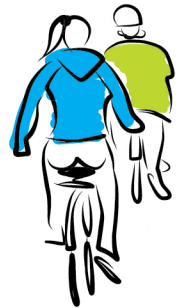


A **VISION** FOR
W. COLLEGE AVE.



A NEW AVENUE



ONE ROUTE ■ ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



THANK YOU to the many organizations that make up the A NEW Avenue Coalition. Your collaboration, expertise, and resources have been essential to shaping a unified vision for W College Avenue.

We also extend our gratitude to the community members who generously contributed their time and insights during the engagement process. We are excited to reflect community input in the future development of this area.

Thank you to Smart Growth America and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through the Community Connector program, for the grant supporting this work.

A special thank you to Showcase Communications for their exceptional work in capturing the spirit of the project and translating that into project branding that will carry into future phases of work.

Another sincere thank you to the incredible local artists—Ally Wilber, Dean Wydeven, ellis jake solie studio, Neo and Valerie Medina of Someday Studios, and Rob Neilson—who generously shared their time and creativity to help us imagine the possibilities for public art along College Avenue.



REIMAGINING A NEW AVENUE

West College Avenue, between the Fox River Mall area (Mall Drive) and downtown Appleton (Richmond Street), is a major corridor in the heart of the Fox Cities. Spanning approximately 2.5 miles, this corridor is far more than a roadway—it's a dynamic lifeline lined with businesses, dining options, residential neighborhoods, and community anchors. As a primary entrance into the Fox Cities for those arriving via Appleton International Airport or Interstate 41, it plays an integral role in shaping the community's identity and influencing first impressions of northeastern Wisconsin.

Despite its importance, W College Avenue (College Avenue) faces challenges that hinder its functionality and appeal. Safety issues, multimodal deficiencies, underutilized parcels of land, and an inconsistent streetscape present ongoing concerns.

The A NEW Avenue initiative is an effort to take a step toward addressing these concerns by revitalizing this important area—something that has been a long-standing goal for many in the region.

One of the challenges in making meaningful changes, however, lies in the complexity of jurisdictional oversight. Although commonly known as College Avenue, the corridor is officially State Highway 125 (WIS 125) and is owned and maintained by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). It runs through both the Town of Grand Chute and the City of Appleton, within Outagamie County. With multiple agencies responsible for different aspects of the corridor, coordinating improvements has been difficult. Addressing transportation needs, land use, and design in a unified way requires collaboration among these stakeholders and the community at large.

With careful planning and cooperation, College Avenue can be improved to better serve residents, businesses, and visitors alike. Evaluating safety issues, making better use of available land, and creating a more welcoming environment can help strengthen the corridor's role in the region. The College Avenue corridor can become a more functional and inviting space for everyone who uses and travels through it.

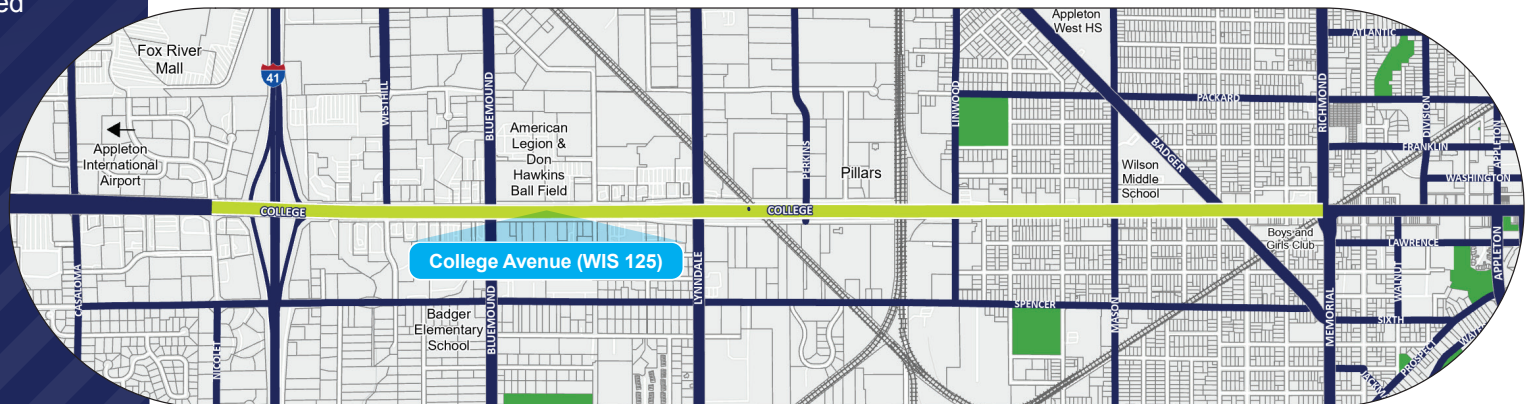
LOCATION:

About 2.5 miles, running from the Fox River Mall (Mall Drive) to downtown Appleton (Richmond Street) of West College Avenue, officially named Wisconsin State Highway 125 (WIS 125).

Key Entry Point to the Fox Cities from Appleton International Airport and Interstate 41.

Major Route through the Fox Cities lined with businesses, restaurants, homes, and community hubs.

This document serves as the **VISION** for future redevelopment and revitalization efforts. It provides a guiding framework for stakeholders to align their efforts and bring shared aspirations to life.



TAKING A STEP BACK: WHAT IS DIVISIVE INFRASTRUCTURE AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Divisive infrastructure refers to physical structures—such as highways, railways, and overpasses—that disrupt neighborhoods and communities. These barriers can separate people from schools, workplaces, and other essential resources, making it harder to maintain social connections and access opportunities. Negative side effects like traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution often accompany such infrastructure, reducing quality of life for nearby residents.

Community members have expressed concerns about feeling unsafe using and navigating the corridor, particularly for non-drivers trying to cross the corridor and motorists attempting to access destinations off the main route. Additionally, the area's inconsistent design detracts from the overall experience of using it—sometimes creating a disorienting effect for drivers and visitors.



The diagram on the following page illustrates how certain transportation interventions can help to break up divisive infrastructure. Features such as pedestrian crosswalks, curb extensions, and refuge islands have the ability to reconnect communities separated by wide, high-speed roadways. These improvements create a safer, more predictable environment for everyone on the road.



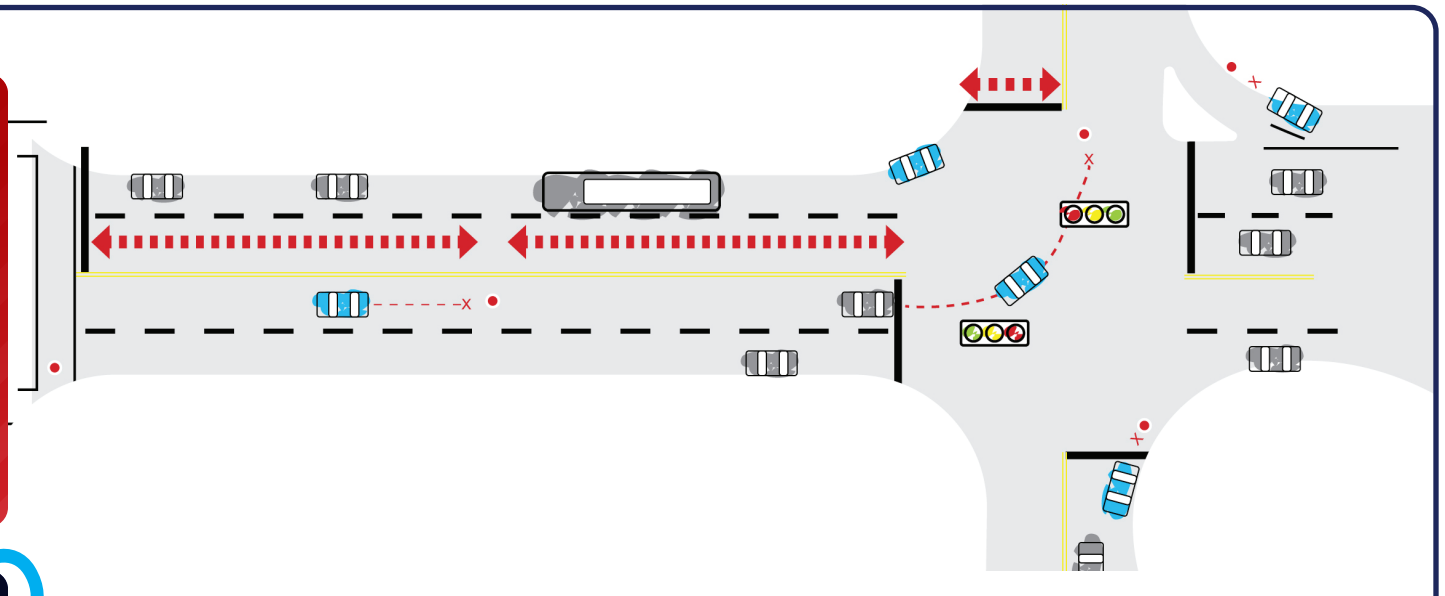
College Avenue is an example of **DIVISIVE INFRASTRUCTURE** where roadway designs create barriers to connectivity, making it difficult and unsafe for pedestrians in our community. Addressing it has become a focal point of this project.



Source: Google Street View

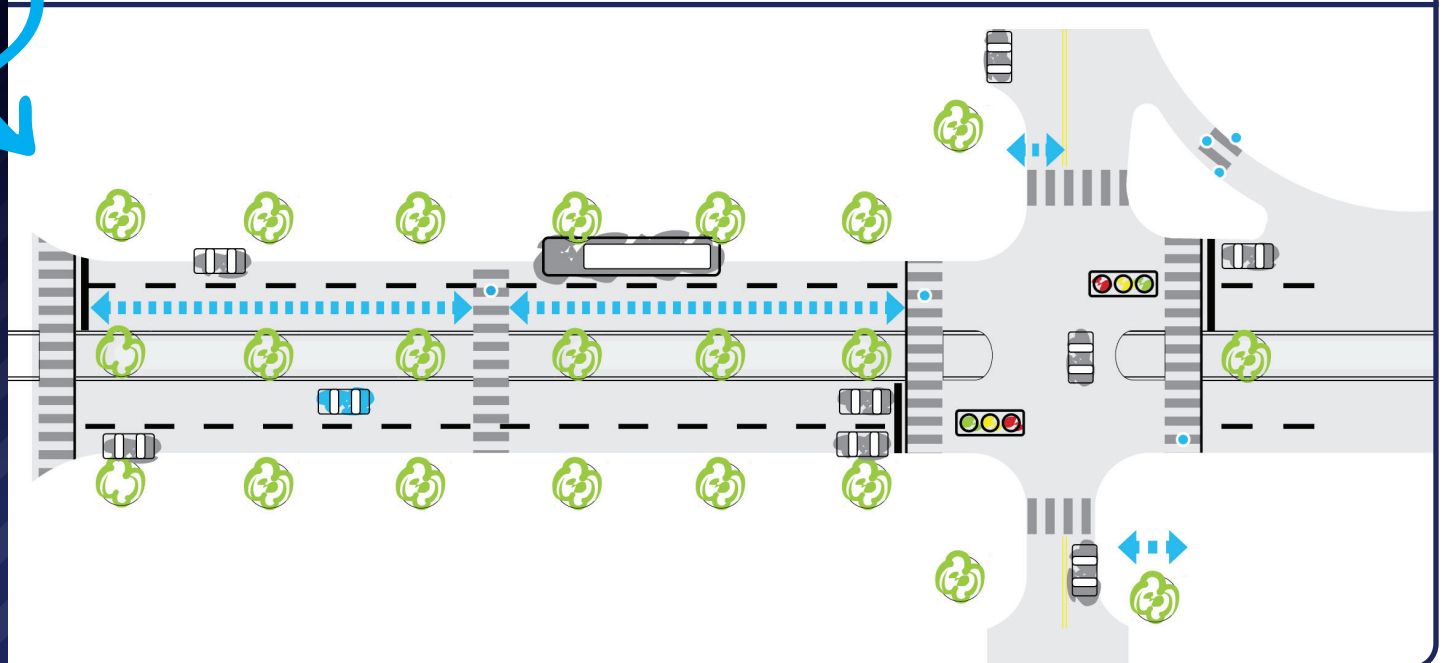
BEFORE: Divisive Infrastructure

Wide lanes and sparse crosswalks encourage speeding and unsafe crossings.



AFTER: Reconnected Infrastructure

Balanced streets with visible crosswalks, curb extensions, and mid-block crossings slow down traffic for pedestrians' and cyclists' safety, while sufficient lane sizes and clear turn lanes ensure smooth flow for drivers.













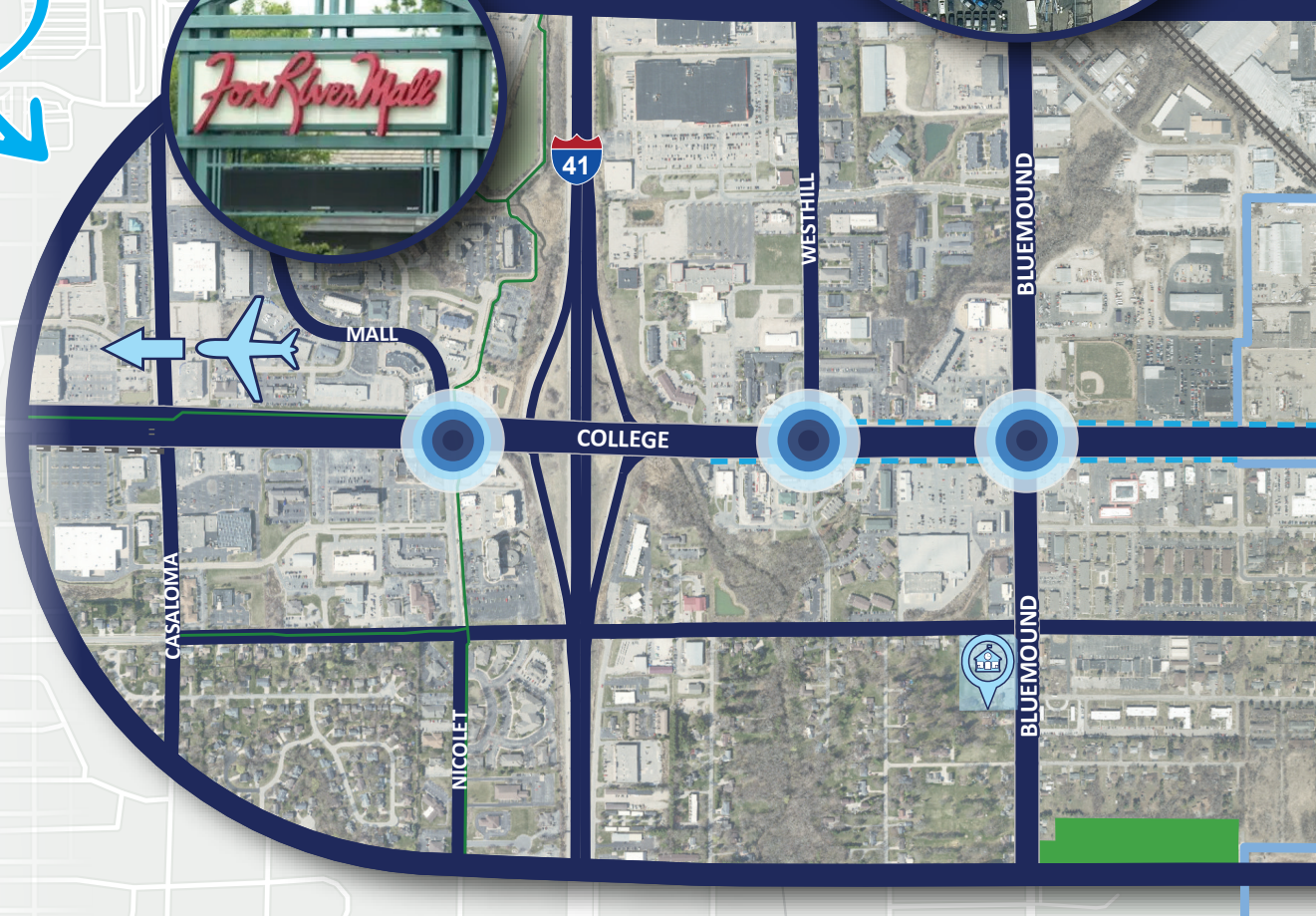
Source: Adapted with modifications from *Dangerous by Design* (2021), Smart Growth America.

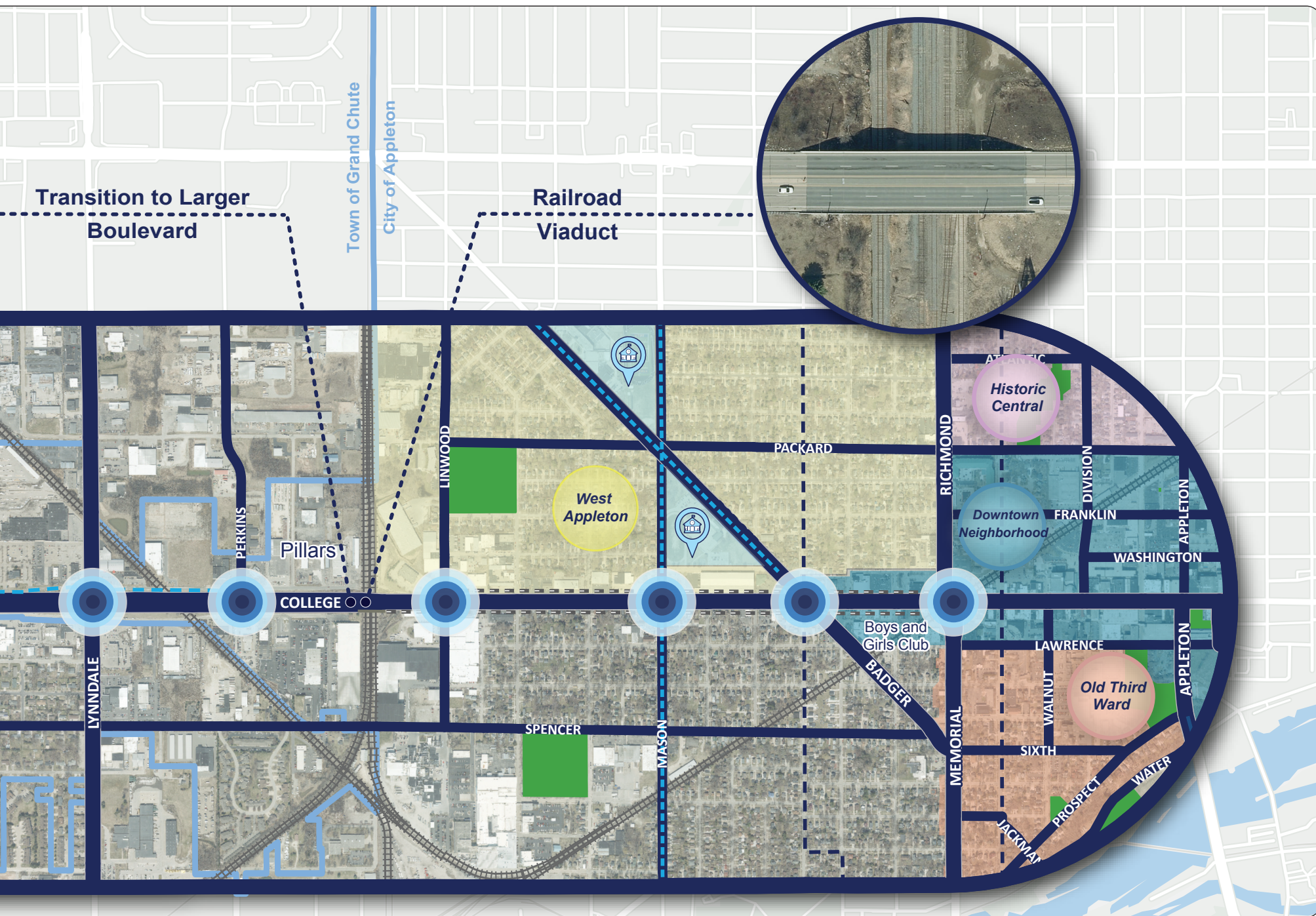
THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

This map labels notable elements of the project area, offering a glimpse into its current character. As you progress through the document, you can explore how these spaces may evolve in the future.

LEGEND

-  Bike Lane
-  Bike Route
-  Major Roadway
-  Railroad
-  Sidewalk
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Key Intersection
-  Trail
-  School
-  Parks

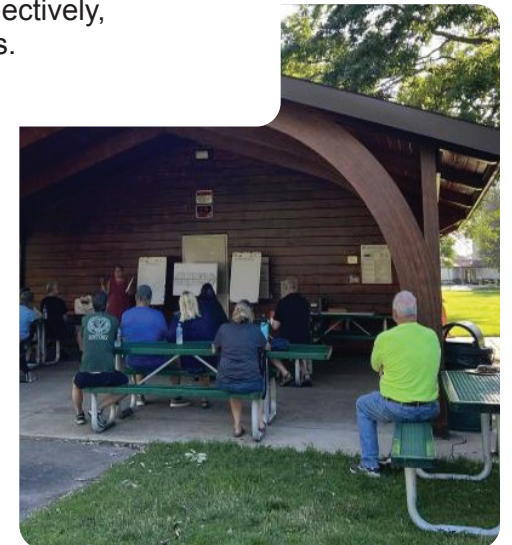






INSPIRED BY YOU: **ONE ROUTE, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES**

Community members contributed ideas, concerns, and goals through pop-up activities (*shown here*), meetings and conversations, surveys, and interviews. Organizing this input was a dynamic coalition of government officials, regional stakeholders, and community service representatives who provided context and structure for the initiative. Collectively, these voices shaped the vision for College Avenue, encapsulated in these pages.





OPPORTUNITIES



Strong support from local residents and stakeholders, laying a solid foundation for planning and implementation



Ample available right-of-way, offering design flexibility and potential for a variety of public spaces and infrastructure



Proximity to major destinations including the Fox River Mall, downtown Appleton, and educational institutions, creating opportunities for increased foot traffic and economic/social activity



Potential for public investment to encourage private investment, attract new development, and spur economic growth



Growing interest in sustainable design and community-centered spaces, offering opportunities to incorporate eco-friendly infrastructure and civic areas that serve local needs

CHALLENGES



Coordinating across multiple authorities (local, county, state) with differing priorities, timelines, regulations, and resources



Balancing the diverse interests of numerous stakeholders, including residents, businesses, and service organizations



Managing redevelopment costs, which requires careful budgeting, funding strategies, and risk management to maintain feasibility



Addressing transportation safety concerns including accommodating the needs of motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users



Overcoming resistance to change or development, especially in areas where established community members or businesses may fear displacement or disruption



VISION: College Avenue is a welcoming part of the Fox Cities where people live, work, and come together. It connects neighborhoods and supports local businesses, offering safe and convenient access by foot, bike, bus, and car. As both a gateway and a destination, it's a place to travel through—and a place to stay.

The **VISION** for A NEW Avenue builds on seven goals and four focus areas. Together, these statements will guide us as we turn our vision for College Avenue into a reality.



SEVEN PROJECT GOALS



SAFETY

Enhance safety for all transportation users



CONNECTIVITY

Improve efficiency and movement between destinations and neighborhoods



ACCESSIBILITY

Ensure equitable access for all through inclusive infrastructure design



IDENTITY

Establish a distinct and welcoming identity for the corridor



PRIDE

Build pride and ownership among local residents and businesses



VITALITY

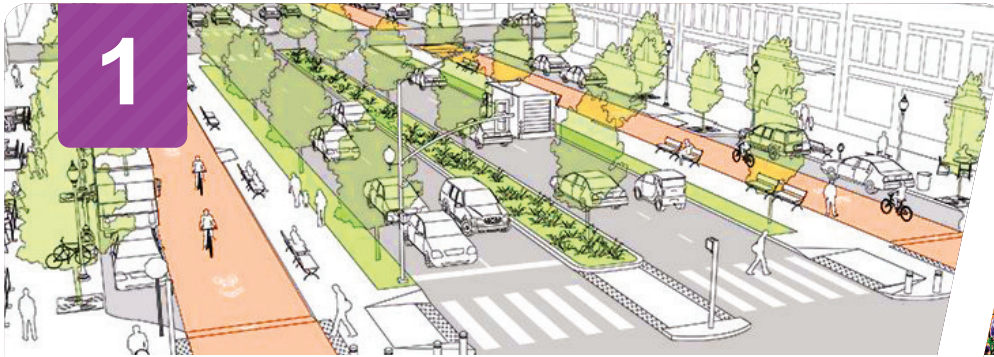
Boost economic growth and attract residents, visitors, and investments



INTENTIONALITY

Encourage infill and redevelopment to address urban gaps with community-aligned land uses

FOUR AREAS OF FOCUS ELEMENTS



CREATING A PATH FOR EVERYONE

Upgrading Our Streets: Redesign the College Avenue right-of-way to improve safety, connectivity, and accessibility. Reconfigure the roadway, upgrade intersections, and integrate active transportation options.



DEFINING OUR ROOTS

Shaping Our Future: Build a distinct identity for College Ave. through branding, streetscape design, and public art to foster community pride and a welcoming entrance to the Fox Cities.



INTEGRATING GREEN SPACES

Building Great Places: Introduce features that enhance the environment, improve public health, and create spaces for relaxation and community gatherings.



TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

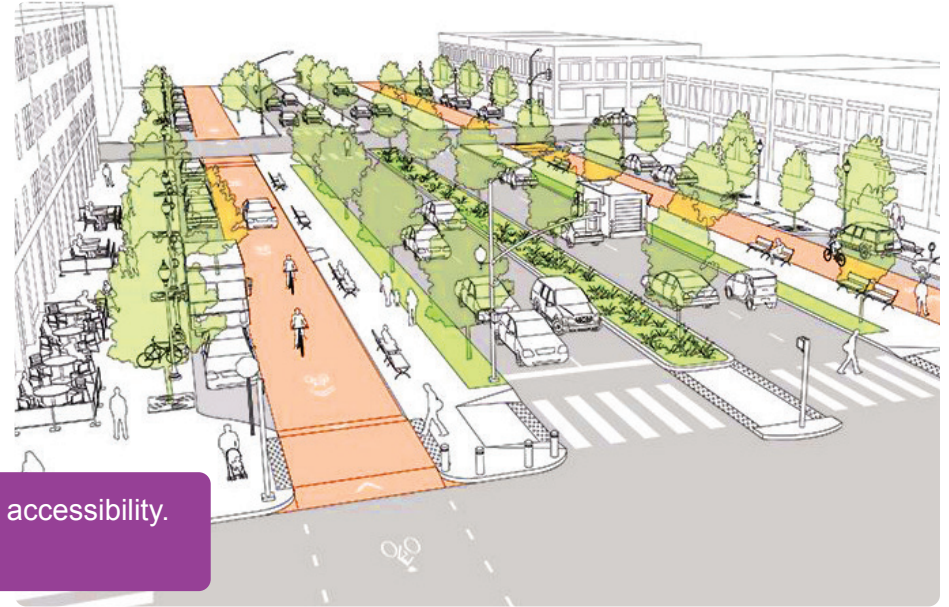
Sparking Growth: Transform underutilized and neglected areas into flourishing spaces that grow the economy and benefit our local community.

ELEMENT

1

UPGRADING OUR STREETS CREATING A PATH FOR EVERYONE

This element focuses on the need to redesign the College Avenue right-of-way to improve safety, connectivity, and accessibility. By reconfiguring the roadway, upgrading intersections, and integrating active transportation options, we will make travel easier for everyone—motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. Improvements should better connect the immediate community to the region, ensuring everyone can safely and freely reach destinations, businesses, and neighborhoods.



RECOMMENDATIONS

An example of a well-designed boulevard, enhancing urban mobility and accessibility. The illustration depicts a 116-ft roadway within a 164-ft right-of-way.

Source: National Association of City Transportation Officials, Urban Street Design Guide.

- 1 Partner with WisDOT to Improve College Avenue.** Roadway enhancements will require WisDOT to prioritize and advance action, as they currently own and maintain the roadway. As part of a future partnership, explore project prioritization, costs, timelines, and funding and maintenance responsibilities.
- 2 Design and Implement Complete Streets for All Users.** Prepare roadway reconstruction plans that support motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.
- 3 Upgrade Stormwater Management Facilities.** Replace open ditches with curbs and gutters and stormwater treatment features for better drainage and a cleaner, more polished look.
- 4 Exceed Accessibility Standards.** Ensure all new infrastructure meets or exceeds ADA guidelines, so the corridor is safe and accessible for seniors and people with disabilities.

- Evaluate the number, width, and locations of travel and turning lanes to reduce congestion and manage speed.
- Evaluate the current frontage road system to identify opportunities to improve traffic operations, navigability, and access to destinations.
- Design improved intersections by considering features such as high-visibility crosswalks, street lighting, pedestrian signals, refuge islands, and traffic-calming measures.
- Prioritize people by considering features such as trails, bike lanes, wide sidewalks, covered bus stops, and traffic control infrastructure.

MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ELEMENTS OF CONCERN



INTERSTATE 41

Interstate 41 (I-41) acts as a barrier, separating destinations along the western end of **College Avenue**. The underpass is unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists as it lacks adequate infrastructure to ensure safe passage through this divide. The area also suffers from traffic congestion, particularly at the **Mall Drive** intersection (located less than 1,000-ft from the interstate) and for drivers accessing the **I-41** ramps. Improvement plans should aim to reduce motorist congestion while enhancing both the underpass and its approaches, such as ramp terminal intersections, to create a seamless pathway for non-motorists.

**I-41 AND
COLLEGE AVE
INTERSECTION**



RAILROAD VIADUCT

The railroad viaduct (i.e., bridge/overpass) on **College Avenue** between **Perkins Street** and **Linwood Avenue** is widely regarded as hazardous and visually unappealing. The viaduct lacks dedicated sidewalks, putting people dangerously close to four lanes of traffic. Poor lighting and outdated fencing contribute to its neglected appearance and unsafe condition. The community expressed concerns that this infrastructure forces pedestrians to risk their safety by crossing the viaduct or resort to using “goat paths” beneath the bridge to illegally cross the railroad tracks directly.

**THE VIADUCT ON
COLLEGE AVE**



Source: Google Street View

KEY INTERSECTIONS OF CONCERN



**WESTHILL BLVD/
KOOLS ST AND
COLLEGE AVENUE
INTERSECTION**

WESTHILL BOULEVARD/KOOLS STREET, BLUEMOUND DRIVE, AND LYNNDALE DRIVE INTERSECTIONS

These intersections in **Grand Chute** connect popular businesses and provide passage from **College Avenue** into the surrounding community. However, community members highlight persistent issues: heavy congestion, missing crosswalks, confusing layouts, and poor visibility. Ongoing safety concerns are underscored by a pattern of recurring crashes, with a portion of them also involving pedestrians and cyclists.



**PERKINS ST AND
COLLEGE AVENUE
INTERSECTION**

PERKINS STREET INTERSECTION

At the **Perkins Street** intersection, there are popular Valley Transit bus stops. Many people attempt to cross **College Avenue** from these bus stops to reach the **Pillars Adult Shelter** (north of College Avenue) and the **Pillars Resource Center** (south of College Avenue). Crossing is hazardous due to high traffic volumes and lack of existing crosswalks.

Additionally, despite their popularity, the transit stops here consist only of a sign on a pole, with no seating or shelter from weather conditions. The area becomes slippery in rain and snow, and ADA accessibility features are absent. Motorists must remain extra vigilant to navigate these challenges too, as the lack of visible infrastructure heightens risk of crashes.

BADGER AVE/STORY ST INTERSECTION

This intersection is a key connection between neighborhoods and businesses near **downtown Appleton**, but it is widely considered unsafe and difficult to navigate. Pedestrians face significant risks, with community members indicating that drivers ignore walk signals. Blocked bike lanes during school bus pickups and the complex five-way street layout further contribute to safety hazards. This intersection necessitates special attention to ensure our community's youth accessing the **Boys and Girls Club, Wilson Middle School, and Appleton West High School** can travel to these destinations comfortably, efficiently, and safely.

**BADGER AVE/
STORY ST AND
COLLEGE AVENUE
INTERSECTION**



SAFETY CONCERNS AT INTERSECTIONS

Community feedback underscores challenges at intersections along **College Avenue**, where pedestrians and motorists alike face dangerous conditions. Pedestrians struggle to cross **College Avenue** due to missing crosswalks and wide roadways, often leaving them stranded in the middle of the street without a safe refuge island. Highlighting the risks for vulnerable groups, one resident shared, ***"It's dangerous having kids cross Badger... many close calls this year."***

Motorists also encounter serious issues. A daily commuter on **Badger Avenue** reported, ***"I travel Badger every morning for work and almost get into an accident every single day on my motorcycle and even my truck because people turn without looking."*** Navigation is further complicated by confusing layouts, especially at intersections with frontage roads, which one resident described as ***"confusing/dangerous."*** Traffic patterns add to the frustration, with a community member noting, ***"The Westhill/Kools intersection is horrendous for nearly two-thirds of the day,"*** while another called out ***"frustrating traffic congestion and wacky traffic patterns and intersections."***

Turning at major intersections is particularly challenging. One driver explained, ***"Every day I plan out my drive to work to avoid a left-hand turn. It is so hard to see traffic coming when someone else is in the turn lane."*** Residents emphasized the need for better traffic flow, with one suggesting, there are ***"Not enough green arrow lights at intersections; they should be at all intersections and be long enough to allow multiple cars to turn off College to side streets, especially at Bluemound and Lynndale."***

Local law enforcement echoes these concerns, noting that poor intersection design contributes to speeding and crashes.

A SAFER FUTURE: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

In response to intersection challenges, the community has proposed a range of solutions to enhance both traffic flow and safety including the installation of crosswalks, roundabouts, and pedestrian bridges or tunnels at high-volume intersections. Some recommend installing flashing beacons, traffic lights with countdown timers, and audible signals to assist pedestrians crossing the corridor. Motorists indicated they would benefit from better-timed traffic signals and improved turning opportunities.

CORRIDOR-WIDE FEATURES OF CONCERN

FRONTAGE ROADS

Frontage roads are lower-volume roadways that run parallel to highways, like **College Avenue**, to connect properties that the highway would otherwise block or limit access to. Along both sides of **College Avenue**, frontage roads (called College Avenue Service Roads) stretch between **I-41** and the viaduct. The community relies on these local roads to access businesses and to avoid direct travel on **College Avenue**. People have mixed feelings about these roads: some say they are confusing and cause disorientation while others think they make travel more efficient and safe.

The current setup isn't perfect, and feedback shows many community members are open to changes—or even getting rid of the frontage roads—if a new plan could work better.

Redevelopment plans could evaluate the reconfiguration of lanes and intersections, the creation of shared access easements, and the development of back roads/alleys so that if frontage roads are removed, properties don't lose access. Plans should also study parking impacts, as some of these frontage roads accommodate on-street parking. If analysis proves some frontage roads are not needed, that space could be repurposed for walking and biking paths, public spaces, or landscaped areas.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The current infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists along **College Avenue** requires significant improvement. Bike paths and sidewalks are missing and fragmented, and the few bike lanes present lack proper visibility. Community members have cited the need to walk in or too close to vehicular lanes or even in ditches and grassy areas along the corridor to get to their destinations.

Transit infrastructure is another key component of active transportation, yet many transit stops along the corridor offer minimal amenities. Many are not ADA accessible and lack shelter from the elements, making waiting for the bus uncomfortable and inconvenient. The public desires enhanced service, including extended hours, more frequent bus stops, and covered bus shelters to improve comfort and accessibility.



**FRONTAGE ROADS
ON COLLEGE AVE**

This image depicts frontage roads running parallel to drainage ditches on both sides of College Avenue. These local roads occupy a substantial portion of the corridor's expansive right-of-way.



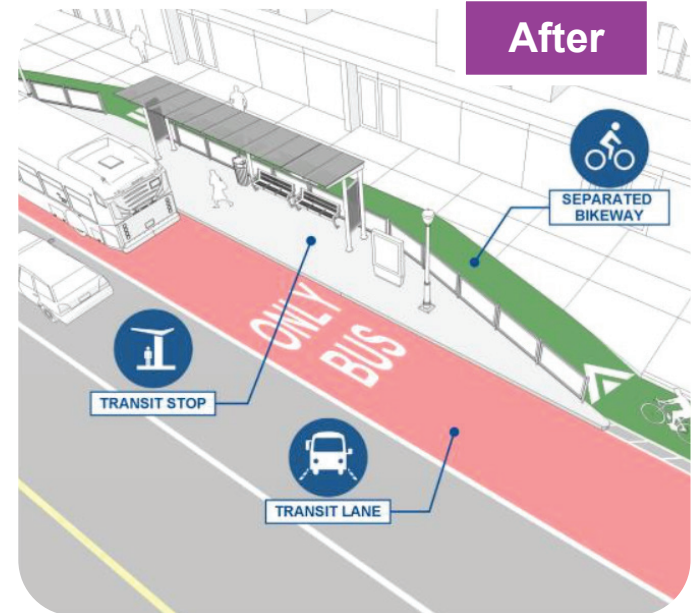
Examples of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure that address transportation safety and accessibility concerns.



Sources: Scape Studio, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus Streetscape. SF Better Streets, Medians and Islands. Domus, In California, a Lizard-Inspired Pedestrian Bridge (2024, May 16). KPAX News, Pedestrian Underpass in Whitefish Officially Opens to the Public (2025, March 27), Sean Wells/MTN News.



Examples of transit infrastructure that address transportation safety and accessibility concerns.



Source: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), Transit Streets Design. Urban Solar Corp (OCTA 496SC project). Mass Transit Magazine (MATA real-time information displays). WMaryland (Local company wants to bring your bus stop alive).

ELEMENT

2

SHAPING OUR FUTURE DEFINING OUR ROOTS

Stakeholders expressed a desire to build a distinct identity for College Avenue that celebrates local culture and the community's future. This element focuses on the creation of a visually unified space through branding and urban beautification initiatives. Improvements aim to foster community pride and to create a welcoming, memorable entrance to the Fox Cities, strengthening the connection between local residents and the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Streetscape example displaying urban design and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.



Source: YouAreCurrent.com, 2022. Renderings by MKSK.

- 1 **Strengthen Community Partnerships.** Collaborate with local businesses, artists, and neighborhood organizations to ensure broad support and input when implementing identity-building initiatives.
- 2 **Prepare Streetscape Design Guidelines.** Develop a plan to enhance the corridor's physical elements considering landscaping, lighting, pavement materials, pedestrian amenities, and traffic features. Designs should strive to unify College Avenue's aesthetic as it transitions from Grand Chute to downtown Appleton.
- 3 **Implement Streetscape Guidelines.** After establishing streetscape guidelines, begin to implement its features as reconstruction of the corridor progresses.
- 4 **Create Interactive Wayfinding Features.** Develop artistic maps, signage, or digital kiosks to guide visitors while highlighting key destinations along or near College Avenue.
- 5 **Launch a Public Art Program.** Introduce a public arts initiative to feature murals, sculptures, illuminated or LED features, and interactive art pieces. Engage local artists to highlight the community's talent while establishing visually impactful landmarks along the entire corridor.

- Move utility lines underground to reduce clutter.
- Add trees, greenery, and planters to make the area more inviting and visually appealing, while ensuring clear sightlines to maintain safety and prevent hiding spots.
- Incorporate creative crosswalks and pavement designs to improve pedestrian visibility and to contribute to the corridor's visual appeal.
- Add street lighting, benches, bike racks, and other functional elements that align with College Avenue's overall design theme, providing both utility and aesthetic consistency.

CREATING A GATEWAY TO THE FOX CITIES

*College Avenue is more than just a roadway; it's an opportunity to highlight the story of the **Fox Cities** and create a memorable experience for residents and visitors.*

Community members emphasize the importance of transforming College Avenue into a vibrant gateway to the Fox Cities. Potential improvements include coordinated wayfinding signage, decorative hardscape, light poles with banners, public art, landscaped medians, and uniform street furnishings such as benches and bike racks. These enhancements would help to create a cohesive and polished appearance for College Avenue, ensuring the corridor becomes a welcoming and recognizable entry point for visitors arriving via I-41 or the Appleton International Airport.

This word cloud below reveals the community's top adjectives to describe their vision for public art along W College Avenue.





Source: (Top left) LaCrosse mural painted by Someday Studios and Chase Gentry, from Connect by Color Public Art Concept and (Top right and bottom) Dean Wydeven, from Route 125 Public Art Concept.



Source (Numbered above): 1. Tulip Prenez Place, ADHOC architectes, from INT Design (temporary installation), 2. Photo by Dean Wydeven (local bus stop on Mutual Way), 3. Handspring Design, External Works Index. (hoop seating for Children's Garden, Kew), 4. Photo by Ethan Kaplan Photography, Untitled by Jorge Pardo, (installation for Van Ness BRT Project.), 5. Image from Art and Architecture San Francisco — Helen Willis Park (light installation), 6. Eastgate, DeWitt Godfrey (gateway structure) and 7. Create_with_sage (painted crosswalk in Pulaski, WI).

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Community input helped shape the following principles to steer public art decision-making along College Avenue.



Use vibrant colors and lighting to create an uplifting, day-to-night atmosphere.



Create approachable, inclusive art that resonates across demographics.



Incorporate diverse art forms—sculptures, murals, interactive pieces, and lighting—for a rich, immersive experience.



Establish an identity rooted in the Fox Cities' history, culture, and geography, resonating as a fresh yet familiar destination.



Integrate native plants, water, and greenery to complement the art and enhance natural beauty.



Ensure visual harmony with Appleton downtown aesthetics to enable a smooth transition between districts.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Implement art that positions the corridor as a cultural destination.



Art should be durable, safe, and low-maintenance.



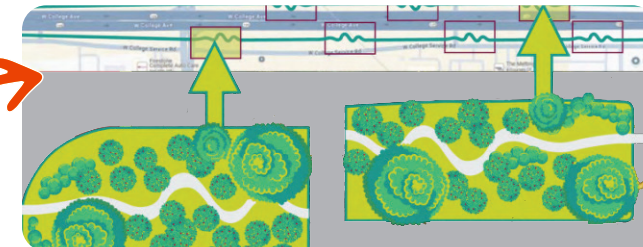
Prioritize hiring local artists.



Involve the public in reviewing and shaping final art choices.



Balance spending to prioritize essential improvements while supporting art as a complimentary element.



ELEMENT 3

BUILDING GREAT PLACES INTEGRATING GREEN SPACES



This section emphasizes the addition of greenspaces, greenways, tree-lined medians, and eco-friendly infrastructure, offering spaces for relaxation and outdoor enjoyment while addressing stormwater management needs. These enhancements will foster inviting green areas that boost public health, create venues for community gatherings, and promote long-term sustainability in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Example of streetscape design, featuring enhanced greenery.



Source: Oasis Designs, Mathura Road Project.

- 1 Develop a Multi-modal Greenway.** Construct a greenway (trail) along College Avenue that provides a safe, accessible route for walking, biking, and other non-motorized travel, connecting neighborhoods, commercial areas, and key destinations.
- 2 Develop Functional and Attractive Public Spaces.** Develop pocket greenspaces or plazas throughout the corridor that offer places for relaxation, social interaction, and community events. Thoughtfully integrate public spaces with the greenway design.
- 3 Incorporate Low-Maintenance, Native Landscaping.** Integrate native plants, trees, and sustainable landscaping to reduce maintenance costs, enhance the area's beauty, support local ecosystems, and create a natural feel within the urban environment.
- 4 Consider Stormwater Infrastructure.** Improve stormwater facilities where needed, designing them with landscaping elements so they blend seamlessly into the environment while managing runoff effectively.



Ensure the greenway links to existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure, providing safe access to nearby schools and community hubs, with a focus on connections to north-south active transportation routes and applicable transit stops.





PUBLIC SPACES

Community feedback highlighted an interest in transforming College Avenue into a welcoming space where people can gather and enjoy nature within the urban environment. Many expressed a preference for pedestrian walkways and boardwalks that provide access to local businesses, interspersed with small parks, greenspaces, or plazas where people can relax and socialize.

Interest in the development of a multi-modal greenway (e.g., boardwalk or trail) was highlighted in community engagement findings and was envisioned in other adopted community plans. Extending west to east, this greenway (trail) could serve as a central feature of the corridor. It could offer a safe route for walking, biking, and other non-motorized travel, and could help to connect neighborhoods, commercial areas, and key destinations.



LANDSCAPING WITH PURPOSE

Many desire improved landscaping to beautify College Avenue. People favored shaded areas with street trees, flowerbeds, planters, green medians, and native plantings that support the local ecosystem. Several individuals stressed the importance of keeping landscaping maintenance costs low. Landscaping treatments could prioritize durable, low-maintenance plants and designs, ensuring these spaces remain attractive and functional over time.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Few like the appearance of the current drainage ditches along College Avenue, with some community members expressing a desire for them to be replaced by curb and gutter systems. To improve the area's drainage and overall environmental impact, stormwater management should be a key focus in the redesign of College Avenue. Features like permeable pavement and rain gardens could be integrated into landscaping plans to manage runoff, reduce flooding, and improve water quality, all while making the area more attractive and environmentally friendly.

Sources: Behan Planning Associates, Freeman's Bridge Redevelopment Project. Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects, The Circle – Uptown Normal. Architoric. Gruen Associates, Rosemead - Public Park Design.

ELEMENT 4

SPARKING GROWTH TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

This element focuses on catalyzing private investment and transforming underutilized spaces into places with thriving businesses, housing, and community activities. Improvements will energize the area, boost the local economy, and create a lively, mixed-use environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Example of a well-designed urban area that emphasizes pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and integration with surrounding land uses.



Source: Congress for the New Urbanism. (n.d.). Harvey Street, Michigan.

- 1 Promote Strategic Growth.** Encourage development in the College Avenue project area by supporting the redevelopment of underutilized properties.
- 2 Enhance Urban Form.** Enrich the visual character of the area through unified development standards coordinated between the Town of Grand Chute and the City of Appleton. Ensure buildings are well maintained and visually appealing, and that business signage is uniform and limits visual clutter.
- 3 Mitigate Displacement Risk.** Help safeguard residents and businesses from displacement by offering programs such as technical support for legacy businesses, weatherization assistance to reduce costs for low-income households, and targeted aid to expand business/home ownership opportunities that build generational wealth.
- 4 Involve the Community in Planning and Community Development.** Ask residents and local businesses to help shape redevelopment plans to ensure changes in the area continue to reflect the community's needs. Create and support existing neighborhood associations to empower locals to become long-term stewards of the corridor.
- 5 Activate the District.** Explore mechanisms and use of policy tools to support redevelopment, including tax increment financing districts, public-private partnerships, façade and business improvement grants, density bonuses, and expedited permitting approvals.

- Provide opportunities for higher-density, mixed-uses along the corridor and near transit stops.
- Update zoning rules to allow taller buildings and flexible mixed-use spaces, to reduce parking requirements near transit, and to offer density bonuses for affordable housing.



Urban Form and Community Appearance

While there are many examples of quality development along College Avenue, the community has expressed concerns about the area's overarching appearance. Many have commented on unattractive properties, areas that appear neglected, inconsistent signage, and limited landscaping. The community feels that these issues create a sense of disinvestment and make the area less inviting. Community feedback emphasized the importance of improving the visual coherence of the corridor through better design and more consistent aesthetics. Enhancing urban form will foster community pride and attract more visitors, ultimately boosting the area's economy and encouraging further development.

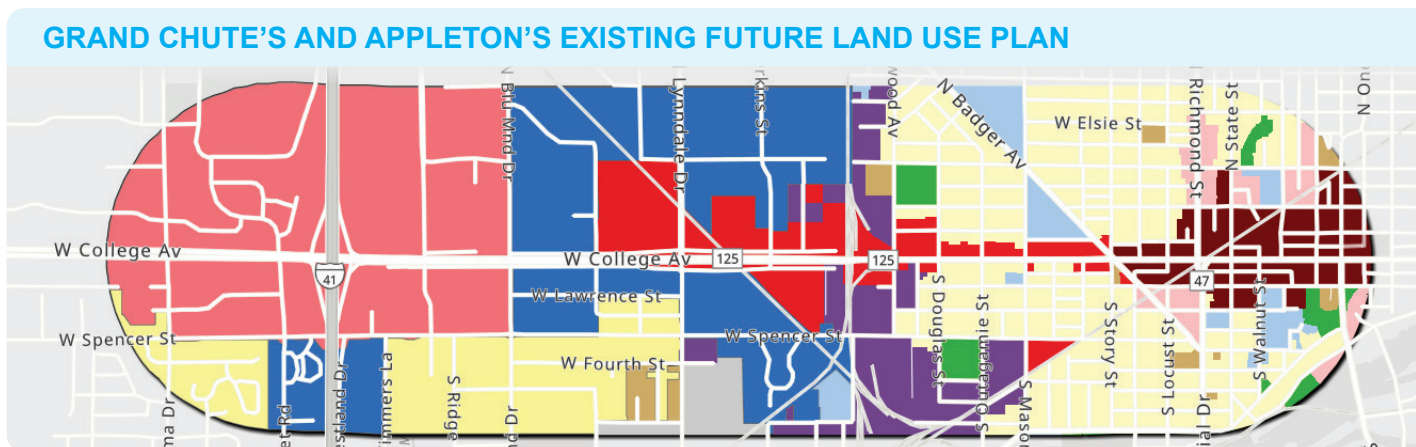
Community Stability During Times of Growth

The project area is home to many lower-income residents and local businesses, making it vulnerable to the impacts of rapid development. As public and private investments drive growth and revitalization, rising rents could displace existing residents and businesses. Fostering growth that boosts outcomes and upward mobility for locals is critical. Initiatives to reduce the risk of displacement should be put in place sooner rather than later. Acting early, instead of treating these as an afterthought, will ensure development strengthens the community without leaving its current members behind.

Community members and stakeholders expressed a desire to stay informed and involved in shaping the project. As development progresses, the project team will continue engaging with residents, neighborhood associations, and community groups to keep a pulse on their needs, wants, and concerns.

Building a Balanced Land Use Framework

This project envisions the creation of a land use plan that encourages investment, improves the area's urban form, and meets the community's needs. Community feedback has shown interest in townhomes, moderate-sized multifamily housing, and mixed-use developments that combine housing and commercial spaces. Additional land use priorities for the area include affordable housing, entertainment venues, family-friendly businesses, restaurants (including fine dining and coffee shops), medical facilities, and retail spaces. There was also a strong desire for supporting locally-owned businesses, which can help to build a more unique, commercial identity for the corridor.



Since College Avenue crosses both the Town of Grand Chute and the City of Appleton, it is important for both jurisdictions to work together to create clear, consistent land use policies and zoning rules. This will make it easier for developers to build-out a more unified and well-defined district.

REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

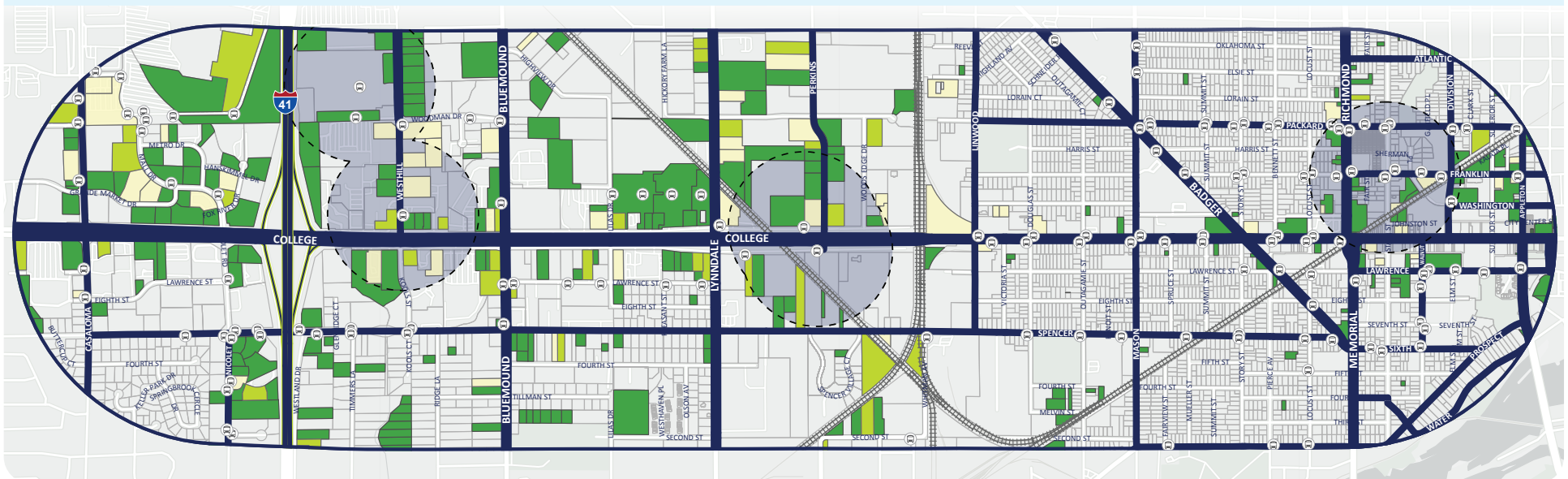
To bring the land use framework to life, implementation efforts should focus on redeveloping and revitalizing catalyst areas along and near College Avenue through targeted infill efforts. This approach harnesses the potential of underutilized spaces, breathes new life into vacant or outdated sites, and makes smart use of existing infrastructure. Priority attention could be spent on areas within a 1/4-mile radius of Valley Transit's busiest bus stops, as illustrated on the map below. By zeroing in on these high-potential zones with strong transit access, we can transform the corridor incrementally—filling key gaps without upending its urban fabric—while fostering a more connected, vibrant community.

Commercial, institutional, and residential assets anchor College Avenue, but the project area falls short of its full promise. Parking lots, disjointed pedestrian pathways, and an auto-centric design dominate the landscape, discouraging visitors from lingering or exploring beyond

their immediate destinations. This car-first layout not only hampers connectivity but also undermines the area's potential as a thriving, people-focused destination. Redevelopment through infill offers a chance to rethink this dynamic, shifting the focus from accommodating vehicles to creating a cohesive, inviting place that prioritizes human experience.

Strategic infill and redevelopment in catalyst areas can ignite broader change by introducing higher-density, mixed-use developments that blend housing, retail, and community spaces. When paired with thoughtful transportation planning, these projects can attract investment, draw more people into the corridor, and spark a ripple effect of economic and social vitality. Research backs this up: walkable, amenity-rich areas encourage visitors to visit multiple businesses, stay longer, and spend more money, boosting local economies. By targeting key sites for transformation, we can turn underused lots into vibrant hubs that serve as anchors for the entire corridor.

COLLEGE AVENUE LAND TO VALUE RATIO & BUS STOP ANALYSIS



LEGEND

Improvement to Land Value Ratio

- High Redevelopment Potential (less than 1.0 ILVR)
- Moderate Redevelopment Potential (1.0 to 1.19 ILVR)
- Potential for Improvement (1.2 to 1.49 ILVR)



Parcel Boundaries



Railroad

1/4 Mile Buffer of Top 5 Most Active Bus Stops



Map Prepared By: Outagamie County Development and Land Services
Source: City of Appleton, Valley Transit, Outagamie County tax assessment roll data (2024) Parcels assessed as tax exempt (X2, X3, X4) are excluded from the Improvement to land value ratio layer.

Disclaimer: The redevelopment potential shown on this map is based on an Improvement to Land Value Ratio (ILVR) analysis conducted for informational and analytical purposes only. This analysis is not intended to reflect the views or intentions of property owners, nor does it imply any judgment about the condition or value of individual properties. The data presented does not suggest any government pressure or plans to acquire, condemn, or redevelop these properties. Property ownership rights remain fully intact, and this analysis is meant solely as a planning tool to explore potential future opportunities.

THE VISION IS CLEAR:

Reimagine College Avenue as a “walkable loop” where people want to stay, not just pass through.

- + This means designing catalyst areas with pedestrian-friendly features—wider sidewalks, safe crossings, bike lanes, and welcoming public spaces like plazas or pocket parks.
- + These enhancements can stitch together the corridor’s assets, making it easy and enjoyable to move between destinations on foot or by transit.

THE RESULT: A revitalized College Avenue that feels less like a thoroughfare and more like a destination—a *place where visitors and residents alike are inspired to explore, connect, and invest in the community.*

NEXT STEPS: REIMAGINING A NEW AVENUE

The transformation of College Avenue is envisioned as a medium- to long-term effort, requiring thoughtful planning and collaboration at each stage.

Within the next five years, we wish to focus on design and engineering to develop a comprehensive redevelopment plan that includes roadway reconstruction, active transportation infrastructure, landscaping, and stormwater management. We hope to explore potential funding strategies in partnership with WisDOT, whose participation is essential.

Following the design and initial reconstruction of the corridor, efforts to enhance College Avenue's visual identity and sense of place may begin. These efforts would ideally follow the completion of major roadway work to ensure that supporting amenities are integrated with minimal future disruption.

Throughout this process, the A NEW Avenue coalition will prioritize building strong neighborhood partnerships to guide corridor initiatives, community and economic development efforts, and land use planning.

PROJECT STATUS

