



Downtown Development Master Plan

City of Prairie du Chien

PREPARED BY:



Vandewalle & Associates  
Madison, Wisconsin

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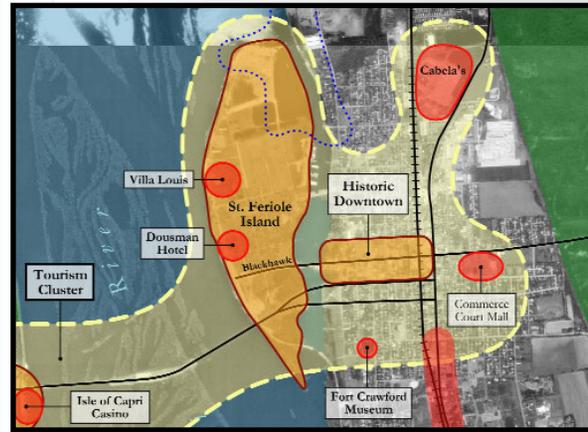
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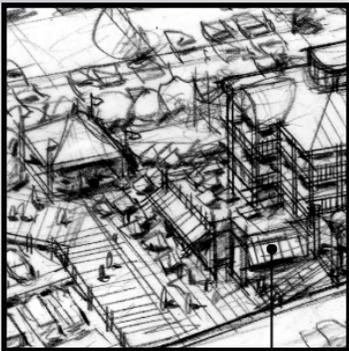
## Executive Summary

At the heart of the community of Prairie du Chien are its riverfront and downtown areas. The historic relationship of the downtown to the river is as important today as it was in the past. Currently, both of these assets are underutilized, but both have great potential to attract and accommodate visitors interested in outdoor recreation and history, while still serving as a retail and civic center to residents. The greatest economic potential for downtown Prairie du Chien is its position within a historical and natural resource rich area. Downtown Prairie du Chien's primary economic opportunity is to become a regional outdoor recreation and tourism destination, while maintaining its identity as the community service center that includes retail and housing geared toward local residents. Downtown Prairie du Chien's current role as a community service district will be expanded to that of a tourist destination and draw.



Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin and Marquette and McGregor, Iowa. The development of a Mississippi River Coalition could enable these communities to tap into resources for which they would not be eligible as an individual community.

**TOURISM CLUSTER AND RIVER COALITION:** Today a cluster of tourism-based activities exists between Prairie du Chien and the surrounding communities. All the communities, businesses, and cultural attractions could benefit from the development of a synergistic relationship between the communities and businesses of



**REDEVELOP RIVERFRONT:** The riverfront redevelopment will be the economic catalyst to greater downtown revitalization. The development of the River Roadhouse, a multi-use entertainment complex and Mississippi Outpost, provides an excellent opportunity to draw local residents and visitors to downtown Prairie du Chien.

**ENHANCE OUTDOOR RECREATION THEME AND BUSINESSES:** Located in Wisconsin's driftless region just north of the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, Prairie du Chien is rich in natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities. From hunting and fishing to boating and canoeing to hiking and wildlife viewing, this area has something to interest a diverse group of active and passive recreationists.



**ST. FERIOLE ISLAND AND DESTINATION ACTIVITIES:** The historical importance of St. Feriole Island should be celebrated. Significant investment and attention has and continues to be invested into the island. St. Feriole Island could become an enhanced visitor destination accessible not only by automobile but by boat, rail, bicycle, and foot.

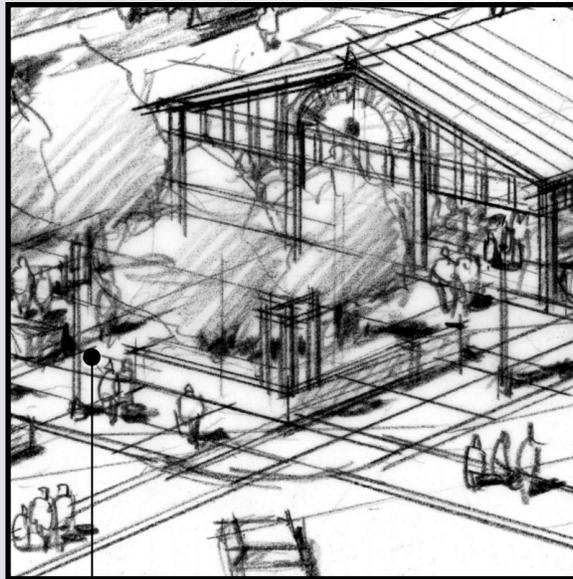
**TROLLEY LOOP AND EXCURSION RAIL:** The development of a trolley loop and the excursion rail network offer downtown Prairie du Chien a way to tap into intracluster tourism traffic by way of the rubber-tired trolley and intercluster tourism traffic via the excursion rail.



**ENHANCE STREETScape AND SIGNAGE:** Streetscaping and signage affect how a visitor perceives a community. Blackhawk Avenue streetscape should be enhanced and special attention should be paid to the Main Street and Marquette Road gateways.



**PAVILION:** With its outdoor space, this Prairie Dog Pavilion is envisioned as an urban activity and gathering space. This flexible “open air” facility could serve as a central location for tent sales, a farmer’s market, fishing tournament “weigh ins” and include a beer hall and restrooms for community and visitor activities.



**COMMERCE COURT:** Commerce Court Mall should be revitalized to serve as the center for community retail and services. As this is a prominent community site, the appearance of the mall should be enhanced by improving the building’s façade. Commerce Court will be linked to greater tourism by integrating the downtown trolley into this site.

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	7
Regional Economic Opportunities .....	8
Economic Opportunities .....	12
Preservation and Redevelopment Plan .....	16
Downtown Development Strategy .....	18
Implementation .....	31
Recommendation Summary .....	34

## FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b> Regional Economic Opportunities .....	9
<b>Figure 2</b> Tourism Cluster .....	13
<b>Figure 3</b> Trolley Loop .....	14
<b>Figure 4</b> Preservation & Redevelopment Plan .....	17
<b>Figure 5</b> Downtown Development Strategy .....	19
<b>Figure 6</b> Riverfront Redevelopment .....	22
<b>Figure 7</b> Prairie Dog Pavilion .....	24
<b>Figure 8</b> Streetscape/Signage Concept Plan .....	29
<b>Figure 9</b> Opportunity Analysis & Downtown Concept Plan .....	30
<b>Figure 10</b> Downtown Revitalization .....	31
<b>Figure 11</b> Project Management Team .....	31

# Introduction

Located along the Mississippi River on Wisconsin's western border, Prairie du Chien is a community steeped with a rich history from its Native American settlements to French and English explorers. Today, the Prairie du Chien area is known as the home of a diverse group of historic sites, natural resources, and outdoor recreational amenities.

“In our plan for the City of Prairie du Chien, we have reflected the City's concern for the protection of its great natural and historical heritage. The wise use of this heritage will provide the citizens of Prairie du Chien with a more livable place for themselves and future generation.”

— Philip Lewis, Jr., Ph.D., FASLA  
*City of Prairie du Chien Master Plan (1981)*



At the heart of the community of Prairie du Chien are its riverfront and downtown areas. The historic relationship of the downtown to the river is as important today as it was in the past. Currently both these assets are underutilized, but both have great potential within the City to attract and accommodate visitors interested in outdoor recreation and history, while still serving as a retail and civic center to residents.

The City of Prairie du Chien retained Vandewalle & Associates, a Madison-based community planning and design firm, to complete a Downtown Development Master Plan. Recommendations identified in this plan are based heavily on the due diligence and planning work completed by this firm while preparing the Opportunity Analysis and Downtown Concept Plan. This plan refines and expands on the opportunities outlined in the earlier document.

## PLANNING PROCESS

### *Steering Committee*

The City of Prairie du Chien appointed a project steering committee to guide Vandewalle & Associates throughout the planning process. The steering committee met at critical junctures in the process to provide input to planners on the scope and intent of the project, the community vision forum, the preliminary recommendations, and finally, on the draft plan.

### *Background Research*

Vandewalle & Associates reviewed a series of relevant planning documents, which included:

- City of Prairie du Chien Master Plan (1981)
- Historical Analysis and Inventory for Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin (1981)
- Opportunity Analysis and Downtown Concept Plan (2000) (See page 8 for a summary of this plan.)

### *Interviews*

On July 31, 2003, Vandewalle & Associates conducted six confidential interviews to learn what particular stakeholders and organizations felt were the opportunities or barriers to downtown and riverfront redevelopment and revitalization.

### *Community Vision Forum*

On July 31, 2003, the City hosted a community vision forum, which was attended by about 50 interested residents, business owners, and stakeholders. During the community vision forum, Vandewalle & Associates presented the

2000 Prairie du Chien Opportunity Analysis and Downtown Concept Plan. After the formal presentation, planners facilitated a series of exercises to gain an understanding as to how the community envisions the future of its downtown and riverfront. Planners were able to gather themes and ideas generated through the exercises and activities. (See Appendix 1: Community Participation Results for further detail.)

### *Presentation of Preliminary Recommendations*

On August 26, Vandewalle & Associates presented its preliminary downtown and riverfront recommendations to the project steering committee. At this time, the committee had the opportunity to comment on and suggest alterations to the recommendations.

## Regional Economic Opportunities (Figure 1)

Through regional analysis and conversations and meetings with the community, the greatest economic potential for downtown Prairie du Chien was determined to lay in its position within a historical and natural resource rich area. Downtown Prairie du Chien's primary economic opportunity is to become a regional outdoor recreation and tourism destination, while maintaining its identity as the community service center that includes retail and housing geared toward local residents. Currently, downtown Prairie du Chien's role is as a community service district; in the future it will transition into a regional tourist destination.

The following is a description of critical elements and opportunities that can impact downtown Prairie du Chien.

### *Circle City*

Prairie du Chien is located within what Dr. Philip Lewis, Jr., Ph.d., FASLA has described as the Circle City. The Circle City is defined as an urban constellation that includes the cities of Chicago, Minneapolis, Green Bay, and Milwaukee, and the Quad Cities region. With over 20 million people living within the region, it holds huge market potential.

### *Primary Tourism Market*

Prairie du Chien's primary tourism market is within a two-hour "daytrip" drive of the community. The area encompasses a population of approximately two million people and includes the metropolitan areas of Madison, Wisconsin; Galena, Illinois; Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and Waterloo, Iowa; and Rochester, Minnesota.

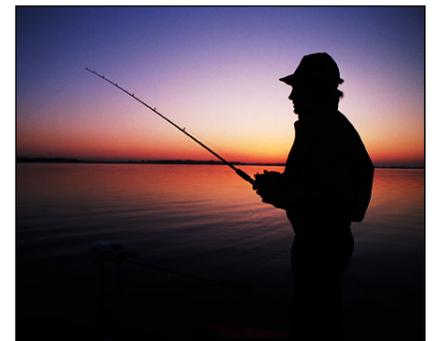
### *Community Service Market*

As the county seat of Crawford County and one of the larger cities in the area, Prairie du Chien serves as a retail and service center for a significant portion of the region. Its general service area is between a twenty to forty mile radius around the city and serves approximately 80,000 people.

### *Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Hub*

Located in Wisconsin's driftless region, just north of the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers, Prairie du Chien is rich in natural resources and outdoor recreation amenities. Outdoor enthusiasts travel to this corner of the state to recreate in the area's outstanding natural amenities. From hunting and fishing to boating and canoeing to hiking and wildlife viewing, this area has something to interest a diverse group of active and passive recreationists.

- State parks—Wisconsin's Wyalusing State Park and Iowa's Pike's Peak State Park and Yellow River Forest
- State Natural Areas—five of which are located in Crawford County



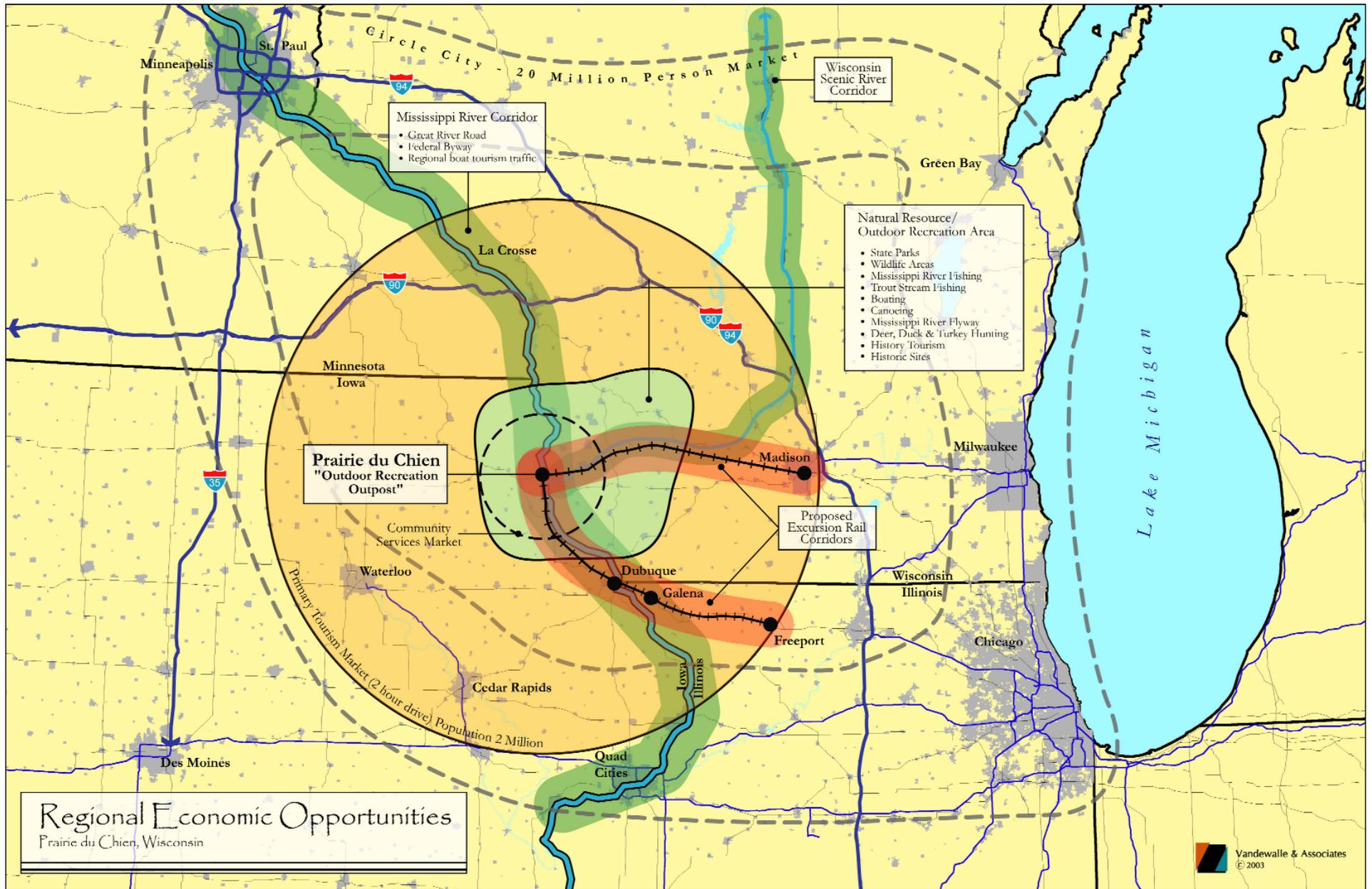
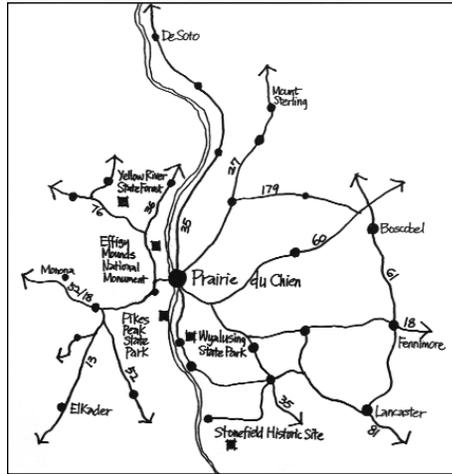


Figure 1

- National and state wildlife areas
- Mississippi Flyway
- Wisconsin River Scenic Corridor
- Bird and wildlife viewing
- Trout fishing in the driftless area
- Waterfowl hunting on the Mississippi River
- Deer and turkey hunting



#### GREAT RIVER ROAD

Spanning 250 miles along the Mississippi River from Prescott to Kieler, Wisconsin, the Great River Road National Scenic Byway provides access to a wide-variety of the region's archaeological and historic sites, cultural offerings, architecture, and biking and recreation areas. Visitors travel along this route to experience its scenic beauty first hand.

#### REGIONAL RECREATIONAL BOAT TRAVEL

Over the last several years, recreational boat traffic up and down the upper Mississippi River has increased. Prairie du Chien should tap into the economic potential by increasing boating facilities on both St. Feriole Island and the mainland shoreline.

#### *Cultural Resources*

As a Native American settlement and one of the oldest established communities in Wisconsin, significant cultural resources are found within the Prairie du Chien area. These include:

- Effigy Mounds National Monument
- Villa Louis Historic Site
- Downtown Prairie du Chien
- Downtown McGregor
- Fort Crawford Museum
- Old French Cemetery
- Military Cemetery
- Residential Areas

#### PROPOSED EXCURSION RAIL CORRIDORS

In the introduction of the City of Prairie du Chien Master Plan (1981), Dr. Philip Lewis, Jr. begins to describe the opportunity afforded through the development of excursion rail connections in Wisconsin's driftless area. Excursion rail, also known as heritage rail tourism, is a promising tourism strategy throughout the region. The rail line between Madison and Prairie du Chien offers an opportunity for the City to tap into the daytrip tourism market that excursion rail could provide. A second proposed route runs between Freeport, Illinois and Prairie du Chien. The city should promote this idea through discussions with other cities in the rail corridors as well as the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

## OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS AND DOWNTOWN CONCEPT PLAN

In 2000, the City of Prairie du Chien retained Vandewalle & Associates to complete an Opportunity Analysis and Downtown Concept Plan for the City. This plan identified that the City should capitalize on the power of the river corridor as well as its position in the heart of a noted outdoor recreation area.

Within the Downtown Concept Plan, the project area was broken down into five sub-planning areas for which possible redevelopment scenarios and themes were identified. The sub-planning areas included:

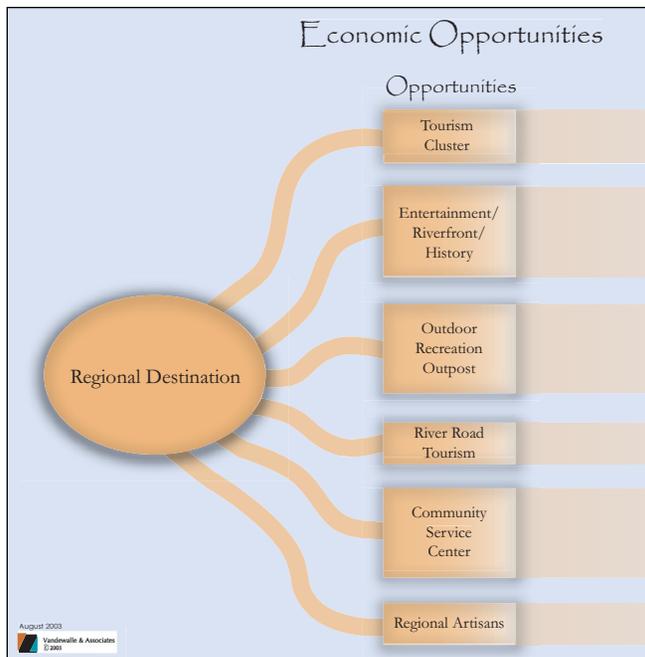
1. Downtown Gateway
2. Streetscape
3. Sports and Recreation Block
4. Visitor-oriented District
5. Blackhawk Avenue/Island

Additionally, the plan made specific recommendations for the Visitor-Oriented District, the Downtown Gateway, the Sports and Recreation Retail Block, the Crawford Hotel, and downtown streetscaping.

# Economic Opportunities

An important strategy for the revitalization of Downtown Prairie du Chien is to become a strong regional tourism destination. To become a stronger regional designation, the following economic opportunities should be actively explored. The economic opportunities described below are the foundation of the Downtown Development Strategy.

- Developing a distinct tourism cluster within the region
- Building on entertainment, the riverfront, and history
- Becoming a renowned outdoor recreation outpost
- Encouraging river road and Villa Louis visitor traffic to stop in downtown Prairie du Chien
- Enhancing Prairie du Chien’s position as a community service center
- Engaging a regional artist network



## TOURISM CLUSTER (FIGURE 2)

Today a cluster of tourism-based activities exists that includes Prairie du Chien and the surrounding area. These activities include a diverse group of outdoor and cultural activities; The Port of Discovery, a co-marketing initiative between Crawford County, Wisconsin and Clayton County, Iowa, should be intensified to help further brand this region as a visitor destination. All the communities, businesses, and cultural attractions, including downtown Prairie du Chien, could benefit from the development of a more synergistic relationship between Prairie du Chien, and Marquette and McGregor, Iowa.

### *River Coalition*

A nonprofit river coalition should be formed between Prairie du Chien and the other neighboring Mississippi River communities. The purpose of this coalition would be to garner state and federal financial support as well as derive funding through other interested Mississippi River partners, such as the McKnight Foundation. The Prairie du Chien Foundation could be engaged to serve this role.

### *Prairie du Chien*

- **Historic Downtown:** Prairie du Chien’s historic downtown is located along Blackhawk Avenue between Marquette Road and Main Street. Historic buildings line the street and offer a great potential to attract niche retail and restaurants to the community.
- **Cabela’s:** A 40,000-square foot Cabela’s retail store, a full-service outdoor outfitter, is located approximately two miles north of downtown Prairie du Chien on Highway 35. Built in 1998, it was an addition to the 600,000-square foot distribution center the company located in the city in 1996. As one of only nine Cabela’s in the country, the retail store is a huge draw to Prairie du Chien.
- **Commerce Court Mall:** Commerce Court Mall is the community service center, which includes a hardware store, a bank, and other community service-oriented businesses. As the shopping area is in close proximity to the riverfront and downtown, it provides a convenient location for visitors to stop in for supplies or necessities.

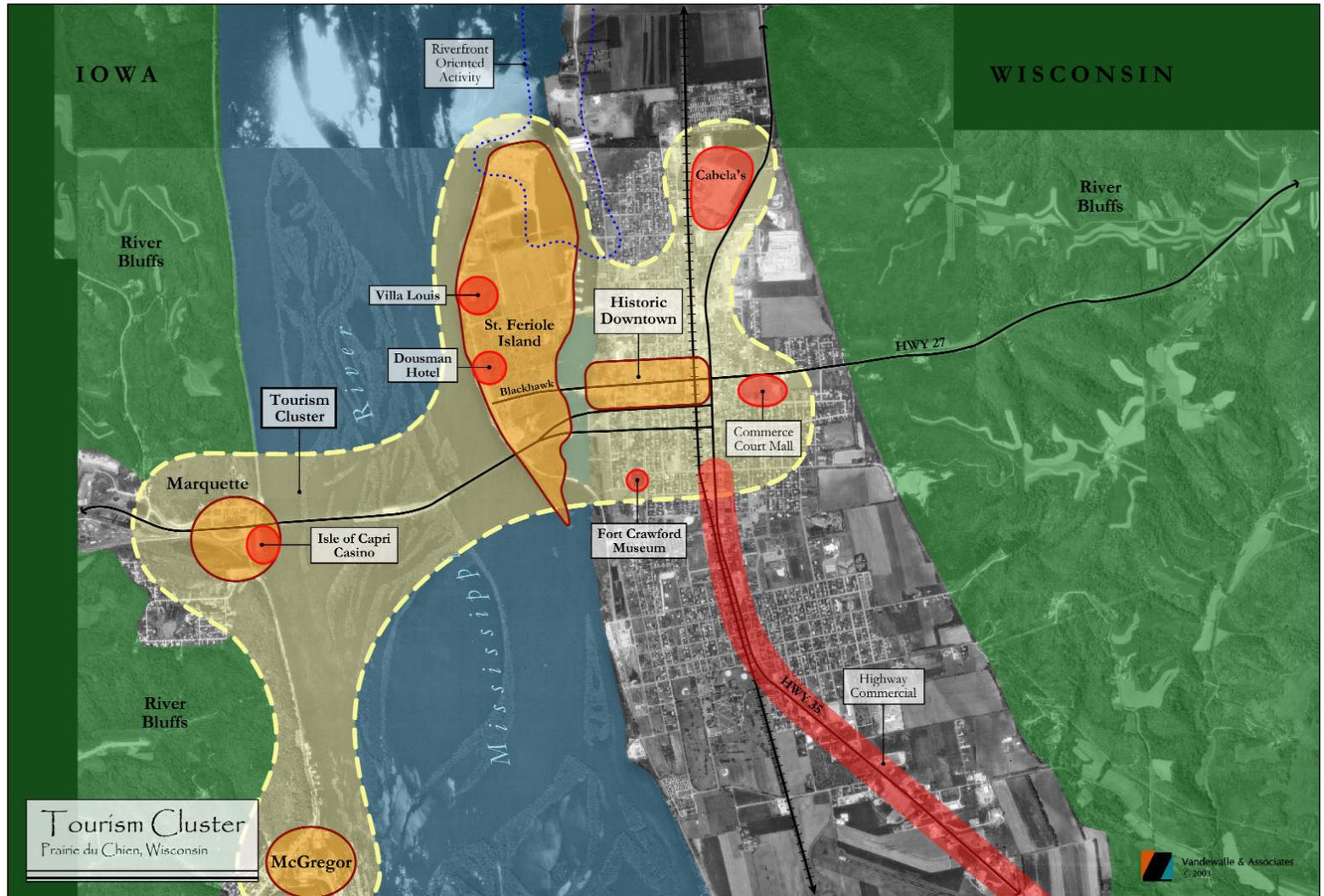
*St. Feriole Island*

- Villa Louis: Constructed by the Dousman family in the 1870s, the family donated the home to the State Historical Society in 1952. With renovations just completed by the State Historical Society, the Villa Louis, complete with its original furnishing, has been returned to its 1890s luster. The former home serves as a museum, and tours are offered between May and October. The Villa Louis has been designated a National Historic Landmark, which is the highest status Congress can confer on a historic structure.

- Dousman Hotel: Listed on the National Historic Landmark, the Dousman Hotel, or Railway House, was once touted as the premier hotel on the Upper Mississippi. Since its construction, it has served as a hotel, a meat packing plant, and a warehouse. Renovations are currently taking place at the hotel to return it to its past glory.

*Marquette, Iowa*

Isle of Capri Casino: Located approximately two miles from downtown Prairie du Chien, the Isle of Capri Casino attracts thousands of people to the area each year.



**Figure 2**

*McGregor, Iowa*

Only four miles from Prairie du Chien is McGregor, Iowa. With its unique small town character, this river community’s restored downtown has become a year-round tourism destination.

### *Trolley Loop (Figure 3)*

The Isle of Capri Casino, which is located on the Iowa side of the river, draws thousands of people each year. Prairie du Chien and the surrounding communities should tap into this activity by creating a rubber-tired trolley loop. The trolley loop is conceptualized as a way to bring people recreating at the casino to downtown Prairie du Chien. While in the downtown, visitors would have the opportunity to shop, eat, and drink at the unique, local stores, restaurants, and pubs. The basic program would include a rubber-tired trolley that runs between downtown Prairie du Chien and the casino, including runs to St. Feriole Island and neighboring communities, such as McGregor. Frequent stops will be made at the intersection streets of Blackhawk Street to encourage riders to explore the City's "Main Street."

To implement this program, the City should:

- Work with the Isle of Capri Casino and other communities to develop trolley operations
- Investigate potential funding through both the Iowa and Wisconsin Department of Transportation grant programs or through discretionary funding for this alternative form of bi-state transportation
- Estimated cost of one new trolley is between \$260,000 and \$300,000, not including operations or maintenance



**Figure 3**

## ENTERTAINMENT, RIVERFRONT, AND HISTORY

Downtown Prairie du Chien has an excellent opportunity to create economic synergies between entertainment, the riverfront, and history. Each of these on their own provide energy and excitement to a community or area. By integrating these three ideas into a comprehensive strategy, Prairie du Chien can become the regional nexus to partake in activities such as listening to live music, experiencing the Mississippi River, or learning about early American exploration.

## OUTDOOR RECREATION OUTPOST

As a known center for outdoor recreation, Prairie du Chien has an opportunity to become an outdoor recreation outpost. As the recreation outpost, Prairie du Chien would be the trailhead for outdoor and cultural tourists traveling through the area. As the community's reputation as the regional trailhead increases, potential spin-off business catering to travelers would cluster in the riverfront and downtown area.

## RIVER ROAD TRAFFIC

Thousands of people travel up and down the Great River Road each year. Prairie du Chien has the opportunity to lure more of the travelers out of their cars to experience its riverfront and downtown. To accomplish this, the community should create a multi-use entertainment complex that provides the initial incentive for people to stop in Prairie du Chien. This facility will serve as the starting ground for these day travelers foray around Prairie du Chien's downtown and waterfront areas.



## COMMUNITY SERVICES CENTER

Downtown Prairie du Chien has the opportunity to serve the local residents' and tourists' day-to-day needs. By concentrating and increasing the number of community retail and service-related business in the downtown, the downtown could capture a greater amount of local and visitor traffic.

## REGIONAL ARTISANS

One particular niche market that could viably be recruited to downtown Prairie du Chien is local and regional art. A diverse group of local artists and artisans are located within the driftless region of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. With particular focus on artists within the Mississippi River corridor, a regional network of artists could be assembled and a local artist gallery or cooperative developed. An example of this type of retail store is the Artisan's Gallery in Paoli, Wisconsin, which is located in a renovated creamery. A group of local artists display and sell their works in this space.

## Preservation and Redevelopment Plan (Figure 4)

A visual analysis of the existing downtown building stock was conducted. This analysis led to the development of the Preservation and Redevelopment Plan, which illustrates the locational opportunities within the project area. In determining whether a building or site should be preserved or redeveloped planners and designers attempt to balance the value of a building with its associated opportunity. As is shown on the Preservation and Redevelopment Plan, the area with the highest concentration of significant historic, significant new, and architecturally contributing buildings is located along Blackhawk Avenue, between Main Street and Michigan Street. Priority and long-term redevelopment sites generally occur along the Main Street corridor and at the intersection of Blackhawk Avenue and Illinois Street.

### DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS

Buildings and properties within the downtown area were given a designation of significant historic, significant new, architecturally contributing, non-architecturally contributing, or renovation targets, based on their physical condition and the integrity of the historical or design context.

#### *Significant Historic*

Significant historic buildings include those identified as key buildings in historic preservation studies as well as through Vandewalle & Associates' visual analysis of existing conditions. To the extent possible, buildings designated as significant historic should be restored to state and federal historical standards. Pure renovation of historic buildings can be impossible due to the need to meet all City building code requirements. City ordinance and guidelines should be reviewed to ensure they promote historic renovation. Actual application to the National Register of Historic Places should be on a building-by-building basis. Historic tax credits have been used as an incentive in the past to help with the adaptive reuse and renovation of buildings and should continue to serve in that capacity.

#### *Significant New*

Significant new buildings are new investment within downtown Prairie du Chien within the last two decades that are viewed as part of the downtown's architectural character. These buildings are "modern" in terms of building code. It is understood that these buildings will be part of the lively downtown fabric for the next forty to fifty years, such as the new City Hall building.

#### *Architecturally Contributing*

The category architecturally contributing represents properties that are not necessarily significant historic or significant new, but are adjacent to, across the street from or in the view corridors of the aforementioned categories. In terms of architectural design standards, renovations and/or reuse of these properties should be in harmony with the buildings around them.

#### *Non-architecturally Contributing*

Buildings designated non-architecturally contributing may be solid buildings that neither contribute to nor detract from the upcoming phase of redevelopment.

#### *Renovation Target*

Renovation targets are buildings that have been identified as those that are the most important for immediate renovation and adaptive reuse. Most likely, these buildings are currently underutilized and developers should be recruited to redevelop them. Through this analysis, renovation targets include the Fort Crawford Hotel and the old City Hall.

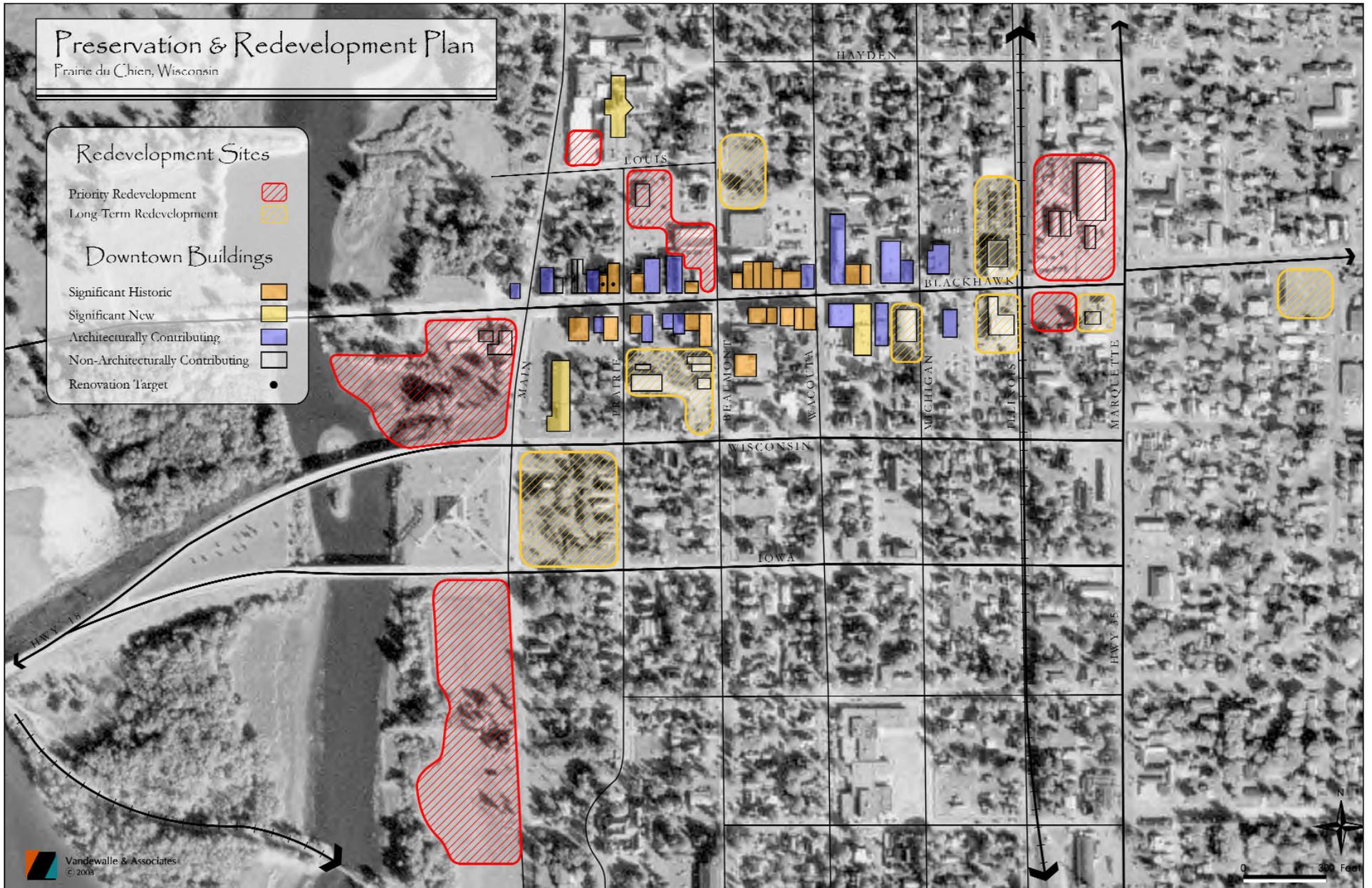


Figure 4

## REDEVELOPMENT SITES

### *Priority Redevelopment*

Six areas within the project area have been identified as primary redevelopment sites. The two largest sites are located on the western side of Main Street and overlook the riverfront. The intersection of Marquette Road and Blackhawk Avenue is the general location of two short-term redevelopment sites. The final two sites are located on Louis Street. (See Figure 4)

### *Long-term Redevelopment*

Eight long-term redevelopment sites are scattered throughout the riverfront and downtown area. The largest site is located on Main Street across from the Wisconsin Travel Information Center, while five of the sites front Blackhawk Avenue. (See Figure 4)

## Downtown Development Strategy (Figure 5)

The project area was subdivided into five planning districts based on their role within the economic and land use context of Prairie du Chien. The planning districts include:

- St. Feriole Island District
- Riverfront Entertainment/Hospitality District
- Tourism Retail District
- Retail Commercial Services District
- Community Retail/Services District

Downtown Development Strategy describes the vision and recommendations on a district-by-district basis to help provide the reader with the distinct flavor of each district.

### **ST. FERIOLE ISLAND DISTRICT**

The historical importance of the St. Feriole Island should be celebrated. Significant investment and attention has and continues to be placed on the island. St. Feriole Island could become a multifaceted visitor destination accessible not only by automobile but by boat, rail, bicycle, and foot. Expansion of the island's marina would facilitate a greater number of boat travelers to overnight at the island and utilize the downtown businesses. In addition to pass through traffic, some of the new marina space would be used for seasonal boat moorings, which would bring more activity to the downtown area. As described earlier, excursion rail is a blossoming regional tourism opportunity. The existing rail line crosses to the island. Finally, a waterfront pedestrian and bicycle trail system should be created to link the island to the mainland.



Figure 5

Providing historical lodging on the island could increase visitorship to downtown Prairie du Chien. The renovation of the hotel provides an excellent opportunity to develop a partnership between it and the Villa Louis. Those who want to extend this experience would then be able to overnight in riverfront rooms in the historic hotel. Once called the Railway House, the Dousman could truly return to its roots by providing food, beverage, and accommodations to those who travel to Prairie du Chien via rail on an excursion rail trip.

Improvements to the island would not only benefit visitors but local residents alike. A community gathering space or festival grounds park could be developed on the island. Not only would this provide a space for special events, but would bring the community members into the downtown, possibly increasing the demands for services.

### *Recommendations*

#### **ENHANCE TOURISM AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES ON ST. FERIOLE ISLAND ❶:**

Additional recreational opportunities should be located on St. Feriole Island by providing more activity space, which could serve as a community outdoor gathering space and festival grounds and/or a public camping facility.

**REHABILITATE THE DOUSMAN HOTEL ❷:** The restoration of the Dousman Hotel should be completed. This hotel's rehabilitation will compliment the renovation work at the Villa Louis, recreating the experience of the historic riverfront.

**CREATE AN EXCURSION RAIL STOP ❸:** An excursion rail stop should be developed on the island to serve as an “end of the line” stop for both the Madison to Prairie du Chien Outdoor Recreation Train and the Freeport-Galena-Dubuque-Prairie du Chien Historic Town Train. The existing rail depot would serve as an excellent boarding area. In order to implement an excursion rail program, partnerships must be formed between the participant communities, the railroad track owners, local tourism promotion organizations, and the local rail enthusiasts.

**EXPAND THE MARINA ❹:** The existing marina should be expanded to serve the local community and increase the City's ability to capture more visitor river traffic. As additional activities are added to the riverfront, the marina should have a relationship to future surrounding recreational activities.

**UPDATE THE ST. FERIOLE ISLAND MASTER PLAN:** The St. Feriole Island Master Plan should be updated to incorporate newly identified opportunities.

## RIVERFRONT ENTERTAINMENT AND HOSPITALITY DISTRICT

The Riverfront Entertainment and Hospitality Districts offers Prairie du Chien the greatest economic expansion potential in the riverfront and downtown area. Waterfront locations offer an exciting landscape in which to site new buildings. New riverfront buildings would be designed to take advantage of the riverfront views as well as help integrate this new development into the visual context of the historic downtown pattern.

Access to downtown Prairie du Chien could benefit from improved access to Mississippi River boat traffic. Improvements that should occur include dredging the slough and modifications to the railroad bridge supports. Fill taken from the slough could be used for the WISDOT bypass project and to raise riverfront sites. A riverwalk would be created to create a pedestrian-friendly link between the island, the new riverfront development, and the downtown.

### *Great River Roadhouse (Figure 6)*

The Great River house is envisioned as an exciting multi-faceted entertainment complex that draws visitors from the Great River Road into downtown Prairie du Chien. The Great River Roadhouse will contain a wide-variety of spaces including a roadhouse restaurant/diner that includes outdoor seating, river-view lodging, and a banquet space to hold special events such as weddings. A music venue would be included within the roadhouse that focused on presenting programs of regional music.

### *Mississippi Outpost (Figure 6)*

The Mississippi Outpost is conceptualized as a one-stop outdoor recreation center—from this locale, visitors can find a fishing or hunting guide, map a hiking course, or find a camp site or hotel. Additionally, the outpost would be the traveler's first source of information on activities occurring in the region. At this location, travelers would be introduced to the history and resources of the region through interpretive displays within the facility.

The outpost is intended to capitalize on the exceptional diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities and the existing regional market base created and

enhanced by Cabela's, Starks, and Sports World. Working in coordination with state and federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, established retailers including Cabela's, Starks, and Sports World, and local organizations including the Prairie du Chien Chamber of Commerce, a network of guides and services should be established. It is anticipated that the outpost would be privately run.

### *Recommendations*

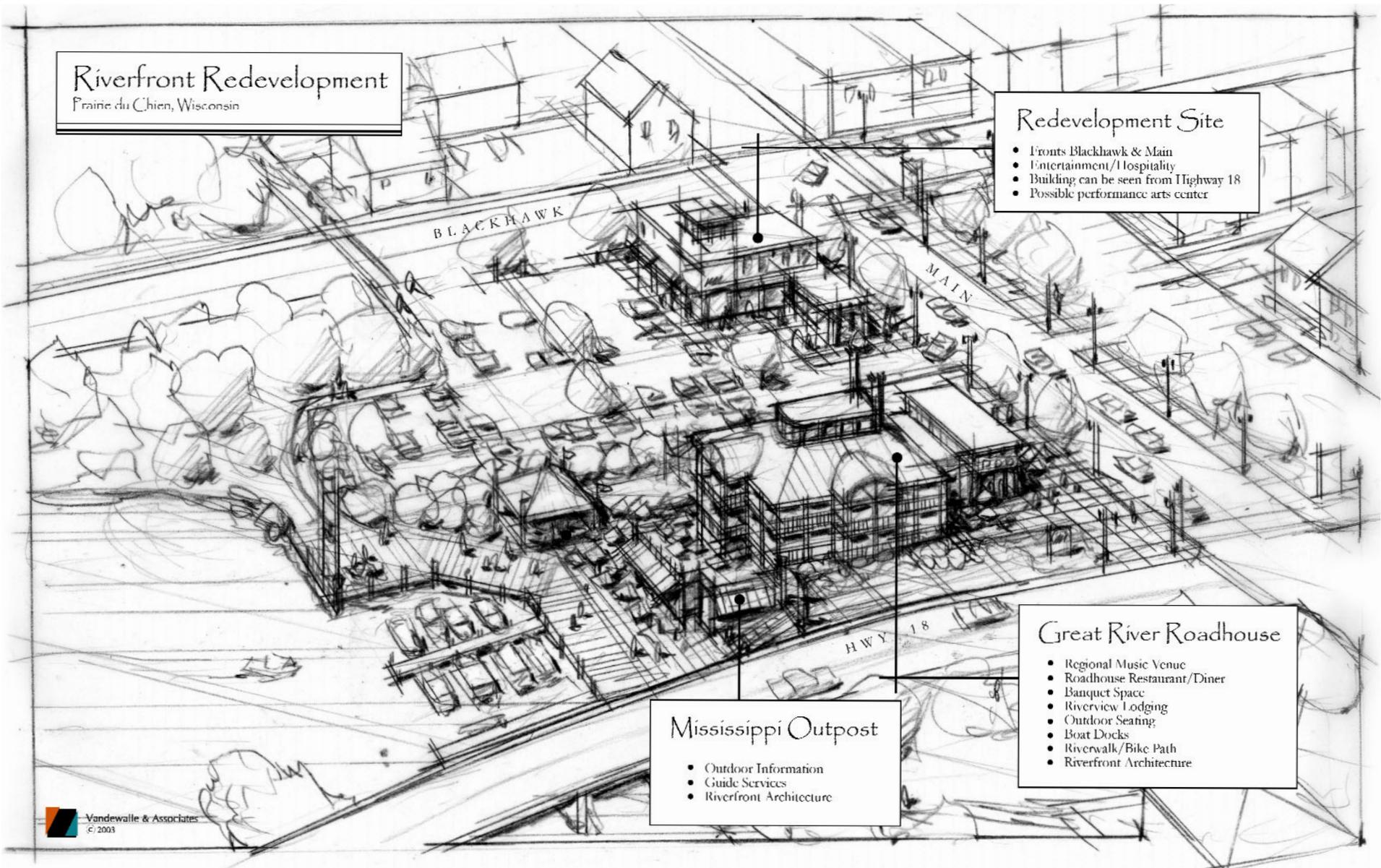
**DEVELOP A RIVERFRONT BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PATH ⑤:** To provide greater access to the waterfront, a riverfront bicycle and pedestrian path should be created. This would provide a safe pedestrian and bicycle route between island, downtown, and Mississippi Outpost activities. A public-private partnership should be developed to finance the path by seeking state transportation enhancement funding. The riverfront trail should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which is underway.

**DREDGE THE MARAIS DE SAINT ST. FERIOLE (SLOUGH) ⑥:** The slough should be dredged to allow boats to dock at Mississippi Outpost and downtown area, allowing water activities to be brought downtown. Additionally this would provide cleaner water for water-based recreation. Dredge material could be used to raise redevelopment sites out of the floodplain as well or provided needed fill for the highway bypass.

**MODIFY THE RAILROAD BRIDGE ⑦:** The railroad bridge supports should be modified to enable boats to enter the slough. The City will need to work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

**REDEVELOP KEY RIVERFRONT SITE ⑧:** Redevelopment of key riverfront sites will help to open the downtown to the riverfront. Concepts for these sites include the Mississippi Outpost, Great River Roadhouse and potential performance arts center.

- Create a redevelopment partnership to assemble properties
- Work with the federal agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to obtain funding for the Mississippi Outpost



Riverfront Redevelopment  
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

- Redevelopment Site
- Fronts Blackhawk & Main
  - Entertainment/Hospitality
  - Building can be seen from Highway 18
  - Possible performance arts center

- Great River Roadhouse
- Regional Music Venue
  - Roadhouse Restaurant/Diner
  - Banquet Space
  - Riverview Lodging
  - Outdoor Seating
  - Boat Docks
  - Riverwalk/Bike Path
  - Riverfront Architecture

- Mississippi Outpost
- Outdoor Information
  - Guide Services
  - Riverfront Architecture

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Figure 6

- Work with Cabela’s to assist branding and marketing guide services
- The building is likely to be under a condominium ownership structure, thus breaking the scale of the project down into smaller financial segments. Local entrepreneurs can then share their talents, experience, and expertise in areas such as lodging, restaurants, or bar/roadhouse venue.
- Investigate riverfront site fill opportunities with regulatory agencies.

**IMPROVE THE MAIN STREET GATEWAY INTO THE DOWNTOWN 9:** Main Street serves as one of the primary entrance corridors into downtown Prairie du Chien, particularly for those entering the community from Iowa. Improvements should be made to this gateway to announce to visitors that they are entering the downtown. Prominent gateway features, such as an arch or a tower, could be incorporated into the design that reflects Prairie du Chien’s history. Directional signage should be included at the gateway that alerts visitors how to navigate to the various downtown and riverfront destinations.

**DEVELOP RIVERFRONT LODGING AND HOSPITALITY FACILITIES 10:** With river views, the U.S. Highway 18 Redevelopment Site could be a highly desirable hotel site. This site should be assembled and land banked until development of a hotel is market feasible. The new hotel facilities should complement the existing hotel, not compete. Other additional recreation and hospitality uses could be located on this site as well.

**ENCOURAGE RIVERFRONT RESIDENTIAL 11:** Within walking distance of the downtown and the St. Feriole Island amenities, riverfront condominiums should be encouraged on the southern half of the U.S. Highway 18 Redevelopment Site. Housing on this site would be a long-term implementation strategy. The site will need to be elevated out of the floodplain. Additional housing opportunities exist along the riverfront, north of Blackhawk Avenue

## TOURISM RETAIL DISTRICT

Concentration of activities is critical to the success of many tourism destinations. Within walking distance from the proposed Mississippi Outpost and Great River Roadhouse and the historical draws on St. Feriole Island, the three-block stretch along Blackhawk Avenue between Main Street and Wacouta could be the center point of tourism retail activity in Prairie du Chien. The buildings in this area are the core of the intact historic storefronts, which provide the unique sense of place that visitors find appealing. As tourism retail is about window shopping and leisurely milling from one store to another, it is very important that a continuous series of active storefronts are occupied. New businesses should first be recruited to the vacant first-floor retail space starting at Main Street. As these two blocks reach retail capacity, the energy should move east along Blackhawk Avenue.

In addition to retail, this district could also offer lodging. The Crawford Hotel should be rehabilitated to provide an interesting and unique place to stay overnight and dine.

### *The Prairie Dog Pavilion—a public gathering space (Figure 7)*

The Prairie Dog Pavilion will be a focal point of the Tourism Retail District. With its outdoor space, this development is envisioned as an urban activity space. The pavilion would provide such necessities as public restrooms and community recreational amenities. This new facility would be carefully designed to provide a flexible space for both community and visitor-oriented activities. Programming at the pavilion could include:

- “Tent” sales for local retailers
- A driftless region farmer’s market
- Outdoor arts and crafts vending
- Outdoor music
- Fish tournament “weigh-ins”

# Prairie Dog Pavilion

Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

## Pavilion

- "Tent" Sale
- Farmer's Market
- Outdoor Music Venue
- Beer Hall
- Downtown Restrooms
- Fish Weigh Ins

Knowlton House

## Open Space

- Shade
- Benches
- Gathering spot
- Downtown kiosk

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BEAUMONT

BLACKHAWK

TWP

Figure 7

The open space element of this project is intended to create an activity space—a central gathering place for visitors to become oriented to downtown Prairie du Chien. This area would provide a downtown kiosk, benches for people watching, and shade trees under which to relax. The design of the pavilion is important to its success, and also in creating another architecturally contributing building to the downtown.

### *Artisan Cluster*

One particular niche market that could be recruited to the Tourism Retail District is local and regional art. A diverse group of local artists and artisans are located within the driftless region of Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. A regional network of artists could be assembled and a local artist gallery or cooperative could be part of the mix of the Tourism Retail District. An example of this type of retail store is the Artisan's Gallery in Paoli, Wisconsin, which is located in a renovated creamery. A group of local artists display and sell their works in this space.

### *Downtown Housing*

To increase the twenty-four hour activity in downtown Prairie du Chien, infill housing should be integrated into the Tourism Retail District. Senior assisted living housing could be particularly well suited for this district due to its close proximity to the activity generated and the amenities created by the riverfront as well as its relationship to the community retail and service areas. Seniors would have the ability to take advantage of the walkability of the downtown area for most of their daily needs.

### *Recommendations*

**RECRUIT TOURISM RETAIL BUSINESSES 12:** Tourism-oriented businesses should be recruited and concentrated within these six blocks along Blackhawk Avenue, between Main Street and Wacouta Street, starting with the blocks closest to the river. Not only does this area have the most complete historic appearance, but is located within walking distance from the riverfront and St. Feriole Island and is in close proximity to established restaurants, taverns, and lodging.

**ENCOURAGE RESIDENTIAL INFILL 13:** Residential infill development should be encouraged within the tourism retail district. This amenity rich district, which includes proximity to Blackhawk Avenue retail and services as well as access to the riverfront, St. Feriole Island, and the proposed riverfront path, could be the location of a senior assisted living facility.

**REHABILITATE THE CRAWFORD HOTEL 14:** The Crawford Hotel should be rehabilitated to its original, historic condition. A visitor or tourism-oriented use should be located in this building.

**DEVELOP A MULTI-USE ACTIVITIES PAVILION 15:** The Prairie Dog Pavilion should be developed. This site would include both indoor and outdoor community and visitor gathering space. The city should work with the current property owners to develop the Pavilion area. A community fundraising effort should be conducted to help fund site and building improvements and create community ownership.

## **SERVICES DISTRICT**

**DEVELOP A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** The city should partner with the State Historical Society, owner of the Knowlton House. Storefronts in this district should be filled with retail stores and service providers frequented by the local community as well as by visitors. Restaurants, a coffee shop, and niche retail should be concentrated in this area. As tourism-retail strengthens in the Tourism Retail District, this area could act as a potential phase two for further tourism retail. As in the Tourism Retail District, uses should be concentrated block-by-block to create a cohesive, interesting downtown environment.

### *Blackhawk Avenue and Marquette Road—Redevelopment Opportunities*

As identified in the Preservation and Redevelopment Plan, a significant amount of redevelopment opportunity exists along Blackhawk Avenue west of Marquette Road. These blocks can be reintegrated as part of the downtown, providing additional two-story storefronts to enhance the overall aesthetic of the downtown.

### *Recommendations*

**RESTORE HISTORIC BUILDING FAÇADES 16:** An incentive program should be developed that provides assistance to building owners who restore their storefronts to original conditions. This program should encourage the removal of attached façades and internally illuminated signs. A façade improvement program should be developed that offers grants or low-interest loans to property owners to spur the enhancement of these façades.

**REDEVELOP THE BLACKHAWK AVENUE AND MARQUETTE ROAD SITES 17:**

Located at the intersection of Blackhawk Avenue and Illinois Street, these prominent redevelopment sites provide visitors a first impression of downtown Prairie du Chien. Redevelopment of these sites should focus on recruiting retail and/or a restaurant. Buildings constructed on these sites should be two-story, if possible, and representative of downtown, flat-roofed storefronts.

**ENHANCE THE BLACKHAWK AVENUE GATEWAY INTO THE DOWNTOWN 18:**

Blackhawk Avenue is the downtown's primary transportation spine. The Blackhawk Avenue gateway should announce to visitors that they have arrived at a unique destination. This gateway should be designed to compliment the Main Street gateway and integrate Prairie du Chien's historical character. The design should integrate a new downtown entry feature, decorative streetscaping, and wayfinding and welcome signage. The City should work with the Department of Transportation to implement aesthetic intersection improvements and to determine if state funding for these improvements is available.

## **COMMUNITY RETAIL/SERVICES DISTRICT**

The Community Retail/Services District should be the central location for residents to obtain necessary goods and services, such as groceries, household goods, or banking. A grocery store was once part of the business mix of this shopping center; unfortunately, this critical, goods-and-service provider has left the downtown. In general, grocery stores play an important role in downtown areas—they provide access to food and supplies within walking distance of the most concentrated areas of housing, and they also provide an important place of community social interaction.

### *Recommendations*

**REVITALIZE THE COMMERCE COURT MALL 19:** Commerce Court Mall should be revitalized to serve as the center for community retail and services. The community should work with the owner to recruit a grocery store to this site. As this is a prominent community site, the appearance of the mall should be enhanced by improving the building's façade. Commerce Court will be linked to the greater daytrip tourism economy by integrating the downtown trolley into this site.

# Economic Opportunities

## Opportunities

## Elements



Tourism Cluster

River Coalition  
Trolley Loop  
Joint Branding Marketing

Entertainment/  
Riverfront/  
History

Pavillion  
Excursion boat/tours/dinner boat  
Lodging  
History exhibits  
Visitor boat docking

Outdoor Recreation Outpost

Shuttles to other tourism areas  
Mississippi Outpost - guide service  
Restaurant  
Capitalize on Starks/Cabela's  
Explore other support businesses

River Road Tourism

Road House  
Theater/performing arts/dinner theater

Community Service Center

Daycare  
Beach  
Coffee house/bookstore  
Downtown greenspace  
Downtown ethnic restaurant

Regional Artisans

Driftless region - River focus  
Retail shops/cluster

## STREETSCAPE/SIGNAGE CONCEPT PLAN (FIGURE 8)

Streetscaping and signage affect how a visitor perceives a community. Streetscaping invites visitors to explore, while signage guides them to their general and specific destinations.

### *Beaumont & Prairie Streetscape*

The construction of the County Courthouse will bring new employees to the downtown area. These employees will want to walk to Blackhawk Avenue for commercial services and restaurants. For this reason, the following streetscape enhancements are proposed for both Beaumont Road and Prairie Street:

- Install pavers to improve sidewalk between Court House and Blackhawk
- Install pedestrian scale street lights
- Create safe pedestrian street crossings
- Improve parking lot by adding tree islands, planting trees, installing pedestrian scale lighting, repaving and restriping the parking surface

### *Gateway Streetscape Design Recommendations (Figure 9)*

Prairie du Chien contains two gateways that announce the location of the downtown. The Blackhawk Avenue/Marquette Road gateway serves those entering downtown from Wisconsin, while the Main Street/Iowa Street gateway serves those entering from Iowa. Figure 9 illustrates a possible Blackhawk/Marquette gateway. The following are gateway recommendations:

- Large downtown gateway monuments
- Install sidewalks and street trees
- Install street lights
- Building activity areas should be adjacent to the street
- Improve downtown location signage

### *Blackhawk Avenue Streetscape Design Recommendations*

Blackhawk Avenue is the center of downtown and its image is important to tourism and commercial success. The following streetscape enhancements are proposed for Blackhawk Avenue from Main Street to Commerce Court Mall:

- Install pedestrian-scale lighting
- Hang flower pots from light poles
- Replace shade trees with ornamental trees
- Cluster trees at public spaces
- Screen parking lots with trees and shrubs
- Remove upper-story signage
- Design signs to reflect business activity
- Illuminate signs externally
- Details of the proposed roundabout improvements on Marquette Road should be designed to improve pedestrian crossings of Highway 18. The design of these areas should be consistent with the enhancements of the entire downtown.

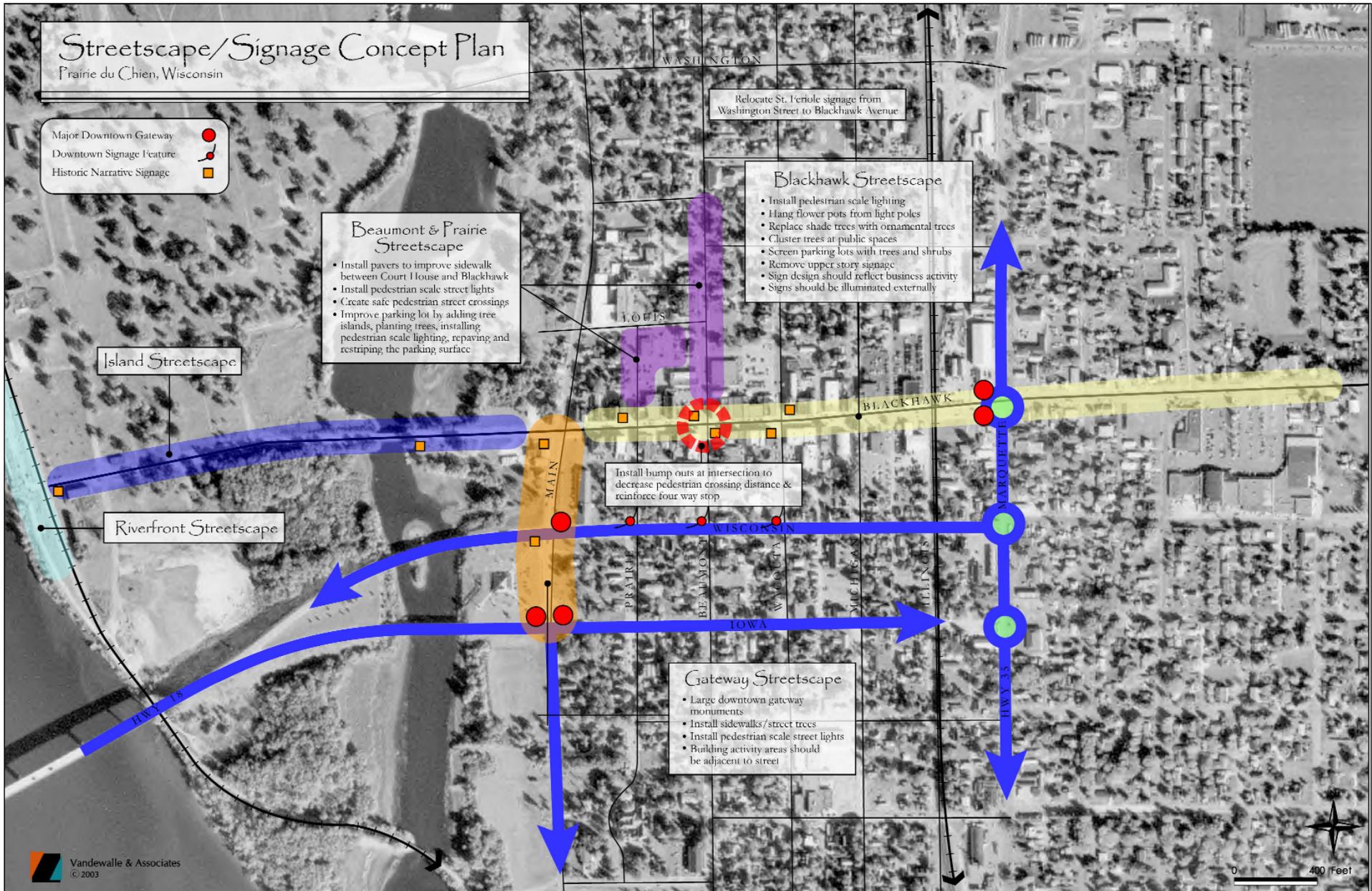
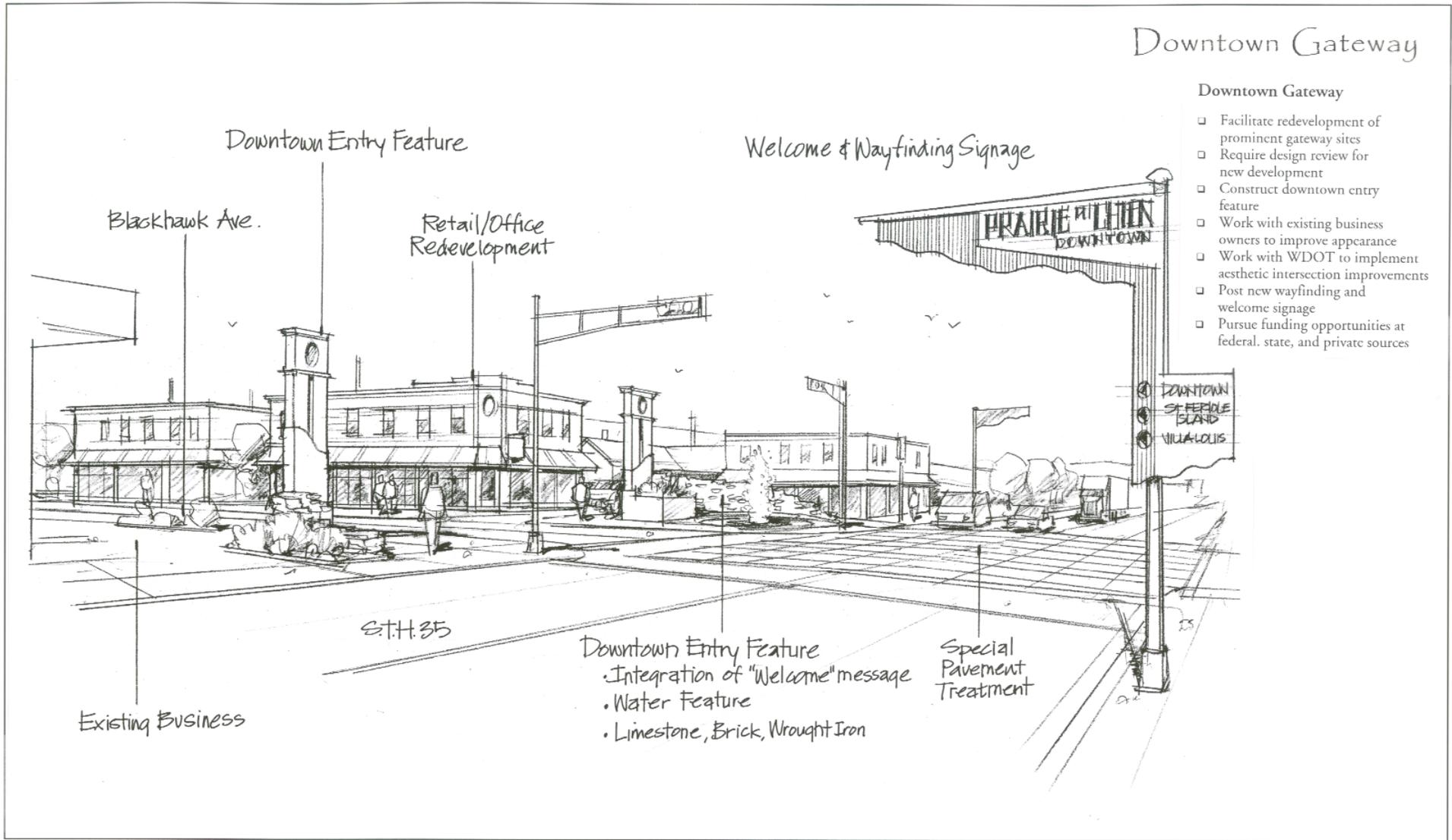


Figure 8

# Downtown Gateway

## Downtown Gateway

- Facilitate redevelopment of prominent gateway sites
- Require design review for new development
- Construct downtown entry feature
- Work with existing business owners to improve appearance
- Work with WDOT to implement aesthetic intersection improvements
- Post new wayfinding and welcome signage
- Pursue funding opportunities at federal, state, and private sources



- Downtown Entry Feature
- Integration of "Welcome" message
  - Water Feature
  - Limestone, Brick, Wrought Iron

Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin  
 Vandewalle & Associates - October 3, 2000

Opportunity Analysis & Downtown Concept Plan

Figure 9

# Implementation

A revitalization strategy should be a comprehensive strategy that includes planning, financing, and implementation components. Figure 10 describes the necessary elements of a comprehensive redevelopment strategy.

- Creation of the Downtown Development Master Plan to guide vision to and guide the downtown revitalization project. The City completed this step of the process in December 2003.
- Creation of a coherent implementation strategy to actively pursue and coordinate public and private redevelopment as well as economic development
- Creation of a redevelopment plan for the project area.
- Identification and creation of financing strategies, including tax increment financing, state and federal grant programs, special assessments, and private donations

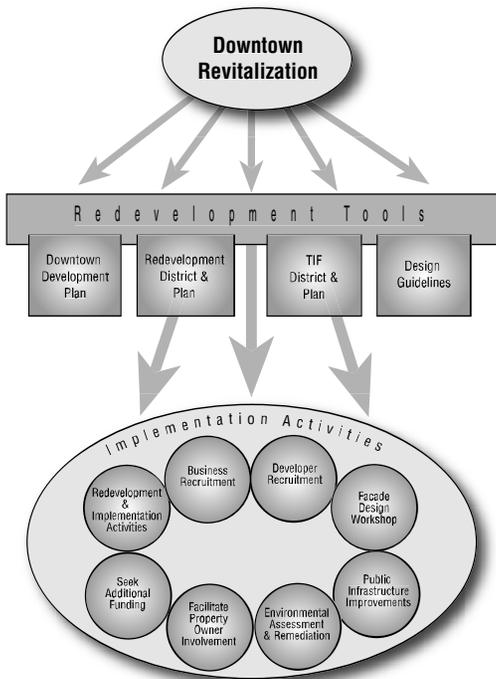


Figure 10

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY— THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

Having a well organized and coherent implementation structure is critical to implementing this plan. It should be noted that that downtown revitalization is, at times, difficult and complicated, and a cohesive and comprehensive implementation structure is needed to actively pursue and coordinate redevelopment activities. The Project Management Team approach depicted in Figure 11 allows for the needed flexibility due to the complex nature of the revitalization process. The Project Management Team is comprised of several separate entities, including the Project Implementation Team, the Redevelopment Authority, a business improvement district or downtown association, the City Plan Commission, and City Council.

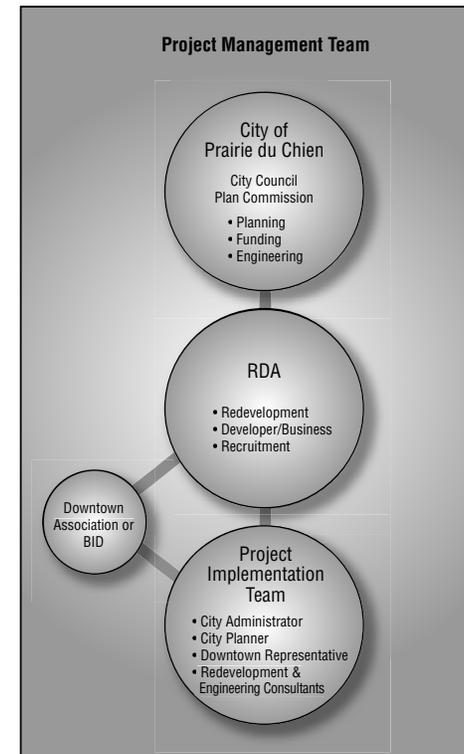


Figure 11

### *Project Implementation Team*

The City should create a Project Implementation Team to manage the day-to-day implementation of the downtown and riverfront revitalization project. Members of this team should include key city staff, such as the city administrator and city engineer, downtown stakeholders, and project consultants. Each of these groups can lend specialized expertise to the project. The overarching role of the Project Implementation Team is to coordinate all the implementation activities, such as identifying and prioritizing projects, managing the design of public improvements, coordinating with private developers, assisting with developer and business recruitment, analyzing project feasibility, determining and seeking other sources of financing.

### *Redevelopment Authority*

The City of Prairie du Chien has an established Redevelopment Authority (RDA), which should be integrated into the redevelopment process. The RDA has the power to purchase land, issue bonds, and create local funding programs (revolving loans, façade improvement, etc.), all of which will facilitate implementation of this plan.

### *Business Improvement District or Downtown Association*

Once the implementation process is underway, a Business Improvement District (BID) or Downtown Association could play an integral role in the revitalization process. Responsibilities of a BID or Downtown Association would include business recruitment and retention, marketing, promotion, special events, and providing the Project Implementation Team and RDA with input regarding redevelopment and public infrastructural need. When a downtown tax increment financing district becomes a viable funding option, the City should provide the BID or downtown association with funding from this source enable this group to actively participate in the redevelopment process. Until a TIF is created, a special assessment district could be developed to fund projects within the BID or a designated downtown district.

### *City of Prairie du Chien—City Council and Plan Commission*

The Project Implementation Team, the RDA, and the BID must maintain contact and work with the City Council and Plan Commission throughout the revitalization project. Without support and approval from these entities, the projects will not move forward.

## **FUNDING**

There are several funding opportunities that the City should explore to implement the Downtown Development Master Plan, including tax increment financing, special assessment districts, state and federal programs, and a private donation program.

### *Tax Increment Financing (TIF)*

The City of Prairie du Chien has reached the TIF capacity limits set by the State, and cannot create any new TIF districts for several years. As such, TIF is currently not a viable funding opportunity for downtown redevelopment. The City should determine a strategy that would enable them to close out existing TIF districts to expedite the creation of a new downtown TIF.

### *Special Assessment District*

Working with downtown and riverfront business and property owners, the City could establish a special assessment district to offset a portion of the infrastructure improvements within a designated downtown district. A special tax would be levied on properties within this district, and the generated revenue would be used to improve the designated area. Generally, if a BID has been established, the special assessment district falls within the BID boundaries.

### *State and Federal Programs*

There are numerous state and federal grants available for downtown revitalization projects. Some of these include, but are not limited to, to Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), historic tax credits, low interest loans, state and federal brownfield grant programs, transportation enhancement funding, and other programs administered by the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource, and Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

### *Private Donation Program*

Private donation programs allow the private sector to participate in funding some of the improvements through the purchasing of downtown and riverfront amenities, such as streetscape elements. The corporate community should be approached to assist with funding larger items. Pavilion enhancement should be funded by the private/corporate donation program.

# Recommendation Summary

## RECOMMENDATIONS

<i>Tourism Cluster</i>	
	Encourage co-marketing efforts with Marquette and McGregor
	Develop a tourist trolley loop between Prairie du Chien, Marquette, and McGregor
	Form a river coalition
<i>St. Feriole Island District</i>	
1	Enhance tourism and recreation activities on St. Feriole Island
2	Rehabilitate the Dousman Hotel
3	Create an excursion rail stop
4	Expand the marina
	Update the St. Feriole Island Master Plan
<i>Riverfront Entertainment and Hospitality District</i>	
5	Develop a riverfront bicycle and pedestrian path
6	Dredge the Marais de St. Feriole (Slough)
7	Modify the railroad bridge
8	Redevelop key riverfront site
9	Improve the Main Street Gateway into the downtown
10	Develop riverfront lodging and hospitality facilities
11	Encourage riverfront residential
<i>Tourism Retail District</i>	
12	Recruit tourism retail businesses
	Promote a local artisan hub

## RECOMMENDATIONS

13	Encourage residential infill
14	Rehabilitate the Crawford Hotel
15	Develop a multi-use activities pavilion (Prairie Dog Pavilion)
	Develop a partnership with the State Historical Society, owner of the Knowlton House
<i>Retail and Commercial Services District</i>	
16	Restore historic building facades
17	Redevelop the Blackhawk Avenue and Marquette Road sites
18	Enhance the Blackhawk Avenue gateway into the downtown
<i>Community Retail/Service District</i>	
19	Revitalize the Commerce Court Mall
<i>Streetscape/Signage</i>	
	Beaumont Street
	Gateway
	Blackhawk Avenue
<i>Implementation</i>	
	Create the Project Implementation Team
	Create a redevelopment plan
	Create a downtown/riverfront TIF (when possible)
	Seek state and federal grants
	Create a private donation program



