

# City of Janesville Downtown Vision and Strategy



Prepared by  
Vandewalle & Associates  
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## Table of Contents

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|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Introduction .....</b>   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Existing Conditions .....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| Economic Profile of the City of Janesville .....  | 5         |
| Downtown Overview.....  | 5         |
| Existing Primary Activity Areas.....  | 5         |
| <i>Map 1: Existing Primary Activity Areas</i> .....                                     | 7         |
| Existing Experience and Conditions .....  | 10        |
| <i>Map 2: Existing Experience and Conditions</i> .....                                  | 13        |
| Redevelopment and Preservation “Block by Block” Analysis.....                           | 16        |
| <i>Map 3: Preservation and Redevelopment Analysis</i> .....                             | 19        |
| <b>Issues and Opportunities .....</b>   | <b>21</b> |
| Regional and Citywide Opportunities.....  | 21        |
| Downtown Opportunities .....  | 22        |
| <b>Downtown Vision.....</b>   | <b>27</b> |
| Downtown Vision Framework.....  | 28        |
| <i>Map 4: Downtown Vision Framework</i> .....   | 29        |
| <i>Map 5: Downtown Vision – Upper and Lower Downtown Loops</i> .....                    | 33        |
| Downtown Circulation Vision.....  | 37        |
| <i>Map 6: Downtown Circulation Vision</i> .....   | 39        |
| <b>Implementation.....</b>  | <b>41</b> |
| Implementation Structure.....   | 41        |
| <i>Implementation Structure</i> .....   | 45        |
| Implementation Activities .....   | 47        |
| <i>Summary of Implementation Activities Chart</i> .....                                 | 49        |
| Implementation Action Plan.....   | 51        |
| <b>Appendix I: Implementation Action Plan .....</b>                                     | <b>53</b> |
| <i>Action Plan 2007 – 2008</i> .....  | 55        |
| <b>Appendix II: Key Implementation Issues .....</b>                                     | <b>61</b> |
| Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) General Feasibility Analysis.....          | 62        |
| <i>Map 7: Potential BID Boundary Pedestrian and Trail Facilities Concept Plan</i> ..... | 69        |
| <b>Pedestrian and Trail Facilities Concept Plan .....</b>                               | <b>71</b> |
| <i>Map 8: Pedestrian and Trail Facilities</i> .....                                     | 75        |
| <i>Figure: Trail Cross Sections</i> .....   | 77        |
| Gateways and Wayfinding Concept Plan.....   | 83        |
| <i>Map 9: Gateways and Wayfinding Concept</i> .....                                     | 85        |

*Gateway and Wayfinding Concept Sketches* ..... 89

Parking Alternatives Analysis ..... 93

*Map 10: Parking Alternatives Analysis* ..... 95

Market Rate Housing Feasibility Study ..... 97

**Appendix III: Conceptual Site Plans**..... 113

**Conceptual Site Plans**..... 114

**Appendix IV: Background Information and Public Participation**..... 121

    Review of Previous Planning Efforts ..... 122

    Demographic Analysis of the Downtown Area..... 126

    Summary of Public Participation Exercises ..... 127

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## Introduction

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Downtown Janesville is the geographic center of the City and the civic hub of Rock County. Situated along the Rock River, the City of Janesville grew from the downtown – which served as the center of industry and commerce. The City’s downtown still reflects that heritage. The downtown features a large collection of occupied and vacant historic buildings on or near the River, as well as historic commercial facades – particularly along the Main Street and Milwaukee Street commercial corridors.

Nationwide, decades of growth gravitating to the periphery of communities has changed the face and function of downtowns, and Janesville is no exception to this. With public and private investment focused on new commercial and residential growth and development at the edges on “greenfields,” the formerly bustling downtown hubs of communities have been transformed. With the predominance of malls in the 1960s – 1980s, and “big box” development more recently, downtowns often no longer serve as the sole or primary commercial centers of communities. Many residents choose to live in new residential development on the edge of cities. This trend results in a perception that downtowns are not places where people want to live. Furthermore, this perpetuates the perception that downtowns can be more challenging places to run businesses.

The communities that have overcome these dynamics to keep their downtowns successful share many common characteristics:

- Are a physically attractive and an aesthetically interesting place to visit (historic buildings, public art, varied topography)
- Are a convenient place for customers to shop and fulfill day to day services
- Are cost-effective and convenient places to run a business
- Feel safe, comfortable, and navigable - especially to pedestrians
- Offer accessibility to motorists – visitors can find the downtown and reasonable parking
- Offer convenient clusters of shops, services and entertainment
- Are built around a defining community feature (e.g. on a river or lakefront)
- Serve as a civic center
- Have attractive public open spaces
- Offer special community events
- Offer a specialized market niche
- Provide unique and convenient housing opportunities for a specialized housing market
- Weave the above elements together to provide a positive experience from arrival to departure

Over the last decades, the City of Janesville, Forward Janesville, the Downtown Development Alliance (DDA) and Janesville Design and Development Center (Design Center), along with several other organizations and the private sector, have demonstrated an ongoing commitment to keeping Janesville’s downtown healthy through public investment, private investment, and thoughtful planning. In early 2007, the City, DDA and Design Center again elected to collaborate to develop this *Downtown Vision and Strategy*. This planning effort is intended to build on those successes in public and private investment; and not to replicate, but to build on those past planning efforts. This *Strategy* is designed to develop a cohesive vision for the downtown; identify key gaps, opportunities, and catalytic projects for the downtown; develop a clear and achievable imple-

mentation strategy; and create a clear structure and public-private partnerships to implement these recommendations.

The planning process was led by a Steering Committee that was comprised of: City Staff, Design Center Staff, Downtown Development Alliance representatives, and consultant staff. In addition, the City Manager, Forward Janesville president, and several other City staff, officials, and private sector individuals contributed significantly to this effort.

This planning process happened over a fairly accelerated timeframe in order to embrace several near term opportunities. Occurring concurrently with the Comprehensive Planning process for the City, the *Downtown Vision and Strategy* was designed to analyze downtown Janesville in greater depth. The process was also designed to facilitate swift action on key opportunities identified in this *Strategy*.

The planning process consisted of the following components:

1. **Information Gathering and Analysis:** A review of past planning efforts, analysis of existing conditions, and understanding of key issues affecting downtown.
2. **Focus Groups and Interviews:** In conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan process, over 100 individuals were interviewed in over 30 focus groups to understand problems, opportunities, and strategies for improvement in the downtown. Results are summarized in Appendix IV.
3. **Vision Workshop:** A broader scale public outreach event facilitated the sharing of general ideas about the strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and challenges facing the downtown; desired future redevelopment, restoration and rehabilitation; circulation and parking issues; activity areas; and key priorities and strategies for the downtown.
4. **Opportunities Analysis:** Opportunities related to the City's regional position, as well as specific downtown opportunities were identified.
5. **Vision Development:** Articulation of a vision or desired direction for the downtown to provide a clear framework for implementation and strategy development.
6. **Implementation Strategy and Structure:** This stage in the process involved developing actionable implementation steps for the downtown, more detailed implementation steps for the key sites and issues (described below) - addressing "what to do" in terms of implementing the Vision. The Implementation Structure addresses "how to do it" with specific emphasis on the key individuals and organizations to be involved ("Lead Responsibility and Partners") as well as the processes and mechanisms that should be used to manage the implementation process.
7. **Key Sites and Issues:** Key issues and development sites with the most urgency and relevance to catalyzing change in the downtown were identified. From numerous sites and issues that were identified, three sites and five issues were prioritized to be explored in greater detail. The criteria for selection included those for which the greatest short-term and catalytic impact could be achieved.



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## Existing Conditions

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The purpose of the Existing Conditions section of this *Strategy* is to acquire a thorough understanding of the planning context for the project and the physical, economic, and cultural attributes impacting the downtown. The following text is a summary, but not an exhaustive report, of the information collected and analyzed.

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### Economic Profile of the City of Janesville

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The City of Janesville is a community of approximately 62,540 people located in south central Wisconsin. Janesville is part of a large and powerful economic system that stretches from Chicago to Minneapolis – St. Paul, Madison and Milwaukee. This “Circle City” of which Janesville is a part, is comprised of upwards of 20 million inhabitants. Janesville is particularly tied to the nearby larger metropolitan areas of Rockford, Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago – all within 1 ¾ hours drive time. Because of this proximity, residents of Janesville have easy access to even larger marketplace areas – the closest being Rockford and Madison.

In addition to its “reach” to larger metro areas, Janesville is a regional marketplace for many smaller surrounding communities, with many communities within a half-hour drive-time surrounding the City. This is enhanced by the presence of more regional retailers in Janesville than in any other Rock County community.

Janesville is also tied to the broader region through inter-regional commuting patterns. The largest number of net commutes out of Rock County is to Dane County (the Madison metro area) and to Winnebago County, Illinois. Janesville also is certainly part of Rock County’s large commuter draw – bringing in workers from Winnebago, Dane, Green, Walworth, and Jefferson Counties.

The City’s economy is diversifying, although still oriented toward manufacturing. Nearly 30 percent of the labor force is employed in the manufacturing sector, which is reflective of the City’s large “blue collar” workforce and history of manufacturing that includes the rich history of General Motors as a key economic driver in the City. The educational, health, and social services sector employs another nearly 20 percent of the workforce.

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### Downtown Overview

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Downtown Janesville is located at the geographic center of the City. The downtown has traditionally been defined as the area roughly bound by Centerway to the north, the Five Points Intersection to the west; Court Street to the south, with a leg extending south to Racine Street along River and Main Streets; and the County Courthouse to the east. This *Vision and Strategy* promotes an outside-in approach, extending the downtown influence area and the bounds of the study area to include the areas both east and west of the River up to Memorial Drive, and the lower downtown area along River Street. The City’s oldest and most historic neighborhoods surround the downtown – including Courthouse Hill and Prospect Hill east of the River, and the Old Fourth Ward and Look West neighborhoods west of the River.

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### Existing Primary Activity Areas

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Downtowns are by definition areas where the types of land uses and activities co-mingle to provide cultural amenities; an array of convenient services and opportunities for workers; a marketplace for residents; and an interesting setting and experience for resident visitors and tourists. While this mixture of land uses and activities is a necessity for achieving a vital, vibrant setting – uses do tend to organize themselves into groups or clusters of complementary activities. To gain an understanding of how downtown Janesville feels and func-

tions, it is useful to explore the organization of the downtown with respect to existing primary activity areas, circulation, and connections.

In downtown Janesville, key activity areas can be organized as follows (See Map 1):

### **Traxler Park**

- 31 acre Community Park located on the River north of downtown, south of Memorial Bridge that functions as Janesville's "special event" park
- Viewing area for award winning Rock Aqua Jays water ski team, drawing hundreds of spectators in the summer months

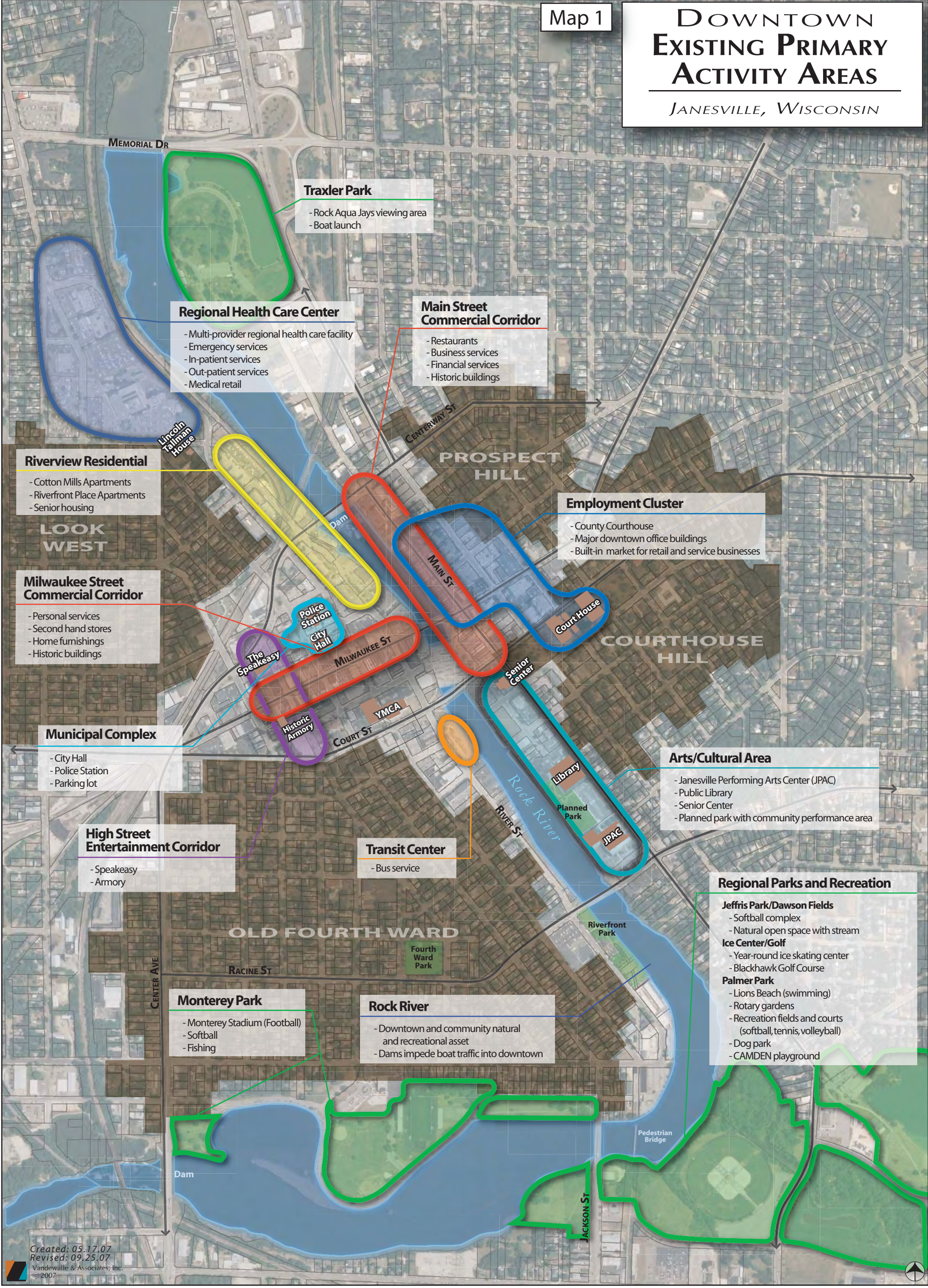
### **Main Street Commercial Corridor:**

- Extends along Main Street from Centerway to Court Street
- Includes a mixture of restaurants, business and financial services
- Includes the South Main Street Historic District
- Buildings back-up to Rock River



# DOWNTOWN EXISTING PRIMARY ACTIVITY AREAS

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN



### Traxler Park

- Rock Aqua Jays viewing area
- Boat launch

### Regional Health Care Center

- Multi-provider regional health care facility
- Emergency services
- In-patient services
- Out-patient services
- Medical retail

### Main Street Commercial Corridor

- Restaurants
- Business services
- Financial services
- Historic buildings

### Riverview Residential

- Cotton Mills Apartments
- Riverfront Place Apartments
- Senior housing

LOOK WEST

### Milwaukee Street Commercial Corridor

- Personal services
- Second hand stores
- Home furnishings
- Historic buildings

### Employment Cluster

- County Courthouse
- Major downtown office buildings
- Built-in market for retail and service businesses

### Municipal Complex

- City Hall
- Police Station
- Parking lot

### High Street Entertainment Corridor

- Speakeasy
- Armory

### Transit Center

- Bus service

### Arts/Cultural Area

- Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC)
- Public Library
- Senior Center
- Planned park with community performance area

### Regional Parks and Recreation

- Jeffris Park/Dawson Fields**
  - Softball complex
  - Natural open space with stream
- Ice Center/Golf**
  - Year-round ice skating center
  - Blackhawk Golf Course
- Palmer Park**
  - Lions Beach (swimming)
  - Rotary gardens
  - Recreation fields and courts (softball, tennis, volleyball)
  - Dog park
  - CAMDEN playground

### Monterey Park

- Monterey Stadium (Football)
- Softball
- Fishing

### Rock River

- Downtown and community natural and recreational asset
- Dams impede boat traffic into downtown



### **Employment Cluster**

- East side of Rock River, extending from St. Lawrence to Prospect Avenue, from the River to Wisconsin Street
- Includes County Courthouse, several major downtown office buildings, business and financial services
- County Government functions provide a built-in market for retail and services businesses

### **Arts/Cultural Area**

- Located on the east side of the River, extending south from Court Street to Racine Street
- Includes the Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC), Hedberg Public Library, Senior Center, and Marshall Apartments
- New public park and community performance area is planned in this location



### **Regional Parks and Recreation**

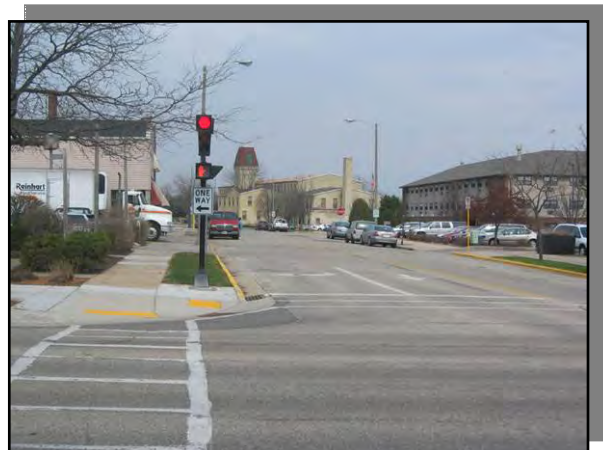
- Corridor of regional park and recreational facilities extending from Jeffris Park/Dawson Fields to Palmer Park
- Range of active and passive recreational facilities – including specialized recreation areas – Janesville Ice Skating Center, Blackhawk Golf Course, Lions Beach, Rotary Gardens, Dog Park, CAMDEN playground

### **Regional Health Care Center**

- Located west of the River, on the northern edge of downtown
- Mercy Healthcare and Dean Medical Systems both have a presence in the area
- Mercy Hospital provides in-patient and out-patient services generating thousands of visitors a day to this area
- Medical retail center also located near this area to the north

### **Riverview Residential**

- Residential development situated along the west side of the Rock River
- Includes Cotton Mills Apartments, Riverfront Place Apartments
- Senior housing, market rate housing, and several subsidized affordable housing units along the west side of the Rock River



**Municipal Complex**

- Located on the west side of the River, at Jackson and Wall Streets
- Includes City Municipal building, and recently constructed Public Safety Building
- City parking lot at west corner of Wall and Jackson Streets

**Milwaukee Street Commercial Corridor**

- Extends along Milwaukee Street from the Rock River west to Academy Street
- Includes a mix of restaurants, personal services, second-hand stores, home furnishings
- Includes the West Milwaukee Street Historic District

**High Street Entertainment Corridor**

- Extends along High Street, from Court Street north to Centerway
- Emerging entertainment corridor anchored by the Historic Armory restaurant and dinner theatre and The Speakeasy restaurant

**Transit Center**

- Located on River Street on the west side of the River
- Hub and transfer point for Janesville Transit Service
- Adjacent to YMCA, but otherwise fairly isolated with respect to lack of activities nearby

**Monterey Park**

- Riverfront park at southern end of Old Fourth Ward neighborhood
- Includes Monterey Stadium for viewing football and softball

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**Existing Experience and Conditions**


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A downtown experience is defined by the means of getting to and around the downtown - navigability for automobiles and pedestrians, parking, and what is visually experienced along the streetscape. Janesville's downtown area was analyzed with respect to the following elements. (See Map 2)

**Transportation System**

- Traffic to and around the downtown is brought in by Center Avenue from the South, North Parker Drive (USH 51) to Centerway from the North, and Racine Street from the east. Centerway serves as a "bypass" to the downtown – in many cases, motorists do not exit Centerway to come into downtown. Racine Street is the most attractive gateway into the downtown from Interstate 90/39, traveling through the Regional Parks and Recreation area and a well-maintained residential neighborhood.

- An east-west and north-south system of one-way pairs serves the downtown and surrounding area. Court and Milwaukee run east-west through the downtown, both providing a river crossing. North Franklin and Jackson Streets run north-south, connecting the downtown with the Regional Medical Center. Both one-way pair systems efficiently move traffic, yet perpetuate high speeds. The one-way streets are often confusing to motorists (particularly visitors) and promote such high speeds that preclude a safe feeling pedestrian environment. Recent traffic counts suggest the one-way traffic volumes on Court and Milwaukee Streets are in the 9-12 thousand vehicles per day range. Franklin and Jackson south of Centerway recently changed to two-way with minimal disruption to traffic volume and flows.
- River Street parallels the Rock River on the west side, providing a route from Racine Street north into the downtown. The atmosphere along the street is somewhat disconnected. The fact that the street is substantially wide, certain businesses (e.g. the bowling alley) are oriented to the side rather than the street, poor condition of the street surface (cracked concrete), the predominance of industrial and wholesale operations and an assemblage of vacant lots contribute to the feeling of a lack of activity on the street.
- Five-points intersection of Court, Milwaukee, Centerway, Center Avenue (USH 51 from the south), and Madison streets and the rail line creates a major conflict point.
- North Parker Drive to Centerway is another traffic pinch-point.

### **Railroad**

- Several rail lines that run through the City converge in the downtown area.
- Railroads form a barrier that separates the residential neighborhoods to the north from the downtown area.
- Elevated crossings are provided throughout much of the downtown; however, trestles are aged and restrict vehicular traffic. (e.g. underpasses at Franklin and River Street, Main Street, and Parker Drive restrict north/south traffic)
- There are no rail-dependant uses remaining in the downtown area of the City.
- Wisconsin Southern rail yard along the west side of downtown is a center of their switching operations – creates traffic blockages at Court Street, trail noise, and frequent whistles.

### **Parking**

- Parking in the downtown is a mixture of on- and off-street parking, which is free. Bi-annual parking studies suggest that there is ample parking available in the downtown. Bi-annual parking studies have also indicated that the most heavily used public parking area is the Parking Plaza located over the Rock River. This parking structure is estimated to have a remaining life of less than 10 years, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR) and Army Corp of Engineers will likely mandate removal, which suggests the need to identify alternative parking locations.
- There are perceptions of parking deficiencies in several locations – most notably the 100 block of Milwaukee Street.



# DOWNTOWN EXISTING EXPERIENCE AND CONNECTIONS

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

### Centerway - Parker Dr.

- Inhibited traffic flow from Centerway to Parker Drive

### Dam

- Provides depth upstream
- Prevents boat access to and through downtown

### Railroad

- Elevated crossing throughout most of downtown
- Trestles are aged and restrict vehicular traffic
- No rail uses remaining downtown

### Centerway

- Serves as "bypass"
- Vehicular traffic thoroughfare
- Entry to downtown from North

### One Way Pair System

- Efficiently moves traffic through downtown
- Not conducive to retail or pedestrians
- Confusing to visitors
- Perpetuates high speeds
- No defined gateway to downtown
- Wayfinding at Centerway and Milwaukee is challenging

### One-Way Pair System

- Creates high speeds through historic residential area
- Difficult access to hospital
- No defined gateways to downtown

### Jackson Street

- Civic uses set back from street
- Parking lots along the street frontage

### Parking Plaza

- Primary central downtown parking location
- Less than 10 years of remaining useful life
- Blocks access and views of the Rock River

### 5 Points Intersection

Conflict point at crossing of rail and roads

### High Street

- Corner buildings orient toward Milwaukee Street
- Large parking lots located along street frontage
- Emerging entertainment corridor

### Dodge Street

- Public and private parking lots along street
- Serves as a parking and service court

### Court Street

- Corner buildings oriented toward other streets
- Public and private parking lots along street frontage

### River Street

- Transit Center set back from the street
- Bowling alley oriented toward side parking lot
- Empty lots along the street
- Existing industrial and wholesale operations

### Racine Street

- Most direct route between downtown and I-90/39
- Lacks wayfinding & gateway at Main & River Streets

### MAP LEGEND

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- Continuous Facade Corridor**  
(Buildings orient toward the street on both sides)
- Broken Facade Corridor**  
(Buildings do not consistently orient toward street)
- No Facade Continuity**  
(Few or no building facades along street)
- One-way Pair**
- Vehicular Traffic Thoroughfare**
- Public Parking Lot**
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Path System**



### **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**

- A pedestrian path on the west side of the River runs fairly continuously from Riverside Park to the north, to Court Street. A portion of the trail runs on the street. From Court Street south to the riverbend the trail is incomplete. From the riverbend area, pedestrians and bicyclists can take the path west to Rockport Park and east past Wright Road – north to Highway 14 and south to Highway 11.
- There are no trail segments paralleling the east side of the River, except between Milwaukee and Centerway.
- The City has a fairly complete sidewalk system in the downtown area.



### **Downtown “Experience”**

A measure of the experience of a pedestrian within the downtown is the “street wall” - the area that helps define and enclose the street corridor, creating a sense of activity, intensity, and spatial containment. In downtown Janesville the street wall corridors were analyzed based on their façade continuity. The following observations were made (See Map 2):

Streets with Continuous Façade Corridors, where both sides of the street are lined with buildings oriented toward the street include:

- Main Street from Centerway to Van Buren
- Milwaukee Street from Academy to Parker Drive
- Segments of River Street, from Milwaukee to Dodge, and from Court to Rock Street

Streets with Broken Façade Corridors, with buildings not continuously oriented toward the Street include:

- High Street from Centerway to Dodge Street
- Jackson Street from Laurel Avenue to Dodge Street
- Dodge Street from Jackson to Franklin
- River Street from Dodge to Racine
- Milwaukee Street from Parker to Division
- Main Street from Van Buren to Racine



Streets lacking Façade Continuity include:

- Wall Street from High to Franklin
- Dodge Street, except for Post Office block between Jackson and Franklin

- Court Street from Academy to River Street
- Franklin Street from Wall to Dodge

These three distinctions are instructive in that they help present a picture of where connectivity is achieved in the downtown experience, where there are some gaps that need to be filled in, and where major attention needs to be focused to create a streetscape experience rather than having “dead-ends” that are not conducive to or attractive to pedestrian movement through and around the downtown.

## **Redevelopment and Preservation “Block by Block” Analysis**

As part of this *Strategy*, a detailed block by block analysis of the central downtown area suggested redevelopment opportunities and preservation priorities. This analysis considered: existing use and condition; historic value; relationship to other historic properties; relationship to redevelopment sites; reuse/redevelopment feasibility, location; and relationship with neighboring sites. Map 3 shows the results of the analysis of all existing buildings and uses in the area. The existing buildings/uses were categorized into the following: Historic Building, Contributing Building, and Non-contributing Building. These are defined as follows.

### **Historic Building**

Includes structures of historic and/or architectural significance that are considered landmarks; architecturally significant and prominent; or exhibit a strong combination of architectural character, integrity and importance of location. In most cases, restoration oriented façade improvements are necessary. In many cases, re-use is appropriate. Preservation and historic restoration of these buildings should be assigned a high priority; however in some cases preservation of these buildings is not appropriate due to a number of factors including: extensive deterioration, loss of historic features, and conflicts with site assembly for significant redevelopment projects. Examples of buildings where re-use is appropriate include the Monterey Hotel and old YMCA on West Milwaukee Street. Buildings that have been successfully restored include the Armory, Cotton Mill, and the reuse of the former Marshall Middle School into the Janesville School Apartments and Janesville Performing Arts Center.



### **Contributing Building**

Includes structures that may have some architectural or historical significance, but are more often contemporary buildings. These structures are labeled contributing because they represent recent investment, and contain uses that are appropriate for and important to the downtown area. These buildings are not expected to be priorities for redevelopment within the downtown. Examples include the Hedberg Public Library, Rock County Courthouse, YMCA, and City municipal and public safety buildings.



### **Non-contributing Building**

Includes structures that are not historically or architecturally significant, nor do they represent recent investment or critical

downtown uses. Many of the uses in Non-contributing Buildings may be appropriate, but the condition of the building suggests a higher and better use is desirable.

The composite picture of each of these categories indicates concentrations of the building types. Analysis of the buildings provided a basis for categorizing each block in the downtown into one of three distinct categories of districts –Preservation District, Redevelopment District, or Mixed-Focus District.

### **Preservation Districts**

Areas appropriate for historic preservation and restoration due to their largely intact collection of Historic Buildings and/or Contributing Buildings. Some of these blocks can remain in their current condition – they do not require any active restoration or use changes. In other cases, incentives and other efforts for historic preservation and adaptive re-use should be targeted. Infill development may also be appropriate in these districts.

### **Redevelopment District**

Several areas in the downtown present clear redevelopment opportunities. There are few historically significant buildings within these areas. And, where such buildings are present, they are isolated from other buildings of similar character. Redevelopment should focus on an urban and pedestrian oriented feel to reflect the surrounding design fabric.

### **Mixed-Focus District**

Areas appropriate for a mix of preservation, leave as-is, redevelopment, and infill development. Identified Historic Buildings and Contributing Buildings should generally be preserved or rehabilitated when feasible.



# DOWNTOWN PRESERVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN



**MAP LEGEND**

- Historic Building
- Contributing Building
- Non-contributing Building
- Building Outside Planning Area
- Preservation District
- Mixed Focus District
- Redevelopment District

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## Issues and Opportunities

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The input gathered through this *Strategy* development process was targeted – with an emphasis on identifying actual problems and actionable solutions. The results of that participation are summarized in Appendix IV at the end of this document

In addition, the input and data gathering served to identify existing and emerging economic and development opportunities that will drive specific redevelopment efforts in the downtown and assist in establishing implementation priorities. Those opportunities are summarized in the second part of this section.

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### Regional and Citywide Opportunities

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Janesville's regional position and influences are an important consideration of this comprehensive planning process. The City does not stand in isolation; the City is shaped by regional physical, economic, and social forces. Although the City cannot directly or independently change many of the forces that shape the region - it must acknowledge and overcome challenges, and identify and capitalize on regional opportunities.

Janesville's physical setting has and will continue to influence its growth and development. The City's geographic location and inherent natural assets were the factors that guided historic settlement patterns. These important natural assets – including the Rock River and Rock Prairie area's rich agricultural soils - continue to shape the City and region today. Planning for these resources must often be balanced with planning for City growth and development – this will remain an opportunity and challenge for the City.

Substantial transportation infrastructure is a strong economic asset for the City and region. Transportation assets include:

- Interstates 39/90, 43;
- Three providers of rail service in the County;
- 60 miles to the Global III intermodal facility in Rochelle, IL;
- Southern Wisconsin Regional Airport, Chicago-Rockford International Airport, and close access to several international airports; and;
- Existing and potentially expanding public transit system – with discussions underway of expansions of Metra (the Chicago Area's Commuter Rail System) to the Rock County area.

The educational infrastructure of the region also strongly enhances the economic climate and quality of life – particularly the University of Wisconsin Rock County and Blackhawk Technical College.

The region of which Janesville is a part also has strong existing economic clusters and is at the front edge of some emerging opportunities. The region has a strong cluster in fabricated metal manufacturing, distribution/transshipment and logistics, and food processing. The region is also putting the pieces together to



evolve to a “bio-industry” processing center with bio-fuel production facilities being developed. The State of Wisconsin as a whole has the opportunity to capture a larger part of the value chain of research coming out of UW-Madison by commercializing and building products in the State. The Governor’s Biobased Industry Consortium established this as part of a statewide agenda. Commercializing and producing bio-products is a great fit with Janesville’s relationship to agricultural land, historic strength in agri-business, and manufacturing infrastructure.

Given that many of these opportunities are regional in nature due to location, access, transportation systems, natural and agricultural resources, Janesville and neighboring communities may have several similar opportunities. Regional economic development strategies and cooperation between Janesville and neighboring communities, for instance the City of Beloit, may allow both communities to more effectively capitalize on these opportunities to drive success.

## Downtown Opportunities

Owing in part to the regional dynamics discussed above, the City of Janesville has tremendous opportunities to shape its future. With the City’s population expected to exceed 80,000 residents over the next 25 years, the City has an opportunity to proactively capture that growth and enhance the downtown and entire community. One of the core decisions the City must make is how and where to direct growth, and how to capture the value from that growth.

Opportunities to capitalize on the local and regional trends in order to make the downtown a “destination” include:

### Embracing the Rock River

The Rock River is clearly an untapped asset of the City, particularly in the downtown area. Rather than capitalizing on the River as the focal point for development, the downtown has largely turned its back to the River. Further, much of the development along the River does not relate to the River. Riverfront properties should be re-oriented and/or redeveloped to face the River – providing opportunities for riverfront uses such as housing, restaurants, entertainment, and retail (particularly recreation-focused retail serving bicycle and boating enthusiasts). The River is also a recreational resource that can be much better utilized – building on successes like the Rock Aqua Jays. Although there are several City parks and open spaces that are located on the River, these could be much better connected with each other. Developing an urban riverwalk along both the east and west sides of the River, and incorporating new footpaths across the River connecting open spaces, cultural and entertainment venues on both sides of the River would provide an important opportunity for residents and visitors to interface with and enjoy the river. Developing a marina would be another opportunity to showcase the Rock River in Janesville. The two dams in the River provide both benefits and drawbacks – the benefits include creating a deeper pool upstream of the dams that facilitate boating. However, the drawbacks of the dams, is that they effectively closes off the stretch of the River through the downtown from on the water activity. Designating a canoe or kayak (non-motorized) trail between the two dams would be a way to generate activity in the River. There may also be an opportunity to place art and other objects in the River in the downtown that further draw attention to this important asset.



*Businesses and buildings that turn their backs on the Rock River could be re-oriented toward the River.*

### Celebrating Janesville’s Heritage and Future

A successful community builds its future on a strong understanding of and appreciation for its past. In order to continue to be a great place to raise a family, it is important that the City provide entertainment opportuni-

ties for all ages – from youth, to young families, to older residents. Museums provide a great way to showcase the history of the community, while exciting and inspiring youth. A “Janesville Heritage” museum spotlighting some of the industries that built the City– for example General Motors, Parker Pen – would be an excellent way to showcase the unique heritage and pride of the City. A museum could be built with hands-on, interactive exhibits geared toward children; or a separate children’s museum or “wing” would be a valuable way to inspire and educate youth. A renovated building in the downtown would be an ideal site for a joint museum, or several appropriate buildings could be identified for separate museums.

### **Enhance Downtown Living Environment**

Providing diverse options for housing downtown and along the riverfront will enliven the downtown as an activity center and provide a larger population to support existing and emerging businesses. At the same time, working to create a vibrant downtown living environment will serve to strengthen the ability to “sell” a downtown lifestyle. Downtown housing in Janesville is positioned for success due to the variety of assets attractive to residents—historic building stock, the Rock River, arts and cultural offerings, many existing businesses, and connected pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Janesville’s demographic trends projected for the next ten years appear to support downtown housing. While downtown housing development is not without its challenges (including parking, elevator access, and rehabilitation costs) catalyzing downtown housing to tap into the potential market already in the area can work to overcome these barriers.

As explored more in depth in Appendix II in the Market Rate Housing Feasibility Study, the City could focus its efforts by targeting the following types of residents for downtown housing.

- **Young Adults/Professionals:** Population projections for the next 10 years suggest Janesville and the market area will have a significant number of residents in the 18 – 35 age cohort. Employers are often challenged in recruiting workers in this age cohort. Retrofitted downtown units, close to activities, the riverfront, and trail system, would attract young professionals eager to live in a more vibrant area. Rental or entry-level owner occupied units may be appropriate for this group.
- **Empty Nesters and Retirees:** Janesville’s 55+ age cohort is projected to increase more rapidly than other age groups. As the Baby Boom generation ages, many desire housing options that require less upkeep and provide easy access to services, shopping, entertainment, recreation, and social networks.

The following are also potential target groups for downtown housing:

- **Downtown Employees:** Housing for downtown employees not only eliminates commuting time but also reduces the amount of parking employers need to provide downtown.
- **Artists:** In the early stages of expanding downtown housing, success can be achieved by marketing less-costly units to residents who are more willing to test an early market, such as artists looking for housing with minimal finishes that can double as studio space.
- **Extended Stay:** Downtown housing would be an attractive option for new and temporary residents, or customers using the medical system. Extended stay housing units could be financed by major employers in Janesville to address this need.

### **Spotlight Arts, Culture, and Entertainment**

Both public and private investments have been instrumental over the last decade in building an arts and cultural infrastructure in Janesville. The City, in partnership with Forward Janesville and the Janesville Area Visitors and Conventions Bureau, should continue to promote arts, culture, and entertainment in downtown Janesville in order to attract new residents and tourists to downtown. These entities, along with providers of arts, culture and entertainment should also work to better network venues and events to draw more energy and visitors to attractions within the City. Current arts and cultural assets in Janesville include the Janesville Performing Arts Center (JPAC), the Hedberg Library, the Lincoln-Tallman House, the Historic Armory Din-



ner Theatre, Beloit/Janesville Symphony Orchestra, and public art exhibits including the '57 Chevy exhibit and planned murals.

Downtown redevelopment in Janesville should include the provision of more arts performance and exhibit facilities as well as galleries and artist lofts. Arts exhibits focusing near and in the Rock River are one example. A Heritage Trail Loop and a Heritage / Children's Museum are additional ideas to spotlight the heritage and culture of the City. Downtown hotels and/or a convention center would also help to attract visitors to enjoy the arts, cultural and entertainment offerings in the downtown.

### **Drawing on the Regional Medical Center**

The presence of a major regional medical center within the City presents opportunities for the downtown. The medical campus and downtown area are close in distance, but still loosely connected. Recognizing the regional medical center as part of the downtown area can help to maximize synergies between the two. Strategic improvements to North Franklin and Jackson Streets – including conversion from one-way to two-way traffic - is one opportunity to better connect the downtown and medical campus. Targeted redevelopment and restoration of the historic residential homes along these streets could provide opportunities for developing neighborhood scale businesses and professional services connected to the medical field. The presence of the medical center also could positively impact nearby neighborhoods, particularly the Look West Neighborhood through programs that offer low-interest loans to hospital employees who live in this area or elsewhere in the downtown.

The presence of the medical center also provides a potential market for a downtown hotel and/or convention center, upscale downtown residential development, and for a downtown education campus offering training programs for nurses, lab techs, etc.

### **Bringing “Wisconsin’s Park Place” Downtown**

Janesville’s “Wisconsin’s Park Place” brand can be more effectively woven into and connected to the downtown.

In addition to the hub of the bicycle and pedestrian trail system, the downtown should be the hub of a way-finding system to direct residents and visitors to the City’s parks that are both inside of and outside of the downtown area. Other opportunities to bring the idea of Janesville as the “Park Place” downtown include:

- Establishing connections to Traxler Park;
- Establishing connections to the Blackhawk Regional Park System;
- Establishing connections to Monterey Park;
- Connecting with the 4th Ward Park;
- Providing additional greenspace along West Milwaukee Street near City Hall;
- Redesigning River Street into a parkway, with a view of the Rock River and greenspace to the east and a vegetated median;
- Removing major through-traffic from downtown streets;
- Completing the bicycle and pedestrian trail network on both sides of the Rock River;



- Redeveloping the river bend area to include significant greenspace, but also downtown residential offering views of the Regional Parks and Recreation System, including Dawson Fields;
- Promoting Racine Street as the primary gateway to the downtown area from Interstate 39/90; and
- Streetscaping that incorporates significant landscaping.

An alternative meaning to “Wisconsin’s Park Place” is a prestigious location for doing business (with reference to the designated property on the Monopoly™ board game). Bringing this alternative “Park Place” idea downtown should start with effectively marketing the downtown as a viable and attractive place for doing business. A multi-pronged strategy may include working to retain existing businesses, recruit new businesses, and to continue to physically make the downtown an attractive place to do business (for instance through beautification projects, public art, streetscape enhancements, and façade improvements).

### Showcase Local Foods

Janesville’s and southeastern Wisconsin’s regional position—proximity to transportation corridors, major metropolitan markets, and fertile, productive agricultural land—has contributed to a cluster of food-processing industries in the region. The local foods movement is gaining momentum nationwide, and there are several places in the State that are exploring opportunities. There are several opportunities that could be pursued in southeastern Wisconsin to tap into a local food market. This *Strategy* recommends the following be pursued in downtown Janesville:

- Become a Regional Center for Southeastern Wisconsin Food: Southeastern Wisconsin enjoys some of the world’s most productive agricultural land. Both food production and processing have thrived in this region. Today’s consumers are demanding healthier foods and are more interested in knowing where their food comes from to alleviate food security concerns. Due to Janesville’s strategic location, excellent access, position as a regional market center, and proximity to larger metropolitan areas, Janesville could take on the role of a regional center for the distribution of southeastern Wisconsin grown and produced food to larger markets like Chicago – for instance, specialty cheeses, fresh fruits and vegetables, and locally produced beers.
- Develop a Public Market and Craft Food Processing Facility: Janesville’s farmer’s market has demonstrated success since it was started in 2005. Developing an indoor public market including food products and complementary non-food products that are produced locally in the vicinity of the farmer’s market could help to build on this success, and provide options for fresh food year-round. Rehabilitating a downtown building into a public market can be less costly than other end uses since the space is flexible and does not require many finishes. A public market can also be a successful way to incubate new, small retail businesses which can graduate to their own retail space as they succeed and grow. In addition to retail sales of fresh food and value-added products, the purpose of a public market space could be expanded to provide for the production of craft food and complementary products. A food processing incubator would allow for emerging businesses to get a start in a cost effective way, with a close link to retail sales. The Schlueters building on Main Street at Centerway may be an ideal location for an indoor public market and local food production incubator as described above (see Appendix III for site concept).
- Encourage Regional Food Restaurants: Restaurants that specialize in foods grown in and around southern Wisconsin could attract visitors to Janesville and would connect Janesville to food-related tourism. Additionally, these types of restaurants would help to support merchants at the farmers market and / or public market through direct sales. Existing restaurants in the downtown could be encouraged to focus on regional foods, or provide regular regional food specials. Blackhawk Technical College’s Culinary Arts Program could be encouraged to provide potential restaurateurs to the area. A brewpub serving beer from Janesville’s own Gray’s Brewery and locally themed food would be a great destination within the downtown area, particularly on the riverfront with a patio or deck facing the River.

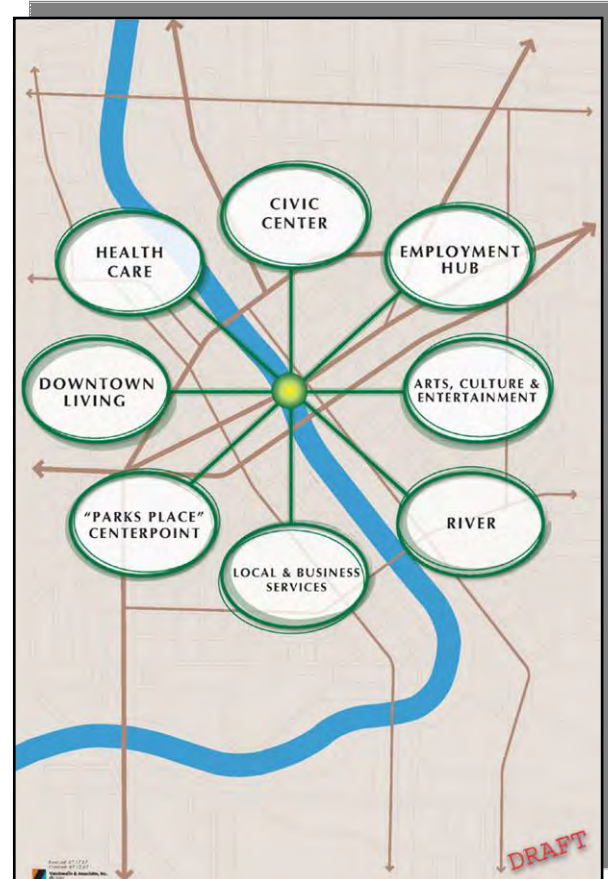
- **Support Food-related Retail:** Food-related businesses are attractive uses in downtown areas, with the potential to provide frequent trips serving needs of nearby residents and the community at large. Janesville could attract more food-related downtown businesses such as a specialty grocery, a bakery, a kitchenware store, or an ice cream shop. Downtown Janesville currently has fairly limited food-related retail, such as a wine shop. A fudge shop recently moved out of the downtown area. Continuing to work with retailers to find out how to attract and keep them downtown is an important priority.

## Downtown Vision

One of the keys to success in downtown revitalization is organizing action behind a common vision. Without a clear direction, strategies and action steps lack the necessary coordination, direction, and resolve. The purpose of this section of the *Strategy* is to articulate a vision for the downtown to provide a clear framework for implementation.

The organizing components of the Vision for downtown Janesville are:

- The downtown is a “destination” - a hub of civic life; employment; arts, culture, and entertainment; local business and services; parks and open space; residential living; and health care.
- The Rock River as a:
  - Community asset and highlight
  - Focus for investment and redevelopment
  - Connector, rather than a community divider
- Celebrating Janesville’s culture and heritage through:
  - Balancing redevelopment and historic preservation
  - Reuse focused on historically significant buildings and rehabilitation within downtown interface neighborhoods
  - Centering “Wisconsin’s Park Place” Downtown
  - Developing a Janesville Heritage Trail Loop and Janesville Heritage and Children’s Museum that spotlight the City’s unique historic and cultural attributes
- Catalyzing revitalization in the downtown through strategic initiatives, including:
  - Redevelopment targeted to large sites to achieve maximum impact
  - Create synergy around key blocks based on existing and potential activity areas
  - Coordinated and convenient circulation to and around downtown for pedestrians and automobiles
  - Looking at the downtown from the “outside in” – recognizing the importance of the adjacent historic neighborhoods, the Regional Medical Campus, the area along the Rock River from the south riverbend to Memorial Drive, and Traxler Park
  - Creating public-private partnerships with clearly defined roles in carrying out implementation initiatives





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### Downtown Vision Framework

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Embracing the Rock River as an asset of the downtown is an opportunity that must be pursued – from orienting development and activity to “face” the River, to viewing the River as a connector of the City, rather than an east-west divider. In order to maximize the potential of Janesville’s downtown, the perception of the area needs to be expanded to include the adjacent and interconnected areas that have equal if not greater impact on the traditional downtown. (See Map 4) The traditional downtown (the Upper Downtown Loop and the Lower Downtown Loop) is part of a much more dynamic urban core including the Traxler Park- Medical Center Loop. Promoting the inherent assets present in each of these areas and using them as a catalyst for a coordinated revitalization effort will be vital to the overall health and positive change of the entire downtown.

# DOWNTOWN VISION FRAMEWORK

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

### MAP LEGEND

-  Activity Area
-  Redevelopment Site
-  Building Reuse
-  Conceptual Interconnected Bike/Pedestrian Path Loops



Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Memorial Bridge

Riverbank stabilization and appearance enhancements

Traxler Park

## TRAXLER-MEDICAL CENTER LOOP

North Main Street Transitional Area

Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Centerway Bridge

## UPPER DOWNTOWN LOOP (SEE ENLARGEMENT)

## LOWER DOWNTOWN LOOP (SEE ENLARGEMENT)

Regional Medical Center

Riverview Housing

Historic Jackson Street Residential/Office

- Historic rehabilitation & selective demolition
- Investigate redevelopment reuse opportunities
- Connect medical center to downtown Gateway area



### **Traxler-Medical Center Loop**

The opportunity to elevate positive energy and investment in the downtown would be enhanced by creating a gateway/connection between the traditional downtown area and the Traxler-Medical Center Loop. The surplus of activity happening in the Traxler-Medical Center area has the potential to generate significant positive impacts on the downtown (activity generated by the hospital and medical clinics, recreation and the Rock Aqua Jays). Creating a prominent connection between these areas will help unite seemingly disconnected areas, stabilizing and strengthening the downtown revitalization effort.

#### **Primary Activity Zone**

- Traxler Park
- North Main Transition Area
- Regional Medical Center
- Riverview Housing
- Historic Jackson Street Residential/Office

#### **Primary Redevelopment Sites**

- North Main Transition Area (public open space in floodplain and commercial/office uses)

#### **Primary Reuse Sites**

- Historic North Jackson Street Residential/Office (professional offices in historic buildings)

#### **Connections**

- Make North Jackson and Franklin two-way between Centerway and hospital area and add historically-appropriate streetscape enhancements
- Connect Parker to Centerway just south of the railroad trestle
- Enhance pedestrian connection from Traxler Park under Memorial bridge and continue north to boat launch / future marina
- Build Riverwalk along east side
- Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Memorial and Centerway bridges
- Address rail crossings at Jackson, Franklin, and Main Street
- Enhance wayfinding to downtown
- Create primary gateway features at Main & Centerway intersection and secondary gateway feature at Jackson/Franklin intersections with Centerway

#### **Other Improvements**

- Clean up west river bank north and south of Memorial bridge
- Create kayak run around the dam area

### **Upper and Lower Downtown Loops**

A wealth of potentially catalytic redevelopment sites, historic building stock ideal for adaptive reuse, and opportunities for a unique pedestrian oriented Riverwalk are important components of the potential change in central downtown Janesville. A number of primary activity zones make the Upper and Lower Downtown Loops the focus of future revitalization efforts, including: the cultural arts area, the Milwaukee Street commercial corridor, riverfront housing, the City Government Center, the transit center, the High Street entertainment corridor, and the Five Points neighborhood commercial area. An important component of this effort will be to use the Rock River as a point of connection and something to build around, instead of an impediment that separates east from west (See Map 5).

Issues of importance for the Upper and Lower Downtown Loops include:

- Use the River as a connector; not a divider. Connecting existing trail segments to create pedestrian loops that connect east to west, and linking important activity centers.
- Orient buildings toward the River, creating a pedestrian oriented Riverwalk experience.
- Remove the existing parking plaza and replace with a pedestrian bridge and strategically placed structured parking on both sides of the River.
- Supplement existing assets including historic structures and the Janesville Performing Arts Center, the Hedberg Public Library, Armory, YMCA, and Bus Transfer facility.



# DOWNTOWN VISION- UPPER AND LOWER DOWNTOWN LOOPS

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN



### Main Street Retail

- Facade improvements
- Business recruitment
- Improve or open up the rear building facades along the river

### Downtown Employment Cluster

### Parking Plaza

- Removed and replaced with a pedestrian bridge and structured parking on both sides of the river

### Rear Facade Renovation

- Improvements oriented to the river

### Olde Towne Mall

- Open both ends and rebrand as an "Arcade" to attract more retail and restaurants and provide a direct connection between Main Street and the river at the terminus of the proposed pedestrian bridge.

### Riverfront Housing

### River Street/Riverfront Commercial/Retail

### Centerway

- Redevelopment
- Reserve for transportation
- Potential transit-oriented redevelopment

### City Government Center

### High Street Entertainment

- New public parking lot
- Old YMCA**
- 1st floor museum/retail/restaurant/brew pub
- Upper floors residential
- Potential furniture store
- Monterey Hotel**
- 1st floor retail/restaurant
- Upper floors hotel, condos, or apartments
- Streetscape improvements

### Old Jail Site

- Mixed-use redevelopment with public parking structure
- Potential hotel site

### Main Street Residential/Office

- Home conversion to bed and breakfast or office with residential above

### Cultural Arts Area

- Planned park with outdoor performance space

### Milwaukee Street Retail

- Facade improvements
- Business recruitment

### Transit Center Mixed-Use

- Additional public parking
- River front redevelopment site as entertainment/mixed-use
- American Farm Enterprise**
- Renovation into an active use such as museum, college/educational center with residential or office above

### Five Points Neighborhood Commercial

### Entertainment Use Redevelopment Site

### River Street Residential, Mixed Use or Open Space

- Riverfront redevelopment as entertainment/ mixed-use/open space

### Rock River Enhancements

- Potential river fountains or sculptures
- Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Racine, Milwaukee and Court bridges
- Enhance powerhouse or relocate dam upstream and provide a lock
- Potential pedestrian bridge across river between Court and Racine

### Mixed-Use Redevelopment with Gateway Feature

### MAP LEGEND

- Redevelopment Site
- Building Reuse
- Potential Parking Structures
- Conceptual Interconnected Bike/Pedestrian Path Loops

## UPPER DOWNTOWN LOOP

### Primary Activity Zones

- Downtown Employment
- Main Street Retail
- Riverfront Housing
- City Government Center
- Milwaukee Street Retail
- High Street Entertainment
- River Street Commercial/Retail
- Five Points Neighborhood Commercial

### Primary Redevelopment Sites

- West Milwaukee Street riverfront parking lot (ground floor retail with offices and condos above and structured public and private parking)
- Chase Bank block (ground floor retail with offices and condos above and structured public and private parking)
- North side of 300 block of West Milwaukee (public parking and central open space/events plaza and possible small restaurant/retail buildings on High Street)
- Five Points Neighborhood Commercial (neighborhood retail/personal service center with grocery store)
- Both sides of Dodge west of River Street (major mixed-use project with riverside open space/plaza)

### Primary Reuse Sites

- Schlueters site at Main and Centerway (public market or 1st floor retail with upper level business incubator or residential/office)
- Monterey Hotel (1st floor retail/restaurant with upper level condos, hotel or apartments)
- Old YMCA (museum or 1st floor retail/restaurant with residential/office above or potential furniture store relocation)

### Connections

- Return Milwaukee and Court to two-way with on-street parking
- Reconfigure/rebuild Five Points intersection with grade separation at tracks
- Replace Parking Plaza with pedestrian bridge
- Major streetscape improvements along Main, Milwaukee, High, Dodge and River St.
- Build Riverwalk on both sides of river
- Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Milwaukee and Court bridges
- Create primary gateway features at the Five Points intersection
- Create secondary gateway at the Milwaukee and Atwood intersection
- Enhance wayfinding within loop, particularly to public parking

### Parking

- Remove parking plaza and replace with structures on Johnson Bank/City surface lots on Main and on northeast YMCA lot with elevated pedestrian connector across River St. to new development on the river
- Incorporate public parking into garages for mixed use project(s) on Chase Bank block and West Milwaukee riverfront parking lot
- Provide additional public parking at the north end of High Street to support entertainment district

### Other Improvements

- Remove/relocate dam and provide a lock; if dam remains, enhance powerhouse appearance and light house and dam
- Façade improvements along Milwaukee and Main
- Improve/open up rear facades of Main Street buildings along the river
- “Open up” both ends of Olde Town Mall and re-brand as “Arcade” to attract more retail/restaurants and provide direct connection between Main and the river at the foot of the proposed new pedestrian bridge

**LOWER DOWNTOWN LOOP****Primary Activity Zones**

- Arts and Culture
- Main Street Residential/Office
- Transit Center Mixed-use
- River Street Residential/Mixed-use

**Primary Redevelopment Sites**

- Old jail site and surrounding properties (museum, housing, hotel, structured private and public parking)
- All four corners of Main & Racine intersection (retail/service)
- City parking lot south of Transfer Station (retail for bus riders or to serve redevelopment site across the street)

**Primary Reuse Sites**

- American Farm Enterprise on River St. and adjoining properties (museum, college/education, residential)
- Main Street Residential/Office (reuse historic houses as B&B's or office/residential)

**Connections**

- Emphasize Racine as primary connection between downtown and I-90/39
- Major streetscape improvements along Main and River Street
- Build Riverwalk on both sides
- Pedestrian and appearance enhancements to Racine bridge
- Link existing bicycle trail segments
- Create primary gateway features at Main and Racine, and a secondary gateway feature at Racine and River Street, and River and Court Street
- Enhance wayfinding within loop, particularly to public parking

**Parking**

- Provide additional public parking in structure as part of old jail site redevelopment
- Provide public parking as part of American Farm Enterprise site redevelopment

**Other Improvements**

- Provide fountains or sculpture in the river
- Park/outdoor performance space between the Library and JPAC

## Downtown Circulation Vision

The importance of how a City's downtown is connected to the rest of the City is often overlooked. Regarding vehicle travel, Map 6 illustrates a distinction between those automobile routes that provide direct routes through or around the downtown (Through Traffic Routes) and those that provide circulation and access to destinations within the downtown (Downtown Circulation Routes). The distinction also suggests differences in street design, streetscaping, number of intersections and traffic signals, speed limits – with Through Traffic Routes designed to efficiently move traffic through the downtown, and Downtown Circulation Routes accommodating those motorists who may stop at a location within the downtown through slower speeds and local access.

Areas around primary entryways to downtown Janesville via Racine Street, Milwaukee Street, Centerway, Court Street, and Jackson or Franklin Street should be enhanced with streetscaping and general redevelopment to improve the visibility and presence of the downtown. Pedestrian and bicycle trails should also be accentuated and extended to facilitate non-motor vehicle connections. Developing a clear way-finding system that directs visitors to downtown destinations from outside of the downtown, between downtown destinations, and to other destinations in the City is also a clear priority (See Map 6).

Important issues to consider regarding downtown circulation include:

- Promote East Racine Street from I-90/39 as the main entry to downtown and create primary gateway features at Main Street and Racine Street intersection.
- Remove the existing Parking Plaza and replace it with a pedestrian bridge and new strategically placed structured parking on both sides of the river that facilitate businesses in the downtown area.
- Convert Milwaukee and Court Streets to two-way traffic with on street parking.
- Connect Centerway to Parker Drive.
- Create a pedestrian connection under Memorial Bridge to proposed Marina.
- Convert Jackson and Franklin Streets to two-way traffic between the downtown and the hospital and add historically appropriate streetscape enhancements.
- Reconfigure the grade separated interchange at Five Points.
- Improve Jackson and Rockport intersection to divert traffic to potential future river bend area redevelopment projects and the downtown.
- Evaluate new River Street bridge to align with Beloit Avenue at Delavan Drive.
- Strengthen the connection to Regional Parks and Recreation Areas through streetscape enhancements.
- Develop pedestrian bridges in location of existing parking plaza, and between River Street and Cultural Arts Area.



# DOWNTOWN CIRCULATION VISION

JANESVILLE, WISCONSIN

Created: 05.29.07  
Revised: 11.07.07

### MAP LEGEND

-  Through Traffic Routes
-  Downtown Circulation Routes
-  Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes
-  Potential Pedestrian and Bicycle Routes
-  Primary Gateway
-  Secondary Gateway or Wayfinding Signage
-  Existing Public Parking Lots
-  Potential Public Parking Structure



Pedestrian connection under Memorial Bridge to proposed marina

Traxler Park & Rock Aqua Jays viewing area

Connect Main Street to Parker Street

New structured parking to replace Parking Plaza

Convert Milwaukee Street and Court Street to two-way

Convert Jackson and Franklin to two-way between downtown and hospital and add historically appropriate streetscape enhancements

River Street Realignment

Reconfigure to a grade separated interchange at Five Points

Remove Parking Plaza and replace with pedestrian bridge

Potential Pedestrian Bridge

Main entries from I-90/39 to Downtown

Strengthen connection to Regional Parks and Recreation Areas through streetscape enhancements

Improve Jackson and Rockport intersection to divert traffic to Riverbend mixed use project and downtown

Evaluate new River Street bridge to align with Beloit Avenue at Delavan Drive



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## Implementation

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The Implementation section of this *Strategy* provides the framework for how the Vision described in the previous sections is achieved. The components of this section will lay the blueprint for:

- Developing the most appropriate and effective structure for action;
- Assigning specific implementation activities to each of the various responsible entities;
- Developing a detailed short-term (18 month) action plan assigning priority action items, priority for completion, and identifying implementation leaders and partners.

### Implementation Structure

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Implementation of this *Downtown Vision and Strategy* is critical and will involve a wide range of activities including everything from developer recruitment, to trail and streetscape enhancements, to parking improvements, to business recruitment, to marketing and events. Accordingly, a wide range of skills and resources is needed, as well as a consistent and coordinated effort among several different and independent entities. Janesville is extremely fortunate to have several highly skilled individuals and organizations available to assist with these efforts. What is needed most, then, is a structure that clearly defines roles and responsibilities to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts.

Part of the downtown planning process included a series of meetings on implementation with the City Manager, Forward Janesville, and other interested parties. From these discussions arose the concept of creating two different public-private partnerships. One (the Downtown Renaissance Partnership) would include a small group of members appointed by the City and Forward Janesville who would be responsible for spearheading major redevelopment projects with funding provided primarily by City general obligation and Tax Increment Finance (TIF). The other partnership would involve restructuring the existing Downtown Development Alliance and Janesville Design and Development Center into a new Downtown Action Alliance that would have primary responsibility for operations, beautification, business recruitment and marketing, with the primary funding coming from a special property tax imposed under a proposed Business Improvement District.

Together, these organizations, the City (who will provide financial and administrative support as well as infrastructure planning and development), and Forward Janesville (who will continue to play a vital role in building private sector and community support) can efficiently cover the wide span of implementation activities called for in this *Strategy*. While dividing these responsibilities among several organizations will put a premium on maintaining solid communications between them, experiences in Janesville and other communities have clearly shown that one organization alone cannot effectively cover this range of activities. Accordingly, the proposed structure attempts to match the resources and expertise offered by each organization with the specific mission at hand in order to create the greatest level of efficiency and impact. The Implementation Structure graphic at the end of this section and the text below provide summaries of these organizations and their responsibilities.

#### **Downtown Renaissance Partnership**

The Downtown Renaissance Partnership (DRP) is a public-private partnership between the City and Forward Janesville. The two organizations have a long history of working together, and the proposed structure builds on their many joint successes to better capture the skills and resources each has to offer. The organization assumes many of the functions currently performed by the City alone. The partnership's primary mission is to lead all major redevelopment projects within all three of the Activity Loops identified in this *Strategy*, including:

- Organizational Management
  - Member recruitment
  - Corporate structure
  - Budget and finances
- Prioritization of Major Redevelopment Projects
  - Redevelopment areas and sites
  - Reuse sites
- Redevelopment of Priority Sites
  - Site assembly and control
  - Site concept planning
  - Developer recruitment
  - Developer negotiations
  - Coordination of related public improvements with the City
- Recommend Major Capital Improvements
  - Open space
  - Traffic circulation
  - Parking
  - Utilities

The nine members of the DRP will consist of the City Council President, Plan Commission Chair, City Manager, Forward Janesville President, two Forward Janesville board members, and three individuals selected jointly by the City Manager and President of Forward Janesville. The City Manager and President of Forward will co-chair the committee. Administrative support will be provided by the City of Janesville. The City's involvement in the DRP would provide the link to the City Council for implementation of the recommended actions and Forward Janesville would provide assistance, support and leadership of the private sector.

The City Administration will recommend a property acquisition and redevelopment fund be established with the first year's commitment to be \$1.5 million and the following years be \$2.0 million. The fund will be used for blight elimination and creating development sites as recommended by the DRP and approved by the City Council.

### **Downtown Action Alliance**

The existing Downtown Development Alliance and Janesville Design and Development Center will be re-structured into a new organization called the Downtown Action Alliance (DAA). The DAA will function as an adjunct committee to Forward Janesville until the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID). The BID would be funded by property owners generally within the Upper and Lower Downtown Activity Loops identified in this *Strategy*, with precise boundaries to be defined by an operational plan. The DAA will lead the efforts to create a BID in order to fund a variety of operational, beautification and marketing efforts in the downtown, including:

- Organizational Management
  - Member recruitment
  - Organizational structure
  - Member meetings and outreach
- BID Creation and Administration
  - BID feasibility analysis and development of member support
  - Work with City to formally establish the BID
  - Annual BID budgets, reports and administration
- Business Coordination and Marketing
  - Coordinate common merchant operations



- Develop and distribute marketing materials
- Conduct special events
- Business Recruitment
  - Determine under served/complementary business niches
  - Assess available locations
  - Develop and distribute recruitment materials
  - Facilitate new business start-ups
- Coordinate Beautification Programs
  - Façade improvement program
  - Streetscape enhancements
  - Public area maintenance
- Special Projects
  - Farmers market
  - Public Market
  - Public art

Membership in the DAA will be open to all property owners and businesses within the Upper and Lower Downtown Activity Loops identified in this *Strategy*. The members of the DAA will serve on various committees related to the above functions and provide recommendations to the BID board concerning the expenditure of BID funds. Under State law, the members of the BID board are appointed by the City Manager and must consist of at least 5 members, a majority of whom must be taxpayers within the BID.

The DAA will be staffed under contract between the City and Forward Janesville, similar to the current agreement governing the Janesville Design and Development Center. The City's initial funding commitment will be for two years – until the BID is established. After the establishment of the BID, the City's funding commitment will be re-evaluated. Future funding, if any, is likely to be targeted to specific expenditures or programs (such as staff support or façade improvements, for example) that meet the eligibility criteria of the potential primary funding mechanisms, such as TIF and Community Development Block Grant funds. The City may also provide in-kind contributions in lieu of funding, such as enhanced level of maintenance and beautification in the BID area.

### **City of Janesville**

The DRP and DAA are public private partnerships essential to achieving full implementation of this *Strategy*. As noted, the City plays a major role in both in terms of providing funding, members, leadership and establishing legislation. There are also several aspects of downtown revitalization that are more the exclusive province of the City. These activities need to be carefully coordinated with the City's private sector partners and include the following:

- Downtown Plan Adoption and Amendments
- Special District Creation
  - Community Redevelopment Area
  - TIF
  - BID
- Public Financing
  - General fund
  - Capital improvement fund
  - Utility funds
  - Special district funds
  - CDBG
  - General obligation bonds

- Special district bonds
- Capital Improvements Planning and Construction
  - Open Space
  - Utilities
  - Parking
  - Traffic Circulation
  - Pedestrian Circulation
- Approval of Redevelopment Projects
  - Property acquisition
  - Development agreements
  - Related public improvements

Given this wide range of functions, a number of City departments and boards (e.g. Plan Commission, Historic Commission, CDA) will be involved. Accordingly, it is recommended the City create an internal “downtown committee” led by the Community and Economic Development Department to ensure these activities are properly coordinated.

### **Forward Janesville**

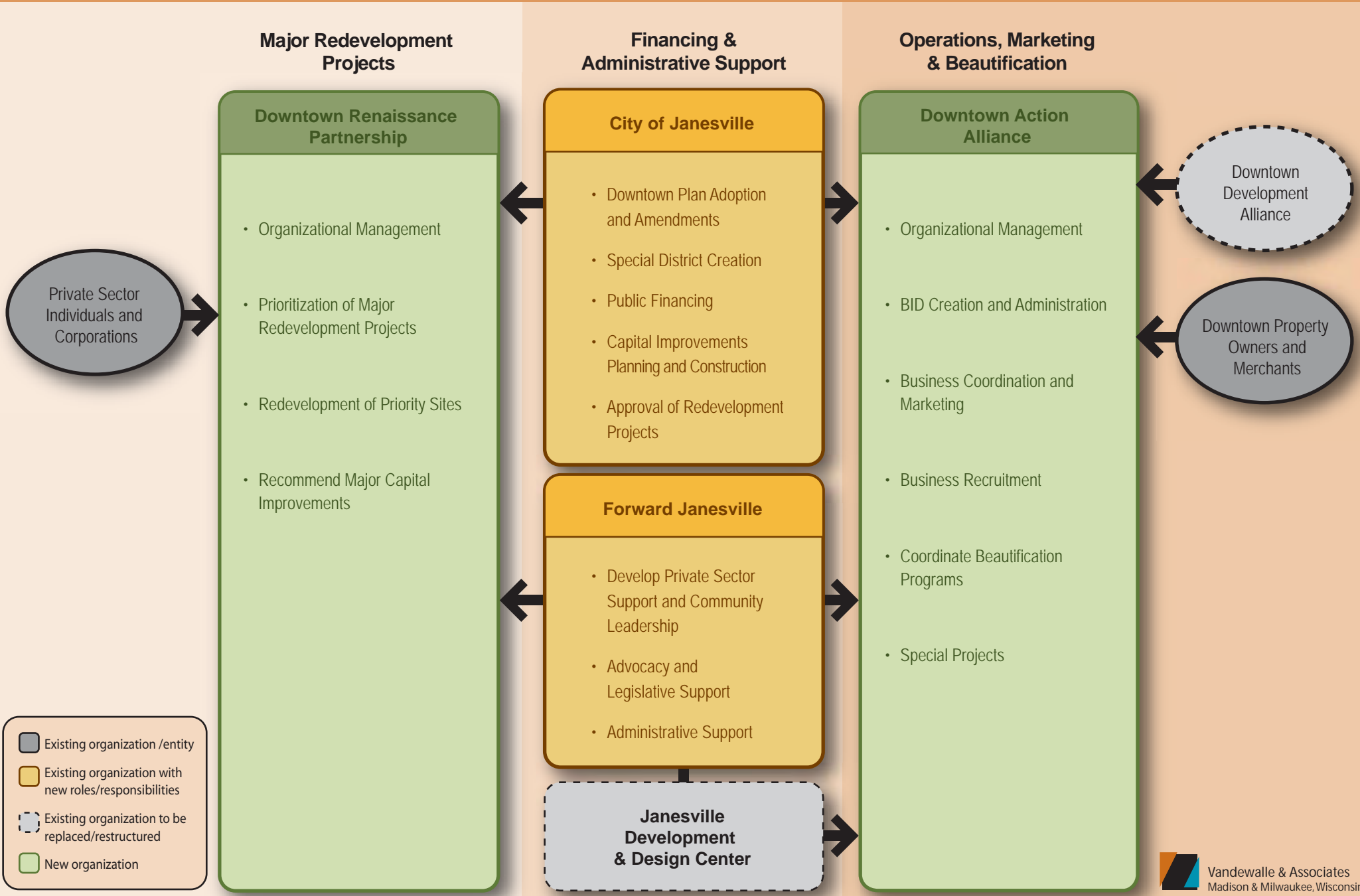
Forward Janesville has proved to be a loyal and hard working partner of the City in achieving numerous community development initiatives over the past several years. Building on this success, it remains a lynch pin in organizing and managing both of the proposed public-private partnership organizations (the DRP and DAA). However, like the City, Forward Janesville will continue to have important functions that are independent of its participation in these other organizations. These include the following:

- Develop Private Sector Support and Community Leadership
  - Communication/education
  - Leadership development
  - Networking
- Advocacy and Legislative Support
  - Local
  - Regional
  - State
  - Federal
- Administrative Support (DAA)
  - Staff management
  - Facilities
  - Equipment
  - Supplies

# Janesville Downtown Vision and Implementation Strategy

## Implementation Structure

**DRAFT**





## Implementation Activities

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The following have been identified as some of the key areas for implementation of the *Strategy*. More specific implementation achievables are organized by general category of task. A page number cross reference is provided, designating the location in the *Strategy* document where these are described in more detail. In addition, the organization with the Lead Responsibility for each is identified. Leads include the Downtown Renaissance Partnership (DRP), Downtown Action Alliance (DAA), City of Janesville (City), and Forward Janesville (FJ).



City of Janesville

Summary of Implementation Activities

The following have been identified as some of the key areas for implementation of the Strategy. More specific implementation achievables are organized by general category of task. A cross reference, designating the location in the Strategy document where these are described in more detail is provided. In addition, the Lead Responsibility for each is identified. Leads include the Downtown Renaissance Partnership (DRP), Downtown Action Alliance (DAA), City of Janesville (City), and Forward Janesville (FJ).

| Category of Task                                       | Specific Implementation Achievables  | Reference Page Number | Lead Responsibility          |
|--|--|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Key Site Redevelopment</b>                          |  |                       |                              |
|  | North Main Transition Area   | 33, Map 4             | DRP                          |
|  | West Milwaukee Street riverfront parking lot   | 38, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | Chase Bank block   | 38, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | North Side of 300 Block of West Milwaukee  | 38, Map 5, 102        | DRP                          |
|  | Five-Points Neighborhood Commercial  | 38, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | Both sides of Dodge Street west of River   | 38, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | Old Jail Site east of River  | 39, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | All 4 corners of Main and Racine Streets   | 39, Map 5             | DRP                          |
|  | City parking lot south of transfer station   | 39, Map 5             | DRP                          |
| <b>Key Building Reuse Projects</b>                     |  |                       |                              |
|  | Jackson Street Residential / Office  | 33, Map 4             | DRP                          |
|  | Schlueters at Main and Centerway   | 38, Map 5, 116        | DRP                          |
|  | Old YMCA on Milwaukee St.  | 38, Map 5, 116        | DRP                          |
|  | Monterey Hotel   | 38, Map 5, 116        | DRP                          |
|  | American Farm Enterprises on River St. and adjacent property   | 39, Map 5, 116        | DRP                          |
|  | South Main Street  | 39, Map 5             | DRP                          |
| <b>Transportation and Traffic Circulation Projects</b> |  |                       |                              |
|  | Convert Jackson and Franklin two-way between Centerway and hospital area   | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Connect Centerway to Parker just south of the rail trestle   | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Return Milwaukee and Court Street to two-way with on-street parking  | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Reconfigure Five-Points intersection with grade separation   | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Get truck traffic off of Main Street and other Downtown Circulation Routes   | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Improve Jackson and Rockport intersection  | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
|  | Redesign River Street into a "parkway"   | 24, Map 6, Map 8      | City                         |
|  | Consider alternative alignments for Jackson Street bridge  | 40, Map 6             | City                         |
| <b>Address Parking Issues</b>                          |  |                       |                              |
|  | Work with WisDNR to attain grant for funds for removal of Parking Plaza  | 38, 95 Map 5, Map 10  | City                         |
|  | Remove parking plaza   | 38, 95 Maps 5, Map 10 | City, DRP, DAA               |
|  | Develop parking structures as recommended on Map 10  | 95, Map 10            | City                         |
|  | Incorporate public parking into redevelopment projects at Chase Bank site and West Milwaukee Parking lot site                                      | 38                    | DRP, City                    |
|  | Develop additional Uptown parking to support High Street entertainment district  | 38                    | DRP, City                    |
|  | Incorporate public parking into redevelopment at old Jail Site   | 39                    | DRP, City                    |
|  | Incorporate public parking into redevelopment of American Farm Enterprises and adjacent property on River St.                                      | 39, 118               | DRP, City                    |
| <b>Pedestrian Circulation</b>                          |  |                       |                              |
|  | Extend pedestrian connection from Traxler Park under Memorial Drive to access redevelopment site to north  | 40, Map 6             | City, DAA                    |
|  | Develop riverwalk along both east and west sides of River  | 74 - 76, Map 6, Map 8 | City, DAA                    |
|  | Pedestrian and aesthetic enhancements on Memorial, Centerway, Milwaukee, Court, and Racine Street bridges  | 74 - 76, Map 8        | DAA, City                    |
|  | Develop pedestrian bridges in location of existing parking plaza, and between River Street and Cultural District                                   | Map 6, Map 8          | City, DAA                    |
|  | Major streetscape improvements along Milwaukee Street, Main Street, River Street, High Street, Academy Street, Dodge Street, Jackson, and Franklin | 74 - 76, Map 8        | DAA, City                    |
|  | Acquire and develop missing link trail segments  | 74 - 76, Map 8        | City                         |
|  | Brand and develop portion of riverwalk as "Janesville Heritage Trail"  | 74 - 76, Map 8        | DAA, City                    |
| <b>Gateways and Wayfinding</b>                         |  |                       |                              |
|  | Install primary gateway features per recommendation of Map 9   | 86 - 94, Map 9        | City, DAA                    |
|  | Install wayfinding signage consistent with Map 9   | 86 - 94, Map 9        | City, DAA                    |
| <b>Façade Enhancement</b>                              |  |                       |                              |
|  | Encourage façade improvements along Main and Milwaukee Streets   | 74 - 76               | DAA                          |
|  | Improve and open up rear façades of buildings along the River  | 38                    | DAA                          |
|  | Open up both ends of Olde Towne Mall and re-brand as an arcade to provide more direct connection between Main and the riverfront                   | 38                    | DAA                          |
| <b>Art and Beautification</b>                          |  |                       |                              |
|  | Provide fountains or water sculptures in the River near the Library, planned park, and JPAC area   | 22                    | DAA                          |
|  | Continue promotion of existing and new arts and cultural opportunities in the City   | 23 - 24               | DAA                          |
|  | Provide strategic open space areas within the downtown, in combination with redevelopment projects   | 24 - 25               | DRP                          |
|  | Provide park and outdoor performance space between Library and JPAC  | 22 - 24               | City, DAA                    |
| <b>Site Development</b>                                |  |                       |                              |
|  | Develop Janesville Heritage and Children's Museum  | 22, 23, 118           | Janesville Museum Inc., City |
|  | Develop downtown Public Market and local / regional food strategy  | 25, 26, 118           | DAA                          |
| <b>Housing</b>   |  |                       |                              |
|  | Encourage new market rate housing development in the downtown  | 23, 101 - 116         | DRP                          |
|  | Work with employers to offer low-interest loans to employees who purchase homes in Janesville's historic neighborhoods.                            | 23                    | DRP, City                    |
| <b>Organizational</b>                                  |  |                       |                              |
|  | Establish Downtown Renaissance Partnership   | 44 - 48               | City, FJ                     |
|  | Establish / reformulate Downtown Action Alliance   | 44 - 48               | FJ, City                     |
|  | Establish downtown Business Improvement District   | 44 - 48               | DAA                          |
| <b>Business Retention</b>                              |  |                       |                              |
|  | Regularly survey business owners needs / issues  | 26, 65 - 70           | DAA                          |

## Implementation Action Plan

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Implementation of this *Strategy* will occur with focused effort on the part of all responsible parties. Although this *Strategy* contains a Vision for the City that will be achievable only after years of commitment to implementation, the short-term implementation steps are critical to establishing momentum, accomplishing projects with catalytic impact, and establishing downtown as a City-wide priority for both the public and private sectors.

Appendix I of this *Strategy* contains an Action Plan for 2007 – 2008. This Action Plan identifies priority action steps to be taken in the next eighteen months to achieve the longer term goals identified in the *Strategy*. This Action Plan is included as an appendix because it is intended to be a dynamic implementation tool that is revised at least once every six to nine months to reflect what has been accomplished and identify new priorities.





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# Appendix I: Implementation Action Plan

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