IMAGINE
A MASTER PLAN FOR OUR CENTER CITY
OSHKOSH

Existing Conditions Report

A Center City Reinvestment Strategy

Houseal Lavigne Associates | October 2016

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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Oshkosh's Center City is a collection of neighborhoods located in the historic core of Oshkosh. Anchored by Downtown Oshkosh, the Center City also extends into other neighboring districts and corridors, including waterfronts of the Fox River and Lake Winnebago.

By many accounts, the Center City is already very successful. A new scenic riverwalk snakes along the banks of the Fox River, with supporting new residential development that has sprouted up in recent years. Historic architecture envelops the pedestrian and communicates a distinctive sense of place, while locally-owned businesses line traditional corridors such as N. Main Street and Oregon Street. Thousands of employees work at a variety of institutions and private businesses. Within the very core of the Center City, the story is not of fixing something that is broken, but transforming it from "good to great."

Within neighboring areas, the challenges are different. The decline of the local lumber/furniture industry ("Sawdust City") have presented once-in-a-generation opportunities to reimagine the Center City, particularly along the formerly industrial South Shore where several prime sites are available for redevelopment. Surrounding residential neighborhoods have declined, with varying levels of disinvestment and blight. Additionally, stretches of the North and South Main Street corridor -- the entryways into Downtown that also function differently than Downtown -- appear tired and unattractive and need a new wave of investment.

At its core, *Imagine Oshkosh* marks the beginning of taking the many different pieces of the Center City collectively to the next level. How can we increase residential density? How can we leverage "once-in-a-generation" redevelopment opportunities such as Pioneer Island and the Jeld-Wen site for game-changing new investment? How can we promote investment that is unique to the character and function of each of the Center City's neighborhoods? How can we make the Center City a thriving employment hub for cutting-edge industries? How can we attract more people to live, shop, socialize, and entertain?

However, before mapping out answers to these long-term questions, it is critical to first understand where our Center City stands today. This Existing Conditions Report marks the halfway point of the *Imagine Oshkosh* planning process and provides a "State of the Center City" snapshot. Ultimately, the information found in this report will provide both a qualitative and quantitative foundation for developing policies and recommendations in the coming months.

Purpose of *Imagine Oshkosh*

In 2000, the City partnered with the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation and the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce to develop a Downtown Action Plan. This document provided the framework and agenda for a new wave of capital projects and private investment between 2000 and 2015. Some of the successful projects that originated out of the Downtown Action Plan and previous planning efforts included the creation of Opera House Square, construction of the Riverwalk and Leach Amphitheatre, and streetscaping along North Main Street. Oshkosh is not just a community that plans – it implements with shovels in the ground.

Imagine Oshkosh not only updates this previous planning effort, but also expands both its scope as well as geography. When completed, *Imagine Oshkosh* will be a long-term vision and comprehensive investment strategy for the entire Center City, directing growth, development, and infrastructure investment. In addition to guiding the City's elected/appointed officials and staff, it will also be a resource for businesses, not-for-profits, developers, and more.

Planning Process

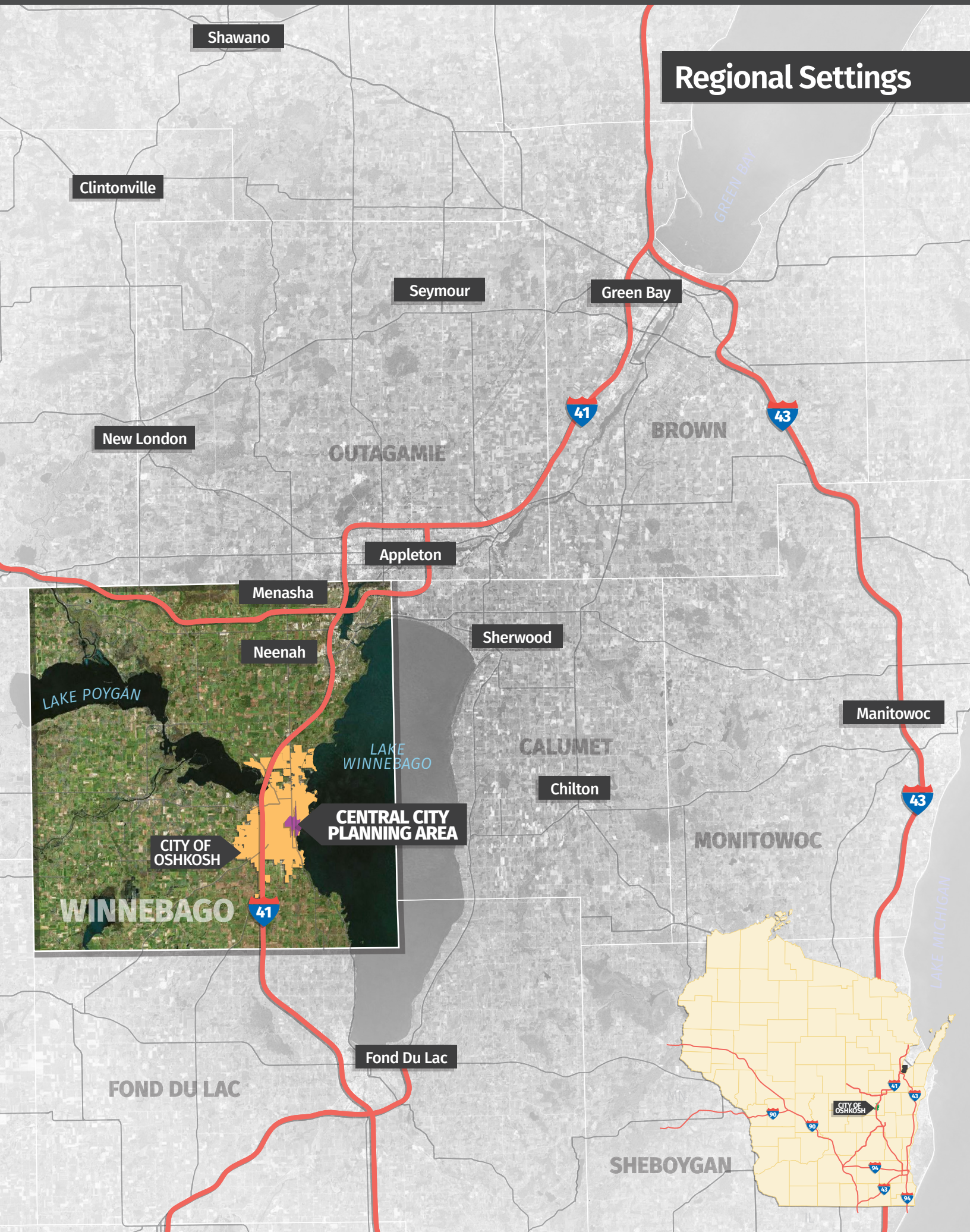
This document is an interim deliverable at the mid-point of an eight step planning process. This report summarizes the existing conditions in Oshkosh's Center City and serve as a foundation for recommendations that will be prepared later in the process.

- **Step 1:** Project Initiation (Complete)
- **Step 2:** Community Outreach (Ongoing)
- **Step 3:** Existing Conditions Analysis (Complete)
- **Step 4:** Market Analysis (Complete)
- **Step 5:** Vision, Goals, & Objectives (Forthcoming)
- **Step 6:** Framework Plans (Forthcoming)
- **Step 7:** Implementation Strategy (Forthcoming)
- **Step 8:** Final Report & Adoption (Forthcoming)

Organization of the Existing Conditions Report

The *Imagine Oshkosh* Existing Conditions Report is framed around seven core ideas:

- **Character & Sense of Place in the Center City**, which includes information on land use, urban design, development regulations, and historic preservation;
- **Living in the Center City**, which includes information on the center city residential population, housing stock, quality of life issues, and surrounding residential neighborhoods;
- **Working in the Center City**, which includes information on center city employment, regional economic issues, issues relating to owning and operating a business, opportunities to capitalize on the daytime population;
- **Developing Property in the Center City**, which includes information on the residential and commercial markets, catalyst site redevelopment opportunities, and financing tools;
- **Activating the Center City**, which includes information on improving recreation, activities, programming, and the waterfront;
- **Getting Around in the Center City**, which includes information on the road network, public transportation, bike infrastructure, sidewalks, and trails;
- **Partnering in the Center City**, which identifies the list of partners who will need to work together to help make the Center City an even better place to live, work, play, and invest.


Regional Settings
Shawano
Clintonville
Seymour
Green Bay
New London
OUTAGAMIE
BROWN
41
43
Appleton
Menasha
Neenah
Sherwood
LAKE POYGAN
LAKE WINNEBAGO
CALUMET
Manitowoc
Chilton
CENTRAL CITY PLANNING AREA
CITY OF OSHKOSH
MONITOWOC
WINNEBAGO
41
43
Fond Du Lac
FOND DU LAC
SHEBOYGAN
GREEN BAY
LAKE MICHIGAN
CITY OF OSHKOSH

Study Area

Oshkosh's Regional Setting

Oshkosh is located in the heart of Wisconsin's Fox River Valley, along the I-41 corridor and within the triangle of Green Bay, Madison, and Milwaukee. This region contains more than 775,000 people.

The City of Oshkosh is 24 square miles and home to 66,083 residents (as of the 2010 Census). It is a progressive community that offers small-town friendliness with big city features and a high quality of life. Money Magazine ranked it one of the "Top 100 Best Places to Live in the United States" and Business Week ranked it "The Best Place in Wisconsin to Raise Kids."

Some of the community's defining features include its recreationally-rich waterways and waterbodies (Lake Winnebago, Fox River, and Lake Butte des Morts), the presence of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, the annual EAA AirVenture Fly-In Convention which draws more than 500,000 people from 60+ countries, and nationally-ranked Farmers Market.

Center City Study Area

The Center City study area includes Oshkosh's downtown and historic core. The main spine of the study area is Main Street, which spans from New York Avenue on the north to 16th Avenue on the south. The study area extends as far west as Wisconsin Street and as far east as Bay Street. The boundaries of the study area were designed to focus on mixed-use, commercial, and employment districts within the heart of the city. Surrounding residential neighborhoods, while absolutely critical to the heath of the Center City, have their own unique set of investment challenges and are being addressed through separate but complementary neighborhood planning efforts. The Center City is essentially a quilt – a patchwork of different districts that are distinctive but also mutually supportive and reinforcing.

The study area is comprised of 1,036 parcels, 592.6 acres, and 0.92 square miles.

Why Our Center City Matters

Center City Oshkosh does not have a singular identity. It plays several significant roles within Oshkosh as well as the greater I-41/Fox Valley region. *Imagine Oshkosh* seeks to strengthen all of these components collectively.

Face of the Community

Oshkosh's Center City is the defining face of the community and its health and vitality shapes opinions of the entire community. When one thinks of Oshkosh, it is hard not to immediately picture the Oshkosh Farmers Market, the distinctive turret of 501 N. Main Street, popular eateries such as Carmel Crisp or The Roxy, or the bronze lions adorning the front steps of the Oshkosh Public Library.

Employment Hub

The Center City is also a job hub, with more than 5,000 employees showing up to work each day. From a small business selling mid-century furniture to growing tech/design firms such as 4Imprint and DealerSocket to a Mercury Marine testing facility, Oshkosh's Center City is a workplace for a variety of employees within different industries.

Civic Heart

Home to City Hall, the Winnebago County Courthouse, Oshkosh Public Library, and more, the Center City is also Oshkosh's center of governance. This draws residents to the Center City on a daily basis for everything from jury duty to checking out library books. The civic presence also acts as anchor, providing stability to the western end of the study area.

Shopping Options

While the retail center of the community has shifted over time towards I-41, the Center City still offers many locally-cherished mom-and-pop shopping destinations such as Kitz & Pfeil TrueValue, Oak's Candies, and the Paper Tiger bookstore. A variety of other businesses, from salons/barbershops to delis, support day-to-day living for both residents and employees.

Social Space

Oshkosh's Center City contains numerous public spaces, such as Opera House Square and the Riverwalk, that promote social interaction (both planned and spontaneous) between people from different walks of life and neighborhoods.

Cultural Center

From symphony concerts at the Grand Opera House to lectures at nearby University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, the Center City's cultural offerings are numerous and attract patrons from throughout the Fox Valley region and beyond.

Active Waterfront

The Fox River snakes through the heart of the Center City study area, connecting Lake Butte des Morts to Lake Winnebago. In the summer months, the river acts as a "boat highway" with boats speeding up-and-down the river as well as docking along the riverfront, grabbing dinner at waterfront restaurants such as Becket's, Dockside Tavern, or the Ground Round.

Entertainment Destination

The Center City is an entertainment district, with bars, restaurants, concert venues, theatres, and more. Whether it is attending an outdoor concert at the Leach Amphitheatre, bowling at T&O Lanes, viewing a retro film at the Time Community Theatre, or listening to live music at New Moon Café, the Center City has something entertaining to do for nearly everyone.

Community History

1853 Oshkosh incorporates as a City named after a Menominee Indian Chief, with a population of 2,500

1858 Railroad comes to Oshkosh

1861-1865 Civil War, nearly 1,000 Oshkosh men serve in the Union Army

1866 Oshkosh is the second largest city in Wisconsin behind Milwaukee

1868 Oshkosh Yacht Club organizes; Col. John Hicks starts the first daily newspaper north of Milwaukee

1870 Oshkosh becomes "Sawdust City" with ten sawmills producing over one million board feet of lumber per year; the City's population grows to 12,673

1871 State Teachers College (UW-Oshkosh) is founded

1878 Steam car "Oshkosh" wins greate reace from Madison to Green bay

1879 First telephone installed

1880 Population grows to 15,749

1882 YMCA opens

1883 Grand Opera House opens with the performance of "The Bohemian Girl"

1884 Electric lighting comes to Oshkosh

1885 Great cyclone strikes the city on July 8

1889 North (Menominee) and South Parks established

1890 Population grows to 22,836

1891 Sisters of Sorrowful Mother establish the first hospital in Oshkosh

1895 Oshkosh B'gosh is founded

1896 Raddatz Submarine tested successfully in the Fox River; electric street cars replace horse drawn carriages

1898 Woodworkers strike against seven mills

1900 Population grows to 28,284; most numerous immigrant group is German

1907 Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce is established

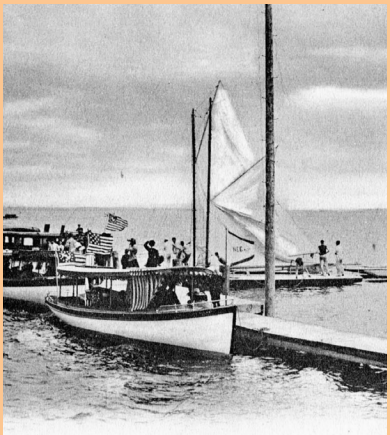
1910 Population grows to 33,000

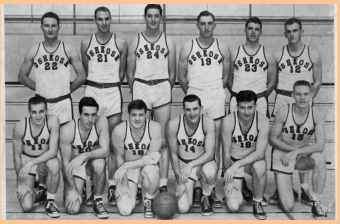
1912 Vocational School organized; later became Fox Valley Technical College

1917-1918 World War I claims 98 Oshkosh men

1920 Women's sufferage succeeds; Oshkosh suffragette Jessie Jack Hooper becomes a leader in the state and across the nation; population grows to 33,162

1853 — **1920**





1924
Edgar Sawyer Home becomes Oshosh Public Museum

1926
Chief Oshkosh is reburied in North Park which in his honor is renamed Menominee Park

1927
Privately owned commercial airport opens with mail service

1928
Oshkosh Area Community Foundation founded

1929
Stock Market crashed and Great Depression starts; Oshkosh loses 40% of manufacturing jobs; John D. Buckstaff's ice boat sets world record for speed at 124 mph and again in 1938 at 143 mph

1930
Last streetcar runs; population grows to 40,108

1930-1939
Great Depression hits lumber industry hard

1940
Population declnes slightly to 39,039

1941-1945
World War II takes servicemen away and claims 160 Oshkosh men

1953
Oshkosh celebrates its centennial

1957
Council-City Manager system replaces Mayor-Alderman system of governement

1964
Pioneer Inn begins construction

1966
The largest land annexation in Oshkosh history

1969
Airport is named Wittman Field after aviation pioneer Steve Wittman

1970
Population grows to 53,082; EAA brings Fly-In to Oshkosh; Park Plaza Mall opens in downtown on 18 acres

1980
Population declines slightly to 50,016

1986
Grand Opera House re-opens and presents "The Bohemian Girl"; Convention Center and Hotel are built in downtown

1990
Population grows to 55,006

1996
Railroad tracks removed from center of the city

2000
Mercy Medical Center opens new hospital west of I-41

2002
Opera House Square dedicated; Oshkosh YMCA opens on westside

2004
Leach Amphitheater opens

2008
Movie "Public Enemies" is filmed in Oshkosh

2009
Oshkosh Corp. secures record military contract; Oshkosh Convention Center reopens after renovations

2010
Population grows to 66,083; Grand Opera House reopens after renovations; Main Street reconstructed for first time since 1955

2015
Greater Oshkosh EDC founded

2016
Imagine Oshkosh is launched

1924 — **2016**

CHAPTER 2

Let's Talk . . .

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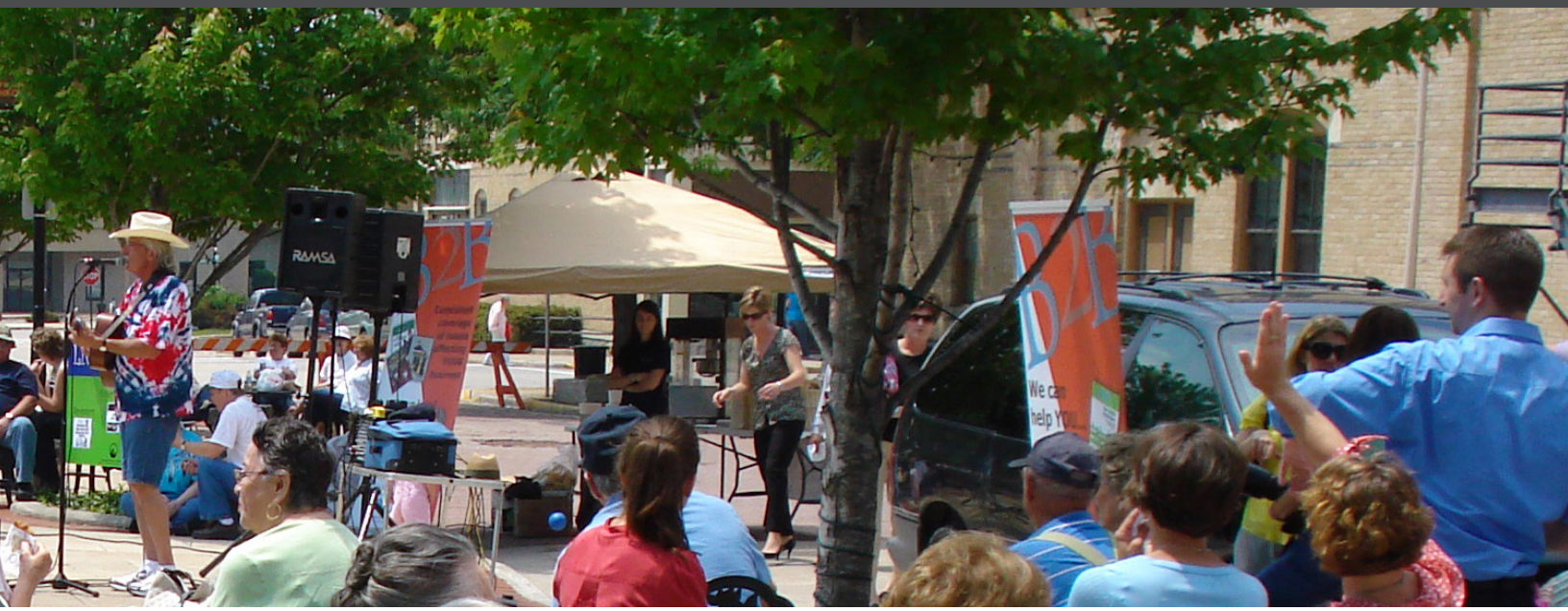
When completed, *Imagine Oshkosh* will be the result of a transparent and engaging process that actively sought input from numerous stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, property owners, service providers, elected and appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of ongoing outreach efforts, both in-person and on-line, have been used to gather the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of the community. This feedback and input has been critical in identifying the key issues and opportunities for the Existing Conditions Report that will serve as the foundation for *Imagine Oshkosh*.

Outreach will continue throughout the drafting and reviewing of *Imagine Oshkosh* in order to allow citizens an opportunity to shape recommendations and review interim documents as they are prepared. Ultimately, this will promote a sense of local stewardship for the plan and ensure that each resident has an opportunity to help shape the future of his or her community.

This section summarizes the community outreach efforts that have been completed thus far in the planning process. The following activities have been conducted:

- Elected & Appointed Officials Workshop (December 15, 2015)
- Stakeholder Interviews (December 15-17, 2015)
- Steering Committee Workshop (December 16, 2015)
- Community Workshop (February 15, 2016)
- Business Workshop (February 16, 2016)
- Project Website (January 2016 – Present)
- Resident Questionnaire (January 2016 – Present)
- Business Questionnaire (January 2016 – Present)
- sMap Mapping Tool (January 2016 – Present)

In addition to documenting "what people are saying now," this chapter also summarizes "what has been said before." This includes a collation and analysis of past plans and studies affecting Center City Oshkosh. The *Imagine Oshkosh* planning process recognizes the value of these prior planning efforts and will build upon them where applicable as a component of the community's new vision.



Top Issues / Challenges

Housing
Capture unmet housing demand through new condos, multi-family units, and townhomes.

Retail
Promote retail diversity and enhance the retail experience.

Cohesion
Improve the cohesion of different districts and ensure consistent and appropriate design.

Catalyst Redevelopment
Redevelop key catalyst sites such as Jeld Wen, Buckstaff, and Pioneer Island.

Access
Establish a direct artery from I-41.

River
Activate the riverfront with housing, activities, and finishing of the riverwalk.

Appearance
Clean up blight and protect historic character.

Brand
Improve the regional appeal and recognition of the Center City.

Top Assets

- Historic character and architectural variety
- Walkability
- Waterfront
- Entertainment venues, including Opera House and the Leach Amphitheatre
- Farmers Market
- Multitude of development opportunities
- University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
- Unique local shops and restaurants and the entrepreneurs who own them
- Employment levels
- Best Western Hotel & Oshkosh Convention Center
- YMCA
- Positive momentum

In-Person Outreach

Elected & Appointed Officials Workshop

On December 15, 2015 a kick-off workshop was held with the elected and appointed officials at City Hall to discuss issues and opportunities within Center City Oshkosh. Participants were members of City Council, Plan Commission, the Business Improvement District, or the Redevelopment Authority.

The workshop centered around three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns facing Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Oshkosh's Center City?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions recorded in response to these three questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues

The discussion began by asking officials to write down and then voice five issues or concerns that they believe are confronting Center City Oshkosh. While this question brought forth a wide variety of topics, many of these issues were interrelated and in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses are organized below into several common themes.

Improving the Retail Experience

Workshop participants expressed concern about retail within the Center City. The concern was multi-faceted and included a lack of retail diversity, a need for destination shopping, and concern that some existing tenants may not be desirable in the long-term. New tenants should be recruited that can increase the appearance and vibrancy of the district.

Parking

The location of parking and its usage by employees versus patrons were issues raised by Oshkosh's officials. While parking volume may be adequate, some felt that the location of the existing supply was not in the right places. Some also stated that prime parking is being used by employees, discouraging patrons from visiting the center city.

Cohesion of Areas

Oshkosh's Center City has many different areas and the "feel" of the Center City district changes as one moves throughout it. It was expressed that these areas should be more harmonious and that some areas should have unified design aesthetics. Even within the core downtown, it was expressed that some blocks lack a visual cohesiveness.

Underutilized Properties

The Center City study area contains several major underutilized properties, including the Jeld Wen site, Buckstaff site, Pioneer Inn site, and more. Oshkosh's officials would like to see a vision for these properties that can inject the Center City with new vitality and investment.

Need for a Direct Artery

Oshkosh's Center City does not currently have a "direct shot" connection to I-41, unlike some other downtowns within the region. This can make accessing the Center City circuitous and unclear for visitors. It was expressed that road realignments combined with signage could help increase access to the Center City area.

Top Project or Actions

Officials suggested a wide range of action items to improve Center City Oshkosh. Specific projects and actions provided by elected and appointed officials are listed below:

Transportation

- Repave and get rid of one-way streets
- Improve condition, design (no one-ways), and maintenance of streets
- Remove car traffic down Main Street in downtown business district
- Repair all connecting streets including N. Main to Murdock
- Change one-way traffic to two-way
- Fix all streets connecting to N. Main—make pedestrian friendly
- Transit center-complete-have everything in one place
- Close off traffic on 400-500 blocks of N. Main Street to only pedestrian traffic

Parking

- Build a leveled parking garage on one lot and open other lots to development
- Implement parking structures
- Build parking ramps
- Change the parking on Main Street to be more like West Bend
- Purchase bank on Washington for parking ramp
- Construct parking behind Main Street stores

Fox River Development

- River should drive development
- Add a corporate campus on the river
- New YMCA Relocation. Do not remodel existing site but relocate to river.
- Connect Riverwalk to downtown
- Create an office park campus bordered by Pioneer Drive/9th Avenue/S. Main with river access, amenities, and Pioneer Island connection

Quality of Development

- More high-quality development on the south side of the river
- Add high-end condominiums
- Demolish town motel, replace with townhomes
- Fix Pioneer Inn area

Identity & Aesthetics

- Identify community identity
- Merchants need to cooperate as a single entity
- Complete zoning/design standards
- Open more facades to the street and create a more open and inclusive culture allowing open alcohol beverages
- Create distinct downtown districts and brands: Uptown, Downtown, LoDo, etc.
- North/south mentality
- Establish trust and publically fund streetscaping and maintenance
- Restore/improve building facades and enhance the right of ways

Greenspace

- Public park or entertainment venue at the Buckstaff property
- Include mini-parks (greenspace) along riverfront
- Develop a new Buckstaff Park on Pioneer Island

Future Development

- Redevelop Pioneer Property— hotel/condo mix
- Redevelop Jeld-Wen site with mix of commercial and residential
- Enable private development of Pioneer and Buckstaff properties
- Convert underutilized or vacant properties to residential
- Find daytime place for warming shelter people that isn't Hardees or the like
- Purchase Pioneer Inn property for new hotel
- Trader Joes in Morton Pharmacy building (co-op)
- Develop mixed-use residential/commercial development on the former Morgan Property south of the river
- Build a big destination

Neighborhoods & Housing

- Stabilize housing
- Development/marketing of housing maintenance programs
- Add massive amounts of living units in full-range of costs/rents

Business Development & Downtown Revitalization

- Establishment of BID/business groups south of the river
- Incentivize retail vacancy with TIF
- Program evening and weekend activities such as events and add recreational entertainment uses

Primary Strengths & Assets

Finally, the officials were asked to identify Center City Oshkosh's major strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on the City's historic past and inventory of historic buildings, riverfront access, and the development opportunities available in the community. A full list of responses is provided below:

Historic Elements & Character

- Historical buildings
- Historic District and more areas under consideration for land-marking
- Architecture
- Some beautiful old buildings
- Rich history
- Historical quality
- Historic feel
- Fairly walkable
- Architecture
- Great historic neighborhoods

Natural Features

- Proximity to River
- Water
- Waterfront from I-41 Hwy to the lake
- Proximity to riverfront/lakes
- Riverfront: Riverwalk, best western, leach, convention center, golf course, marinas, restaurants, etc.
- Water proximity to Main/Leach Amphitheater/Pioneers

Movers & Shakers

- Good momentum with current revitalization since 2000
- The strong passion/loyalty of the community
- The people (BID board, Business owners, etc)

Current Development & Businesses

- Quantity of mixed use properties
- Good inventory of buildings of architectural importance (public and private homes and churches)
- Adjacent to large university
- Grand Opera House
- Fairly good building stock in central core
- Diversity of businesses – small unique retail
- UW- Oshkosh

Community Amenities

- Library and churches proximity to residents and downtown
- Farmers Market
- Cultural/recreational options densely clustered
- Great concentration of public services/buildings (library, city hall, opera house, etc.)
- Events—park in center of town

Opportunities

- Many development opportunities
- Ample developable sites/buildings
- Opportunities for new residential units
- Some destination businesses to build on

In-Person Outreach

Stakeholder Interviews

In order to get greater detail about important issues and more accurately assess "on the ground" conditions and potentials, the consultant team conducted confidential one-on-one interviews and roundtable discussions with more than two dozen individuals. Those interviewed possessed a wide range of perspectives and backgrounds, including small and large business owners, local experts, key service providers, institutional partners, developers, and more.

Each group of participants was asked a series of questions about Oshkosh's Center City, with interviews generally lasting about one hour. Their feedback, ideas, and information was invaluable in drafting the Existing Conditions Report.

In-Person Outreach

Steering Committee Workshop

On December 16, 2015 a kick-off workshop was held with the *Imagine Oshkosh* Steering Committee at City Hall to discuss issues and opportunities within the Oshkosh Center City. The workshop centered around three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns facing Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Oshkosh's Center City?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions recorded in response to these three questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues

The discussion began by asking Steering Committee members to write down and then voice five issues or concerns that they believe are confronting Oshkosh's Center City. While this question brought forth a wide variety of topics, many of these issues were interrelated and in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses are organized below into several common themes.
Decline of Surrounding Neighborhoods

Participants expressed concern about the stability of many of the single family residential areas surrounding the center city. It was stated that these neighborhoods are the gateways into the downtown and should also provide a consumer base for goods and services within the central city area. However, many experience blight, vacancy, and public safety challenges.

Unmet Housing Demand

The residential market in the center city is surging with the addition of new multi-family units. However, participants believe there is a gap in the market, with virtually no "high end" condominium product for professionals, empty nesters, and retirees. It was expressed that some of the vacant waterfront properties would be suitable locations for such development.

Key Redevelopment Sites

Center City Oshkosh contains a sizable acreage of redevelopment sites, including the Jeld-Wen site, Pioneer Inn site, Buckstaff site, and more. Steering Committee members would like to see this vacant acreage better utilized, generating new activity, increased density, and new tax revenue.

Inconsistent Design Aesthetic

The Center City area is a large geography and concern was expressed that it did not have a consistent design aesthetic. The historic character, streetwall, and streetscape can vary block by block. Participants suggested restoring the historic character of downtown buildings as well as establishing a uniform aesthetic that tied different areas together.

Top Project or Actions

Steering Committee members suggested a wide range of action items to improve Center City Oshkosh, but several ideas came up frequently. Some of the more popular responses included:

- Redeveloping vacant or blighted properties for uses such as mixed use development or condominiums and upscale housing.
- Improving the aesthetics of the downtown through updated design standards or renovated façade initiatives.
- Developing business relations by offering incentives to businesses for moving downtown and developing a marketing plan for the community.

Specific projects and actions provided by Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) members are listed below:

Business Development

- Offer incentives for businesses to move Downtown
- Work with various stakeholders to develop a comprehensive marketing plan
- Convince professional businesses to locate in Oshkosh
- Attract retail to meet needs of consumers
- Create a group to formally manage retail operations
- Develop ongoing mechanisms and coordinate downtown efforts

Aesthetics

- Façade rehab removing 1960s and 70s store fronts
- Work with all business owners to update all signage and building facades to historic standards for consistency
- Façade improvements program with strict standards

Redevelopment Opportunities

- Eliminate motel
- Purchase old residential areas and build new condos and single-family homes
- Boutique hotel at Pioneer Inn
- Redevelop Pioneer Inn site
- Pioneer Island redeveloped with a partial resort/tourism destination
- Buckstaff building should be demolished
- Bring in redevelopers to meet housing needs and lodging needs using blighted or vacant properties
- Clean out and level 2-3 blocks east of N Main Street
- Aggressive home buyer rehabilitation program with 5-year tax credit for near east
- Upscale housing project
- Clean out and level town motel block
- Condo/housing redevelopment on vacant property
- Rebuild the two bridges
- Relocate the housing authority from 500 block
- Add a mixed use complex
- Housing standards for multifamily housing in the downtown area that are more clear and directly applicable.

Transportation

- Redesign and improve downtown roads/streets
- Reconfigure public parking (perhaps with a strategic ramp)
- Better Road access to 41 via 9th Street—redesign and build

Riverwalk

- Finish entire Riverwalk

Primary Strengths & Assets

Lastly, Steering Committee members were asked to identify Center City Oshkosh's major strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on the various amenities available in the community such as the farmers market and the river walk. A full list of responses is provided below:

- Hotel/Convention Center
- Farmers Market
- Opera House
- Fox River
- Lake Winnebago
- Leach Amphitheatre
- Great dining options
- Events
- Riverwalk
- Employment base
- Development potential on the south side of the river
- Generous giving
- People who care
- Community desire for a great downtown
- Historic character
- University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

In-Person Outreach
Community Workshop

On February 15, 2016, a workshop was held with Oshkosh residents and stakeholders at the Oshkosh Convention Center to discuss issues and opportunities within the Oshkosh Center City. The workshop centered around three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns in Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Oshkosh's Center City?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions recorded in response to these three questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues

The workshop featured a guided group discussion where participants were asked to identify five key issues confronting Oshkosh's Center City. After reviewing the collective list of issues identified by the group, participants were then asked to rank their three issues. While numerous topics were discussed, several key themes emerged during the discussion, which were consolidated into the following central concepts.

Activating the Riverfront

Workshop participants would like the riverfront activated and redeveloped with a variety of new uses that can capitalize upon the waterfront's beauty and recreation opportunities. Particular emphasis was placed on the south shore of the water, such as the vacant Jeld Wen site. Residents noted the positive impact the Riverwalk has had on the waterfront, and would like to see it completed and complimented with additional investment.

Redeveloping Pioneer Island

Pioneer Island is a gateway into the community via Lake Winnebago; in the summer months, the vacant site is often the first thing that boaters see when approaching Oshkosh's Center City. Residents envision the site redeveloped into commercial and/or residential uses, bringing the prominent property back onto the tax roll and contributing to the vitality and aesthetic of the area.

Revitalizing Vacant/Blighted Areas

Workshop participants stated that they would like to see vacant structures either torn down or repurposed, based on the quality of the building and the stability of the block. Much attention was paid to former industrial areas on the south side of the river, including the Buckstaff site.

Developing a Variety of Quality Housing Options

In order for the Center City to thrive, participants would like to see more residential units downtown, including quality condominiums along, or proximate to, the waterfront. It was noted that currently the only product in the Center City area is either a traditional single family home on a residential block or a rental multi-family unit. Townhomes and condominiums are desired.

Improving the Regional Appeal

Concern was expressed that the reputation and standing of Oshkosh's Center City needs to be improved within the region. It was cited that Downtown Appleton and Downtown Neenah often are seen as more desirable destinations. Others do not patronize the Center City because of a lack of direct interstate access.

Top Projects or Actions

In response to the list of issues identified during workshop discussion, participants were asked to name specific projects or actions that would improve Oshkosh's Center City. The list of recommended actions are listed and categorized below.

Transportation

- Create a strong bike/walk path to the west side
- Long-range plan for bridge across Lake Winnebago to east side of lake to open up Oshkosh to eastern central Wisconsin
- Provide bus service on nights and weekends
- Convert key vacant lots into free parking lots to service downtown businesses
- Work with transportation department to make public transit efficient and user friendly

Promotion & Branding

- Launch a marketing/advertising/programming campaign
- Program to encourage people to support and shop at small retail businesses
- Marketing for businesses and residential development with a positive identity
- Figure out what Oshkosh is going to be known for
- Provide a forum for advertising/publicizing local businesses

Economic Development & Business Resources

- Provide grants for rehab projects, tax breaks, and other incentives
- Support better cooperation between entrepreneurs, property owners, and City officials
- Leverage UWO proximity
- Offer property tax incentives to a mid-size grocery store (preferably a co-op)
- Offer grants for building redevelopment to property owners who arrange for new businesses with at least 3 employees
- Make it easier to put on events to draw people downtown.
- Get everyone on same page
- Identify sites for business development
- Court larger businesses that could become a draw for the downtown area and help them develop existing sites to their purpose without compromising visual integrity of downtown
- Ensure a healthy mix of businesses

Development Projects

- Build new office buildings to create jobs
- Clear environmental concerns of Buckstaff properties
- Get satellite UWO locations within the downtown core
- Redevelop Pioneer Island
- Build upscale housing
- Ensure the downtown is mixed-use in nature
- Renovate and develop south river walk (current Oshkosh Corp. truck storage) to include condos/apartments (upscale), restaurants, and retail
- Develop healthcare facility downtown
- Condo development
- Rehab Buckstaff property
- Develop a program to give downtown buildings a face lift (owner involvement mandatory)
- Make the south side of the river more boater-friendly. Specifically at the site where Oshkosh Corp. stores their trucks
- Recruit a co-op grocery store
- Build a corporate campus
- City resources directed towards assisting building and full service grocery store
- Find a place for an Indoor Market

Character & Aesthetics

- Promote density
- Make green public spaces and plant trees
- Expand support of farmers market—it's amazing!
- Add foot patrol police walking around at night
- Encourage evening hours of business and music etc. (other than bars)
- Expand hours of operation for businesses
- Get a new newspaper
- Homeless population rising (Safety)
- Rehab existing apartments including entrances
- Cohesive and attractive key entry point signs
- Improve streets
- Landscape
- Remodel buildings on Main St
- Upkeep of other vacant buildings at Buckstaff location
- Make landlords fix building exteriors
- Renovate/improve vacant or underutilized property
- Power wash buildings and walks

Primary Assets & Strengths

As the Center City Master Plan moves forward, the key strengths and assets of the community should be maintained and built upon. Participants identified the following strengths and advantages that make Oshkosh City Center a great place:

- Cozy feeling when hosting an event downtown
- Leach Amphitheater
- Farmers Market
- Architecture
- Historic Main Street
- Walkability
- Architectural charm, great buildings
- Fox River and Lake Winnebago access
- Opera House
- Public Library
- YMCA
- Churches
- People
- History
- Small Businesses
- Current residents
- Opera House Square
- Potential at river/lake
- Gallery walk
- Grand Theater
- Morgan House
- New and existing restaurants
- Historic buildings
- Oshkosh Convention Center
- Best Western Hotel
- Willingness of City officials and staff to explore and make an effort
- Availability of development opportunities
- Good employment
- Blank canvas
- Water frontage
- UWO
- Untapped potential for development
- Lots of affordable housing close by
- Civic uses
- Plenty of parking

In-Person Outreach

Business Workshop

On February 16, 2016, a workshop was held with members of the Oshkosh business community at the Oshkosh Convention Center to discuss issues and opportunities within the Oshkosh Center City. The workshop centered around three key questions:

- What are five issues or concerns facing businesses in Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Oshkosh's Center City?
- What are the primary strengths and assets of Oshkosh's Center City?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions recorded in response to these three questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

Top Issues

The workshop featured a guided group discussion where participants were asked to identify five key issues confronting Oshkosh's Center City. After reviewing the collective list of issues identified by the group, participants were then asked to rank their three issues. While numerous topics were discussed, several key themes emerged during the discussion, which were consolidated into the following central concepts.

Enhancing the Center City's Brand

Workshop participants would like to improve the Center City's brand and reputation. It was noted that many Oshkosh residents, as well as those living in the greater Fox Cities region, do not patronize the Center City often. Improving the Center City's reputation as an exciting and safe destination with "something for everyone" will improve the business climate and vitality of the neighborhood.

Improving Downtown Access from I-41

Participants believe that the Center City lacks an attractive, direct, and easy-to-follow route from I-41. Improvements suggested included construction of a more direct route as well as better signage along existing routes. It was also noted that the existing access routes are unattractive in places, and aesthetic improvements should be made to communicate a positive first impression of Oshkosh and draw visitors into the Center City.

Revitalizing Surrounding Residential Neighborhoods

The health and vitality of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the Center City are seen as critical to its success. Participants noted that many of the nearby neighborhoods suffer from disinvestment and crime impacting the attractiveness of the Center City. It was suggested that additional investment in these areas can not only stabilize the Downtown core but also provide a healthy consumer base for local businesses.

Improving Building Appearance

Blight was also cited as a top concern. Participants noted several locations for improvement, including demolition of older industrial buildings (where appropriate), façade improvements for historic Main Street Buildings, and investment in blighted residential neighborhoods.

Promoting a Healthy Retail Mix

Workshop participants recognized that the retail mix of the Center City will be different than it was 50 years ago. However, they would like to see a more diverse mix of retail options than what is currently offered. Suggestions included the addition of a grocery store and more businesses supporting day-to-day living.

Top Projects or Actions

In response to the list of issues identified during workshop discussion, participants were asked to name specific projects or actions that would improve Oshkosh's Center City. The list of recommended actions are listed and categorized below.

Marketing

- Increase marketing locally and outside the community
- Hire city marketer to run ads, do promotions, billboards, etc.
- Better advertise what the Center City is and how to get to it
- Hire top marketing firm to promote all of Oshkosh
- Bring outside investors/developers to City to show off Oshkosh
- Promote Lake Winnebago, such as sailing races
- Use of downtown logo/branding to businesses and the public

Transportation

- Bike trails or paths to Center City
- Create more bike lakes and promote recreational projects
- Widen Main St

Aesthetics

- Hire a designer to make Downtown look aesthetically appealing—uniform and unique
- Designate Highway 44 and South Park Avenue as the main entrance to downtown
- Buy houses, improve roadway/access
- Improve building and sign codes to increase building re-use and image
- Educate owners and the public on importance and draw of historic properties and their appropriate maintenance
- Remove all blight along the river and lake—make parks, walking areas, etc.
- Clean-up the surrounding residential neighborhoods to include driving out the criminal activity
- Improve the curb appeal of all access points leading into and through downtown

Business Resources

- Provide incentives for new/existing businesses
- Establish a permitting overview committee to recommend possible discrepancy in Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods
- Implement Main Street Program to include North and South Main, BID, and Oregon St. businesses
- Expand existing BID District or create new BID Districts
- Encourage night/weekend foot traffic; "still water becomes stagnant"
- Attracting more employers to the Center City
- Recruit and incentivize some of the area large companies to move white collar jobs to waterfront office space (to be developed) in the Center City
- Increase amount/number of business grants
- Promote a healthy mixture of retail and service businesses
- Educate businesses on parking options and the community (simple changes)

Public Services

- Create a limited but visual police presence
- Improve snow removal

Development

- Raze or refurbish vacant buildings
- Re-open/re-develop the Pioneer Inn
- Destination condo/hotel/waterpark on Pioneer Inn site
- Redevelop the Town Motel
- Reach out to current landlords for recruitment purposes
- Recruit developer to create retail/apartment/hotel complex on Jeld Wen, Pioneer Inn, and Buckstaff sites
- Land a unique retail business to lure people downtown; this would create a trickle effect to other businesses
- Create more affluent residential areas
- Recruit developers to produce higher-end condo housing on the waterfront

Primary Assets & Strengths

As the Center City Master Plan moves forward, the key strengths and assets of the community should be maintained and built upon. Participants identified the following strengths and advantages that make Oshkosh City Center a great place:

- Waterfront
- UWO proximity
- Tech sector
- Architecture
- Grand Opera House
- Riverwalk/River
- Current redevelopment activity
- Farmers Market
- People
- Art—murals, gallery walk, concerts
- Best Western Hotel
- Leach Amphitheatre
- Events
- Great opportunities for leveraged improvement
- Momentum
- Passionate business, restaurant, and entrepreneurial leaders
- Historic character
- Size of community
- New up-and-coming businesses
- Location on the water
- BID—beautification, grants, website/marketing
- Few vacant buildings within BID
- YMCA
- Volume of jobs
- Culture
- Growing residential base
- Growing technology sector
- Large employment base

Online Outreach

Resident Questionnaire

An on-line questionnaire for Oshkosh residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community, and is not intended to be a scientific survey instrument. The questionnaire was launched in January 2016, and will remain open and available throughout the visioning portion of the planning process. As of the drafting of this report, 242 residents submitted responses to the questionnaires. The following is a summary of collected responses.

Visiting the Center City

Roughly one-fifth of all questionnaire takers visit the Center City daily, with 40% weekly, 25% a few times a month, and the remainder either a few times a year or rarely. The most popular reasons for visiting the Center City were for dining, shopping, and community events.

Favorite Things

Residents were asked to list their three favorite things about Oshkosh's Center City. More than 600 items were listed. Popular responses included:

- Unique architectural character
- Entertainment options and festivals
- Coffee shops
- Unique locally-owned shops and restaurants
- Oshkosh Public Library
- Kitz and Pfeil True Value
- Riverwalk
- Walkability and convenience of getting around
- Public spaces such as Opera House Square
- Oshkosh Farmers Market

Least Favorite Things

Residents were also asked to list their three least favorite things about Oshkosh's Center City. Common responses included:

- Lack of critical mass and activity in the core
- Lack of variety in shopping and dining
- Not bike friendly
- Lack of a full-service grocery store
- Poor road conditions
- Parking
- Lack of green spaces
- The "narrowness" of Main Street
- Homelessness, panhandling, and disruptive people
- The sundial in Opera House Square

Comparison

Residents were asked how Center City Oshkosh compares to other neighboring downtowns. A plurality responded "the same" (38%), while 33% stated it was worse and 14% that it was better. The remainder were unsure.

Most Important Issues

Residents were asked what they felt were the "most important issues" for a range of categories. The highest three responses for each category are provided below.

- **Transportation:** parking (#1), bikeability (#2), transit service (#3)
- **Business Development:** vacant sites (#1), quality of life (#2), downtown activities (#3)
- **UW-Oshkosh:** presence of student housing (#1), housing transition between Center City and surrounding neighborhoods (#2), priority gateway corridors Between institutions and the Center City (#3)
- **Appearance:** vacancy (#1), historic preservation (#2), streetscape (#3)
- **Arts & Entertainment:** capitalizing on the Fox River and Lake Winnebago (#1), preservation of local history and legacy (#2), events and activities (#3)

Housing

A plurality of questionnaire takers (42%) described the Center City's housing stock as "fair," while 28% stated it was "poor" and only 13% rated it as "good." The remainder reported they were unsure. None reported it was "excellent."

A follow-up question asked what type of new residential development should occur within the Center City. Townhomes, condominiums, and apartments were the most desired.

Would You Live in the Center City?

The questionnaire asked residents if they would consider living in the Center City and to share either why they would or why they wouldn't. Respondents mostly stated that they would not move to the Center City. Reasons given included too much density, lack of green space, noisiness, and need for larger housing units given familial size. Some did respond that they would move if higher quality housing was provided.

Incentives

Roughly two-thirds of those who completed a questionnaire support the usage of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses.

Desired Development

Residents were asked what types of non-residential development they would like to see within the Center City. The top responses were: retail stores (80%), restaurants (75%), and entertainment (66%).

Quality of Life

63% of participants are "satisfied" with the quality of life in the Center City. Roughly one-third are dissatisfied.

A vast majority (71%) of residents believe that the quality of life today in the Center City is either much better or somewhat better than it was ten years ago. 23% believe it is about the same while the remainder report it is somewhat or much worse. Moving forward, 64% of respondents believe that Center City Oshkosh will be a better place in ten years.

Big Ideas

Participants were asked to share their "big idea" for Oshkosh's Center City. Popular responses included:

- Food co-op
- Grocery store
- Waterpark hotel or resort on Pioneer Island
- Demolish vacant and run-down buildings
- Activation of the river

Online Outreach

Business Questionnaire

An online questionnaire for Oshkosh's businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the local business climate. As of the drafting of the Existing Conditions Report, 32 business owners and operators submitted answers to the questionnaire. A summary of their responses to key questions are provided below.

Favorite Things

Business owners were asked to list their three favorite things about Oshkosh's Center City. Popular responses included:

- Small business owners
- Farmers Market
- Fox River
- Sense of community
- Gallery Walk
- Architecture

Least Favorite Things

Business owners were also asked to list their three least favorite things about Oshkosh's Center City. Common responses included:

- "Narrowness" of Main Street
- Parking
- Inconsistent business hours
- Homeless
- Road quality (e.g. potholes)

Comparison

Business owners were asked how Center City Oshkosh compares to other neighboring downtowns. A plurality responded "worse" (36%), while 32% stated it was the same and 26% that it was better. The remainder were unsure.

Most Important Issues

Business owners were asked what they felt were the "most important issues" for a range of categories. The highest three responses for each category are provided below.

- **Transportation:** Alternatives to personal automobile use (#1), parking (#2), bikeability (#2), safety (#3)
- **Business Development:** quality of life (#1), infrastructure maintenance and upgrades (#2), programs to encourage local spending and hiring (#3)
- **UW-Oshkosh:** outreach and engagement (#1), hospitality related development (#2), university-oriented nightlife and entertainment (#3)
- **Appearance:** historic preservation (#1), public art(#2), wayfinding (#3)
- **Arts & Entertainment:** preservation of local history and legacy (#1), capitalizing on the Fox River and Lake Winnebago (#2), and support for local artists (#3)

Housing

A plurality of questionnaire takers (43%) described the Center City's housing stock as "fair," while 29% stated it was "good" and 18% rated it as "poor." The remainder reported they were unsure. None reported it was "excellent."

A follow-up question asked what type of new residential development should occur within the Center City. Townhomes, condominiums, and apartments were the most desired. 89% of business owners stated they believe increased residential density would positively impact their business.

Factors Affecting Businesses

Business owners were asked to rate how several different factors and issues affect their business. The top factors were: quality of their building (#1), visibility and access to customers (#2), proximity to public transportation (#3 - tie), and character of the business district (#3 – tie).

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts

Tax Increment Financing utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district to pay for improvement and further incentivize continued reinvestment. The purpose of TIF funding is to encourage and attract desired development within key commercial areas. TIF dollars can typically be used for infrastructure, streetscaping, public improvements, land assemblage, and offsetting the cost of development.

Business owners were asked about the effectiveness of TIF districts within the Center City. Only 1 in 5 reported that they were "effective" or "very effective." 26% stated they were unsure.

Retention

The majority of participating business owners (75%) would not move their business out of the Center City if given a chance. The 25% that stated they would move their businesses cited the following reasons for doing so: lack of a grocery store, not enough traffic, difficulty parking, and disjointed merchants/BID board.

Desired Development

Residents were asked what types of non-residential development they would like to see within the Center City. The top responses were: retail stores, entertainment, restaurants, and mixed-use.

Incentives

80% of those who completed a questionnaire support the usage of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses.

Quality of Life

A vast majority (72%) of business owners believe that the Center City is much more successful today than it was ten years ago and 75% believe this positive trend will continue over the next five years.

Receptiveness

75% of the business owners who participated in the survey report that the City is receptive to the business community.

Online Outreach

Project Website

An *Imagine Oshkosh* project website was created to establish a centralized location for information regarding the plan. The website contains information and updates concerning the project, meeting notices, and downloadable versions of project documents and reports. To provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website is accessed through a link on the City of Oshkosh's home page. The project website also contains links to online questionnaires for residents and business owners, as well as the sMap mapping tool.

Online Outreach

sMap

sMap is a social mapping application developed by Houseal Lavigne Associates that allows residents to actively participate in the planning process. Linked from the project website, sMap enables participants to create their own community maps, making note of issues and opportunities while providing comments tagged to specific locations. Residents are able to tag community assets, desired uses and developments, key transit destinations, areas with poor appearance, problematic intersections, and public safety concerns, among other options.

As of the drafting of this Existing Conditions Report, only 3 maps have been created for a total of 10 points. A summary of points placed on the map that are within the study area are listed below, organized by topic area.

Community Assets

- Opera House Square
- Riverwalk
- Winnebago County Historical Society

Development Priority Sites

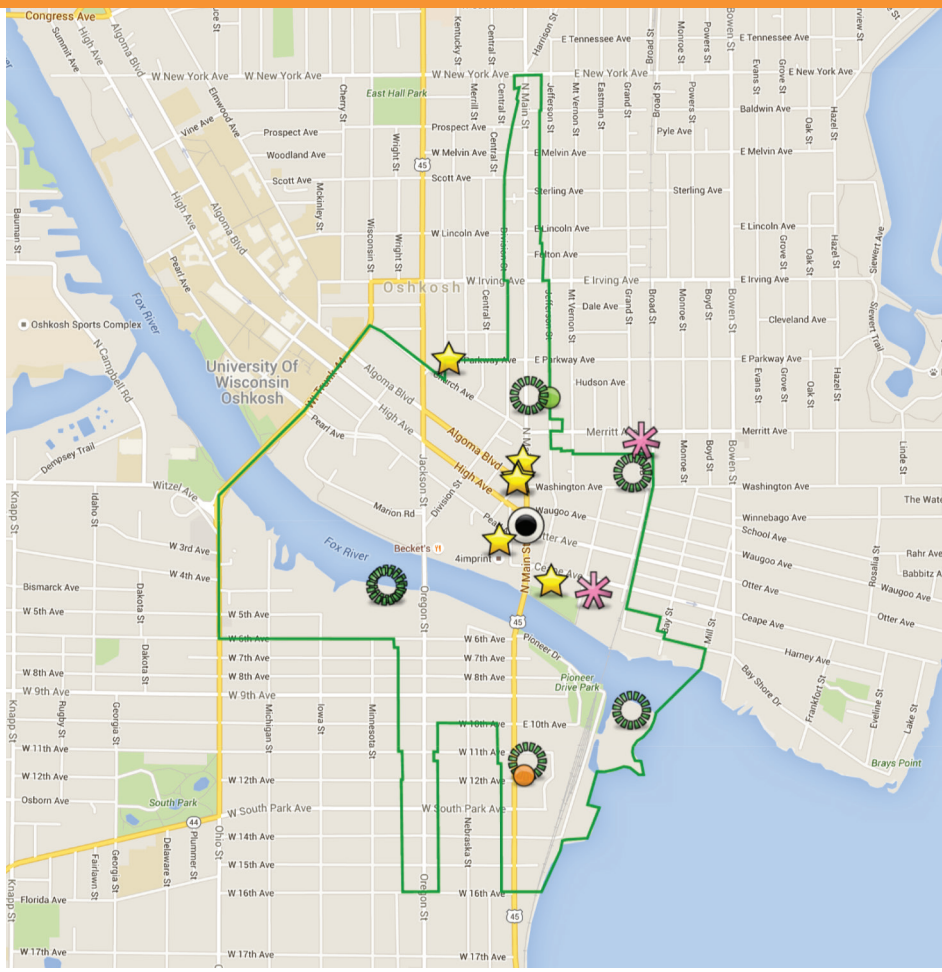
- Buckstaff Property
- Raulf Hotel
- Eagles Club (preserve it)
- Old Morgan Doors site

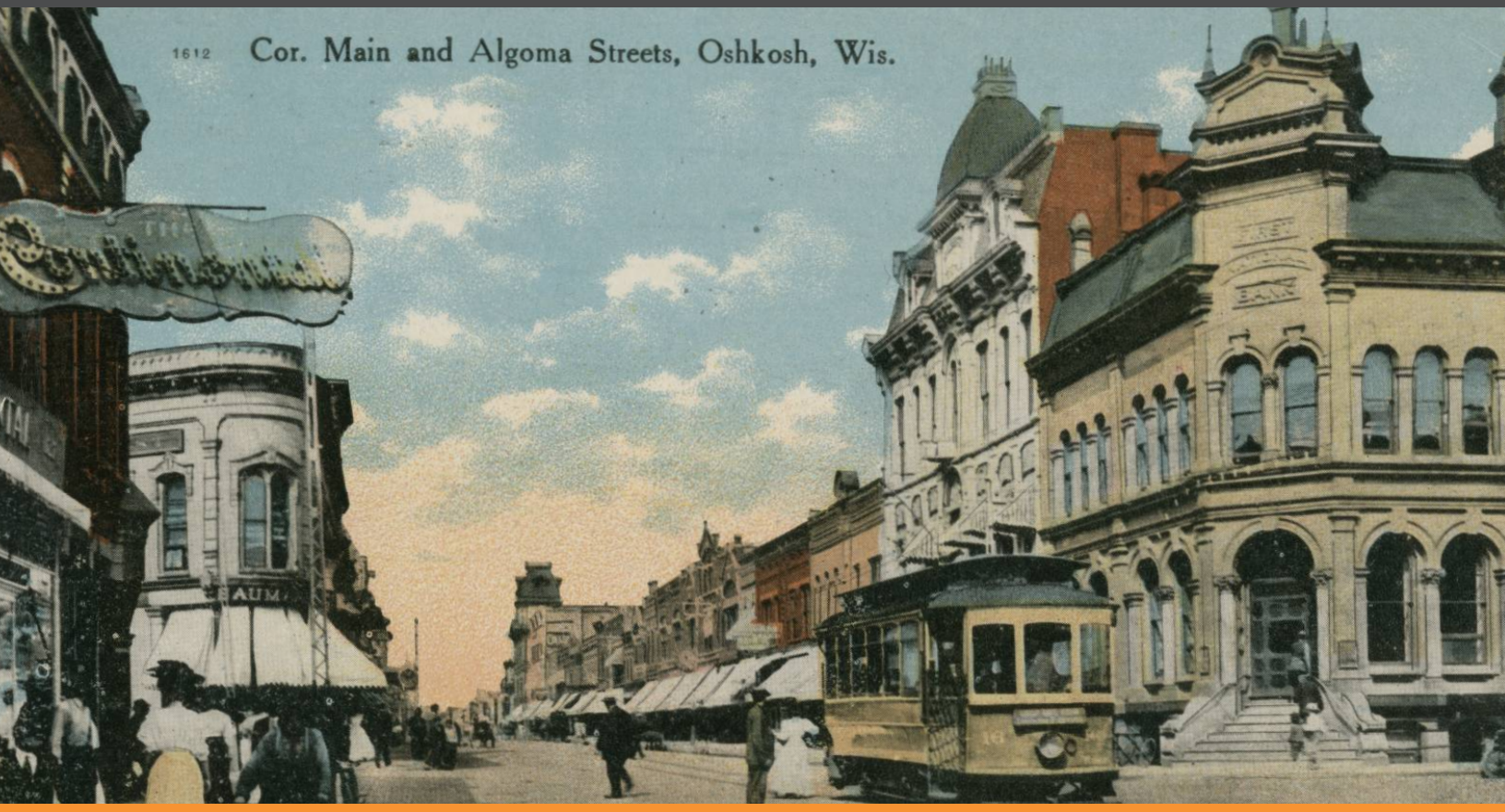
Public Safety Concerns

- Buckstaff Property

Key Transit Destination

- Old Railroad Depot





Past Plans & Studies

This section contains a review of past plans and studies impacting policy, planning, and development within Oshkosh's Center City. The *Imagine Oshkosh* planning process recognizes the value of these prior planning efforts and will build upon them where applicable as a component of the community's new vision.

Document Review: **Key Takeaways**

A long history of planning

The City has planned for the Center City for decades. *Imagine Oshkosh* continues this tradition and will incorporate and build upon previous efforts where applicable.

It takes time

Transitioning the Center City away from industry towards commercial, residential, and recreational uses has been a more than 50 year process. Several plans from the 1970s, for example, recommend redevelopment scenarios on several waterfront industrial properties that mirror discussions being held today.

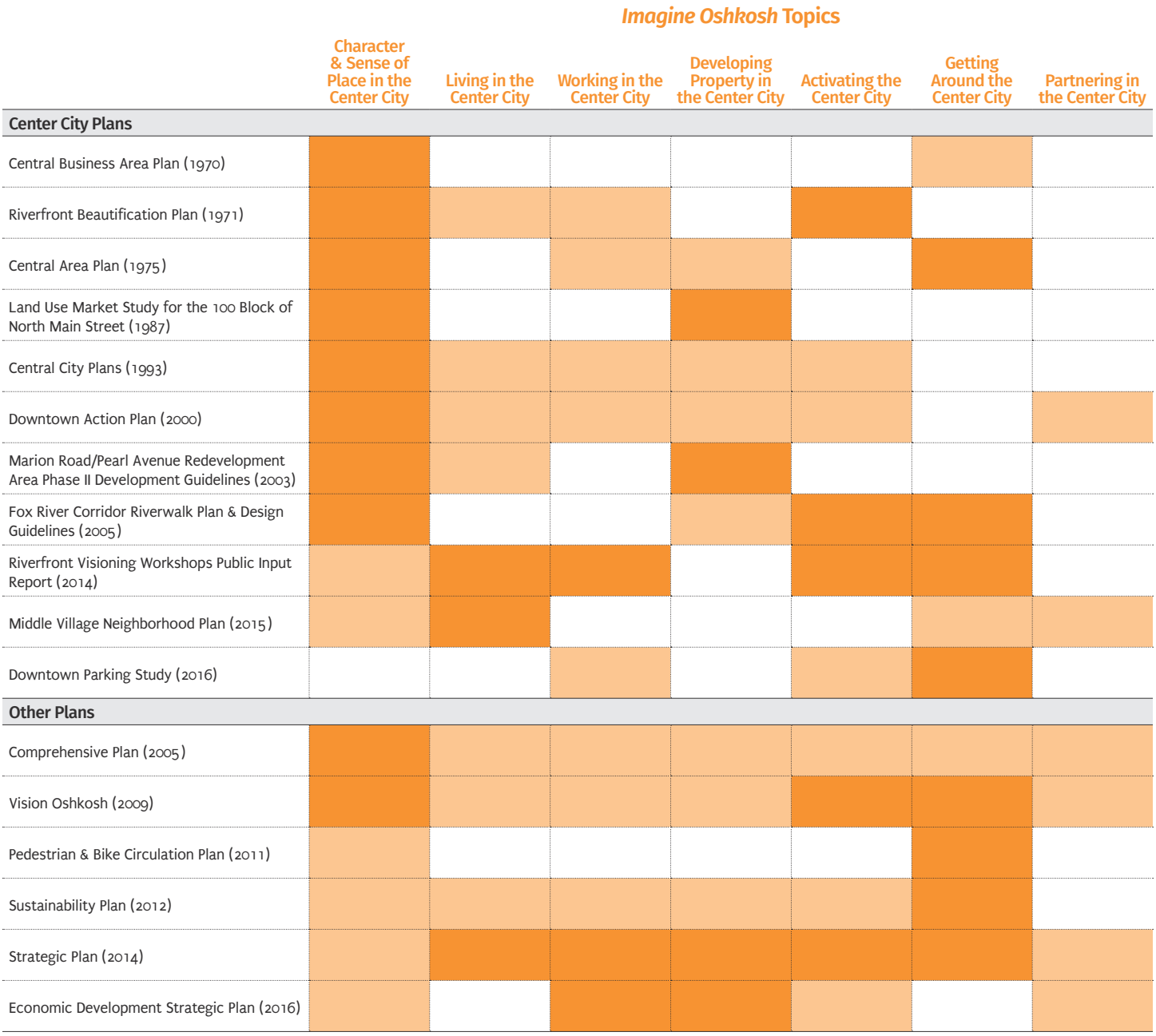
It is imperative to "get it right."

The long time that it has taken to redevelop the industrial waterfront shows how critical it is to plan and develop with foresight and care. Properties only redevelop once every several generations. Similarly, planning blunders – such as the proposed closure of Main Street for a pedestrian mall (which was never implemented) – can have negative effects for generations.

Oshkosh plans to implement

Many of the Center City's most cherished assets – the riverwalk, Leach Ampitheatre, historic architecture, Farmers Market, and more – were either created, built, or protected through prior planning efforts.

Document Review:
Applicability to *Imagine Oshkosh*



Center City Plans

Central Business Area Plan (1970)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The 1970 Central Area Business Plan was a guide for coordinating public and private action to bring about the orderly revitalization of Downtown Oshkosh. Some of the key take-aways from the study include:

- The opening of the $15 million Park Plaza Shopping Center will strengthen the economic health of downtown. Maximum benefit will not be realized, however, until the surrounding area is revitalized as well.
- One of the greatest challenges facing the downtown is the lack of a direct route from US 41.
- Downtown traffic patterns should shift to two one-way couplets: Main Street for southbound traffic and State and Jefferson Streets for northbound traffic.
- Downtown has fewer parking space than any other city of comparable size in the state.
- Pedestrian ways should be created that replace low-traffic volume streets.
- To improve aesthetics, overhanging signs should be eliminated, street trees should be planted, and new buildings should be setback from the street to provide additional pedestrian space.

Riverfront Beautification Plan (1971)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Riverfront Beautification Plan aimed to improve the appearance and ecological health of the Fox River in the face of more than a hundred years of manufacturing and logging. Some of the key take-aways from the plan include:

- Oshkosh's employment base is diversifying and beginning to shift away from factory work. This presents opportunities to re-envision and beautify the waterfront incrementally as properties redevelop.
- 40% of all riverfront property within Oshkosh is utilized for industrial purposes. Virtually all of the waterfront land within the *Imagine Oshkosh* study boundary is utilized for industrial purposes, outside of Pioneer Island and the Park Plaza Shopping Center.
- Pollution is still an area of great concern, given the historic usage of it as a sewer by industry.
- Oshkosh's riverfront has relatively easy public access relative to other communities, but blighted boat slips and local dumping harm the aesthetic.
- The industrial waterfront transition should to other uses, including commercial, residential, parks/recreation, and institutional. Pioneer Inn, Park Plaza Shopping Center, and Wisconsin State University-Oshkosh are all given as successful examples of transition.
- High-density housing developments should be added to the riverfront along Marion Road and on the Morgan Doors/Jeld-Wen site.
- The zoning ordinance should be amended to more closely regulate development on the water, limiting it to waterfront activities. A continuous walkway system should be developed along the waterfront.

Central Area Plan (1975)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

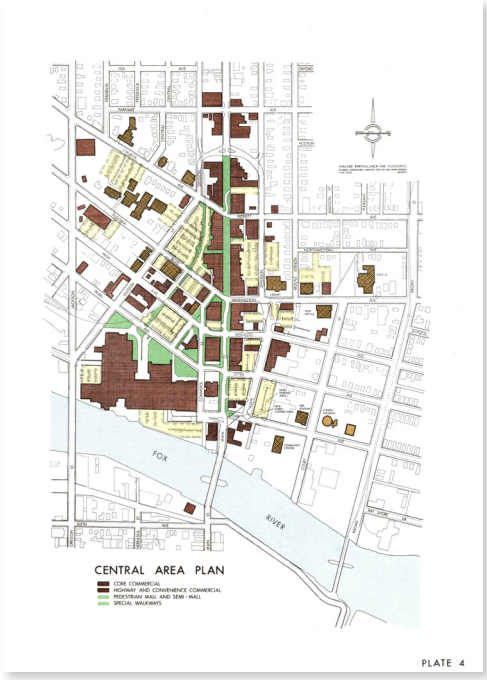
The Central Area Plan built off previous planning efforts and sought to revitalize and maintain a vibrant healthy core. Some of the key take-aways from the plan include:

- The main challenges facing the Central Area include: a high volume of traffic that disrupts the main function of the street; pedestrian areas that are not attractive; inconvenient parking; the offsets in streets and diagonal streets created during the original patting of the city have an adverse effect on traffic circulation; the central area is not oriented towards the water; and that the architecture of Main Street [that is overwhelmingly cherished in 2016] is seen as lacking character and looking identical to thousands of other cities.
- A bypass should be constructed that directs traffic volume away from Main Street.
- The Plan has a heightened focused on uninterrupted pedestrian mobility and connectivity between shopping areas. A pedestrian mall should be developed by closing Main Street to vehicles [between Washington Avenue/Algoma Boulevard and roughly where Peabody's and Crescent Moon currently are]. This, coupled with the Park Plaza mall, would serve as anchors to the downtown area. Bump-outs should be added to intersections along Main Street.
- A convention center and new downtown hotel should be added, in addition to new high density multi-family developments targeted to students and seniors.

Land Use Market Study for the 100 Block of North Main Street (1987)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

This study analyzed the 100 Block of N. Main Street to determine the optimum land use and development program **[note: the site is currently occupied by the mixed-use 100 N. Main building]**. It was determined that the desired scenario would be a 5 story mixed-use structure with 60,000 to 80,000 square feet of net leasable Class A office space and 20,000 square feet of net leasable retail space on the first floor.



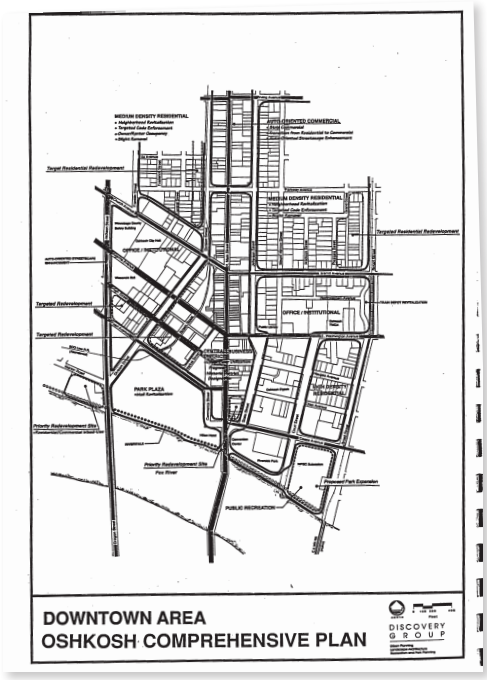
Central City Plans (1993)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Central City Plans were developed as a component of the City's 1993 Comprehensive Plan, and included several individual special area plans for neighborhoods comprising the 2016 *Imagine Oshkosh* study area. Some of the key take-aways from the plan include:

- New development should be oriented towards the riverfront and lakeshore, with a supporting continuous riverwalk park and trail system.
- New housing development should be encouraged on sites formerly used for industry and commercial development, including support for mixed-use within the core.
- Improve the presence and impact of University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh with the Center City, including bike and pedestrian linkages and student housing along Marion Road. Industry in the Marion Road should be transitioned out for a blend of commercial and residential uses. Public access to the riverfront should be provided.
- N. Main Street, between Otter Avenue and Parkway Avenue, should be a predominantly specialty retail district. To the north, development patterns should shift to auto-oriented commercial uses.
- Along S. Main Street, the former Universal Foundry site along South Main is a priority redevelopment site. Recommended uses include specialty retail, office, and residential, with mixed-use suitable as well. Specialty retail and office development ("warehouse district") is envisioned along South Main between the riverfront and Tenth Avenue.
- Along S. Main Street, roughly between Tenth and Seventeenth Avenues, industrial uses should be transitioned towards formalized business parks elsewhere in the community. This area should be redeveloped for medium to high density residential and/or commercial and residential mixed-use.
- Oregon Street, between Sixth and South Park Avenues, should serve as a neighborhood business district.
- Along N. Main Street (north of the CBD), efforts should be undertaken to upgrade the appearance of the auto-centric corridor. This includes parking lot landscaping, street trees, reducing the number of signs, and encouraging cross access.



Downtown Action Plan (2000)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Downtown Action Plan seeks to enhance property values, provide a higher quality of life, and identify new uses for underutilized parcels. Some of the key take-aways from the plan include:

- Within the 100-300 Blocks of N. Main Street, a new public plaza **(note: now Opera House Square)** should be developed on the Walgreens' site, streetscaping should be enhanced, and the 100 block should be redeveloped.
- Along N. Main Street, between the river and Parkway Avenue, residential development should be increased and the streetscape should be enhanced. Surface parking behind the buildings can alleviate parking pressures on Main Street. Pedestrian accessibility should be increased across the Main Street bridge.
- A riverfront park **(now: Riverside Park and the Leach Amphitheatre)** should be developed that brings the community together to enjoy the beauty of the river.
- E. Ninth Avenue and Pioneer Drive, east of Main Street, should be redeveloped into a mixture of residential, commercial, and office uses.

Marion Road/Pearl Avenue Redevelopment Area Phase II Development Guidelines (2003)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The development guidelines establish a more detailed vision for redevelopment along the formerly industrial north waterfront between Wisconsin Avenue in the west and Jackson Street in the east. A three-phased approach is proposed for a blend of non-industrial development, and guidelines for the design, site orientation, and pedestrian amenities are identified. Key objectives of the guidelines include:

- Buildings will create a strong street edge;
- Buildings will be compatible with their neighbors;
- Pedestrian activity and interaction will be encouraged;
- Buildings will be constructed to last;
- Buildings will respond to the context of Oshkosh and the heritage of the Fox River; and
- On-site parking will be visually separated from major streets.

Fox River Corridor Riverwalk Plan & Design Guidelines (2005)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

This Plan establishes the vision for a comprehensive riverwalk along the Fox River that can revitalize the riverfront and link up with ongoing redevelopment efforts. It provides detailed design standards. Key objectives of the plan include:

- Developing a continuous riverwalk on two sides of the river between Wisconsin Street and Lake Winnebago;
- Linking the downtown riverwalk with the WIOUWASH State Trail and UW-Oshkosh to the northeast;
- Linking the downtown Riverwalk with neighborhoods and the Pioneer Resort area to the south;
- Crafting a unifying design vocabulary for public and private projects linked by the Riverwalk;
- Encouraging consistently high quality riverfront development;
- Creating a more beautiful, inviting riverfront in the downtown area;
- Improving infrastructure to make redevelopment opportunities more attractive;
- Locating improved facilities for recreational boating and fishing;
- Creating a wayfinding system and user amenities to promote the safe, easy use of the Riverwalk; and
- Establishing alternative transportation (e.g. boating, bicycling, pedestrian, etc.) connections between key destinations.

Riverfront Visioning Workshops Public Input Report (2014)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

In the late summer of 2014, a call was put out to residents and users of the Fox River system in Oshkosh to assist in generating ideas for an overall 'vision' for the waterfront areas within the City. This report summarizes those findings. Some of the findings include:

- Common themes about Oshkosh's identity included the lumber industry (historic identity), lots to do, and recreational activity along the waterfront.
- Participants would like to see increased connectivity between the Downtown, business areas, the waterfront, and Menominee Park, as well as direct access to the waterfront.
- Priority redevelopment sites included the Pioneer Inn, Buckstaff, Jeld-Wen, AxleTech International, and Marion Road sites.
- Small-scale multi-family housing was the preferred housing development option along the waterfront and street-oriented commercial and mixed-use was the desired commercial option. Preferred employment related intensities were not very conclusive.

Middle Village Neighborhood Plan (2015)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

Middle Village is a historic neighborhood just north of the institutional campus (e.g. City Hall, Police Department, etc.) within the Central City. Several blocks of Middle Village along Church Avenue and N. Main Street fall within the *Imagine Oshkosh* study boundary. The Neighborhood Plan addresses neighborhood challenges and promotes reinvestment. Some of the recommendations of the plan that may affect *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- Provide highly visible crosswalk markings at all intersections.
- Install traffic calming measures where feasible.
- Proactively address police calls for service and issues associated with boarding houses and high rental concentration in the neighborhood.
- Install historically consistent decorative street lighting when new streets go in.
- Develop a Project Porch Light Program to include funding for 20 additional lighting sources for property owners.
- Utilize proactive code enforcement on properties within ongoing code violations.
- Increase home ownership through a variety of different programs.

Downtown Parking Study (2016)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Downtown Parking Study provides parking planning and operating strategies for Downtown Oshkosh. Since parking is such a costly asset, the study carefully considers the need for additional parking and opportunities to maximize use of current parking assets.

Current Conditions

- The current downtown parking supply includes 4,860 parking spaces: 37% are publicly owned and operated with public access, 31% are publicly owned and operated but with limited public access, 20% are privately owned and operated with limited public access, and 12% are located on-street.
- Roughly 1 in 3 parking spots within downtown is controlled by City Center (31%).
- The distribution of parking supply is within reasonable standards when compared to similar size cities.

Downtown Parking Study (Continued)

Conclusions & Recommendations

- The current peak weekday parking demand in downtown Oshkosh does not exceed the current supply. Approximately 49% of the current parking supply is occupied during peak weekday conditions (2,414 parked vehicles). Conversely, there are approximately 2,446 unoccupied parking spaces during peak weekday conditions. Development of a new public parking structure in downtown Oshkosh is not recommended at this time.
- A future parking surplus is projected to occur under each of the five potential downtown development scenarios. The surplus of unoccupied parking supply is projected to range between 2,431 spaces for Scenario 1 and 1,376 spaces for Scenario 5.Based on current data and future development scenarios analyzed by Walker, a new parking ramp is not needed to support current or future parking demand in downtown Oshkosh.
- While an overall surplus of parking exists today, and a surplus is projected under future development scenarios, there are localized areas with more intense demand patterns that can be addressed through parking management practices.
- It is recommended that the City of Oshkosh invest in informing the community on downtown public parking options through the development and implementation of a sign/wayfinding program, community outreach efforts, and public parking branding strategy.
- To more effectively manage the use of public parking resources in downtown Oshkosh, it is recommended that the City implement an on-street paid parking system in the core area of downtown. A primary goal of the public parking system is to provide access to downtown destinations and events. By value pricing the core on-street supply and offering free off-street and peripheral on-street parking, the City can use price as a tool to redistribute parking demand and maximize the use of existing resources. Downtown patrons and employees would be provided a range of parking products to choose from that best align with personal preferences.
- While current typical parking conditions do not warrant the construction of a new parking ramp, we recognize that some stakeholders believe a ramp is desired. The preliminary estimate of conceptual cost for a 400-space parking ramp is $7.2 million. The Parking Fund, under current policies and practices, would be unable to support the annual debt service payment, operating expenses, and capital repair and maintenance associated with the public parking ramp.

Other City Plans

Comprehensive Plan (2005)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The 2005 Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan is the City's official guide for growth and development. The Plan makes recommendations for housing, land use, transportation, economic development, utilities, community facilities, agricultural resources, cultural resources, natural resources, intergovernmental cooperation, and implementation. Most of the major recommendations originating out of the Comprehensive Plan involves with high-level growth and management outside of the scope of *Imagine Oshkosh*, such as revising the subdivision ordinance, developing boundary agreements, improving I-41 corridors, and authoring new master plans for growth areas. Recommendations relating to *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- Continue implementation of the 2000 Downtown Action Plan.
- Encourage Downtown/Central City residential development through rehabilitation or new construction, and accommodate a variety of appropriate housing types.
- Design and construct the Fox River Corridor with a continuous, looped trail system and an environmentally sensitive design for the shoreline.
- Adopt design guidelines for the Main Street Historic District and downtown area.
- Pursue incentives for façade improvements and streetscape improvements.
- Review potential for expanding existing BID or creating new ones.
- Work with industry, particularly in the Central City area, to investigate opportunities for relocation from older outdated facilities to newer industrial plants within industrial parks.
- Continue to provide and promote opportunities for recreational events on and public access to the Lake Winnebago and Fox River system.
- Create a shoreline and riverfront overlay district.
- **The *Imagine Oshkosh* study area is shown almost entirely as "Mixed Downtown Development" on the future land use map.**

Vision Oshkosh (2009)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics

Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Vision Oshkosh Plan establishes a vision that enhances the appeal of Oshkosh in ways that are consistent with the heritage of the community, the character of commercial interests and neighbors, and the future that should be as promising as possible. Recommendations relating to *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- The Center City area was identified by residents as "highly susceptible to change," meaning that it should be given elevated priority for development and redevelopment.
- Residents see the Center City as the main geographic area for future growth - new parks, residential, commercial, and entertainment uses.
- The South Shore was identified by residents for new multi-family and single family residential housing.
- N. and S. Main were identified as being one of the top five streets for transportation improvements.
- A comprehensive bicycle network with clear signage and maps should be developed.
- The waterfront walkway should be completed on both sides of the river.

Pedestrian & Bike Circulation Plan (2011)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Pedestrian and Bike Circulation Plan recommends strategies for improving pedestrian and bicycle transportation throughout the greater Oshkosh area over a 20 year period. Some of the key findings relating to *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- Walking is often overlooked and undervalued as a transportation mode.
- The bridges over the Fox River are a major concession for bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- The overriding principle for bicycle and pedestrian friendly streets is to create public right-of-ways that work effectively for and benefit all modes of transportation.
- Bicycle and pedestrian program recommendations include education, encouragement, and outreach programs; enforcement; facility maintenance and policy recommendations.
- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities along established right-of-ways are the most efficient and cost effective improvements (relative to new trails).
- All bike routes within Oshkosh are recommended to be signed, whether they have bike lanes, sharrows, wide curb lanes, or are simply shared-use roadways.
- Priority facility improvements include: signing and/or designating a shareway along N. Main Street (north of Washington Avenue), W. 10th Avenue (between Oregon Street and S. Main Street), around the Leach Amphitheatre connecting to Bay Shore Drive, and New York Avenue; continuing development of the Riverwalk along the waterfront; signing and striping portions of N. / S. Main, Commerce Street, State Street, Wisconsin Street, High Avenue, Algoma Boulevard, 6th Avenue, and 12th Avenue.

Sustainability Plan (2012)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The City's Sustainability Plan aims to make the Oshkosh community greener and more environmentally friendly. The document addresses energy consumption, local food, conservation, waste, the atmosphere, land use, transportation, economic development, government, safety, and healthiness. Many elements of the Sustainability Plan align with *Imagine Oshkosh*, but some of the more directly applicable recommendations include:

- Draft changes to the zoning ordinance to address community gardens as permitted or conditional land uses in all zoning districts.
- Work with the Council to approve a terrace tree ordinance.
- Create a collaborative inventory of existing vacant buildings, promote adaptive reuse and establish working committee for these items.
- Place a high priority on completion of the Riverwalk.
- Continue bicycle lane striping and installation of bike route signs as recommended in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Circulation Plan.
- Continue to support the Oshkosh Farmers Market in downtown locations, and work with management to expand areas for stalls.
- Continue to support food sales from stands and trucks within current city, county and state regulations.
- Make public access to the Fox Riverfront a high priority.
- Continue to focus on revitalizing the downtown and central city area with mixed uses, adaptive reuse and historic preservation.

Strategic Plan for 2015-2016 (2014)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The City's Strategic Plan is a unified plan that focuses on five strategic initiatives that will make Oshkosh one of Wisconsin's premier communities: supporting economic development, strengthening neighborhoods, improving and maintain infrastructure, improving quality of life, and develop a high performing government. Some of the recommendations of the plan that may affect *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- Establish a revolving loan fund.
- Rethink the role of BID(s) and/or associations in Downtown development.
- Streamline permitting, development plan review, and approval processes.
- Work with stakeholders to remove Buckstaff Building and develop plans for re-use.
- Work with Pioneer Island owners to remove code violations and assist in any redevelopment plans.
- Help move Jeld Wen project forward.
- Create a Rental Registration and Inspection Program.
- Aggressively pursue enforcement of code regulations pertaining to property owners
- Improve the character of Main Street
- Sign and stripe bike lanes following the Bike and Pedestrian Plan as approved and the budget allows.
- Continue development of the South Shore riverwalk.

Economic Development Strategic Plan (2016)

Imagine Oshkosh Topics	
Character & Sense of Place	Activating
Living	Getting Around
Working	Partnering
Developing Property	

The Plan seeks to make Oshkosh a thriving and sustainable community offering abundant opportunities for work and life. A core component of the Plan is revitalizing the downtown, central city, and Fox River corridor by eliminating blighting conditions and addressing environmentally contaminated property. Key recommendations that affect *Imagine Oshkosh* include:

- Actively pursue acquiring sites for redevelopment that have the potential to have a significant impact on the community if redeveloped. This should be done through TIF monies or CDBG funds.
- Encourage BIDs to promote commercial districts within the Center City.
- Develop riverwalks along the riverfront with grants and TIF monies.
- Create a vision for waterfront development which includes design guidelines and desired types of development.

CHAPTER 3

Analysis

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CHAPTER 3A

Character & Sense of Place in the Center City

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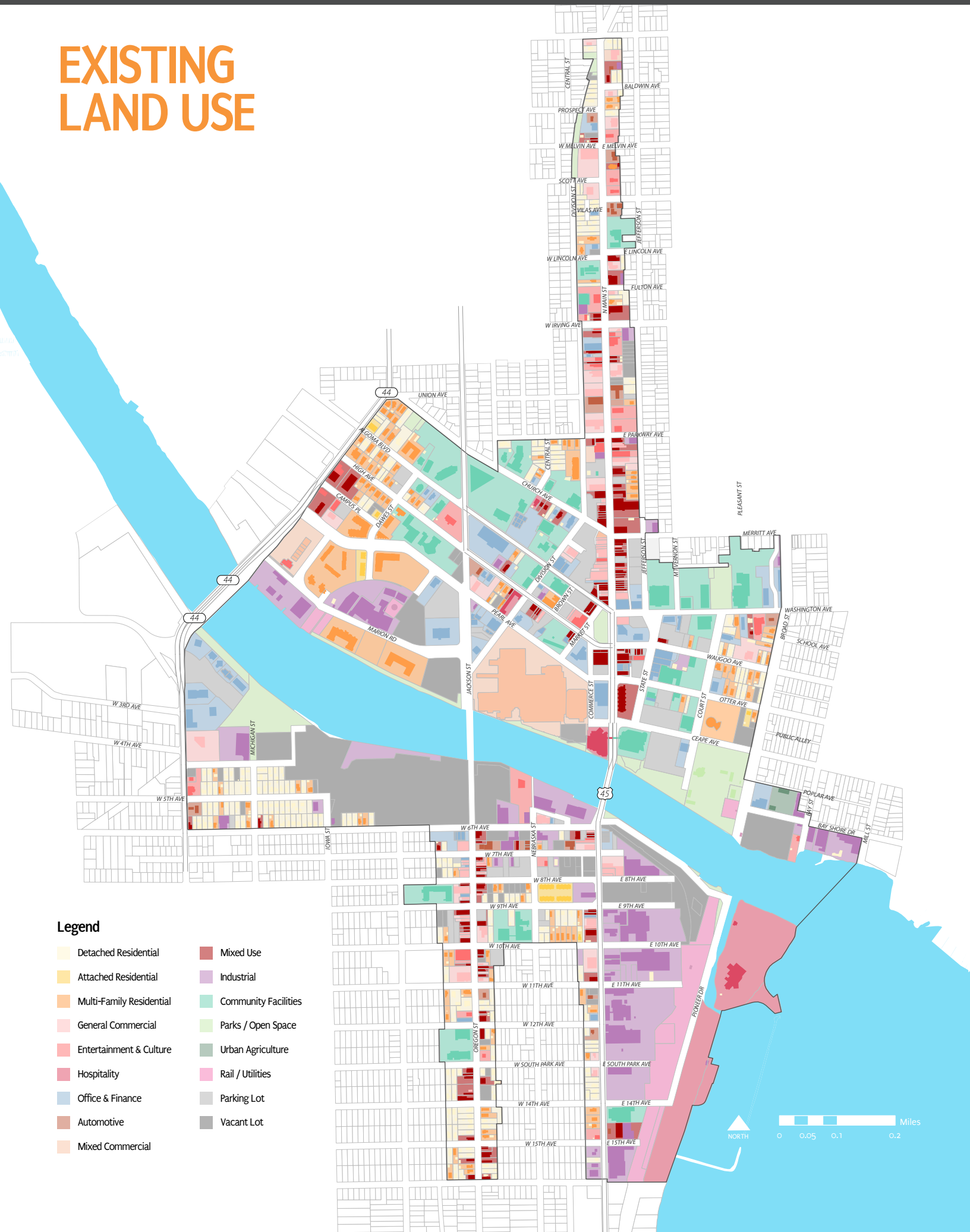
Existing Land Use Classifications

Existing land use provides an inventory of every parcel in the Center City to identify how land is used within the study area, broken into 17 distinct land use designations. Downtown has a diverse mix of land uses, but the concentration of different uses varies throughout the study area, reflecting that the Center City is not one uniform downtown area but a collection of different districts and neighborhoods.

Existing Land Use Composition
Oshkosh, WI

Existing Land Use Classifications	Acreage	Percentage
Detached Residential	31.33	7.7%
Attached Residential	2.75	0.7%
Multi-Family	40.07	9.9%
Retail & Service	17.33	4.3%
Entertainment & Culture	11.75	2.9%
Hospitality	21.82	5.4%
Mixed Commercial	20.52	5.1%
Mixed-Use	21.82	5.4%
Office & Finance	27.81	6.9%
Automotive	4.53	1.1%
Industrial	49.45	12.2%
Urban Agriculture	1.19	0.3%
Community Facilities	47.88	11.8%
Parks & Open Spaces	22.16	5.5%
Rail & Utility	12.91	3.2%
Parking Lot	22.88	5.7%
Vacant Lot	48.18	11.9%

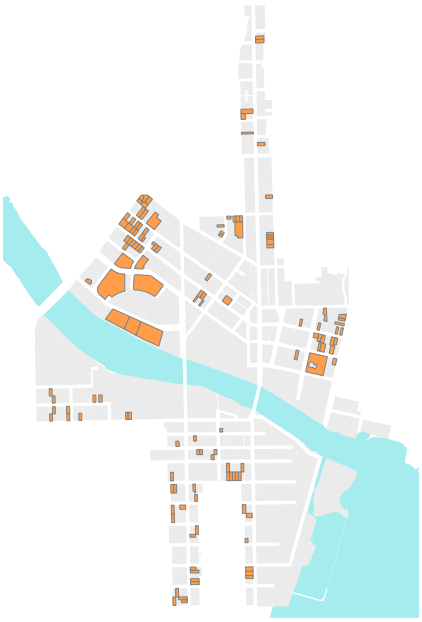
EXISTING LAND USE



Legend

- Detached Residential
- Attached Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- General Commercial
- Entertainment & Culture
- Hospitality
- Office & Finance
- Automotive
- Mixed Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Community Facilities
- Parks / Open Space
- Urban Agriculture
- Rail / Utilities
- Parking Lot
- Vacant Lot

Residential



Detached Residential

The Single Family Detached land use includes stand-alone homes, often with an accompanying detached garage. These uses are found along lower density stretches of the study area's corridors, such as Main Street, as well as in adjacent neighborhoods. Single Family Detached homes within the Center City tend to be older and some possess historic elements.

Within the study area, some single family detached homes have transitioned into commercial, office, or multi-family uses (and are depicted as such on the accompanying map), such as along Church Avenue.

Attached Residential

Attached residential uses are individual housing units attached horizontally with separate entrances to each unit, such as duplexes, rowhomes, and townhomes. Due to shared walls, they allow for greater residential density than detached units. An example includes the MK Townhomes along Nebraska Street between 8th and 9th Street.

Multi-Family

Multi-family residential uses contain multiple housing units stacked vertically and horizontally with a shared parking lot for tenants. The style and scale of multi-family ranges within the study area, including both a converted single family detached home with multiple units for UW-Oshkosh students to newer, multi-story apartment buildings such as the Rivers or the Anthem apartments. Stand-alone multi-family buildings tend to be located outside of the core downtown area, where rental or condo units are a component of a mixed-use building.

Commercial

Retail & Service

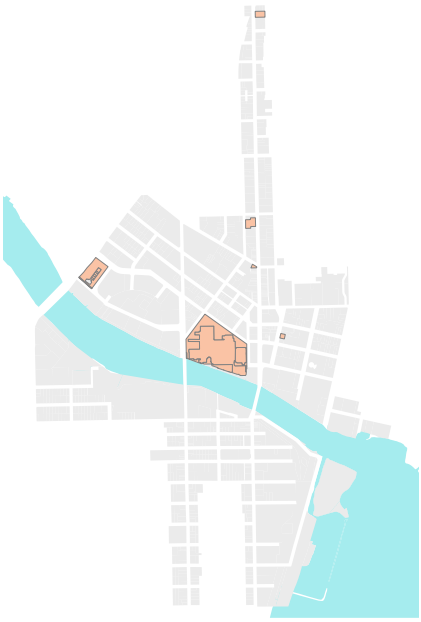
Retail & Service uses include businesses that provide goods and services for purchase. Typical uses include clothing stores, niche retailers like a bike shop or comic book store, beauty salon, barbershop, antique store, and other similar uses. The character of the retail / service uses changes throughout the study area. Properties within the downtown core and along Oregon Street tend to occupy older historic buildings built to the property line while those outside of these areas tend to be more auto-oriented.

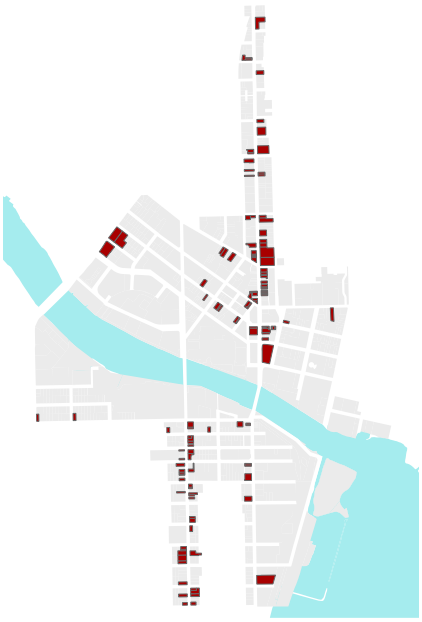
Entertainment & Culture

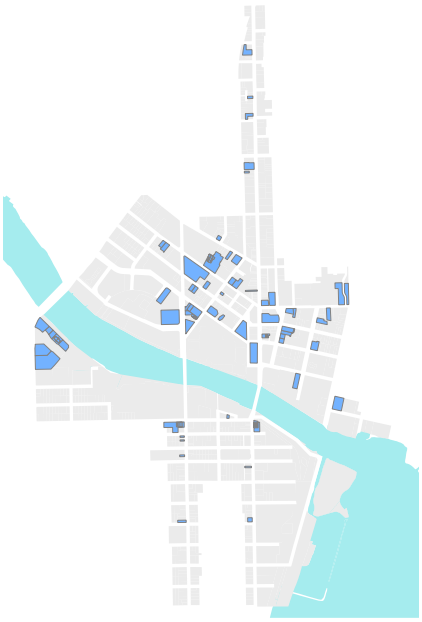
Entertainment & Culture uses provide entertainment, culture, and leisure to patrons, including restaurants, bars, taverns, art galleries, theatres, bowling alleys, and more. These uses represent some of the highest profile commercial businesses in Oshkosh's Center City. Though found throughout the study area, they tend to be mostly located along Main and Oregon Streets.

Hospitality

The Hospitality land use includes the Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel, Pioneer Inn (closed), Oshkosh Convention Center, and Town Motel.







Mixed Commercial

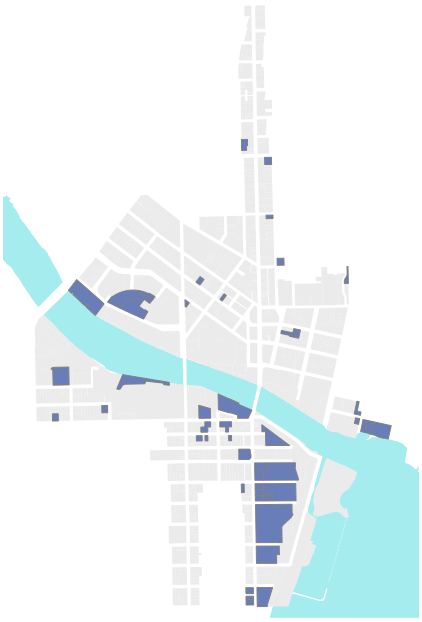
Mixed commercial uses include multiple distinct commercial uses, such as a single structure with a blend of different commercial tenants, such as a restaurant, office, and retail shop. An example would be the City Center, which includes offices, a bank, and a restaurant.

Mixed-Use

Mixed use parcels are structures that include multiple distinct uses, most commonly stacked vertically. The most common form of mixed use developments are commercial spaces with residential or office uses located on upper floors. The majority of mixed use structures are older commercial stock with a converted residential space on the second floor, although more contemporary developments such as 100 N. Main Street are also mixed-use. While most mixed-use buildings are located within the downtown core, they can also be found along Oregon Street and farther north on N. Main Street.

Office & Finance

Office & Finance uses consist of businesses that provide white-collar employment in the Center City, including professional firms, law firms, and medical practitioners. The character and scale of office and finance uses vary widely, ranging from converted historic structures such as the First National Bank Building to auto-oriented banks such as BMO Harris Bank with drive-throughs.



Automotive

Automotive uses include auto repair, maintenance, and supply businesses. They are located on the fringes of the study area.

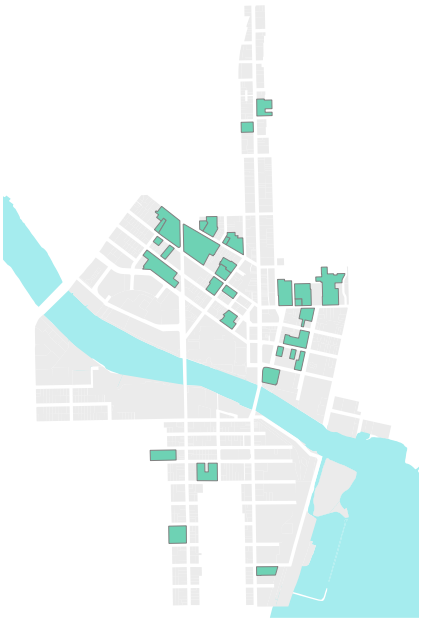
Industrial

Industrial uses include both light and heavy industry. Examples include manufacturing, heavy storage, printing, boat motor testing, boat storage, and more. Most industrial uses tend to be located south of the Fox River, which historically has been an industrial area for many generations.

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture includes land that is being actively farmed and harvested for food.

Public / Semi-Public



Others

Community Facilities

The Community Facilities category includes governmental uses, places of worship, schools, and daycares. Examples include City Hall, Winnebago County Courthouse, Oshkosh Public Library, and the Oshkosh Police Department Headquarters. The structures housing these uses often add great visual interest to the downtown, including unique building layouts, ornamental design, and visual landmarks, such as spires.

Parks & Open Spaces

Parks include land that provides active or passive recreational amenities, intended to benefit the general public with attractive outdoor spaces. Examples include Opera House Square, Riverside Park, and the Leach Amphitheatre.

Open space includes sites that provide outdoor space but are not intended or programmed for recreational use. Open space is separate from vacant lots in that the site has not been intended or prepared for eventual development.

Rail & Utility

Rail includes the CN railroad right-of-way and associated rail uses. Utility uses include easements for overhead power lines and associated utility uses.

Parking Lot

The parking lot land use designation includes parcels whose predominant use is either public or private parking. When a parcel includes parking for a supporting business or destination, that parcel is considered a component of that greater use.

Vacant Lot

Vacant property consists of sites that currently contain no standing structure or use. This can include sites that were previously developed but the structure was demolished or removed. Vacant land is mostly concentrated along the waterfront and south shore areas.

Partially / Fully Vacant Building

Vacant buildings were first assigned an overall use based upon the building structure and past usage and then further identified as either occupied, fully vacant, or partially vacant. For example, a closed restaurant would be labeled first as Entertainment / Culture and then assigned a second classification of vacant. Residential units were not assessed for vacancy given the difficulty of accurately establishing occupancy (particularly in multi-floor multi-family buildings) and also given the expected annual turnover of rental properties.

Center City Vacancy

While vacancy remains a challenge, the size and scale of the problem is manageable and relatively better than many center cities of Oshkosh's size and characteristics. Within the Center City, only 12.5% of parcels were vacant and only 2.3% of buildings were fully vacant. Roughly one in ten buildings were either fully vacant, partially vacant, or underutilized, based upon field reconnaissance and assessment data provided by the City.

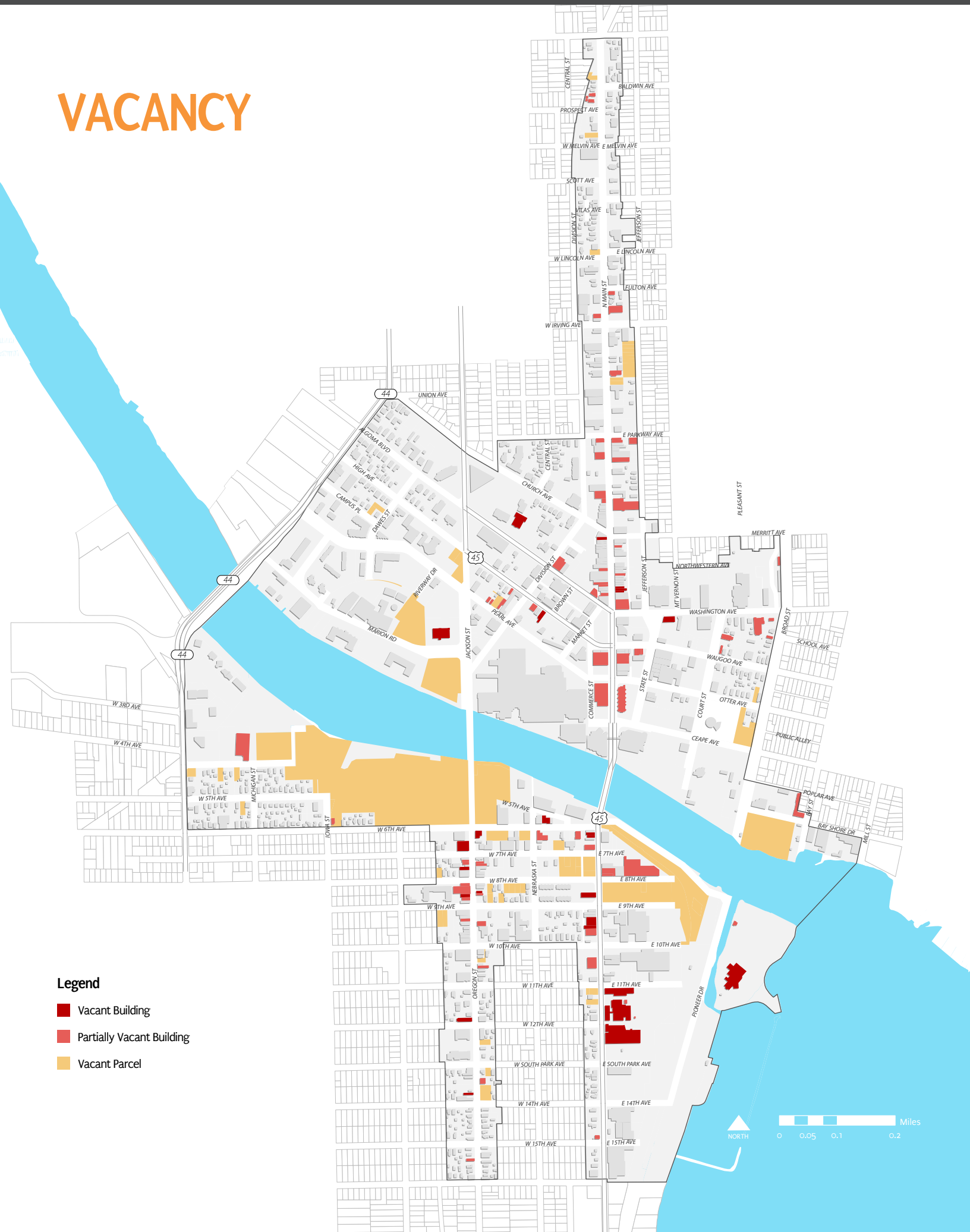
From a perception standpoint, vacancy can often seem more acute due to the concentration of vacancy within a few areas and several very prominent sites being vacant or underutilized. For example, three of the Center City's largest buildings have vacancies, such as 217 N. Main Street, 404 N. Main Street (First National Bank Building), and 111 N. Main Street (US Bank Building), and several prominent sites are available for redevelopment such as the Morgan Door site (currently storing Oshkosh Corporation trucks), the closed Pioneer Inn, and the crumbling Buckstaff factory complex.

Both the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) have resources and programs in place to promote vacant properties within the Center City. For example, the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) advertises vacant properties on their website as well as places attractive "This Space is Your Opportunity" posters in the windows of vacant commercial properties

Imagine Oshkosh Vacancy Snapshot

Category	Number	Percent of Study Area
Vacant Parcels	66 parcels	12.5% (acreage)
Fully Vacant Buildings	25 buildings	2.3% (buildings)
Partially Vacant Buildings	73 buildings	6.8% (buildings)

VACANCY



Legend

- Vacant Building
- Partially Vacant Building
- Vacant Parcel

Key Planning Priorities for *Imagine Oshkosh*

This section highlights ten of the most important planning priorities that will form the cornerstone of the *Imagine Oshkosh*. This list is not all-inclusive, the numbering does not reflect rankings, and many of these priorities relate to one another and are expounded upon in greater detail in other sections of this report. The priorities were identified through a combination of community outreach, fieldwork, best planning practices, and the professional recommendations of the consulting team.

Defining Distinctive Character Areas

Land usage, development intensity, architectural style, and massing vary throughout the Center City area. While the entire study area can be considered the City's historic core, the Center City cannot be assessed as one monolithic area. It is a large study area, roughly twice the size (north to south) of Chicago's Magnificent Mile. The Center City is a quilt of different areas, the sum of different districts and neighborhoods. For example, the fabric along North Main changes dramatically crossing Parkway Avenue, transitioning from a historic streetwall into auto-oriented uses such as a Burger King. To this end, preliminary character areas are established later in this chapter. While these areas may function differently, *Imagine Oshkosh* will identify ways to stitch them together into a collective whole.

Promoting Mixed-Use

Mixed-Use is a core component of any successful center city or downtown area, combining ground floor activity and interest with residential density to patronize local businesses and fill the streets. At present, several buildings along North Main (including both inside of the historic core as well as farther north) do not fully utilize their mixed-use potential, with upper floors either vacant or underutilized. This could be for a variety of reasons, such as the complexity of converting a historic commercial building into residential units, a lack of interest among ownership, and/or the need for storage or office space for the tenant on the ground floor. Several vacant buildings are also suitable for mixed-use conversion, such as the 900 Block of South Main.

The City of Oshkosh does not permit mixed-use (ground floor commercial with upper floor residential) by right within its zoning code. Currently, it is a conditional use in commercial districts, requiring the same level of scrutiny as uses that do not belong in a downtown, such as drive-through restaurants or automobile repair shop. For comparison, both Fond du Lac (Chapter 720, Article VII, 720-50) and Appleton (Chapter 23, Article VI, Section 23-114) permit residential units above other ground floor uses by right within central business districts. The City has expressed interest in changing this regulation as a component of a zoning code update.

Depending on a building's location within the Center City, residential units may not be desired on the ground floor. Commercial uses that engage the street may be the most appropriate.

MIXED-USE BUILDINGS: UPPER FLOOR USE

Legend

- Retail & Service
- Multi-Family
- Office & Finance
- Vacant

Establishing Critical Mass in Targeted Locations

Successful downtowns and center cities are activity hubs with an integrated mixture of offices, residences, restaurants, entertainment venues, outdoor spaces, recreation, shopping, and more. This creates activity on the street such as people walking, biking, dining al fresco, and hanging out in the park. Such bustle and interaction is what draws people to live, work, and play in center cities across the country and gives them their sense of place.

Establishing a critical mass of activity requires aligning multiple public and private investments that can build on one another and reinforce each other. If activity is too spread out, it dilutes the investment and creates small pockets of activity that fail to add up to something larger.

The level and type of activity within Center City Oshkosh varies by location, time of day, day of the week, and season. Activity tends to peak during the summer months and during weekends with events/festivals such as shows at the Opera House, concerts at Leach Amphitheatre, and the Oshkosh Farmers Market. The most consistent activity center hub is along North Main Street between High and Waugoo Avenues in the south to E. Parkway Avenue in the north, but other activity nodes occur throughout the study area such as along the waterfront and along Oregon Street.

A core component of *Imagine Oshkosh* will be to identify and prioritize "critical mass areas" within the study area. These areas are candidates for investment prioritization and can have a catalytic impact on the Center City, expanding over time as economies of scale are achieved.

Engaging the Fox River & Stitching Together North Side / South Side

The Fox River is one of the prominent and defining features of the Central City area. Oshkosh has engaged its riverfront through projects like the Leach Amphitheatre, the river walk, and multiple parks, as well as through businesses like Dockside Tavern. Although the new Wisconsin Street Bridge has accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists, the other two bridges serving the heart of the area are less welcoming routes for non-motorized travel. As the south side of the river redevelops, the Plan needs to identify strategies to ensure the riverfront, on both sides, becomes the common gathering place that "seams" together the entire Central City district, rather than acts as a hard edge that delineates a separation between two different areas.

Balancing the University Presence

The University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh campus neighbors the study area to the west, employing roughly 1,300 people and educating 13,194 students annually. Although "off-campus," the western portion of the study area (roughly between Church Avenue in the north, Jackson Avenue to the east, Pearl Avenue to the south, and WI 44 to the west) caters to university students, with fraternity and sorority housing, student housing, fast food, and pizza delivery outlets.

The university is an important component of Center City Oshkosh, with its students living, working, dining, and recreating within the greater Downtown area. However, it is critical that the Center City maintain a balance between university orientation and a broader demographic. The district should not redevelop to the point where local businesses only cater to a "college town" demographic.

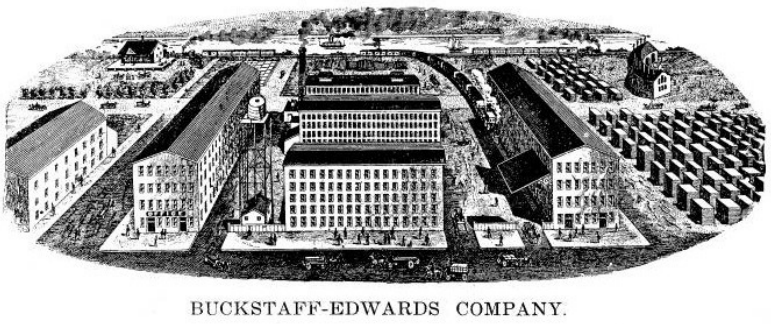
Stabilizing Surrounding Residential Areas

The fringe of the study area and the surrounding blocks are traditional neighborhoods mostly comprised of single family detached homes built between 1900 and 1945. These homes were built on a grid system on lots typically 7,500 square feet in size. Relative to the entire city's housing stock, these homes tend to be older, more likely to be renter-occupied, and with a high concentration of code violations per block (particularly in the neighborhoods to the northwest of the study area). The majority of homes are not a component of a historic district, but some have historic attributes that given them a unique presentation.

Imagine Oshkosh is not a plan for residential neighborhoods and many of the surrounding neighborhoods have undergone, or will undergo, their own neighborhood plans. However, the health and vitality of these neighboring blocks are vital to the success of Center City Oshkosh and will be recognized as such. A downtown cannot be successful unless its neighboring residential areas are thriving, stable, and invested in. A well-maintained center city housing stock provides: a consumer base for downtown businesses; families to put eyes on the street and populate public spaces and parks; visual interest for walking and bike rides; and a positive first impression as one as traveling into the center city. Aspects which may be addressed include property maintenance, owner occupancy, attractive landscaping, adequate lighting, historic preservation, and more.

More detailed information on neighboring residential areas can be found within **Chapter 3c: Living in the Center City**.

The transition of the waterfront from industrial to commercial and residential has been underway for some time, but the current opportunity to reshape so many sizeable properties along the waterfront in unprecedented in recent history.



Redevelopment of the Buckstaff Company site, which operated for 161 years along S. Main, is one opportunity to reimagine the future of Oshkosh's Center City.

Capitalizing on a Once-In-100 Years Transition

The opportunity to redevelop several key sites along the banks of the Fox River and Lake Winnebago, possibly in tandem, are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Oshkosh. Historically a woodworking and manufacturing community, the banks of the river and lake have been utilized mostly for heavy industry for more than a 100 years. Redevelopment of formerly industrial properties into residential or commercial uses has been occurring incrementally for several decades, stretching back to the opening of the Park Plaza Mall in July 1970 or the more recent residential development along Marion Road and Pearl Avenue.

Imagine Oshkosh should establish a comprehensive vision and redevelopment scenario for such vacant sites, including the Morgan Door site (formerly a door manufacturer), Lamico Mobility Products site (formerly a crutch manufacturer), Buckstaff Edwards Company site (formerly a casket and furniture manufacturer), and Pioneer Island (formerly a resort). Additionally, *Imagine Oshkosh* may also recommend expanding redevelopment of vacant sites into underutilized neighboring properties to create a larger redevelopment scenario.

While the preferred redevelopment program of these sites are not known at this time, owing to the need for further community outreach and analysis, there are several broad elements that should underline whatever is ultimately proposed. These elements were identified based upon sound planning principles, existing community outreach, and the professional recommendation of the consultant. Aggregately, future redevelopment should:

- Have an "urban" site design and architecture that fits into the existing fabric of the center city;
- Include residential units that can meet pent up residential demand and increase density in the center city;
- Provide amenities or experiences that are currently lacking in the center city and not detract from existing uses and businesses;
- Include quality office space that could support new office tenants and/or accommodate expansion of existing growing businesses already within the center city; and
- Have an engaging relationship with the waterfront, including open spaces and attractive visuals from the water.

Redevelopment should be the highest quality possible and with the maximum community benefit. Redevelopment opportunities such as these do not come often – and whatever is ultimately developed will remain standing for generations and it is integral to "get it right."

More detailed information on waterfront redevelopment and key catalyst sites can be found within **Chapter 3e: Developing Property in the Center City.**

The addition of The Rivers Senior Living and The Anthem on the north shore of the waterfront have revitalized formerly vacant areas and added residential density.

The usage of upper floors for residential living combined with ground floor commercial activity is a cornerstone of any successful downtown.

Increasing Residential Density

A residential population provides a consumer base for Center City businesses and leads to greater activity on the street, particularly in the early mornings and evenings when the "9-5 workforce" is not present. Center City Oshkosh could support a greater level of residential density, including new "ground-up" construction on vacant sites or parking lots, the conversion of vacant/underutilized upper floors in existing buildings into apartments or condos, adaptive reuse of historic structures for multi-family units, and reinvesting in single family detached homes in neighboring blocks. The type, style, scale, and intensity of residential development should vary by character area, however, the underlying approach should be to increase the number of residents living in the Center City.

More detailed information on residential density and housing development can be found within **Chapter 3c: Living in the Center City** and **Chapter 3e: Developing Property in the Center City**.

Attracting 21st Century Jobs

A "9-5 workforce" forms the backbone of any downtown or center city, with businesses not only paying taxes but also stimulating other retail, residential, hospitality, and entertainment spending. For example, the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) estimates the average weekly expenditure at stores and restaurants in close proximity to work at $129 per office worker (this includes buying grocery items and larger ticket items at retail stores).

Over the past decade, employers across the country have begun preferring downtown offices over suburban or interstate oriented office parks. This is due to the need to attract and retain young talent as well as improve both formal and informal collaboration ("happy accidents") integral to many 21st century white collar businesses. Local examples include Dealersocket and 4Imprint.

(Continued on the next page)

In many aspects, Center City Oshkosh is well-poised to capitalize on this trend, with a vibrant dining and bar scene, properties available for speculative or to-suit redevelopment, recreational amenities, proximity to University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, a special sense of place, and more. However, several employers and stakeholders identified a limited supply of quality office space, with much of the existing product either (a) occupied or (b) without the floorplans, parking, and/or amenities necessary for utilization.

A key component of *Imagine Oshkosh* should be ensuring that the Center City is a competitive and desirable location for the recruitment and expansion of white collar jobs.

Preserving History & A Sense of Place

In order to be successful, center cities require the coordination and combination of several components working together to create a unique sense of place. A unique sense of place is critical to growing a population, attracting and retaining businesses, reducing crime, generating new tax revenue, improving public health and civic engagement, and enhancing arts, entertainment, and recreation. Key elements to a successful sense of place include historic preservation of landmark buildings, the utilization of exciting public art, pedestrian orientation, a vibrant mixture of uses and shops, and special events unique to the center city.

Built Form

The built form of a downtown or center city describes the relationship of structures to one another, comparing size, style, and proximity. Traditional downtowns or "main street" areas feature a built form based on mass, density, and the creation of a continuous "street wall." Inline buildings, with little to no front and side yard setbacks are a common characteristic, creating compact, walkable neighborhoods. These buildings are built right up to the sidewalk, establishing a street wall of side-by-side united structures. This built form provides a classic pedestrian environment unique to city centers.

Traditional Storefronts

In the past, most of Center City Oshkosh had a traditional built form, with blocks of dense masonry commercial and industrial structures. This was a function of transportation limitations at the time, which required close proximity between uses and fostered walkability. Over the years, many historic buildings have been demolished to accommodate parking lots or new developments more oriented to the automobile, but several blocks remain largely intact.

N. Main Street, between Algoma Boulevard/Washington Avenue and Parkway Avenue is one example of traditional built form. These blocks provide a pedestrian oriented experience that is enjoyable and inherently walkable. Recent national trends have supported a return to these kinds of shopping experiences, preferring "park once" shopping districts with patio dining, local shops, and entertainment in a lively atmosphere. This built form is desirable in many districts within the *Imagine Oshkosh* study area.

Auto-Oriented

While traditional built form is found along portions of N. Main Street, S. Main Street, and Oregon Street – and fragments of it remain in other places, many segments of the study area have become auto-oriented. The presence of visible parking lots tells users that the intention is for them to visit by car, encouraging automobile use and perpetuating the expectation that parking should be located immediately outside a store or destination.

The intensity of auto-orientation varies throughout the study area, from fully auto-oriented uses with surface parking abutting the roadway and setback buildings (e.g. the Burger King at Parkway Avenue & N. Main) to somewhat auto-oriented buildings with parking accessible in the rear or side but may be built to the property line (e.g. Lara's Tortilla Flats). In the latter cases, it is clear that traditional storefronts have been coupled with the teardown of a neighboring traditional storefront to accommodate parking.

Other examples of auto-oriented built form include the City Centre complex (formerly Park Plaza Mall); the block bounded by State Street, Otter Avenue, Ceape Avenue, and Court Street; and the Dollar Tree along N. Main Street.

Civic/Institutional

Center City Oshkosh features a variety of civic and institutional uses, including City Hall, Police Department, Winnebago County Courthouse, Oshkosh Public Library, and Oshkosh Convention Center. Some of these uses are positioned on large sites with considerable parking. This, combined with the siting of some on "super blocks," can discourage walkability while also creating self-contained developments that have little interaction with the surrounding area. A compact built form is ideal, but larger campus style developments can provide relief from the urban environment if designed appropriately, within large lawns, parks, and plazas.

Detached Dwellings

The areas on the fringe of the study area, as well as surrounding neighborhoods, largely featuring detached dwellings. As the Center City has grown, residential blocks have converted to commercial or multi-family uses. This encroachment has also created pockets of detached dwellings in commercial areas, some of which have been converted to commercial uses (e.g. the Edward Jones investment office on Church Avenue near City Hall) while some remain residential (e.g. along the west side of N. Main Street between New York Avenue and Prospect Avenue). Single family uses along main arteries may need to be repositioned for commercial uses over time while those within neighborhoods should receive reinvestment.

Streetwall Assessment

A Sense of Enclosure

Enclosure refers to a room-like feeling that occurs on streets and other public spaces that are visually and physically defined by buildings, walls, trees, and other elements. It creates special sense of place and intimacy that are an important elements of successful downtowns.

A sense of enclosure is established when the total width of a street does not exceed the height of the buildings on the street and when buildings are lined next to one another to form a continuous street wall. Landscaping, in the form of trees and tall shrubs used to screen surface parking areas, can also contribute to a street wall. The sense of enclosure is disrupted when there are breaks in the street wall for curb cuts, parking lots, vacant sites, and inconsistent buildings setbacks. Additionally, streetwalls provide ground-level visual interest in the form of architecture, window shopping, plantings, public art, and more.

Streetwalls can very dependent upon the adjacent land use. For example, a residential street wall that consists of single-family homes can maintain a consistent street wall given the structures have a similar setback. Although they will have a number of curb cuts for driveways, they do not necessarily break up the street wall when considering the low-density nature. Conversely, curb cuts within a commercial district such as Main Street, where buildings are in close proximity, can significantly reduce the sense of enclosure. In these areas, parking lot landscaping that aligns with the building setbacks serve to link discontinuous buildings and maintain the street wall.

Assessment

The accompanying "Streetwall Assessment Map" depicts existing building and landscaping streetwalls, as well as locations without any streetwall. Not surprisingly, the Central Business District area and the Oregon Street corridor have the most intact streetwall, mostly formed by zero-setback mixed-use buildings. The areas lacking streetwall include the angular superblocks to the east of the CBD, the northern portion of N. Main Street, and many of the east-west avenues along the South Shore portion of the study area.

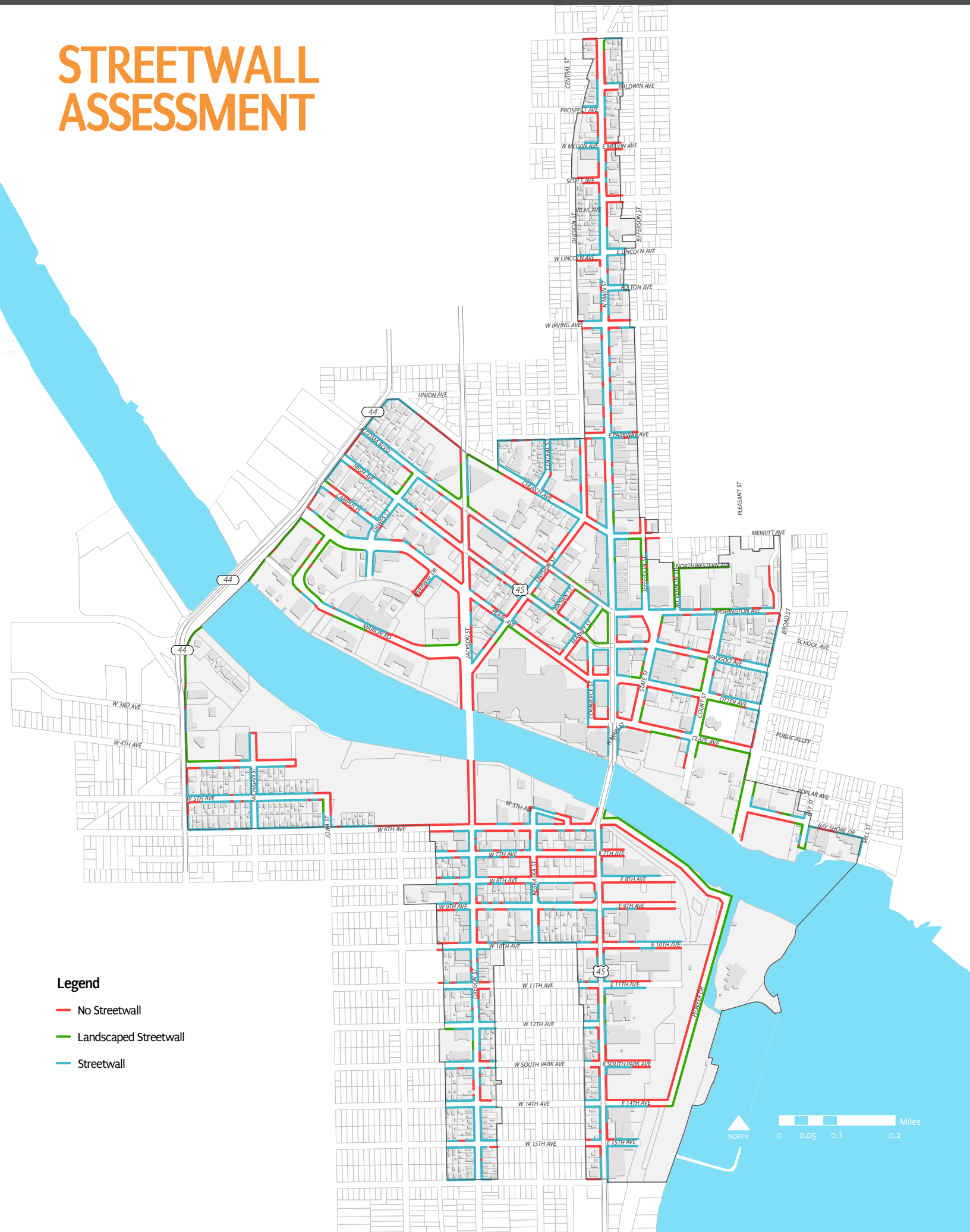
Mixed Use Streetwall. *This mixed-use streetwall, with no setback, along N. Main creates visual interest and an intimate sense of enclosure.*

Residential Streetwall. *While a front yard forms a setback between the sidewalk and home, the regular rhythm of detached dwellings creates a visual streetwall.*

Landscaping Streetwall. *"The alignment of shrubbery and pedestrian furniture against the sidewalk creates an informal streetwall mimicking the footprint building and helping to fill a gap between two buildings."*

Streetwall Gap. *This surface parking lot, with no structure or landscaping, is a gap in the visual streetwall along N. Main.*

STREETWALL ASSESSMENT



Historic Preservation

Center City Oshkosh contains many historic structures built in the 19th and early/mid-20th century when Oshkosh was one of the largest cities in Wisconsin and known as "Sawdust City." These historic structures range in style from Italianate to Romanesque, and contribute to an attractive physical environment and special sense of place. Because of downtown's "traditional main street" aesthetic, several scenes of the film Public Enemies (set in the 1930s and featuring Johnny Depp as gangster John Dillinger) were filmed along N. Main Street.

Existing Protections

The Center City contains two historic districts on the National Register: Irving-Church Historic District and the North Main Historic District. Additionally, some other Center City buildings are also on the register as individual properties, such as the Daily Northwestern Building (224 State Street) or the Brooklyn No. 4 Firehouse (17 W. 6th Avenue). These designations are authorized through the U.S. Department of the Interior and are primarily used for federal rehabilitation tax credits as well as marketing and publicity. Other benefits include exemptions from the State Historic Building Code and protection from negative impacts of federally funded projects nearby. They do not regulate demolition or exterior alteration of the properties (unless federal tax credits are requested).

Local ordinances often provide the toughest protection of historic properties, regulating alteration, renovation, improvement, demolition, and more. The City has a historic preservation ordinance, found within Chapter 30 - Article XVIII of the City Code. One key element of the ordinance is a heightened standard for demolition, requiring close scrutiny and public input. However, City policy has been to only designate a property when initiated by the property owner, even though the City Code reports that the Common Council or Landmarks Commission could also initiate a historic designation. As such, only two properties are currently protected in the study area: 226 High Street (a residence) and 50 W. 6th Avenue (The Granary).

Elements of the Downtown Overlay District (a zoning overlay covering roughly along North Main and Market Street from High Avenue/Waugoo Avenue to Parkway Avenue) help preserve the historic character of N. Main Street through building design standards. These regulations – including regarding building entrances, frontage, fenestration, materials, and more - apply to new building construction, additions, and façade renovations. The overlay district does not include any protections for demolition.

HISTORIC DISTRICT & LANDMARKS

Opportunities for Consideration

Given Oshkosh's rich history, there are several key issues and opportunities regarding historic preservation in the Center City. Possible issues for *Imagine Oshkosh* to consider are detailed below.

- **Working with property owners to place more Center City buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.** There are many buildings within the study area that are not listed on the National Register but may be eligible. As noted earlier, there are many benefits to being on the register.
- **Landmarking Center City buildings under the Historic Preservation Ordinance.** At present, any of Oshkosh's great Center City buildings could be demolished under the standard demolition process. This is because they are not protected under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- **Encouraging reinvestment and re-use of historic buildings.** This could include changes to city policy to make reinvestment easier, expanded availability of financing tools, technical assistance with the conversion process, assistance with grant applications, complimentary public right-of-way improvements, and more. Recent reinvestment projects in historic buildings include Dealersocket (531 N. Main Street), Bar 430 (430 N. Main Street), and Ski's Meat Market (502 N. Main Street). While not historic at this time, the adaptive re-use of the Park Plaza Mall into the mixed-use City Centre is a successful example of re-purposing an older building for a new era.

- **Improving and enhancing historic facades.** Some historic facades within the Center City area have been covered up, significantly altered, or fallen into disrepair. Matching grant funding up to $1,000 is currently offered by the Downtown Business Improvement District, but properties outside of the BID are not eligible. Opportunities may exist to expand such programming both financially as well as geographically.
- **Expanding design guidelines into appropriate areas or establishing new guidelines for these areas.** Currently, properties within the Downtown Overlay District are subject to design guidelines to ensure that the character and aesthetic are preserved over time, even as new development occurs. However, these guidelines do not apply to other Center City areas with similar character, such as Oregon Avenue or S. Main Street.
- **Utilizing pieces of older buildings or infrastructure for creative re-use.** When demolition or replacement of older structures occurs, elements of the structure could be re-used to show a connection to the past and cultivate sense of place. For example, if the CN rail bridge was to be replaced, the existing bridge could be repurposed as a bike/pedestrian crossing; another example would be to preserve elements of the former Buckstaff site (to be demolished) for usage in a public park or plaza, similar to Seattle's Gas Works Park.
- **Expanding signage that celebrates Oshkosh's history.** Existing signage includes informational signage along the banks of the Fox River explaining Riverside Park, Oshkosh's Lakes and Rivers, and the Chicago/Northwestern Railway Bridge. There may be opportunities to expand historic signage throughout the study area.

Built in 1912 and designed by famous Oshkosh architect William Waters, 913 Oregon Street once housed both the State Exchange Bank and the Oshkosh Public Library South Side Bank. Its rusticated neoclassical style is distinctive along the Oregon corridor. This property is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but may be eligible.

501 N. Main Street, also referred to as the Webster Block, was built in 1895 in the Queen Anne style. Its prominent, castle-like turret is one of Oshkosh's most distinctive architectural elements. This property is one that should be considered for protection under the City's Historic Preservation Ordinances.

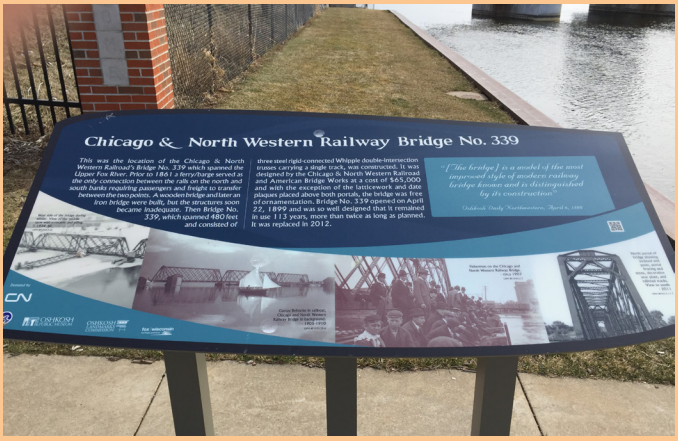
DealerSocket, an automotive website and digital marketing firm, recently moved into 531 N. Main Street. The former Frank Percy Gun and Fur Shop, built in 1900 and 1908, was repainted and improved to accommodate this new tech user. It is one of many examples of new investment in historic buildings in the Center City. State and Federal HIstoric Tax Credits were utilized in the renovation.

Stricter regulations could prevent buildings that are incongruent with the surrounding historic character of the Center City, such as the Chase Bank Building on the corner of Waugoo and High."

This N. Main bar is one example of a historic property that could benefit from a façade improvement returning the exterior to its historic character.

While the remainder of the factory complex was torn down, the bottling department of the former Peoples Brewery Company was preserved and incorporated into a new building, now occupied by Blended Waxes. The brewery was local to Oshkosh, founded in 1911 and the first black owned brewery in the United States.

Decorative elements such as this mosaic tile along N. Main Street should be preserved whenever possible.



Informational signage about Oshkosh history, such as this sign explaining the history of Oshkosh's rail bridge, engages pedestrians and inspires community pride.

Public Art

The benefits of public art are well documented. It is said that public art can develop a sense of community pride, stimulate social interaction, encourage healthier life styles, reduce vandalism and cost, promote ecology, nurture and strengthen grass roots cultures, expand learning and awareness, heal the social fabric, explore risk and make lateral connections between the various people and agencies responsible for the public art.

Center City Oshkosh has relatively limited public art. Existing public art includes including the Opera House Square sundial and a colorful mural of community history across from the Opera House. There are also several "ghost murals" which are faded advertisements from past commercial or industrial which add a unique flair to downtown, such as the faded Bull Durham advertisement depicted in the accompanying photograph.

One previously successful public art campaign undertaken in Oshkosh was **Pride of Oshkosh** in 2004. The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Paine Art Center and Gardens, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, and Oshkosh Northwestern partnered together to fund the placement of thirty three life-sized lion sculptures from around the community. The lions were modeled after "Harris," one of the bronze lions guarding the front entrance of the Oshkosh Public Library. The project was inspired by Chicago's successful **Cows on Parade**. The lions were ultimately auctioned off, with the proceeds benefiting the Oshkosh Public Library.

Imagine Oshkosh should consider the addition of public art in Center City Oshkosh, including possible examples and locations that could benefit. Examples of successful programs in other communities that could be evaluated include: providing public art in municipal capital improvement projects (Ann Arbor, MI), requiring a "percent for art" requirement for new development (Oakland, CA), and hosting public art competitions such as Art Prize (Grand Rapids, MI).

This colorful mural across from the Oshkosh Opera House is an example of great public art

Ghost murals, such as this one on the south wall of Terry's Bar at 688 N. Main Street, take a viewer back to a different era and add character to an area

Building & Site Design

The design of individual buildings in the Center City are fundamental to its aggregate character and environment. *Imagine Oshkosh* may examine and suggest standards or guidelines for desired building placements, scale, bulk and proportion, style, materials, doors and entrances, windows, rooflines, lighting, landscaping, and more. It is expected that the type and intensity of standards/guidelines may vary by neighborhood/district. This section within the Existing Conditions Report depicts some general design and visual texture issues, both good and bad, within the Center City for further exploration within the planning process.

Colors. *From the south shore of the Fox River looking north, the Central Business District can sometimes appear visually bland, dominated by beiges and browns.*

Illumination. *The usage of different colored lights at night to illuminate bridges and buildings, such as the Exclusive Company, gives the Center City character and communicates excitement.*

Signage. *The type, location, and appearance of building signage helps communicate the character and profile of the Center City. The quality of signage varies throughout the study area.*

Orientation. *Buildings such as the Chase Bank building are oriented, both spatially and visually, away from the pedestrian. Dark glass obscures pedestrian interest and the setback angular placement of the front door reduces interaction with the street.*

Windows. *Display windows on the ground floor of commercial buildings are a distinguishing feature of many buildings. The windows of Ski's Meat Market and Winnebago Bicycle at 502 N. Main Street, for example, engage the pedestrian through colorful displays of food and bicycles.*

Rooflines. *Commercial rooflines within Center City Oshkosh are typically flat, sometimes with parapets. The rooflines of some buildings are edged with accent masonry. Many rooflines could be improved upon to create greater visual interest.*

Landscaping. *Landscaping softens the street edge and plays an important role by integrating color and seasonal interest into the Center City. Many parking lots, such as this one along N. Main Street, lack landscaping and screening.*

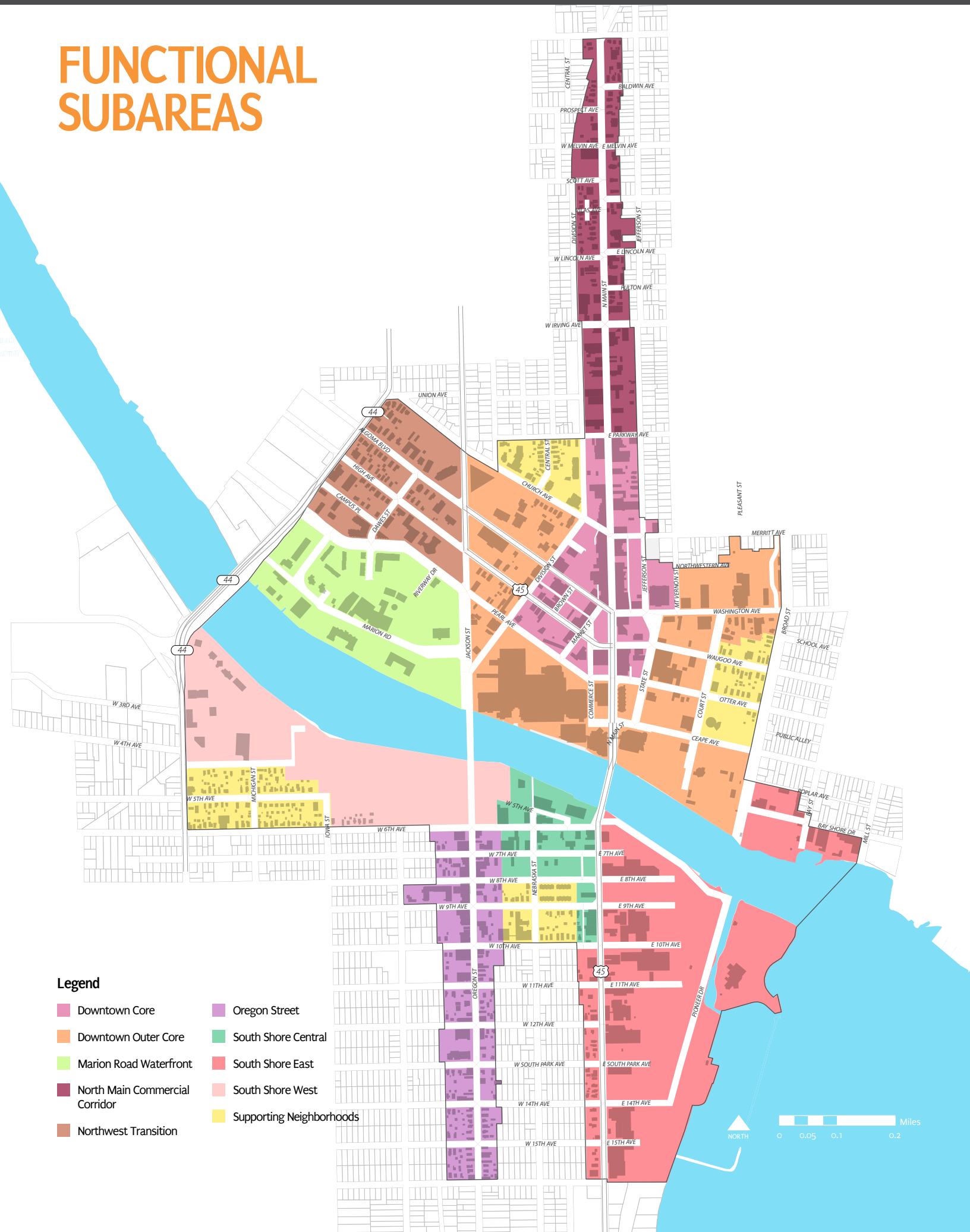
Materials. *The use of appropriate building materials such as masonry is key to compatible rehabilitation and new construction, as well as communicating quality and an attractive aesthetic. The usage of metal siding on businesses, for example, should likely be prohibited on new construction within most, if not all of, the Center City.*

Functional Subareas

As noted earlier, Oshkosh's Center City is a collection of neighborhoods located in the historic core of Oshkosh. While the entire study area can be considered the City's historic core, it cannot be assessed as one monolithic area. Land usage, development intensity, architectural style, desired usage, and massing vary throughout the Center City.

To that end, this section establishes preliminary sub-areas (or "neighborhoods" or "districts") to help guide the planning process and make the Center City's large geography more manageable. Sub-areas were identified based upon existing uses, desired future uses (**note: this is preliminary**), built forms, physical boundaries, character, market potential, and more. Moving forward, *Imagine Oshkosh* will provide further detail regarding each subarea, as well as recommendations for addressing issues within and between different areas. The boundaries of each sub-area may adjust as the planning process continues.

FUNCTIONAL SUBAREAS



Legend

- Downtown Core
- Downtown Outer Core
- Marion Road Waterfront
- North Main Commercial Corridor
- Northwest Transition
- Oregon Street
- South Shore Central
- South Shore East
- South Shore West
- Supporting Neighborhoods

North Main Commercial Corridor

The North Main Commercial Corridor Subarea is a largely auto-oriented corridor along N. Main Street from Parkway Avenue in the south to New York Avenue in the north. A clear demarcation between this sub-area and the Core Downtown Subarea to the south exists at the intersection of Parkway Avenue and N. Main Street, where historic properties with no setback transition to a sports bar, fast food restaurant, and appliance store with surface parking. Lot depth varies along the corridor, with some parcels extending the depth of the entire block while others are backed by single family detached homes. While the city's streetscaping project has extended into this subarea and some properties have a historic design, surface parking lots and pole signs line the corridor, reflecting an auto-centric orientation.

Downtown Core

The Downtown Core Subarea is the entertainment, cultural, and social heart of the city. It is what everyone would typically agree is "downtown" or the "central business district," and is home to some of Oshkosh's most cherished destinations and businesses, such as the Grand Opera House or The Roxy. Buildings are typically built to the property line, two or more stories in height, and mixed-use with commercial on the ground floor and residential or office uses on the upper floors. Bump-outs, streetscaping, and pedestrian amenities have reduced the right-of-way to encourage slow speeds and facilitate pedestrian mobility. Opera House Square provides a central green space for the community, particularly during warmer months. On the whole, the Downtown Core is fairly successful, and the issue challenge remains in taking it "good to great."

Downtown Outer Core

The Outer Core Subarea exhibits characteristics of the Downtown Core, but currently lacks sufficient development intensity and a compact built form. Although there are some large employers and elements of a "downtown feel," surface parking, setbacks, superblocks, and lower density development erode this area's pedestrian friendly atmosphere. Some of the key land uses within the Outer Core include the City Centre complex, City Hall, Police Department, and Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel and Convention Center. It is expected that as the Downtown Core continues to energize, "spill-over" activity and investment will move into the neighboring blocks of the Outer Core.

Marion Road Waterfront

The Marion Road Waterfront Subarea is a mostly residential district along Marion Road and Pearl Road on the north shore of the Fox River. While in the midst of an urban environment, the built form of this area is somewhat suburban, with buildings resembling outlot developments. Buildings are set back from the road with large visible surface parking lots along the right-of-way, due to the fact frontage was moved up to the Riverwalk. Formerly an industrial area, it has undergone significant redevelopment with the addition of multi-family buildings such as Rivers Senior Living, and The Anthem, Morgan Crossing. Commercial frontage forms the western and eastern boundaries along Wisconsin Street and Jackson Street. Two industrial properties remain to this day in the midst of this mostly residential area: the active Mercury Marine motor boat testing facility and the vacant Lamico factory. Both uses should likely be transitioned out of this area.

A beautiful riverwalk forms the southern boundary of the study area, although other pedestrian connections such as trails between developments are lacking. Active overhead utilities cut through the study area between the Mercury Marine facility and the Rivers Senior Living.

Northwest Transition

The Northwest Transition Subarea serves as a transition area between the higher density Downtown area and the distinct University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh campus area. It contains a blend of uses. Auto-oriented commercial uses form the eastern and western boundaries along Jackson Road and Wisconsin Street, with single family residential blocks between the two roadways. Institutional uses such as the Winnebago County Courthouse and Most Blessed Sacrament Parish can also be found on the eastern border of the sub-area. Compared to the Marion Road Waterfront, it has much more of a "traditional neighborhood" feel even though many properties are rentals.

Generally, uses within the sub-area are tailored towards college students, with single family homes converted into rentals, fraternity houses, sorority houses, fast food such as Hardees, and pizza chains as Papa John's and Toppers.

South Shore West

Unlike other subareas which are more constrained by existing development, the South Shore West Waterfront Subarea is a blank slate. The subarea is defined by the vacant 27 acres Morgan Door site, which occupies over 1,500 linear feet of waterfront along the Fox River. Currently it is being used by Oshkosh Corporation for vehicle storage, however, plans are underway to redevelop the site into a mixed-use district comprised of a grocery store, commercial uses, multi-family units, condominiums, and town-homes (Morgan District). The road network within this subarea is minimal, particularly within the Morgan Door site, and redevelopment represents an opportunity to establish a more complete network as well as extend the riverwalk.

The western portion of the sub-area, along WI 44, contains office park and auto-oriented commercial uses. Bordering the sub-area are several blocks of single family detached homes which may face redevelopment pressure as critical mass is achieved within the area.

Oregon Street

The Oregon Street Subarea is a multi-block neighborhood commercial district that almost functions like a "mini-downtown." It is largely defined by commercial or mixed-use properties built to the property line, some with historic characteristics. The upper floors of some properties have been converted to residential units. Uses along the corridor are mostly local businesses catering to Oshkosh residents and on-street parking or rear parking supports patrons arriving by automobile. Over the years, some traditionally-designed properties have been demolished and replaced with surface parking lots (e.g. SE corner of Oregon Street & 9th Avenue) or more auto-oriented designs (e.g. American Auto Sales), however, the streetwall remains largely intact.

Single family residential uses can be found along the southern part of the Oregon Street corridor as well as behind some of the commercial uses. Vacancy is a fairly acute within some of the northern blocks. Relative to Downtown Oshkosh, sidewalks are narrow and the streetscape is fairly plain, however, decorative and pedestrian oriented streetlights add charm.

South Shore Central

The South Shore Central Subarea is sandwiched between the South Shore West and South Shore East Subareas. It contains a mixture of light industrial and commercial uses and vacant properties, which give the district a funky "warehouse district" vibe. This subarea represents an opportunity to harken back to Sawdust City and preserve a more industrial feel while accommodating commercial and residential uses. Unlike the other two South Shore subareas, the South Shore Central subarea is not expected to be wholesale redeveloped. It does have, however, many opportunities for targeted infill development, such as the large vacant city-owned lot along S. Main between 7th and 8th Avenues. The district also has many architecturally rich buildings suitable for adaptive re-use, such as four story Miles Kimball building, the 900 Block of Main Street, The Granary at 50 W. 6th Avenue, or the Brooklyn #4 Hook and Ladder Firehouse. It is expected that activity in this area will increase as the other two South Shore neighborhoods are redeveloped.

South Shore East

The South Shore East Subarea is a currently an industrial area intermixed with some auto-oriented commercial and single family detached uses. Two of the most notable sites within the subarea are vacant: Pioneer Island and the Buckstaff Company site. South Shore East's existing industrial character is out-of-place with its surrounding districts and existing uses are not the highest and best use of the land.

As with the South Shore West subarea, this subarea is largely a blank slate and parcel consolidation will facilitate wholesale redevelopment into an exciting mixed-use district at the foot of Downtown Oshkosh. However, unlike the South Shore West Subarea, properties have not been cleared and industrial businesses will need to be voluntarily relocated to designated industrial parks. To the extent possible, buildings with historic characteristics should be integrated into the new development scenario or moved to a new location.

This subarea also includes several light industrial properties on the north shore of the riverfront, adjacent to the Downtown Outer Core subarea and across from Pioneer Island. These properties have similar conditions to the S. Main Street properties and similar redevelopment is expected.

Supporting Neighborhoods

The Supporting Neighborhoods Subarea consists of residential blocks located alongside or in the midst of mostly commercial or mixed-use districts. While neighborhood character might vary slightly by location, generally these blocks are comprised of single family detached homes, with some townhomes and multi-family properties. Depending on the level of activity and investment within neighboring districts, these areas might see reinvestment as residential properties or redevelopment as part of a larger project. One exception would be the Irving Church neighborhood, which is historic and should be preserved. Key challenges include high rental occupancy, poor property maintenance, and public safety concerns.

CHAPTER 3B

Living in the Center City

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130 Establishing Critical Mass: Targeted Residential Development

132 Providing Day-to-Day Amenities

133 Stabilizing Surrounding Neighborhoods

A robust residential population is critical for any successful downtown or center city. It provides a consumer base for Center City businesses and leads to greater activity on the street, particularly on weekends and in the evenings when the "9-5" workforce is not present. A key component of *Imagine Oshkosh* will be to increase residential density in the city core by identifying housing needs and quality of life issues that can attract new residents.

This section details key information and issues relating to living in the Center City, including:

- **Center City Population**, detailing **who** currently lives in the Center City as well as key demographic attributes of the population;
- **Center City Housing**, providing information on **what** types of housing exist **where** within the Center City, as well as market trends, housing attributes, and unmet demand;
- **Quality of Life**, detailing key quality of life issues within the Center City that affect living, including services, parks, and amenities; and
- **Surrounding Neighborhoods**, providing information on the single family neighborhoods that surround Center City Oshkosh and their relevance to the planning process.

Data Sources

Data for this chapter were acquired from a variety of sources, including the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2010 US Census, Oshkosh Business Improvement District, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, Zillow, Trulia, and ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of business and market data.

The figures presented in this chapter are the most recent and reliable available, as of the drafting of this report. The majority of data cited in this study relate to the following sources:

- Figures from 2010 reflect data provided by the U.S. Census.
- 2010-2014 American Community Survey data reflects a five year estimated average based on surveys conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau during that time period.
- Data for years 2016 and 2021 are estimates and projections developed by ESRI.

Center City Population

This section provides an overview of who currently lives in the Center City as well as key demographic attributes for this population. Data is also provided for surrounding areas having an influence on the Center City: a five-minute drive time ("primary market area" or PMA) and fifteen-minute drive time ("secondary market area" or SMA) from Opera House Square. This allows for comparisons between the Center City and the "greater area," as well as providing data for assessing retail potential later in the report.

Population Levels

ESRI estimates that 2,784 people live in Center City Oshkosh in 2016. The Center City population is also growing; by 2021, the population is estimated to increase to 2,874. It is expected that the population will grow much more significantly if the Morgan District is developed as proposed. This trend mirrors the five-minute and fifteen-minute drive times, which are both encountering slight population increases.

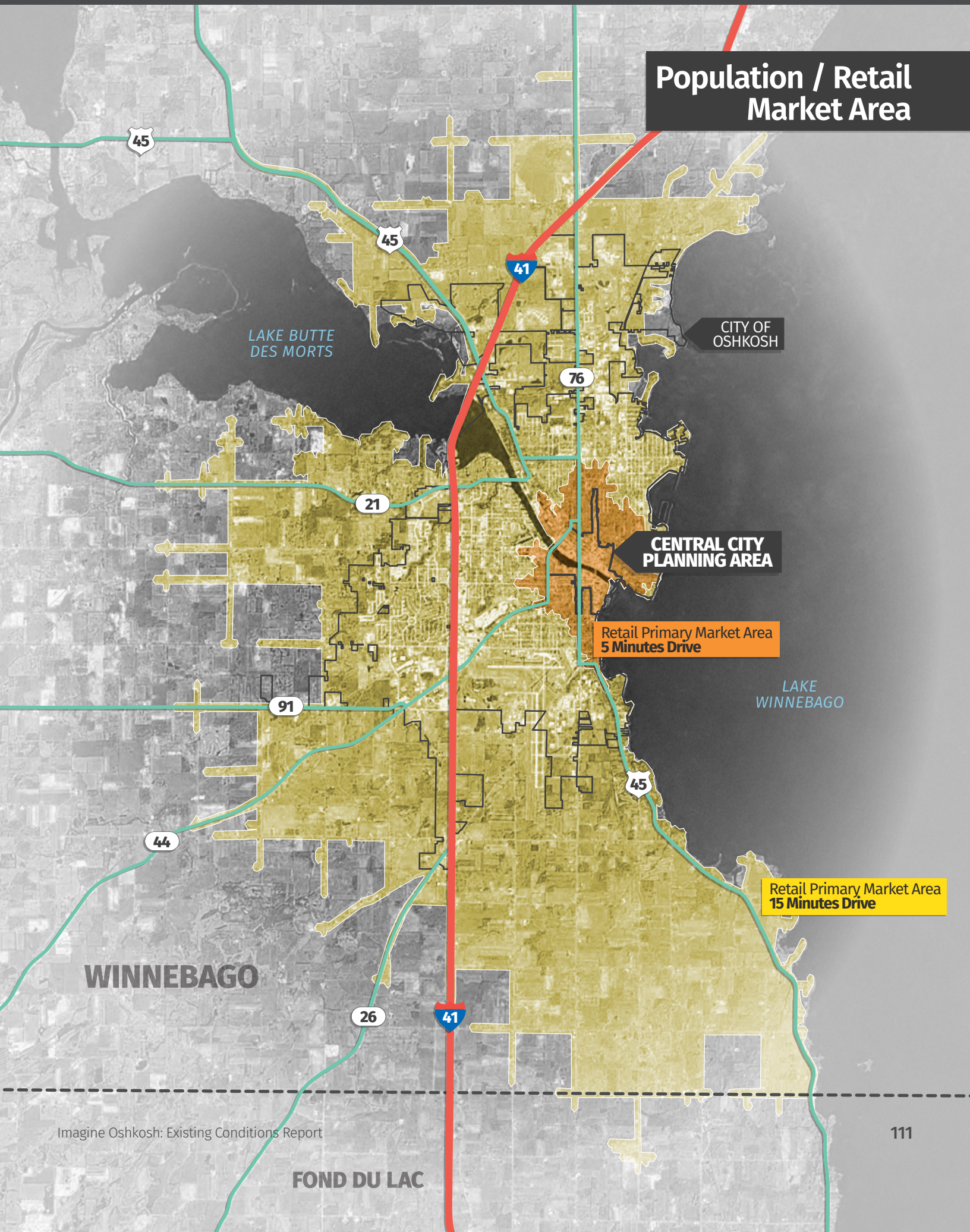
With an estimated city-wide population of 66,500 in 2016, 4.2% of Oshkosh residents live in the Center City. This is the highest percentage of any center city/downtown in the region, compared to Fond du Lac (4.1%), Green Bay (4.0%), Appleton (3.7%), and Neenah (3.5%).

General Profile

Some of the key attributes of Center City residents include:

- **They are relatively young.** In 2016, the median age of a Center City resident is 25.4 years of age. This is slightly younger than the PMA (26.8 years) and much younger than the SMA (37.1 years) and national median (38.0 years). An examination of population distribution by age shows that this is likely due to the concentration of University of Wisconsin Oshkosh students – the 20-24 year old cohort comprises 34.1% of the population (compared to only 21.3% in the PMA and 11.6% in the SMA). The population is expected to age slightly over the next five years, but remain young.
- **They are mostly white.** In 2016, the U.S. Census showed that 88.6% of the Center City population is White, followed by 3.7% Black, 3.3% Asian, 2.9% Multiracial, 0.8% Native American. This is relatively on par with both the PMA and SMA, where the white population comprises 89.5% and 89.9% of the population, respectively.
- **Household incomes are low.** In 2016, the median household income for a Center City resident is $21,101, much lower than the PMA ($33,607) and the SMA ($45,916). The currently low income level is likely due to the presence of university students and seniors, as well as housing authority properties at 528 N. Main Street (Raulf Place) and 100 Court Street (Court Tower). Incomes for both the Center City and PMA are projected to decline slightly over the next five years, while the SMA is expected to see rising incomes.
- **Roughly one in five residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.** In 2016, it is estimated than 18.5% of Center City residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. This is lower than both the PMA (22.4%) and the SMA (28.1%), likely a reflection that there is also a disproportionate percentage of the population that is in the process of obtaining a degree.

Population / Retail Market Area



Takeaways

A growing population shows continued interest and desirability in living in Center City Oshkosh. With several new market-rate housing developments either proposed or underway, it is very possible that Center City Oshkosh will outperform the population projections issued by ESRI. New residential growth will also lead to more consumer spending in the Center City at bars, restaurants, dry cleaners, delis, and more, and increase the Center City's competitiveness for other forms of investment and resources.

Compared to the PMA and SMA, Center City Oshkosh residents are much younger and less affluent. This is a not necessarily unique attribute, for many cities have similar demographics as a result of outward growth and suburbanization. The opportunity for *Imagine Oshkosh* will be identify the tools necessary to diversify – both socially and economically - the Center City population. While families may prefer single family detached homes in traditional neighborhoods, there may be opportunities to increase the population of young professionals, professional households without children, single mid-career professionals, and empty nesters. Additionally, single family neighborhoods near the Center City could be attractive destinations for young families.

Demographic Summary (2010, 2016, 2021)

Center City Oshkosh, Primary Market Area (PMA), Secondary Market Area (SMA)

Center City

	2010	2016	2021	Projected Change (2010-2021)	
Population	2,630	2,784	2,874	+244	+9.3%
Households	1,315	1,390	1,437	+122	+9.3%
Average Household Size	1.96	1.97	1.97	+0.01	+0.5%
Median Age	25.0	25.4	26.5	+1.5	+6.0%
Median Household Income	--	$21,101	$20,673	-$428	-2.0%

Primary Market Area - 5 Minute Drivetime

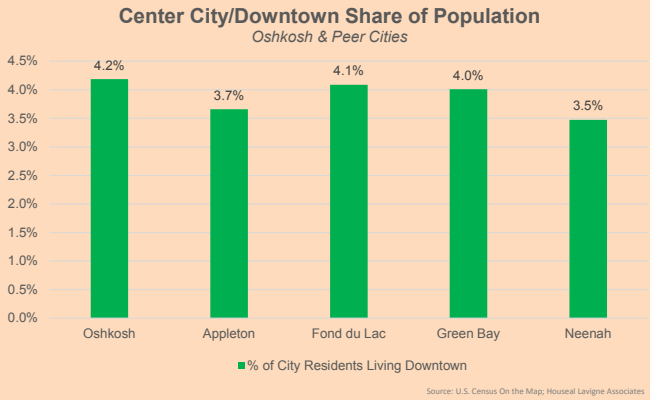
	2010	2016	2021	Projected Change (2010-2021)	
Population	22,070	22,223	22,396	+326	+1.5%
Households	8,446	8,589	8,691	+245	+2.9%
Average Household Size	2.31	2.30	2.29	-0.02	-0.9%
Median Age	25.8	26.8	27.4	+1.6	+6.2%
Median Household Income	--	$33,607	$32,398	-$1,209	-3.6%

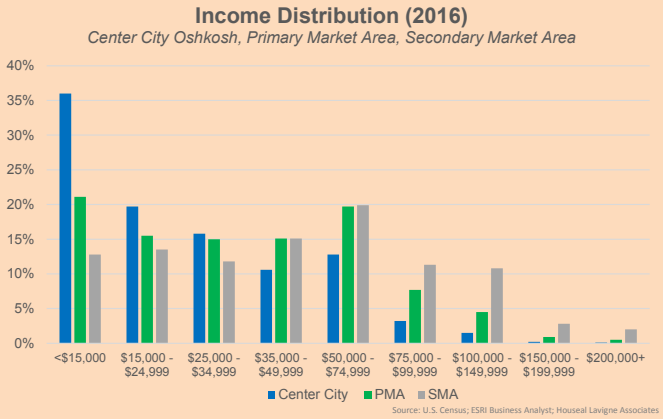
Secondary Market Area - 15 Minute Drivetime

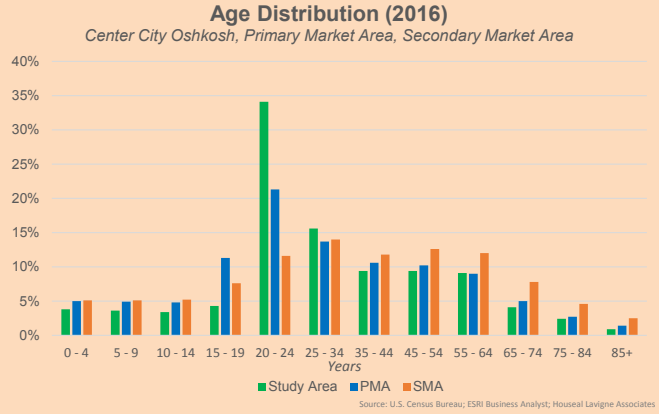
	2010	2016	2021	Projected Change (2010-2021)	
Population	75,396	76,036	76,629	+1,233	+1.6%
Households	30,192	30,785	31,179	+987	+3.3%
Average Household Size	2.27	2.25	2.24	-0.03	-1.3%
Median Age	35.2	36.1	37.1	+1.9	+5.4%
Median Household Income	--	$45,916	$51,103	+$5,187	+11.3%

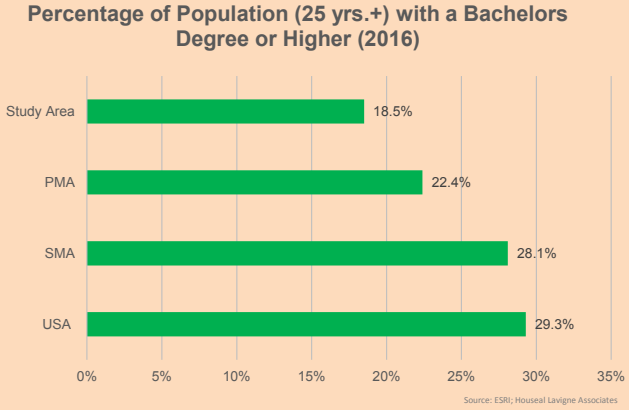
Sources: U.S. Census; ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

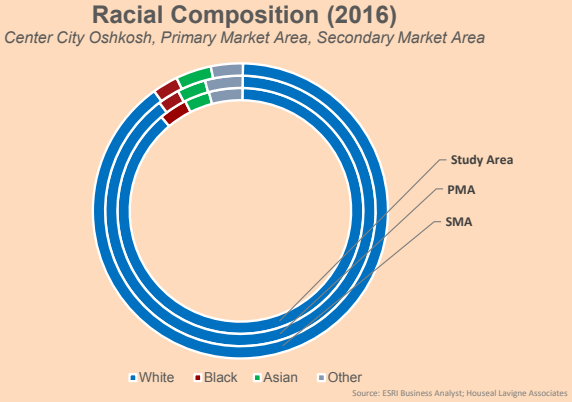
Demographics - Supporting Facts & Figures











Center City Housing

This section assesses the Center City housing market, including the existing supply, type, tenure, age, development activity, rental pricing, sales volume, sales pricing, and more. This section concludes with a residential demand analysis that outlines the projected demand for housing within Oshkosh's Center City.

Just as driving distance has a significant influence in determining the market for downtown businesses, the quality and character of the housing stock in Oshkosh and neighboring communities will influence a given household's decision to purchase or rent a home in Center City Oshkosh. For purposes of this study, the Market Area is defined as the communities of Oshkosh, Appleton, Neenah, Menasha, and Fond du Lac.

Supply

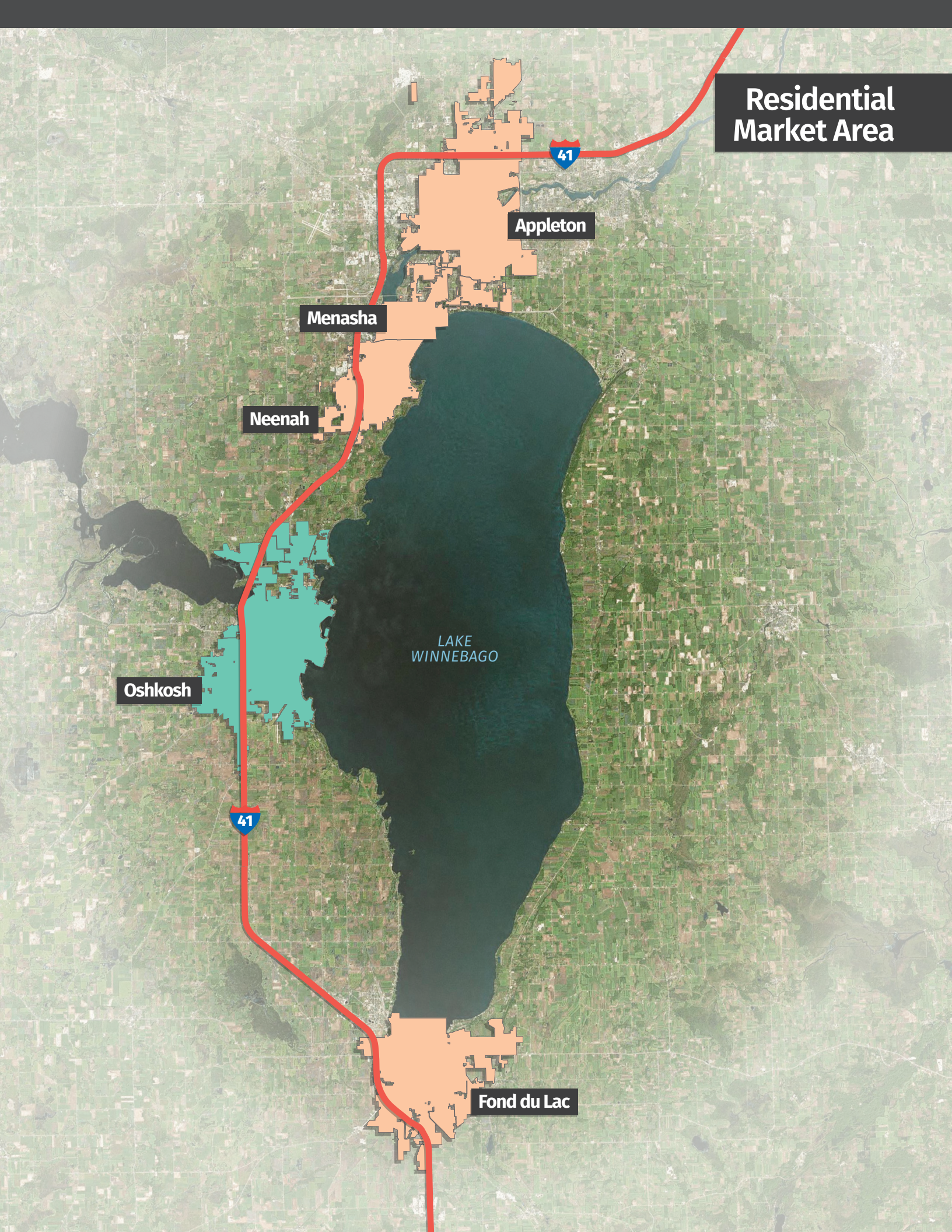
ESRI estimates that the study area contains 1,458 housing units in 2016. The housing supply is projected to grow over the next five years to 1,505. It is expected that the total number of units will exceed ESRI's projections if several currently proposed projects are completed as proposed.

With an estimated city-wide supply of 28,868 housing units in 2016, 5.1% of Oshkosh's housing units are located within the Center City. This is the highest concentration of any downtown/center city in the region, as depicted in the accompanying chart.

General Profile

Some of the key attributes of Center City housing units include:

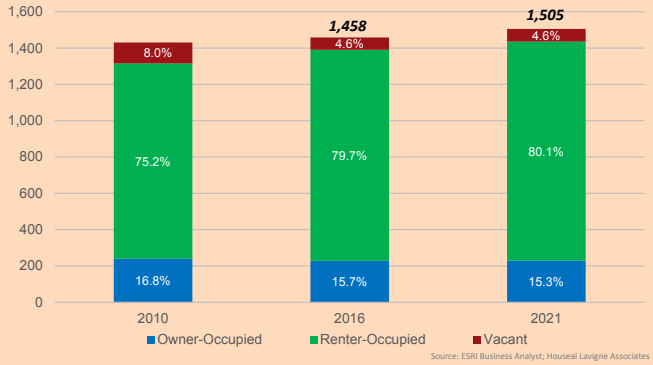
- **A plurality (49%) of housing units are multi-family units.** Not surprisingly, the Center City contains a greater percentage of multi-family units than the greater market area (49.0% vs 24.2%). The study area also contains a fair amount of single family detached (28.0%) and attaches uses (23.1%).
- **The vast majority (79.7%) of housing units are renter-occupied.** This is much higher than the market area (36.3%).
- **Residential vacancy is low (4.6%).** The vacancy rate in the Center City is lower than the market area (6.3%), and the Center City vacancy rate has declined noticeably over the past five years from 8.0% to 4.6%).
- **The housing stock in the Center City is older than the market area.** In the Center City, more than half (56.7%) of units were built prior to 1939, compared to only 24.9% in the market area. 13.3% of the Center City housing supply was built after 2000.
- **The value of units within the Center City is lower than that of the market area.** In 2016, the median home value in the Center City was $89,312, roughly $40,000 less than that of the market area ($130,370).
- **Residential land uses are found throughout the study area in various forms and sizes.** The types of residential land uses vary from single family detached uses on residential blocks to high-rise multi-family buildings, from upper floor loft conversions to townhomes.


Residential Market Area
41
Appleton
Menasha
Neenah
LAKE WINNEBAGO
Oshkosh
41
Fond du Lac

Housing - Supporting Facts & Figures

Total Housing Units (2010, 2016, 2021)

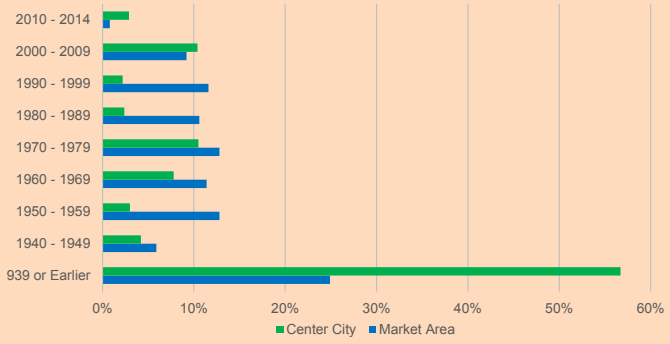
Center City Oshkosh



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Housing Units by Age (2010-2014 Avg.)

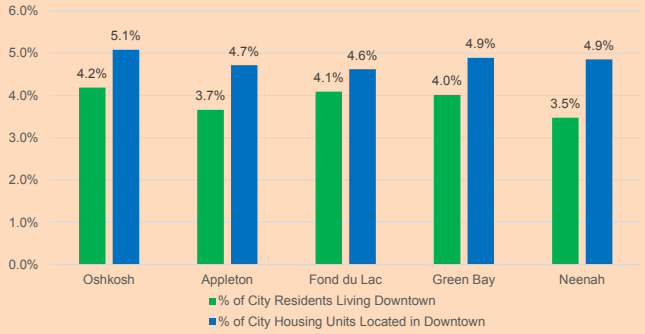
Center City Oshkosh & Market Area



Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Downtown Share of Population & Housing

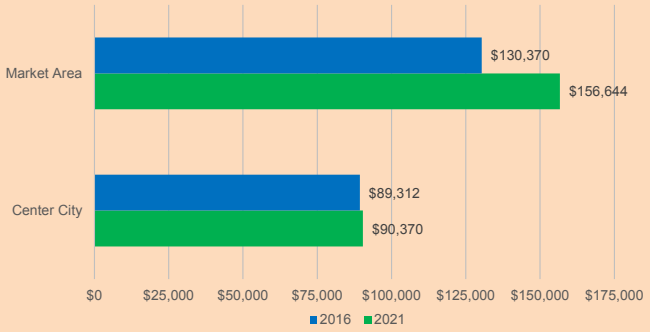
Oshkosh & Peer Cities



Source: U.S. Census On the Map; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Median Home Value (2016, 2021)

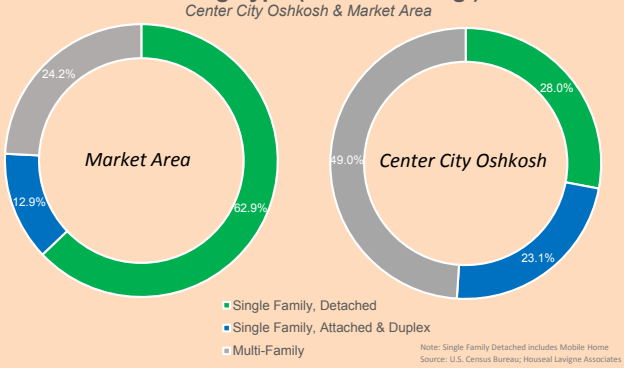
Center City & Market Area



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Housing Type (2010-2014 Avg.)

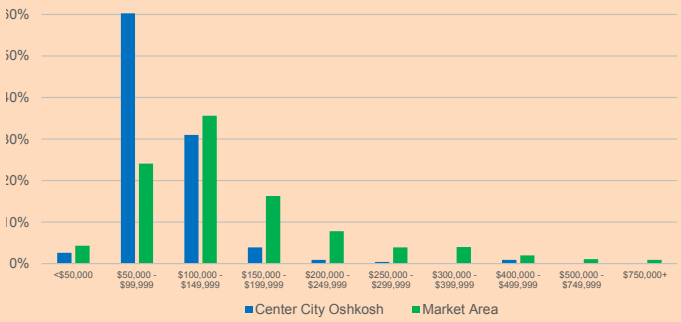
Center City Oshkosh & Market Area



Note: Single Family Detached includes Mobile Home
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Owner-Occupied Home Values (2016)

Center City Oshkosh & Market Area

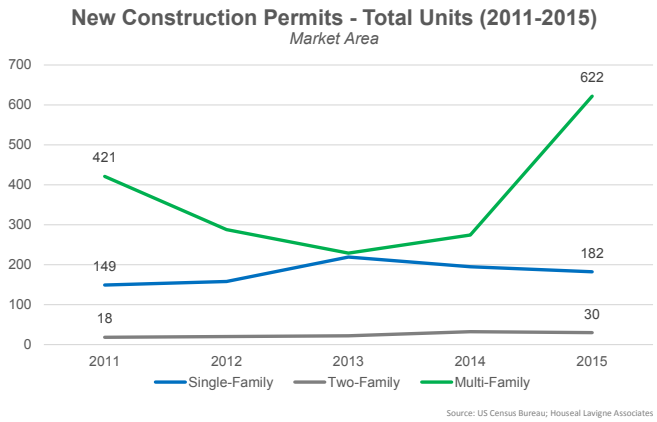


Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Building Permit Activity

Data for new construction permits was gathered for market area communities, as data for individual downtowns and center cities was unavailable. The accompanying table depicts the combined permitting activity of the five market area communities over the past five years (2011 to 2015). Some of the key findings include:

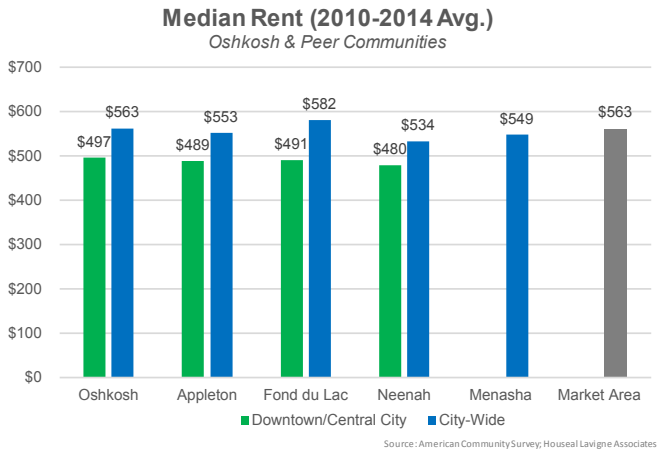
- **The total number of permitted units has increased, suggesting a ramping up of development activity within the overall market area.** In 2015, 834 units were permitted, the highest volume of permits issued in the past five years and up from 501 units in 2014.
- **Multi-family development is driving the increase in permitted units.** In 2015, for example, 74.6% of the units permitted were multi-family units. Over the past five years, 64% of all units permitted were multi-family units.
- **26.0% of all units permitted within the past five years occurred in Oshkosh.** Of the 2,859 permits issued: 1,164 units were in Appleton (40.7%), 742 units in Oshkosh (26.0%), 326 units in Neenah (11.4%), 301 units in Fond du Lac (10.5%), and 247 units in Menasha (8.6%). For context, 29.1% of the market area population is found within Oshkosh.



Rents

Roughly 8 in 10 units within the Center City are renter-occupied. As shown in the accompanying graph, the median rent in Center City Oshkosh is estimated at roughly $500, which is on par with most of the downtowns/center cities within the market area. However, Center City rents are lower than city-wide medians ($534-$582) as well as the median within the market area ($563).

More specifically, an inventory was conducted in June 2016 to assess rents of specific Center City/Downtown properties within the market area. Properties that were included either (a) have publicly listed units available for rent or (b) publicly list their rental rates. As of the drafting of this report, there was no data available for units within Downtown Neenah or Menasha.



Based upon this online inventory, the average rents of listed or advertised properties in Center City Oshkosh was $914, with an average of $0.88 per square foot. It can be surmised that newer units in Center City Oshkosh are renting at higher rates than older units and that the current marketplace consists of rents of roughly $0.90 to $1.00 per square foot for newer units (**note: this figure was produced by filtering out units older than 15 years**). Figures from the June 2016 inventory are reinforced by the Tax Increment Financing Application for the new mixed-use Morgan District, submitted by the developer in December 2015. The developer proposes, on average, $925 dollars in monthly rent for 900 square feet of apartment space, or $0.97 per square foot.

Inventory: Rental Multi-Family & Townhome Units (June 2016)

Market Area: Center City Oshkosh, Downtown Appleton, & Downtown Fond du Lac

	Project	Address	BR	BA	Size (SF)	Asking Rent	Asking Rent PSF / Month	Year Built
Center City Oshkosh	--	221 High Avenue #A	3	2	1,200	$995	$0.83	1919
	Dawes Street Apartments	95 Dawes Street	3	2.5	1,520	$1,350	$0.89	2005
	Converted Upper Floor	705 N. Main Street #A	3	1	1,200	$900	$0.75	1920
	Rivers Senior Living	475 Marion Road	1	1	Unavailable	$610-$700	Unavailable	2011
	Rivers Senior Living	475 Marion Road	2	1	Unavailable	$720-840	Unavailable	2011
	100 North Main	100 N. Main Street - 1A	1	1	800	$690	$0.86	2003
	100 North Main	100 N. Main Street - 2A	2	2	1100	$795	$0.72	2003
	100 North Main	100 N. Main Street - 3A	3	2	1368	$1,065	$0.78	2003
	The Anthem	431 Marion Road	2	2	910	$900	$0.99	2015
	The Anthem	431 Marion Road	2	2	1150	$1,150	$1.00	2015
	The Anthem	431 Marion Road	3	2	1171	$1,300	$1.11	2015
	Morgan Crossing	495 Pearl Avenue - 1A	1	1	716	$699	$0.98	2007
	Morgan Crossing	495 Pearl Avenue - 2A	2	2	944	$879	$0.93	2007
	Morgan Crossing	495 Pearl Avenue - 2B	2	2	1001	$899	$0.90	2007
	Morgan Crossing	495 Pearl Avenue - 3A	3	2	1277	$1,300	$1.02	2007
	Morgan Crossing	495 Pearl Avenue - 3B	3	2	1230	$1,300	$1.06	2007
	Concord Place	151 Dawes Street - A	1	1	695	$675	$0.97	2003
	Concord Place	151 Dawes Street - B	2	2	950	$850	$0.89	2003
	Concord Place	151 Dawes Street - C	2	2	991	$830	$0.84	2003
	Concord Place	151 Dawes Street - D	2	2	1045	$850	$0.81	2003
	Bent Block / Converted Upper Floor	470 N. Main St.	Studio	1	704	$540	$0.77	1886
	Bent Block / Converted Upper Floor	470 N. Main St.	Studio	1	826	$540	$0.65	1886
	Bent Block / Converted Upper Floor	470 N. Main St.	3	1	1309	$1,000	$0.76	1886
	MK Townhomes	808 Nebraska Street	1	1	800	$605	$0.76	2009
	Average				**1,041**	**$914**	**$0.88**	
Downtown Appleton	Converted Upper Floor	212 E. College Avenue - Upper Floors	Studio	1	Unavailable	$550	Unavailable	1895
	Converted Upper Floor	609 W. College Avenue - Unit F	2	1	Unavailable	$600	Unavailable	Unavailable
	Converted Upper Floor	609 W. College Avenue - Unit G	2	1	Unavailable	$700	Unavailable	Unavailable
	Historic Fox River Mills	101 E. Water Street	1.5	1	1114	$1,040	$0.93	1883-1915
	River Heath	201 S. Riverheath Way	1	1	1,200	$1,575	$1.31	2014
	Average				**1,157**	**$893**	**$1.12**	
Downtown Fond du Lac	Retlaw Apartments / Converted Upper Floor	7 Sheboygan St. #203	2	1.5	1450	$875	$0.60	1925
	Retlaw Apartments / Converted Upper Floor	7 Sheboygan St. #204	2	1.5	1736	$875	$0.50	1925
	Converted Upper Floor	111 S. Main Street	1	1	650	$550	$0.85	Unavailable
	Converted Upper Floor	42 1/5 N. Main Street	2	1	1800	$775	$0.43	Unavailable
	Converted Upper Floor	171 S. Main Street	1	1	650	$425	$0.65	Unavailable
	Converted Upper Floor	33 N. Main Street	1	1	650	$400	$0.62	1929
	Average				**1,156**	**$650**	**$0.61**	

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; Trulia; Zillow; HotPads; Downtown Appleton, Inc.; Oshkosh Business Improvement District

Multi-Family Development

Based upon available real estate data and conversations with local developers, there has been somewhat limited development of multi-family units – including condominiums and apartments – in market area center cities/downtowns over the past five years. The vast majority of market area apartment development has occurred within Center City Oshkosh along Marion Road, including Rivers Senior Living – Phase I (2011; 60 units), Rivers Senior Living – Phase II (2016; 40 units), and The Anthem (2015; 80 units). Within Center City Oshkosh, however, there has been no development of condominium buildings during the same time period.

Throughout the outreach process, residents, developers, and local stakeholders expressed interest in high-quality condominium development within the Center City, particularly on vacant or underutilized land near the waterfront. It is believed that such development could set Oshkosh apart from other communities because the market inventory for high quality waterfront condominiums in an urban setting is very limited.

Using the leading real estate websites, such as First Weber, Realtor.com, Zillow, and Trulia, an inventory was conducted to catalogue prices of condominiums. The accompanying table includes pricing of units either listed for sale as of June 2016 or those sold within the past six months. Because of the limited inventory of center city and downtown units within the market area, multi-family units that are located on a waterfront (but outside of a downtown or center city) are also included, provided they are similar in character. Using this criteria, most of the applicable inventory is found in Oshkosh and Appleton.

As the table depicts, the typical condominium unit available in 2016 is a two-bedroom, two-bathroom property with 1,788 square feet of space and a price of $191,358. However, as one expects, prices vary based upon location, size, and quality. New condominium developments can list as high as $350,000 due to scenic views, high quality finishes, and generous square footage; examples include the Banta Court Townhomes in Appleton. Market support for higher end condominium pricing is reflected in the Tax Increment Financing Application for the new mixed-use Morgan District, submitted by the developer in December 2015. The developer proposes 24 waterfront condominiums on the former Jeld Wen site will sell for an average of $375,000 per unit.

Inventory: Condominium Units (June 2016)

Market Area: Center City/Waterfront Oshkosh & Downtown/Waterfront Appleton

	Location	Project Name	Address	BR	BA	SF	Price	Price / SF	Year Built
Oshkosh	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #425*	2	3	1881	$191,500	$101.81	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #313*	1	1.5	1072	$111,000	$103.54	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #233*	2	2.5	2014	$143,549	$71.28	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #222*	3	2.5	2512	$229,000	$91.16	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #216*	2	2.5	2100	$190,000	$90.48	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #307*	2	2.5	1858	$185,000	$99.57	1986
	Waterfront	River Mill Condominiums	1545 Arboretum Drive #327*	2	2	1878	$130,000	$69.22	1986
Appleton	Downtown	Richmond Terrace	400 N Richmond St - #446	2	2	1273	$155,900	$122.47	2002
	Downtown	Richmond Terrace	400 N Richmond St - #423	2	2	1273	$122,900	$96.54	2002
	Downtown	Richmond Terrace	400 N Richmond St - #1052	2	2	1003	$112,000	$111.67	2002
	Downtown	Richmond Terrace	400 N Richmond St - #435	1	1	875	$94,900	$108.46	2002
	Downtown	Richmond Terrace	400 N Richmond St - #417	2	2	1426	$130,000	$91.16	2002
	Downtown	Lawrence Court	5 Lawrence Court	2	1.5	1096	$189,900	$173.27	Unknown
	Waterfront	Stroebe Island / Sunrise Pointe	2187 Sunrise Drive	3	4	3270	$329,900	$100.89	Unknown
	Waterfront	Stroebe Island / Sunrise Pointe	2193 Sunrise Drive #6A	3	3	2346	$255,000	$108.70	Unknown
	Waterfront	Stroebe Island / Island Harbor	2494 Stroebe Island Drive	3	2	1670	$179,900	$107.72	Unknown
	Waterfront	Banta Court Townhomes	1155 E Banta Court	3	2	2390	$350,000	$146.44	2012
	Waterfront	Banta Court Townhomes	1155 E Banta Court	3	2	2240	$344,000	$153.57	2012
		Total Average		**2**	**2**	**1,788**	**$191,358**	**$108.22**	

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; FirstWeber; Trulia; Zillow; HotPads

Demand Analysis

The residential demand analysis estimates the number of households that would be "eligible" to purchase or rent units in Center City Oshkosh based on various household characteristics. Put simply, the demand for housing will be determined by the lease rates or sales price of residential units and the types of product offered. Traditionally, young professionals (age under 35) and empty nesters (age over 55) are the predominant occupants of multi-family units while families (aged 35-54) are the predominant buyer of single family homes. By examining how many householders fall into various age and income cohorts, the demand for units of a given housing type can be estimated.

Home Pricing & Minimum Income Requirements

Condominiums

For the residential demand analysis, two base sale prices were selected to determine the minimum income requirements for potential home buyers: $200,000 and $375,000. This provides data for two different scenarios: development of "middle end" condominium units ($200,000) and development of "high end" condominium units ($375,000). The former figure was generated by rounding up the average 2016 condominium price of $191,358; the latter is based upon pricing for high end condominiums included in the aforementioned Morgan District site proposal. As shown in the accompanying table, a minimum household income of $61,113 is needed for the middle end condominiums and $104,933 for the high end condominiums.

Minimum income requirements consider the ability to put at least 15% down toward the purchase of a home, various housing experiences in addition to a mortgage payment (e.g. condo fees, home insurance, private mortgage insurance, etc.), and acceptable benchmarks of percentage of income allocated towards housing (30%).

Apartments

The accompanying "Home Pricing" table also estimates the minimum income requirements for households who rent their homes. The typical property on the market as of June 2016 is a roughly 1,000 square foot two-bedroom apartment. Units built within the past ten years range typically rent for around $1.00 per square foot per month. Using this math, a rent of $1,000 monthly is utilized to estimate demand for new units. Affording this rent would require a minimum income of $40,000. As well as a minimum income requirement, a maximum income threshold of $99,999 was used so as to not overstate the market. It is assumed that those households earning $100,000 or greater would seek the opportunity to purchase a home.

Home Pricing (2016)
Center City Oshkosh

Condominum Pricing	Middle End	High End
Asking Price	$200,000	$375,000
Downpayment	15%	15%
Interest Rate	3.38%	3.26%
Monthly Mortgage Payment	$752	$1,389
Annual Mortgage Payment	$9,024	$16,668
Annual PMI & Home Insurance	$1,548	$2,208
Annual Assessments	$3,600	$4,800
Annual Property Taxes	$4,162	$7,804
Housing Costs as % of Income	30%	30%
Minimum Income Required	$61,113	$104,933

Apartment Pricing		
Monthly Rent	$1,000	
Annual Rent	$12,000	
Housing Costs as % of Income	30%	
Minimum Income Required	$40,000	

Sources: Houseal Lavigne Associates; Zillow Mortgage Calculator; Winnebago County; Investopedia

Market Area Demand

The following section further refines the pool of income qualifying buyers and renters using various factors to derive estimated market area demand for condominium housing in Center City Oshkosh. The outcomes of the various steps of the market area demand calculation are highlighted in the accompanying tables. A market area demand table has been created for both condominiums and apartments.

Part One: Age & Income

Estimates for market area demand should exclude households that do not meet the income requirements ($61,113+ for the middle end condominiums; $104,933+ for the high end condominiums) and probable ages of someone seeking a condominium in the defined market area. Multi-family units in downtown locations are typically occupied by some combination of young professionals, empty nester households looking to downsize, and those looking for home ownership without maintenance responsibilities. These buyers are typically aged 25 to 34 and 55 and older, respectively.

Part 2: Mobility Index

After establishing a baseline of those households able to afford and likely to purchase or rent a unit, a "mobility index" is used to ascertain the percentage of households moving each year within given age cohorts. This index has been derived and further refined using 2014-2015 movement patterns recorded by the US Census for the Midwest region. It identifies the propensity for a household in a given age bracket to move from their current residence. For purposes of this analysis, it was determined that 20.9% of households aged 25 to 34 would be likely to move while only 3.4%-5.3% of households aged 55 and older would be likely to move in any given year.

Part 3: Home Ownership

The next step of the analysis is to determine what proportion of households, of those deemed eligible, are homeowners or renters. In other words, of those meeting age and minimum income requirements who are moving, how many households prefer to buy versus rent? The accompanying "Tenure by Age of Householder" table depicts the proportion of owner- and renter-occupied units according to the age of the head of households.

The homeownership and rental rates are used to further refine the market and potential buyers and renters of units in each respective market area.

Tenure by Age of Householder (2010)
Market Area

Age Cohort	Occupied Units	Owner Occupied Units	% Owner Occupied	% Renter Occupied
< 25	6,594	794	12.0%	88.0%
25 - 34	16,598	8,073	48.6%	51.4%
35 - 44	15,670	10,310	65.8%	34.2%
45 - 54	18,517	13,339	72.0%	28.0%
55 - 64	14,868	11,132	74.9%	25.1%
65 - 74	8,390	6,335	75.5%	24.5%
75+	10,454	6,799	65.0%	35.0%

Sources: Houseal Lavigne Associates; US Census Bureau; ESRI Business Analyst

Part Four: Oshkosh Market Share

It is assumed that approximately 28.4% of the eligible households in the market area will purchase or rent a multi-family unit in Oshkosh. These market share estimates are based on the proportion of households in Oshkosh compared to the number of total households in the market area. This percentage is applied to the pool of potential qualifying home buyers and renters to estimate the annual demand for similarly priced housing in Oshkosh as a whole. Given this market share, it is estimated there is potential demand within Oshkosh in 2016 for 205 middle-end condominium units, 108 high-end condominium units, and 216 apartment units. Demand for middle- and high-end condominium units are not mutually exclusive, as the analysis is drawing from much of the same pool for both calculations.

Household Demand for Apartments (2016)
Market Area

Middle-End Condominums ($200,000 Price Point)

Part 1: Age & Income	25-34	55-64	65-74	75+	Initial Total
2016 Income Qualifying Households	5,816	6,434	3,106	1,773	17,129
Part 2: Mobility	20.9%	5.3%	3.4%	3.7%	Refined Total
2016 Movers	1,216	341	106	66	1,728
Part 3: Ownership	48.6%	74.9%	75.5%	65.0%	Refined Total
2016 Home Ownership	624	86	26	23	759
Part 4: Oshkosh Share	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	Refined Total
2016 Oshkosh Buyers	177	24	7	7	216

Possible Demand for Apartment Units in Oshkosh: 216 Units

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; US Census Bureau; Zillow

Household Demand for Condominiums (2016)
Market Area

Middle-End Condominums ($200,000 Price Point)

Part 1: Age & Income	25-34	55-64	65-74	75+	Initial Total
2016 Income Qualifying Households	3,998	5,801	2,319	1,038	13,156
Part 2: Mobility	20.9%	5.3%	3.4%	3.7%	Refined Total
2016 Movers	836	307	79	38	1,260
Part 3: Ownership	48.6%	74.9%	75.5%	65.0%	Refined Total
2016 Home Ownership	406	230	60	25	721
Part 4: Oshkosh Share	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	Refined Total
2016 Oshkosh Buyers	115	65	17	7	205

Possible Demand for Middle-End Condominums in Oshkosh: 205 Units

High-End Condominums ($375,000 Price Point)

Part 1: Age & Income	25-34	55-64	65-74	75+	Initial Total
2016 Income Qualifying Households	2,066	3,167	1,312	482	7,027
Part 2: Mobility	20.9%	5.3%	3.4%	3.7%	Refined Total
2016 Movers	432	168	45	18	662
Part 3: Ownership	48.6%	74.9%	75.5%	65.0%	Refined Total
2016 Home Ownership	210	126	34	12	381
Part 4: Oshkosh Share	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	28.4%	Refined Total
2016 Oshkosh Buyers	60	36	10	3	108

Possible Annual Demand for High-End Condominums in Oshkosh: 108 Units

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; US Census Bureau; Zillow

Part Five: Capturing New Development in the Center City

While there is demand for condominium and apartment units in Oshkosh, several items must be noted:

First, the estimated demand numbers do not necessarily justify new construction; demand could also be absorbed by turnover of existing units. However, as noted earlier, the supply for quality residential units within or near a downtown district and along a waterfront is very minimal. New units that are well-positioned, well-marketed, and well-built in relation to the existing supply have an excellent chance of capturing the potential demand identified and growing the pie.

Second, the estimated demand numbers are city-wide and not unique to the Center City. However, it is believed that the Center City is the best positioned neighborhood within Oshkosh for the type of multi-family development desired. The availability of land, necessary approvals and zoning, financing, and community support are all critical to successful new development.

Thirdly, new residential development in Center City Oshkosh will have to compete with new residential development that occurs elsewhere in the market area, such as Appleton, Fond du Lac, Menasha, and Neenah. To remain competitive, Oshkosh's units must be better positioned and offer greater value to the prospective tenants or home buyers.

Lastly, one additional opportunity for residential growth could be to market Oshkosh homes as vacation properties. Condominiums on or near the waterfront could be attractive summer properties for home buyers in other markets, such as Chicago.

Takeaways

The Center City housing market is trending in a positive direction, with a growing number of units, low vacancy, and significant development activity. Based on recent development activity and the potential for new investment, Center City Oshkosh is an extremely well-positioned city center for further residential growth, particularly in the condominium market, which is likely undersupplied. Continued residential density will facilitate spin-off retail spending as well as increase the attractiveness for new retail development.

Establishing Critical Mass
Targeted Residential Development

As noted earlier, successful downtowns and center cities are activity hubs with an integrated mixture of offices, residences, restaurants, entertainment venues, shops, and more. This creates activity on the street such as people walking, biking, sidewalk dining, and hanging out in the park. Such bustle and interaction is what makes center cities great and draws people to them.

Establishing a critical mass of activity requires aligning multiple public and private investments that can build on one another and reinforce one another. If activity is too spread out, it dilutes the investment and creates small pockets of activity that fail to add up to something larger.

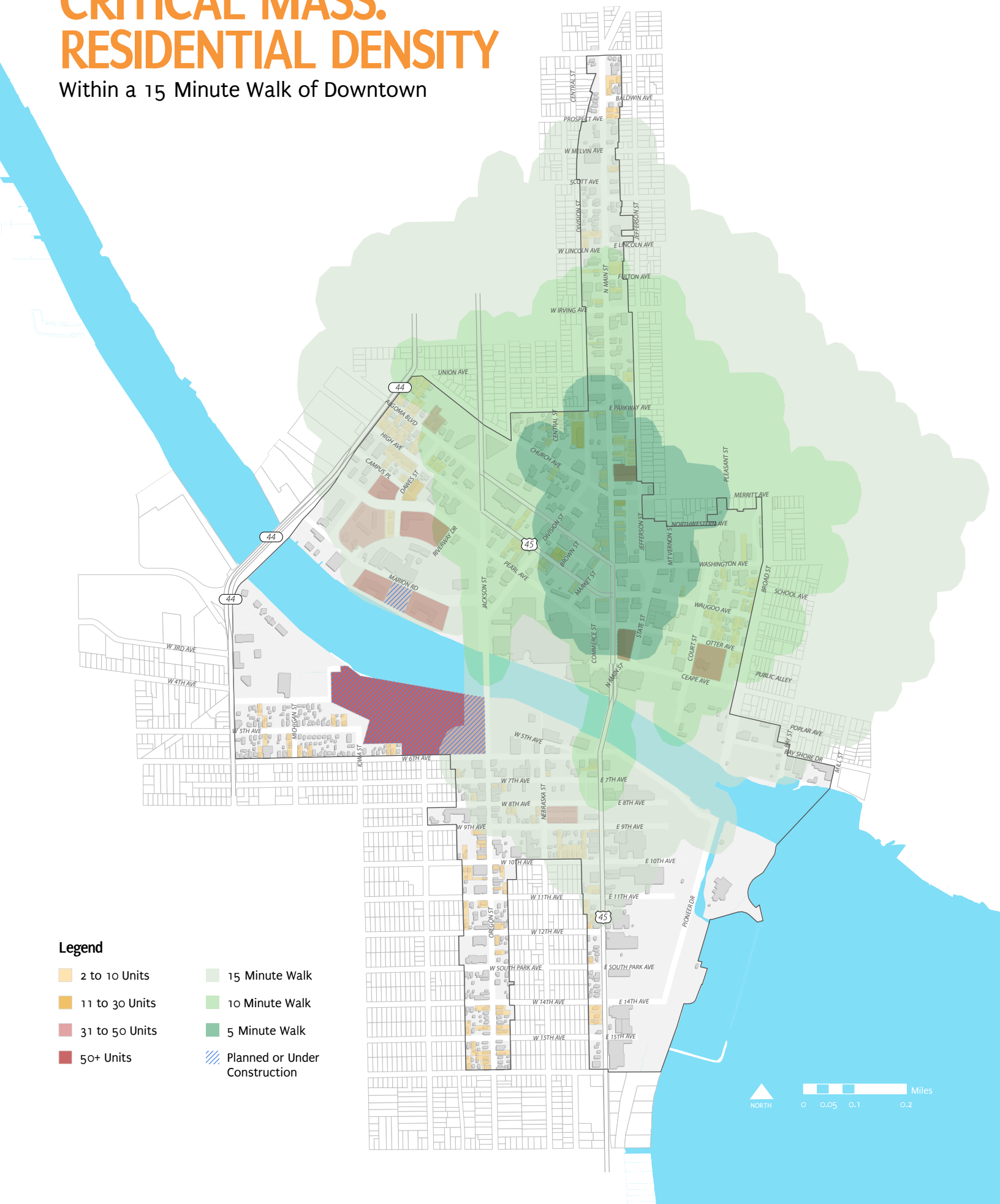
One of the most important components of establishing critical mass is a concentrated residential population intermixed with commercial uses. While the Center City has added several new residential developments in recent years along Marion Road and Pearl Avenue (and another large program is underway on the Jeld Wen site on the south shore), this development is somewhat suburban in style and is located within a 10-15 minute walk from the heart of the Center City.

This walking distance, combined with an irregular street grid, harsh winters, a local aversion among some to walking, and easy automobile access decreases the likelihood that these residents will spend their time, money, and energy in Downtown Oshkosh.

This observation does not suggest that the recent and ongoing development should not occur or is not desirable. Merely, it is being suggested that new residential development also be pursued within the heart of the Center City, and at minimum, that nearby residential development be as closely integrated with the Downtown Core as possible through pedestrian infrastructure. *Imagine Oshkosh* will identify sites and potential development programs for infill development or redevelopment within the Downtown Core and Outer Core that can help achieve critical mass.

CRITICAL MASS: RESIDENTIAL DENSITY

Within a 15 Minute Walk of Downtown



Providing Day-to-Day Amenities

In order for a center city to be competitive as a desirable "neighborhood" to live in, it must provide for the day-to-day amenities that most residents seek in-and-around their residences, regardless of where they live. At present, the Center City already has many businesses that cater to the day-to-day needs of residents (and beyond), including hardware store, a bookstore, automotive repair, dry cleaner, restaurants, bars, barbershop/salon, yoga studio, deli, and more. On the whole, Center City Oshkosh has a strong inventory of important day-to-day retail and service uses.

However, two items that could improve the attractiveness of living in the Center City include: programmed park space and a dog park. While Center City Oshkosh has green spaces (e.g. Riverside Park, Leach Ampitheatre, Opera House Square) and recreation opportunities (Riverwalk, boat docks), it does not have any programmed park space or playgrounds other than Roe Park. The addition of such space could support families living in/near the Center City as well as provide safe play spaces for visiting families.

Additionally, dog parks are becoming increasingly popular as downtown populations grow throughout the country. Because many Center City homes are multi-family units that do not have their own yard, a fenced-in dog park would provide space for dogs to run around and get exercise out of the way of the general public. This could be an amenity that could increase the attractiveness of living in the Center City among dog-owners currently living in multi-family units elsewhere. For context, using a national benchmark, the American Veterinary Medical Foundation (AVMF) estimates that Oshkosh, WI may have 14,937 dogs.

Stabilizing Surrounding Neighborhoods

The fringe of the study area and the surrounding blocks are traditional neighborhoods mostly comprised of single family detached homes built between 1900 and 1945. These homes were built on a grid system on lots typically 7,500 square feet in size. Relative to the entire city's housing stock, these homes tend to be older, more likely to be renter occupied, and with a higher concentration of code violations. The majority of homes are not a component of a historic district, but some have historic attributes that give them a unique presentation. Additionally, many blocks either lack porch lights or do not use them. When combined with relatively dim street lights, these blocks can appear unwelcoming after dusk.

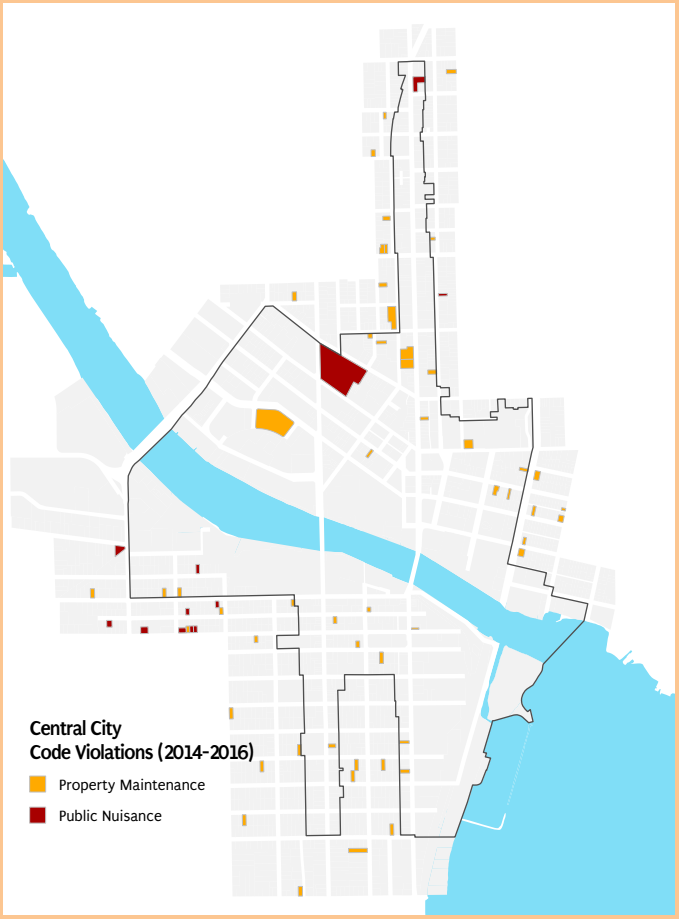
As mentioned earlier in the report, *Imagine Oshkosh* is not a residential neighborhoods plan and many of the surrounding neighborhoods have undergone, or will undergo, their own unique planning process. However, the health and vitality of these blocks are vital to the success of Center City Oshkosh and will be recognized as such. *Imagine Oshkosh* may outline, from a high-level, specific programs, catalyst blocks for investment, reinvestment strategies, or planning tools that could promote stabilization and investment in these neighborhoods.

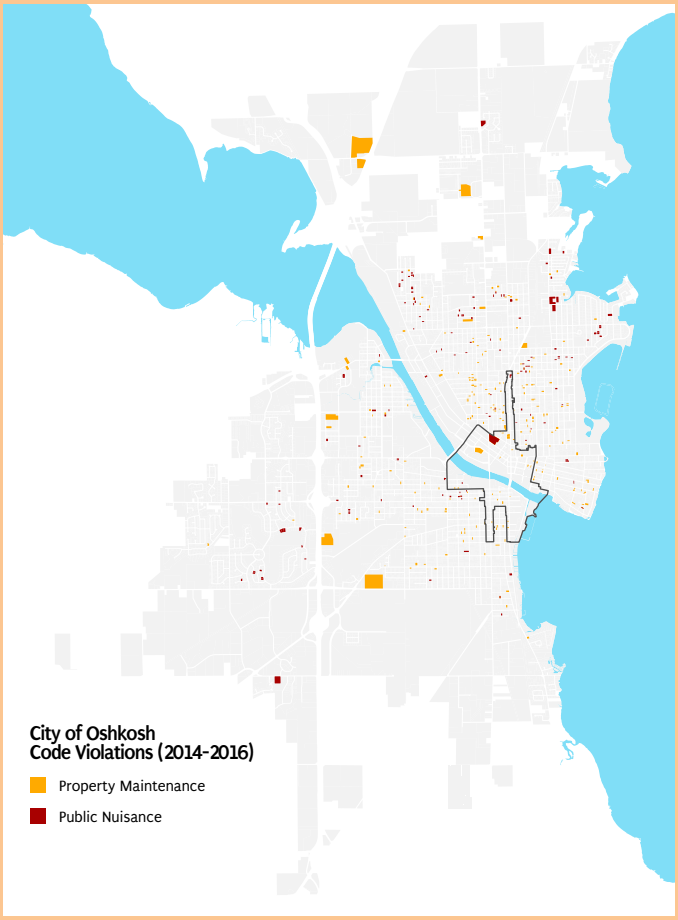
Many of the residential single family blocks surrounding Center City Oshkosh are dominated by renters.

Source: City of Oshkosh

The housing stock surrounding the Center City tends to be older than the rest of the city.

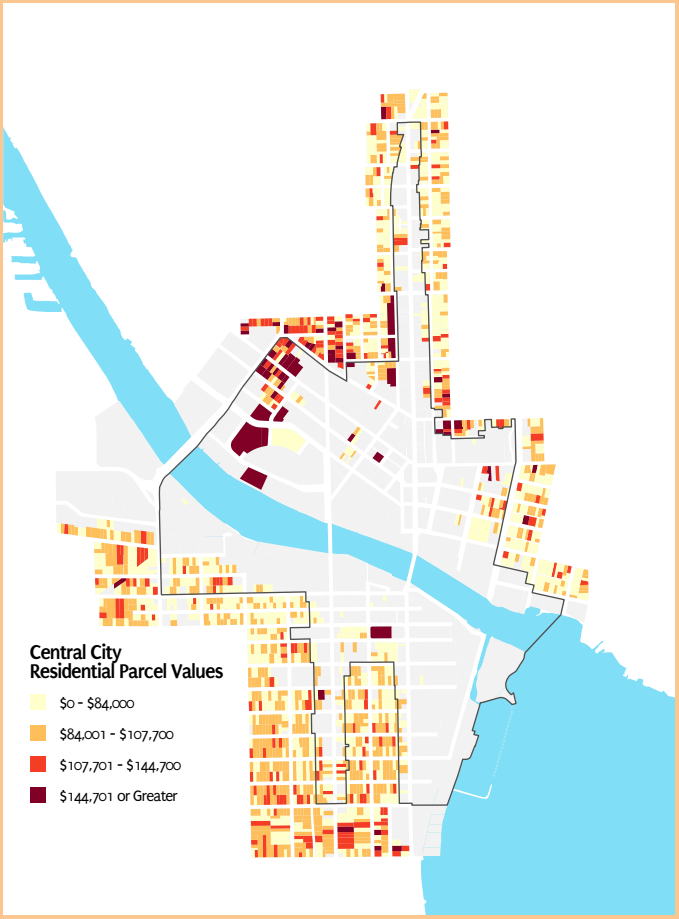
Source: City of Oshkosh

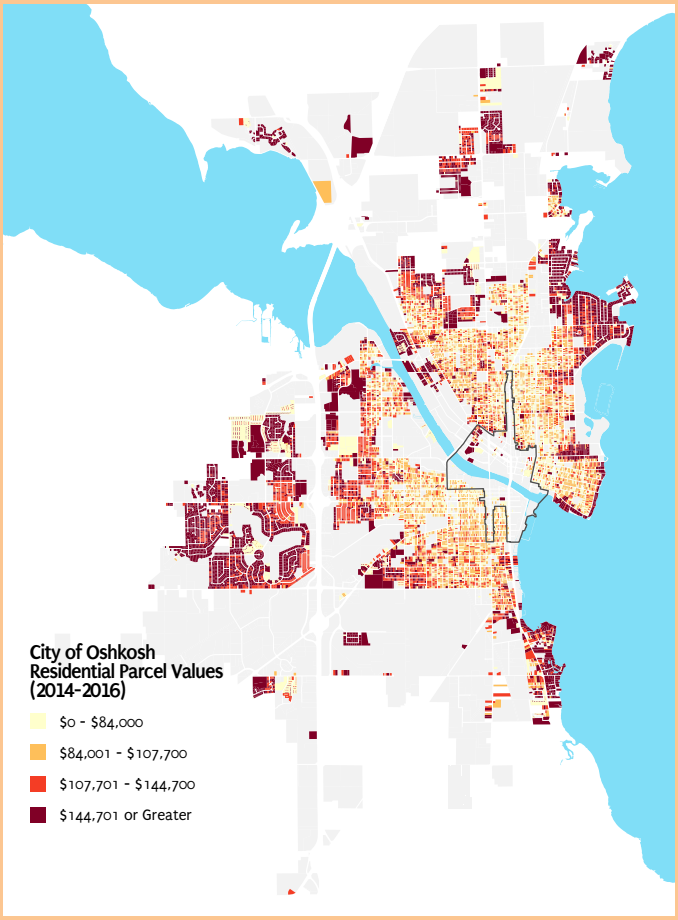




Code violations (reported since 2014) are a significant problem for residential blocks near the Center City, particularly to the northwest. However, it should be noted that a portion of reported code violation have been corrected.

Source: City of Oshkosh





Residential properties near the core of the city tend to be valued less than those found on the outskirts of the city.
Source: City of Oshkosh

CHAPTER 3C

Working in the Center City

142 Employment
147 Retail Market
154 Office Market

A vibrant economy is an important component of any successful downtown or center city. A thriving employment base generates tax revenue, spending on retail and dining, street activity, real estate investment, and residential growth, among many other things. *Imagine Oshkosh* will seek to increase the number of jobs in Center City Oshkosh and position the Center City as a premier employment hub in the knowledge economy.

This section details key information and issues relating to working and owning a business in the Center City, including:

- **Center City Economy**, providing an overview of the Center City economy as well as other important economic and employment trends at both the regional and local level; and
- **Retail Market**, detailing information on retail activity and businesses in the Center City;
- **Office Market**, detailing existing commercial land uses and real estate inventory in the Center City.

Additional information related to real estate development can be found in **Chapter 3D: Developing Property in the Center City.**

Data Sources

Data for this chapter were acquired from a variety of sources, including the 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2010 US Census, Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, LoopNet, and ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of business and market data. The figures presented in this chapter are the most recent and reliable available, as of the drafting of this report.

Employment

This section provides an overview of employment in the Center City as well as other key economic indicators.

Total Employment

Center City Oshkosh contained 5,512 jobs in 2014, a noticeable increase over 2005 employment levels of 3,059 jobs. Total employment also grew in both in the City of Oshkosh (33,549 to 37,341) and the five-county region (355,178 to 381,109) during the same time period.

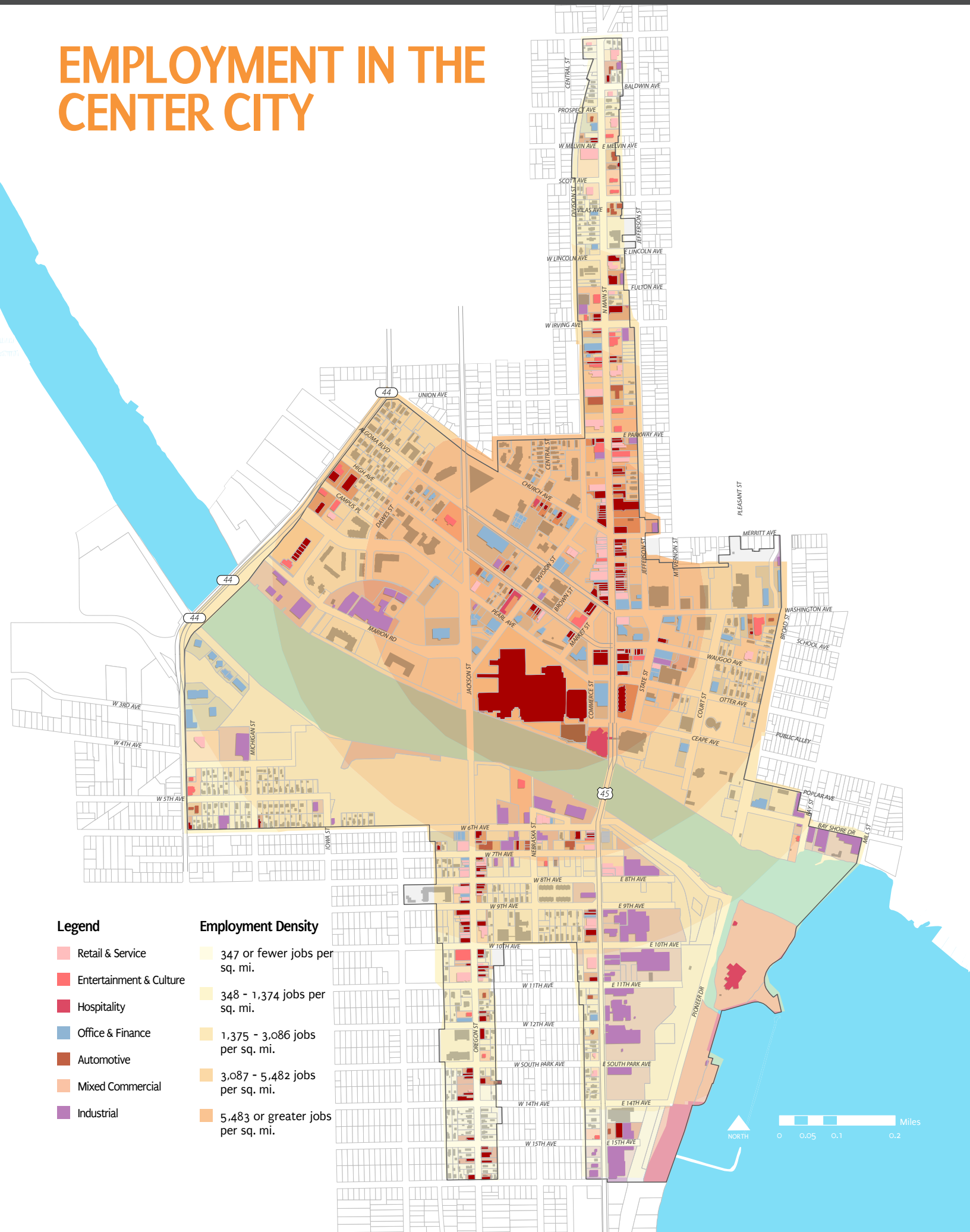
Over the past decade, the Center City's share of city-wide total employment has grown from 9.1% to 14.7%. Compared to the downtowns/center cities of neighboring communities, Center City Oshkosh contains fewer jobs than most, both in total employment as well as share of city-wide employment. As shown in the accompanying graph, Oshkosh outperforms Fond du Lac but lags behind Green Bay, Appleton, and Neenah.

General Profile

Some of the key attributes of the Center City economy include:

- **The Center City economy mostly driven by government, "white collar," and retail/hospitality service jobs.** In 2014, the top five industries in Center City Oshkosh were Public Administration (1,223 jobs), Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (903 jobs), Retail Trade (779 jobs), Accommodation and Food Services (727 jobs), and Finance and Insurance (393 jobs). Roughly 1 in 5 jobs are public sector jobs. While Manufacturing remains the largest industry at both the city-wide and five-county regional level, it is only a very small component of the Center City economy (62 jobs), as manufacturing companies have downsized, closed, or relocated out of the study area.
- **Six of Oshkosh's fifteen largest employers have a presence in the Center City. Major Center City employers include Winnebago County (1,018 jobs), 4Imprint (729 jobs), Silver Star Brands (650 jobs), City of Oshkosh (569 jobs), and Clarity Care (569 jobs).**
- **The Center City economy contains burgeoning technology and creative enterprises sectors. Between 2005 and 2014, the number of Center City jobs within the "Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services" industry doubled from 457 jobs to 903 jobs. Examples of such employers include Oraculur Systems, ImproMed, Dealersocket, AccuCom, 4Imprint, and more. The creation and success of Amplify Oshkosh, a local organization focused on growing the tech economy in Oshkosh, reflects the importance of this segment of the economy.**
- **Much of the retail, hospitality, and entertainment economy is dependent on the season, according to business leaders. During warm months, the Center City is activated with boat traffic along the river and lake, concerts at the Leach Amphitheatre and Opera House Square, the Farmers Market, and other outdoor activities that draw residents and tourists to spend, shop, and stay in the Center City. However, much of the Center City's activities cease in winter months and cold temperatures can inhibit outdoor events and walking. One prominent business owner noted a drop of 75% in business between July and January, and a local restauranteur reported that 70% of his annual revenue is collected in the summer.**
- **The vast majority of those who work in the Center City do not live there. In 2014, only 2.4% of Center City employees also lived there. A plurality of these workers are commuting from elsewhere in Oshkosh (42.5%), but many are also traveling from Appleton, Neenah, Fond du Lac, Omro, Menasha, and the greater Milwaukee area.**

EMPLOYMENT IN THE CENTER CITY



Legend

- Retail & Service
- Entertainment & Culture
- Hospitality
- Office & Finance
- Automotive
- Mixed Commercial
- Industrial

Employment Density

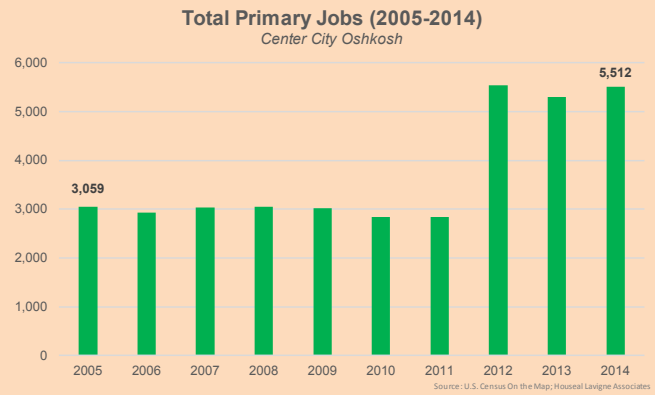
- 347 or fewer jobs per sq. mi.
- 348 - 1,374 jobs per sq. mi.
- 1,375 - 3,086 jobs per sq. mi.
- 3,087 - 5,482 jobs per sq. mi.
- 5,483 or greater jobs per sq. mi.

Takeaways

Center City Oshkosh is nearing the completion of its decades-long transition away from being a manufacturing center and retail hub towards an economy grounded in "knowledge" industries, professional services, hospitality, boutique shopping, and entertainment. A physical representation of this trend is the transformation of the Park Plaza Mall, formerly a suburban-styled indoor shopping mall, into City Center, a mixed-use office building with more than 1,500 employees in various sectors.

Employment growth over the past ten years – and at a pace faster than the city -- reflects the attractiveness of opening or expanding a business within the Center City. Most business leaders interviewed during the planning process believe that the Center City is a desirable location for additional job growth, with ready access to a regional talent pool and favorable business climate at both the local and state level. Proximity to Downtown Oshkosh is also increasingly attractive for employers seeking to recruit and retain younger talent. Hurdles to Center City business growth include a limited volume of contemporary office product, parking availability, and interstate access.

The benefits of additional office workers within the Center City would be significant. More employees require more square feet of office space, thus filling existing vacancies or spurring new office development. They also tend to spend money at neighboring businesses (e.g. dry cleaners, delis, grocery stores, etc.), and some may even choose to live in the Center City. Using industry benchmarks, the accompanying chart depicts some of the economic benefits of additional office workers including: new retail spending, demand for office square footage, and residential units. For example, the addition of 250 new employees within Center City Oshkosh could generate in new demand roughly 46,000 square feet of office space, 6 housing units, and $1.7 million in new retail spending.

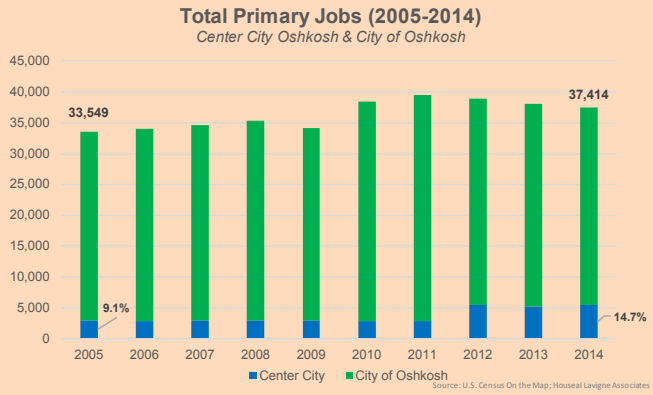


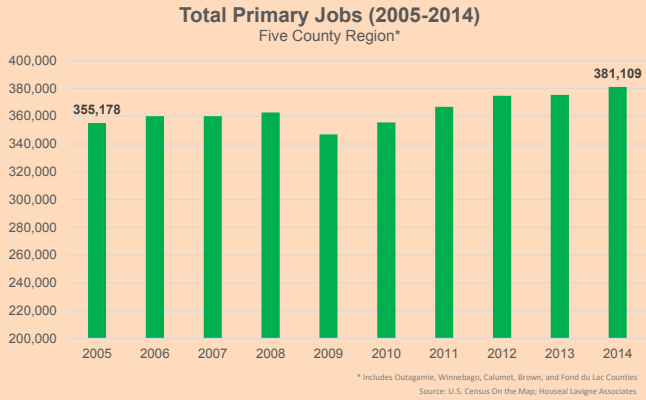
Employment by Industry (2014)
Center City Oshkosh

Industry (NAICS Code)	Employees 5,512	100%
Public Administration	1,223	22.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	903	16.4%
Retail Trade	779	14.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	727	13.2%
Finance and Insurance	393	7.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	319	5.8%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	319	5.8%
Admin & Support, Waste Mgmt & Remediation	259	4.7%
Wholesale Trade	151	2.7%
Information	117	2.1%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	79	1.4%
Manufacturing	62	1.1%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	61	1.1%
Construction	43	0.8%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	40	0.7%
Educational Services	37	0.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	0	0.0%
Utilities	0	0.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	0	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Employment - Supporting Facts & Figures





Employment by Industry (2014)
City of Oshkosh

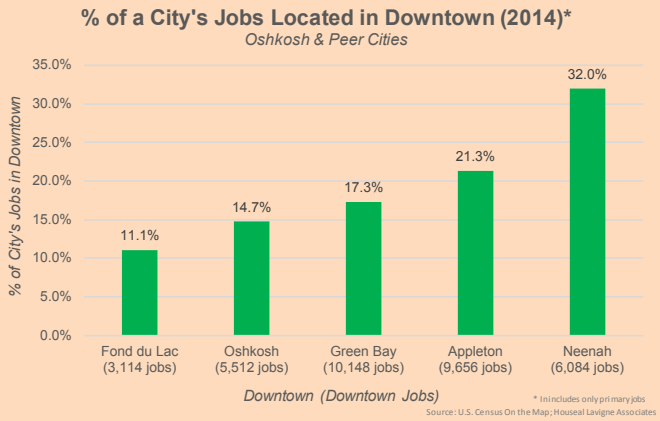
Industry (NAICS Code)	Employees 37,414	100%
Manufacturing	8,955	23.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	5,770	15.4%
Retail Trade	4,776	12.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	3,037	8.1%
Educational Services	3,011	8.0%
Public Administration	2,682	7.2%
Wholesale Trade	1,390	3.7%
Finance and Insurance	1,342	3.6%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1,288	3.4%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,197	3.2%
Construction	1,182	3.2%
Admin & Support, Waste Mgmt & Remediation	1,035	2.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	671	1.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	329	0.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	274	0.7%
Information	271	0.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	167	0.4%
Utilities	31	0.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	0.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	3	0.0%

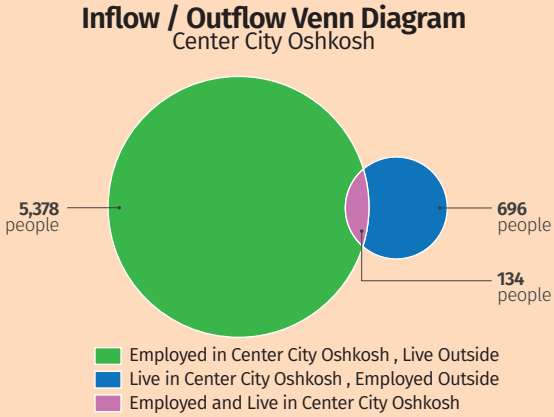
Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Employment by Industry (2014)
5 County Region

Industry (NAICS Code)	Employees 381,163	100%
Manufacturing	81,379	21.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	49,158	12.9%
Retail Trade	38,625	10.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	27,910	7.3%
Educational Services	25,991	6.8%
Finance and Insurance	22,087	5.8%
Admin & Support, Waste Mgmt & Remediation	20,351	5.3%
Construction	18,864	4.9%
Wholesale Trade	18,063	4.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	14,118	3.7%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	13,970	3.7%
Public Administration	12,791	3.4%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	10,806	2.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	10,260	2.7%
Information	6,406	1.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,669	1.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	2,672	0.7%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	2,565	0.7%
Utilities	937	0.2%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	541	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Houseal Lavigne Associates





15 Largest Employers (2016)
City of Oshkosh

Business/ Organization	Type	Located in the Center City?	Employees
Oshkosh Corporation	Specialized Trucks	No	2,800
Bemis	Packaging Tape/ Plastic Film	No	2,300
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh	Higher Education	No	1,327
Oshkosh Area School District	Education	No	1,290
US Bank	Financial Institution	Partly	1,144
Winnebago County	Government	Yes	1,018
Aurora Medical Center & Medical Group	Healthcare	No	870
4Imprint	Advertising	Yes	729
Winnebago Mental Health Institute	Healthcare	No	702
Affinity - Mercy Medical Center	Healthcare	No	688
Silver Star Brands	Mail Order Distribution	Yes	650
City of Oshkosh	Local Government	Yes	569
Clarity Care	Healthcare	Yes	569
Oshkosh Correctional Institution	Corrections	No	502
Hoffmaster Group	Paper Specialties	No	444

Source: Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Economic Benefits of New Office Employees (2016)
Center City vOshkosh

If the Center City Added X New Office Employees...	....Potential Economic Benefits Include		
	New Square Footage Demand (SF)	New Retail Spending ($)	New Residential Demand (Units)
50	9,250	$335,400	1
100	18,500	$670,800	2
250	46,250	$1,677,000	6
500	92,500	$3,354,000	12
750	138,750	$5,031,000	18
1,000	185,000	$6,708,000	24
1,500	277,500	$10,062,000	36

Assumes 185 square feet per office worker; $129 in spending at nearby businesses per week; and a 2.4% capture rate of employees to residents (existing rate)

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; International Council of Shopping Centers; US Census Bureau; CoStar

Retail Market

This section provides an overview of retail businesses, activity, and spending habits in the Center City. For purposes of this analysis, two retail markets have been identified: a five-minute drive time ("primary market area" or PMA) and fifteen-minute drive time ("secondary market area" or SMA) from Opera House Square. Households located within a 5-minute drive of the Center City are those likely to utilize it for routine errands and everyday shopping; those located within a 15-minute drive are more likely to visit shops and restaurants on a less frequent and more targeted basis. While visitors or tourists living outside of these drive times may occasionally patronize the Center City, they are not considered average consumers and were not included in analyses to prevent an overstating of demand.

Existing Retail Snapshot

In 2016, Center City Oshkosh contained 130 retail businesses, including 51 bars and restaurants, and annual retail sales are estimated at roughly $62 million dollars. As noted in early chapters, the character, scale, and type of retail varies throughout the study area, with more auto-oriented retailers on the northern fringe of the study area and boutique retail and restaurants mostly concentrated within the Downtown and Oregon Street districts.

Based on the field reconnaissance of the consulting team, the existing retail mix is relatively healthy, with a diversity of shops catering to different needs and populations. The Center City still contains many retail businesses that used to be staples within American downtowns but typically (in other communities) either closed or relocated to other locations. This is a huge benefit; examples include a hardware store, shoe store, book store, movie theatre, deli, furniture store, and more. While some undesirable retail uses were identified, and there is always a need for more businesses catering to day-to-day living (e.g. a grocery store), the existing composition is actually fairly diverse relative to many other communities of Oshkosh's size and is a strong base to build upon. Undesirable uses will likely relocate over time as reinvestment occurs and rents increase.

Retail within the Center City, and downtowns across the country, is evolving. Several decades ago, major retailers relocated to larger sites and malls with easy highway access, such as J.C. Penney's (which moved from the 400 block of N. Main to Koeller Street next to I-41; the store has since closed). Today, the growth of online shopping through retailers such as Amazon has impacted local shopping habits and reduced reliance on physical stores ("clicks vs. bricks"). The retail opportunity within Center City Oshkosh lies in the ability to provide (a) much needed day-to-day services for residents and employees and (b) unique products, experiences, and atmospheres that cannot be obtained online or in big-box locations ("destination shopping").

Consumer spent ...

$62 million

... annually in Center City Oshkosh.

Of Every Dollar Spent in Oshkosh for Retail and Dining...

6 cents
is spent in the Center City

Retail Snapshot (2016)

Center City Oshkosh, Downtown Appleton, Downtown Fond du Lac, and Downtown Neenah

	Center City Oshkosh	Downtown Appleton	Downtown Fond du Lac	Downtown Neenah
Population (Residential)	2,784	2,763	1,758	886
Primary Workers (Any Industry)	5,512	9,656	3,114	6,084
Retail & Food/Drink Sales*	$62,506,474	$81,858,126	$48,499,317	$28,262,770
Retail Businesses	130	145	72	47
Home Improvement Stores	5	3	1	1
General Merchandise Stores	2	2	1	1
Food Stores	8	5	6	2
Auto-Related Stores	5	7	4	3
Apparel & Accessory Stores	12	6	3	3
Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores	8	14	7	4
Eating & Drinking Places	51	66	21	22
Miscellenous Retail	40	42	29	11

**Excludes Non-Store Retailers*
Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; ESRI Business Analyst

Competition

Center City Oshkosh performs a dual function, providing for the day-to-day needs of residents while also serving an employee population and those visiting for events, dining, boutique shopping, and more. As such, Center City Oshkosh serves several target groups of patrons. Households living in the Center City or living nearby will utilize it for routine errands and everyday shopping such as dropping by a local coffee shop on the way to work or ordering carry-out from a local eatery. Households located farther away, on the other hand, are more likely to visit the Center City on a less frequent and more targeted basis.

The location of existing and proposed commercial development in areas where day-to-day and destination-oriented customers live has significant implications for businesses within Center City Oshkosh. Within a 5-minute drive of the core of the Center City (primary market area), there is virtually no retail and dining competition, making the Center City the primary day-to-day retail option for the population within the core. Within a 15-minute drive (secondary market area), retail and dining competition is robust along the I-41 corridor between exits 116 and 119, with chain businesses such as Shopko, Best Buy, Hobby Lobby, Buffalo Wild Wings, Walmart, Auto Zone, Target, and more. While not all businesses along the I-41 corridor may compete directly with businesses in the Center City given differences in the shopping experience and pricing, there are many instances of likely direct competition (e.g. True Value [Center City] vs. Lowe's [I-41]; Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel [Center City] vs. several hotels along the interstate [I-41]). However, as noted earlier, the competitive edge of the Center City's retail and dining market is its unique character, water access, and "destination" experience; core challenges include providing a parking regime that is convenient and easy to understand for visitors.

From a regional destination perspective, Center City Oshkosh's main "downtown competition" is Downtown Appleton. Major draws that ancillary generate retail and dining spending include the Children's Museum and the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. Plans for a Fox Cities Exhibition Center in Downtown Appleton are currently underway.

Development Potential

Annual sales-per-square foot can be utilized to translate leakage dollars into development potential. While sales per square foot vary by individual retailer and industry, general assumptions of supportable square footage can be made by using an industry benchmark of $200 to $400 per square foot. For purposes of this analysis, $400 was utilized for a more conservative approach that does not overstate retail demand. In the accompanying Retail Gap Analysis Summary table, leakage has been converted into supportable square footage, depicted in black.

However, it is important to note the difference between market potential ("leakage") and the tangible development of a particular site or location. While leakage may exist, the success of recapturing that lost revenue depends on a variety of factors beyond spending habits, including the availability of developable land, construction costs, rents, road conditions, competition from nearby municipalities, and/or the business climate.

Data indicates unmet demand for new retail development in both primary and secondary markets. As depicted in the accompanying table, there are some categories that demonstrate potential market support for additional retail development. Although the volume of retail leakage varies in the primary market area, some of the retail that the Center City may be best positioned to capitalize include:

- **Grocery Stores**, with leakage of $14.3 million (43,357 supportable square feet)
- **Limited Service Eating Places**, with leakage of $2.6 million (6,520 supportable square feet)
- **Health & Personal Care Stores**, with leakage of $10.8 million (27,023 supportable square feet)
- **General Merchandise Stores**, with leakage of $37.4 million (93,446 supportable square feet).

Gap Analysis

A gap analysis is a comparison of retail supply and demand within a defined market area, which is typically a drive time. Its findings help establish what types and volume of new retail could or could not be supported based on existing spending and sales.

Simply put, a gap analysis compares retail sales ("supply") with what consumers spend ("demand") within a market area. When consumers spend more than businesses earn (demand > supply) in the market area, consumers are spending dollars outside of the area. This is referred to as "leakage," and is displayed in green on the accompanying graphs. Typically, market areas with leakage are potential opportunities for growth, as local demand for these goods and services already exists but is unmet by existing supply.

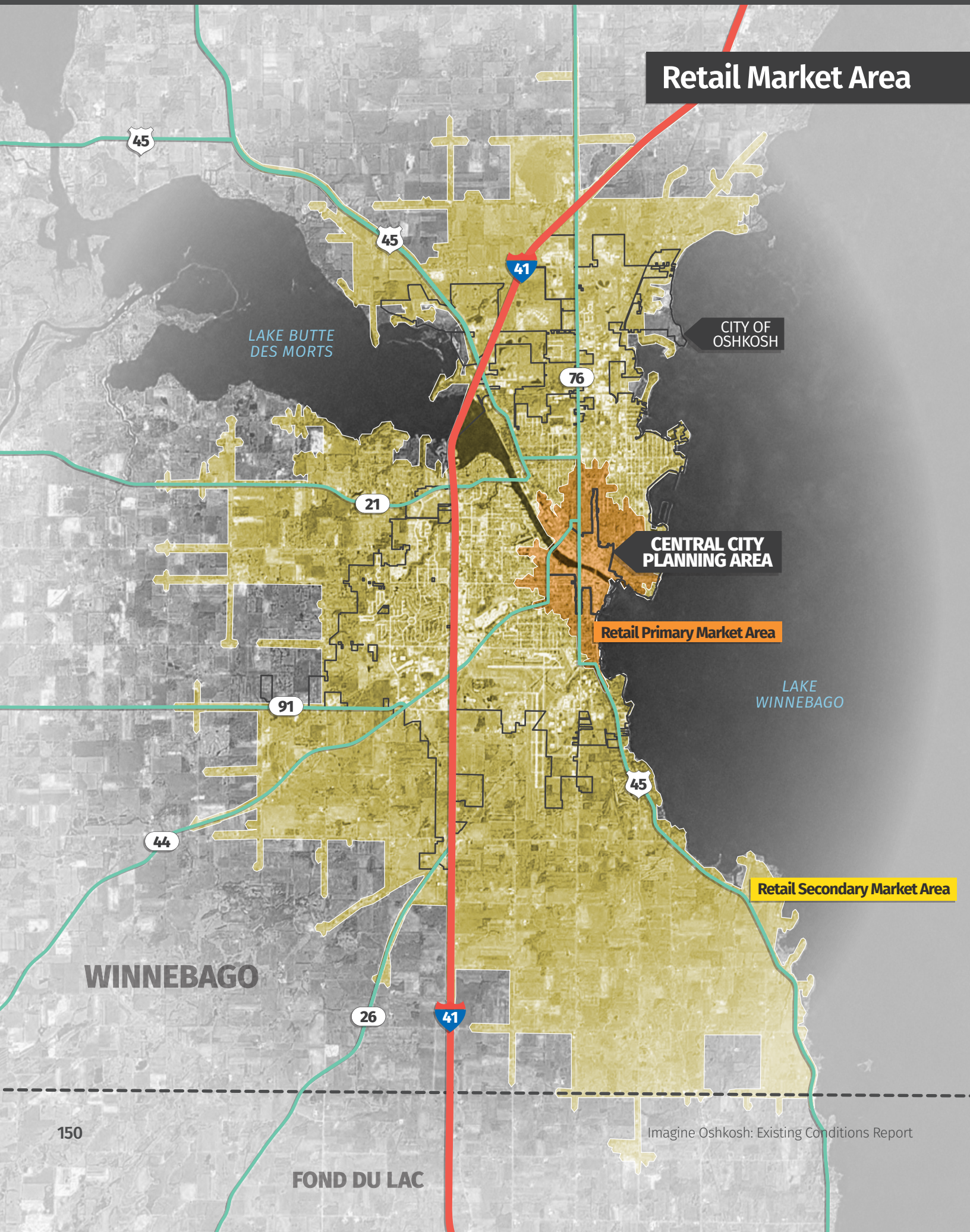
Conversely, when retail sales are more than consumers spend (supply > demand) in a market area, the market is saturated with customers from both within and outside the area. This is referred to as a "surplus," and is depicted in red on the accompanying graphs. As the market is oversupplied with spending, a retail category with surplus is challenging for new retail development.

Primary Market Area: Undersupplied by $62.6 Million

As shown in the accompanying table, it is estimated that there is unmet demand for retail goods and services totaling approximately $62.6 million. The primary market area (5 minute drive time) contains 8,727 households in 2016 and total retail demand is estimated at $226 million. Many categories are experiencing some level of leakage, including Grocery Stores, Health & Personal Care Stores, and General Merchandising Stores.

Secondary Market Area: Oversupplied by $70.9 Million

As shown in the accompanying table, it is estimated that there is an oversupply of retail goods and services totaling $70.9 million. The secondary market area (15 minute drive time) contains 30,844 households in 2016 and total retail demand is estimated at $988 million. Relative to the primary market area, it is more oversupplied, albeit there are retail groupings that are undersupplied, including Furniture and Home Furnishings, Electronics and Appliance Stores, Health and Personal Care Stores, and Other General Merchandise Stores.


Retail Market Area
45
45
41
LAKE BUTTE DES MORTS
CITY OF OSHKOSH
76
21
CENTRAL CITY PLANNING AREA
Retail Primary Market Area
LAKE WINNEBAGO
91
45
44
Retail Secondary Market Area
WINNEBAGO
26
41
FOND DU LAC

Retail Gap Analysis Summary

Center City Oshkosh - 5 & 15 Minute Drivetime (2016)

Summary Demographics	5 Minute Drivetime	15 Minute Drivetime
2016 Population	23,282	76,170
2016 Households	8,727	30,844
2016 Median Disposable Income	$27,901	$36,248
2016 Per Capita Income	$17,090	$24,850

Summary	Retail Gap ($M)	
	5 Minute Drivetime	15 Minute Drivetime
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	$62.6	-$70.9
Total Retail Trade	$70.5	-$63.7
Total Food & Drink	-$7.9	-$7.2

Industry Group	Retail Gap ($M)	Sq. Ft. Potential[1]	Retail Gap ($M)	Potential[1]
Auto Parts, Accessories, & Tire	$1.6	4,057	($9.8)	(24,574)
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	$4.2	10,471	$14.0	34,964
Furniture Stores	$3.1	7,754	$12.2	30,524
Home Furnishings Stores	$1.1	2,717	$1.8	4,440
Electronics & Appliance Stores	$1.7	4,327	$15.7	39,301
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	($1.8)	(4,524)	($30.8)	(77,124)
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	($3.7)	(9,321)	($32.2)	(80,488)
Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supplies Stores	$1.9	4,797	$1.3	3,364
Food & Beverage Stores	$14.3	35,742	($7.3)	(18,159)
Grocery Stores	$17.3	43,357	($14.5)	(36,323)
Specialty Food Stores	($2.2)	(5,625)	$3.6	8,935
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	($0.8)	(1,991)	$3.7	9,230
Health & Personal Care Stores	$10.8	27,023	$16.3	40,861
Gasoline Stations	$2.6	6,475	($6.2)	(15,508)
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	($1.8)	(4,516)	$1.3	3,249
Clothing Stores	($1.5)	(3,837)	$3.4	8,464
Shoe Stores	$1.1	2,711	($4.5)	(11,184)
Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather Goods Stores	($1.4)	(3,391)	$2.4	5,969
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	($1.3)	(3,126)	($0.2)	(570)
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instrument Stores	$1.0	2,474	$0.0	111
Book, Periodical, and Music Stores	($2.2)	(5,600)	($0.3)	(681)
General Merchandise Stores	$37.4	93,446	($2.5)	(6,234)
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	$32.7	81,874	($23.1)	(57,835)
Other General Merchandise Stores	$5.6	13,879	$20.6	51,601
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	$2.8	6,893	($54.2)	(135,536)
Florists	$0.2	580	($3.6)	(8,966)
Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	$0.7	1,708	($0.0)	(29)
Used Merchandise Stores	($0.3)	(782)	$0.7	1,702
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	$2.2	5,387	($51.3)	(128,243)
Food Services & Drinking Places	($7.9)	(19,739)	($7.2)	(17,967)
Full-Service Restaurants	($4.1)	(10,264)	$1.7	4,215
Limited-Service Eating Places	$2.6	6,520	($5.2)	(13,049)
Special Food Services	$0.0	83	$1.2	3,082
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	($6.4)	(16,078)	($4.9)	(12,215)

Non-Store Retailers, Automotive Dealers, and Motor Vehicle Dealers excluded from analysis.

[1] *Potential based on an average annual sales per-square-foot of $400.*

Totals are subject to rounding errors.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst ; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Office Market

Some of the key issues, opportunities, and attributes of the Center City office market include:

- **Professional office uses are located mostly within the Downtown Core and Outer Core districts.** The size, intensity, and quality of office buildings varies, from historic multi-story commercial buildings (e.g. First National Bank Building), a contemporary office park (Bridgeview Center), a large former mall that is now mostly offices (City Centre), and single-story standalone buildings (Riverfront Landing).
- **The Center City office market lacks contemporary and concentrated "Class A" product.** While there has been considerable residential development in recent years, office development has been limited. Some existing commercial buildings have been recently renovated or improved, such as 531 N. Main Street (Dealer Socket), however, the vast majority of existing product is dated and lacking the modern amenities and contiguous square footage that a higher profile or sizable tenant might require. During community outreach, stakeholders expressed desire for high quality office towers, such as those in Neenah (Neenah Towers, Gateway Tower) and Menasha (One Menasha Center). It is believed that if the Center City is truly to be a hub for innovation and "knowledge-based" employment, upgraded or new quality office space will likely be needed.
- **Vacant or underutilized parcels along the South Shore may accommodate the development of new office space.** Preliminary interest has been expressed during community outreach for the joining of industrial properties south of the Fox River for development of a large-scale office building or complex. Such a development could be speculative in nature or be built "to-suit" for a large user. During public outreach, much support was expressed for recruiting a corporate headquarters, such as Oshkosh Corporation.

The new One Menasha Center (eight stories; 115,000 square feet) is an example of high quality commercial development that may be possible in Center City Oshkosh to accommodate new, existing, and expanding employers.

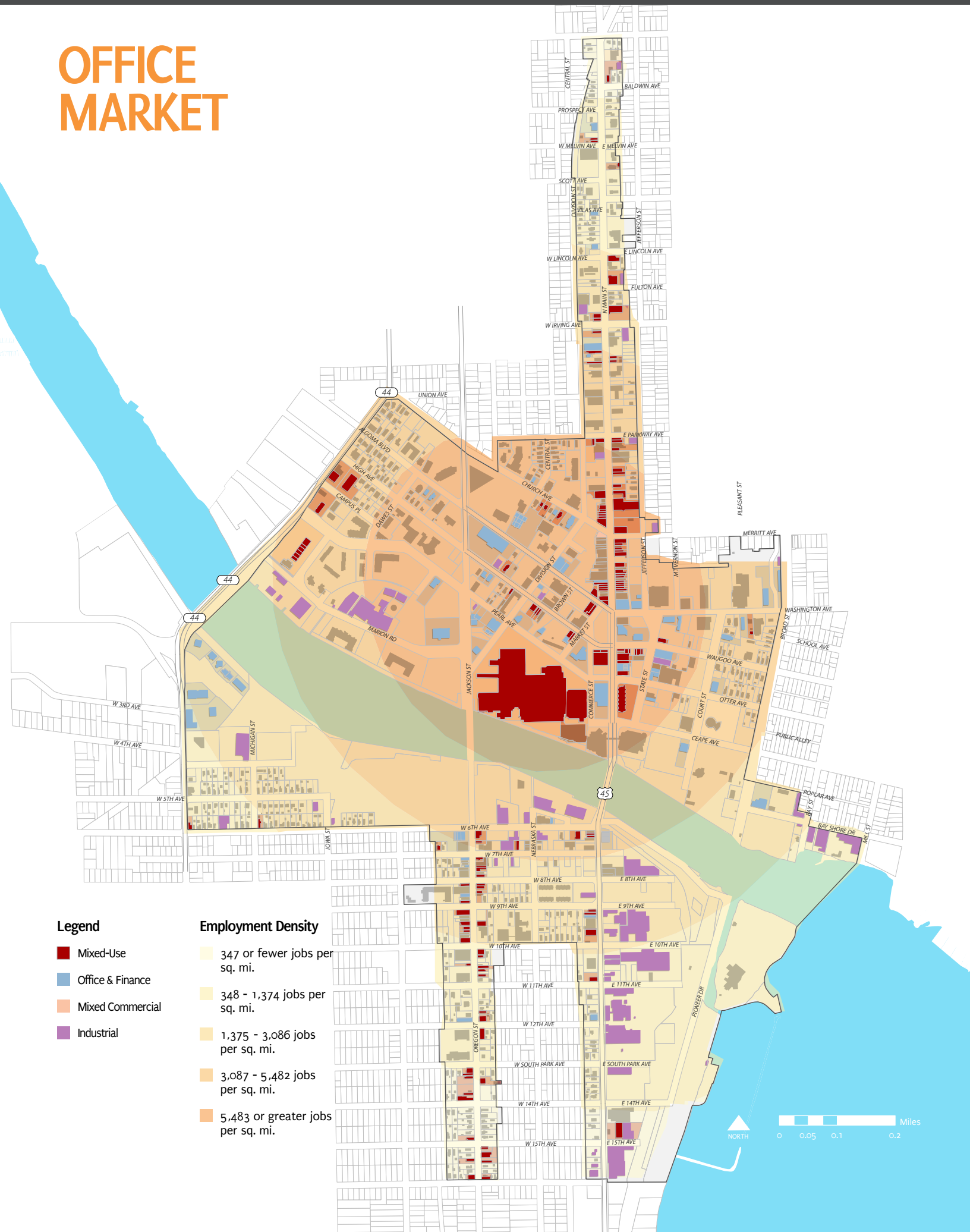
Source: Menasha Development Corporation and Appleton Post-Crescent

The proposed Gateway office building in Downtown Neenah is another example of neighboring communities building quality office space in city cores.

Source: Neenah Downtown Redevelopment Associates and Appleton Post-Crescent for the photo.

- **Several prominent office buildings are currently underutilized.** Vacancy ebbs-and-flows through different market cycles and is common in any market. However, Oshkosh's three largest office buildings – 111 N. Main Street, 217 N. Main Street, and 404 N. Main Street – are experiencing vacancy, with a collective 90,000 square feet available in these three buildings alone (based on current listings; actual vacancy may be higher). The full utilization of these properties, given their prominence in the heart of Downtown, is critical to a vibrant economy. Opportunities may include working with developers to add value to the properties to attract new tenants previously uninterested in renting space ("value add"), converting upper floors into residential units, or proactively recruiting new tenants that can fill the spaces as-is.
- **There is 457,722 square feet of commercial space for lease and 424,161 square feet for sale collectively in area downtowns and center cities (June 2016).** This includes Center City Oshkosh, Downtown Appleton, Downtown Fond du Lac, Downtown Neenah, and Downtown Menasha. Roughly 33% of the square footage for lease and 13% of the square footage for sale is within Center City Oshkosh. The ability of the Center City to compete will depend on pricing, amenities, floor plates, and the location requirements of the tenant.

OFFICE MARKET



Legend

- Mixed-Use
- Office & Finance
- Mixed Commercial
- Industrial

Employment Density

- 347 or fewer jobs per sq. mi.
- 348 - 1,374 jobs per sq. mi.
- 1,375 - 3,086 jobs per sq. mi.
- 3,087 - 5,482 jobs per sq. mi.
- 5,483 or greater jobs per sq. mi.

Commercial Properties for Lease - Downtowns (June 2016)

Primary Market Area Downtowns

Property	Space Available (SF)	Asking Rent (SF / Year)
Center City Oshkosh	**153,792**	**$10.54**
528 N. Main Street	4000	$4.50
705 N. Main Street	1200	$9.00
146 Algoma Boulevard	2178	$9.00
21 Waugoo Avenue	320	$13.13
21 Waugoo Avenue	785	$12.23
100 N. Main Street	1200	$11.95
217 N. Main Street	59,000	$12.00
404 N. Main Street	9,744	$7.20 - $16.56
208 State Street	3,850	Unavailable
219 Washington Avenue	8,500	$14.00
600 S. Main Street	1,600	$4.50
601 Oregon Street	7,480	$12.00
208 & 212 W. 12th Avenue	1,320	$9.12
135 Jackson Street	14,016	$12.00
551 High Avenue #530	1,678	$9.95
551 High Avenue #551	2,101	$10.00
350 Ohio Street	1,400	$13.00
111 N. Main Street	20,420	$15.00
16 Washington Avenue - First Floor	9,000	$10.00
16 Washington Avenue - Lower Level	4,000	$7.00
Downtown Appleton	**254,508**	**$12.54**
900 W. College Avenue	3,135	$14.00
122 S. Memorial Drive	9,600	$7.25
225 N. Richmond Street	443	$12.00
330 W. College Avenue - 2nd Floor	10,884	$14.00
330 W. College Avenue - 3rd Floor	4,160	$16.00
330 W. College Avenue - 3rd Floor	607	$14.82
330 W. College Avenue - 3rd Floor	640	$15.00
423 W. College Avenue	15,000	$3.50
318 W. College Avenue	35,138	$15.00
222 W. College Avenue	22,000	$20.00
207 W. College Avenue	2,000	$12.00
103 W. College Avenue	78,480	$12.00
100 W. Lawrence Street	1,055	$20.00
10 E. College Avenue	4,750	$6.00
100 E. College Avenue	5,300	$7.50
122 E. College Avenue - First Floor	5,230	$18.00
122 E. College Avenue - Lower Level	24,640	$12.00
215 E. College Avenue	3,200	$11.25
200 E. Washington Street	925	$14.00
200 E. Washington Street	12,042	$18.00
200 E. Washington Street	280	$12.86
101 W. Edison Avenue - Suite 170	2,562	$12.00
101 W. Edison Avenue - Suite 160	4,351	$4.00
101 W. Edison Avenue - Suite 211	318	$14.15
101 W. Edison Avenue - Suite 219	285	$12.63
101 W. Edison Avenue - Suites 180, 247, 224, 234, 245	5,409	$12.00
304 N. Appleton Street	2,074	$8.50
Downtown Fond du Lac	**19,901**	**$9.71**
17 S. Main Street	3,200	$11.25
55 S. Main Street	6,474	$12.00
17 Forest Avenue	5,227	$12.00
51 E. 1st Street	5,000	$3.60
Downtown Menasha	**16,700**	**$8.50**
150 Main Street	16,700	$8.50
Downtown Neenah	**12,821**	**$11.50**
111 E. Wisconsin Avenue	10,226	$8.00
333 N. Commercial Street	2595	$15.00
Total	**457,722**	**$11.48**

Source: Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Oshkosh BID, LoopNet, Houseal Lavigne Associates

Commercial Properties for Sale - Downtowns (2016)

Primary Market Area

Property	Property Size (SF)	Asking Price	Price (SF)
Center City Oshkosh	**56,028**	**$321,427**	**$57.51**
208 State Street	8960	$389,900	$43.52
210 N. Main Street	5638	Unavailable	Unavailable
309 High Avenue	Unavailable	$138,000	Unavailable
703 Oregon Street	Unavailable	$55,000	Unavailable
909 Oregon Street	2205	$89,900	$40.77
216 N. Main Street	Unavailable	$299,900	Unavailable
319 Pearl Avenue	2,056	$174,000	$84.63
303 Pearl Avenue	10,200	$650,000	$63.73
405 Washington Avenue (Eagles Club)	Unavailable	$375,000	Unavailable
683 N. Main Street	11,165	$350,000	$31.35
601 Oregon Street (Second Floor)	7,000	$799,000	$114.14
601 Bay Shore Drive (Warehouse)	8,804	$215,000	$24.42
Downtown Appleton	**327,878**	**$868,832**	**$41.68**
820 W. College Avenue	23,572	$795,000	$33.73
122 S. Memorial Drive	9,600	$350,000	$36.46
225 N. Richmond Street	12,500	$625,000	$50.00
523 W. College Avenue	5,760	$349,000	$60.59
423 W. College Avenue	15,000	$297,500	$19.83
330 W. College Avenue	32,314	$3,900,000	$120.69
318 W. College Avenue	45,916	$1,500,000	$32.67
130 E. Franklin Street	8,530	$250,000	$29.31
122 E. College Avenue	53,125	$650,000	$12.24
323 N. Morrison Street	5,650	$299,000	$52.92
200 E. Washington Street #2A	88,888	$1,600,000	$18.00
128 N. Durkee Street	2,800	$149,900	$53.54
618 S. Olde Oneida Street (Light Industrial)	24,223	$529,416	$21.86
Downtown Fond du Lac	**28,600**	**222,850**	**$33.38**
15 N. Main Street	3,100	$98,400	$31.74
7,9,11 N. Main Street	11,500	$225,000	$19.57
119 S. Main Street	6,000	$269,000	$44.83
161 S. Main Street	8,000	$299,000	$37.38
Downtown Menasha	**0**	**$0**	**$0**
None	--	--	--
Downtown Neenah	**11,655**	**$272,000**	**$51.98**
411 S. Commercial Street	3,936	$269,000	$68.34
216 N. Commercial Street	7,719	$275,000	$35.63
Total	**424,161**	**$529,542**	**$45.46**

Source: Loop Net; Houseal Lavigne Associates

CHAPTER 3D

Developing Property in the Center City

160 Current Development Regulations

166 Incentives & Tools

172 Opportunity Sites

Reinvestment in existing property and the development of new property is a key indicator of the health and vitality of a local economy, as well as the ability to meet the demands of residents and employers. This section details issues and opportunities relating to building, improving, and reinvesting in commercial, residential, and mixed-use properties within the Center City. It is organized into the following sections:

- **Current Regulations**, providing an overview of current zoning, signage, and parking requirements;
- **Incentives & Tools**, detailing existing programming that can be leveraged to stimulate new development and redevelopment; and
- **Opportunity Sites**, identifying properties that are suitable for redevelopment, development, or additional investment and would have a catalytic impact on the Center City.

The detailed demographic and market information that provides the foundation for much of the information in this chapter can be found in **Chapter 3b: Living in Downtown** (as it relates to the residential market) and Chapter 3c: Working in Downtown (as it relates to the commercial market).

Current Development Regulations

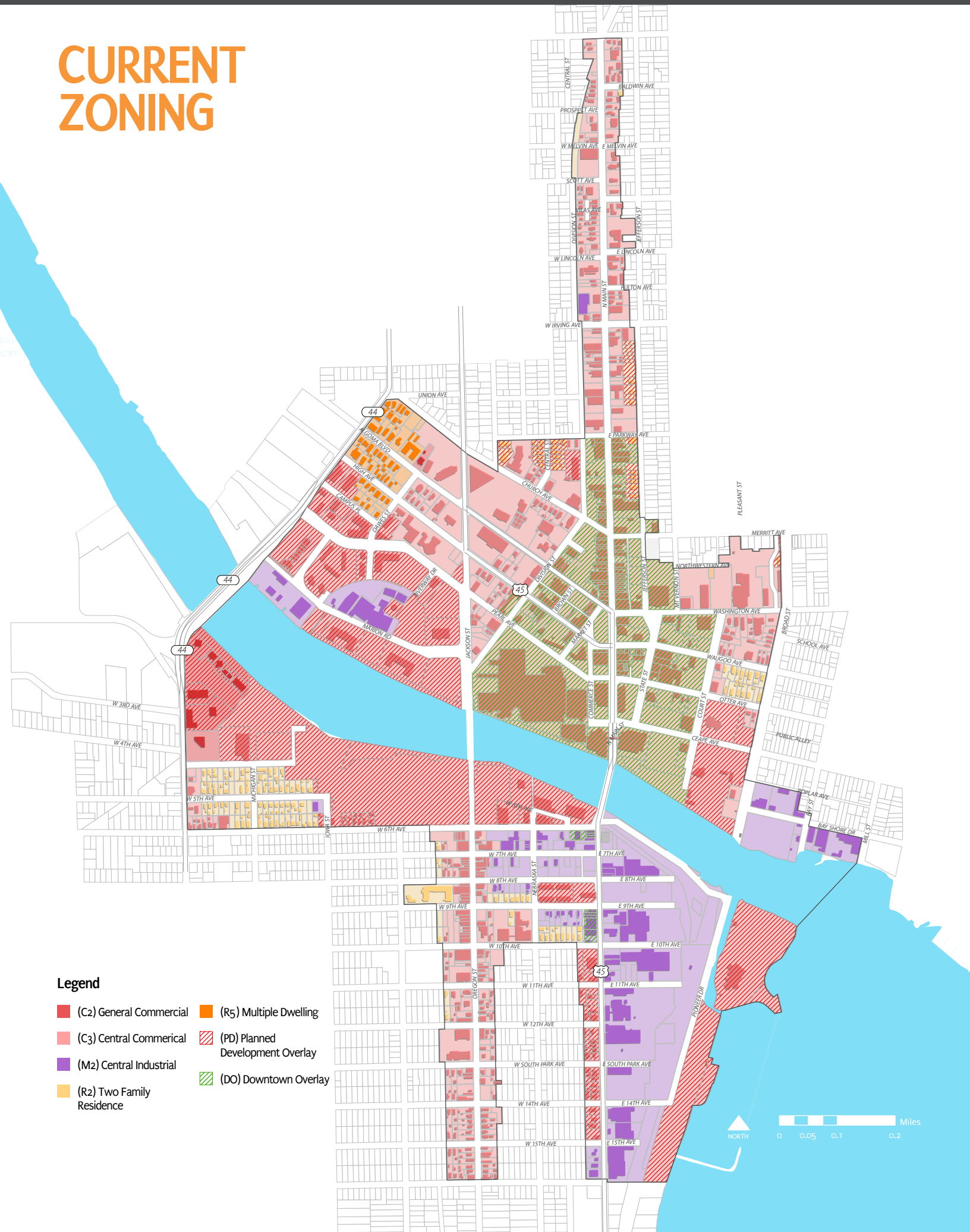
This section proves an overview of the City's current zoning. The City's Zoning Ordinance is Chapter 30 within the Code of Ordinances. The Center City currently contains 5 zoning districts and 2 overlays which regulate the usage and intensity of land. Zoning Districts & Overlays

***Imagine Oshkosh*: Zoning Summary**

District	Acreage	% of Study Area
R-2	20.9	5.2%
R-5	9.5	2.3%
C-2	11.5	2.8%
C-3	264.1	65.3%
M-2	75.7	18.7%
Split Zoning	23.0	5.7%
Total	**404.62**	**100%**
Overlay Districts		
+ Downtown Overlay	67.7	16.7%
+ PD Overlay	128.5	34.0%

Note: District and overlay designations are not mutually exclusive.

CURRENT ZONING



Legend

- (C2) General Commercial
- (C3) Central Commerical
- (M2) Central Industrial
- (R2) Two Family Residence
- (R5) Multiple Dwelling
- (PD) Planned Development Overlay
- (DO) Downtown Overlay

R-2 Two Family Residence District

The R-2 district permits single family homes, two family dwellings, and other similar uses. The minimum lot dimensions are: 60 feet (width), 100 feet (depth), 7200 square feet (area), and 3600 square feet (per unit). Minimum residential structure dimensions are: 35 feet (height), 7.5 feet (side yard setback), 25 feet (front yard and rear yard setback), 1200 square feet (structure area), 400 square feet (dwelling unit structure). Permitted height and the minimum side yard setback are increased to 45 feet and 10 feet, respectively, for non-residential structures.

R-5 Multiple Dwelling District

The R-5 district accommodates a diversity of residential uses at differing densities while also permitting fraternity and sorority houses, rooming houses, bed and breakfasts, and other similar uses. The minimum lot dimensions are: 60 feet (width), 100 feet (depth), 7200 square feet (area), 1500 square feet (per unit). Structure dimensions vary based on the type, however, multi-family dwellings can only be at maximum 45 feet high and setbacks include a sliding scale starting at 7.5 feet for sideyard setbacks, a front yard setback of 25 feet, and a sliding scale starting at 25 feet for rear yard setbacks. Dwelling unit square footage must be 400 square feet at minimum.

C-2 General Commercial District

The C-2 district accommodates any use permitted in the C-1 district (except residential uses) as well as banks, hotels, entertainment uses (bowling alleys, movie theatre, etc.), and a wider variety of retail stores. Mixed-use (commercial and residential) is not permitted by right. Standards vary by the usage, detailed below.

- **Commercial** structures are limited to 45 feet in height, with setbacks as follows: 10 feet (side yard), 25 feet (front yard), and 25 feet (rear yard).
- **Mixed Commercial/Residential** structures must meet the standards of commercial structures with a minimum dwelling unit area of 400 square feet. Residential units are only permitted on upper floors.

C-3 Central Commercial District

The C-3 district permits any use permitted in R-5 and C-2, unless when noted otherwise, as well as parking lots, automobile storage garages, funeral homes, bus passenger depots, and more. Mixed-use (commercial and residential) is not permitted by right. Standards vary by the usage, detailed below.

- **Residential** structures must meet all the standards of the R-5 district.
- **Commercial** structures are limited to 45 feet in height, no required front, rear, or sideyard setbacks.
- **Mixed Commercial/Residential** structures must meet the standards of commercial structures with a minimum dwelling unit area of 400 square feet. Residential units are only allowed on upper floors.

Downtown Overlay District

The Downtown Overlay District was established to foster a strong viable downtown as a commercial, civic, residential, and cultural center. The boundaries are generally considered to be the historic Central Business District (CBD) and are roughly coterminous with the Business Improvement District (BID), but two stretches of streetwall along South Main are also included. The District implements minimum standards to preserve and restore historic buildings, ensure coordinated design between new and old buildings, protect vehicular and pedestrian movement, and aid in improving the overall economic viability of the district.

The district allows any uses permitted within the underlying zoning district, but specifies that all residential uses are limited to upper floor areas. No new detached residential units are permitted. Any new building, building addition, and/or façade renovation (where 50%+ is renovated) is subject to the following building design standards:

- Buildings must have one public entrance facing the primary street.
- Buildings shall be oriented to the public street and a minimum of 70% of the façade shall be constructed at the setback line.
- Facades shall incorporate design elements to denote base, middle, and cap. Horizontal elements shall visually align with similar elements of neighboring properties.
- No height restriction.
- Doors and windows should be similar in size, proportion, and alignment based on the architectural style of the building and adjacent properties. Original door and window openings shall be maintained and shall be restored to original style and size if the façade is being renovated.
- Replacement windows shall fit exactly into the original window openings and should match the historic windows in size, shape, arrangement of panes, and materials.
- Primary exterior building finishes must make-up atleast 75% of the façade finish and consist of material equivalent in grade and quality such as brick, stone, concrete panels with a grid or brick-like appearance, terra cotta, cast iron, and more. EIFS and metal may be used but not as a primary material.
- When façade changes are made, hidden architectural elements and original materials shall be restored or replaced to match the original architecture of the building.

Additionally, properties must also follow the below signage standards, which supplements Section 30-37 of the Zoning Ordinance. Key regulations include:

- Signage shall relate to the design of the principal building on the property. For buildings without a recognizable style, the sign shall reflect the decorative features of the building or the elements of the buildings in the adjacent area.
- Portable, electronic message board, and sheet metal signs are prohibited.
- Projecting signs are limited to the tenant's store name and logo only.
- Only one wall sign is permitted per storefront operation.

The district also requires that all mechanical equipment and service areas be screened from the public view.

Planned Development Overlay District

The Planned Development Overlay District facilitates a more flexible mixture and pattern of development, grouping of open spaces, and arrangement of living patterns in accordance with good planning principles. Several areas within the Center City area are designated for/were built as planned developments, including the City Center, Pearl Road area, the Jeld Wen site, Pioneer Island, and more. When applied to a specific geographic area, the process shall be governed by the PD process but the underlying zoning district shall prevail in determining land uses, density, and intensity.

M-2

The M-2 district allows any use permitted C-3 district (except hospitality and residential uses) as well as moderately intensive industrial and manufacturing uses. No front, rear, or side yard setback is required. No minimum lot width or lot size is required for uses also permitted in the M-1 district, but those found within the M-3 district trigger different standards.

Off-Street Parking & Loading

Section 30-36 of the Zoning Code regulates off-street parking and loading. Some of the key regulations affecting development in the Center City include:

- Parking is not required for non-residential uses in the C-3 Central Commercial District, however, when off-street parking facilities are provided, such facilities shall be provided in accordance with the ordinance, except in respect to the required number of spaces. Mixed-use and upper floor residential uses need to provide evidence of the availability of off-street public or private parking within 1,000 feet of the unit.
- Required parking varies by use, with: multi-family parking requiring 2 spaces per each unit with 2 bedrooms or less, and 0.5 spaces per additional bedroom; office uses requiring 5 spaces for the first 1,000 square feet NFA plus 1 space per 300 square feet thereafter; hotels requiring 1 space per guest room; and general retail sales requires 1 space per 300 square feet plus 1 space per 1,000 square feet outside sales or display area.
- Many uses have established maximums for parking to prevent "overparking."
- Shared/pooled parking is permitted under the right conditions.
- A minimum of four bike parking spaces may be provided in lieu of one required automobile space in a nonresidential parking lot with a maximum reduction of up to 5 parking spaces.
- Loading and unloading facilities shall be provided for all commercial and industrial structures unless an equivalent number of spaces is provided in conformity with these regulations.

Signage

Signage is regulated within the Zoning Ordinance within section 30-37. Additional signage regulations for the Downtown area are included within the Downtown Overlay District. The ordinance regulates sign area, installation, type of sign, location of sign, and more.

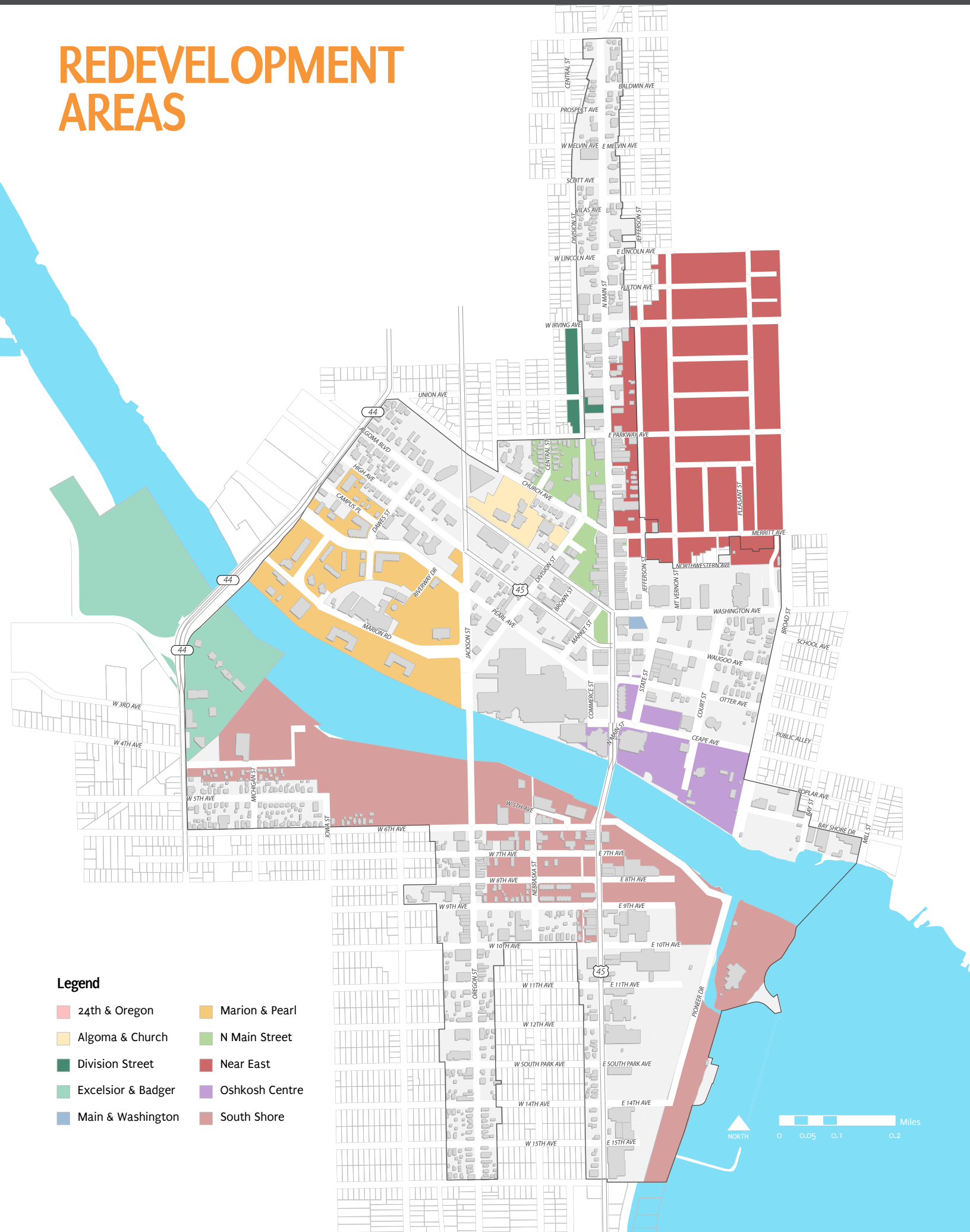
Incentives & Tools

The city, state, and federal government offer various incentives to encourage economic development and improvements to existing properties. This section details available some of the incentives and tools that could be leveraged to generate desired redevelopment and development scenarios recommended in *Imagine Oshkosh*.

Redevelopment Districts (City)

The City of Oshkosh, based on recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan, created several redevelopment districts to further revitalization efforts and align resources and funding. The main source of public funding has been through Tax Increment Financing (detailed in the next section) with the purpose of creating the conditions for private development. Within the project study area are eight designated Redevelopment Areas, depicted on the accompanying map. *Imagine Oshkosh* will determine whether or not these existing districts need to be updated in terms of geography or whether new districts should be created to guide recommendations.

REDEVELOPMENT AREAS



Legend

- 24th & Oregon
- Algoma & Church
- Division Street
- Excelsior & Badger
- Main & Washington
- Marion & Pearl
- N Main Street
- Near East
- Oshkosh Centre
- South Shore

Tax Increment Financing Districts (2016)
Center City Oshkosh

TIF #	Termination Date	TIF Type	Purpose
10	September 16, 2020	Redevelopment	Main & Washington Street Redevelopment – Washington Parking Lot/Economic Development
11	January 10, 2022	Redevelopment	Oshkosh Office Center – Parking Lot
12	April 22, 2024	Redevelopment	Division Street Redevelopment – Housing Redevelopment
13	September 22, 2025	Redevelopment	Marion Road/Pearl Avenue Redevelopment – Commercial and Housing Development
15	January 9, 2028	Redevelopment	Park Plaza/Commerce Street Redevelopment – Economic Development and Rehabilitation
16	May 22, 2028	Redevelopment	100 Block Redevelopment
17	September 25, 2028	Redevelopment	City Center Redevelopment
20	July 12, 2032	Redevelopment	South Shore Redevelopment Area
21	February 14, 2033	Redevelopment	Fox River Corridor Project
25	May 22, 2039	Redevelopment	City Center Hotel Redevelopment

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; City of Oshkosh

Tax Incremental Financing (City)

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is the most common economic development tool utilized by Wisconsin cities to spur development. Authorized by the state legislature in 1975, TIF allows municipalities to fund infrastructure and other improvements within a designated area by capturing increased property tax revenue. Approval of TIF districts falls to a Joint Review Board consisting of the City, County, School District, and Fox Valley Technical College. In order for a TIF to be approved, among other factors, the developer must meet the "but for" test – that the new development could not feasible but for the use of a TIF.

TIF districts must fall under one of four district types: Blighted District, Rehabilitation or Conservation District, Industrial District, and Mixed-Use District. The declaration is based on the type of land that makes up 50% of the area in the TID, or which of the four is predominant with regard to the TID area. The TID is terminated at the end of the expenditure period (15-22 years, dependent upon the district type), following receipt of tax increments that total more than the project costs, or due to voluntary termination.

Eligible project must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and meet seven basic objectives:

- Stimulate and continued revitalization of the central city and downtown area
- Promote efficient usage of land through redevelopment of blighted areas.
- Strengthen the economic base of the City and support Economic Development.
- Stabilize and upgrade targeted neighborhoods.
- Create and retain family supporting jobs in the City.
- Increase property values and tax revenues.
- Leveraging the maximum amount of non-city funds into a development and back into the community.

The project study area contains ten TIF districts. They are depicted on the accompanying map, with information relating to each TIF in the accompanying table. One outcome of *Imagine Oshkosh* may be to recommend evaluating the creation of new TIFs or to amend the boundaries of existing TIFs to accommodate recommended development or redevelopment.

Historic Preservation Tax Credit (State)

The State's Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HTC) program provides transferable state income tax credits to eligible entities rehabilitating certified historic buildings. The HTC provides an uncapped, 20% credit for qualified rehabilitation expenses. Eligible buildings must be recommended by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) as a certified historic property. Properties that are not eligible because they are not certified historic buildings may also quality for the credit if the building was placed in service before 1936 and has not been relocated.

Historic Preservation Tax Credits (Federal)

The U.S. government offers two federal income tax credits that can facilitate restoration and rehabilitation of historic and/or old buildings. The credits are:

- **20% Federal Tax Credit.** A 20% income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be "certified historic structures." The State Historic Preservation Offices and the National Park Service review the rehabilitation work to ensure that it complies with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Internal Revenue Service defines qualified rehabilitation expenses on which the credit may be taken. Owner-occupied residential properties do not qualify for the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

10% Federal Tax Credit. The 10% tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of non-historic buildings placed in service before 1936. The building must be rehabilitated for non-residential use. In order to qualify for the tax credit, the rehabilitation must meet three criteria: at least 50% of the existing external walls must remain in place as external walls, at least 75% of the existing external walls must remain in place as either external or internal walls, and at least 75% of the internal structural framework must remain in place. There is no formal review process for rehabilitations of non-historic buildings.

Revolving Loan Fund Program (City/EDC)

In 2014, the City established the Revolving Loan Fund Program in partnership with the Greater Oshkosh Economic Development Corporation. The $2.4 million program provides a flexible gap financing tool for businesses involving high-income and job growth projects through expansion and/or relocation in the City. Eligible businesses may receive a loan minimum of $50,000 to a maximum of $200,000 to acquire land, buildings, and equipment; for site preparation, construction, and/or rehabilitation; clearance or demolition; and several other activities.

Recruitment Grant (BID)

Established by the Oshkosh Business Improvement District (BID), the Recruitment Fund Grant program gives up to $5,000 to an individual business to aid in its relocation into the BID or fund expansion for a business that is already in the BID.

Retention Grant (BID)

Established by the Oshkosh Business Improvement District (BID), the Retention Grant awards qualifying property owners and businesses within the BID matching funds for exterior façade improvements made to their building. The grant reimburses 50% of expenses up to $1,000.

Business Development Tax Credits (State)

Businesses seeking to locate or expand in the Center City may be eligible for Business Development Tax Credits through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Eligible businesses must demonstrate an increase in net employment in the state each year for which the business claims tax credits. Ineligible businesses include payday loan and title loan companies; telemarketing, other than inbound call centers; pawn shops; media outlets; retail; farms; primary care medical facilities; financial institutions; and businesses in the hospitality industry.

Enterprise Zone Tax Credit (State)

Enterprise Zone Tax Credits are available through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation to assist Wisconsin businesses that have major expansion projects or are relocating major business operations from other states to Wisconsin. Refundable tax credits can be earned through job creation, job retention, capital investment, employee training and supply chain purchases from Wisconsin vendors. Ineligible businesses include payday loan and title loan companies; telemarketing; pawn shops; media outlets such as newspapers and radio, unless the job creation is significant; businesses in the tourism industry, unless the job creation is significant; retail; farms; primary care medical facilities; and financial institutions.

Neighborhood Business Revitalization Guarantee (State)

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) provides financial assistance to small businesses. The organization's Neighborhood Business Revitalization Guarantee (NBRG) gives access to financing that allows qualified small businesses to develop or rehabilitate commercial real estate in urban areas.

Affordable Housing Programming (State)

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) provides several financing options for affordable housing developers and property managers to construct and maintain affordable housing. Financing includes tax-exempt bond financing, stand-along bond financing, and flex financing, among others.

Special Project Loan Fund (State)

The Special Project Loan Fund is administered through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Loan amounts range from $50,000 to $250,000, and can be used by businesses for working capital, equipment purchases, brownfield remediation, or new product development. Loans require at least a 50 percent match by the recipient, and loan guarantees require a 20 percent match.

Opportunity Sites

Opportunity sites are vacant and/or underutilized parcels where development, adaptive-re-use, or redevelopment would have a significant positive effect in Center City Oshkosh. To provide focus, and with the aim of creating a "critical mass" of activity within concentrated areas, only 20 sites were identified, mostly in concentrated areas with the greatest likelihood of development activity. These sites are only preliminary at this point; *Imagine Oshkosh* will build upon this list and develop an actionable and prioritized list of redevelopment scenarios that can achieve the plan's vision of increased vitality and activity.

Key criteria used to identify opportunity sites include:

- Location
- Visibility and access
- Vacancy
- Current use
- Surrounding land uses
- Ability to fill gaps in the street wall
- Ability to generate new tax revenue
- Ability to enhance urban character
- Ability to create synergies with nearby land uses

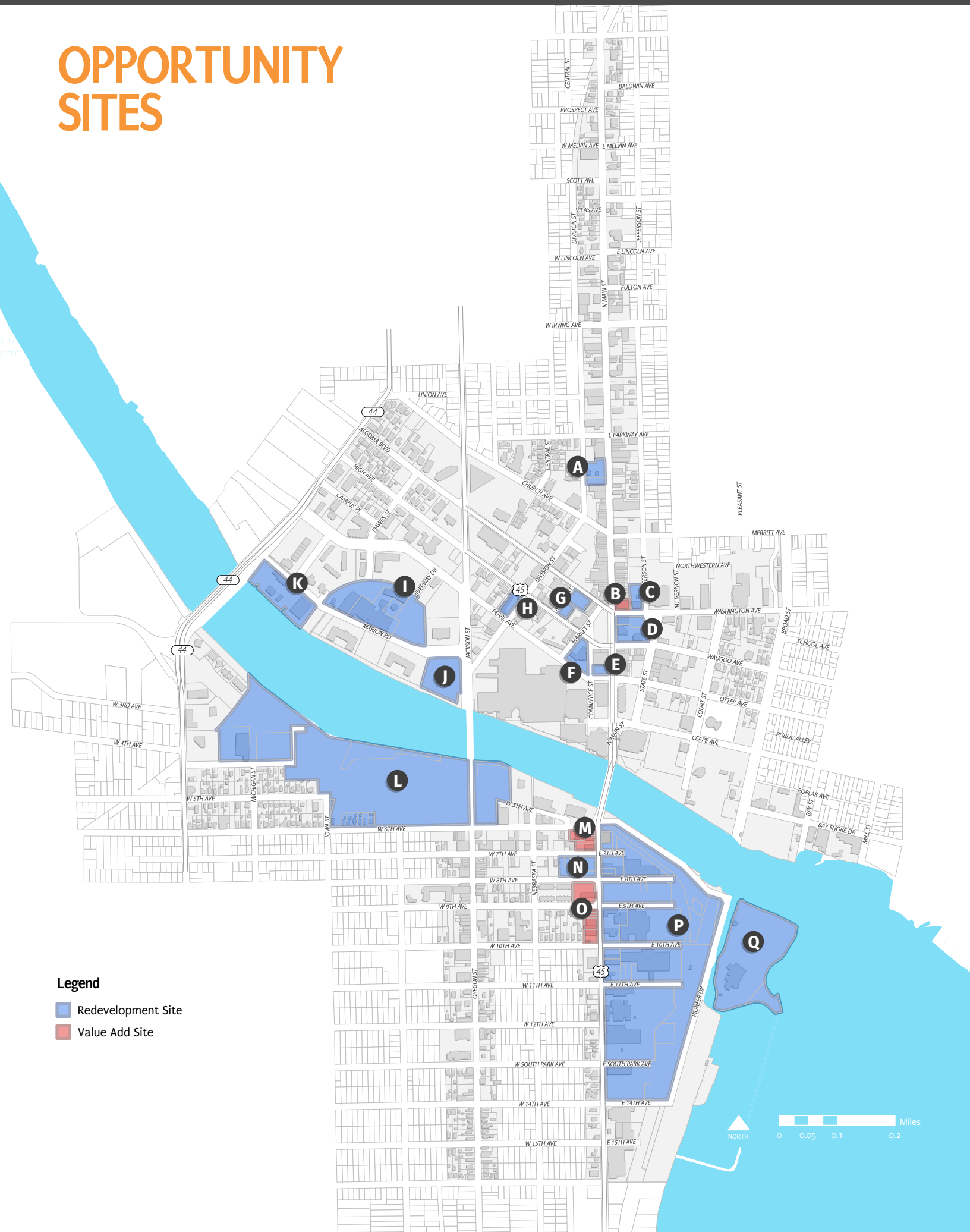
Opportunity sites have been broken down into two categories: **Redevelopment Sites**, which include development of vacant parcels or demolition of an existing structure for a new structure; and **Value Add Sites**, which include existing structures that should be preserved but activated with expansion, higher occupancy, repositioning, and/or adaptive re-use. Some sites include multiple parcels; in some cases it may be appropriate to integrate existing uses and buildings into larger redevelopment scenarios.

Opportunity Sites (2016)
Center City Oshkosh

#	Type	Current Use	Acreage	Functional Subarea	Current Zoning	# of Parcels	# of Owners
A	Redevelopment	Parking Lot; Small Office	0.86	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	2*	2
B	Value-Add	Commercial Building	0.26	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	1	1
C	Redevelopment	Bank	0.55	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	1	1
D	Redevelopment	Commercial; Bank; Parking Lot	1.43	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	3	3
E	Redevelopment	Parking Lot	0.73	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	2	2
F	Redevelopment	Motel	0.50	Downtown Outer Core	C-3 (+DO)	1	1
G	Redevelopment	Bank	0.89	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	1	1
H	Redevelopment	Parking Lot	0.27	Downtown Core	C-3 (+DO)	1	1
I	Redevelopment	Industrial; Vacant	7.65	Marion Road Waterfront	M-2; C-3 (+PD)	4	4
J	Redevelopment	Industrial	3.54	Marion Road Waterfront	M-2	1	1
K	Redevelopment	Vacant Lot	2.58	Marion Road Waterfront	C-3 (+PD)	1	1
L	Redevelopment	Industrial; Vacant; Residential	36.57	South Shore West	C-3 (+PD)	14	8
M	Value-Add	Commercial	0.75	South Shore Central	M-2; M-2 (+DO)	7	4
N	Redevelopment	Vacant Lot	1.28	South Shore Central	M-2	6	1
O	Value-Add	Industrial; Commercial	0.79	South Shore Central	C-3 (+PD); M-2 (+DO)	6	5
P	Redevelopment	Industrial; Commercial	39.53	South Shore East	M-2	25	16
Q	Redevelopment	Commercial	15.86	South Shore East	C-3 (+PD)	1	1

**Denotes that parcels would have to be split to accommodate development*
Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; City of Oshkosh

OPPORTUNITY SITES



Legend

- Redevelopment Site
- Value Add Site

CHAPTER 3E

Activating the Center City

160 Current Development Regulations

166 Incentives & Tools

172 Opportunity Sites

Successful center cities are activity hubs with an integrated mixture of offices, residences, restaurants, entertainment venues, outdoor spaces, recreation, shopping, and more. This creates activity on the street such as people walking, biking, dining al fresco, and hanging out in the park. Such bustle and interaction is what draws people to live, work, and play in center cities across the country and gives them their sense of place.

This section provides an overview of issues relating to activating the Center City, including:

- **Establishing Critical Mass**, detailing major activity generators, dead zones, existing festivals and programming, and the need for year-round activities;
- **Touching the Water**, providing an overview of how the waterfront relates to Center City activity and the need for further improvements; and
- **Providing Public Spaces & Green Spaces**, detailing the need for spaces that allow for socialization, recreation, and relaxation.

Establishing Critical Mass

Establishing a critical mass of activity requires aligning multiple public and private investments that can build on one another and reinforce each other. If activity is too spread out, it dilutes the investment and creates small pockets of activity that fail to add up to something larger. A core component of *Imagine Oshkosh* will be to identify and prioritize "critical mass areas" within the study area.

Understanding Center City Users

At the most basic level, an understanding of activity in the Center City requires an understanding of its users and modes of transportation. Throughout any given day or week, the primary users of the Center City may include:

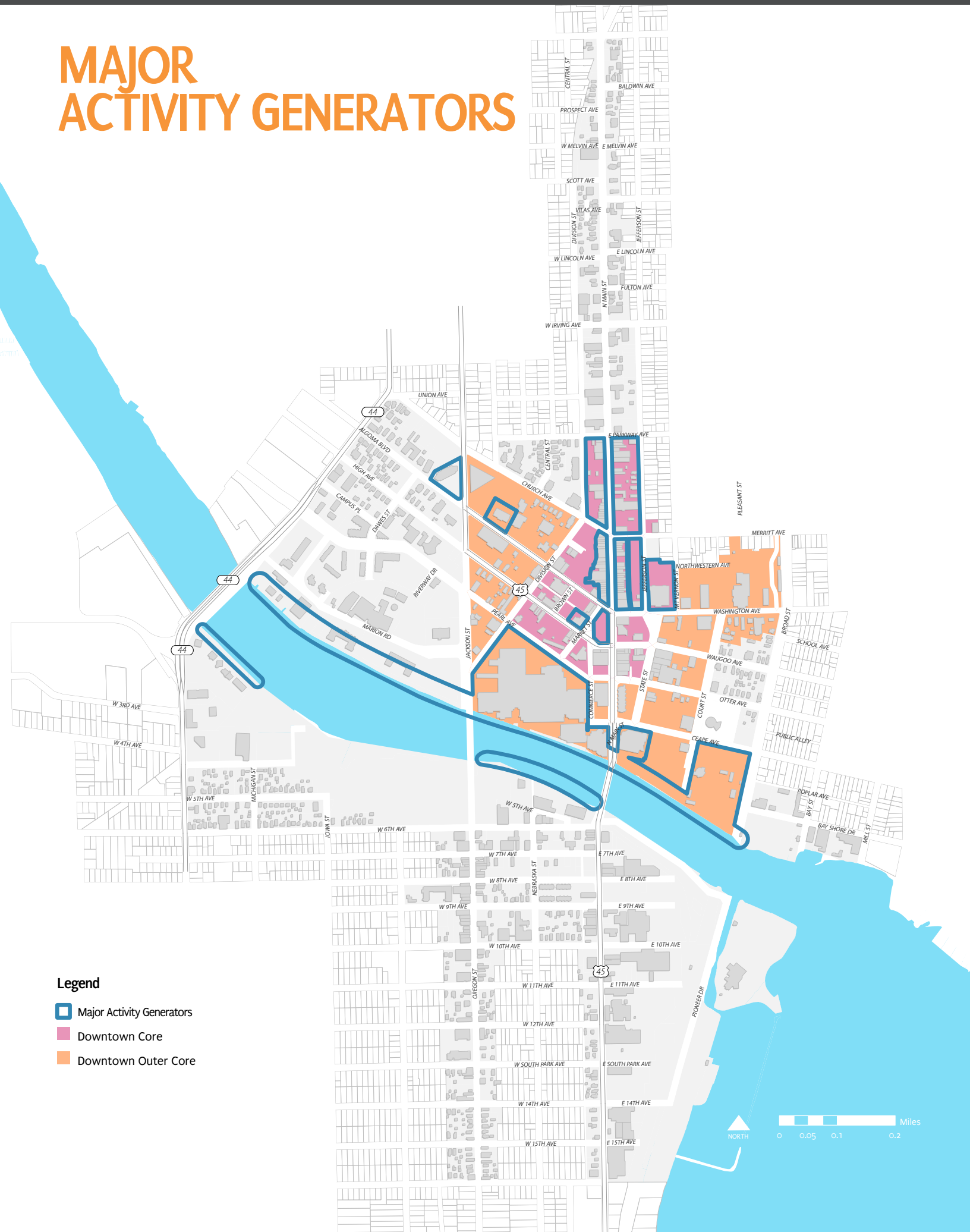
- Employees
- Business owners
- Government workers
- Shoppers
- Diners
- Commuters
- Government service users
- Residents
- Bicyclists
- Boaters
- Dog walkers
- Drivers
- Pedestrians
- Tourists
- Business conference/meeting attendees

Identifying Major Activity Generators

The Center City has many "activity generators" that stimulate daytime, nighttime, and weekend traffic. Based on community outreach, some of the major activity drivers in the Center City are depicted in the accompanying map and include:

- City Hall
- Winnebago County Courthouse
- Leach Amphitheatre
- 400-500 Block of N. Main Street
- Public Library
- Riverwalk / Waterfront
- Farmers Market
- Opera House
- Opera House Square
- Hotel/Convention Center
- City Center

MAJOR ACTIVITY GENERATORS



Legend

- Major Activity Generators
- Downtown Core
- Downtown Outer Core

Hosting Outdoor Festivals & Events

Oshkosh hosts many events throughout the year that draw residents and visitors to the Center City. Some of the major events held in the Center CIty include:

- Oshkosh Saturdays Farmers Market (June through October, held along N. Main Street)
- Gallery Walk (first Saturday of every month, held in Downtown Oshkosh)
- Waterfest (Thursdays in the summer, held at Leach Amphitheatre)
- Irish Fest (early summer, held at Leach Amphitheatre)
- Oktoberfest (fall, held at Leach Amphitheatre)
- Chili Cook-Off (October, held in Opera House Square)
- Gus Macker 3-on-3 Tournament (August, held in Opera House Square)

Promoting Year-Round Events & Activities

As noted in an earlier chapter, much of the retail, hospitality, and entertainment economy is dependent on the season. During warm months, the Center City is activated with boat traffic along the river and lake, concerts at the Leach Amphitheatre and Opera House Square, the Farmers Market, and other outdoor activities that draw residents and tourists to spend, shop, and stay in the Center City. However, much of the Center City's activities cease in the winter months and cold temperatures can inhibit outdoor events and walking, although ice fishing on the lake is popular during the winter as well as snowmobiling and ice boating. The world famous sturgeon spearing season happens for up to sixteen days in February where over 13,000 special spearing licenses are issued and Lake Winnebago is covered with ice shanties.

Imagine Oshkosh will evaluate opportunities for activating the Center City year-round, particularly in colder months when activities wane. An example of other successful winter programming includes "Take Back Your Winter" in Muskoka, Canada; former programming in Oshkosh that was cancelled included Heart of Winter Fest and an ice skating rink.

Touching the Water

One of Center City Oshkosh's greatest assets is the ability to "touch the water." While many other center downtowns in the region are located on or near water, Oshkosh's waterfront allows anyone to walk right up to the waterfront and relax, hop into a speedboat, or launch a canoe. For example, in Downtown Appleton, steep bluffs separate the waterfront from Downtown; portions of Downtown Neenah's waterfront remain private residential or industrial property, although it does have a short riverwalk and green space at Arrowhead Park.

Completing the Riverwalk

The Oshkosh Riverwalk is one of the community's most cherished amenities and a world class asset. When completed, the Riverwalk will be a nearly continuous loop along both sides of the Fox River from Wisconsin Street in the west to Lake Winnebago in the east, connecting with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and the Wiouwash Trail. At present, the northern shore of the project is complete while the south shore portion remains mostly incomplete.

Continuation of the Riverwalk along the south shore is underway as funding becomes available. A segment of the south shore portion between Wisconsin Avenue and Michigan Street was completed in 2014 and the Boat Works Marina property was completed in 2016.

However, much work remains to continue its extension eastwards to Pioneer Island. *Imagine Oshkosh* will incorporate existing plans for the Riverwalk into the plan, advocate for its extension, and ensure that redevelopment scenarios of South Shore properties accommodate its extension.

Capitalizing on Boat Activity

The Fox River connects Lake Winnebago to Lake Butte des Morts. Lake Winnebago is the largest freshwater body of water within Wisconsin, and in the warm months the Fox River is a key highway for canoes, kayaks, motorboats, and the Loos Cruises. Docks along the northern banks allow boaters to pull right up and dine at local restaurants such as Becket's and the Ground Round.

For some boaters, their first impressions of Oshkosh might be what they see from the water, so it is critical that the waterfront is inviting and attractive. *Imagine Oshkosh* should provide recommendations to encourage further boat traffic within the Center City, making it the "place to be" for boaters. Examples could include: redevelopment of Pioneer Island, redevelopment of other waterfront properties, extension of the Riverwalk, public art, additional boat launches, and more.

Providing Public Spaces & Green Spaces

Center City Oshkosh is fortunate to have several green and public spaces, including Roe Park, Opera House Square, Riverside Park, and the plaza across from the Oshkosh Public Library. Proximate to the study area are Shapiro Park and Steiger Park. However, much of the dedicated open space is concentrated near the waterfront and there are few public spaces or plazas outside of the very core of the study area. *Imagine Oshkosh* will evaluate the creation of new green and public spaces, such as pocket parks, plazas, dog parks, and more. Other options include programming space that is currently unprogrammed, such as adding a beach volleyball court in an existing green space. The addition of such spaces could support residents living in/near the Center City, generate activity and excitement, and provide recreation areas for visiting families.

Small pocket parks located between buildings on formerly vacant lots can serve as an oasis and public space for reading, people watching, and eating lunch. This example in New York City has been very successful.

Source: Project for Public Spaces

Existing spaces, such as this small plaza (William Waters Plaza) across from the Oshkosh Public Library, could be improved with public art, landscaping, a checkers/chess table, or other interactive pieces. Planned improvements are underway.

OPEN SPACES

Legend

- Existing Tree
- Proposed Riverwalk
- Existing Riverwalk
- Existing Plaza
- Existing Green Space

CHAPTER 3F

Getting Around in the Center City

179 Motorized Mobility
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The ability to safely and efficiently move through the Center City is critical to quality of life as well as economic development. While the Center City should accommodate both vehicles and pedestrians, walking should be the primary mode of transportation within most areas of the Center City.

A distinguishing characteristic of any successful center city is a strong pedestrian orientation. Even visitors that arrive by automobile become pedestrians the moment they park and exit their cars. Unlike suburban commercial corridors, which are primarily oriented toward the automobile, center cities should orient toward the pedestrian. The movement of pedestrians between stores, employment areas, dwelling units, theatres, restaurants, parking areas, and the riverfront are critical considerations *Imagine Oshkosh* must consider. A safe and attractive pedestrian environment can significantly contribute to the overall character and appeal of the Center City and help catalyze additional investment.

This section is organized into the following sections:

- **Motorized Mobility**, providing an overview of the road network, road conditions and classifications, parking, and freight rail;
- **Public Transportation**, summarizing existing transit service within the Center City;
- **Pedestrian & Bike Mobility**, detailing sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, bike infrastructure, and more; and
- **Streetscape**, providing information on the existing N. Main streetscape.

Motorized Mobility

Existing Planning

Transportation planning within the City is already guided by several plans and policy documents. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fox Cities Urbanized Area, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) develops a Long Range Transportation Plan that is reviewed annually and updated every five years. In conjunction, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is an annually prepared program of transportation projects that will be utilizing federal funding assistance in their implementation. In addition, the City of Oshkosh utilizes local transportation plans in conjunction with several citizen transportation committees to guide decision making for roadway and service improvements.

Roadway Jurisdiction

Roadways within the project area are controlled by WisDOT and the City of Oshkosh. While the City has the power to make improvements to roadways under its jurisdiction, improvements to WisDOT roadways require coordination and collaboration to ensure future roadway treatments meet appropriate design and performance regulations, while balancing the needs of access and mobility. Roadways under WisDOT jurisdiction include US 45 and WI 44. As streetscape and roadway improvements are identified in the planning process, it will be critical to keep jurisdictional issues in mind to ensure feasibility of recommendations.

Functional Classification

The functional classification of a street or highway is dependent on the balance of mobility and access it provides as well as the surrounding land uses served by that street or highway. The functional classification of roadways not only designates their use and frequency of use (annual average daily traffic), but also their design. According to WisDOT, the functional classification of roadways criterion is predicated on the following:

- **Principal arterial.** These roadways serve a large percentage of travel between cities and other activity centers, providing a high degree of mobility. Principal arterials carry the major portion of trips entering and leaving an activity center, as well as the majority of through movements that either go directly through or bypass an area.
- **Minor arterial.** Minor arterial roadways carry traffic for inter-community trips, serving some local traffic while providing greater land access than principal arterials.
- **Collector.** Collectors provide direct access to residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas, and serve moderate to low daily traffic and inter-neighborhood trips.
- **Local Street.** Local streets predominantly serve to access adjacent land uses. All streets not classified as arterials or collectors are classified as local streets.

Trucks Routes

The City of Oshkosh has several designated multi-axle truck routes used for the delivery of industrial and commercial goods. Designated truck routes prevent significant noise and traffic impacts to neighborhood streets. Several designated truck routes run through the Center City, including along S. Main Street, N. Main Street, Wisconsin Street, Oregon Street, Jackson Street, and Irving Street. It is likely desirable for truck routes to be diverted away from N. Main Street, which is the heart of the Center City, and possibly S. Main Street (as the area redevelops away from industrial usage).

Road Conditions

The Pavement Surface Evaluation Rating System (PASER) is a system to evaluate roadway conditions. The system ranks the quality of roadway segments on a scale of 1-10. Roadways within the project area are considered good (7-8 rating: needing routine maintenance such as crack sealing and minor patching), fair (5-6 rating: needing preservation treatments (non-structural), surface repairs, and partial-depth patching), and poor (rating 3-4: requiring structural renewal (overlay), and extensive slab or joint rehabilitation).

VEHICULAR TRANSIT

Ongoing & Planned Capital Improvements

Each year the MPO prepares the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which outlines transportation projects needing federal funding assistance to achieve the goals in the LRTP. The TIP aligns with the capital improvement program of local governments, considering available budgets and timelines. Projects within the study area for the 2015-2018 period are limited to design work for the Oregon/Jackson Street Bridge.

The LRTP recommends several projects within the study area. Each of the projects listed are considered Illustrative Projects. These types of projects are recommended to repair identified deficiencies, but do not at present have dedicated funding. LRTP Illustrative Projects within the project area include:

Planned Capital Improvement Projects (2015-2018)
Center City Oshkosh

Project	Description	Cost (in thousands)	Jurisdiction
City of Oshkosh Bridge Lift Structures	Rehabilitation for remote operations	$864	WisDOT
Oregon/Jackson Street Bridge	Bridge Replacement	$2,000 (2016) $44,795 (2019)	WisDOT
Main Street, from New York Avenue to Irving Avenue	Roadway Reconstruction	$2,525	City of Oshkosh
Main Street, from the Fox River to 16th Avenue	Roadway Reconstruction	$4,363	City of Oshkosh

Source: Houseal Lavigne Associates; East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Downtown Parking Study

The availability of on- and off-street parking is a critical component to the overall transportation network. Earlier this year, a Downtown Parking Study was authored by Walker Parking Consultants that provides parking and operating strategies for Downtown Oshkosh. It is intended that this separate study serve as the parking strategy for the Downtown, complementing *Imagine Oshkosh*.

This brief section summarizes the current conditions identified in the report as well as conclusions and recommendations. It is also included in the section summarizing past plans in studies in **Chapter 2: Let's Talk.**

Current Conditions

- The current downtown parking supply includes 4,860 parking spaces: 37% are publicly owned and operated with public access, 31% are publicly owned and operated but with limited public access, 20% are privately owned and operated with limited public access, and 12% are located on-street.
- Roughly 1 in 3 parking spots within downtown is controlled by City Center (31%).
- The distribution of parking supply is within reasonable standards when compared to similar size cities.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- The current peak weekday parking demand in downtown Oshkosh does not exceed the current supply. Approximately 49% of the current parking supply is occupied during peak weekday conditions (2,414 parked vehicles). Conversely, there are approximately 2,446 unoccupied parking spaces during peak weekday conditions. Development of a new public parking structure in downtown Oshkosh is not recommended at this time.
- A future parking surplus is projected to occur under each of the five potential downtown development scenarios. The surplus of unoccupied parking supply is projected to range between 2,431 spaces for Scenario 1 and 1,376 spaces for Scenario 5.
- Based on current data and future development scenarios analyzed by Walker, a new parking ramp is not needed to support current or future parking demand in downtown Oshkosh.
- While an overall surplus of parking exists today, and a surplus is projected under future development scenarios, there are localized areas with more intense demand patterns that can be addressed through parking management practices.
- It is recommended that the City of Oshkosh invest in informing the community on downtown public parking options through the development and implementation of a sign/wayfinding program, community outreach efforts, and public parking branding strategy.
- To more effectively manage the use of public parking resources in downtown Oshkosh, it is recommended that the City implement an on-street paid parking system in the core area of downtown. A primary goal of the public parking system is to provide access to downtown destinations and events. By value pricing the core on-street supply and offering free off-street and peripheral on-street parking, the City can use price as a tool to redistribute parking demand and maximize the use of existing resources. Downtown patrons and employees would be provided a range of parking products to choose from that best align with personal preferences.
- While current typical parking conditions do not warrant the construction of a new parking ramp, it is recognized that some stakeholders believe a ramp is desired. The preliminary estimate of conceptual cost for a 400-space parking ramp is $7.2 million. The Parking Fund, under current policies and practices, would be unable to support the annual debt service payment, operating expenses, and capital repair and maintenance associated with the public parking ramp.

Rail

An active Canadian National (CN) rail line runs through the eastern portion of the study area in a north-south direction. It extends from Fond du Lac through Oshkosh, heading north to Neenah, Menasha, and Appleton. Roughly 26-30 trains per day utilize the rail line. The rail line and switching lines form a physical barrier between Pioneer Island and the properties to the west along S. Main. After the rail line crosses the Fox River, it runs at grade along Broad Street, forming the eastern boundary of the *Imagine Oshkosh* study area. The presence of the existing rail right-of-way must be considered in future development scenarios within the South Shore East subarea.

Public Transit

GO Transit

Public transportation is provided through GO Transit. Go Transit offers 10 fixed bus routes, 6 of which serve the project area. Buses typically run between 6:15 am and 6:45 pm with fares currently set at $1.00 or $0.50 for seniors and those with disabilities. GO Transit buses are equipped with bicycle racks, increasing multi-mobility within the region. Transit stops are marked by signage, and some stops include covered rest area. Nevertheless, the majority of bus stops within the study area lack benches or other facilities to accommodate waiting riders. The Transit Center is located at the intersection of Pearl Avenue and Market Street.

Titan Transit

The University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh runs two fixed route bus routes during its 14-week semesters. These bus lines provide an extended and late-night transit option, supplementing GO Transit regular hours.

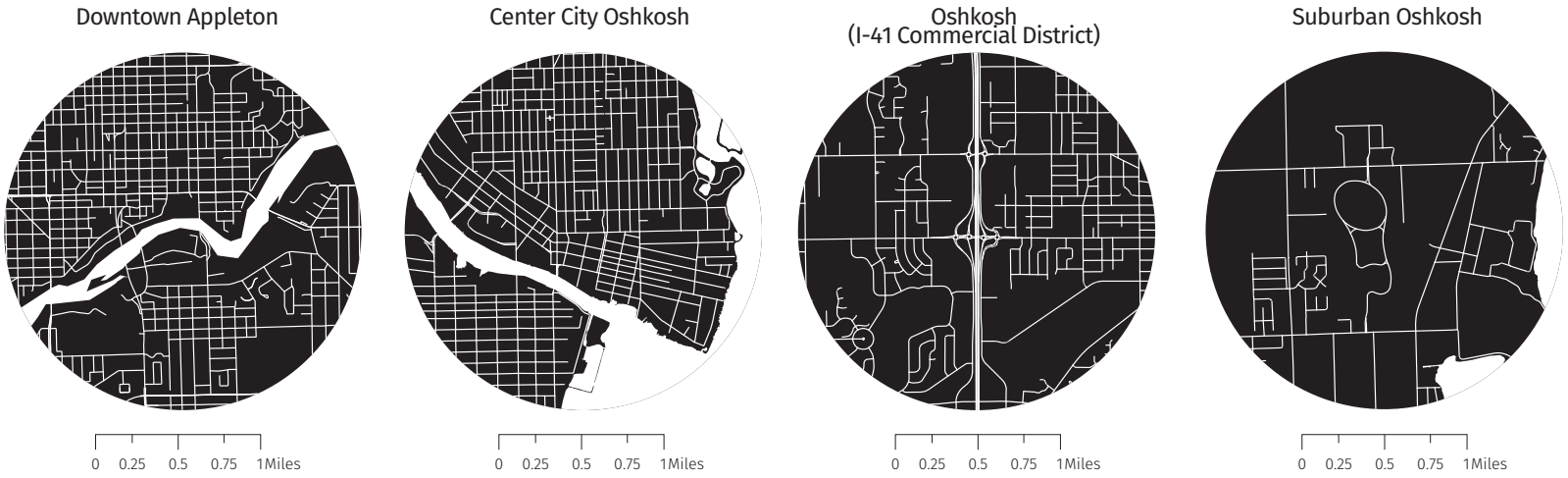
PUBLIC TRANSIT

Legend

- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 5
- Route 6
- Route 8
- Route 10
- Titan Transit Evening Route
- Titan Transit Late Night Route

- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 5
- Route 6
- Route 8
- Route 10
- Titan Transit Late Night Route
- Bench

Street Grid Comparisons



Pedestrian & Bike Mobility

Street Grid

The street grid of any area impacts its function. The size and shape of the blocks in the center city affect its walkability and pedestrian-friendliness. A street grid with short blocks means an area is more walkable and accessible. This is a key component of a center city and a planning consideration where walkability and pedestrian friendliness are primary objectives.

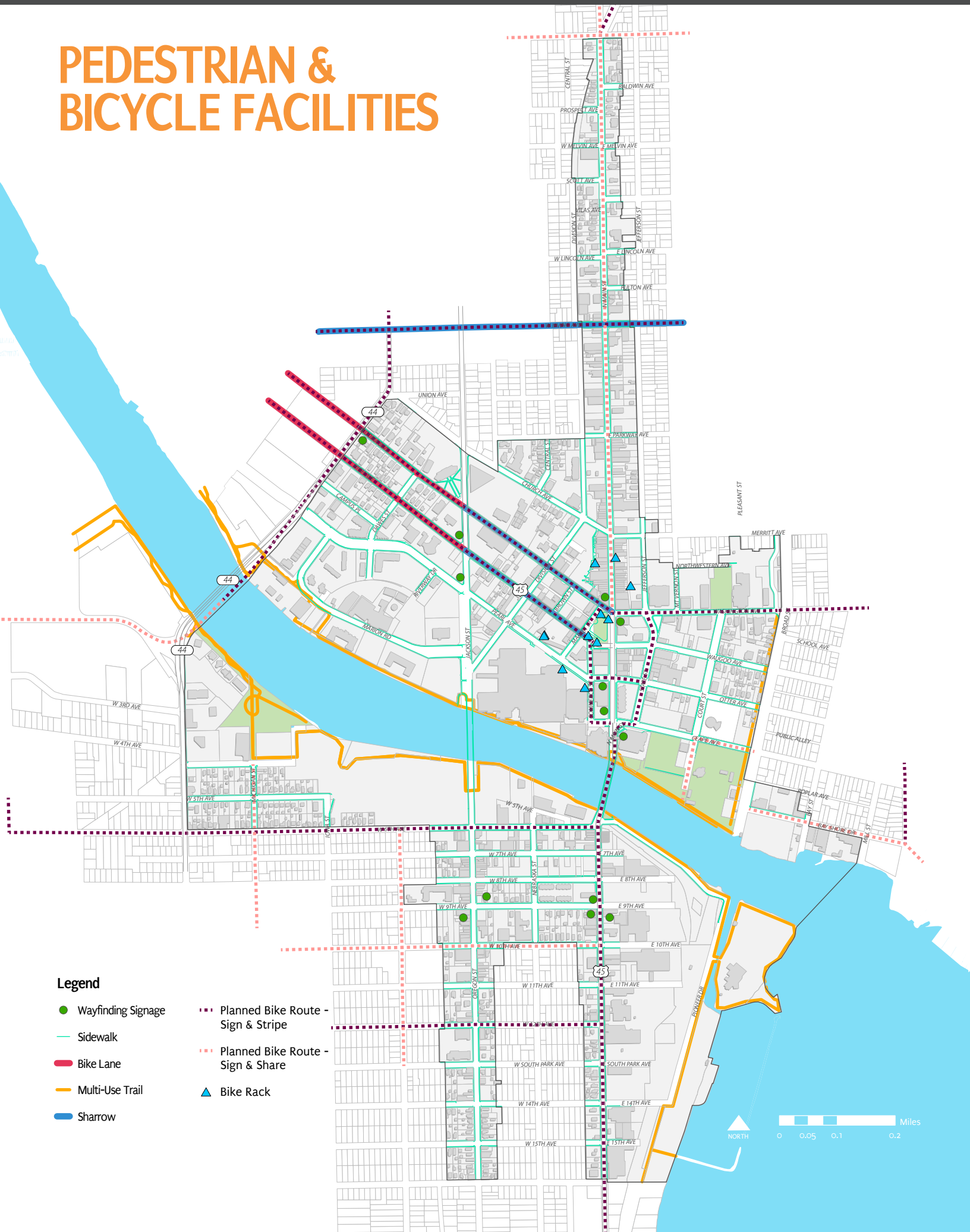
There is a direct correlation between the size of blocks of an area and its use and function. Smaller blocks are more walkable and accessible and are the preferred block type in a center city. When blocks are 'walkable', pedestrian comfort and friendliness are achieved. A visitor can park in one spot and make multiple stops in the center city by walking from business to business. Other cited benefits that are attributed to pedestrian-scaled block sizes include less traffic congestion, cleaner air, enhanced social capital (face-to-face interaction) among residents, and healthier citizens.

Citizens that are driving less and walking more in the center city of a community will also have more interaction with neighbors and community members, helping to establish a critical mass. Increasing interaction among residents will in turn increase the area's social capital and help create a greater sense of community.

While much of Oshkosh's street grid remains intact, there are many "super blocks" that reduce walkability, such as along N. Main Street, Church Avenue, Algoma Boulevard, and Marion Road. The angular orientation of some side streets to the west of N. Main Street, combined with block length, can also inhibit pedestrian friendliness and cause disorientation. It is not expected or recommended that the historic street grid will change given existing development patterns; however, it becomes that much more important to ensure that "super blocks" contain pedestrian amenities, visual interest, and other forms of activity.

As redevelopment occurs within the study area, *Imagine Oshkosh* will advocate for preserving the existing street grid and making new connections, where possible. This will be especially important as several large multi-acre sites redevelop on the South Shore.

PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE FACILITIES



Legend

- Wayfinding Signage
- Sidewalk
- Bike Lane
- Multi-Use Trail
- Sharrow
- Planned Bike Route - Sign & Stripe
- Planned Bike Route - Sign & Share
- Bike Rack

Sidewalks along S. Main Street are carriage walks. Their narrowness and proximity to the roadway, which is also a truck route, can create a less inviting pedestrian experience.

As part of a recent streetscaping initiative, sidewalks along N. Main Street are wide and buffered from the street with plantings, decorative brick, benches, and other amenities

Complete Streets

A "complete street" is a roadway that is designed to be safe for all users of the transportation network, including motorists, transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians. A key recommendation in **Vision Oshkosh Plan (2009)** was to prepare and adopt a "complete streets" plan. *Imagine Oshkosh* will evaluate roadways within the study area for applicability for "complete streets" programming.

Sidewalks

The City of Oshkosh has an extensive, well-connected sidewalk network. The network consists of sidewalks as well as provisions for pedestrian access between parking lots, building entrances, and street sidewalks (City of Oshkosh Zoning Ordinance, Section 30-36.E.9). It should be noted, however, that not all pedestrian facilities are created equally. The width, placement, and design of sidewalks, as well as their use on different roadway classifications, can have a significant impact on pedestrian comfort and overall use. While the City's sidewalk network and best practices are presented within the 2011 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan, the following analysis focuses on issues specific to the study area.

Sidewalk Typology

The study area includes two types of sidewalks:

- **Carriage walks.** Carriage walks are those in which the sidewalk is directly adjacent to the roadway. This sidewalk placement creates an uncomfortable pedestrian experience, with pedestrians adjacent to moving traffic. Carriage walks should be a minimum of 6' in width with a preferred width of 8' to provide a wider buffer to the travel lanes. The presence of on-street parking can assist to create a barrier between the sidewalk and traffic, while textured pavers, planters, and street trees can enhance long expanses of pavement.
- **Parkway sidewalks.** Parkway sidewalks are those in which turf, grass, flowers, or trees divide the sidewalk from the roadway. Where the right-of-way allows, parkway sidewalks are the preferred sidewalk gap treatment to provide a landscaped buffer between pedestrians and vehicles. In addition to enhancing pedestrian safety, parkways have the potential to accommodate sustainable landscaping techniques including bioswales, rain water inlets, and rain gardens, as well as provide opportunities to establish tree canopy.

While it is challenging to retrofit existing built-out areas with wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, it can be possible. Where the right-of-way width exists, streetscaping initiatives can widen the sidewalk by reducing traffic or parking lanes. Additionally, redevelopment of large properties or blocks could lead to the development of better sidewalks along those blocks.

Sidewalk Zones & Function

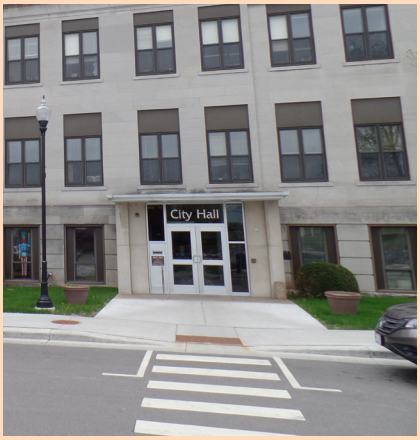
Sidewalks within the core of the study area generally fall in line with sidewalk zone best practices. Well-functioning sidewalks consist of four distinct "zones" of activity that provide for a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience. The zones include a frontage zone to buffer the building from pedestrians and allow space for dining or merchandise displays; a pedestrian zone that is free of obstacles for people to travel; a furniture/utility zone for trees, planters, and light and utility poles; and a curb zone that serves as a transition area between the sidewalk and road.

Crosswalks

While streets with low traffic volume (<3,000 ADT), low speeds (<20 mph), and few lanes (1-2) do not warrant marked crosswalks, marked crosswalks are generally in place at all other intersections within the study area. Center City crosswalks are painted with a standard, transverse crosswalk design; however, there are more high-visibility design solutions that may increase crosswalk visibility and pedestrian safety. This is particularly important at mid-block crossings where stop lights, signals, and timers do not exist.

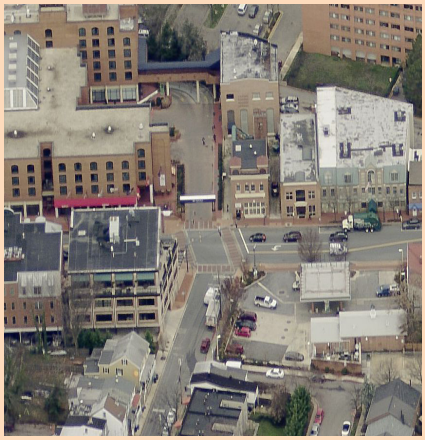
Transverse Crosswalk

These serve as traditional crosswalk marking, using two parallel bands to delineate pedestrian space. This type of crosswalk marking is difficult for motorists to see, which poses a safety hazard to pedestrians.



Continental Crosswalk

These crosswalks are considered high-visibility, which are more easily seen by motor vehicle drivers. Use of continental crosswalks rather than transverse crosswalk markings have been shown to significantly increase intersection safety.



Brick Paver/ Decorative Crosswalk

These crosswalks delineate pedestrian crossing areas through the use of decorative or brick pavers. It serves to create a sense of place and identity within an area; however, low contrast designs can lead to low visibility of these crosswalks. This crosswalk treatment is best used for roadways with slow travel speeds and few travel lanes, and can be combined with continental crosswalks to further increase visibility.

Riverwalk

The Oshkosh Riverwalk is one of the community's most cherished amenities and a world class asset to the Center City. Oshkosh is the only community in the area where downtown pedestrians can "touch the water" and hop directly into a motor boat or canoe.

Upon completion, it the Riverwalk will be a nearly continuous loop along both sides of the Fox River from Wisconsin Street in the west to Lake Winnebago in the east, connecting with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and the Wiouwash Trail. At present, the northern shore of the project is complete while the south shore portion remains incomplete.

Continuation of the Riverwalk along the south shore is underway as funding becomes available. A segment of the south shore portion between Wisconsin Avenue and Michigan Street was completed in June 2016, including a bridge, picnic area, restroom, and boat/kayak/canoe launch. Further expansion is proposed in the new Morgan Door redevelopment plan, extending the trail to Oregon Street.

However, much work remains to continue its extension eastwards to Pioneer Island. *Imagine Oshkosh* will incorporate existing plans for the Riverwalk into the plan, advocate for its extension, and ensure that redevelopment scenarios of South Shore properties accommodate its extension.

Bicycle Facilities

The City of Oshkosh has a growing bicycle network; nevertheless, bicycle facilities within and through the Center City are limited. The 2011 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan serves as resource of best practices and addresses future improvements to the City's bicycle network.

Most recently, the City began public outreach efforts and studies to install a bike lane on East Irving Avenue between Wisconsin Street and Hazel Street and a bike lane on N Main Street from Irving Avenue to New York Avenue. The Irving Avenue project would require removal of on-street parking to one side of the street. Most recent public outreach demonstrates strong support for both these projects, which were identified as high priority streets within the 2011 Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan.

Additional priority improvements identified within the study area by the 2011 Plan include:

- **Sign & Share** are streets designated as bike routes through the use of signage and/or sharrows. Sign & Share streets include N Main Street between Murdock Avenue and Washington Avenue; Main Street Bridge; Court Street between Ceape Avenue and the Riverwalk; Ceape Avenue between Broad Street and Court Street; 10th Avenue between Michigan Street and S Main Street; and Michigan Street between 4th Avenue and Osborn Avenue.
- **Sign & Stripe** are streets designated as bike routes through the use of striped bicycle lanes and signage. Sign & Stripe streets include Algoma Boulevard between W New York Avenue and N Main Street; High Avenue between Congress Avenue and Commerce Street; Commerce Street between Waugoo Avenue and Ceape Avenue; State Street between Ceape Avenue and Washington Avenue; N Main Street between Ceape Avenue and 6th Avenue; Trunk Highway 44 between W Irving Avenue and S Riverwalk; 6th Avenue between Idaho Street and S Main Street; and 12th Avenue between Ohio Street and S Main Street.
- **Off-Road Trails** are traffic separated bicycle facilities, such as the Riverwalk.

Bike Parking

Streetscape improvement in the Center City yielded several bicycle parking facilities along the Main Street corridor. These bike racks provide critical bicycle storage infrastructure. In addition, the City's zoning ordinance incentivizes the installation of bicycle parking on private development by allowing for a reduction in parking spaces (City of Oshkosh Zoning Ordiannce, Section 30-36.F.4). For every four bicycle parking spaces installed, one less parking space is required, up to five parking spaces. This incentive provides a good start to creating additional bicycle parking facilities, however, it may not be significant enough to compel private property owners to accommodate bikes.

Streetscaping

The public right-of-way encompasses a significant holding of land within the study area. These corridors are not only a means of transportation and utility transmission, but play a large role in defining the character of the community.

Recent streetscaping along N. Main Street from the Fox River in the south to Irving Avenue has established a unique identity and pedestrian friendliness that sets it apart from the rest of the city and many other communities. Brick accents mark the edge of the sidewalk while street trees, lighting, and banners create a safe and inviting feel. In addition, the use of planters, trash receptacles, and benches create small hubs of activity. Streetscape elements not only help to identify an area, but can be used to create a unique sense of place.

Elements include:

- **Lighting.** Lighting not only contributes to community safety, but also adds visual interest. Lighting within downtown is best utilized when at the pedestrian scale and includes full-cutoff design to reduce light pollution and glare.
- **Landscaping.** Landscaping includes the use of street trees, decorative planters, and parkway and bumpout vegetation. It plays a significant role to provide shade, define space, and create a sense of enclosure, as well as can be a contributor for effective stormwater management.
- **Furniture.** Street furniture plays an important role in placemaking and includes such elements as seating, trash receptacles, bollards, bike racks, and more. Public seating provides opportunities for relaxation, people watching, and public gathering.

Imagine Oshkosh will evaluate additional areas for potential streetscape expansion, such as Oregon Street or S. Main.

CHAPTER 3G

Partnering in the Center City

198 "Who's Our Leader & Champion?"
199 Planning Partners

This section identifies organizations who have a stake in the success of the Center City, whether it is living, working, activating, or getting around in the Center City. As *Imagine Oshkosh* is being developed, it is expected that the organizations summarized in this section will have a role in plan implementation. Please note that this chapter is a working list that is evolving and is not currently all inclusive.

"Who's Our Leader & Champion?"

During the outreach process, it was communicated – particularly in stakeholder interviews – that economic development leadership within the Center City is fragmented between different organizations and that the Center City lacks a central "champion" with dedicated resources. Referencing the success of Downtown Neenah, one interviewee asked: "Who is our John Bergstrom?" Another example cited of was the not-for-profit Downtown Appleton, Inc.

This does not mean that progress is not being made or that particular organizations do not work well together, but merely that greater efficiency and progress could be achieved through better cohesion, clearer roles, and aligned resources. The most prominent groups for economic development within Center City currently are the Business Improvement District (note: the jurisdiction only covers a portion of the study area), City of Oshkosh, Greater Oshkosh EDC, and Chamber of Commerce. *Imagine Oshkosh* should help clarify existing roles or establish a framework for clear leadership and responsibilities within the Center City, starting with resources that are already available.

Planning Partners

Organizations with a likely role in plan implementation are listed in this section. Please note that this chapter is a working list that is evolving and is not currently all inclusive. The order of the list has no bearing on roles and responsibilities.

City of Oshkosh - Boards & Commissions

The City of Oshkosh includes 25 boards and commissions that provide decision-making assistance for a variety of policies and development within the City. Boards and commissions include:

- City Council
- Plan Commission
- Business Improvement District Board
- Landmarks Commission
- Pedestrian and Bicycling Advisory Committee
- Public Arts & Beautification Committee
- Redevelopment Authority (RDA)

City of Oshkosh - Department of Community Development

Planning Services Division

The Planning Service Division is responsible for zoning and subdivision regulations, land use planning, economic development, historic preservation and housing programming. The Division applies for and administers the CDBG Program and Brownfield Grants, as well as oversees the Sustainable Oshkosh program and Oshkosh Healthy Neighborhoods Alliance.

Economic Development Division

The Economic Development Division is responsible for implementing the City of Oshkosh Economic Development Plan. This Plan will guide the City's economic development efforts and investment strategy for the next five years in coordination with the Greater Oshkosh EDC and various other partners in the region.

Business Improvement District

The Downtown Oshkosh Business Improvement District (BID) was established in 1987 initially to supply downtown parking but has evolved into assisting with marketing, promotion, property management, revitalization, and business retention programs.

The BID is funded through property assessments. Property owners within BID contribute a self-imposed levy that is calculated based on a number of factors including the property's assessed value and street frontage, with a minimum assessment of $400 to a maximum of $8,000. The assessments make up a yearly operating budget that is used to fund one full-time manager, the Recruitment and Retention Fund Grant Program, events, marketing, and beautification programs.

The BID's boundary is concentrated within the Downtown area. In recent years, expansion of BID boundaries has been evaluated, particularly south of the river, but expansion has not materialized.

Winnebago County

As the county seat of Winnebago County, Oshkosh contains the County Courthouse as well as the administrative arm of County government. Its operations are located in several locations within the study area.

Greater Oshkosh EDC

Greater Oshkosh EDC provides leadership, direction, coordination, and services to advance economic development in the greater Oshkosh area. In addition to and strategy, GOEDC administers a number of tools, including an interactive inventory of sites and facilities, a Revolving Loan Fund Program, and a number of informational resources for businesses and entrepreneurs.

Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce

The Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce is a member-based organization that advocates for more than 1,000 businesses within the Oshkosh area. It is the fifth largest chamber in Wisconsin and achieved a 5-star rating. The Chamber provides resources that include networking opportunities and business startup and economic development information. In addition to its advocacy role, the Chamber operates the Leadership Oshkosh Program, a nine-month program that prepares individuals for leadership roles in both their organizations and the community; and Propel Oshkosh, a development and networking group aimed at attracting and retaining young individuals for local businesses in the Oshkosh area.

Oshkosh Convention & Visitors Bureau

The Oshkosh Convention & Visitors Bureau (OCVB) is a private, not-for-profit organization, funded through room tax dollars from Oshkosh hotels. The OCVB serves as the area's tourism resource, revealing the City's brand identity: "Oshkosh, Wisconsin's Event City," in 2010. The organization serves as a resource for local event and amenities and provides a comprehensive, online list of events within the Oshkosh area.

Oshkosh Saturday Farmers Market, Inc.

Hailed as one of the best farmers' markets in the country, the Oshkosh Farmers Market serves as a local food mecca and community gathering place. The year-round market boasts more than 150 vendors in the summer and approximately 45 in the winter. The volunteer-based organization works with local businesses to provide public restrooms and is a key economic development driver in downtown. It supports and accommodates other community events, such as Gus Macker, Main Street Music Festival, Square Fair, Chili Cookoff, Chalk Walk, and more.

Oshkosh Public Library

The Oshkosh Public Library serves as the community's "knowledge center." With more than 1,000 visitors a day, it is a significant driver of activity in the Center City. Library leadership is in the process of transforming the Public Library into a "social commons," a location for hanging out, casual reading, scholarship, and socialization. The Library also provides many community resources and programming, including literacy classes, lectures, and workshops.

Oshkosh Area Community Foundation

The Oshkosh Area Community Foundation is a non-profit organization that provides funding for projects that improve the Oshkosh community. Grant funding is directed at projects the expand access to the arts, education, and quality of life for residents.

University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is the third largest university in the state with nearly 14,000 students and 1,700 employees. UW Oshkosh offers 60 undergraduate majors, 100 minors, and 15 Master's Degrees in four professional colleges including: Business, Education and Human Services, Letters and Science, and Nursing. Its multi-acre campus sits on the western boundary of the Center City study area and its students and faculty live, work, and play within Downtown Oshkosh. The University has also been an active partner in Downtown development; it was an investment partner in the Best Western Premier Waterfront Hotel & Convention Center.

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) is the official comprehensive, area-wide planning agency for the ten county east central region of Wisconsin including the counties of Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Menominee, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago. ECWRPC staff provides assistance in the following areas: environmental, economic development, open space, land use, housing, community, transportation, and GIS.

Amplify Oshkosh

Amplify Oshkosh is a local organization focused on growing the tech economy in Oshkosh. It looks to empower the IT community through connections with industry leaders, promote awareness by hosting idea exchanges and cross-promotion, and strengthen the entrepreneurial spirit within Downtown's IT community.

Oshkosh Opera House Foundation

The Oshkosh Opera House Foundation is responsible for The Grand's performance season and rental activities. Each year, over 25 public performances and approximately 10 youth events comprise the fine arts season with additional activities, including community theater, corporate meetings and weddings, filling The Grand to capacity. The Opera House is owned by the City of Oshkosh.

Other Critical Partners

- Residents
- Developers
- Investors
- Business Leaders
- Small Business Owners