



Summary Report

La Valle Design Team



April 1, 2022

FEMA Flood Mitigation & Hazard Recovery Plan
Relocation Design Charrette

In Collaboration with:

La Valle Revitalization Committee

MSA Professional Services, Inc.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension

Village of La Valle

This report was prepared by:

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Land Use + Community Development



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Community Vitality + Placemaking

Signature Effort



Design Wisconsin Team

A research-based approach to community placemaking

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Summary Report

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Overview

In response to severe flood events, the Village of La Valle, Wisconsin has been awarded federal funding to assist in flood mitigation and recovery. As part of the planning process, a group of local residents formed the La Valle Revitalization Committee. The purpose of the committee is to provide leadership and community representation.

The Village has hired MSA Professional Services, Inc. to assist with the planning effort. The effort includes: modeling existing conditions, reviewing engineering solutions to address flooding, exploring redevelopment of flood prone sites, and exploring relocating downtown businesses.

Results from the existing conditions modeling and engineering study suggest that levees, upper watershed storage, and other engineering solutions may not be feasible. The community should consider relocating downtown businesses along the Baraboo River and redevelop those sites prone to flooding as open space.

MSA has asked the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking research team to design and facilitate a community survey and design charrette to develop planning and design alternatives for both the redevelopment of flood prone sites in the downtown and the relocation of downtown businesses. The purpose of this report is to document the process and outputs of the community design charrette that occurred on March 8 and 9, 2022.

Process

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension has collaborated with MSA Professional Services, Inc. and the Village of La Valle to develop a process to collect, organize and prioritize community input to develop planning and design alternatives. La Valle Revitalization Committee members helped design and deploy the community survey and worked directly with planners and designers to identify community priorities and needs.

MSA and Extension put together a planning and design team to facilitate a day-long community workshop on Tuesday, March 8 followed by a day-long work session with a public presentation on Wednesday, March 9.



Schedule

Tuesday, March 8: Input

- 1:45 PM Team members assemble at Town Hall
- 2:00 PM Tour of key sites with La Valle Revitalization Committee
- Existing Downtown
 - Potential Relocation Sites
 - HWY 33 N - West
 - HWY 33 N - East
 - Town Hall Site
 - Trail Crossing & Bridgehead
 - School Site
- 6:00 PM Planning & Design Workshop at the Library
- Review Community Survey Results
 - Identifying Businesses for Relocation
 - Community Placemaking
 - Visioning: A New Open Space
 - Visioning: A New Downtown
 - Potential Relocation Sites: Pros & Cons
 - Summary
- 8:00 PM Adjourn

Wednesday, March 9: Output + Public Feedback

- 9:00 AM Planning & Design Studio at Town Hall
- 7:00 PM Community Presentation at Town Hall & Online (Zoom)
- 8:00 PM Community Public Feedback
- 8:30 PM Adjourn



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Review Community Survey Results

University of Wisconsin-Extension Specialist Kristin Runge shared the Community Survey results with the La Valle Revitalization Committee. The survey includes questions about community values, quality of life, community infrastructure, community services, economic development, tourism, outdoor recreation, and natural resources.

Identifying Businesses for Relocation

The La Valle Revitalization Committee identified businesses in the downtown that would remain in place and those that needed a new location. As part of the process, they identified the types of businesses that should be accounted for in a new downtown area. These included: a salon, cafe/coffee shop, small retail, bed and breakfast, small office space, and grocery. Committee members indicated the need for providing space for future businesses as well. They agreed that buildings located in the flood plain (south of Main Street) would be demolished and the properties repurposed as open space.

Community Placemaking

University of Wisconsin-River Falls Specialist Todd Johnson provided a brief overview of best practices in regards to community placemaking. In particular, he walked through the UW-Extension publication, "The Principles & Practice of Community Placemaking" (Grabow, 2015) and underscored the principles that best suited La Valle. Of the 19 principles of placemaking, Johnson emphasized the following:

Land Uses & Development Patterns

The topography and vegetation helps define the edges of the community and countryside. When considering future development and land uses consider the following principles.

- **Compact Communities & Clear Urban/Rural Differentiation:** Communities should be compact with a clear urban/rural edge. Urban land uses should be concentrated to make better use of municipal infrastructure and available land. This preserves natural areas and farmland while supporting a vibrant community filled with activity.
- **Preserved Farmland & Environmental Corridors:** Communities should preserve the surrounding countryside for farming and natural areas. Greenbelts provide a clear distinction between city and country. In addition, environmental corridors allow wildlife to safely move from one critical habitat to another.



Downtown

Downtown La Valle is more than a collection of buildings and streets, it's a source of community identity and pride. Downtowns not only provide a place for businesses and services to be located, they provide a setting for public events and activities that express the unique characteristics and values of the community. When thinking about La Valle's downtown consider the following principles.

- Strong Urban Center: Communities should have a strong urban center, where multiple uses and activities are clustered in fairly close proximity. Strong urban centers attract people and encourage activities that strengthen our sense of community. Often they represent the overall heritage and character of the community and serve as places for celebration and civic pride.
- City-Centered Redevelopment & Infill: Communities should redevelop sites within the existing boundaries before developing new sites on the fringe. When considering places to develop, encourage locations that are near the center of the community to make use of existing built infrastructure and to strengthen the city core.
- Many Choices & Many Things to Do with Sociable Settings: Successful and attractive cities have many things to do in public gathering areas. Residents and visitors find rich, vibrant, mixed use environments to be visually stimulating. Throughout history, great cities provide focal points and places for people to gather, meet, and talk.

Parks & Public Spaces

The creation of parks and public spaces near the downtown is an opportunity to celebrate the beauty of the Baraboo River while enhancing quality of life and economic development. When making choices consider the following principles.

- Environmental Resources & Parks: Communities should weave the natural environment into their built environment. The research shows that people will have a greater well-being, be healthier, and more productive if they have access to nature. In order to meet the variety of needs within a community, natural areas and outdoor recreational areas should be diverse and include places for small groups of people to meet to have picnics, talk, and relax; places for the very young to get outside; places for school children to exercise, play games, and explore nature; places for larger groups to meet and host events; places for competitive and non-competitive sports that accommodate a variety of skills, ages, and interests; places for the performing arts large and small; and quiet places for contemplation.
- Public Buildings & Public Spaces Enlivened by Art: Public buildings and spaces should be enlivened by art. They are often places used for special events and should be a source of pride of the community.



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Trails & Connections

The 400 Trail provides a unique opportunity for recreation as well as cultural and economic development. When considering new development, consider the following principles.

- Pedestrian- and Bike-Friendly Environments: Communities should be developed in ways that supports and encourages pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Connectivity: People should be able to move easily from one place to another. Good urban places are “legible” in which people can navigate using wayfinding elements such as signs, kiosks, lighting, murals, and landscaping.

Visioning: A New Open Space

Committee members expressed some of their hopes for a parks and open space along the Baraboo River.

- Providing for a variety of users (residents and visitors of all ages).
- Providing for a variety of uses (active and passive).
- Providing places for events and group activities.
- Providing places to sit, picnic, and view fireworks.
- Providing access the water.
- Educating people about La Valle and its history.
- Connecting the Baraboo River to the downtown.

Visioning: A New Downtown

Committee members expressed some of their hopes for what a new downtown might include.

- Providing for a variety of users (residents and visitors of all ages).
- Providing for a variety of uses (active and passive).
- Providing places for events and group activities.
- Providing opportunities for tourism.
- Providing opportunities for new businesses.
- Connecting the Baraboo River to the downtown.



Potential Relocation Sites: Pros & Cons

The La Valle Revitalization Committee provided a guided tour to members of the planning and design team. The tour included the existing downtown business district along with five potential relocation sites. At each site location, team members asked Committee members questions about site boundaries and ownership, circulation and access, ownership, as well as stormwater drainage and public safety.

HWY 33 N (west)

- Pros: The site is level and has both highway access and snowmobile/ATV trail.
- Cons: Deed restrictions prevent development for the next 10 years. The site is located on a busy highway; lacks pedestrian and bike access; it is far removed from the existing downtown and community; and it is unlikely to contribute to or benefit directly from the 400 State Trail.



HWY 33 N (east)

- Pros: The site has highway access.
- Cons: The site is steep and would require extensive grading and engineering. As with the HWY 33 N (west) site, it is located on a busy highway; lacks pedestrian and bike access; it is far removed from the existing downtown and community; and it is unlikely to contribute to or benefit directly from the 400 State Trail.



Town Hall

- Pros: The site already serves a civic function, has highway access, and is located near existing neighborhoods.
- Cons: The site is small; it has drainage issues to the south; and it is unlikely to contribute to or benefit directly from the 400 State Trail.



Trail Crossing & Bridgehead

- Pros: The site is an extension of the existing downtown; it has access to existing businesses and the 400 State Trail; it is within walking distance of the Baraboo River; it has existing street and utilities; and it has room for new businesses and public spaces.
- Cons: The site is currently owned by the DNR.

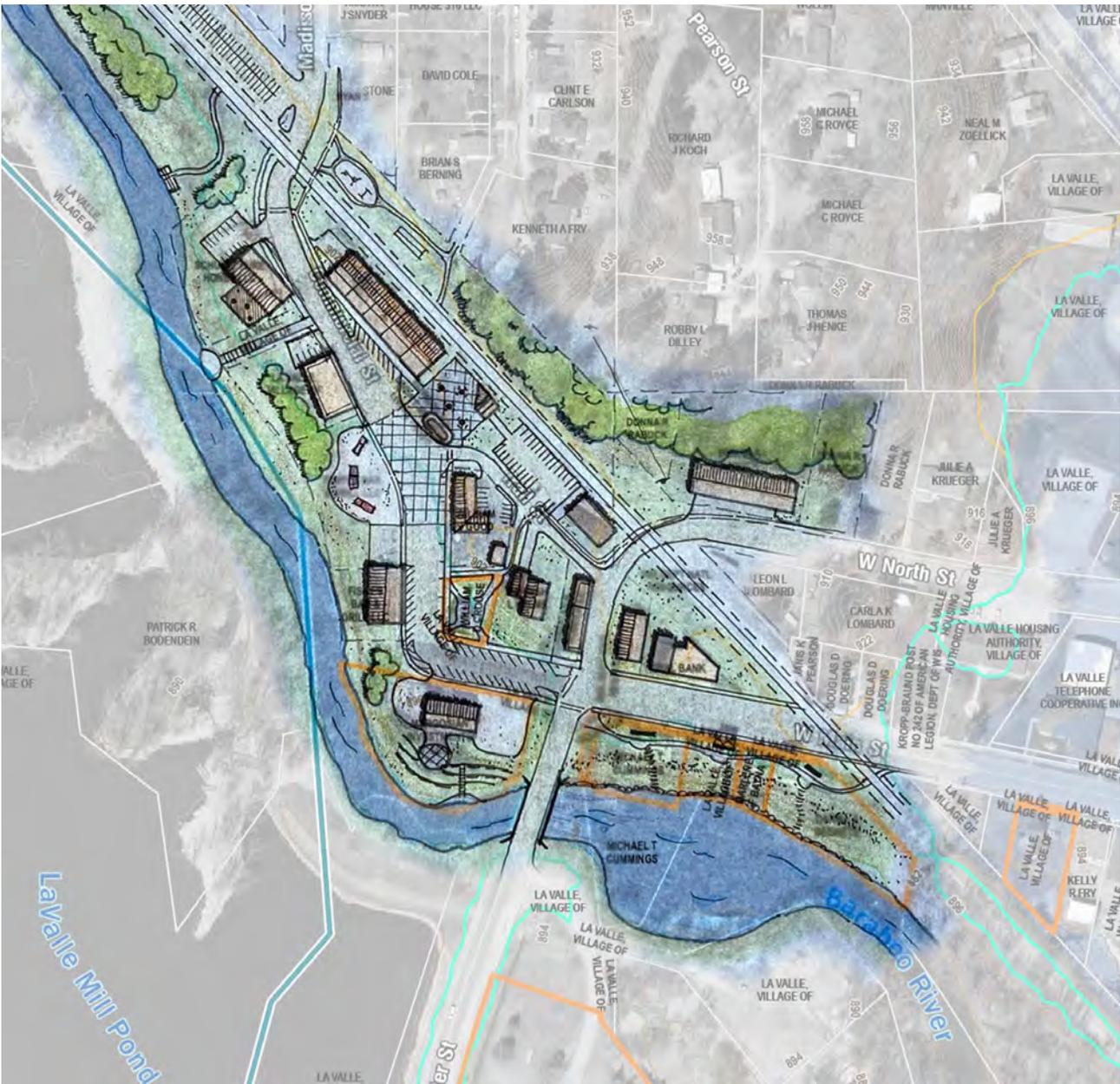


School Site

- Pros: The site is currently owned by the Village; it has access to the highway and existing drive for the school; it will be served by new municipal wells on the east side of HWY 33; there is room for development; and although the school may shutter for lack of enrollment, but the building could be repurposed.
- Cons: The site is far removed from the existing downtown; it lacks pedestrian and bike infrastructure; and it is unlikely to contribute to or benefit directly from the 400 Trail.



After a some discussion, the Committee agreed that the Trail Crossing & Bridgehead site offered the best solution for relocating downtown businesses. In addition, the school site offered potential for future residential. Members of the MSA and University of Wisconsin planning and design team would focus on both sites for development. (Note: While on the tour of the existing downtown, Committee an team members agreed that the old grocery store site is an ideal location for a new grocery store.)



Proposed Downtown & Open Space

The property located in and around the DNR property at the intersection of west Main Street, Commercial Street, and Trail Street provides a cost-effective site to expand existing commercial and public realm. Unlike the other proposed sites, this site is served by existing streets, utilities, existing downtown businesses, parking, and direct access to the 400 State Trail.

Located outside the flood plain but close enough to the Baraboo River, it encourages businesses and activities that might benefit from their proximity to the river and the trail. With a focus on tourism, outdoor recreation, and entertainment, the expanded downtown would enhance the 400 State Trail while encouraging local business and community development.





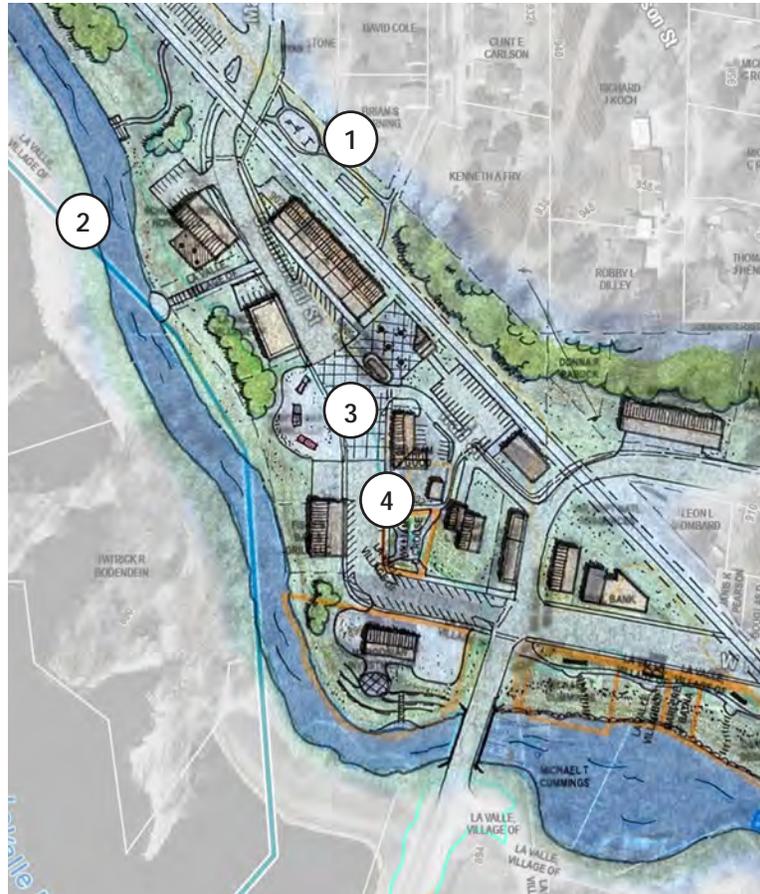
Although much of the proposed relocation site is currently owned by the DNR, it is conceivable that there is opportunity for a land swap. After the flooded properties along the south side of Main Street are raised, that land along with land along the south banks of the river would be ideal for outdoor recreation, hiking trails, fishing piers, and camp sites.

Aside from the public restrooms and parking lot, several of the DNR structures within the proposed site are in a state of disrepair and offer little value to the surrounding businesses and neighborhoods. Redeveloping the site would not only revitalize the downtown area, it would advance the mission of the DNR as a sustainable infill solution that encourages pedestrian and bike transportation while protecting and preserving natural areas. The following text and illustrations will provide greater detail of the proposed downtown and open space.



Trailhead Playground

This site is an ideal location for a new playground that supports the adjacent neighborhood while serving as a landmark along the 400 State Trail. Cyclists with families would welcome the opportunity for rest and be encouraged to explore the downtown.

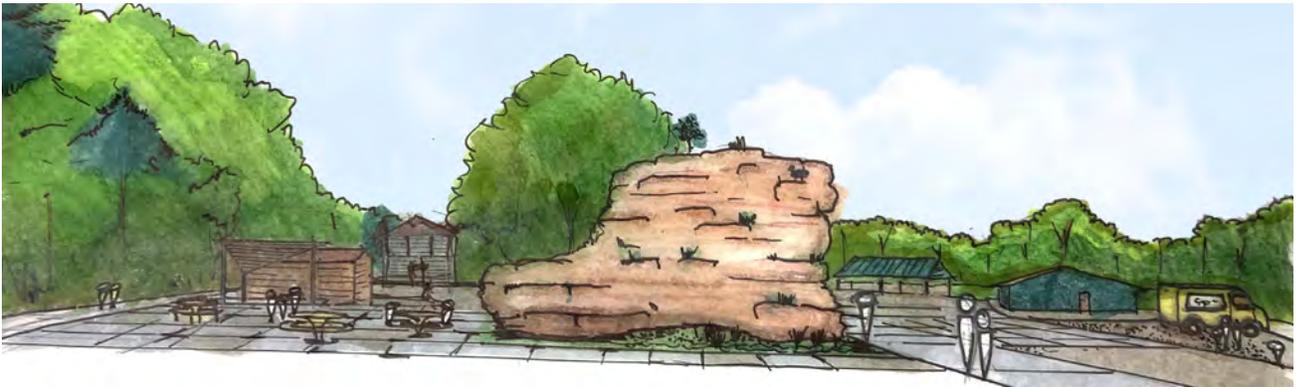


Canoe/Kayak Launches

Providing safe and convenient locations for launching a canoe or kayak would encourage users while supporting local businesses and activities. The upstream site is served by the DNR's parking lot. The downstream site could serve as an amenity close to local businesses.



Photo 1



The Rock

Capitalizing off of this unique natural feature, the “Rock” could be used as a focal point for the downtown. The site is currently served by public restrooms and parking to the east with additional parking to the west across Commercial Street. Consider landscaping, street furnishings, and lighting to support local businesses, the arts, food trucks, farmers’ markets, and other community events (image above).

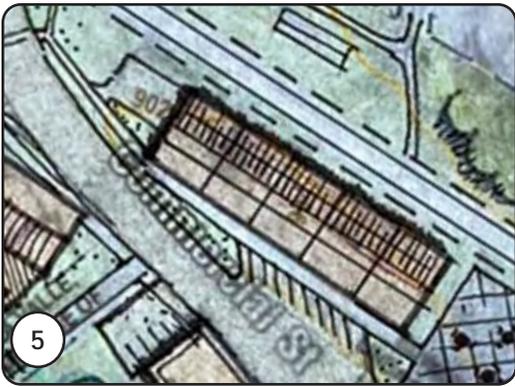


Corner Park

The corner of Main Street and Commercial Street could be transformed into a small flexible outdoor space to support community events and informal gatherings. Consider water features and/or fire pits to draw people to the site (see image below).



Photo 2



The Trailhead Depot

The northwest end of the site could accommodate a number of small storefronts as part of a “depot”. Consider cafes, gift shops, salons, ice cream parlors, pie shops, and other businesses that cater to trail users and compliment one another. Stores could feature street-side access along Commercial Street as well as trail-side access. A covered boardwalk with bike racks would invite cyclists and other visitors.



Photo 3

Above: Architecture of rural railway depots like the one that served La Valle, could inspire future commercial development along the 400 State Trail. Cyclists could park their bikes under a protected roof while they stopped to explore the downtown.



Photo 4

Left: The small rural community of Lanesboro, Minnesota is recognized as a successful model for “Rails to Trails”. Located along the Root River Trail, the town features bike rental, multiple restaurants, cafes, bed and breakfasts, galleries, and a theatre.



Above: Existing site conditions feature underutilized properties.

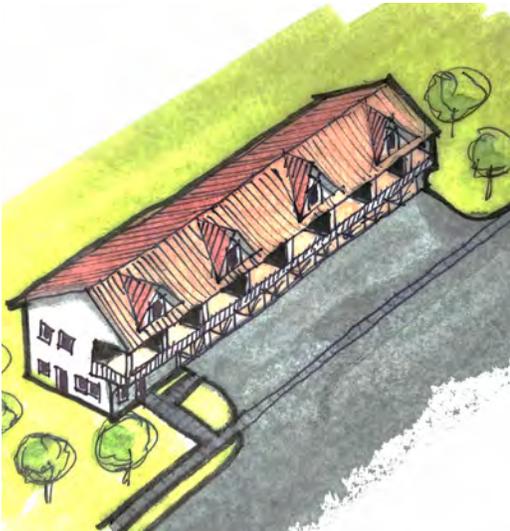


Above: Concept sketch showing the 400 State Trail crossing Commerce Street with the Trailhead Depot and Trailhead Park in the background (left). Off to the right, repurposed buildings with new landscaping feature outdoor dining and yard games. At the far right, a path leading from the northwest DNR parking lot leads to a new canoe/kayak launch.

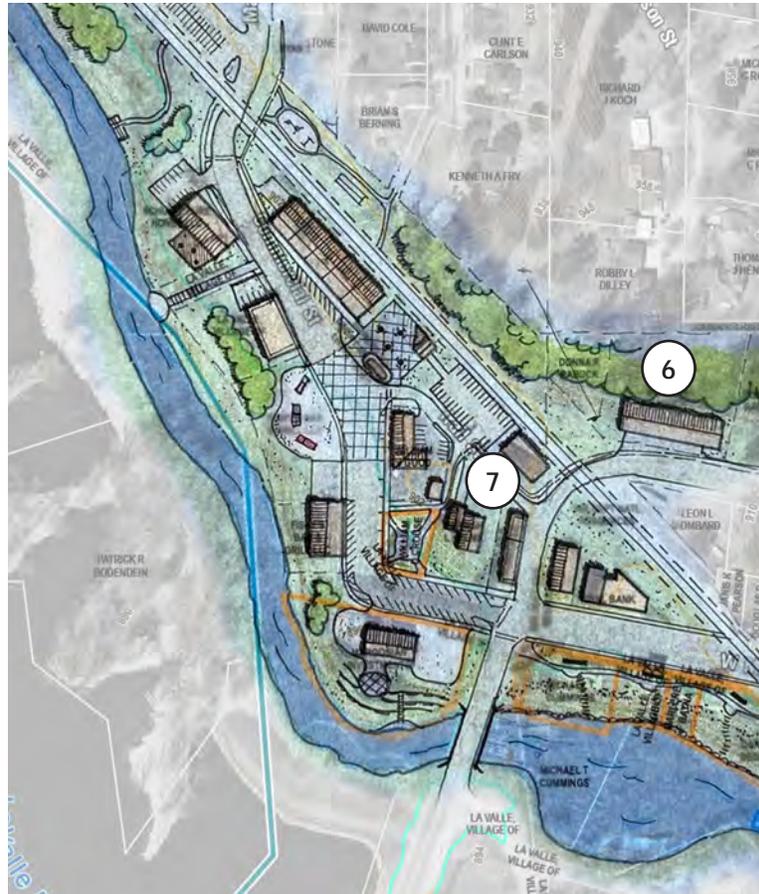


The Carriage House

The vacant lot along West North Street could accommodate a multi-unit lodge. Each unit would have bedroom and kitchenette suites above a 2-stall garage. Balconies would have views of the trail and fireworks.



Above: Concept sketch of The Carriage House. Five suites and a caretaker unit each featuring a 2-stall garage and balcony.



Bikes & Beds

The DNR "Antique Store" site could be redeveloped into a destination for tourists as well as hangout for residents. Consider a cafe/bike shop on the main level with lodging above. This fills the need for additional lodging while catering to cyclists and other visitors.



Above: Existing DNR property along the 400 State Trail.

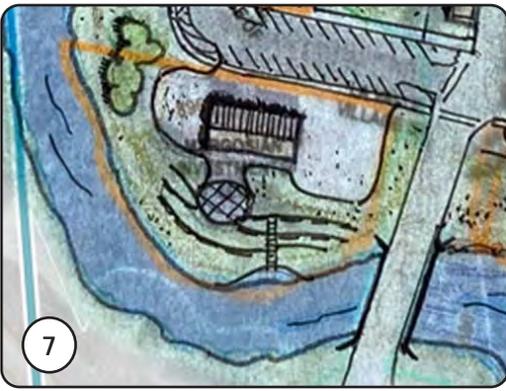


Above: Concept illustration showing new bed and breakfast/bike shop with Trailhead Park in the distance.



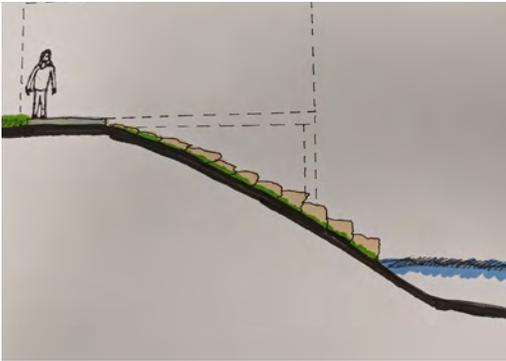
Photo 5

Left: An example of a building in Hushford, Minnesota situated along the Root River Trail. Encourage development to create amenities for cyclists (bike racks, awnings, tire pump stations, etc.) as well as activities (bike shop/ rental, cafes, picnic areas, lodging, etc.).



Bridgehead Park

The west side of the bridgehead is served by an existing parking lot making it a prime location to host events. A new pavilion and/or performance space could improve its capabilities to be able to support outdoor concerts, farmer's markets, car shows, art fairs, etc. Green space cascading down from the parking lot could include concrete or stone slabs built into the riverbank. This would provide seating for outdoor performances and fireworks.



Above: Concept sketch showing a cross-section of concrete or stone reinforcing the riverbank while doubling as seating. Below is an example of landscape seating made from granite.



Photo 6



Mill Park

The east side of the bridgehead could include a trail that runs along the length of the Baraboo River. Consider historic artifacts from the mill along with interpretive plaques to tell the story of La Valle (image right). Include smaller trails leading to water's edge for viewing and fishing.



Housing, Workforce, & Childcare

Today, most of our communities are experiencing a shortage of affordable housing, skilled workforce, and affordable childcare. For workers, it determines where they can live and work. For employers, it affects who they can hire and how much it will cost to pay them. For communities, it limits population growth. When market forces don't address these issues, communities must work with developers, business owners, and non-profits to address their needs. Consider working with public and non-profit organizations to identify housing issues, strategies, and resources.

Future Neighborhood Development

During the site tours, the planners and designers learned about the uncertain future of La Valle's Elementary School and the potential for redeveloping the site. Although the Committee and team didn't find the site ideal for relocating businesses, it did possess several amenities that would make it attractive for residential development.

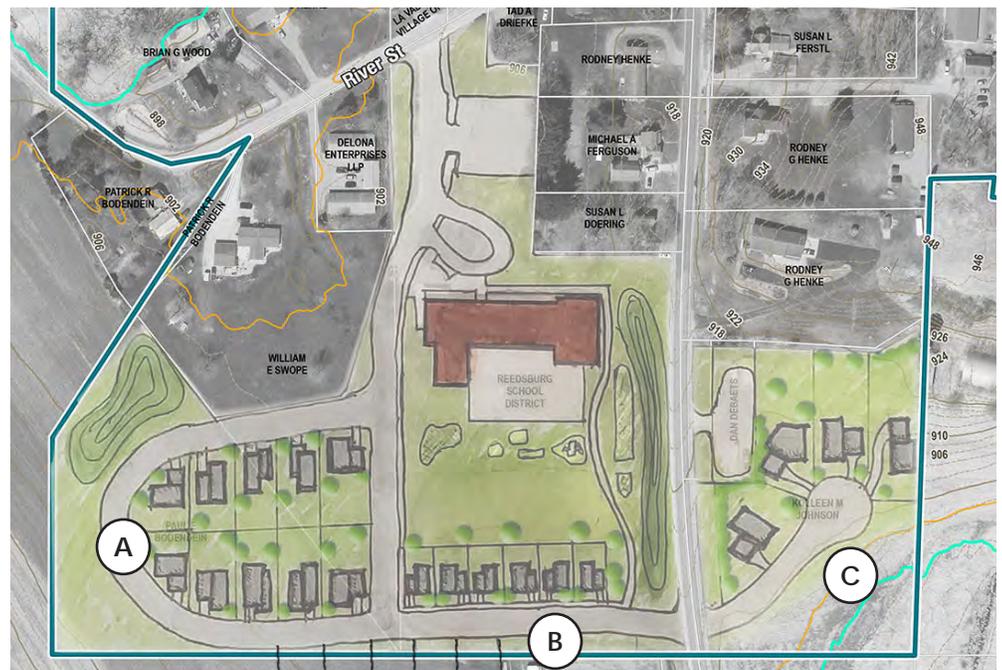
- **Ownership:** The Village currently owns the land and can control its development. It may choose a traditional route and sell the land to a developer or it could maintain ownership or transfer ownership in order to create opportunities for workforce housing (land trust, neighborhood association, etc.).
- **Access:** The site has access to the north (Mini Creek Road) and to the east (Hwy 58 Trunk).
- **Well Water:** The Village has established a new municipal well just east of the site and has capacity for providing water to new residential development.
- **Existing School:** The existing school building has been well-maintained. If the school were to close, it could be repurposed as a community center, daycare center, apartments, and/or business incubator.

Right: Concept sketch of a future residential neighborhood. Key elements include:

A. Single-family homes on medium-sized lots

B. Single-family detached condominiums on smaller lots

C. Single-family homes on larger lots



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Contributors

La Valle Revitalization Committee

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Questions & Contact

For more information about the University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Vitality + Placemaking Team and the Design Wisconsin Team program, please contact:

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The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension provides statewide access to university resources and research so the people of Wisconsin can learn, grow and succeed at all stages of life. UW-Extension carries out this tradition of the Wisconsin Idea – extending the boundaries of the university to the boundaries of the state – through its four divisions of continuing education, cooperative extension, business and entrepreneurship, and broadcast and media innovations.

Who We Are

With an office in each Wisconsin county, Cooperative Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to local needs and based on university knowledge and research. We deliver our expertise to the public, addressing a wide range of needs to people, plants and animals, in both urban and rural areas of the states.

What We Do

We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

The Wisconsin Idea

“The University of Wisconsin’s direct contributions to the state: to the government in the forms of serving in office, offering advice about public policy, providing information and exercising technical skill, and to the citizens in the forms of doing research directed at solving problems that are important to the state and conducting outreach activities.”

– Jack Stark, “The Wisconsin Idea: The University’s Service to the State”, p.1

