

The west side was one of several early business locations in the loosely knit communities that sprang up around the two rivers. The eastern bank south of the Eau Claire River became the major center of commerce and eclipsed the smaller commercial center near Madison and Bellinger Streets. Heavy manufacturing at the steel and tire factories along the northern side of the Eau Claire overshadowed the mills and smaller industries in West Riverside. West side industry declined with changes in the pattern of highways and railroads, trends in shipping and manufacturing, and lack of available land for growth.

The pattern of early industrial development is still evident in West Riverside. Several large warehouse or light manufacturing buildings are still in use along Oxford Street, although for the most part they are functionally obsolescent and suffer from much deferred maintenance. The many open or underutilized acres near Oxford Street are evidence of the fact that this is no longer a viable industrial or business location.

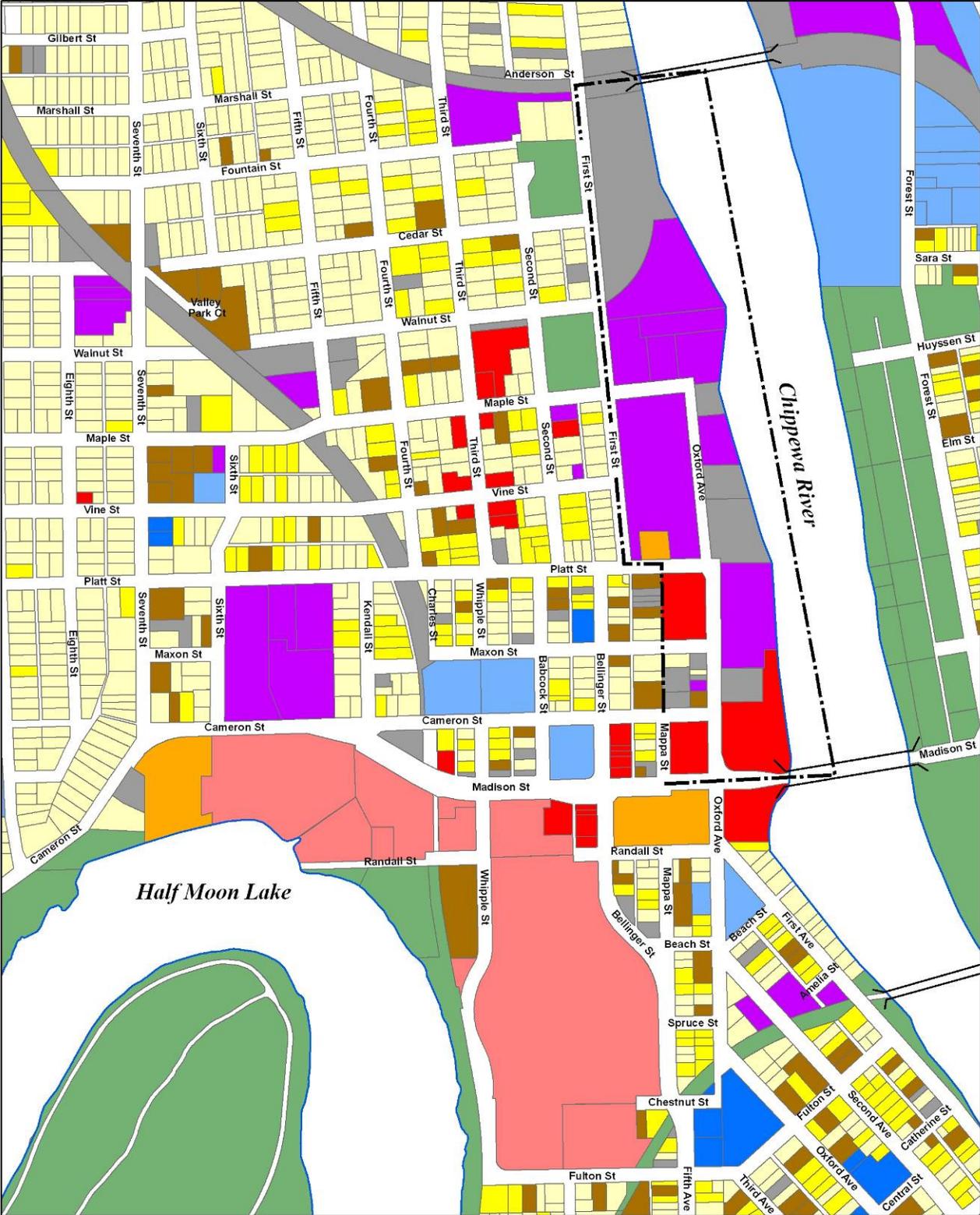
Across the District, both north and south of Madison Street, and usually adjacent to housing, there stand isolated industrial buildings left from earlier times. Some are in active use while a few are entirely vacant.

In many cities, including Eau Claire, the shells of former industrial dynamos have been given a new lease on life with offices, retail businesses, small entrepreneurs or housing. The new Children's Theatre along Oxford Street is one such example. However, there appears to be limited for more such conversions in West Riverside because of the character, condition or location of the industrial buildings.

## **Road Pattern**

A relative lack of major road connections to the outer loop of federal highways slows land development in West Riverside as it does the business district east of the river. The improvement of the Third Street route to the North Crossing acknowledges the long-time business district along that street and should provide some support there. If Cameron Street were ever connected to I-94, the entire central area would benefit. Business development in West Riverside is supported by the Fifth-Bellinger-First-Third network, which provides fairly good north-south movement.

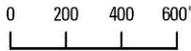
The Madison Street alignment has been the location of a river bridge since 1924. However, Madison Street itself did not gain its current prominence until 1992 when it was widened and linked smoothly to Cameron Street.



**WEST RIVERSIDE DISTRICT PLAN**

- |                       |            |                            |
|-----------------------|------------|----------------------------|
| Single Family Housing | Commercial | Public or Institutional    |
| Two Family Housing    | Office     | Place of Worship           |
| Multi Family Housing  | Medical    | Undeveloped                |
| Park or Trail         | Industrial | RDA Redevelopment District |

**Figure 3**  
**Existing Land Use**  
**2009**



## **Railroads**

Three railroad lines once crossed the West Riverside District but none had as dramatic an influence on the pattern of land use as they did east of the river. Railroad service is now gone but the three corridors remain. One is used for a bicycling path and the other two are potential trails.

The City owns the corridor that runs north from Half Moon Lake while a private party owns the corridor that links to the former railroad bridge over the river; a private party owns the corridor west of Third Street while the City owns the portion east of Third Street and the “High Bridge” that crosses the Chippewa River. That bridge will be resurfaced in 2012 for bicyclists and pedestrians (through a federal transportation enhancement grant) in preparation for improved connections to the east and the west.

## **Housing**

Although development in the West Riverside District began with industry, it was housing that soon filled it. The District was a more seamless fabric of housing before the improvements to Madison Street and Third Streets and the expansion of Luther Hospital. Housing occupied the several blocks that are now devoted to parking, clinic and new hospital north of Spruce Street and the original hospital building.

Housing in West Riverside was once primarily single-family detached, but many of those structures have been remodeled and divided into two, three- and four-unit rental buildings. West Riverside has a higher percentage of residential structures with three to nine units than the rest of Eau Claire. That phenomenon is typical in several central neighborhoods of this city, however. Figure 3, Existing Land Use, shows the pattern of single-family and multi-family housing in the district and its uneasy relationship to non-residential land uses.

The subject of housing type, density and maintenance will be described further in another later section of this analysis.

## **Retail and Service Businesses**

Retail and service businesses are located along Madison, Bellinger and Third Streets. Overall, the district is not a retail center for Eau Claire even though Madison Street has relatively high traffic counts. There appears to be potential for the development of additional retail and service businesses along the north side of Madison Street where housing presently stands or where sites are underutilized.

There are several half-blocks of housing along Madison Street that are incompatible with the nearby businesses and with the level of traffic on Madison Street. Those blocks should probably evolve to businesses.

The shops along Bellinger and Third Streets front along the sidewalk in the traditional urban style.

At the bridgehead along Madison Street is retail site that is developed with a very low density suburban style and, thus, underutilized for its central location; a site to the south is

intensively used but as a lumber and millwork sales center and warehouse, which is not supportive of nearby land uses.

At the southwest corner of Madison and Bellinger stand a bar and an adult book and movie store. Neither has its own parking and both are incompatible with the image and mission of the nearby hospital and clinic.

The large plumbing supply business along Madison at Sixth Street includes retail and wholesale sales. The small businesses along Third Street mostly serve the nearby neighborhoods.

### **The Riverfront**

Unlike the eastern riverfront, the western shore is nearly fully occupied with housing or businesses; there is no public park land along the western riverfront. Immediately south of the district, a linear park for the City recreational trail begins.

Also unlike the eastern side, there is a broad, wooded floodplain below the bluff line on the western shore. South of Madison Street, the floodplain extends beyond the tall riverbank (the initial bluff line) into the neighborhood. Refer to Figure 13 for the location of the 100-year and 500-year floodplain boundaries.

North of Madison Street, the shoreline above the top of the river bank is devoted to parking lots, undeveloped private land and several aging industries or warehouses. Near the former railroad bridge, an open site is used by the City for snow storage and temporary Public Works Department operations storage. The height of the bluff increases toward the north. In this reach, the flood plain remains beneath the bluff line.

South of Madison Street, thirteen single-family houses are located between First Avenue and the bluff. All of those houses are located in the 100-year floodplain. The lumber yard at Madison Street is partially protected from flooding by its own protective wall.

### **The Oxford Avenue Corridor**

North of Madison Street, the Oxford and First Streets corridor is the major redevelopment opportunity for the District. The corridor consists of undeveloped and underutilized sites, obsolescent and deteriorated buildings, outdoor storage yards and 3,000 feet of riverfront with a view across the water to a linear park. The Eau Claire Children's Theatre Company recently renovated and expanded what appears to be one of the few old buildings worth keeping in the corridor, a structure that could now serve as a cornerstone for subsequent reinvestment work. Nearly all of this area is above the 100-year floodplain.

The Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority has designated the entire corridor as a Redevelopment Project Area. (See the description of that initiative under Prior Related Plans, above.) Redevelopment is expected to be conducted by private interests but the RDA stands ready to participate if called upon for land assembly or public improvements. The designation of the Redevelopment Project Area allows the RDA to exercise those and other powers as described by Wisconsin statutes.

Most potential redevelopment sites will be sufficiently large to accommodate a range of building types and footprints. Oxford Avenue south of Platt Street will probably have to remain, but north of that point Oxford could potentially be vacated. Site access east from First Street is constrained by a 15-to 20-foot drop in elevation.

The City is interested in securing enough land above the river bank to accommodate pedestrian and bicyclist paths, whether this is accomplished by purchase or dedication of fee title or an easement. As noted above, the intention is to link the City recreational trail near Fulton Street to the former railroad bridge at the northern end of the West Riverside District. This linear park and trail would, however, shrink the east-west dimension of all of the riverfront parcels. Thus, the future buildings should be carefully designed for privacy and separation from that public space. Relocating or vacating Oxford Street north of Platt Street may be helpful in that regard and could be a factor in negotiating private redevelopment plans.

Land below the river bluff line might be privately owned. The City would be interested in securing the rights to that floodplain land, also.

### **The Madison to Fulton Street Neighborhood**

Between the Luther-Midelfort Hospital and the Chippewa River, south of Madison Street, is a neighborhood of housing and businesses that demands close attention during this planning process. It is strategically located in the center of Eau Claire with 1200 feet of riverfront. Easy access is available from Madison and Bellinger Street. To the west, the hospital and clinic provide hundreds of jobs, and to the south it is anchored by a Catholic church and school and a Lutheran church. State and City trails link the neighborhood to Half Moon Lake, Phoenix Park and beyond.

This small neighborhood was once predominately single- and two-family housing, seamlessly part of the large neighborhoods to the south and north. Several non-residential land uses have interrupted that pattern, including the Charlson lumber and millwork business at Madison Street, the West Riverside office building and surface parking lot, small industrial-warehouse structures along the former railroad corridor (now the bike path), and, a three-story school building and parking lots (the structure is now vacant and owned by the City). Thirteen large houses line the riverbank along First Avenue. More recently, a cluster of townhouses and several single-family conversions have added to the mix. Overall, the neighborhood is intensively developed with only small amounts of open land.

Because of its location, visibility, access and amenities, this neighborhood would seem to hold promise for something greater than its present uneasy status. Clinic expansion might seem like a possibility but Luther-Midelfort has indicated that it does not wish to grow east of Bellinger Street but rents some space in the West Riverside office building.

These and other questions should be studied:

- Are other clinics or medically-related businesses a possibility?
- What is the potential for non-medical office buildings?

- Should housing be intensified to take advantage of the location and amenities?
- What is the appropriate pattern of land uses in relating to the neighborhood to the south, the hospital, the riverfront and the Madison Street corridor?
- What is the appropriate size of future buildings here; should the neighborhood remain mostly small buildings such as the original one- and two-story houses or should large residential or commercial buildings be encouraged such as the townhouse cluster of the West Riverside office building?

The block bounded by Bellinger, Randall and Mappa Street seems to have the greatest short-term potential for change because of its location and neighbors, but it is intensively developed.

### **Local Institutions**

**The Luther Midelfort Hospital and Clinic** is obviously the major institution in West Riverside. Luther Midelfort provides Eau Claire and the surrounding communities with medical specialties ranging from comprehensive cardiac, cancer, orthopedic and trauma services to women's and family primary care. Luther Midelfort, an element of the Mayo Health System., includes a 304-bed acute care hospital and Midelfort Clinic. The clinic, added in 1995, is a five-floor medical office building attached to Luther Hospital that has grown to become one of the largest multi-specialty groups in Wisconsin with more than 200 physicians representing almost every medical specialty.

In 2010, two five-story bed towers totaling 358,000 square feet and a new western entrance were added to the hospital. Supporting that expansion was an 800-stall, four-story parking structure. The main entrance to the hospital now faces Half Moon Lake and a realigned Whipple Street.

Surface parking is located to the north of the complex, with two surface lots west of Whipple Street, a large surface lot to the west along Madison Street, smaller surface lots along Bellinger Street and a major new structure to the southwest. City buses stop in the northern parking lot and along Bellinger Street at Spruce Street.

The hospital rents space in the West Riverside office building, located east of Bellinger Street at Madison Street. Also owned are the Lakeside Apartments, an apartment building near Half Moon Lake with federally-subsidized rents, and a child day care center between Chestnut and Fulton Streets.

Over the long-term, the hospital may continue to grow by making more intensive use of its present property. It could expand by removing and replacing the oldest buildings and grow north toward Madison Street with additional space for clinics as well as structured parking.

The southern boundary of the medical campus is set at Fulton Street and the eastern boundary at Bellinger Street.

With the 2010 addition, the major entrance to the complex will face Half Moon Lake and the primary parking location for staff and visitors will be located in a structure north of Fulton Street. Thus, Fulton Street will become a more important entrance route and the intersection of Fulton and Bellinger Streets will become a more heavily used intersection.

There are presently two entrances to this medical center along Madison Street and four along Bellinger Street. The need for traffic signals should be monitored at the Madison-Whipple and Bellinger-Fulton intersections. Sight line improvements may also be needed at the latter location.

An increasing number of hospital and clinics visitors arrive from locations west of Eau Claire. Thus, the hospital supports the idea of connecting Cameron Street to I-94. This would supplement the indirect routes from I-94 to West Riverside and Downtown.

A recent storm sewer improvement along Spruce Street, which drains east to the river, has greatly diminished the chance of another flood on this site.

Additional dining businesses near the hospital are desired by businesses in the area although there are three places to buy meals within the medical center.

Near the hospital's northern parking area (at the corner of Madison and Bellinger Streets), are a bar and adult book and video store, which are incompatible with the image and mission of the hospital and clinic.

**The LE Phillips Senior Center**, located along the northern side of Madison Street between Babcock and Bellinger Streets, provide social, educational, and health and wellness programs to 2,300 area seniors, especially those of lower income. The City acquired and cleared the site and constructed the building for the center with federal assistance in 1996. The operations of the center are supported mostly by dues, donations and program fees.

The center would like to expand its building and add programs to serve the growing Baby Boomer market but parking is already a problem. Their off-street lot is inadequate and there is not enough on-street parking nearby.

**The Eau Claire Montessori Charter School**, located along Cameron Street between Charles and Babcock Streets, accommodates students from pre-kindergarten through fifth grades from across the city. The former Lincoln Elementary School building is not presently used although the Montessori program could expand to fill it, or it could be re-used as an office for the school district.

As with the nearby LE Phillips Senior Center, parking is a problem for staff and parents. There is no busing to this facility. The playground is also considered to be too small.

The Eau Claire School District wishes to maintain the older neighborhood schools such as this one.

**The Eau Claire Children's Theatre** recently renovated and occupied a former industrial building along Oxford Street between Platt and Maxon Streets. The facility seats up to 275 audience members and has 85 parking spaces.

### **Parks and Trails**

There are two neighborhood playground sites in the District along First Street at Maple and Cedar Streets. Only the Maple Street property, Kessler Playground, is presently developed although the level of improvements is minimal. The other site is open but unimproved. Overall, the quality of active parks in the District is low.

Half Moon Lake Beach provides swimming opportunities, a changing building and a parking lot on the eastern shore of that gorgeous body of water. City park land is planned to be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake.

Multiple-use trails are planned along both frontages of the Chippewa River, around Half Moon Lake and along both of the abandoned railroad corridors that cross the District. The trail planned along the riverfront would be a branch of the City recreational trail, which is built along the western riverfront and has a trailhead in Phoenix Park at the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers.

Paved paths presently exist along (1) the eastern bank of Half Moon Lake and (2) from the Half Moon Lake trail to the river bridge that is part of the City recreational trail. A portion of the latter trail is on a former railroad grade.

### **Buildings and Development**

Figure 5, Pattern of Buildings, illustrates the outlines of every building in the West Riverside District. The pattern of small lots with high land coverage is evident throughout the residential neighborhoods.

In the commercial and industrial areas, the open land created by parking lots, outdoor storage and demolished buildings forms a different pattern. The Luther Hospital and Clinic complex with its surface parking and recent parking structure dominates the district south of Madison Street.

The park and conservancy land around Half Moon Lake and on the eastern riverfront contrast with the balance of the tightly developed neighborhood.

Finally, the three former railroad corridors that slice across the district are apparent.

Not apparent, however, is an early log flume or canal that ran from the Chippewa River to Half Moon Lake. An 1888 map indicates that the flume left the river just below the former railroad bridge and ran below the secondary bluff, just east of First Street. It crossed what is now the northern parking lot of Luther-Midelfort Hospital before depositing its logs into the lake. It has since been filled and buried.

## Pattern of Zoning, 2010

The pattern of zoning in the West Riverside District, illustrated by Figure 4, is not consistent in many instances with the current pattern of land use. The two primary discrepancies are the use of the R-3, Low-Rise Multiple-Family Housing District, and the R-4, High-Rise Multiple-Family District.

North of Madison Street, these districts comprise a large part of the neighborhood as they step down toward the lower density R-2, One- and Two-Family District, located to the north and west. South of Madison is another area interspersed with the R-4 District.

These districts cover areas that are developed mostly with single- and two-family housing even though the R-3 and R-4 districts allow buildings with many more housing units. Thus, row houses and apartment buildings could be built in the middle of blocks composed otherwise of single-family and two-family buildings. This zoning has also allowed many single-family buildings to be remodeled into multi-unit rental buildings, many times without sufficient off-street parking. The result is often deleterious to the remaining single-family housing.

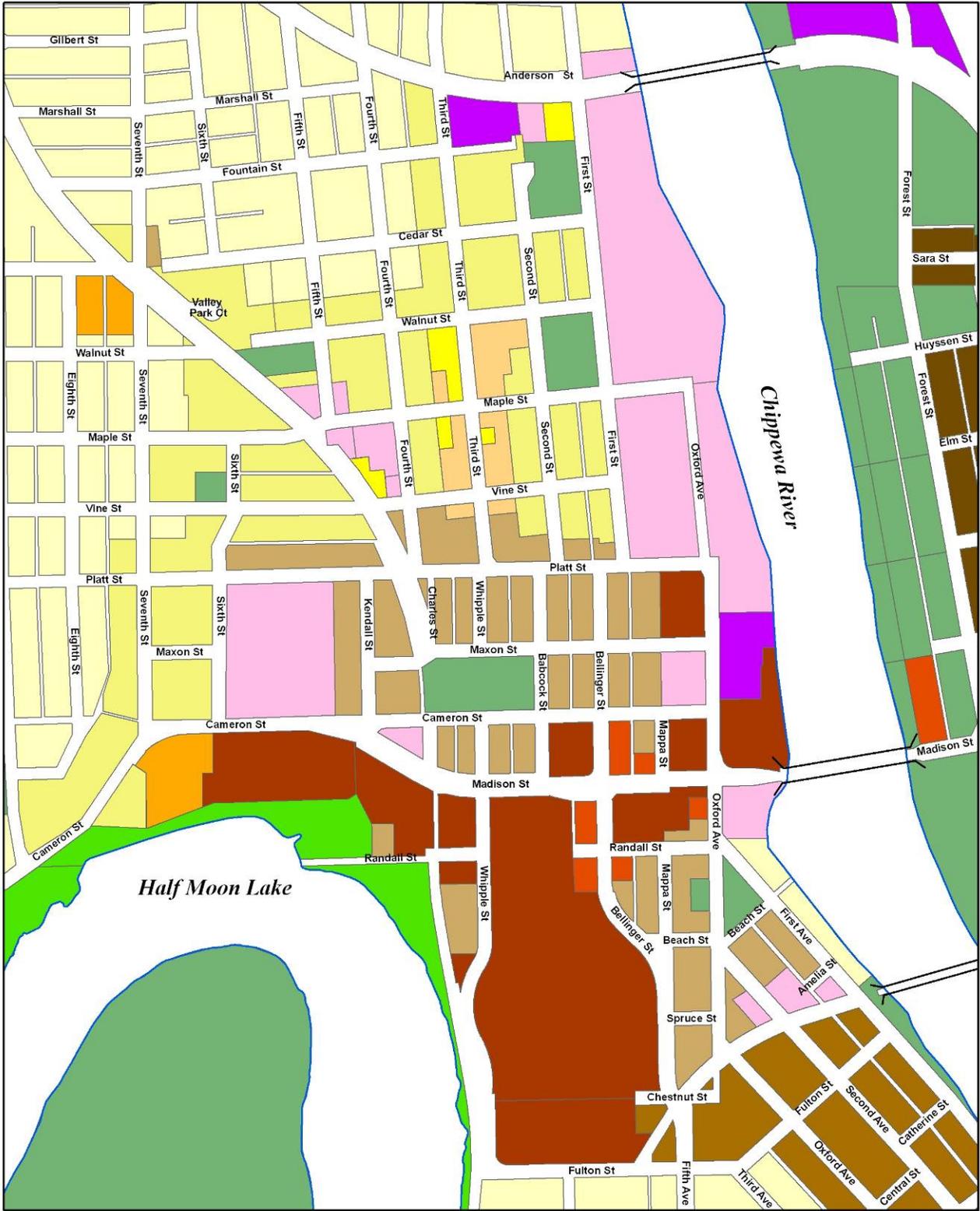
Such higher density residential zoning is a result of a comprehensive plan from the 1960s that conceived of a ring of high-density housing and residential towers around the downtown.

In other Eau Claire neighborhoods, such R-3 and R-4 zoning has been rolled back to RM, R-2 or even R-1 districts.

The industrial zoning in the Oxford Avenue corridor is inconsistent with the intentions of the plan adopted for that area by the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority.

The zoning districts in West Riverside are:

**R-2 One- and Two-Family District.** The one- and two-family district is established in order to provide for the development and maintenance of one-family homes and two-family homes, and to encourage land-efficient, energy-efficient, and affordable family housing.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

	R2		RM		CBD		P
	R3		RMP		CBDP		CV
	R3P		C2		I1		
	R4		C3		I2		

**Figure 4**  
**Existing Zoning**  
**2009**

0 200 400 600'

**R-3 Low-Rise Multiple-Family District.** The low-rise multiple-family district is established to provide for the development and maintenance of moderately dense multiple-family housing, in either older neighborhoods or developing areas. The density and height restrictions of the low-rise multiple-family district are intended to allow for the compatibility of these areas with adjacent lower density residential areas.

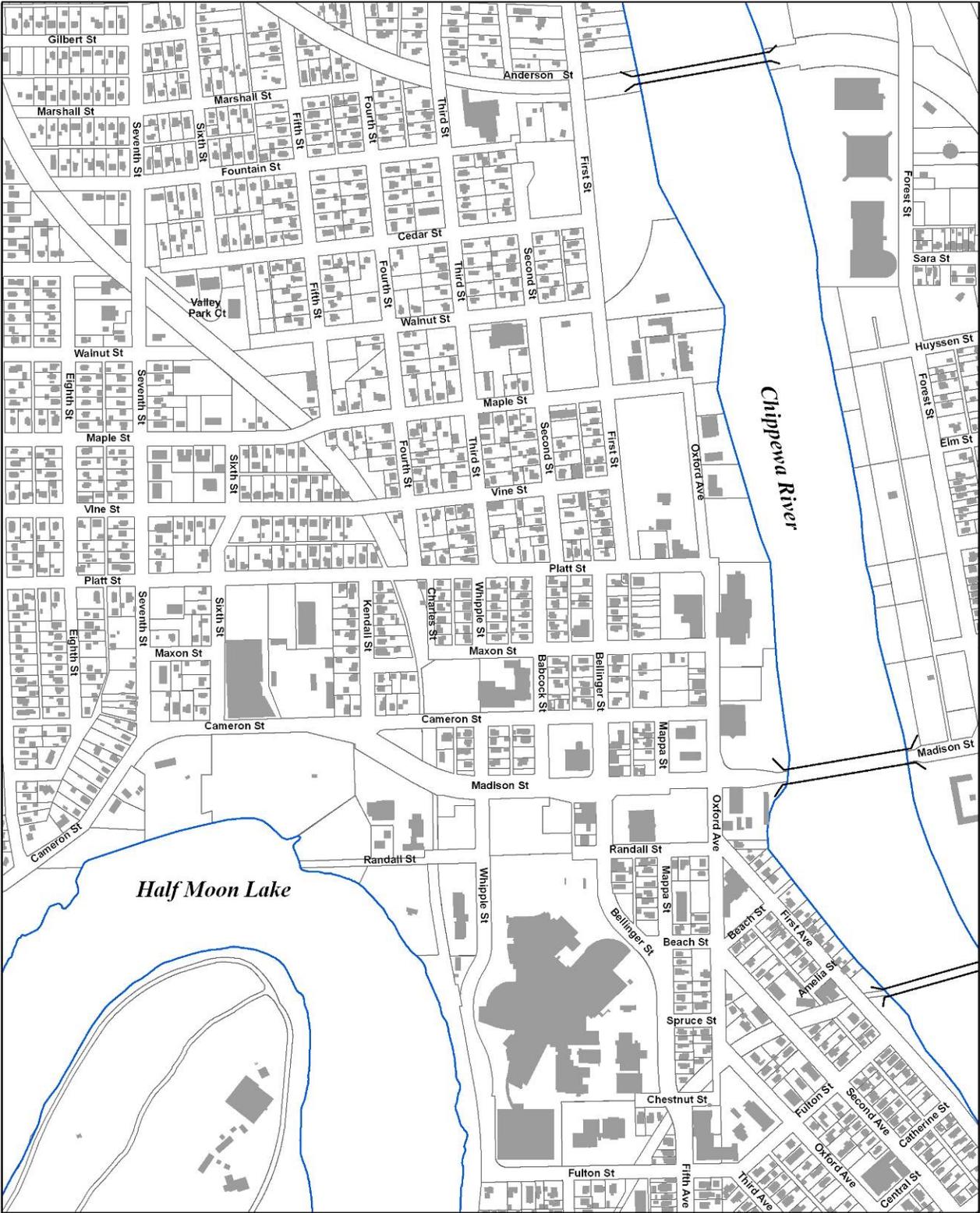
**R-4 High-Rise Multiple-Family District.** The high-rise multiple-family district is established to provide for the development and maintenance of high rise (3 or more floors), high density residential uses in a limited number of areas of the city.

**RM Mixed Residential District.** The mixed residential district is established to provide for the development and maintenance of a compatible mixture of small single-family homes, two-family homes, townhomes, garden apartments, and small apartment buildings; and to encourage moderately dense development which is compatible with existing and future single-family development, in either older neighborhoods or developing areas.

**CBD Central Business District.** The central business district is established to be a high intensity, pedestrian oriented, shopping, office, service, entertainment and residential area in the city. Diversity in the CBD is encouraged through the mix of uses and activities with development guided by the comprehensive plan. The requirements, herein, reflect the need for the highly compact intense development typical of downtowns while increasing the availability of open space, plazas, pedestrian ways, and the river amenity. This district is closely related to the CBD-P district, which has additional site planning and design controls.

**I-1 Light Industrial District.** The I-1 district is established to accommodate those uses which are of a non-nuisance type located in relative proximity to residential and commercial areas, and to preserve and protect lands designated on the comprehensive plan for industrial development and use from the intrusion of certain incompatible uses which might impede the development and use of lands for industrial purpose. Development in the I-1 district is limited primarily to certain wholesale and jobbing commercial uses and certain industrial uses, such as the fabrication of materials, and specialized manufacturing and research institutions.

**I-2 Heavy Industrial District.** The I-2 district is established to accommodate most industrial uses and especially those heavy industrial uses which are incompatible to residential and commercial uses. The district allows for areas where intense industries may locate and not be in conflict with residential or commercial areas or more sensitive industrial uses. Industrial activities of all types are permitted, including those not desirable in other zones due to objectionable impacts or appearance. New office, business and retail uses are limited and new residential uses are not allowed. The site development regulations are limited to the minimum standards necessary to assure safe, functional, efficient and environmentally sound development.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

 Building Footprints

**Figure 5  
Pattern of Buildings**

0 200 400 600'

## Housing Tenure

Rental housing comprises 80 percent of the housing stock in the West Riverside District north of Madison Street and 55 percent south of Madison Street, as indicated by Table 1, Selected Demographic Characteristics (pages 16 and 17) and illustrated by Figure 6, Housing Tenure (page 25).

Figure 6 would seem to indicate that there are more owner-occupied housing units than rental housing units. This visual discrepancy may be caused by the fact that that map shows land parcels rather than housing units and because the parcels that are used for rental housing tend to have more housing units than do the parcels with owner-occupied housing.

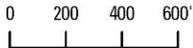
These high proportions of rental housing reflect the numerous multiple-family buildings and, perhaps, its age, deferred maintenance and environment. Rental housing is a necessary and important component of any community and serves people who either do not wish to own their shelter or lack the means. However, a common side effect sometimes is a decreased long-term commitment to the neighborhood, as renters' stays in the neighborhood tend to be shorter than those of owners.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

Orange square: Owner- Occupied Housing      Yellow square: Renter- Occupied Housing

**Figure 6  
Housing Tenure**



## Building Conditions

An informal visual inspection of the exterior condition of the buildings in the West Riverside District indicates that many of the residential buildings in the neighborhood suffer from deferred maintenance to the siding, roof, gutters, porch or garage. Nonetheless, there are instance of single-family houses that are in remarkably good exterior condition, with evidence of recent new siding, shingles or other components.

The Eau Claire City-County Health Department conducted an exterior inspection of all of the housing units in this and other central neighborhoods in 2010. The results are aggregated and averaged by block and depicted by Figure 7.

The industrial buildings in the district are nearly all in very poor exterior condition and functionally obsolescent.

The condition of the commercial buildings ranges from good to poor. Likewise, some commercial buildings are new and intensively used while others date to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and are functionally obsolescent.

## Historic Properties

There are three known historic or archaeological sites in the District:

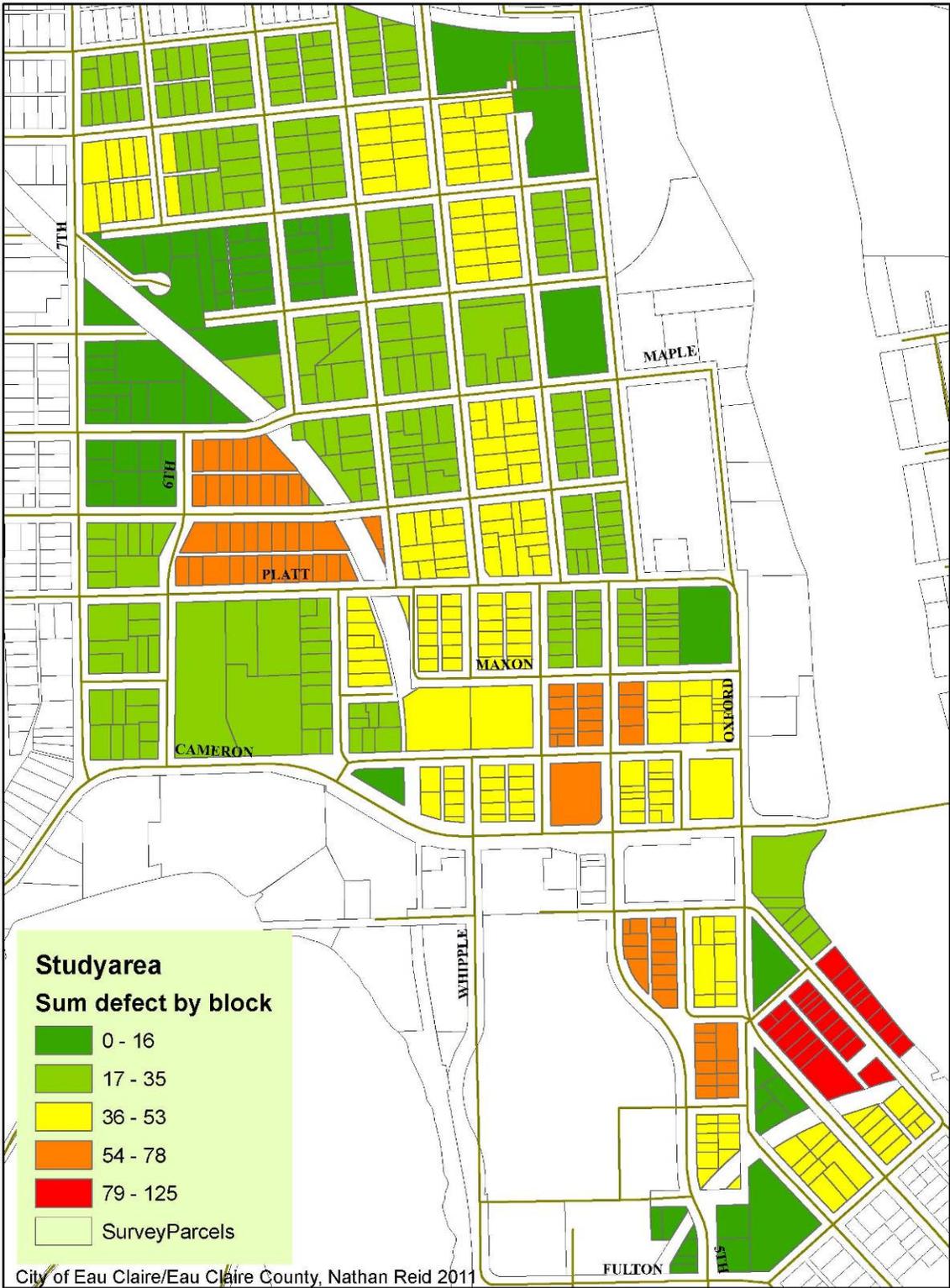
- **The Waldemar Ager House**  
The Ager House has been completely restored at 514 W. Madison Street – one quarter mile north of its original location at the corner of Chestnut and Whipple Streets. Waldemar Ager was a Norwegian immigrant who was a noted fiction writer, newspaper editor, speaker and civic leader.
- **St. Patrick's Church**  
316 Fulton Street
- **An archaeological site near Half Moon Lake.**



**St. Patrick's Church**



**The Waldemar Ager House**



**Figure 7**  
**Exterior Housing Conditions Survey**

## Streets

### Street Classification

Streets are classified by function for the purpose of ensuring consistent design standards across the city. In the West Riverside District, there are four classifications of street:

**Table 2**  
**Street Classification**

Classification	Purpose	Examples
Principal Arterial	Provides high to moderate volume and moderate speed traffic movement between and through major activity centers. Access to abutting property is subordinate to traffic flow and is subject to necessary control of entrances and exits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Madison Street</li> <li>▪ Cameron Street west of Kendall Street</li> </ul>
Minor Arterial	Augments and feeds the Principal Arterial system and is intended for moderate volume and moderate speed traffic movement. Access to abutting property is partially controlled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bellinger Street</li> <li>▪ Third-Platt-Oxford Streets</li> <li>▪ Vine Street west of Third Street</li> </ul>
Collector	Collects and distributes traffic between arterial streets and local streets. Intended for short length trips to abutting properties. Design of collector streets varies depending on the character and intensity of traffic generated by adjacent land development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seventh Street</li> <li>▪ Oxford Street south of Madison Street</li> <li>▪ Second Street</li> </ul>
Local	Provides direct access to abutting property. Intended for low speed and low volume traffic movement and short trips.	All other streets

After a series of public meetings, the Council decided to keep the major north-south arterial on Third Street in lieu of moving it to First Street.

It is not expected that Bellinger Street north of Madison Street will replace Oxford Street north of Madison as the connection to Third Street even though Bellinger Street is a Principal Arterial south of Madison Street. Bellinger Street north of Maxon Street is lined with houses, and it is easier to make the turn at Platt-Oxford than at Platt-Bellinger.

The City hopes that some day there will be an interchange on I-94 at Cameron Street to aid access to and from the downtown (and the West Riverside District). However, that improvement is not in the long-range plans of the Wisconsin DOT.

### Traffic Volumes

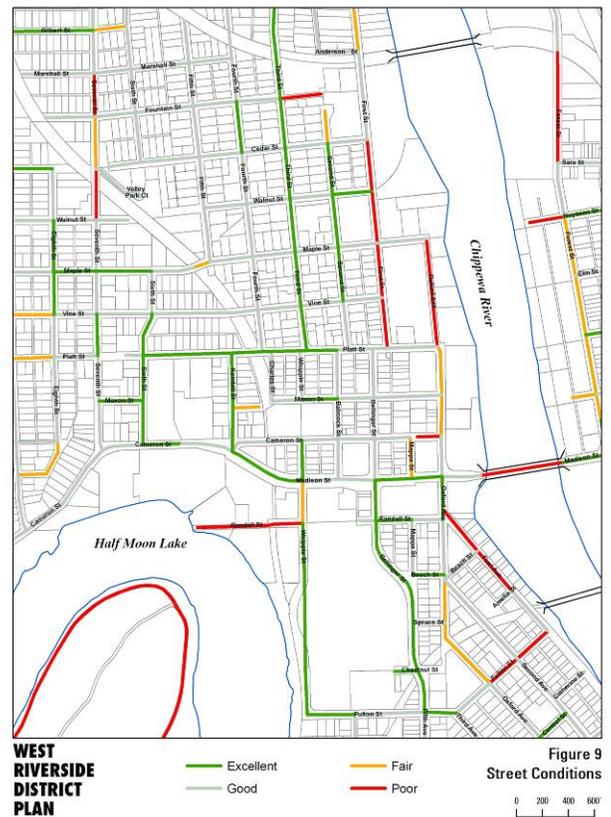
Approximately 20,000 vehicles cross the Chippewa River on the Madison Street bridge on a typical day. That daily volume drops to approximately 7,000 along Cameron Street west of the district as trips either originate or end in the District or turn north or south. The North Crossing (completed in 1993) diverted some trips away from the Madison Street bridge and affected other traffic patterns in and around the District.

The Third-Platt-Oxford route was previously designated US Highway 12 and has long been a heavily used connection to the north. The Highway 12 designation is now signed on Clairemont Avenue but this connection to the North Crossing, Wisconsin Highway 124, remains fairly busy with average traffic counts in the range of 6,000 to 7,000 vehicles per day.

### Street Conditions

Street conditions are assessed on a regular basis throughout the community by the Eau Claire Department of Public Works. The most recent results are depicted on Figure 9.

Most of the streets are rated in Excellent or Good condition. However, Oxford and First Streets in the Redevelopment Project Area are rated as Fair or Poor. The Madison Street river bridge requires joint and sidewalk repairs; major renovation is not expected to be needed in the next twenty years.

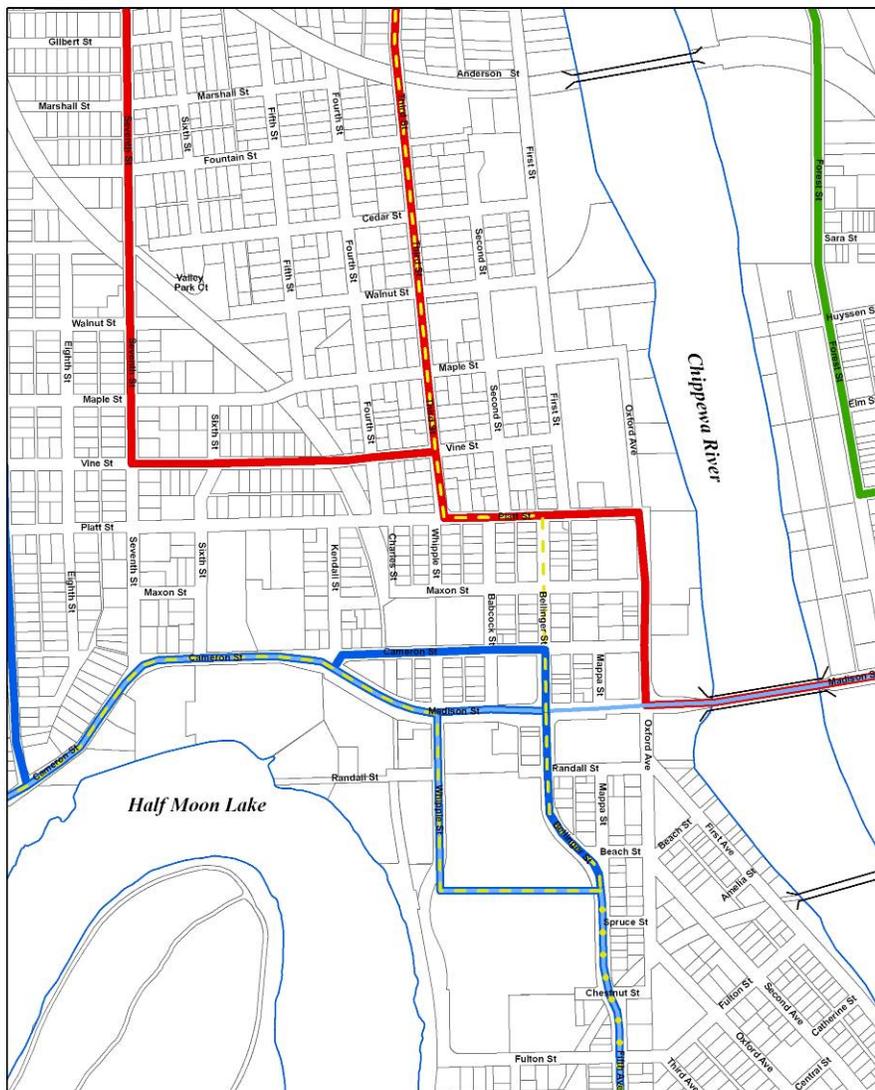


## Bus Routes

Bus service is provided to and through the West Riverside district by Eau Claire Transit, as depicted by Figure 10, Bus Routes. Basically, there are three bus routes that serve the district:

- Route 2-12
- Route 20-21
- Route 8-18.

Routes 2-12 and 20-21 both cross the river at the Lake Street bridge and serve Luther Hospital before circulating through neighborhoods and commercial districts to the west. Route 8-18 crosses the river on the Madison Street bridge and serves the residential and industrial areas to the northwest. All bus routes pass through the downtown transfer point.



### WEST RIVERSIDE DISTRICT PLAN

- Route 8-18
- Route 2-12
- Route 20-21
- Route 3-4
- - - Express Route 10
- Express Route 2 & 11

Figure 10  
Bus Routes



## Bicycling and Walking

### Existing Facilities

Walking is encourage by the presence of concrete sidewalks along nearly every block face in the District including the major streets such as Madison, Cameron and Bellinger; the major exceptions are in the Redevelopment Project Area. The only major sidewalk deficiencies are east of First Street and north of Oxford Avenue.

Access to and from the city-wide and state bicycling paths is provided via the path on the former railroad corridor that crosses the Chippewa River near Fulton Street. Connections are available across the river to the trailhead in Phoenix Park, south along the river on the Chippewa River State Trail paths, and west along half Moon Lake and into beautiful Carson Park.

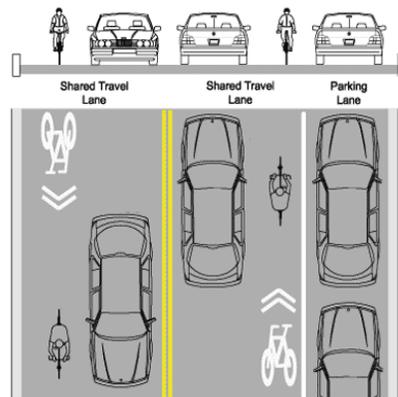
There is also a pair of on-street striped bicycling lanes along Bellinger Street between Madison and Fulton Streets.

### Planned Improvements

Future multiple-use trails are planned to be built in these alignments:

- Around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake;
- Along the former railroad corridor, owned by the City, that runs in the western side of the district;
- Along the former Railroad corridor that runs across the northern side of the District; note that this trail was not included in the draft 2010 *Eau Claire Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*); the abandoned railroad trestle that will be used as the river crossing will be (has been) redecked in 2010 for that purpose
- Along the western riverfront from the State Trail bridge near Fulton Street to the planned trail corridor across the abandoned railroad trestle.

When complete, there will be five river crossings dedicated exclusively for bicyclists and pedestrians in Eau Claire, and two of them will be in West Riverside.



Example of "sharrow" markings

The on-street striped lanes that exist on Bellinger Street are planned to be extended south to Water Street and the Chippewa River State Trail.

Madison / Cameron Street is designated as a Primary Bicycling Route in the *Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*, which means that striped lanes or "sharrow" markings should be applied to guide bicyclists and alert motorists.

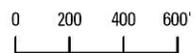
First Street from Madison Street to the State Trail bridge is designated as a Signed-Only bicycling route.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

- Sidewalk
- Multi- Use Path
- - - Planned Multi- Use Path

**Figure 11  
Sidewalks and Paths**

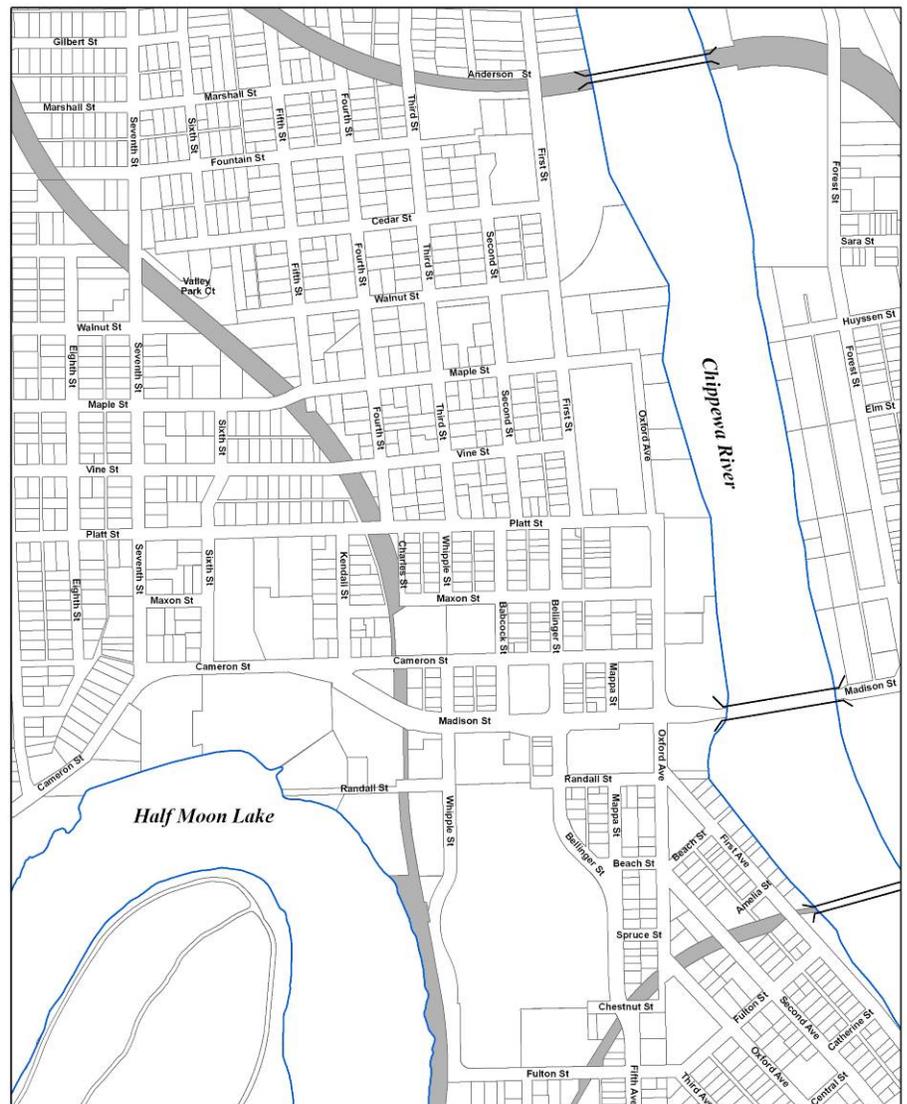


With these off-street paths, on-street lanes and river crossings, the West Riverside District will enjoy some of the best bicycling access of the entire city. Those facilities encourage riding to work and riding for fun or exercise, all of which help quality of life and support better land development.

### Former Railroad Corridors

As noted previously, there are three former railroad corridors in the West Riverside District:

- South: From the State Trail river bridge to Half Moon Lake and Carson Park
- West: A former corridor that is now owned by the City of Eau Claire
- North: A former corridor that is now partially owned by a private individual, although the City of Eau Claire owns the river bridge in that alignment.



**WEST RIVERSIDE DISTRICT PLAN**

■ Former Railroad Corridor

**Figure 12  
Former Railroad Corridors**  
0 200 400 600'

Figure 12 illustrates the alignment of these corridors.

The northern route is not included in the comprehensive bicycling route plan of the *Eau Claire Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan* (draft, 2010). Nevertheless, there is the possibility that the City could negotiate the purchase of the corridor in the future since it may not be developable by itself for residential, commercial or industrial purposes.

## Natural Features

The Chippewa River and its ancient meanderings have created the major natural features of the West Riverside District. It is evident that in the distant past the river was not confined to its present channel but periodically ran across the District, leaving Half Moon Lake as a landlocked remnant and two steep slopes as evidence of former riverbanks. In addition, the valley of the westerly railroad corridor was apparently carved from an ancient stream that ran to the river.

### The River and the Lake

The West Riverside District is heavily developed for urban purposes but enjoys the beauty and tranquility of the views across the Chippewa River and Half Moon Lake. These two features are major assets for the District and the entire city that can be leveraged to create long-term urban value and quality of life.

Public access to the edges of the river in the District for viewing, fishing or launching boats is all but nonexistent as most of the riverfront is in private ownership. There is a small amount of public park edge near the State Trail bridge head, and the Madison Street bridge offers spectacular views.

Public access to the lake is available at Half Moon Beach, a City swimming beach with a clothes-changing building and parking lot. Views to and across the lake to Carson Park are possible all along the multi-use path that runs along the eastern side of the lake.

Views toward Carson Park from private properties at the northern end of the lake are quite amazing. The mature woods of old white pines in the park give one the impression of being in the wilds of northern Wisconsin. Views from the Luther Hospital towers undoubtedly share this treasure.

The scenic and recreational potential of these two waterfronts that embrace the West Riverside District should definitely be leveraged for their benefit to this neighborhood and the broader community.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

- Steep Wooded Slope
- Wooded Area
- 784 Elevation in Feet
- 500 Year Flood
- 100 Year Flood
- River Bluff Line

**Figure 13  
Natural Features**



### **Floodplains**

In the present day, there are steep wooded slopes along the shores of the Chippewa River and Half Moon Lake. The 100-year (1 Percent Hazard) floodplain is closely confined to the bluffs along Half Moon Lake and the river in most locations. However, south of Madison Street, the 100-year floodplain does extend beyond the river bluff line to encompass several blocks in the neighborhood, endangering a number of houses and businesses, as shown on Figure 13, Natural Features.

The 500-year floodplain (0.2 Percent Hazard) encompasses most of the Redevelopment Project Area designated by the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority north of Madison Street plus part of the neighborhood to the south.

### **Steep Slopes**

In addition to the steep slopes immediately along the Chippewa River and Half Moon Lake, there are two other prominent linear hillsides, both of which are wooded:

- Immediately east of First Street – this slope is approximately 15 to 20 feet tall and divides the riverfront industrial area from the residential neighborhood to the west
- A feature running diagonally across the District and along the sides of one of the railroad corridors – this wider, taller slope creates a band of open space through the pattern of residential blocks.

The pattern of sandy soils is consistent with the alignment of these two bands of steep slopes.

### **Other Wooded Areas**

The western and northern railroad corridors are partially wooded by virtue of being unused for many years.

## **Summary of Major Planning Issues**

The major questions that should be discussed and resolved during this district planning process are described below.

### **Land Development along Oxford Street**

How should land in the northern Oxford Avenue corridor be redeveloped? What are the desired types of land use there – housing, businesses, industry, City park with trails? Should the idea of a “convention center” continue to be considered for that location?

### **Parks, Playgrounds and Public Open Space**

Should a riverfront linear park with paths be extended from the Chippewa River State Trail bridge to the former railroad trestle? What should be the role of the City if this direction is pursued?

Should the undeveloped playground property located at First and Cedar Streets be sold for private development or held as park space?

Should there be a central park or plaza in the District that might serve as a focal point and civic gathering space? Where might such a feature be located? Could it serve to encourage redevelopment of adjacent and nearby properties?

How should access to Half Moon Lake from the District be improved?

Should there be a public boat launch on the river in the District?

### **Residential Neighborhood Improvements**

What should be done to stabilize or improve conditions in the residential neighborhoods? What should be the role of the City in this effort? Should the City engage in a neighborhood-wide alley improvement program; how should such improvements be paid for?

### **Residential Neighborhood Zoning**

Should the R-3 and R-4 zoning that predominates in the residential neighborhoods be changed to a less intensive residential district?

Should the residential properties with commercial zoning along Third Street be rezoned for housing?

Should any other steps be taken to reduce the residential density of the District?

### **District Identity**

Should anything be done to better define the perimeter of the district in order to improve its identity?

Should additional means be used to improve the identity of the District?

### **The Madison Street Corridor**

Should the housing in this corridor (Cameron to Randall Streets) be redeveloped to other land uses? Should the oldest of the commercial buildings be redeveloped? Should future buildings be brought up to the sidewalk along Madison Street or should surface parking be allowed there?

Should design guidelines be developed for the commercial area?

What should be the role of the Business Improvement District?

What should be done to improve the ease and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists trying to cross Madison Street?

### **The Neighborhoods East and South of Luther Midelfort Hospital**

Should parts of the neighborhood east of Bellinger Street evolve to higher residential densities and, perhaps, retail, office or hospitality land uses? Should the Comprehensive Plan guidance of commercial land use for this neighborhood be followed?

Should the houses between First Avenue and the river be acquired and the land converted to linear park? Should the houses there be redeveloped into higher density housing? What might be the best way to extend the riverfront trail north through this area?

Should anything be done to mitigate the effect of increased hospital traffic on Fulton Street? Should a traffic signal be installed at the corner of Bellinger and Fulton Streets to accommodate the increased traffic volumes there?

### **District Commercial Development**

What additional businesses are desired in the District? Should a grocery store be recruited to the District?

### **Arts and Culture**

Should the District use the arts (visual or performing) to promote redevelopment, enhance identity and build social organization? Can the District build upon the foundation created by the Children's Theater to attract additional performing arts groups that may establish facilities in the District?

### **Auto Access to the District**

Should the arterial roads leading to the District be improved to accommodate increased traffic volumes?

### **Half Moon Lake Trail**

When should the recreational trail be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake?

### **Northern Railroad Corridor**

Should the City negotiate to purchase the former railroad corridor along the northern edge of the District for the purpose of building a bicycle / pedestrian trail?

### **Crime, Vandalism, Behavior and Perceptions**

What should be done to reduce the number of crimes against property and persons in the District? Should this plan try to directly address and reduce the incidence of obnoxious, anti-social or noisy personal behavior which sometimes occurs? What should be done to improve the perception of personal security in the District?

### **Property Maintenance**

What should be done to improve the maintenance and appearance of buildings, yards and alleys? Should there be increased enforcement of City regulations on building and yard maintenance?

### **Parking**

Should there be different regulations on where autos can be parked; should there be better enforcement of the current regulations? Should the odd-even parking wintertime restrictions be waived on those streets that are too narrow for parking on both sides? Do City regulations need to be changed to allow or encourage bigger garages?

Should the amount of off-street surface parking generally be reduced in the district in favor of more structured parking?

### **Neighborhood Organization**

What should the City do, if anything, to help organize a neighborhood association for the area north of Madison Street?

## *West Riverside District Plan*

### **Vision Statement**

The West Riverside District should grow as a proud and identifiable neighborhood in Eau Claire that features desirable housing options, many well-paying jobs, interesting shops serving the local population, two magnificent waterfronts and outdoor recreation opportunities. The District should complement the Downtown but stand on its own.

The centerpiece of the District should continue to be Luther Midelfort Hospital (Luther-Mayo Health System), which is the economic engine and a major source of identity for the district.

Neighborhood reinvestment should include housing, shops, office buildings and small businesses. Housing assistance code enforcement and other efforts will stabilize and improve the neighborhood.

Beautiful public parks along the two waterfronts should provide lasting value for nearby housing and improve recreation and quality of life for residents throughout the District and across the City. A major new linear park and trail should be created along the Chippewa River that links segments of the City-wide network and ties into the neighborhood. Access to the fabulous Half Moon Lake and Carson Park should be improved by the completion of a walking and bicycling path all around the lake. Three paths in former railroad corridors should tie the waterfront parks and trails deep into the District and the northwestern Eau Claire community.

North of Madison Street, the Oxford Avenue corridor will be completely transformed with townhouses, apartments and small shops that take advantage of the views to the riverfront park.

### **Guiding Principles for the District**

These principles will be used by the City of Eau Claire to help guide the evolution of the West Riverside District, including plans for land use, zoning, urban design, parks and trails, streets, and housing rehabilitation:

#### **1. District Identity**

West Riverside should be a distinct, identifiable, and special place in Eau Claire and not merely an entrance to or subpart of the Downtown.

**2. Purpose**

By following the recommendations of this plan, the West Riverside District should move toward the objective of becoming recognized as a desirable neighborhood with a variety of housing types and income levels, jobs, and outdoor recreation opportunities close to downtown.

**3. Intensity and Scale**

The two- to four-story building height and relatively high land coverage now found in the district should be maintained. The existing zoning regulations should be reconsidered with the aim of reducing the allowable maximum residential density.

**4. Image**

The image of the district should be improved by redeveloping property, increasing housing maintenance, creating riverfront parks and trails, and enhancing the Madison Street and Oxford Avenue corridors.

**5. Orientation**

The neighborhood should have better visual and functional connections to the Chippewa River and Half Moon Lake. Enjoyment of those resources should be improved with new linear parks.

**6. Housing Quality and Affordability**

The long trend of housing disinvestment should be reversed with stimulus provided by downtown growth, park and trail improvements, hospital success, land use regulation, and City ordinance enforcement. During its revival, the neighborhood should remain affordable for households of low and moderate income.

**7. Employment**

The number of jobs in the district should be increased through private initiative and land use planning. Businesses that complement the hospital and clinic are especially desired.

**8. Movement**

Auto traffic should continue to be accommodated, but its impact should be softened through dispersal, street edge landscaping, bus transit, walking and bicycling.

**9. Green**

The image of the district should be greener than presently through the use of street trees, private plantings and linear, waterfront parks. Additional landscaping is particularly important along Madison / Cameron Street, Bellinger Street and Oxford Avenue.

**10. Organization**

The residential and commercial elements of West Riverside should become organized as an effective voice for this plan and ongoing actions.

**11. Role of the Public and Private Sectors**

The role of the public sector should be primarily regulatory while the role of the private sector should be financial and business.

## Policies for the West Riverside District

### Use of This Plan

These recommendation and guidelines will be used by the City when reviewing site development applications, by the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority when conveying land for redevelopment, and by the Community Development Department when amending the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan*.

### The Roles of the Public and Private Sectors

The City should help achieve this plan through land use planning, zoning administration, street and utility maintenance, trail improvements, regulatory enforcement and redevelopment assistance. The City will not use its powers of “*eminent domain*” to acquire private property for redevelopment unless necessary for removing blight. Property may be acquired in the Redevelopment District designated by the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority on a willing-seller basis for redevelopment. The City’s Housing Division may build new housing for low- or moderate-income buyers or renters on property formerly owned by the City if that opportunity arises. Otherwise, redevelopment will be initiated, financed and implemented by private parties on a voluntary basis.

### Summary of the Pattern of Land Use

The City will plan and regulate land development to move toward the pattern illustrated by **Figure 14, Land Use Plan**. That map calls for the following land uses, which are described in further detail in subsequent sections of this document.

**Figure 15, New Buildings and Parks**, complements the land use plan map and illustrates locations for infill and redevelopment, principles of building and parking location relative to the street, general building types and park locations.

It should be emphasized that there are many viable design solutions that are consistent with those principles but which differ in many respects. The imagination of developers should not be totally usurped by this plan.

**Madison- Cameron Streets Corridor:** Land development along Madison Street should continue to evolve to a mixture of small retail and service businesses, offices, and potentially, housing above commercial space. The Bellinger-Mappa block may undergo redevelopment. Additional off-street parking may be created west of Babcock Street for the Phillips Senior Center, the Montessori School and the historic Ager House. The single-family housing along Whipple Street may eventually be redeveloped to housing above shops or multi-family housing. The Ager House and adjacent public open space will be preserved. The outdoor storage at the First Supply Eau Claire should either be screened

much better or removed for redevelopment. Buildings in this corridor may be up to four stories in height.

**Luther-Mayo Hospital and Vicinity:** If additional facilities are added to the Luther-Mayo Hospital complex, they are expected to be within the boundaries of its present property. Fulton Street will remain the southern edge of the medical campus.

**Southeast Neighborhood:** New multiple-family housing will be encouraged between the West Riverside Office Building and the multi-use trail. Property facing Bellinger Street, including the triangular block south of Randall Street, may be redeveloped to small offices, especially those medically-related. The industrial buildings near the multi-use path should be redeveloped to housing.

**Near North Neighborhood:** The residential neighborhood between Platt and Cameron Streets should retain its present scale and character.

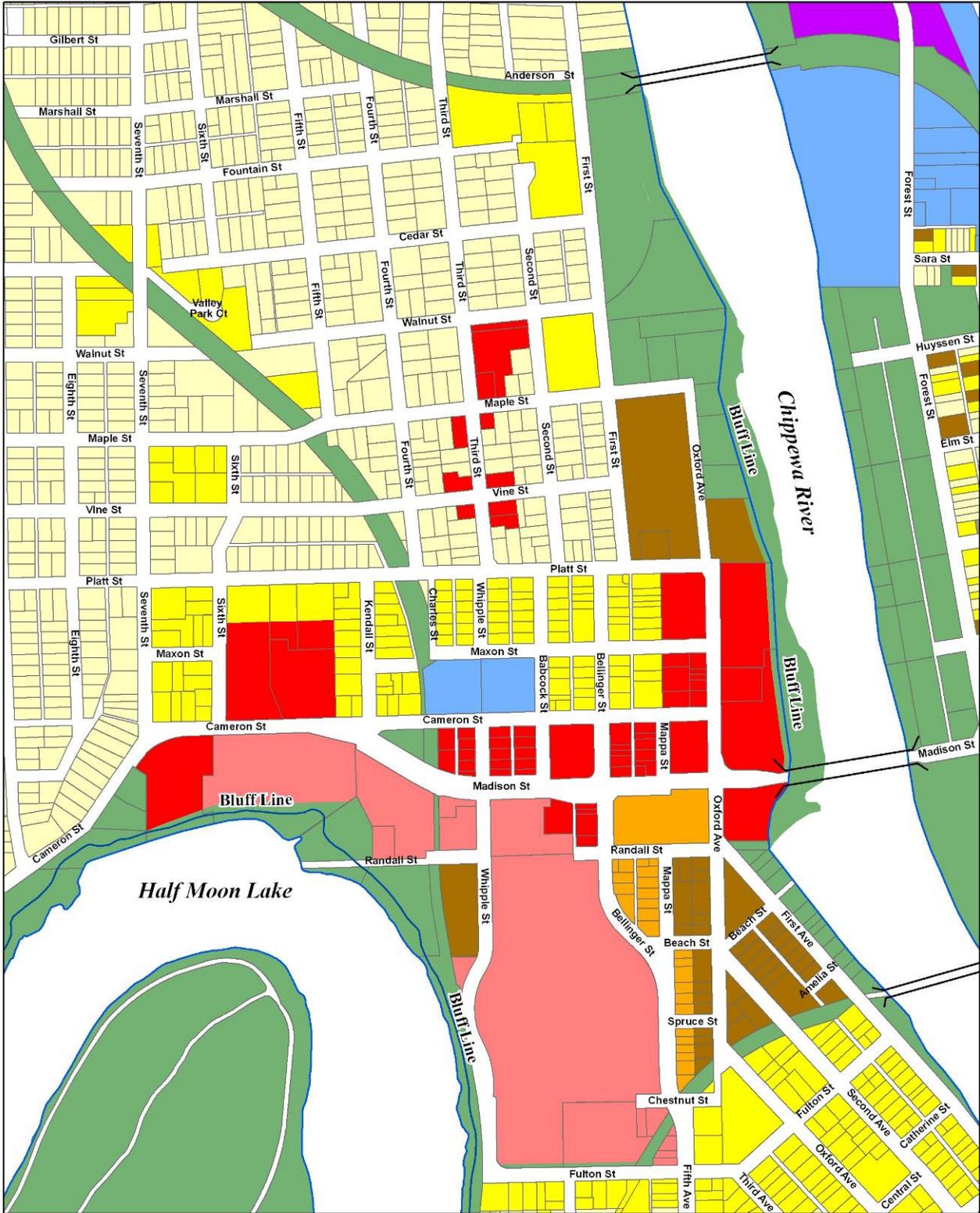
**Northern Neighborhood:** North of Platt Street, only a few isolated changes are proposed in the pattern of land use and development. There are three parcels of wooded land on steep slopes that could be used for housing, along with two aging industrial sites.

**Riverfront:** There should be a continuous band of park space along the riverfront wide enough, at a minimum, for a paved pedestrian and bicyclist path along the top of the river bluff. This riverfront park may be substantially wider north of Platt or Maple Streets.

**Oxford Avenue Corridor:** Property along the Oxford Avenue corridor should be redeveloped to take advantage of its views to the proposed riverfront park and the river itself. Land uses may include small shops and service businesses, offices, and multiple-family housing. Some housing may be located over commercial spaces. Surface parking should be minimized in favor of locations underneath buildings.

**Bicycling and Walking Paths:** There are three former railroad corridors crossing the District, one of which has already been converted to a bicycling and walking path. The other two should also be used as recreational trails.

A path for walking and bicycling should be extended around the northern and western sides of Half Moon Lake, preferably on either public park land or potentially on an easement across private land. This path will supplement access to Half Moon Lake Beach, among other sites, which can be expected to receive more use as the water quality in the lake improves.



**WEST  
RIVERSIDE  
DISTRICT  
PLAN**

- Mixed Lower Density Housing
- Mixed Medium Density Housing
- Multi Family Housing and Mixed Uses
- Park or Trail
- Public or Institutional
- Commercial and Mixed Uses
- Office
- Medical

**Figure 14  
Land Use Plan  
2010**  
0 200 400 600'

## Madison – Cameron Street Corridor

The Madison – Cameron Street corridor will always remain the District’s “Main Street” and primary face. It also serves as a major entrance to downtown, an important cross-city route, and the principal access to Luther-Mayo Hospital. Consequently, traffic levels will remain high, appearances will be important, and commercial development potential will grow.

### Land Use

Residential land uses should be phased out on the blocks that abut Madison Street and replaced with office, medical, service, and retail developments. Housing above retail or office space would be permissible. All of those blocks should be rezoned to Central Business District, which allows an urban mixture of retail, office, and residential development.

### Site Design and Architecture

New buildings should be located near the sidewalk, with parking to the rear or under the building. A short building setback to accommodate private landscaping (to complement the public street trees) would be perfectly acceptable. Any parking located near the street should be screened with plantings and/or a low masonry wall.

While it is not expected that Madison Street will ever become as oriented toward pedestrian activity as Oxford Avenue is hoped to be, the sense of edge, enclosure, and place provided by this policy will help create an environment appropriate for this western complement to downtown.

Buildings along Cameron and Madison Streets should have doors and windows facing the sidewalk and street, be two to four stories in height, be well landscaped and use high quality façade materials. Exceptions may be made to the preferred height of buildings to accommodate individual design limitations, space needs or design compatibility.



This multi-use building abuts the sidewalk. Parking is underneath, in the rear and along the street. Trees in the sidewalk soften the façade and improve the environment for walking.



Warm-colored materials were used on the façade of this specialty medical building.



**Figure 15**  
**New Buildings and Parks**

### Focal Points

Public art or monuments should be located along Madison Street to announce arrival and focus. In lieu of a “town square” park, which would be a strong symbol of central place, monuments at prominent corners, at the Madison-Cameron road split, or at the river bridge will be built by the City.



Above are examples of district focal points and public art. Features such as these are typically located along sidewalks, at major entrances or gateways, or bus stops. They are both decorative and functional.

### North Bellinger Street Retail Area

The shops along Bellinger Street north of Madison Street operated by ethnic owners are an asset to the neighborhood and the larger community. However, the commercial buildings on that block are aging and may eventually be redeveloped by the private market, possibly in combination with the housing to the east.

If redevelopment occurs, housing or offices over shops would be ideal along Bellinger Street with parking to the rear. Building edges should abut Madison Street, and the pattern of small blocks should be preserved here and throughout the District.

### Phillips Senior Center and Eau Claire Montessori School

Both the L.E. Phillips Senior Center and the Eau Claire Montessori Charter School are important to the neighborhood and the larger community. However, this popularity has led to some parking shortages, particularly when their peak demands coincide.



The LE Phillips Senior Center on Madison Street



The Eau Claire Montessori Charter School on Cameron Street

Therefore, the City will work with those institutions and nearby landowners to try to find a redevelopment scenario that creates a land use pattern that is appropriate for the corridor long-term, as well as some off-street parking that can be shared by those institutions and the future development.

Design ideas include but are not limited to:

- Private redevelopment of the block west of Babcock Street to some combination of housing, office or small business, parking and green space.
- Rebuilding a one-block stretch of Babcock Street to include corner bump-outs and angled parking.

It is emphasized that any redevelopment associated with this issue will be done privately. The City’s role will be to administer the zoning regulations and build or review any changes to public streets or utilities. The zoning classification as Central Business District supports the expansion of the Senior Center. No one will be forced by the City to sell their house.

**Ager House:**

The historic Ager House, a private museum located along the north side of Madison Street next to the planned multi-use trail, will be retained and protected, along with the adjacent City green space. Some additional off-street parking should be provided, possibly in conjunction with the Montessori School and the LE Phillips Senior Center. The Central Business District zoning for the site is appropriate.



The historic Ager House can be part of the western entrance to the District along Madison Street

**Western Cameron Street**

As noted above, the hospital uses a large tract of land along Cameron Street for employee parking, which, of course, is essential. However, if parking is consolidated into structures closer to the hospital in the future, some or all of that property would be ideal for either office or residential development because of its fine access, visibility, views (resulting from its high elevation near Half Moon Lake), and wooded edge.



Buildings along Cameron and Madison Streets should have doors and windows facing the sidewalk and street, be two to four stories in height, be well landscaped, and use high quality façade materials.

At First Supply Eau Claire, the outdoor storage yard is a blighting influence on the nearby neighborhood. There is also concern that runoff from the former oil business site may be harming water quality in Half Moon Lake. Therefore, the outdoor storage should either be screened much better or that portion of the site ought to be redeveloped. Suggested redevelopment land uses include a commercial building along Madison Street and low-rise attached housing along Platt Street. The showroom building is not a concern.

## Luther-Mayo Hospital and Vicinity

Long-term growth of the Luther-Mayo Hospital campus may locate medical and/or office buildings along Madison Street in place of surface parking. It is anticipated that much, if not all, of the growth of the hospital and clinic itself will take place immediately adjacent to the existing buildings or on the “footprint” of the existing buildings.

**Layout is Conceptual Only:** It is important to note that the conceptual building layout illustrated by Figure 15, New Buildings and Parks, does not represent a plan by the Mayo Health System. Rather, it is meant to illustrate the principles of locating multi-story buildings along the public streets, locating parking behind the buildings, using parking structures when it becomes economically feasible, maintaining the pattern of small blocks, and fostering a walkable environment. If development occurs, it will undoubtedly differ from Figure 15. Furthermore, there is no expectation or schedule for Mayo campus growth.

The hospital’s visual identity along Madison Street should be maintained and improved by sight lines, attractive signage, prominent campus entries, landscaping and buildings located near the street. Locating future buildings along Madison Street would:

- Strengthen the visual image and identity of the hospital
- Heighten the sense of arrival and entrance if properly coordinated with entry drives, landscaping, lighting, and signage
- Help the Madison Street corridor feel more like a “place” than just a traffic conduit
- Contribute to building a critical mass of businesses and destinations in the District.

The hospital entrance drives that exist opposite of Babcock and Randall Streets should be maintained and accentuated with lighting, landscaping, signage, and building placement.

If a Mayo parking structure is added to the site of the present surface parking, it might be centrally located and linked south to the hospital with a skyway and north to new buildings along Madison Street. Any parking structure along a public street should have an attractive façade and landscaping, as does the most recent structure located along Fulton Street. Mayo health facilities could be located within a portion of the structure, especially on the first floor facing a public street. (Figure 15 illustrates that idea along Whipple Street.)

Some surface parking will need to be maintained near the hospital entrance and elsewhere on the site. It is expected that the hospital will continue to maintain surface parking on its properties west of Whipple Street for the foreseeable future.



Luther-Mayo Hospital



This parking structure along Fulton Street uses materials, colors, and plantings for compatibility with the residential neighborhood to the south.

The need for a traffic signal at the intersection of Fifth and Fulton Streets should be studied. It is expected that traffic turning movements will greatly increase at this intersection because of the recently constructed parking structure near Fulton Street and the pair of hospital bed towers.

**The Southeast Neighborhood**

The land use plan and zoning map should encourage small-scale redevelopment of portions of the neighborhood east of Bellinger Street and south of Randall Street (east of Luther-Mayo Hospital). The properties that abut Bellinger Street may be used for offices or new housing; the old warehouses along the multi-use trail corridor should be replaced with housing.

The hospital owns a few properties on either side of the multi-use trail corridor near Chestnut Street that should be eventually used in support of the medical campus.

The former City Parks and Recreation building at First and Oxford Avenues should be privately re-used for housing or offices. Some surface parking for that building is located west of Oxford Avenue.



Decorative lighting and street trees were included when Bellinger Street was recently rebuilt. Potential exists for infill development, such as small office buildings or mid-rise housing.



This old school building, which was most recently used as the Eau Claire Parks and Recreation office, can continue to contribute to the neighborhood as housing and/or small offices.

**The Near North Neighborhood**

The area between Platt and Cameron Streets should serve as a transition between the Madison-Cameron corridor, which will be used commercially, and the balance of the neighborhood to the north. This two-block band should continue to be predominately single-family houses, duplexes, and three-unit buildings. Zoning may be adjusted in the future to allow redevelopment with townhouses or small apartment buildings under the RM, Mixed Residential District, zoning classification. Representatives of the Eau Claire Community Development Department will conduct a detailed analysis of the effect of rezoning properties to R-M and hold neighborhood discussion meetings before making that amendment.

## **The Northern Neighborhood**

Few land use changes are recommended for the residential neighborhood north of Platt Street. Exceptions include infill residential development on a few parcels of industrial property or open space. Commercial development along Third Street should be limited to its current locations. The industrial sites near Cedar and Eight Streets and near Third and Fountain Streets should be redeveloped to housing.

Zoning may be adjusted in the future under the R-2, One- and Two-Family Housing District to disallow further inappropriate development of apartment buildings. The City will conduct a detailed analysis of the effect of rezoning properties to R-2 and hold neighborhood discussion meetings before making that amendment.

## **The Chippewa Riverfront**

The West Riverside District should rediscover the Chippewa River and “open up” to it in order to reclaim its birthplace, improve residential quality of life, and greatly boost economic development. The riverfront should become a second focus of the District, rivaling the Madison Street corridor. There should be a beautiful linear park above the bluff that includes paths for walking and bicycling, improved walking routes along the streets from the neighborhood, and land development that takes advantage of this major new amenity.

### **Path Link**

A continuous public pedestrian and bicyclist linkage will be built from the Chippewa River State Trail bridge near Fulton Street to the former railroad trestle near Marshall Street, which is owned by the City of Eau Claire for that purpose. This idea is shown in the *Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan (2005)* and will serve to complete a missing segment of the riverfront loop trail system.

### **South of Madison Street**

South of Madison Street, that pedestrian route will initially consist of the existing public sidewalk along First Avenue; the bicyclist route will initially consist of a signed route on First Avenue. Longer term, the City should acquire on a willing-seller basis the thirteen houses located between the river and First Avenue for use as a public park with pedestrian and bicyclist paths. Eight of those houses are presently occupied on a rental basis, some show deferred maintenance, most of them have shallow lots, and all of them are in a 100-year floodplain.

Beyond a path and green space, the major benefit that would result from this action is that a visual and psychological connection will be established to the river for the entire neighborhood back to at least Bellinger Street; the benefits of the river will be enjoyed by residents beyond those who live next to it. Property values will be boosted for blocks inland. This may be the greater and most lasting benefit.

The multi-use path may run on a structure beneath the Madison Street bridge as it does on the eastern bank of the river.

**Madison Street to Platt Street**

North of Madison Street, property will be acquired above the edge of the river bluff for a continuous public park and trail from the Madison Street bridge to the former railroad trestle. Means of land acquisition may be a combination of direct purchase from willing sellers by the Redevelopment Authority (with subsequent conveyance to the City) and/or negotiated dedication during the site plan review process.

The width of this linear park may vary from the minimum needed for a multi-use path to a much wider park that may extend west to Oxford Avenue.

From Madison to Platt Street, it is recommended that the linear park be approximately 30 feet in width, enough to accommodate the multi-use path plus clear zones. The relationship of this path to adjacent land development is described in the next section of this plan.

**Platt Street to Maple Street**

The future alignment of Oxford Avenue is highly negotiable. The road surface and the utilities are beyond their useful lives and will need to be entirely replaced. Therefore, Oxford Avenue could be rebuilt in an alignment east or west of its present route, kept on its present route, made discontinuous or eliminated altogether. The latter option is not recommended because of the importance of providing easy public access to all points along the river.

This segment of Oxford Avenue could bow to the river bluff line, creating much more space for housing development to the west. Or, it could bend to the west and serve housing on both sides; space would be left for the paths above the bluff. Refer to Figure 17 on page 73 for illustrations of this idea.

**Maple Street to the Old Railroad Trestle**

North of Maple Street, the riverfront park could broaden substantially, coming all the way west to First Street. In exchange, Kessler Park could be sold for housing development and its functions moved east of First Street. Acquiring land for park use with a combination of City, state, and (maybe even) federal funds might be more feasible than assisting redevelopment to housing through other means such as tax increment financing or Redevelopment Authority funds. Kessler Park will be retained until replacement land is acquired and improved. The decision on moving Kessler Park will be made by the Council after considering all factors.

The housing development potential of the Kessler Park site is not as strong as the open property bounded by Oxford, Platt, First, and Maple; however, it is further from the river and its relationship to the future park is much weaker because of topography and roads.

Soil conditions on the City’s snow storage site may be cost-prohibitive for housing development. The steep slope leading up to the trestle is not conducive to development either. Therefore, a park might be the best use for that northerly stretch of riverfront. One drawback is that this green space would not leverage redevelopment well.

Refer also to page 72 for a policy regarding the disposition of the undeveloped park land near the intersection of First and Cedar Streets.

### Neighborhood Links to the Riverfront

Fountain, Vine and Fulton Streets should be improved as east-west connections from the residential neighborhood to the river. Along all three streets, sidewalks should be rebuilt as needed, pedestrian street crossings striped, gaps filled in the pattern of street trees, and decorative lighting installed. Figure 16, Enhanced Pedestrian Routes to the Riverfront, illustrates this concept.

Madison Street was recently improved with sidewalks, trees, and lighting. All that remains to be added are stairways down to the trail that is planned to duck under the bridge.

These linkages should terminate at visual overlooks in the planned park along the river bluff with stairs down the bluff to the wooded flats below.

### Riverfront Park and Trail Design

The land along the Chippewa River will be asked to perform many functions. It will stabilize the river bluff, filter some storm water runoff, accommodate paths for bicycling and walking, provide green space for passive or active recreation, provide views and overlooks to the river, connect the neighborhood to the river gorge, and leverage land development. The mixture of all these disparate activities will require careful design to maximize use of the space and help the functions co-exist.

There are three primary considerations in this design process:

1. Determining the perimeter and extent of the park land.
  2. Deciding how to obtain the land for public use.
  3. Planning the park uses, arranging their layout, and designing the materials, fixtures, topography and plantings (landscape architecture).
- 
1. **Park Boundaries:** The desired boundaries of the riverfront park may be set during the course of the *West Riverside District Plan*, during a subsequent park planning project or on a case-by-case basis as land redevelops. There are advantages and disadvantages for each of those options. An early decision provides direction and certainty. A later decision allows for more factors to be considered.
  2. **Means of Land Acquisition:** Land may be purchased using City general funds, by selling general obligation bonds, and/or by obtaining grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources or a federal source, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (the National Park Service, administered by the DNR) or the federal Community Development Block Grant program.



Residents from the West Riverside District and beyond should be encouraged to walk or bicycle to the riverfront via improved sidewalks and safe streets. (Well-behaved dogs are also invited.)



Figure 16  
Enhanced Pedestrian Routes to the Riverfront

Other funding sources may include tax increment financing (repays bonds using the increase in property taxes from a redevelopment district) or the income from the proposed sale of Kessler Park to a housing developer.

This question may not be resolved during the course of this planning project.

**3. Landscape Architecture:** There is a multitude of design solutions for the eventual park space, many of which would be equally suitable. Providing a park design is beyond the scope of this planning project and should be undertaken subsequently. However, these principles ought to be considered.

**Transition to Housing:** This idea may be the most important. If housing is located immediately adjacent to the planned bicycling and walking path south of Platt Street (or elsewhere), it will be essential that they co-exist amicably. Achieve this without using great setbacks by elevating the doors and windows of the housing, installing plantings, low walls or open fences, and by using transitional features such as porches and balconies. Please refer to the photographic examples and sketch under “Relationship to the Riverfront Linear Park,” on page 70.

**Parking:** Screen surface parking, whether for the park or land development, with plantings and located away from sensitive park spaces.

**Natural space:** Return some parts of this large park space to a semi-natural condition for the sake of water quality, animal habitat, maintenance, and appearance.

**Surface Water Management:** Filter water runoff from the neighborhood, park turf, and hard surfaces before it gets to the river by swales (rain gardens) and ponds.

**Outdoor rooms:** Conceive the park as series of outdoor rooms, each with a purpose and character, linked to one another and the neighborhood.

**Quality of Materials and Fixtures:** As with Phoenix Park, this site will be highly important and visible to the community, an expression of community pride and identity. Therefore, choose high quality materials and help make the park seem special.

**Activity:** Program and design the park so that it is used all day long every day of the year. North of Maple Street, acquire land from First Street to the river to provide a multi-purpose space for neighborhood gatherings, celebrations, a skating rink, art shows, etc.

**Linkages:** Ensure that the route from the Chippewa River State Trail bridge to the crossing at the old railroad trestle is clear. Likewise, accentuate the paths from the neighborhood to the waterfront.

**Security:** Help people feel safe in the park through activity, visibility, and lighting.

**Low Maintenance:** Every good designer considers long-term maintenance.



The riverfront park should be continuous from bridge to bridge, include paths for bicycling and walking, and provide visual and physical access to the water.



Linking the Chippewa River Trail to the former railroad trestle path is a key element in the plan.



A walking path may be provided in the floodplain below the bluff.



The riverfront park should become a beautiful place to relax, stroll, play, and watch people - an oasis in the heart of the city.



Access to the edge of the water increases appreciation.



A city-wide sign system could help people find their way among the path system and the streets.



High quality materials and fixtures should be used to convey the importance of the park.

## Oxford Avenue Corridor

The Oxford Avenue corridor north of Madison Street is the major opportunity for near-term change and improvement in the West Riverside District. Facilitated by Eau Claire Community Development and the Eau Claire Redevelopment Authority, the private market will be encouraged to revitalize the corridor from Madison Street to the old railroad bridge.

### Land Development

Desired types of land development in the Oxford Avenue corridor include multiple-family housing and, possibly, housing over shops or small offices.

**South of Platt Street**, redevelopment could consist of a combination of commercial and residential land uses with potentially a higher proportion of business than housing. This segment of Oxford Avenue will continue to have the highest traffic volumes and, thus, may be more suited for commercial development.



The Children's Theatre is a pioneer and foundation for the future of the Oxford Avenue corridor.

Additional performing or visual arts venues would complement the Children's Theatre, build an arts district, and enhance the image of the neighborhood. The Children's Theatre Company will, of course, be expected to remain in its refurbished building for the long term and serve as an anchor for the corridor.

Zoning for the corridor up to Platt Street could be Central Business District, which allows a wide variety of retail, service, office, residential, and mixed-use development.

**North of Platt Street**, there are major opportunities to accomplish redevelopment with multiple-family housing on one or both sides of Oxford Street. The street itself may continue in its present alignment after being rebuilt or it may curve toward or away from the river as illustrated by Figure 17 on page 73. The alternative street alignments will create options for the design of the new housing sites and the linear riverfront park.

These housing sites should be the most intensively developed in the District with parking under the buildings and heights up to four stories. A high quality of materials and site improvements is sought for this splendid opportunity. The steep, wooded slope east of First Street between Maple and Platt Streets will help mitigate the height of the new buildings relative to the smaller houses to the west. The developer of that site may consider allowing a public walkway across the property to extend to the riverfront the pedestrian improvements proposed along Vine Street.

**North of Maple Street**, land should be acquired for the planned park from First Street to the river. This generous expanse will allow for a variety of neighborhood activities and neighborhood gatherings, contributing a significant park to near-northwestern Eau Claire.



New development along Oxford Avenue may range from two to four stories in height and include townhouses, apartment buildings (rental or ownership), retail or office buildings, or some combination of commercial and residential space.



Buildings should have doors and windows that face the street and sidewalk. A building should be located close to each street intersection to “hold the corner.” Apartment buildings should have a recognizable front door along the street. Materials and colors can be used to reduce the apparent bulk of a building.



Parking should not normally be located along the public street; when it is, the appearance should be screened with a sturdy fence, a low masonry wall, or an earthen berm with plantings. Some parking should be located under the building. On the Luther-Mayo Hospital site, it may eventually become economically feasible to locate some of the parking in an independent structure.

Approximately half of the land planned as park north of Maple Street is already owned by the City and used for snow storage by the Public Works Department.

### Site Design along Oxford Avenue

Land development will support the Oxford Avenue corridor through proper use of building height, placement, parking, façade design, materials, landscaping, lighting and sidewalks.

Buildings along Oxford Avenue should be two to four stories in height although exceptions may be made to the preferred height of buildings to accommodate individual design limitations, space needs or design compatibility. Buildings east of Oxford Avenue should have less height than those west of Oxford Avenue. Three stories should be the maximum height east of Oxford Avenue.

In most instances, buildings should be located close to the street. Any surface parking located between the building and the street should be visually screened with plantings, berms, or low masonry walls. A high proportion of the parking should be located under the buildings. Buildings should have doors and windows facing the sidewalk and street, be well landscaped and use high quality façade materials.

If housing is located adjacent to the riverfront paths, doors and windows should be elevated to provide a sense of separation between the public and the private spaces. Transitional



Image of the potential future Oxford Avenue looking north from Maxon Street and the Children's Theater.

elements such as balconies should be used. Landscaping, low masonry walls, and open fences may also provide transition and security. (Refer also to the previous section on Riverfront Park and Trail Design.)

**Relationship between the Riverfront Park and Oxford Avenue Development**

The design and location of buildings along Oxford Avenue will be carefully coordinated with the design and width of any riverfront parkland so that privacy and security are provided for residents and so that a comfortable experience may be provided for park and trail users. Setbacks, differences in elevation, fencing, walls, and plantings may all be used to create a proper transition between private and public spaces in a confined space.

Land developers and the City Plan Commission will decide on a case-by-case basis whether a given building should relate more closely to the street or to the river bluff and linear park.



The riverfront multi-use trail will likely have to be in a narrow corridor south of Platt Street but could meander into a wider space to the north. If the paths are located close to housing, residential privacy and security can be provided by elevating the windows, doors, patios or balconies, and by screening with plantings or fencing (open, yet protective).

As mentioned previously, Oxford Avenue between Platt and Madison Streets could stay in its present alignment or move one way or the other. This segment of Oxford Avenue could bow to the river bluff line, creating much more space for housing development to the west. Or, it could bend to the west, and serve housing on both sides; space would be left for the paths above the bluff. The sketches on the next page illustrate these options.



Image of the proposed riverfront trail with adjacent housing, looking north into the park.

### **The Madison - Oxford Intersection**

The intersection of Madison Street and Oxford Avenue is an important location for the West Riverside District not only because of its traffic volume but also because it is an arrival point, an entrance, and a visual gateway to downtown. Consequently, real estate economics and urban design principles dictate that nearby land should be intensively well conceived.

Therefore, the northeast and southeast corners should be redeveloped to better and more appropriate uses. Buildings should be multi-story and situated near the corner with doors and windows along the sidewalk; parking should be to the rear and underneath.

Land uses, such as a hotel, offices, small service businesses and restaurants could take advantage of proximity to downtown, the hospital, the river, and the traffic flow.

A pair of entrance monuments would be appropriate at this intersection or at the bridge piers.



Additional examples of identity features.

### **Street and Utilities**

Oxford Avenue itself will be rebuilt, and the public and private utilities replaced as necessary. The street will consist of two driving lanes, two parking bays with corner bump-outs, a green boulevard with overstory deciduous trees and decorative lighting, and a pair of concrete sidewalks.

### **Use of Undeveloped Park Land at First and Cedar Streets**

There are two blocks owned as park space along First Street. The northerly property (formerly the site of a hockey rink) is undeveloped and probably not needed for park purposes. Consequently, the City should either sell it for housing development (with some design standards) when the market is ripe or develop it with affordable housing through the housing Division of the Community Development Department. A strip of land should be retained for use as a pedestrian path from the eastern end of Fountain Street to First Avenue and the riverfront park.



Figure 17  
Road Alignment and Land Development Options for Oxford Avenue

## Multiple-Use Trails

### North-South Corridor

The City will build a multiple-use asphalt path on the former north-south railroad corridor from the Half Moon Lake Trail to the point where it intersects the east-west railroad corridor.

### East-West Corridor

The City will work to acquire the former northern railroad corridor that runs west from the former Marshall Street railroad trestle. The City would re-use that corridor as a linear park with a multi-use path that links east to the riverfront path system and continues west to Roosevelt Elementary School. That bridge is owned by the City, will be re-decked in 2012 for bicycling and walking, and links to paths on the eastern side of the river.



From left to right: The former railroad trestle, which will be receiving a new deck and side rails in 2012 for bicycling and walking across the Chippewa River; the former railroad corridor that runs west from the railroad trestle but currently is privately owned; the river bridge for the Chippewa River State Trail that leads to the trail head in Phoenix Park.

### Half Moon Lake

The Half Moon Lake path (ten to twelve feet wide) will be extended around the northern and western shorelines of the lake. Initially, the path will need to follow Cameron Street until the land or easement for the path can be obtained. Luther Hospital has expressed an interest in extending the path across its property and has graded the path area south of its parking lot. The City has acquired a lot on Cameron Street and removed the residence from the property. This will need to be used initially as the path route until the residence to the south is willing to sell and the City is willing to purchase. The City will need to negotiate with the radio station an easement or property purchase to extend the path across this property.

An archaeological site west of Half Moon Beach will be protected with the location and design of the park.



A picnic shelter on the eastern shore of Half Moon Lake

## **Residential Neighborhood Improvements**

Long-term improvements to the quality of the residential environment in the District, as well as improvements to individual structures, may occur through the combined efforts of private owners, public regulations, and public improvement programs.

The private market can be expected to respond to increased job opportunities in the District and the larger downtown. The redevelopment of blighted industrial sites along the riverfront and the introduction of a linear park and paths along the river will provide attractive amenities that will also increase housing demand in the District. Thus, if the objectives of this plan are realized, it should promote the residential vitality of the neighborhood.

## **Neighborhood Organization**

The City should encourage and aid the creation of a neighborhood organization that can advocate for the interests of the District. The neighborhood organization would be separate from the North Barstow Area / Madison District Business Improvement District, but may work in concert with that commercial organization.

City staff could serve as the facilitators of a District organization while recruiting members to run as candidates for positions in the organization. Other neighborhood organizations in Eau Claire could serve as models, and their leaders might serve as mentors to the new leadership. The City could provide recommended procedures, sample documents, and key contact information. Efforts should be made to recruit and include representatives from all the various ethnic, racial and economic groups of the District. The City should provide a modest amount of financial support to cover items such as mailings, as it does for other neighborhood groups.

The roles of a neighborhood organization could include:

- Advise the City on long-range planning and public works projects
- Advise the City on development applications in the District
- Advise the City on matters pertaining to security, building and yard maintenance, vandalism and other law or regulatory enforcement matters
- Serve as a conduit for District residents to voice their concerns
- Lead the organization of District events such as garage sales or celebrations.

## **Residential Neighborhood Zoning**

Changes should be made to zoning regulations that up until now have allowed inappropriately intensive housing development on blocks otherwise used for single-family housing. Such amendments would provide confidence to owners that their renovation investments will not be negated.

Upon adoption of this District plan, City staff will initiate a process of examining the zoning of every residential property in the neighborhood for the purpose of potentially adjusting that zoning to a less intensive category.

Most of the residential uses in the planning area have R-4 or R-3 zoning, which are multi-family zoning districts applicable to areas planned for higher density residential development. Most of the residential uses in the planning area are single-family homes with a few duplexes or small apartments.

There should be a general down-zoning of properties now designated as R-4 or R-3 to the less intensive RM and R-2 classifications across the District, as other central neighborhoods of Eau Claire have experienced. Down-zoning these properties is more consistent with the existing uses in the area, allows building permits to be issued for additions to single-family homes without needing Plan Commission approval, and protects the neighborhood from inappropriate higher-density development.

When a property is rezoned to a more restrictive district, it may become a legal nonconforming use. As such, it may not be substantially enlarged, it may only be maintained in its present size and use until it changes to a use allowed by the new zoning designation. The City is sensitive to the effect of this restriction on property owners, but also has an interest in the broader, long-term benefits that may occur as a result of the rezoning. Therefore, the City will study every property proposed for a zoning change and determine whether such change is warranted.

### **Commercial Zoning on Third Street**

There are a few houses along Third Street that are zoned C-2, Neighborhood Shopping District, particularly between Maple and Vine Streets. These houses should be rezoned to a residential classification, such as RM or R-2, so they are in conformance with zoning and an obstacle to obtaining mortgage or rehabilitation loans is removed.

Existing businesses in this corridor will be allowed to continue but any application to expand onto an adjacent property will be considered individually based on neighborhood compatibility. If a business is discontinued and the building removed, the property should be rezoned to a residential classification that fits the neighborhood.



Narrow-lot single-family housing would be appropriate for infill and redevelopment sites in many parts of the West Riverside District. These examples of new housing use traditional American architectural proportions and features (such as the front porch), which would blend nicely with many of the older houses in the District. Such homes would offer contemporary floor plans and amenities while evoking nostalgic sentiments. The garage would be located in the rear and accessed from the alley.

### Housing Rehabilitation

Much work is needed to address deferred maintenance and Building Code violations across the West Riverside District and other neighborhoods in Eau Claire. The vast majority of this work will have to be financed and performed by the owners without any City assistance.



Much maintenance and rehabilitation can be performed by owners themselves.

**Rehabilitation Assistance Program:** The City of Eau Claire Housing Division presently administers a program that provides low-interest loans for housing rehabilitation of moderate-value, older structures in neighborhoods across the City. One part of the program is tailored for owner-households with annual incomes at 50 percent or less than the regional median; the other for owner-households with incomes of 50 to 80 percent of the median. Landlords who rent to low-income tenants may also participate.

Under the first program, the loan does not have to be repaid until the house is sold or rented; under the second, payments are made monthly. A wide range of repairs and energy improvements may be financed under each program. Some participants may also receive grants to remove lead paint or asbestos hazards from their house.

Unfortunately, the amount of money annually available is insignificant compared to the need; only about two dozen home owners are assisted each year.

**Housing Code Compliance:** The Eau Claire City-County Health Department administers the Intensified Housing Code Compliance Program, which aims to eliminate serious health or safety hazards associated with deteriorated or unsafe housing (including problems associated with garbage or lead) and to encourage neighborhood improvements to protect and promote public health.

Under this program, an exterior conditions survey to evaluate the conditions of all properties in selected neighborhoods, including West Riverside. From those surveys, the properties with the more significant exterior problems receive an interior inspection. A written compliance notice stating any violations, along with the date by which corrections must be made, may be issued to the owner. Failure to correct violations may result in legal action. The basis for this program in the Eau Claire Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code, Chapter 16.08 of the City Code. The results of the 2004 conditions survey are mapped on the City's Website under <http://www.ci.eau-claire.wi.us/health-department>.

This enforcement program has been in effect since 1982 and is expected to continue. Certain homeowners who are required to make code improvements may receive financial assistance under one of the programs described above.

### **Additional Actions by the Housing Division or the Redevelopment Authority**

The City of Eau Claire Housing Division should continue to buy a small number of blighted housing units each year and substantially rehabilitate them before offering them for sale at market rates.

Spot redevelopment of some of the lowest value housing is another way to provide opportunities to build structures that are compatible with their neighbor, command higher prices and engender a sense of rebirth. In a strong market, such redevelopment occurs privately as individuals see an opportunity to build a new house in a desirable location at a reasonable cost. Hopefully, the public improvements and private investments envisioned in this plan will raise confidence in the District to the point that such investments are made more often.

### **Off-Street Residential Parking**

Off-street parking for dwellings converted from single-family homes can detract from the appearance of the neighborhood. The need for tenant parking must be balanced by the importance of appearances. Parking must maintain the residential character of the neighborhood and not adversely affect nearby properties. Therefore, site plans for multiple-family residential buildings should be evaluated to ensure that off-street parking is located inconspicuously and not in the front yard; that it does not occupy excessive portions of side or rear yard; and appropriate surfacing, wheel restraints and landscaping are provided.

### **Street Maintenance**

The City of Eau Claire should continue to administer its program of seasonal street surface maintenance (i.e., sealcoating, crack sealing and pot hole filling) along with its multi-year program of street reconstruction to the extent allowed by the City budget. Fortunately, streets in the West Riverside District are generally in good condition as a result of intensified City efforts over the past 25 years and advocacy from the Public Works Department.

### **Street Trees**

The City Forestry Department should continue to replace dead trees in the street boulevards and implement a plan for filling gaps in the pattern. Residents on lots that receive a new tree should be given flyers urging them to water the new trees regularly during their early years and during dry periods. A canopy of trees can have a strong positive effect on the perception of a residential neighborhood, keep houses cooler in the summer and enhance the pedestrian environment.

### **Appearance Awards Program**

Sponsor a program that provides positive recognition to property owners concerning building maintenance, building restoration, site improvements or landscaping. This program should be administered across the city.

### **Code Compliance and Crime**

The efforts of the City to write and enforce laws requiring minimum standards of conduct and maintenance will never be adequate by themselves to address all problems. Consequently, private individuals will have to take it upon themselves to do the right thing when it comes to maintaining their property and respecting the rights of others. Neighborhood improvement must be based on the collective actions of the population.

### **Code Enforcement Process**

The code enforcement process is typically initiated in several ways:

- In response to a complaint by an individual or a neighborhood association
- By City staff observing a code violation as they patrol the community and do their jobs
- As a result of an action such as an application for a building permit or a zoning variance.

The City relies on residents to help identify possible code violations, particularly in these areas:

- Snow and ice on public sidewalks
- Illegal signs such as advertising flyers and portable ground signs
- Graffiti on public or private property
- Tall grass and weeds
- Illegal dumping of garbage and debris
- Abandoned and/or inoperable vehicles
- Illegal dumping of oils and other hazardous materials into storm drains
- Overgrown foliage blocking stop signs, impeding sight at driveways or corners
- On-street and off-street parking regulations in residential neighborhoods
- Overflowing garbage or other garbage problems
- Zoning and occupancy issues
- Housing maintenance issues.

Residents may notify the City of possible violations by telephone, e-mail or letter. Contact information is providing on the City's Website under Departments, Community Development, Inspections.

### **Code Enforcement Program**

The City should continue to support those owners who wish to maintain an attractive neighborhood through continued and intensive enforcement of City regulations on building and yard maintenance, parking, trash and other nuisances.

The aim should be to gradually reduce blighting influences through enforcement of regulations addressing serious health hazards such as fire safety, overcrowding, lead paint, or asbestos.

Based on an outline of ideas contained in this plan, the City-County Health Department and the City Departments of Police and Inspections should jointly devise a program that can be sustained for the long term in this and other central neighborhoods. Most of these efforts

have been underway for many years, but a fresh review and coordinated campaign may be warranted. Those organizations will be consulted as this District plan is drafted.

**Objective: Create a strategy for preserving and improving Eau Claire neighborhoods**

1. Create an overall plan for addressing nuisance and maintenance problems; involve neighborhood representatives in its design, implementation and periodic assessment. Establish clear roles, responsibilities and communication protocols.

**Objective: Improve enforcement of City regulations**

2. Improve coordination of City Code enforcement among the several departments that are involved – Police, Fire, Animal Control, City-County Health, Public Works, Code Enforcement, Forestry, Streets and Community Development. Use a geographic information system to track violations and enforcement across Departments over time and measure the effectiveness of new efforts.
3. Establish a Police Department foot patrol for target locations.
4. Increase enforcement of noisy vehicle laws, especially motorcycles.
5. Tighten the timeline for compliance on nuisance related violations.
6. Conduct an annual drive-through of the District to identify code violations, as done in other neighborhoods. Involve a representative of the neighborhood organization.

**Objective: Improve landlord dependability for property maintenance, condition and tenant conduct**

7. Require that certain rental properties be licensed and inspected for Housing Code compliance.
8. Enforce the ordinance that regulates the number of unrelated persons living in a dwelling unit. Use neighbors' complaints and the Intensified Housing Code Enforcement Program as sources of this information.
9. Enforce regulations pertaining to off-street residential parking.
10. Continue to improve communication with owners and managers about procedures and rules.

**Objective: Improve or maintain the appearance and condition of property**

11. Remove or renovate vacant/tagged properties (vacant home registration, purchase and demolition program, and others).
12. Maintain on-going funding sources for housing ownership and rehabilitation assistance programs, as well as rental rehabilitation and maintenance. (See Housing Rehabilitation on page 77.)
13. Provide periodic free pick-up events for major articles. Also, coordinate with a non-profit organization to remove student furniture at the end of Spring term.
14. Work with University officials to create a flyer and e-mail notice for students that lists key City regulations, desired behaviors and relevant contact information.

**Certified Eau Claire Landlord Program**

The Eau Claire Police Department will continue to offer the Certified Landlord Program, which teaches:

- Effective property management to prevent illegal activity
- Applicant screening applicants to attract responsible tenants
- Rental agreements that can be used to end illegal activities
- Residents rights and responsibilities
- Physical improvements that deter crime.

The program is designed to increase cooperation and build a better relationship among property owners, law enforcement agencies, neighborhood leaders and community advocates.



Stabilizing and improving the quality of the housing stock is one of the central goals of the *West Riverside District Plan*. The City may assist in that goal through consistent zoning amendments, code enforcement across the neighborhood, direct financial assistance, maintaining streets, utilities and parks, creating a new riverfront park and trail, and by aiding the redevelopment of blighted or underutilized properties.

## Summary of Actions for the West Riverside District Plan

The following are the major actions recommended by the *West Riverside District Plan*.

**Table 3  
Major Recommended Actions**

Planned Action	Lead Organization or Department	Priority	Page in this Plan
<b>Public Improvements – Parks and Trails</b>			
Prepare a layout for the riverfront park; establish the park boundary.	Parks Department and Planning Department	1	64 - 67
Renovate the former railroad trestle bridge for use in bicycling and walking.	Parks Department or Public Works Department	1	74
Build the riverfront park improvements including the pedestrian and bicycle path.	Parks Department	2	64
Acquire property or an easement and extend the trail around Half Moon Lake.	Parks Department	2	74
Acquire former railroad corridor north of Fountain Street for use as a bicycle path that will connect to the old railroad trestle bridge.	Community Development Department	2	74
Build multi-use paths on the north-south and the east-west railroad corridors.	Parks Department	2	74
<b>Public Improvements – Other</b>			
Continue to adequately maintain the public streets, utilities and street trees.	Public Works and Forestry Departments	1	78
Install a traffic signal at Fifth Avenue and Fulton Streets.	Public Works Dept.	2	61
Move the Kessler Park functions to the planned riverfront park.	Parks Department	3	63
<b>Residential Neighborhood Improvements</b>			
Establish a neighborhood organization	Community Development Department	1	75
Continue to administer the housing rehabilitation assistance programs and the housing maintenance code inspection and enforcement program.	Housing Division of Community Development Department	1	77
<b>Redevelopment</b>			
Continue to acquire properties in the Redevelopment District on a willing-seller basis.	Community Development Department	1	53 68
Acquire houses east of First Street south of Madison Street on a willing-seller basis to extend the riverfront linear park.	Community Development Department	3	62

<b>Planned Action</b>	<b>Lead Organization or Department</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Page in this Plan</b>
Build housing on the park land at First and Cedar Streets.	Housing Division of Community Development Department	3	73
<b>Planning and Regulation</b>			
Amend the zoning map in response to redevelopment proposals that are consistent with the land use plan (Figure 14).	Community Development Department	1	75 - 76
Study the down-zoning or residential properties throughout the District.	Community Development Department	1	75 - 76
Review applications for land redevelopment consistent with this plan and the zoning code.	Community Development Department	1	53
Review the adequacy of current code enforcement protocols and improve enforcement as judged appropriate.	City Manager	2	79 - 80
Amend the <i>Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan</i> to reflect the <i>West Riverside District Plan</i> .	Community Development Department	3	53