



CITY OF APPLETON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

August 27, 2025

**Plan Commission – Release
of Draft Plan Appleton**

SMITHGROUP

OUTLINE

Why this Plan Matters

**How Community Feedback
Informed the Plan**

Plan Preview

Organization

Vision

Goals

Strategies and Tools

Land Use Place Types





ELECTED OFFICIALS + CITY STAFF

- Established a shared community vision and goals to guide future policy decisions
- Guide future changes to zoning
- Inform budgeting decisions
- Position the city for future regional, state, and federal funding opportunities



BUSINESSES, NON-PROFITS + UNIVERSITIES

- Identify locations to expand, start, or relocate a business.
- Create strategies to attract new businesses to Appleton
- Encourage housing and placemaking that could attract and retain talent



DEVELOPERS + BUILDERS

- Identify ideal locations for new development, redevelopment, or adaptive reuse of buildings.
- Set clear design and development expectations and priorities.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Find strategies to enhance housing, parks, open spaces, transit, sidewalks, and other public resources.
- Learn about City programs and services.

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



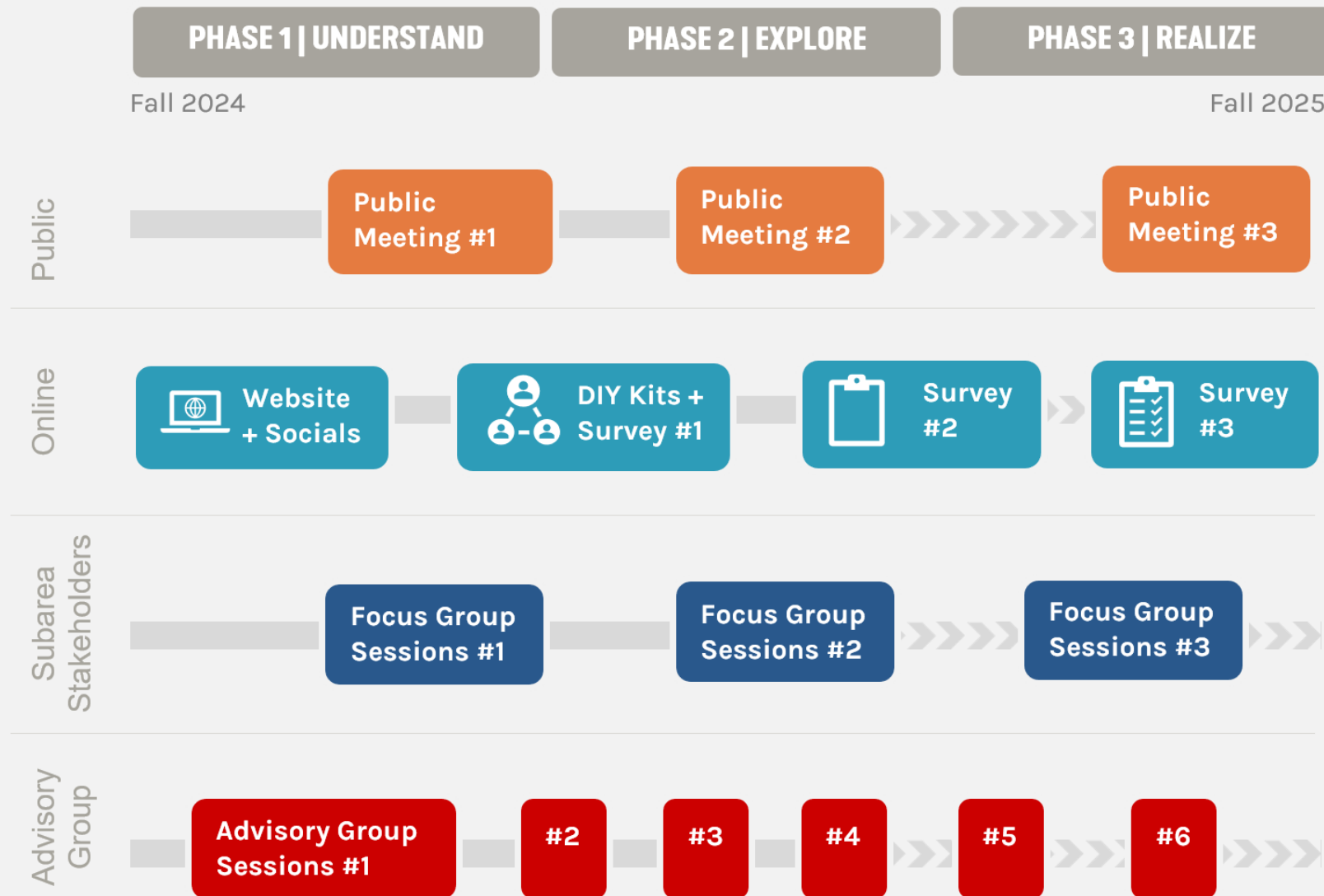
HOW DID WE CREATE THE PLAN

 **280+**
In-Person
Attendees

 **532+**
Online Survey
Responses

 **470+**
Map Pins
Placed

 **15**
Stakeholder
Sessions



Wisconsin State statutes require that this plan cover...



Issues and Opportunities



Housing



Transportation



Utilities and Community Facilities



Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources



Economic Development



Land Use

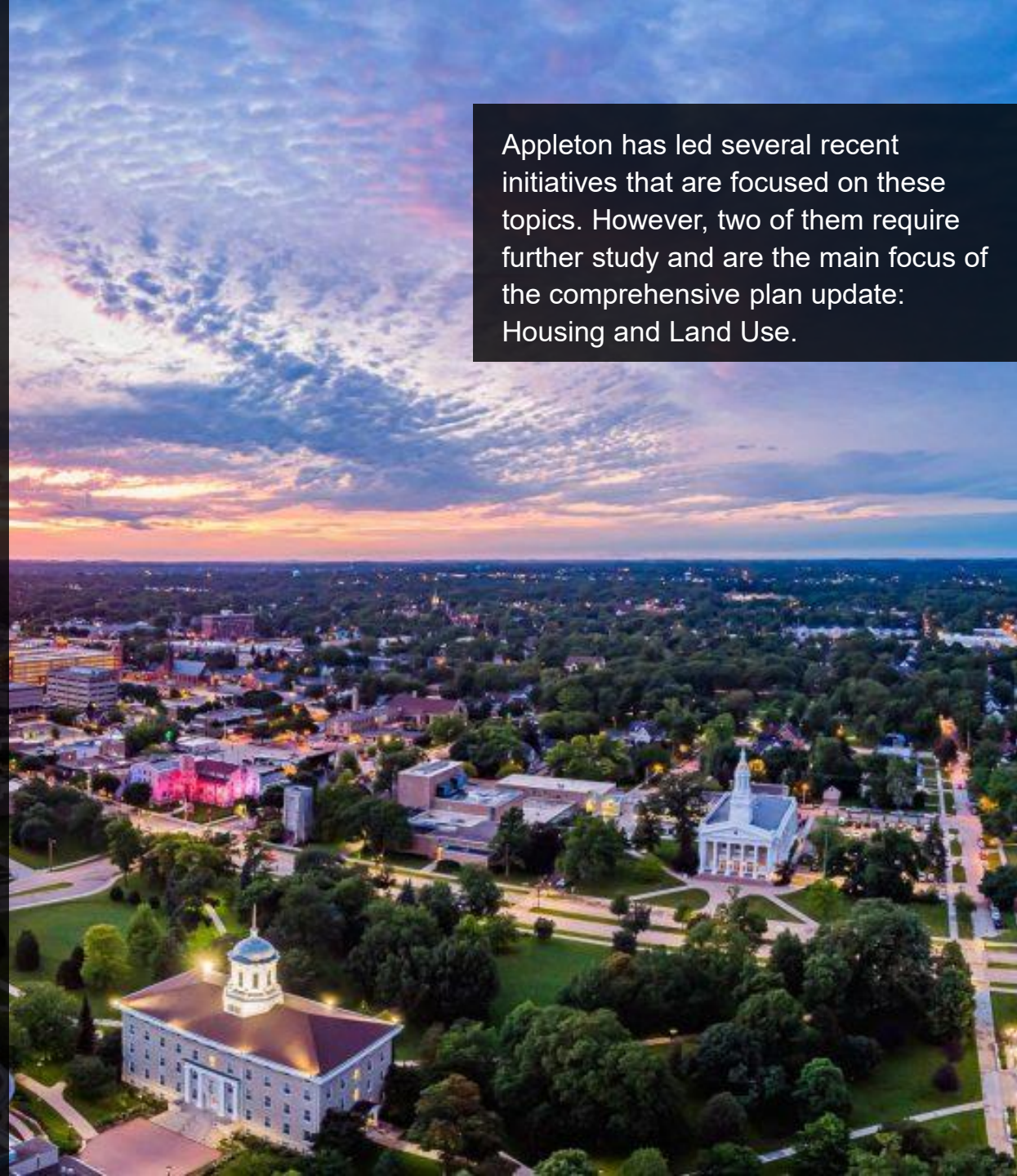


Intergovernmental Cooperation



Implementation

Appleton has led several recent initiatives that are focused on these topics. However, two of them require further study and are the main focus of the comprehensive plan update: Housing and Land Use.



PRIOR PLAN STRUCTURE



CURRENT PLAN STRUCTURE

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

Parks and Rec Plan (while this is referenced, it is now adopted separately)



Over 300 community members came together in the fall of 2024 to share their vision for the future of Appleton and provided feedback on it in the spring of 2025. Collectively, they set the vision that Plan Appleton aspires to.



**affordable
housing +
welcoming
neighborhoods**
mentioned by
65% of people



**a thriving
economic +
cultural
scene**
mentioned by
36% of people



**improved
walking,
biking, +
riding through
the city**
mentioned by
25% of people



**sustainable
development
+ accessible
green spaces**
mentioned by
13% of people



**responsible,
collaborative,
+ transparent
leadership**
mentioned by
26% of people

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.

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, as demographics 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 when we see:

- Increase ratio of build granted for alternative single family detached
- Increase funding for rehab and imp
- Decrease percent of c households (renter at variety of incomes)
- Decrease eviction filin

strategies

desired outcomes

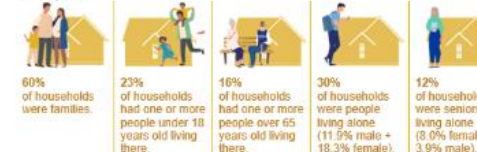
Housing Trends**Housing Choice**

Appleton is projected grow 5,000 people by 2040. This will impact households, job needs, school sizes, and more. Appleton has also under built 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 S26010, 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.



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.

STRATEGIES

- **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.
- **Unhoused and At-Risk Housing** | Support organizations aiding unhoused 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.
- **Housing Supply** | Increase housing supply in Appleton to meet housing demand.



Goal T | Transportation

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

STRATEGIES

- **Roads** | Create a system of complete streets: roads that are safe, efficient, and comfortable for all road users.
- **Parking** | Maintain a balanced parking supply that meets community needs while minimizing negative impacts of parking on the character, safety, and mobility of Appleton's neighborhoods and transportation network.
- **Transit** | Support Valley Transit to provide cost-effective, reliable, and frequent public transit services.
- **Rail** | Continue to support considerations to restore regional passenger rail connectivity.



Goal U | Utilities and Community Facilities

Appleton will provide reliable, high-quality utilities and community services in a fiscally responsible manner.

STRATEGIES

- **Water** | Maintain quality public water and sanitary sewer infrastructure.
- **Energy** | Improve energy efficiency.
- **Telecommunications** | Support efforts to deliver dependable cellular and internet coverage, speeds, and fiber optics for both daily use and in times of emergency.
- **Waste** | Support practical, cost-effective and collaborative approaches to solid waste and wastewater management that aims maximize resource recovery from waste streams.
- **Community Facilities** | Support updates as needed with new development to continue providing quality education, health, emergency service, and cultural community facilities for residents.



Goal R | Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural 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.

STRATEGIES

- **Parks** | Develop a linked system of parks, greenways, and trails for people to enjoy active lifestyles and recreation opportunities.
- **Natural Systems** | Preserve important natural features and enhance environmental quality throughout the community to secure economic, recreational, and health benefits for residents.
- **Agriculture** | Promote compact and efficient land use patterns to avoid fragmentation of agricultural lands.
- **Cultural Resources** | Have exceptional cultural resources, organizations, events, and venues that make Appleton the arts and cultural center of the Fox Cities.



Goal E | Economic Development

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.

STRATEGIES

- **Businesses** | Grow Appleton's business community through recruitment, expansion, and retention programs that ensure a diverse business mix and jobs that pay well with strong partnerships with nonprofit business organizations.
- **Placemaking** | Create a vibrant environment downtown and in neighborhood commercial districts that is conducive to attracting and retaining talented people.
- **Development** | Encourage new development and redevelopment activities that create vital and attractive neighborhoods and business districts.



Goal I | Intergovernmental Cooperation

Appleton will strengthen intergovernmental collaboration with neighboring municipalities, counties, the regional planning commission, state and federal agencies, and other relevant organizations to align land use and development planning across jurisdictions.

STRATEGIES

- **Collaboration** | Remain committed to continuing collaboration with neighboring municipalities, counties, the local school district, and the regional planning commission to improve alignment of long-range plans, reduce uncertainty, and support mutually beneficial development outcomes.
- **Communication** | Maintain open communication with neighboring municipalities, counties, the local school district, and the regional planning commission to stay informed about initiatives and developments that may affect the City so proactive action can be taken.



Goal L | Land Use

Appleton will continue to support thoughtful growth, development, and redevelopment that strengthens neighborhoods, considers sensitive natural areas, and maintains high-quality City of Appleton services.

STRATEGIES

- **Infrastructure** | Provide a pattern of development that minimizes impacts to municipal services, utilities, and the environment.
- **Growth** | Coordinate growth areas with boundary agreements to ensure orderly and efficient development by collaborating with surrounding jurisdictions.
- **Reinvestment** | Encourage redevelopment and reinvestment in established neighborhoods.
- **Zoning** | Plan for compact, efficient, and fiscally responsible development by updating the zoning code and other regulatory tools.
- **Flexibility** | Ensure a land use approach that can adjust to housing needs, market shifts, and population changes.





Housing Strategies

Appleton is home to many people, each with their own unique housing needs.

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



60%
of households
were families.



23%
of households
had one or more
people under 18
years old living
there.



16%
of households
had one or more
people over 65
years old living
there.



30%
of households
were people
living alone
(11.9% male +
18.3% female).



12%
of households
were seniors
living alone
(8.0% female +
3.9% male).

WHAT IS CHANGING IN APPLETON?

Appleton is set to grow with more jobs and residents in the coming years, which means a need for more housing.

Appleton is set to need **6,800** new units over the next few years for young professionals, empty nesters, and everything in between



That would be **180** owner units constructed each year...

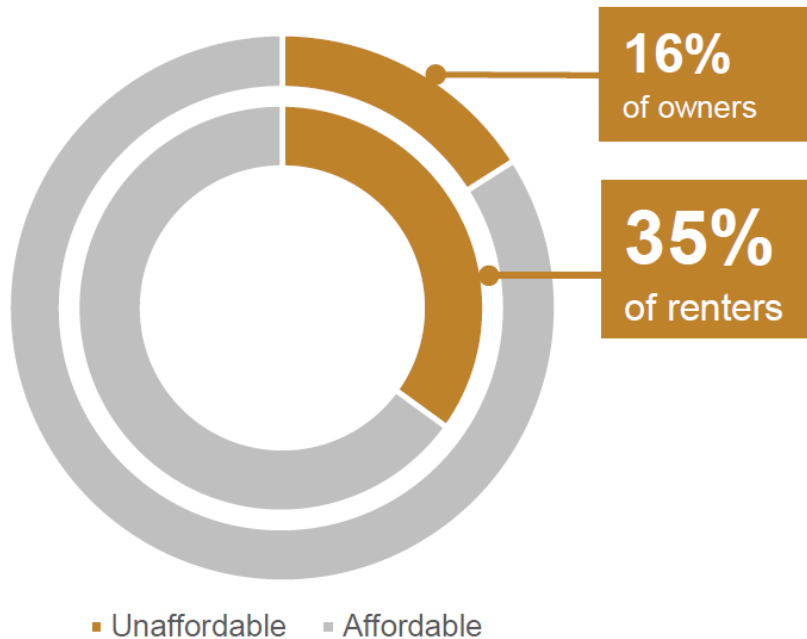


And **160** renter units constructed each year...



Appleton also aims to have housing at a variety of costs so that there are affordable options for people with a variety of incomes.

About 1 in 3 rentals are unaffordable.
In comparison 1 in 10 ownership units are considered unaffordable.



Tools for Affordable Housing in Plan Appleton

Housing Choice Voucher Program

The housing authority allows families under the program to use their voucher to buy a home & receive monthly assistance

Community Land Trusts

An entity could hold land for the permanent benefit of affordable housing for residents

Affordable Housing Funding

The city could consider including a dedicated affordable housing fund as a part of TID extension, CDBG allocation/loan, the Appleton Homeowner Rehabilitation Loan Program, and other sources offered by AHA

Development Review

Revise the development process to provide expedited permitting for affordable housing.

BIG IDEAS

To maintain a variety of housing options – both rental and ownership – throughout the city for different lifestyles and costs, Plan Appleton encourages more of these types of development.



Accessory Dwelling Units



2-, 3-, and 4-Unit Homes



Small Apartment Buildings



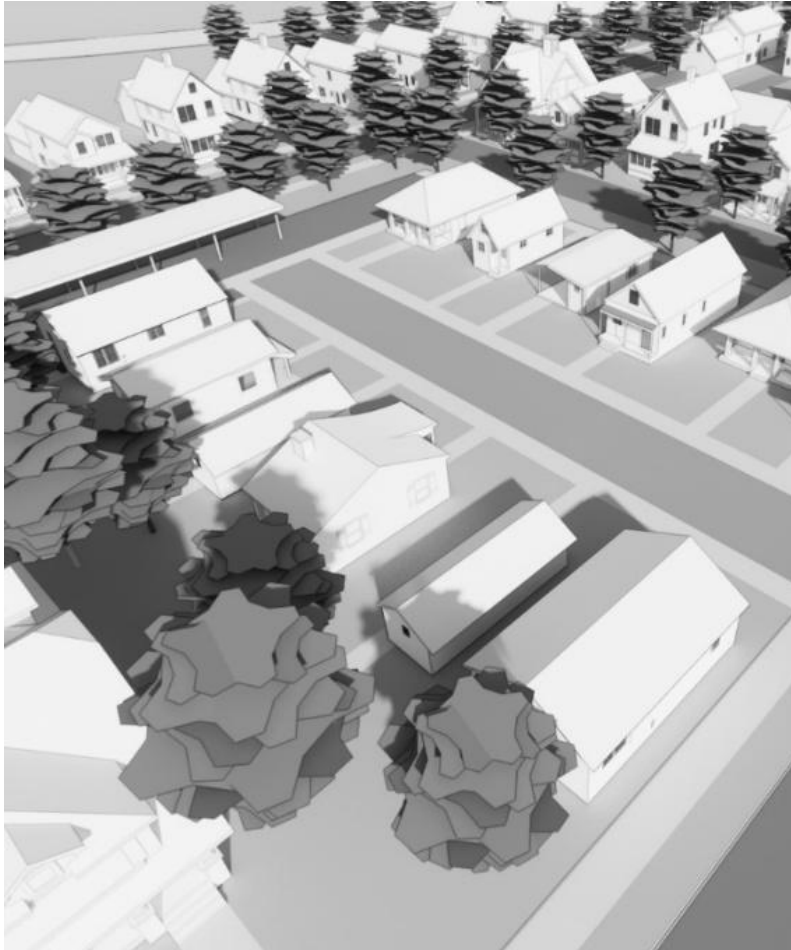
Townhomes



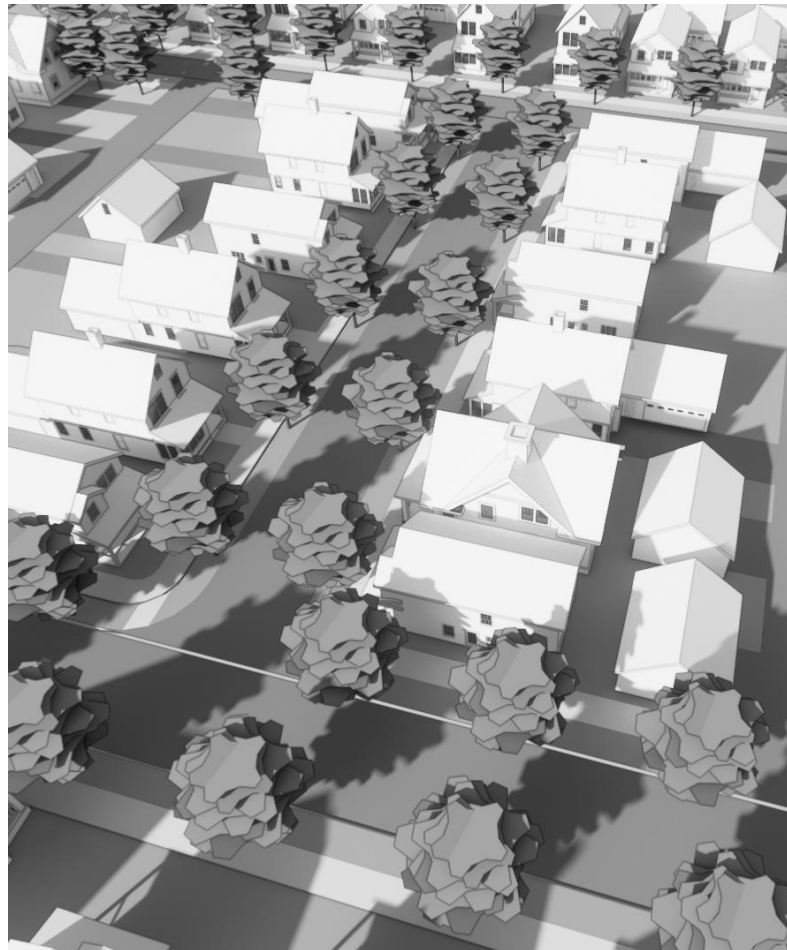
Mixed-Use

BIG IDEAS

We are encouraging more compact suburban neighborhood styles to preserve open spaces, connect to existing utilities, and make more walkable areas.



COTTAGE COURT HOUSING



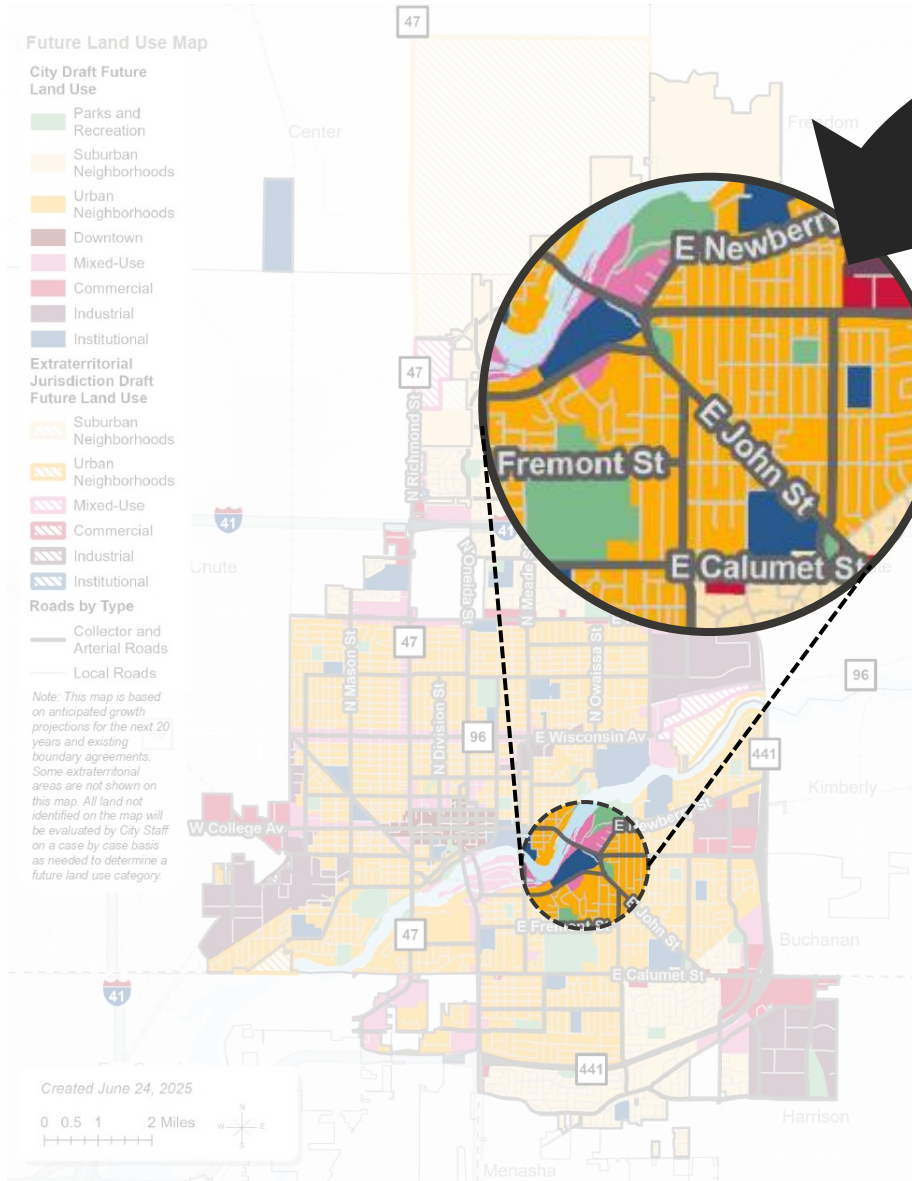
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN



CLUSTER STYLE HOUSING

BIG IDEAS

Future land use now considers not just zoning and development, but also transportation.

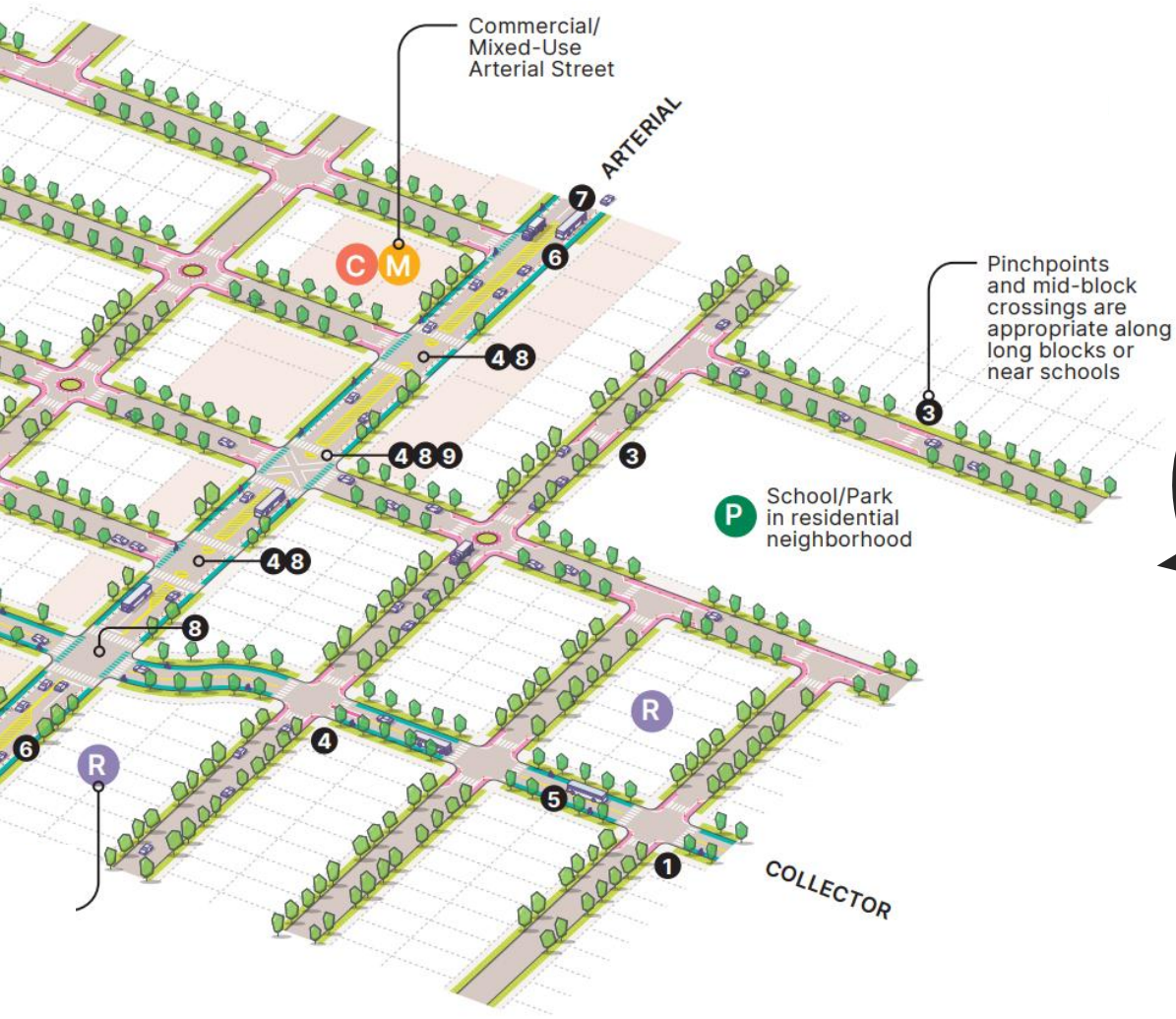


Why show roads?

We are recommending to prioritize residential density and locate future retail along busier collector and arterial roads.



Future land use also aligns with complete streets, which will make it easier and more comfortable to travel by means other than a car, which is more common currently.



Strategies for Complete Streets in Plan Appleton

Land Use

Complete streets use design and regulations to prioritize safety, accessibility, and equitable access for all users of the road, regardless of their age, ability, or mode of transportation. We aligned future land uses with the Complete Streets Guide

Complete Streets Design Guide by Future Land Uses

	Name	Land Uses
Local Roads	Residential Traditional Local	Neighborhoods
	Residential Smart Local	Neighborhoods
	Generic Traditional Local	Commercial, Mixed Use, Parks and Recreation, Institutional, Industrial
	Generic Smart Local	Commercial, Mixed Use, Parks and Recreation, Institutional
	Industrial Smart Local with Sidepath	Industrial

■ Neighborhoods
■ Commercial
■ Mixed Use
■ Industrial
■ Institutional
■ Parks and Recreation

BIG IDEAS

Plan Appleton aims to help with walkability and connectivity by increasing density along busier corridors, especially the three subareas explored: Northland/Richmond, Oneida, and Wisconsin



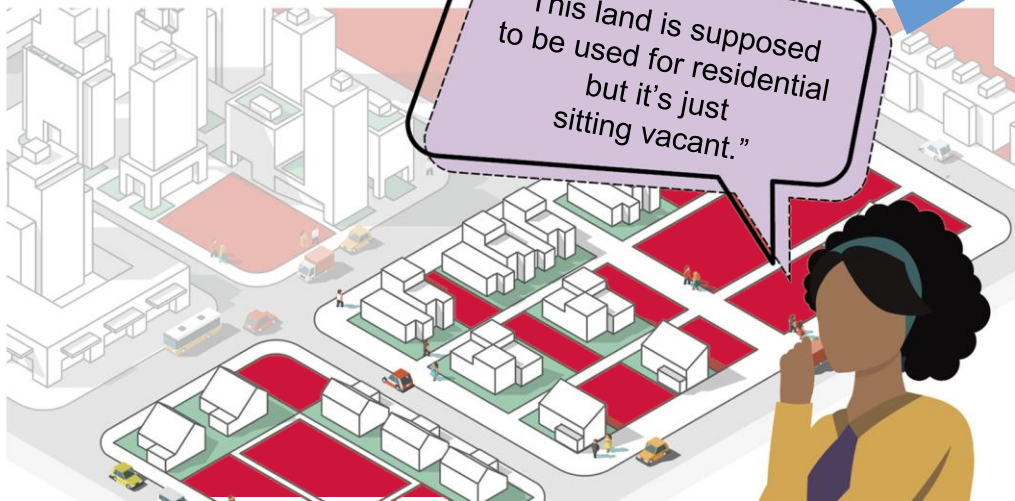


Future Land Use, Place Types, and Zoning

LAND USE IS ONE PART OF PLACE TYPES

While traditional comprehensive planning uses Land Use to describe what is actually happening on the land

"This land is supposed to be used for residential but it's just sitting vacant."



Land use tells us what's there.

Place Types show what people want a place to feel like - not just what's built there now. It's about creating a future vision for how a place should look, feel, and work.

"I want to see ground floor stores with people living upstairs and a bus stop."



Place types help us imagine what could be there.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLACE TYPES AND ZONING?

PLACE TYPES

describe the character of a place and what it could look like in the future

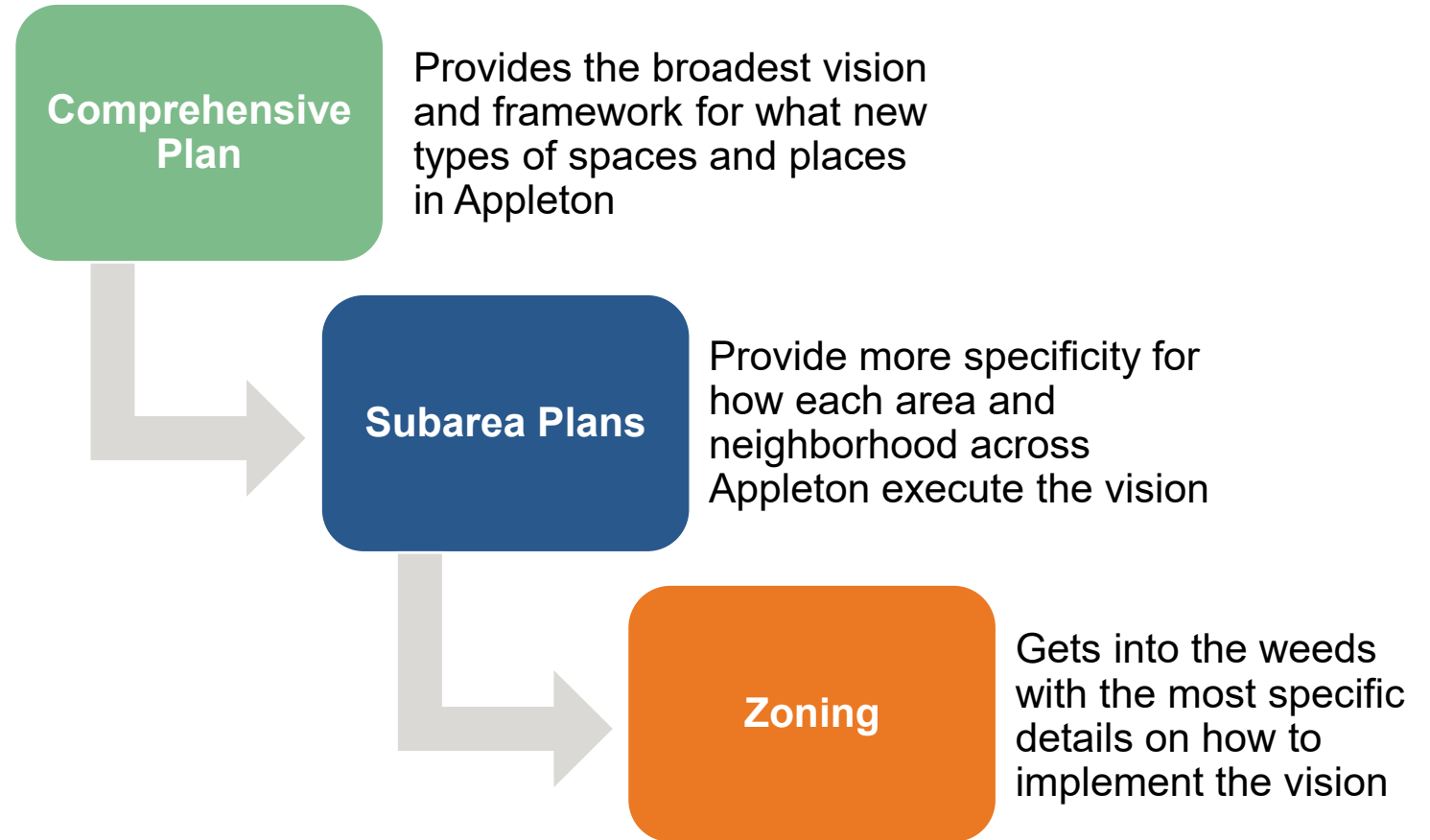


ZONING

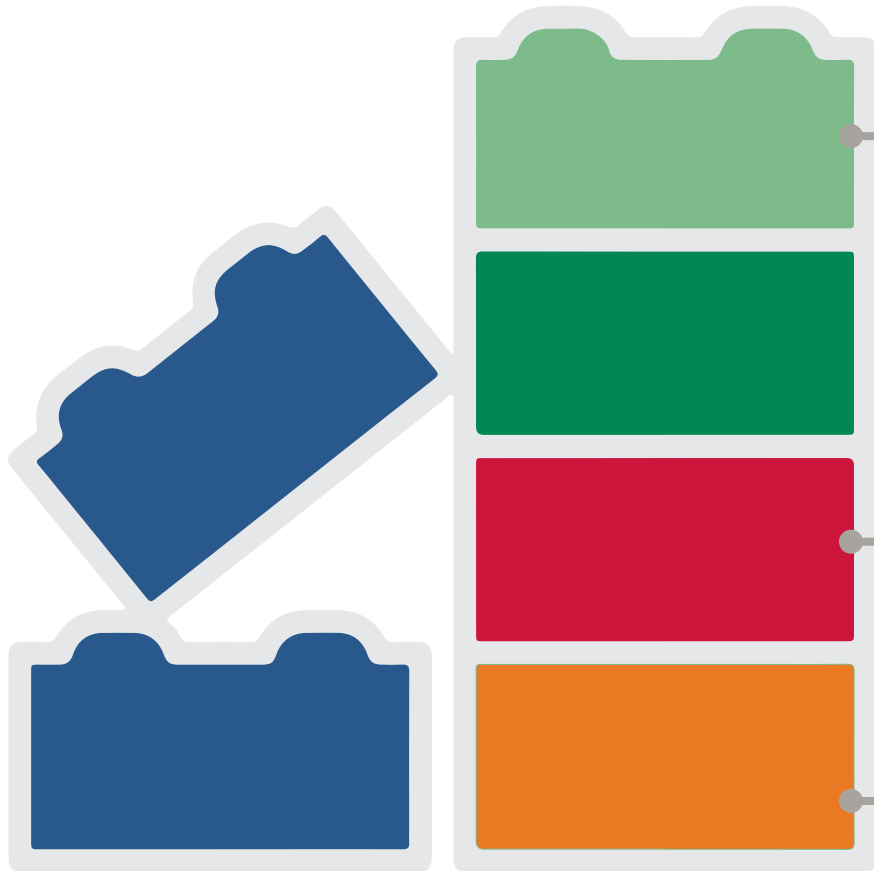
provides the rules and regulations for what you are legally allowed to do



Seeing the Bigger Picture



PLACE TYPES IN PRACTICE



Place Types are the building blocks of Plan Appleton.

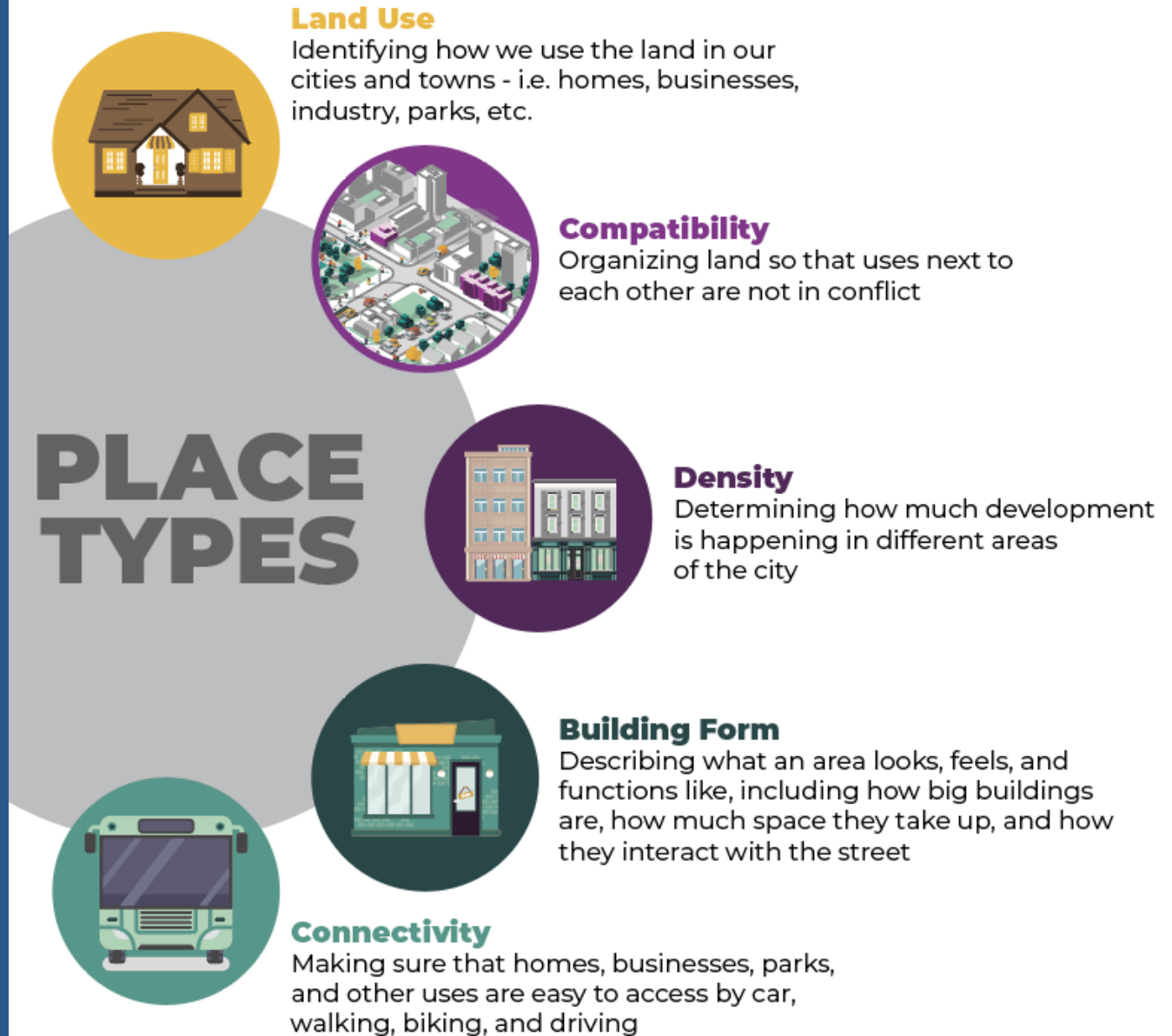
They translate the community vision into a clear, actionable framework for how different areas should evolve and transform.

They serve as a guide to evaluate development proposals to ensure that future development aligns with the City's vision

They inform how zoning needs to change to support the best possible use of land in the future.

What do Place Types Contain?

Land use, but also character, density, transitions, and relationship to street



BIG IDEAS

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



BIG IDEAS					
	Intent	Primary Land Use	Character	Transportation	Current Zoning
Parks and Recreation	Preserve large public open spaces and limit development encroaching upon natural and recreational areas	Parks, open spaces, and natural areas	Large programmed and natural open spaces with trails, recreational fields, and other low intensity uses	Multi-use trails; Connections along the perimeter to existing sidewalks and crosswalks	P-I
Suburban Neighborhood	Ensure new neighborhood development encourages connectivity and traditional neighborhood design	Single-unit and two-unit housing. Medium density multi-unit housing near collector streets, arterial streets, and parks	Medium sized lots	Well-connected road network; curb and gutter; safe crossings; trails; sidewalks	R-1A, R-1B, R-2, R-3
Urban Neighborhood	Support existing neighborhoods, encourage compatible infill, incorporate more housing types	Single-unit, two-unit, and medium density multi-family housing. High density multi-family housing near collector streets, arterial streets, and parks.	House-scale, historic neighborhood patterns; front porches, garages in rear	Connectivity to transit corridors; walkability; sidewalks; safe crossings	R-1B, R-1C, R-2, R-3
Downtown	Historic walkable center with vibrant center for activity in the City.	Active first floor uses with residential and office above	Active first floor; mid-rise and high-rise buildings	Very walkable and well connected; transit; on-street parking	CBD
Mixed-Use	Enhance gateways and integrate more uses	Transitioning commercial to mixed-use	Transition auto-oriented areas to more walkable mixed-use	Transition to more walkable; improve access management	C-1
Commercial	Improve site design to enhance corridor gateways	Retail, office, personal services	Shopping centers, big box retail	Auto-oriented; improve access management	C-2, C-O
Industrial	Flexibility for lighter industrial and research parks to heavier industrial manufacturing uses	Manufacturing, warehouse, research and development	Some areas more campus “office park” style; others more historic industrial fronting the street	Proximity to transit corridors or stops; connected to existing road network; proximity to rail	M-1, M-2
Institutional	Government, medical, and educational campuses	Education, medical, municipal	Low- to mid-rise institutional buildings; Campuses with integrated greenspace, often individually master planned	Well connected to corridors and transit, internal system of streets and paths	PI

Previous plan had only one category and mostly focused on existing

- But it did plan for 2 units per lot

More specificity for which housing types should be where

More future-focused language to guide rezonings



Suburban Neighborhoods

What are the key traits of a suburban neighborhood?

- Detached homes on medium sized lots to allow more density while complementing the character of existing subdivisions
- A mixture of housing types like attached duplexes, triplexes, or quads allowed, typically near parks or collector and arterial streets
- Street lighting and sidewalks connected to the existing street grid
- Primary grid-like streets with some curvilinear streets around natural features

Intent

Most of these areas have been developed in the last several decades as subdivisions. New neighborhood development should encourage connectivity, conservation of natural land, traditional building styles emphasizing an active frontage, and a mixture of housing options.

Land Uses

- Primary: single-unit and two-unit housing. Medium density multi-unit housing near collector streets, arterial streets, and parks
- Secondary: schools, neighborhood parks, and institutions, neighborhood commercial (on collector and arterial streets)

Zoning

Most suburban areas are currently zoned R-1A, R-1B, R-2, or R-3. Future zoning could simplify into a new zoning classification that provides maximum lot sizes and reduces minimum lot width from 70 to 50 feet. Different housing types would be regulated by new use standards that apply across districts.

Character

- Medium sized lots
- Front entrance separate from any garage entrance
- Less prominent garages (set back from the primary front façade, preferably less than half of the front façade) or in rear with alley access to promote community over cars
- Small to medium-scale nonresidential uses—such as schools and churches—may expand into adjacent residential areas, where appropriate, through limited development that respects neighborhood character and scale

Transportation

- Well-connected road network with curb and gutter
- Safe crossings and sidewalks
- Multi-use trails separated from the road whenever feasible



Urban Neighborhoods

What are the key traits of urban neighborhoods?

- Small to medium sized homes on narrower lots close together
- A mixture of single-unit homes, duplexes, triplexes, quads, and townhomes throughout the neighborhood with small apartment buildings occasionally near parks, collectors, or arterial streets
- Street lighting, street trees and sidewalks
- Gridded streets that emphasize connectivity and support non-motorized transportation
- Neighborhood parks and small businesses are within walking distance of homes

Intent

Support existing neighborhoods by encouraging compatible infill and incorporating more housing types.

Land Uses

- Primary: single-unit, two-unit, and medium density multi-family housing. High density multi-family housing near collector streets, arterial streets, and parks.
- Secondary: schools, neighborhood parks, and institutions, neighborhood commercial (on collector and arterial roads)

Zoning

Most urban areas are currently zoned R-1B, R-1C, R-2, R-3. Future zoning may condense these to apply a revised district that provides scale and siting standards for different housing types.

Character

- Small sized lots
- Mixture of housing types
- Front porches with garages in the rear
- Small to medium-scale nonresidential uses—such as schools and churches—may expand into adjacent residential areas, where appropriate, through limited development that respects neighborhood character and scale

Transportation

- Connectivity to transit corridors
- Walkability, sidewalks, street trees, safe crossings
- On-street parking in high demand areas in alignment with Complete Street principles



Plan Implementation

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



TYPES OF ACTIONS

**ACTIONS RELATED TO
DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND
REGULATIONS**

**ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT OTHER
PLANS**

**ACTIONS RELATED TO
PARTNERSHIPS**

**ACTIONS THAT SUPPORT OUR
HOUSING AND LAND USE GOALS**



NEXT STEPS

Draft Plan debut tomorrow at Mary Beth Nienhaus Activity Center and online survey available

📅 Through September 19th, 2025

📍 www.planappleton.org

Public hearing at Plan Commission for recommendation of adoption

📅 Wednesday, October 8th, 2025

📍 Council Chambers

🕒 3:30 pm

Public hearing at Common Council for adoption

📅 Wednesday, November 19, 2025

📍 Council Chambers

🕒 7:00pm

