



# CITY OF JANESVILLE

*Wisconsin's Park Place*

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Volume 2: Policies and Recommendations

**Reinvention and Revitalization**

**Complete Neighborhoods and Compelling Places**

**Accessibility and Mobility**

**Connectivity to Region**

**Quality of Life**

**Sustainable Future**



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City of Janesville  
Planning Division

Adopted by City Council: December 11, 2023

City of Janesville Comprehensive Plan  
Volume 2: Policies and Recommendations

# **Comprehensive Plan Volume 2: Policies and Recommendations**

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**PART A: CITYWIDE POLICY PLAN**

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## CHAPTER 1: POLICY PLAN INTRODUCTION

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### PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN

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This *City of Janesville Comprehensive Plan* is intended to help the City guide short-range and long-range growth and development.

**THE PURPOSES OF THIS *COMPREHENSIVE PLAN* ARE TO:**

- ◆ Provide a Vision for future growth and development in and around the City;
- ◆ Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 40 years;
- ◆ Recommend appropriate types of land use for specific areas in and around the City;
- ◆ Advise the “character” of development in the City’s planning area;
- ◆ Preserve natural resources and promote the conservation of agricultural resources around the City;
- ◆ Identify needed transportation and community facilities to serve future land uses;
- ◆ Foster economic development based on the City’s strengths and opportunities;
- ◆ Direct housing, commercial, office, research and industrial investments in the City;
- ◆ Support the health and well-being of all residents.
- ◆ Provide a framework for intergovernmental cooperation to achieve *Plan* directions;
- ◆ Provide detailed strategies to implement *Plan* recommendations.

## PLAN ORGANIZATION

The *Comprehensive Plan* is organized into two volumes. The first volume of the *Plan*, Volume 1, is the *Existing Conditions Report*. That Report contains chapters that present background information on each element (e.g., *Transportation, Land Use, Economic Development*) required by the State of Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning legislation. The background information in the *Existing Conditions Report* influence and shape the goals, objectives, policies, and programs contained in this document, Volume 2.

This component of the *Plan*, Volume 2: Policies and Recommendations, is organized by chapters each containing general goals, objectives, policies and programs for the City to address each of the nine elements required by the Comprehensive Planning legislation. The Implementation chapter includes proposed citywide strategies and an implementation timeline to ensure that the recommendations presented in this *Plan* become a reality. Part B includes “Area Specific Plans” with sub-area plans of various corridors and areas around the City.

### Volume 1: Existing Conditions Report

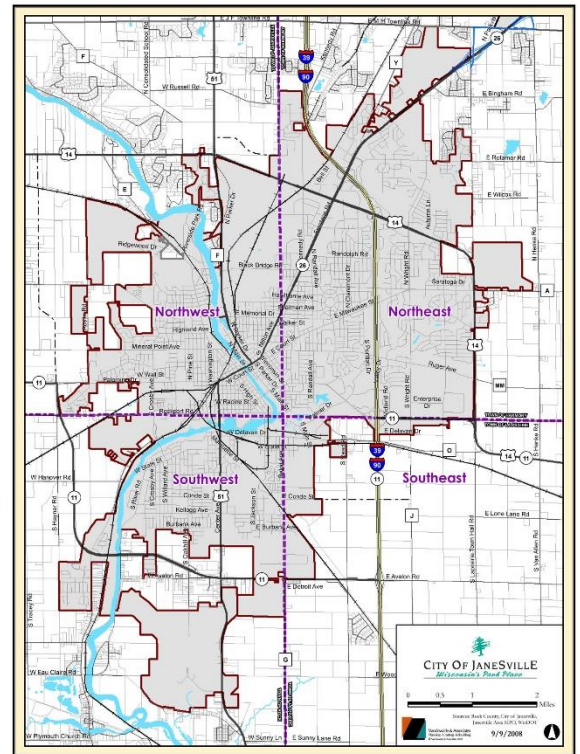
Volume 1: Existing Conditions Report provides an overview of the current state of the City – a “snapshot” at the time this *Plan* was updated in 2021-23. The information on existing conditions provides a starting point from which future direction can be established. Like this document, Volume 1 is organized by chapters corresponding with the State-defined elements of a comprehensive plan. A new chapter has been added that addresses Public Health in the Built Environment. At the end of each chapter of Volume 1, a summary of Key Issues and Opportunities is provided. These Key Issues and Opportunities provided direction in the creation of the plans Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs, and Recommendations.

### Volume 2: Vision, Goals, Objectives, Policies, Programs and Recommendations

Volume 2 of the *City of Janesville Comprehensive Plan* provides future direction for the City through the establishment of an overall vision for the City, as well as goals, objectives, policies, programs, and recommendations.

The vision statement and overall goals are expressions of the general direction the City wishes to take over the next 20 years. All objectives, policies, programs, and detailed recommendations to implement the *Plan*—contained in the following chapters—should advance or at least be consistent with this vision. The City endorses the vision presented on the following page.

Figure 1: Plan Sub Areas





# CITY OF JANESVILLE VISION

## Promote, protect, and improve on Janesville's unique assets.

- Celebrate the City's history, industrial heritage, and resiliency.
- Perpetuate claim as "Wisconsin's Park Place" through preserving and expanding the City's park, open space, and greenbelt system.
- Continue to embrace the Rock River as a focus for activity, development, preservation, and recreation.



Historic Lincoln-Tallman House Museum

## Emphasize sustainable growth and development.

- Maintain and create complete neighborhoods offering a wide range of housing choices and nearby amenities.
- Revitalize the City's "gateways" and underutilized corridors and encourage the development of mixed-use neighborhood activity centers.
- Continue to draw energy, investment, and activity to downtown Janesville.
- Embrace efforts to expand low-emissions and active transportation options, reduce carbon emissions in City operations, and encourage sustainability efforts in the community.
- Focus recreation and environmental protection around the greenbelt network



Hedberg Public Library



Palmer Park



Janesville Innovation Park

## Prioritize the Quality of Life for the community

- Improve upon amenities that make Janesville an attractive place to live, work, and play.
- Provide excellent services that continue to meet resident expectations.
- Develop a transportation network that is safe, accessible, and comfortable for all users, especially vulnerable users like pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Work in partnership to ensure a strong education system and community services.
- Continue to promote Downtown as a civic, cultural, shopping, entertainment, and healthcare hub.



Janesville Town Square

## Strengthen and diversify the City's economy.

- Strengthen the City's position as a regional commercial and industrial center while balancing efforts to create mixed-use neighborhood activity centers.
- Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in businesses large and small.
- Explore emerging economic opportunities based on the City's existing industries, regional proximity to the Midwest, and the exceptional agricultural assets of the region.
- Support efforts to strengthen the local pipeline for workers through collaboration between local government, area schools, businesses, and business groups.



## Volume 2: Policies and Recommendations

Each chapter of this volume of the *Comprehensive Plan* includes a set of goals, objectives, policies, and programs which will provide the vision and policy guidance that the Plan Commission, City Council, residents, and other interested groups and individuals need to guide the future of the City over the next 20 years.

Goals, objectives, policies, and programs are defined below:

**Goals** are broad statements that express public priorities about how the City should approach development issues during the next 20 years. These goals are based on key issues, opportunities and problems that affect the community.

**Objectives** are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through planning and implementation activities. The accomplishment of an objective contributes to the fulfillment of a goal.

**Policies** are rules or courses of action used to ensure *Plan* implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives. The policies are intended to be used by decision-makers on a day-to-day basis.

**Programs** are specific projects or services that are advised to achieve *Plan* goals, objectives, and policies. The programs described represent recommendations of the *Comprehensive Plan*. This is an important distinction in that they are not public policy, but they are recommendations that came out of this planning process that the City intends to explore.

## OVERALL GOALS

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Below is a list of goals to guide the overall direction of the City of Janesville over a 20-year planning period. These were developed through input from a steering committee, the public, and city staff throughout the planning process. Opportunities for input included public steering committee meetings, online comments, a community satisfaction survey, stakeholder outreach, public engagement meetings on housing and economic development, and an open house.

Objectives, policies, and programs that forward these goals relevant to each element of this *Plan* are presented in subsequent chapters.

1. Plan for a future land use pattern that accommodates growth and expansion, while maintaining and enhancing the character and quality of the Plan area.
2. Sustainably manage the exceptional natural resources of the Rock River Valley region through City policy and programs.
3. Cooperate regionally to preserve agriculture as a component of the area's landscape, economy, and culture.
4. Preserve the historic character and architectural landscape of Janesville, while supporting innovation in Janesville's cultural scene.
5. Develop, operate, and maintain a comprehensive, physically active, accessible, and financially and environmentally efficient transportation system which: integrates and connects all modes and purposes of travel and transportation; preserves and builds upon existing infrastructure; is safe, secure, reliable, resilient, and sustainable; and supports and enhances economic vitality, travel and tourism, and the health and well-being of Janesville's occupants and visitors.
6. Provide municipal services that are high quality, cost effective, and citizen responsive.
7. Provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the future growth of the City.
8. Promote and facilitate the health and well-being of occupants and visitors of the City by providing community facilities with features that encourage and accommodate healthy and active lifestyles.
9. Guide Janesville into being a city made up of neighborhoods that are safe, thriving, and complete.
10. Ensure Janesville provides a range of quality, affordable, and available housing opportunities that satisfy local housing demand.
11. Ensure Janesville's business environment supports growth, innovation, and success across industries and businesses of all sizes.
12. Grow Janesville's highly skilled workforce with ongoing access to diverse educational and vocational training opportunities, including emerging skills and fields, providing a foundation for long-term economic success.
13. Maintain a City practice of community and economic development centered around sustainability, equity, and community well-being.
14. Promote intergovernmental cooperation pertaining to transportation systems, the provision of parks and open spaces, natural resources protection, community services, and other areas.
15. Realize the vision of this *Comprehensive Plan* through well-coordinated and ongoing implementation.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THEMES

The *City of Janesville Comprehensive Plan* themes are overarching ideas woven throughout the *Plan* that help to ensure consistency among the *Plan's* elements. These themes relate to and forward the vision and overall goals of the *Plan* and reflect the public input provided as part of the planning process. The themes provide an organizational framework ensuring that the specific direction provided in each *Plan* element advances ideas that are important to the City. As the City creates and enforces policy and undertakes initiatives to shape its form, economy, natural environment, and social well-being over the next 20 years, it will do so guided by the following themes: Reinvention and Revitalization; Compelling Places and Complete Neighborhoods; Connectivity to Region; Quality of Life; and Sustainable Future.

### Reinvention and Revitalization

In 2015 with the adoption of the Arise Plan (Rock Renaissance Area Redevelopment & Implementation Strategy) the City, and other Downtown partners, began a major effort to revitalize Downtown Janesville through establishing a stronger emphasis on the Rock River as a community asset and amenity. This effort has helped to transform access to the river at the Town Square and spurred redevelopment to position Downtown Janesville as a destination to live, work, and play.

In the coming years, Janesville can continue to reinvent itself and the way the community looks, feels, and functions. Through the efforts of ARISE, Downtown



*Downtown Janesville is a vital and vibrant place to visit restaurants, local businesses, events, and cultural spaces. This photo is from “Music at the Marv” a weekly concert held during the summer months in Downtown.*



*New housing options are helping to reinvent Downtown Janesville as a place to live, work, and play. The historic Monterey Hotel has been converted to apartments in this photo from 2023.*

Janesville Inc, the Downtown Business Improvement District, the City, and others, Downtown Janesville can continue to be reinvented and revitalized into a more vibrant neighborhood that serves as the central gathering place and cultural center for the Janesville community.

The reinvention and revitalization of Janesville does not end in Downtown. The City, and its dedicated partners, have opportunities to reinvent car-centered commercial areas around the City into vibrant mixed-use neighborhood activity centers that are more walkable and bikeable and contain a mixture of residential, retail, and employment opportunities. Continued efforts to stabilize older neighborhoods can help to improve the quality of life for residents and families and improve sites that detract from the quality of the community and neighborhoods. Reinvention and revitalization are an ongoing and iterative process, one the City is well situated to take significant strides towards achieving over the timeframe of this plan.

See Chapter 9 – Economic Development for more details on redevelopment and revitalization.

## Complete Neighborhoods and Compelling Places

Over the course of this plan’s life, planning for complete neighborhoods that provide a distinct sense of place is essential to shaping Janesville’s future. The distinction between planning for new neighborhoods in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner, rather than considering and developing subdivisions in a piecemeal approach is critical. The same goes for existing neighborhoods. The most attractive, compelling, and health supporting neighborhoods provide a range of housing options, offer safe, convenient, and efficient transportation connections within the neighborhood and to other parts of the City, provide facilities for bicycles and pedestrians, recreational opportunities, green spaces, public and private gathering places, and facilities and services that maintain a high quality of life for residents. Through thoughtful design and quality development, neighborhoods can become more complete and compelling places that enhance the overall health and sense of safety of residents.

From retrofitting existing commercial areas, to encouraging mixed use developments and new neighborhoods on targeted greenfield locations, the City can help to guide the development of more complete and compelling neighborhoods throughout Janesville.



*Complete Neighborhoods provide residents with a sense of place that is unique to Janesville while also providing access to essential everyday places.*



*Creating neighborhood activity centers could involve buildings with first floor retail tenant spaces with outdoor spaces to linger, connect, and socialize. Residential units developed on the upper floors providing additional housing units and neighborhood customers. This mixed residential and retail building in Oak Creek, WI is part of the Drexel Town Square development.*

A carefully planned and well-designed mixture of residential, commercial, office, and community facilities – mixed-use development can act as a neighborhood or community gathering place, establish a focal point in neighborhoods or larger commercial areas, and catalyze development and redevelopment around it. These areas can serve as the “hubs” of neighborhood social life just as Downtown serves as the “hub” for community-wide civic, cultural, and social events.

See Chapter 2 – Land Use and Chapter 8 – Housing and Neighborhood Development for more details on Complete Neighborhoods.



## Accessibility and Mobility

Accessing everyday destinations by walking, biking, riding the bus, and driving is an essential element of a sustainable City that provides complete neighborhoods and a high quality of life. The City's off-street bicycle and pedestrian pathways are a strong source of community pride and an important amenity that should be preserved and expanded. The City's high-performing transit system, and backbone of sidewalks serve essential functions in helping connect people to the places they need to go. Through continuing to invest in creating complete streets that enhance the safety of all users across Janesville's transportation network, more residents will feel safe and comfortable moving around without needing to drive. Improving access to safe, accessible transportation options



*Janesville's trail system and the Rock River provide important access to the outdoors and to destinations around the City.*



*The Janesville transit System provides a vital service connecting residents who do not drive to destinations around the City.*

can help reduce the carbon footprint of Janesville's transportation sector and enhance residents' quality of life and the environment both locally and globally.

Beyond the more utilitarian reasons for travel, Janesville provides high-quality access to the outdoors, to recreational amenities throughout Janesville's extensive park system, and to a regional network of bicycle trails and the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. The Rock River provides opportunities for water-based recreation and is considered a "water trail" by providing a means of continuous navigation along the River's path through Janesville. The City is one of several communities statewide that features designated segments of the Ice Age Trail. A recently proposed trail plan for all of Rock County that will connect Janesville to areas across the state via hiking trails is bright. Maintaining and improving upon the access to these amenities is an essential part of what makes Janesville a desirable place to live and will serve the community long into the future.

See Chapter 6 – Transportation for more details on accessibility and mobility.

## Connectivity to Region

Janesville is part of a Mega region that includes over 13 million residents<sup>1</sup> between the metropolitan areas of Chicago, Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Madison, Janesville, Beloit, and Rockford. Janesville plays an essential role in supporting the supply chain of goods traveling through this region and is also an important center for food production, manufacturing, and health technology. The area within a 90-minute drive of Janesville includes the 1.3 million residents<sup>1</sup> living in Metropolitan Madison, Janesville, Beloit, and Rockford. This micro metropolis includes Janesville's most important neighbors when it comes to sharing resources such as housing, healthcare, and workforce. Strengthening Janesville's connection to both regions will only help bolster a healthy, sustainable economy while also ensuring residents of Janesville have access to the world-class amenities provided across this region.

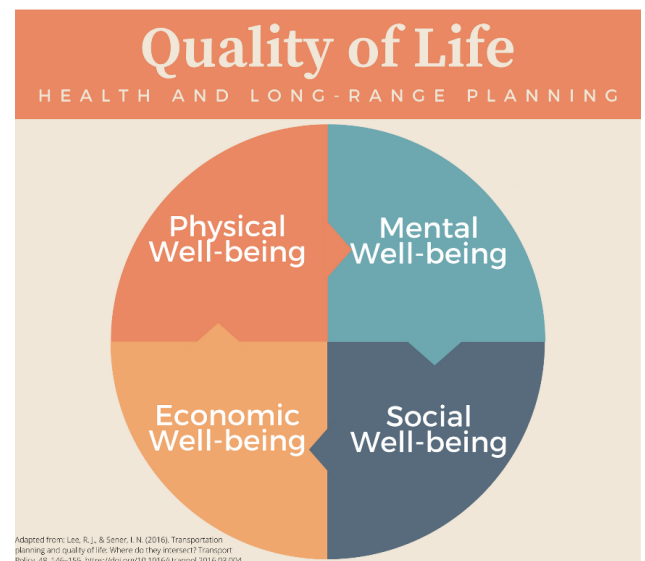
See Chapter 9 – Economic Development for more details on regional economic development.



*Janesville is connected to a broader Great Lakes region including Chicago, Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Madison, Beloit, and Rockford.*

## Quality of Life

“Quality of life” is a commonly used term to identify a goal outcome of development that occurs within a community. Providing a high quality of life involves residents experiencing physical, mental, social, and economic well-being. This can be experienced by individuals, households, social groups, and the community. From a City Planning standpoint, efforts to maintain and improve upon the community's quality of life include efforts to provide a high-quality education system, to improve the walkability, and bike ability of the community, provide sufficient parkland, ensure access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing, provide opportunities for higher-education and employment, support social



<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau 5-year ACS estimates 2017-2021 B01003

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connection through programming, events, and cultivating a rich food, arts and nightlife scene, and to provide opportunities for residents to be civically engaged in the addressing community issues, challenges, and ongoing development.

Traditionally, people would seek out a place to live based on the job opportunities of the region. More and more people are now choosing where to live, work, and play based on the quality of life offered by a place. A City's long-term economic strength and sustainability lies in being able to retain existing residents and attract new ones. Efforts to support the Quality of Life in a city benefit long-term residents as well as newer ones. Janesville's City government can play a vital role in ensuring that amenities and opportunities are equitably distributed in a way that improves the community's overall well-being. To attract and retain a wide range of residents, the City should strive to offer diverse quality of life amenities: attractive employment opportunities, a variety of housing types, good schools, walk-able neighborhoods, accessible parks and recreational facilities, entertainment and cultural venues, quality shopping opportunities, opportunities for social and civic engagement, good health care, and safety.

See Volume 1 Chapter 9 – Public Health and the Built Environment for more details on how development in Janesville can help lead to improved quality of life and public health outcomes.

## Sustainable Future

Globally, there is a recognition that our climate is changing rapidly. The need for truly sustainable development is more pressing than ever. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) provides a global framework for shifting towards a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. SDG 11 seeks to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and



*Bioswales, like this native plant rain garden along S River St, help to reduce flooding intensity and protect water quality in the Rock River.*

sustainable”. How cities achieve this goal involves strategies related to housing, transportation, access to public spaces, clean air, efficient use of resources, economic stability, and more. Sustainability initiatives often have an initial cost, while yielding substantial savings in the long-term. In Janesville, developing mixed-use neighborhood activity centers that provide a mixture of moderate density housing along with outdoor spaces and commercial areas will give residents more to do in their neighborhood. This can help to reduce vehicle travel and transportation related emissions. The City can lead the way in studying how to reduce the carbon footprint of City operations while also supporting private sector and community efforts to develop renewable energy, reduce waste, and embrace low or no emissions transportation options.

Additionally, ongoing efforts to expand and preserve environmental corridors, land use practices to encourage smart growth, and efforts to protect water quality are steps the City can continue to take to support environmental sustainability.

While much attention has been focused on carbon emissions and the environment, social well-being and economic well-being are just as important to sustainability. Efforts to support housing affordability and better jobs will allow residents to experience a higher quality of life and yield

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substantial economic and social benefits. Improving access to healthy foods and to high-quality social and public spaces can also improve the community's well-being.

See Chapter 7 – Explore Sustainable Municipal Practices for more details on how Janesville might address the issue of Sustainability.

## Defining terms used throughout the Plan.

This *Plan* contains and promotes several urban planning and design concepts. To assist in understanding this plan more easily, a few of these concepts are defined earlier in this chapter and listed below:

**Aging in Place** - the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level.

**Car-centric** – a typical car-centered development is a large commercial big box store setback far from the road with significant amounts of surface parking between the building and the road. Oftentimes these areas are located on major arterials that are only safe and accessible by driving to them. Portions of Milton Avenue, Center Avenue, and Court St reflect elements of this type of design.

**Complete streets** – streets that are designed for the safety and comfort of all users including the most vulnerable such as pedestrians, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and bicyclists, rather than for the maximum flow and efficiency of automobile traffic.

**Complete neighborhood** – is a neighborhood that provides access to everyday destinations like childcare, grocery stores, public spaces, and more within a short walking or biking distance. Some people consider a neighborhood with destinations within a 15-minute walk or bike to be complete.

**Food access** – having stable access to healthy foods provides opportunities to reduce chronic diseases. A lack of access can lead to shifts in eating habits that may include more processed foods and less nutritious foods.

**Gentle density** – urban form that resembles detached housing neighborhoods, such as single-family neighborhoods, however, includes more dense middle housing types such as duplexes, townhomes, and other types.

**Greenfields** – are areas that are currently undeveloped in either a natural state or as farmland. There are numerous Greenfields that are completely or mostly surrounded by City boundaries and buildings.

**Healthy and active lifestyles** – A more socially connected, and physically active member of the community would be considered living a healthy and active lifestyle. This can include walking or biking to destinations and generally maintain a healthy social calendar.

**Living wage** – Considered by most to be a wage that enables workers and their families to meet their basic needs, including providing food, shelter, clothing, childcare, healthcare and more. Oftentimes this wage is higher than the legally defined minimum wage in the United States; The City of Janesville uses a Living Wage Salary Index created by MIT to define the living wage equivalent when offering financial job incentives for industrial developments.

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**Mixed use** – relates to there being a mixture of land use types within an area, i.e., a commercial area with retail, office, and residential buildings, or within a single building, with several stories of residential units on top of 1-2 floors of retail or office space.

**Middle housing** – housing types that include more than one dwelling unit on a parcel but with buildings that are smaller than large apartment buildings. They include duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, cottage courts, and other building types. These housing types require zoning provisions that are largely not present in the City’s current code and ordinances.

**People-centric development** – involves a development philosophy that seeks to engage the community more directly in helping to shape the future of a community, and a built environment that includes spaces that are designed specifically for people moving about on foot, bike, or other non-automobile wheels. Janesville’s Town Square is an example of a people-centric development through creating exclusively pedestrian and bicycle pathways, and through designing the space to encourage people to linger, connect, and socialize.

**Placemaking** – efforts to activate public/private spaces through organizing events, artwork, and through the design of spaces themselves. The Town Square is an example of placemaking as is the Downtown Janesville Farmer’s Market.

**Road diet** – is a street design that includes reducing the number of travel lanes to reduce crash rates through encourage slower moving traffic and creating additional roadway dedicated to turn lanes. This is sometimes accomplished through re-striping the roadway to reduce travel lanes and include a two-way turn lane, or TWTL. They may also physically alter the roadway through the construction of curb bump outs to assist pedestrian crossings, pedestrian median refuges, and reconstructing curbs to narrow the roadway.

**Sustainability** – involves “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” – UN 1987. Generally, relates to environmental, economic, and social needs.

**Transit supporting** – neighborhoods with a mixture of housing types and densities are better able to support public transit through creating efficiencies in the number of people living near to transit lines and to important destinations.

**Third places** – place for people to linger and connect that isn’t at home or at work. For example, parks, coffee shops, community centers, arts institutions, and other places.

**Walkable** – related to the presence of sidewalks in good condition, trails, and safe road crossings. Also related to how close destinations are to neighborhoods thereby allowing people to walk to school, work, or to a shop or restaurant comfortably and safely.

