



CITY OF JANESVILLE

*Wisconsin's Park Place*

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Executive Summary



Prepared by:  
City of Janesville  
Planning Division

Recommended by Plan Commission:  
November 6, 2023

Adopted by City Council:  
December 11, 2023





## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This City of Janesville Comprehensive Plan is intended to help the City guide short-and long-range growth and development. Through the vision and recommendations set forth in the Plan, the City intends to:

- Promote, protect, and improve upon Janesville's unique assets
- Emphasize sustainable growth and development
- Prioritize the quality of life for the community
- Strengthen and diversify the City's economy

The following themes are woven throughout the plan to ensure consistency with the vision:

**Reinvention and Revitalization**

**Complete Neighborhoods and Compelling Places**

**Accessibility and Mobility**

**Connectivity to Region**

**Quality of Life**

**Sustainable Future**

### COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING LAW

The Comprehensive Planning Law was passed as part of the 1999-2001 Wisconsin biennial budget. Although sometimes referred to as the Smart Growth Law, the Comprehensive Planning Law does not actually dictate how or where development will occur. Those decisions are left to local communities. However, because the Comprehensive Planning Law does improve on the amount and quality of communication within and between jurisdictions, it may indirectly lead to more informed decisions that result in smart growth.

The Comprehensive Planning Law defines a comprehensive plan as containing nine elements: Issues and Opportunities, Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Utilities and Community Facilities, Land Use, Implementation. The City has included an additional chapter within the Plan addressing Public Health in the Built Environment.

The law provides flexibility to local governments in addressing statutory requirements. The state does not adopt, certify, or object to local plans. Instead, a plan must be adopted by a community's governing body in order for it to effect future decisions.

A central aspect of implementation is exercising land use regulation authorities. The statute specifies that if a local governmental unit engages in official mapping, subdivision regulation, or zoning, those actions must be consistent with that community's comprehensive plan. This is intended to make land use decisions much more predictable.

Source: *Wisconsin Department of Administration, Comprehensive Planning Law Fact Sheet*



## PURPOSES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

- Provide a Vision for future growth and development in and around the City.
- Identify areas appropriate for development and preservation over the next 20 years.
- Recommend appropriate types of land use for specific areas in and around the City.
- Promote a cost-effective pattern of development.
- 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 unique opportunities.
- Direct housing, commercial, office, research and industrial investments in the City.
- Provide a framework for intergovernmental cooperation to achieve Plan objectives.
- Provide detailed strategies to implement Plan recommendations.
- Work in concert with more detailed City plans, such as parks and open space plan, ARISENow downtown plan, neighborhood plans, sewer service plans, utility system plans, and the Janesville Area MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Fulfill requirements under Wisconsin’s Comprehensive Planning Legislation State statutes 66.1001.

## PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

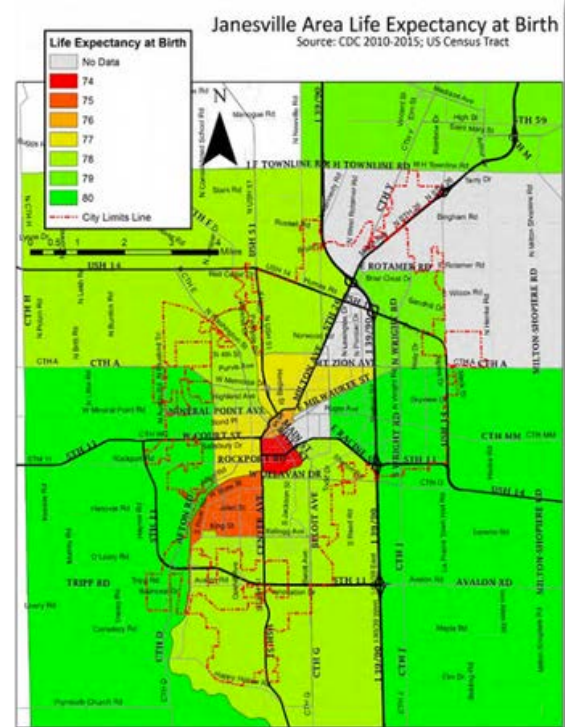
The comprehensive plan was updated through a two-year process that included thoughtful analysis, adequate engagement of the public and stakeholders, and meaningful opportunities to vet and review components of the Plan prior to adoption.

- A Plan Commission, City Council, and kickoff meeting to establish a public participation plan and identify issues and opportunities.
- A community survey was conducted to assess resident perceptions and attitudes about the quality of life, services and programs, economic health and development, City leadership, and the City’s communication methods and responsiveness.
- A total of twelve public steering committee meetings were held to provide policy guidance during the plan update and to review elements of the plan.
- On August 3rd, 2023 a community discussion centered on economic development was held with over 25 members of the community discussing topics ranging from continuing economic growth, improving the workforce development pipeline, and embracing new ways to support community and economic development over a 20-year planning period.
- On October 16th, 2023 a public open house was held to review updates to the comprehensive plan and obtain public comments, and suggestions in advance of Plan Commission public hearing review.



## PUBLIC HEALTH

The public health chapter was added to the comprehensive plan to respond to a call from the Rock County Health Department to address public health issues through the City of Janesville's long-range planning and comprehensive plan process. Public Health has served as a guiding lens to the entire comprehensive plan update. As a result, various goals, objectives, and themes have been added to the various chapters within the Plan to address public health. Janesville's current built environment is very car dependent and thus, discourages a more active and healthy lifestyle. A more walkable, bikeable, gently dense, and mixed use City will support community well-being and promote a higher quality of life.



### OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Encourage compact, walkable mixed use developments	Continued investment in parks and trails	Food access
Multimodal transportation - bike and pedestrian infrastructure, transit, street design	Downtown revitalization efforts	Safe routes to school
Third spaces for mental health and wellness	Equity and transportation disadvantage	Framework for health in planning



## REINVENTION AND REVITALIZATION SINCE 2009

### Town Square

Completed in 2018, the town square project has helped reshape Janesville's downtown. The space is regularly used for special events like the farmers market, First Friday concerts, Flannel Fest, and as a community gathering space for all residents and visitors.



### HyVee

Completed in 2023, this building on the City's north-side was previously a Shopko. The building was heavily renovated, and now houses multiple new uses, including a grocery store.



### Dollar General Distribution Facility

Completed in 2017, this facility, located on the City's far south-side, is the single largest industrial building in the City at just over 1 million square feet.



### The Glade Residences

Completed in 2020, this market-rate apartment community on the City's east-side has approximately 260 units of varying size.



### The Monterey Apartments

Completed and opened in 2023, this former historic hotel is one of the most iconic buildings in Janesville's downtown. The building was recently renovated to include 51 market-rate apartments.



## **RATIONALE: COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE SINCE 2008**

### **JANESVILLE HAS BECOME OLDER, WEALTHIER, BETTER EDUCATED, AND MORE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE.**

- The number of people under the age of 17 has decreased, while the number of people aged 65 or older has increased.
- There has been a decrease in the total number of low-income households, and an increase in higher earning households.
- The number of people who have less than a HS diploma has decreased, while the number of people with a bachelors degree or higher has increased.
- Janesville is still predominately white, but the number of individuals identifying as non-white has increased.

### **JANESVILLE IS ADDING PEOPLE, HOUSEHOLDS, AND JOBS ALL WHILE UNEMPLOYMENT RATES REMAIN VERY LOW AND THE AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE HAS DECREASED.**

- Janesville has added approximately 209 residents a year and around 231 new households per year, but the average household size has continued to decrease.
- Around 7% more people were estimated to be employed in 2021 as compared to 2010.
- In 2022, despite the spike of unemployment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, unemployment in Rock County was estimated to be only 2.9%.

### **NEW HOUSING UNIT CONSTRUCTION HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH HOUSEHOLD GROWTH AND VACANCY RATES ARE VERY LOW FOR RENTAL UNITS AND OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS.**

- For most of the previous decade, no new multi-family housing units were approved for building permits or constructed.
- Between 2010 and 2021, 1,588 new housing units were permitted or constructed. Over the same time period, 2,776 new households were added to Janesville.
- As of 2021, vacancy rates for both owner- and renter-occupied units in Rock County is below 1%.

### **THE COST OF RENT AND HOME OWNERSHIP HAS INCREASED ALONG WITH THE NUMBER OF SEVERELY HOUSING COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS. THE TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSING COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS HAS REMAINED THE SAME.**

- The median gross rent has increased 21% since 2010.
- The average monthly median home sale price has increased 45% since 2015.
- Despite a slight decrease in total cost-burdened households, the number of severely cost-burdened households is estimated to have increased by 7%.

### **COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES TO REINVENT PARTS OF JANESVILLE.**

- Janesville has rebounded from a major economic shift when the largest employer (General Motors) shuttered in 2008.
- Diversification in the local economy has accompanied this transformation.
- The City has seen a number of noteworthy investments in Downtown Janesville, numerous industrial and commercial development projects, and several notable multi-family development projects in the years following the closure of the General Motors assembly plant.

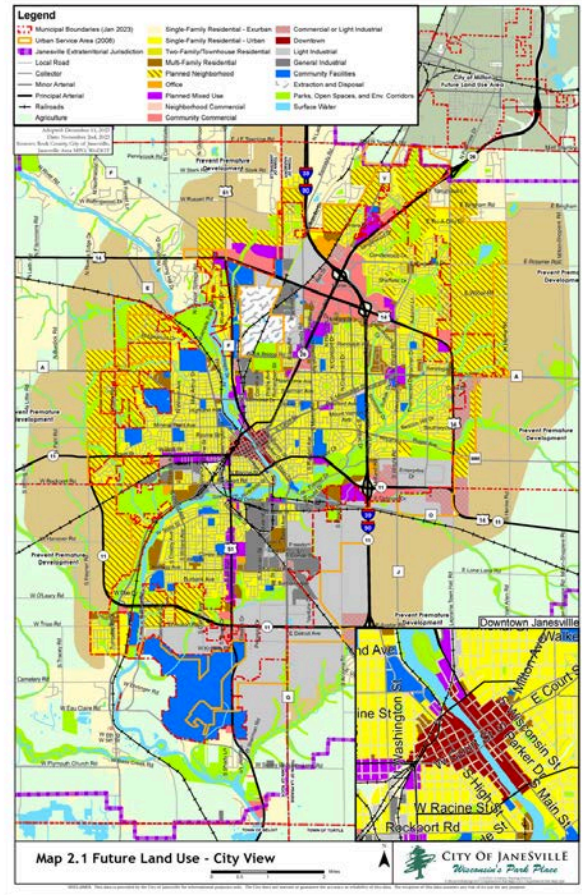
Given the change that Janesville has experienced in the past decade, the City of Janesville embarked on an update of the City's Comprehensive Plan acknowledging that while certain parts of the plan were outdated, the plan as a whole remains largely valid.

*\*All statistics noted above are estimates*

# Reinvention and Revitalization

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: LAND USE

- Promote community reinvention through redevelopment and revitalization of priority areas, including downtown, older neighborhoods, and commercial corridors.
- Flexibility in neighborhood design to accommodate changes in the housing market.
- Enhance quality of life by accommodating a full range of land uses within the community, while minimizing land use conflicts, and enhancing “community character.”
- Work towards sustainability by encouraging an efficient land use pattern based on urban development, rather than rural and exurban sprawl; protecting sensitive environmental features and water quality.
- Improve public health by creating spaces to improve the physical, mental, social and economic well-being of residents and community members.



## OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Urban Residential Land Use Categories	Design Standards for Multiple Family Housing	Planned Neighborhood
Neighborhood Design Types	Planned Mixed Use	Non-Residential Land Use Categories
Rural and Environmental Land Use Categories	Special Study Areas	Existing and Potential Land Use Challenges





## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Reinvention of the City's economy through promoting economic diversification, while still building from the City's industrial heritage and unique place-based assets.
- Create and sustain compelling places and an overall quality of life that will enable the City to attract and retain a talented workforce, ranging from young professionals, to skilled workers, to workers approaching retirement age.
- Recognition that a sustainable economy can be achieved through a strategic combination of retaining, attracting, and growing businesses from within Janesville.
- Workforce development efforts that meet the needs of current employers and position the City for long-term economic growth.
- Acknowledging economic connections between the City and the broader region as a strength that must be leveraged in order to compete in the global marketplace.



## OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Continued efforts to expand and grow the industrial sector in Janesville	Janesville is a great location for industrial and manufacturing development	Park Place Innovation Campus
The former GM/JATCO site	Strengthen the entrepreneurial infrastructure and resources needed to grow strong, resilient business ventures	Continue to pursue investment and redevelopment of City "Gateways" and underutilized commercial corridors
Planned Mixed Use	Design standards for commercial and industrial development	Explore creating a formal business retention and expansion program in partnership with community partners





# Complete Neighborhoods and Compelling Places

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- Creation of more complete neighborhoods throughout Janesville that provide access to everyday community destinations, support neighborhood-scale retail activity and retail centers, and provide quality, affordable, and available housing opportunities.
- Reinvention of the City through neighborhood revitalization efforts, reinvestment, and initiatives that improve the quality of life for residents.
- Neighborhood design that incorporates a mixture of housing types, sizes, and costs, mixed use neighborhood centers, and transportation pathways that are safe and comfortable for users of all ages and abilities.
- Housing options that meet the needs of people of different ages, income levels, and abilities.
- Steps to reduce regulatory barriers to constructing and redeveloping residential units in the City.
- Connections between City, State, and Federal programs intended to boost housing repair and maintenance.



- Single-Family
- Accessory Dwelling Unit
- Duplex
- Medium Multiplex
- Cottage Court

"Traditional Neighborhoods" contain **Middle Housing**  
Adapted from Opticos Design 2023



## OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Define Complete Neighborhoods	Strategies to to encourage more Complete Neighborhoods	Housing and Health
Aging in Place	Mixed use neighborhood activity centers	Strategies to support creation of mixed-use neighborhood activity centers
Missing Middle housing types and traditional neighborhoods	Design standards for multiple family housing	Neighborhood development plans



## Accessibility and Mobility

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: TRANSPORTATION

- Reinvention of the City by embracing safe and accessible transportation options, including complete streets.
- The creation of compelling places and neighborhoods by mitigating and minimizing the visual dominance of transportation improvements and increasing the convenience of alternative modes of transportation that are efficient, effective and healthy.
- Providing safe and efficient connections for pedestrians, bicycles, and automobiles within and between neighborhoods, throughout the City, and between the City and a broader region.
- Enhancing Quality of Life for residents through expanding connected recreational trails and pedestrian/bike facilities to serve most portions of the City and encouraging healthy and active lifestyles.
- Properly maintain and preserve the existing transportation system to increase safety and maximize the life of investments.
- Support state, regional, and local efforts to preserve and enhance rail corridors for future transportation purposes.
- Provide efficient cost-effective fixed route transit service with a focus on the transportation needs of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, youth, and transit dependent households.



### OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

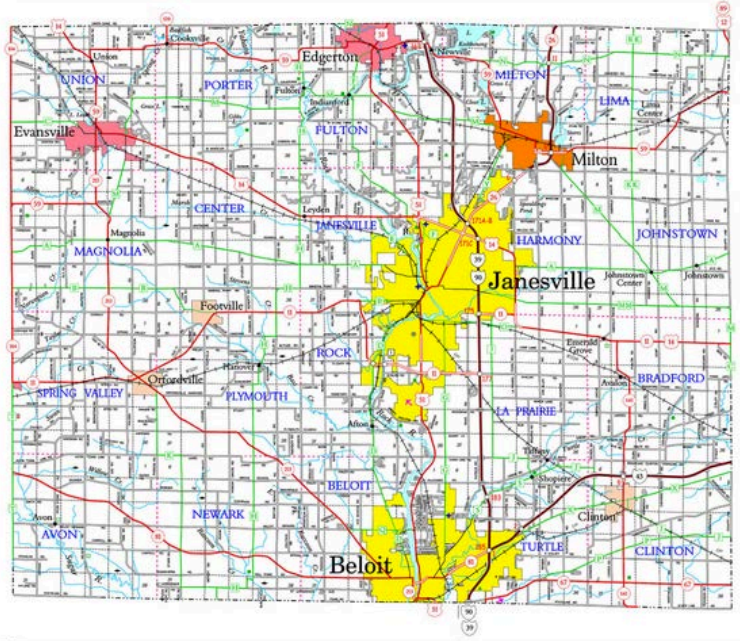
Streets and Highways	Bicycles and Pedestrians	Connecting missing links in the bicycle and pedestrian network
Encourage active transportation	Public Transit	Freight - Highways, Rail, Airport and Pipelines



## Connectivity to Region

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

- Reinvention of parts of the City in need of improvement, as well as creating compelling and high-value growth areas. Boosting the tax base in the City not only benefits the City, but it also provides tax benefits for all overlapping units of government - including the County, School Districts, Technical College District and State.
- Exploring the potential for sharing the costs and benefits of services, equipment, and facilities.
- Sustainability through agreeing to a more predictable edge between urban development, rural development, preservation areas through on-going intergovernmental discussions and coordination with neighboring communities.
- Boosting regional quality of life through cooperation on the development of parks and recreational facilities and economic development initiatives.
- Acknowledging, enhancing, and capitalizing on connections between the City and the broader region - including highway, bicycle, and pedestrian networks; freight rail, greenbelts and natural resource systems, and the Rock River Corridor.



### OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The City of Janesville's relationship, actual and potential conflicts with neighboring towns	Town of Rock (Cooperative Boundary Area Plan)	Town of Harmony
Town of Janesville	Town of La Prairie	City of Milton



## Quality of Life

### KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

- Promoting health and sustainability by accommodating and supporting local regional food production, processing, and consumption.
- Providing a high quality of life through growing the employment base in agriculture and ag-related businesses.
- Support projects spotlighting the history and cultural history of Janesville.
- Sustaining the City's rich sense of history and cultural heritage.
- Establishing Janesville as a destination for unique cultural and historic amenities.
- Support mental and social well-being through social infrastructure and third places.
- Connecting cultural organizations with specific communities and neighborhoods to engage in place-making activities that help residents define and refine their sense of local identity and create unique social spaces that support community health and well-being.



### OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Promote efficient and well-planned city development to preserve farmland	Develop and expand economic clusters around bio-based products and food production and processing	Promote and support the local food system
Bolster Janesville's role in developing new, innovative cultural resources (Children's Museum project)	Preservation of Janesville's historic buildings and districts	Gateways and Wayfinding



# Sustainable Future

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES NATURAL RESOURCES

- Including parks, greenspaces, and natural areas in new neighborhoods, to encourage development that integrates the built environment with the natural environment.
- See the City as part of a larger regional ecosystem, connected through common natural features - such as the Rock River, glacial moraines, the Cambrian aquifer, and the overall ecology of Southern Wisconsin.
- Continued reinvestment of the City's riverfront, through guiding acquisition of key areas for open space, recreational, and commercial uses.
- Guide redevelopment and revitalization by advising where utility and service capacity already exists, thereby helping to reinvent portions of the City.
- Promote community-wide sustainability through encouraging efforts to reduce carbon emissions and environmental impacts from City operations and the Community.
- Create logical connections and relationships between existing utilities and facilities with expansions and satellite facilities to better serve the City.



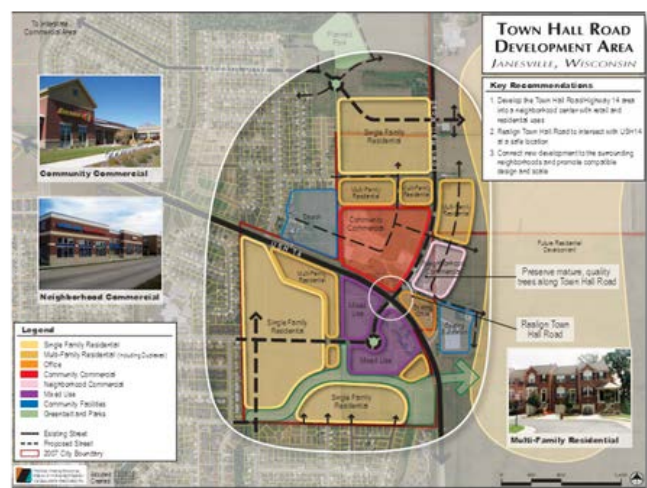
### OVERARCHING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Protect environmental corridors and greenbelts as "green infrastructure" for the City	Protect the Rock River Corridor and Watershed	Promote ongoing utilities and facilities studies
Explore sustainable municipal practices	Continue to update and implement the Parks and Open Space Plan	Enhance coordination with the Janesville and Milton School Districts

## SUB-AREA PLANS

### NORTHEAST

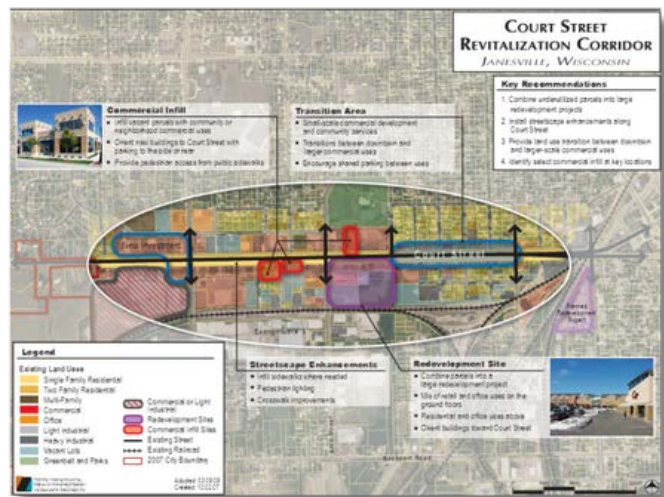
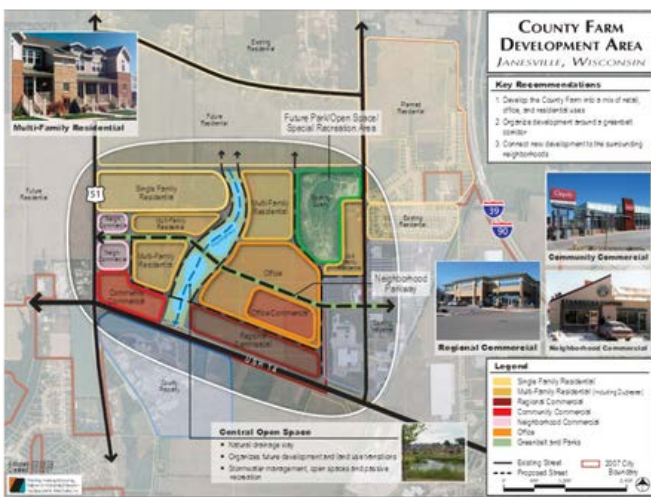
- Plan for future neighborhood development primarily north of CTH A extending east to Henke Road and north to Milton-Harmony Townline Road. Plan for future Urban Reserve where the City will prevent premature development extending east to Milton-Shopiere Road.
- Encourage a redevelopment concept for the John Paul Road Mixed Use Center that includes a carefully planned combination of mixed use development, commercial, and office; and a direct connection between John Paul Road and Milton Avenue and a bike/pedestrian overpass.
- When development is proposed for the USH 14 and Town Hall Road area, encouraging a detailed neighborhood plan for a neighborhood center that incorporates new residential and neighborhood-compatible commercial and mixed use development, realignment of Town Hall Road to intersect with USH 14 at a safe location, and compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods.
- Pursue incremental long-term revitalization strategies for the Milton Avenue Corridor, adhering to different “character” guidelines for land use, improvements, and streetscaping based on the intensity of uses and relationship to existing development.
- In addition to the locations mentioned above, plan for mixed use development at key nodes including Milton Avenue north of Blackbridge, intersection of E. Milwaukee Street, Wright Road, and CTH A; west of Wright Road north of USH 14; west of USH 14 at Town Hall Road.



## SUB-AREA PLANS

### NORTHWEST

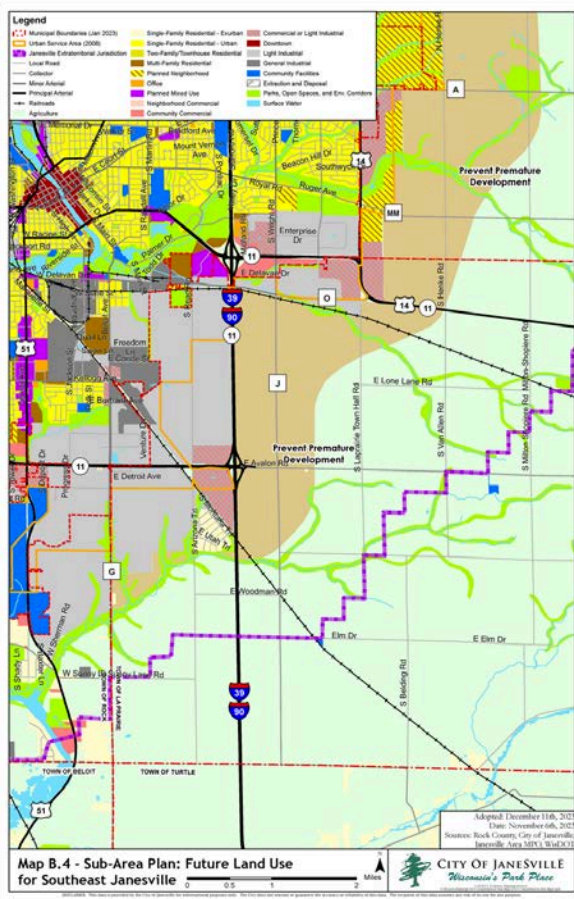
- Plan for future neighborhood development primarily between Rockport Road and the rail line, remaining generally south of USH 14.
- Plan for mixed use development at key nodes including near the County Farm area at USH 14 and USH 51; north of STH 11, and along West Court Street.
- Pursue revitalization strategies for the Court Street corridor that include combining underutilized parcels into redevelopment projects, installation of streetscape enhancements, a logical land use transition between Downtown and larger-scale commercial uses, and commercial infill.
- When development is proposed for the County Farm area, encourage a detailed plan that included a mix of retail, office and residential uses organized along a greenbelt corridor, connected to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Work to carefully coordinate land uses with other neighborhood development that may occur.



## SUB-AREA PLANS

### SOUTHEAST

- Work with the Town of LaPrairie to promote the preservation of agricultural land, particularly east of I- 39/90 and south of CTH O.
- Promote the areas at the Racine Street / STH 11 interchange of I-39/90 for economic development and high-quality employment uses.
- Reserve interchange areas for high-quality future growth and development, discouraging premature development in these areas.
- Preserve right-of-way for the STH 11/USH 14 bypass extension.
- Promote agribusiness-related industry on the southeast side.
- Promote continued expansion of industrial development in TIF districts, especially in areas with good rail, highway, and airport access.



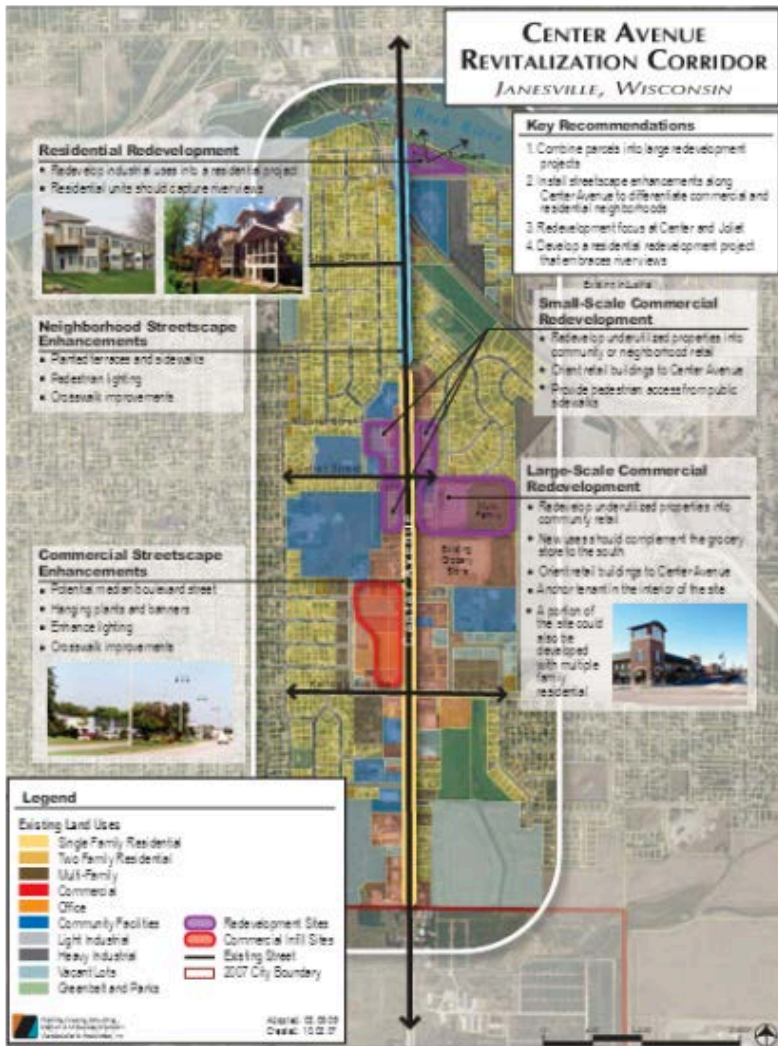




## SUB-AREA PLANS

### SOUTHWEST

- Plan for future neighborhood development that is generally east of STH 11 on the west side of the City, and extends south of STH 11 south of the City to Avalon Road.
- Pursue revitalization strategies for Center Avenue that includes combining underutilized parcels into large redevelopment projects (such as at Center and Joliet), installing streetscape enhancements to differentiate commercial and residential portions of the corridor, and consider a residential project on the riverfront.
- Work to coordinate land use in the Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport planning area with Town of Rock and Rock County.
- Work collaboratively and strategically to plan for the future redevelopment of the former General Motors' site.

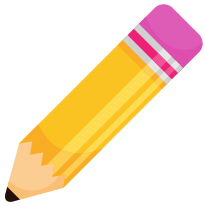




## KEY IMPLEMENTATION

### AN UPDATE TO THE CITY'S ZONING CODE WILL HELP TO:

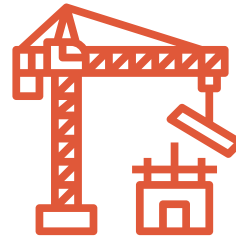
Make code easier to use



Attract desirable businesses

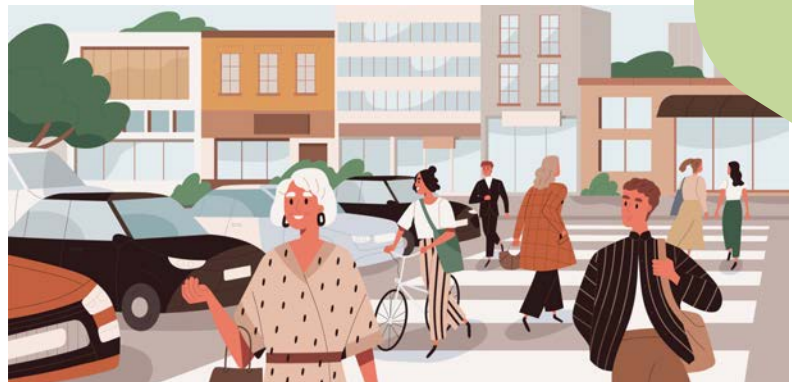


Promote mixed use redevelopment



Increase housing options to preserve affordability and attract new residents

Shape Janesville into a more walkable, bikeable, attractive, and exciting place to live



### WITH A NEW CODE ON THE BOOKS:

Update Area, Corridor, and Neighborhood Plans