

CITY OF APPLETON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

October 8th, 2025

Plan Commission –
Adoption of Plan Appleton

Plan 
Appleton

Plan Appleton...

Analyzes **existing conditions** and **trends**

Identifies **issues** and **opportunities** in the city

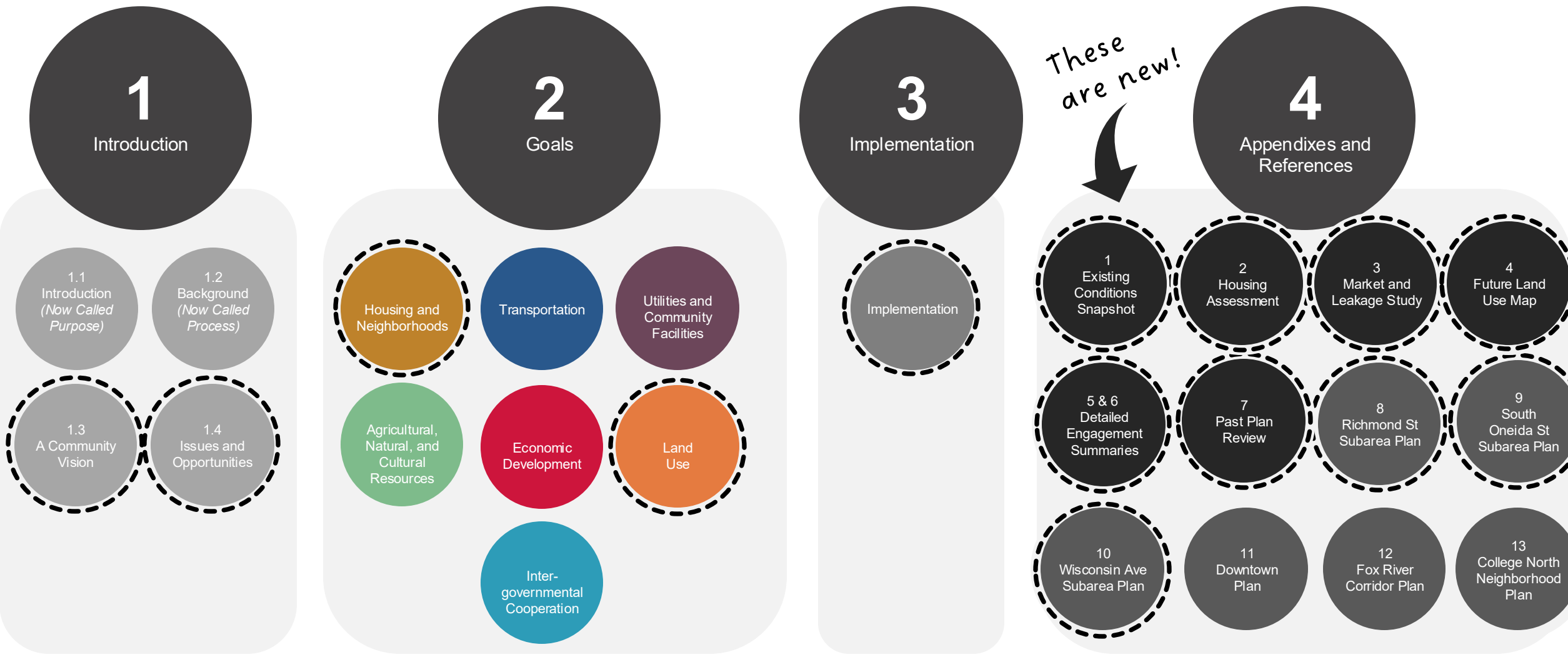
Establishes a **shared vision** for the future of the city

Proposes **citywide goals and policies** to achieve that shared vision



PLAN STRUCTURE

Sections with a dashed black line are fully updated and replaced from the prior plan. The others have lighter edits to meet best practices, recent trends, and city initiatives.



Appleton is a city where everyone feels welcome, connected, and empowered to thrive.

We foster vibrant neighborhoods, a resilient economy, and rich cultural life supported by diverse housing options, sustainable growth, and safe, accessible transportation options. Through collaboration and committed leadership, Appleton is a place where everyone can live meaningful lives - today and for generations to come.

SEVEN GOALS

For each goal, you'll find...

goal statement

connection to
state statute

why it matters

trends

tools + Appleton in Action

Goal H | Housing

Appleton will have housing options of a variety of styles, sizes, and costs to meet community members' unique needs across its neighborhoods.

This section covers the Housing element of the Wisconsin Comprehensive Planning Law (s. 66.1001 2b, Wis. Stats.)

Why Housing Matters

For many years, the "American Dream" meant owning a large home with a large yard, plenty of rooms, and garage for the car. Appleton was no exception to this, with most homes constructed over the past few decades as subdivisions on the outskirts of the city. However, needs are changing. Households are looking for a variety of options based on their life and unique needs. From students finding their first apartment to growing families needing bedrooms to seniors wishing to age in their family homes, Plan Appleton is developing a housing strategy for the next twenty years to meet community members' diverse needs.

% Strategies

There are several key strategies that will help Appleton achieve its goal for the future of housing in the city.

- **Housing Choice** | Maintain a variety of housing options – both rental and ownership – throughout the city.
- **Housing Costs** | Have housing at a variety of costs so that there are affordable options for people with a variety of incomes.
- **Homelessness and At-Risk Housing** | Support organizations aiding homeless community members and at-risk renters on their path to reliable housing.
- **Housing Quality** | Help community members maintain the quality of their existing housing and adapt their housing to their unique needs.

See Section 4, Implementation to learn the actions Appleton will take to make these strategies a reality.

Desired Outcomes

We will know Plan Appleton is working when we see:

- Increase ratio of build-out to total single family detached
- Increase funding for rehab and imp
- Decrease percent of cost burden for households (renter as % of income)
- Decrease eviction filings

strategies

desired outcomes

Housing Trends

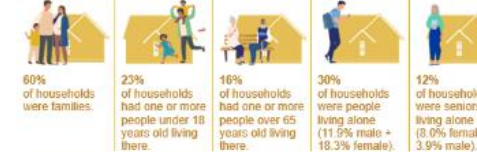
Housing Choice

Appleton is projected to grow 5,000 people by 2040. This will impact households, job needs, school sizes, and more. Appleton has also underbuilt over the last decade and has a very low vacancy rate. This has resulted in people looking outside of the city for their housing options. To address the underdevelopment and meet the housing needs of the new population Appleton will need to increase its housing stock. It is forecasted that Appleton would need to see the development of around 180 owner units and 160 rental units annually over the next 20 years. This would mean a total of 6,800 new units, with a range of styles and price points.

Sources: Wisconsin Demographics Services Center, Municipal Population Projections from 2010-2040, Vintage 2013 (latest available) | 2025 Appleton Housing Assessment, SmithGroup

In 2023, Appleton had 30,860 households. Of those households, there were several key trends to consider when thinking of the diverse housing needs of Appleton residents:

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table S1101, Households and Families, 2023



Housing Costs

The median household income in Appleton was \$77,450 in 2023. At this time, about 1 in 3 rentals (35%) were unaffordable, meaning renters paid more than 30% of their gross income on housing costs. In comparison, around 1 in 10 ownership units (16%) were considered unaffordable.

Sources: U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Table S2507, Households and Families, 2013 and 2023. See the Existing Conditions Report Appendix and the 2025 Appleton Housing Assessment for more details on the challenges and opportunities related to housing Appleton is facing.



Housing Tools

These shifting households and their incomes indicate a need for a variety of housing in the future. The needs of growing families, young professionals, long time residents and more differ. While Appleton has been hard at work expanding housing options across the city, there are some additional tools that can support housing advancements in the future.

Several different housing needs were mentioned by community members and explored during engagement events, including the needs of growing families, students, and seniors.



FUTURE LAND USE

We organized the City into eight different “place types” each with their own recommendations based on their major uses, character, and more to make sure future development and investments help achieve our goals.

Parks and Recreation



Suburban Neighborhood



Urban Neighborhood



Downtown



Mixed-Use



Commercial



Industrial



Institutional



ACTIONABLE ITEMS

For each goal, in the implementation chapter, you will find...

Goal H | Housing
Appleton will have housing options of a variety of styles, sizes, and costs to meet community members' unique needs across its neighborhoods.

Housing Actions

H1. Continue to implement Housing Policy Development.

H2. Update the zoning code options:

RELATED GOALS T U

- Add new housing typologies, with more emphasis on context.
- Consider permit citywide.
- Remove minimum dwelling unit so lot dimensions allow up to 4 units.
- Consider adding building types in regulate a mixture.

Goal T | Transportation

Appleton will support a transportation network that provides multiple ways for people to navigate the city and connect to the region.

Transportation Actions

T1. Use the Complete Street and intersections and reconstruct and improve projects and develop.

T2. Update the zoning transportation.

RELATED GOALS U

- Consider removing parking maximums.
- Support on-street located shared.
- Allow underground Downtown District.
- Consider allowing for residential.

Goal U | Utilities and Community Facilities

Appleton will provide excellent utilities and community services at a reasonable cost and will work with private utility companies to ensure quality service delivery.

Utilities/Community Facilities Actions

U1. Encourage neighborhood physical improvement signage, district branding preservation and expansion.

U2. Align city facility plan the goals of the sustainability leadership in sustainable development.

U3. Develop policies and new forms and type generation.

U4. Continue to update ensure compliance encouraging local housing implement best practices.

Goal A | Agricultural, Natural, and Community Resources

Appleton will create a quality space for community members to thrive by protecting its environmental quality, preserving its important natural resources, and supporting its cultural spaces.

Resources Actions

A1. Continue park land dedication and development through.

A2. Consider the creation development to residential housing.

A3. Implement the City Recreation Plan.

A4. Avoid the fragmentation by directing new sites, encouraging use land efficient private initiatives agricultural land.

Goal E | Economy

Appleton will pursue economic development that retains and attracts talented people, brings good jobs to the area, and supports the vitality of its industrial areas, downtown, and neighborhood business districts.

Economy Actions

E1. Prepare and implement a business recruitment program that targets site selectors and suitable businesses in manufacturing, business and professional services, retail and other industries.

E2. Work with the existing business community to help identify and tap opportunities for expansion.

E3. Support/partner with organizations pursuing programs for entrepreneurial development comprised of networking, financial assistance, training, and supportive services for all types of entrepreneurs.

E4. Collaborate with Fox Valley Workforce Development Board to support existing and new education-workforce partnerships. Encourage partners to engage in career awareness and organize target business programs.

Goal L | Land Use

Appleton will continue to support thoughtful growth, development, and redevelopment that strengthens neighborhoods, takes into account sensitive natural areas, and maintains high-quality city services.

Actions	Timeframe	Champion	Partners
L1. Update the zoning code to promote traditional neighborhood design	Mid	CDD	
RELATED GOALS H T R			
- Promote city-scale neighborhoods by limiting large single family lot sizes. - Increase density by allowing smaller lot sizes in residential districts. - Promote walkable, vibrant front yards with easy access to sidewalks. - Consider a minimum to maximum front setback range to promote efficient design to allow for future development. - Reduce minimum lot width and lot area to encourage compact development patterns to reduce length and cost of utility extensions and roadway infrastructure. - Deemphasize dominant garages and driveways to promote active, walkable neighborhoods. - Add use regulations for limited neighborhood commercial on collector or arterial roads, accessory commercial, and/or live/work units. - Revise PI district to allow housing, retail, and compatible services.			

actions

timeframes

champions

partners

HOW THE COMMUNITY RESPONDED TO THE DRAFT

AUGUST THROUGH SEPTEMBER

Open House for Release of Draft Plan and Online Survey



42%

were positive feedback



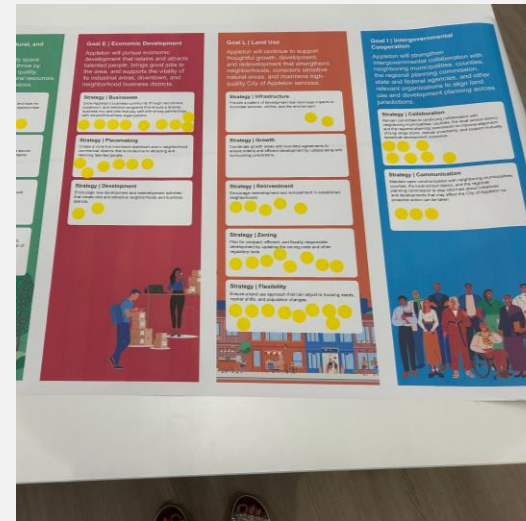
43%

were general comments or already covered in the plan



12%

led to a clarification or change in the plan



WHAT WE ASKED

VISION

Do you believe the plan provides the desired vision for the next 10-20 years for the City's development?



QUESTION

Do you believe the plan provides the desired vision for the next 10-20 years for the City's development?

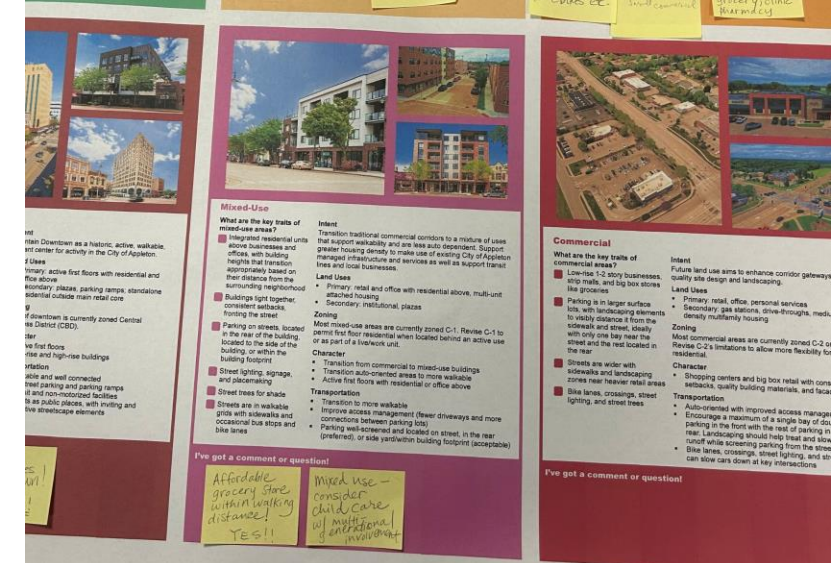
ANSWER

72%

of survey takers responded positively.

WHAT WE ASKED

Do the land use categories, descriptions, and future land use map help guide the community's vision for development?



QUESTION

Do the land use categories, descriptions, and future land use map help guide the community in achieving the goals needed to realize the community's vision for development?

ANSWER

83%

of survey takers responded positively.

83%

of survey takers responded positively.



PLAN STRATEGIES BY PRIORITY

HIGH PRIORITIES

Housing Strategies

- Housing Choice
- Housing Costs
- Unhoused and At-Risk Housing
- Housing Supply

Transportation Strategies

- Roads
- Transit
- Rail

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Strategies

- Parks

Land Use Strategies

- Zoning
- Flexibility

MEDIUM PRIORITIES

Housing Strategies

- Housing Quality

Utilities and Community Facilities Strategies

- Water
- Energy
- Waste
- Community Facilities

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Strategies

- Natural Systems

Economic Development Strategies

- Businesses
- Placemaking

Land Use Strategies

- Infrastructure
- Reinvestment

Intergovernmental Coordination Strategies

- Collaboration

LOW PRIORITIES

Transportation Strategies

- Parking

Utilities and Community Facilities Strategies

- Telecommunications

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Strategies

- Agriculture
- Cultural Resources

Land Use Strategies

- Growth

Intergovernmental Coordination Strategies

- Communication



PLAN STRATEGIES BY PRIORITY

HIGH PRIORITIES

Ensure zoning regulations support mixed-use and high-density residential development.

Redevelop underutilized parcels and parking lots to increase housing supply.

Support mixed-use housing and commercial development to increase density and vibrancy on underutilized lots.

Strengthen code enforcement efforts to address properties that are poorly maintained, ensuring compliance with property maintenance standards and supporting overall neighborhood character.

Increase vegetation and reduce impervious surfaces within the subarea. Provide landscape buffers near roadways during site development and redevelopment.

MEDIUM PRIORITIES

Promote funding the façade program and utilization of façade improvement program. Revise the program to incentivize application and use.

Implement traffic-calming strategies—both tactical and long-term—to improve safety and accessibility.

Improve walkability and mobility in all three subareas.

Bury overhead utility lines as part of the site redevelopment process.

WAS HIGH, MADE MEDIUM BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Create a complete set of street amenities for pedestrians, including lighting, shade, seating areas, banners, wayfinding, trash receptacles, and other fixtures.

WAS HIGH, MADE MEDIUM BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Conduct a comprehensive traffic study for the subareas to evaluate strategies for improving overall safety and traffic efficiency.

LOW PRIORITIES

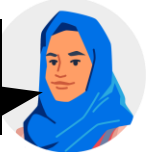
Collaborate with stakeholders to secure state and federal funding - such as EPA Brownfield Grants or Wisconsin DNR programs - to support redevelopment.

Implement plans and principles from the Complete Streets Guide.

Encourage art and interactive exhibits.

Reduce visual clutter of billboards, signage, and utilities.

No major changes were needed to data, content, or goals. The most questions from the comments were about the Housing Assessment Appendix, where some charts and words were updated to provide more clarity.



BEFORE



Figure 14 Where there are more units at an income group than households at that income level, that means other households are occupying those units such as households who make over \$75,000 where there are more households who make that income than units that are affordable to them. Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1 yr estimates. B25063 Gross Rent and B25118 Tenure by Household Income in the past 12 months.

AFTER

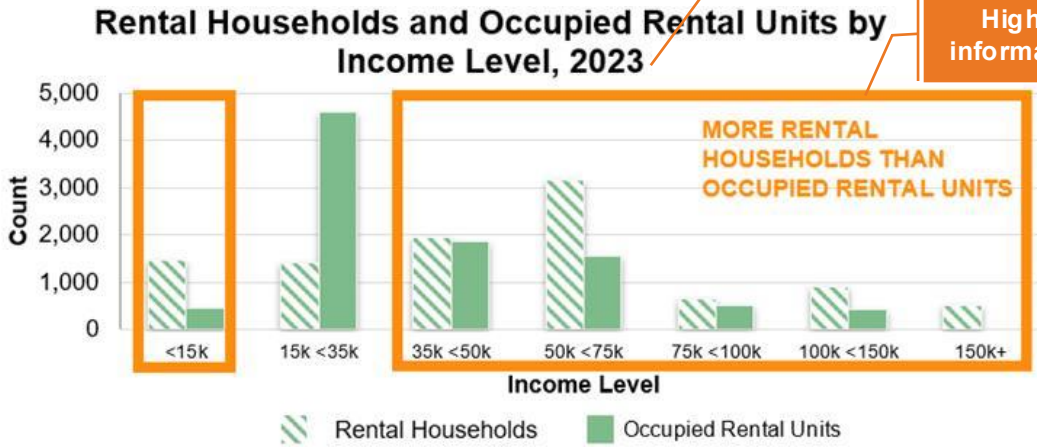


Figure 14 Where there are more occupied rental units than households at an income level, households in other income levels are likely occupying those units. For example, there are substantially more rental households who make over \$50,000 than there are occupied units, meaning there are likely households in those income brackets occupying units that are very affordable to them. However, there are more households making less than \$15,000 than there are available units, meaning they have to move into units that are more costly for them. Source: 2023 American Community Survey 1 yr estimates. B25063 Gross Rent and B25118 Tenure by Household Income in the past 12 months.

Changed “housing” to be more specific throughout (i.e. occupied rental housing units or owner households)

Made date of data collection more clear

Highlighted key information in tables

Made figure descriptions more clear and with less jargon

HOW THE COMMUNITY RESPONDED TO THE DRAFT

BEFORE | Release of Draft Plan at Mary Beth Nienhaus Activity Center and online survey

📅 Through September 21st, 2025

📍 www.planappleton.org

TODAY | Public hearing at Plan Commission for recommendation of adoption

📅 Wednesday, October 8th, 2025

📍 Council Chambers

🕒 3:30 pm

UP NEXT | Public hearing at Common Council for adoption

📅 Wednesday, November 19th, 2025

📍 Council Chambers

🕒 7:00pm

