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1. Introduction

About Wisconsin Avenue Subarea

Wisconsin Avenue is a major east–west corridor in Appleton, connecting Interstate 41 near the Fox River Mall in the Town of Grand Chute to the Village of Little Chute to the east. This study focuses on the segment of Wisconsin Avenue between Richmond Street and Meade Street.

The subarea is predominantly characterized by commercial retail uses. Key employers and institutions in the subarea include Appvion Operations and St. Thérèse Catholic Parish. Many existing storefronts are oriented toward the street with parking located behind, contributing to a more pedestrian-friendly environment. However, typical auto-oriented buildings are also scattered throughout the area. The presence of multiple travel lanes at high travel speeds poses challenges to creating a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor.



Existing conditions around the Wisconsin Avenue subarea



LEGEND

Study Area

0' 400' 800'

Map of the study area of the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea

PLAN APPLETON Wisconsin Avenue Subarea Plan

3

Key Takeaways from Previous Plans

The 2010–2030 Comprehensive Plan included the Wisconsin Avenue corridor; this plan focuses on a more defined subarea within that geography. Although the plan was adopted fifteen years ago, many of its key takeaways remain relevant today. The current subarea planning effort builds upon these foundational goals, reinforcing strategies that continue to align with community needs and priorities. The following six takeaways remain a focus for the Wisconsin Avenue subarea:

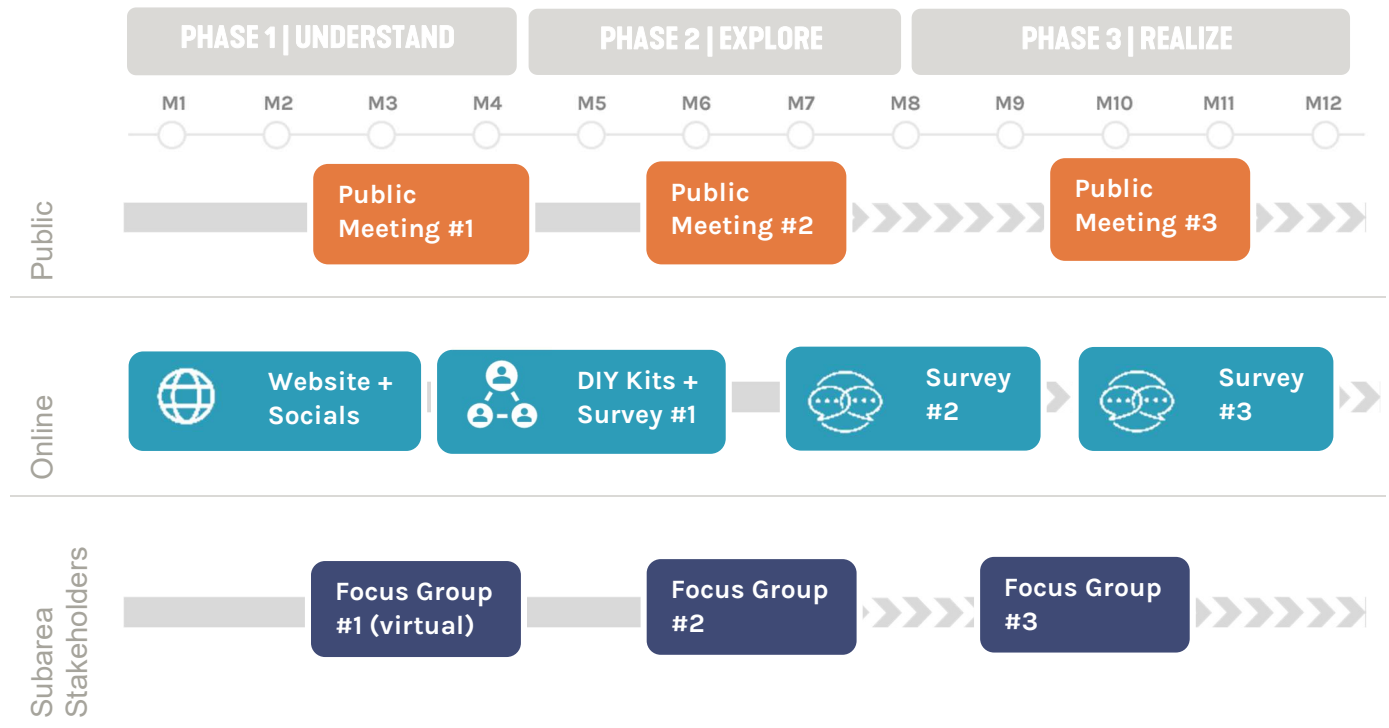
- Enhancing landscaping and streetscape elements
- Promoting mixed-use development
- Redeveloping vacant and underutilized sites
- Encouraging pedestrian-oriented building design
- Supporting transit services
- Promoting sustainable practices



Wisconsin Avenue Existing Conditions - Drone photos taken by City of Appleton in October 2024

Process

Project Timeline and Engagement



Public Meetings

Several in-person meetings were held to engage the public in the subarea planning process. The first public meeting took place on November 19, 2024. Community members were invited to an open house where they could learn more about the project. Stations for each of the three subareas were set up, allowing attendees to share their visions and values for each area.

At the second public workshop, held in March 2025, table exercises invited participants to identify locations for improvement related to the public realm, redevelopment, and mobility.



Online Engagement & DIY Mobile Toolkits

All in-person activities were translated into an online survey to extend outreach and ensure feedback from as many voices as possible.

A mobile toolkit was specifically created during the first phase of engagement to enable individual community groups to discuss and share their visions for the City and its subareas.



Subarea Focus Group Meetings

Subarea focus groups met at key points throughout the planning process to help shape the vision and share concerns for the future of each subarea. The first virtual meeting was held on November 9, 2024, followed by an in-person meeting in March 2025 at the Appleton Public Library. The final focus group meeting to review the plan findings was held in July 2025.



WHAT WE HEARD



Enhance facades and fill in missing teeth

Re-imagine Wisconsin as a food street; draw more local vendors

Streetscape has an opportunity to be more attractive through identity and branding

Calm traffic and include green when redeveloping

More neighborhood events like Bazaar After Dark

Inhospitable due to funneled winds, no trees or shading, or lighting

Make Wisconsin Ave more like College Ave with apartments over businesses, very walkable, small businesses

A summary of comments from the public engagement events

Visitor Trends

The average person visited this subarea

3 times

in 2024.

The number of visitors has increased by 2.1% since 2022



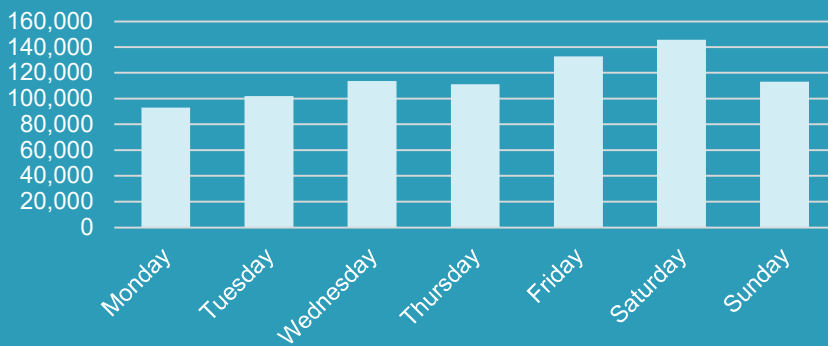
People spent an average of

99 minutes

in the subarea when they visited in 2024 - enough to enjoy a sit-down meal and browse one or two shops.



Wisconsin Ave Subarea
Average Number of Visitors by Day of the Week, 2024



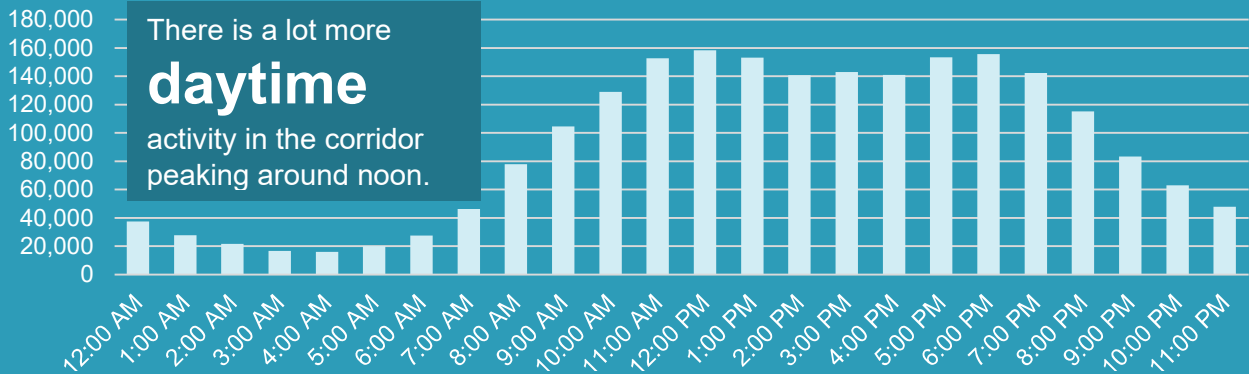
There were over

811,750

visits to this subarea in 2024. Saturday was the most popular day for people to stop by.



Wisconsin Ave Subarea
Average Number of Visitors by Hour of the Day, 2024



There is a lot more

daytime

activity in the corridor peaking around noon.

Source: Visitor data was captured using PlacerAI, which tracks cell phone and spending trends from January 01, 2024 to December 23, 2024. This program counts visits when a mobile device user spends at least 7 to 10 minutes at a specific location. A buffer was applied to only collect records from individuals who live outside the subarea.

2. Goals

The following goals summarize the vision for the Wisconsin Avenue subarea, based on insights gathered through the planning process and community engagement.



See Chapter 3: Development

Development

Encourage redevelopment that increases housing supply and supports mixed-use development.

- Expand housing opportunities and promote redevelopment
- Encourage development that is flexible in response to changing market conditions
- Foster mixed-use and higher density development
- Strengthen community connections and livability with redevelopment
- Support high-quality and cohesive urban design



See Chapter 4: Enhance Mobility

Mobility

Enhance mobility and neighborhood connections.

- Expand and enhance multi-modal transportation options to improve access and mobility for all users
- Strengthen safety and access for all users
- Enhance non-motorized connections to existing neighborhoods
- Apply Complete Streets Design Guide principles to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all modes of transportation



See Chapter 5: Improve Community Character

Character

Improve streetscape and landscaping.

- Strengthen the identity of the public realm to support safety, welcomeness, and environmental stewardship
- Create a more engaging Wisconsin Avenue Subarea streetscape by investing in art, landscaping, and amenities supporting pedestrian comfort and safety
- Declutter the streetscape by implementing design standards for signs, billboards, utilities

Opportunities Map

There are several key development opportunities that were identified through the visioning process as opportunities for redevelopment, new development, or site enhancements to enhance the walkability, vibrancy, and residential opportunities of the area.

1. N. Richmond St. and Wisconsin Ave. | Potential for mixed-use gateway redevelopment
2. N. Clark St. and Wisconsin Ave. | Infill development
3. N. Appleton St. and Wisconsin Ave. | Small scale retail redevelopment
4. N. Oneida St. and Wisconsin Ave. (Former KFC Area) | Vacant building redevelopment
5. St. Thérèse Catholic Parish Area | Mixed-use redevelopment with housing
6. N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave. | Redevelop parking and single-family homes to mixed-use development
7. Redevelopment Opportunities | Potential for redevelopment and infill development
8. North of Appvion Parking Area | Potential for development
9. Appvion Parking South Area | Potential for development



LEGEND



Roads



Existing Buildings



Identified Opportunity Areas



0' 400' 800'

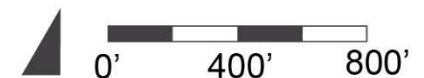
3. Development

Existing Land Use and Character

The Wisconsin Avenue Subarea features a mix of pedestrian-friendly businesses and car-oriented suburban commercial uses. Drive-in restaurants, drive-through ATMs, and other suburban-style businesses are scattered among traditional storefronts that front directly onto Wisconsin Ave. with little or no setback. Just beyond this commercial corridor, the subarea transitions into predominantly single-family residential neighborhoods on both sides of the street. Green space and public spaces are limited within the subarea. The subarea's existing land use typologies are described below and illustrated on the map that follows.



LEGEND



Residential

Character

- Mostly single-family homes with traditional architectural styles.
- Front stoops/porches are typical.

Strategy

Maintain and improve façades. Develop underutilized lots for new housing. New development will increase density along the corridor while providing a thoughtful transition into surrounding residential neighborhoods.



Institutional

Character

- Typically two stories or higher.
- St. Thérèse Catholic Parish is an example of institutional land use within the subarea.
- Most buildings have dedicated parking areas at the front or side of the building. Some have additional parking lots off site.
- The structures generally have large windows with high transparency.

Strategy

Improve the frontage landscape, activate the space during nonpeak hours, and screen parking. Consider complementary uses for underutilized spaces. If developed, place parking in rear.



Pedestrian-oriented Businesses

Character

- 0' or small setback from the street. Often have rear parking.
- Typically, one to two stories.
- Often occupied by local businesses.

Strategy

Improve façades, retain local businesses, improve pedestrian experience with better lighting and landscape features.



Car-oriented Businesses

Character

- Buildings typically have larger setbacks from the street.
- Parking is often located at the front or side of the building.
- Some businesses include drive-through facilities.

Strategy

Enhance frontage landscaping to minimize the impact of auto-oriented uses, helping to screen parking and support the long-term transition to pedestrian-friendly buildings.

Encourage redevelopment with higher-intensity land uses along Wisconsin Avenue that transition to a lower-intensity near adjacent neighborhoods. Improve access management by consolidating driveways and limiting expansive curb cuts.



Vacant Land/ Building/ Parking

Character

- Vacant land or vacant building.
- Often paved and used as parking.

Strategy

Recruit new businesses and redevelop vacant land, building, and underutilized parking for development.

The redevelopment should apply pedestrian-friendly design and activate the street frontage.



Development Character

As most existing buildings along Wisconsin Ave. are commercial establishments, the public has expressed support for introducing more attractions and housing to help establish the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea as a cultural, food, and entertainment destination. The precedent images below illustrate opportunities for medium-density housing and mixed-use development that can support this vision. They highlight opportunities to introduce new housing options, support local businesses, and create safe, walkable corridor with character.

Some areas offer potential for higher-density residential development, which should be designed to transition gradually to adjacent lower-density neighborhoods, maintaining the existing character. Redevelopment also presents an opportunity to support local businesses and incorporate valued community amenities such as gathering places and accessible green space.



Mixed-use Mid-Rise

An active, transparent ground floor brings life to the street, fostering connection between indoor uses and the public realm and introduces higher density.



Mixed-use Low-Rise:

An active, transparent ground floor brings life to the street, fostering connection between indoor uses and the public realm.



Multifamily:

Context-sensitive multifamily housing introduces density to meet housing demand while preserving the character of surrounding single-family neighborhoods.



Neighborhood Commercial:

Small-scale businesses that serve a residential neighborhood's basic needs, reducing the need to travel longer distances by car.



Townhouse:

The scale of townhouse housing blends into the neighborhood fabric, offering more housing without compromising the subarea's identity.



Pedestrian Friendly Streets

Future redevelopment presents opportunities to create pedestrian friendly streets.



Civic Spaces

Accessible and welcoming civic spaces provide opportunities for community gathering, public services, and civic engagement.



Public Green Space

Well-designed public green spaces offer ecological, stormwater infrastructure, and health benefits while enhancing neighborhood livability.

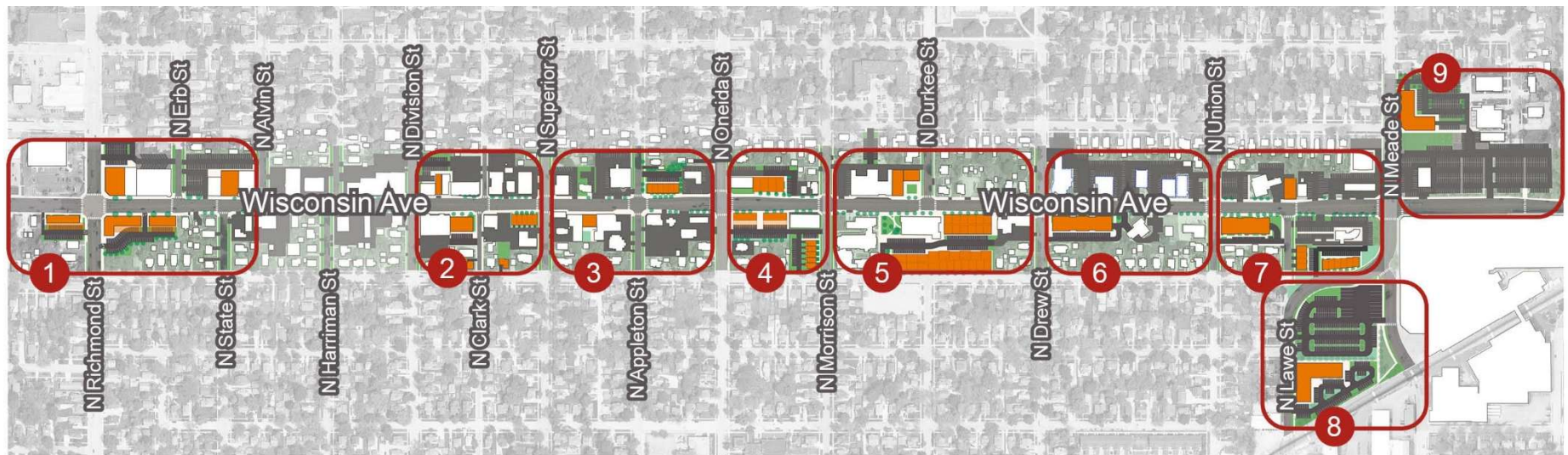


Existing residential properties along Wisconsin Avenue could be converted commercial use in a way that provides a gradual, compatible transition to adjacent residential area.

Development Concepts

Several key sites were identified through the visioning process as opportunities for redevelopment or new development to enhance the walkability, vibrancy, and residential opportunities of the area in both near and long term. These enhancements would improve walkability, increase vibrancy, and expand residential opportunities within the Wisconsin Avenue subarea.

1. **N. Richmond St. and Wisconsin Ave.** | Opportunities for development.
2. **N. Clark St. and Wisconsin Ave.** | Potential for infill and redevelopment
3. **N. Appleton St. and Wisconsin Ave.** | Potential for infill and redevelopment
4. **N. Morrison St. and Wisconsin Ave.** | Potential for redevelopment
5. **St. Thérèse Catholic Parish Community Garden Area** | opportunity for mixed-use development and housing
6. **N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave** | Potential for redevelopment
7. **N. Lawe St. and Wisconsin Ave** | Potential for redevelopment
8. **Appvion Parking South Area** | Potential for mixed-use developments
9. **North of Appvion Parking Area** | Potential for mixed-use developments



LEGEND

- Proposed Buildings
 Existing Buildings



It is important to note that these concepts are **illustrative only** and all future development would require the **willingness and participation of existing property owners**.

Activate the Street and Improve Walkability

N. Richmond St. and Wisconsin Ave. Intersection

The intersection of N. Richmond St. and Wisconsin Ave. serves as a key node within the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea. Strategic redevelopment of this intersection—featuring high-quality architectural design—can transform it into a welcoming and visually appealing entry point.

Enhancing pedestrian safety through improved crossings and high-visibility crosswalks will support walkability and connectivity across the subarea.



N. Richmond St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection potential

Infill Development

Gaps between pedestrian-facing storefronts along Wisconsin Ave. present opportunities for infill development. New buildings could fill these "missing teeth," creating a more continuous and cohesive streetscape that promotes walkability within the subarea. Parking access can be provided at the rear of the buildings, supporting efficient vehicular circulation while maintaining a pedestrian-friendly frontage.



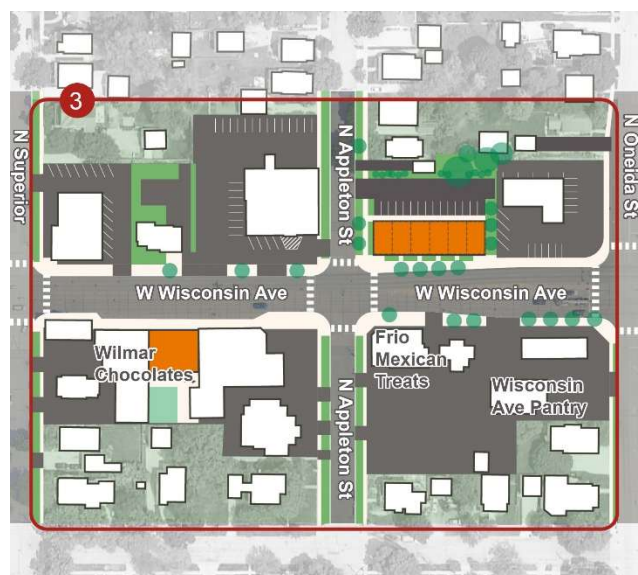
N. Clark St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection existing



N. Clark St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection potential

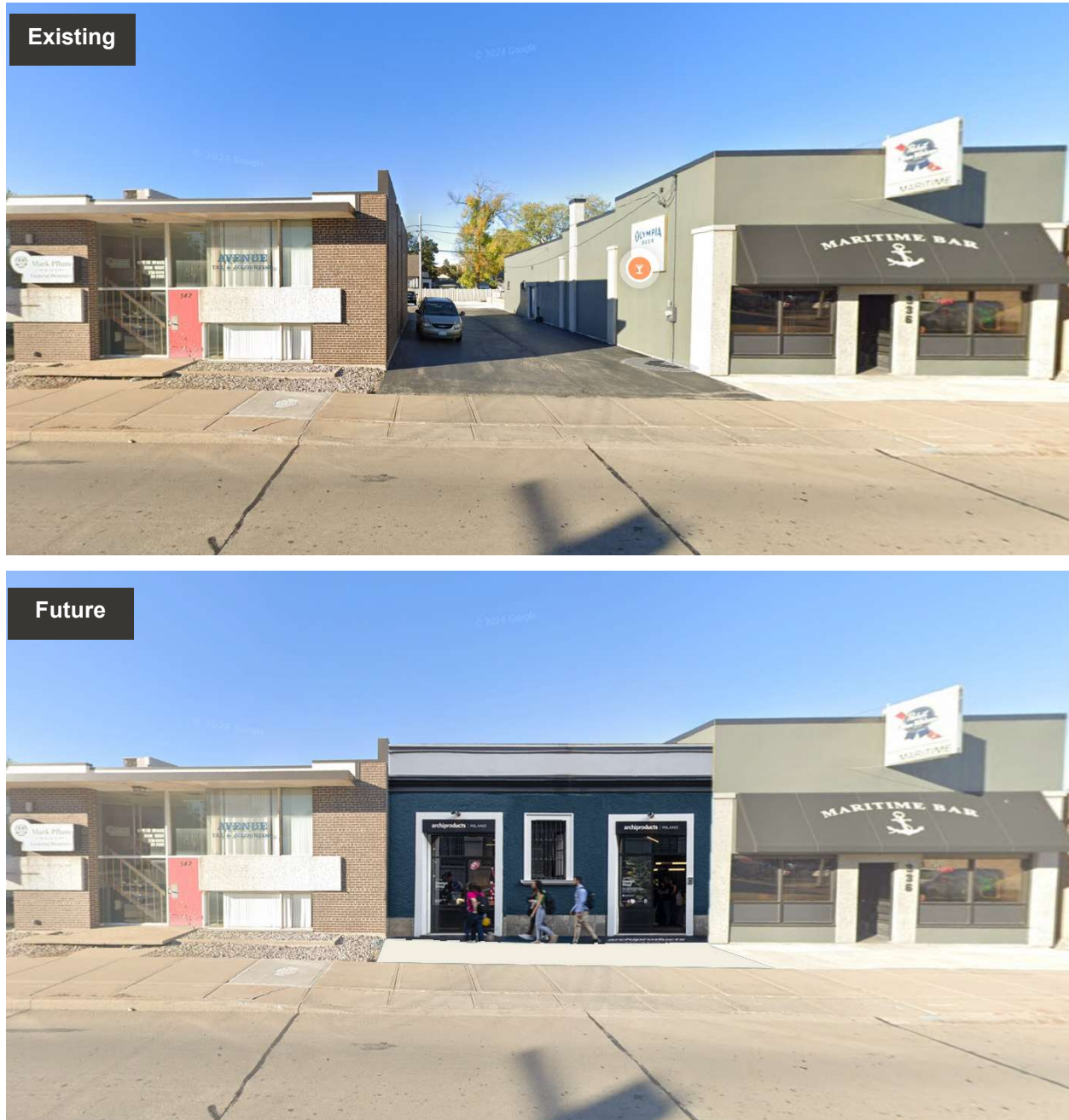


N. Appleton St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection existing



N. Appleton St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection potential

The rendering below illustrates how potential infill development could enhance and activate the street frontage near N. Division St.

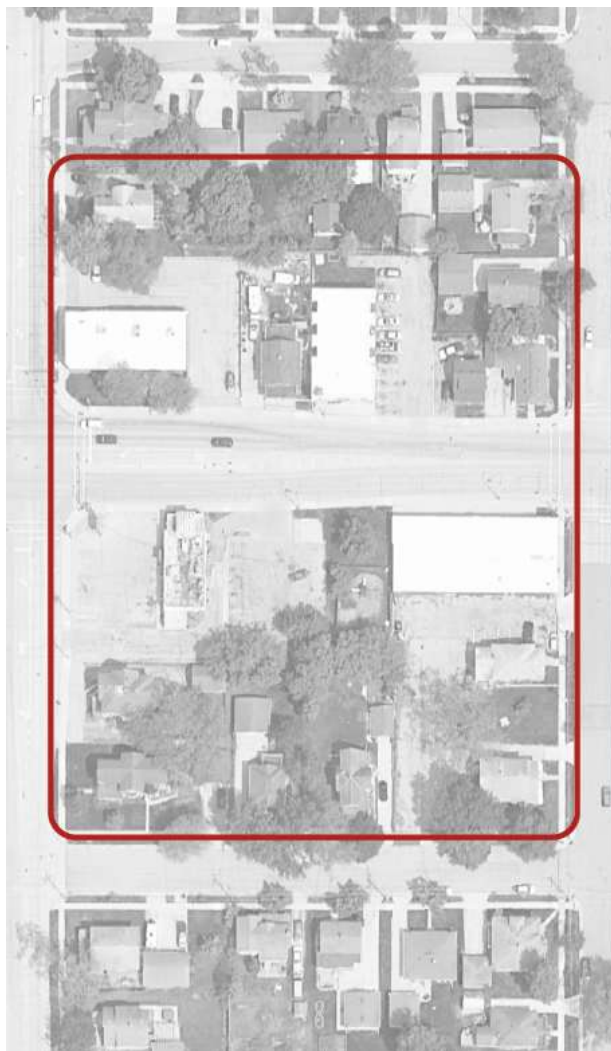


Brownfield Site Redevelopment

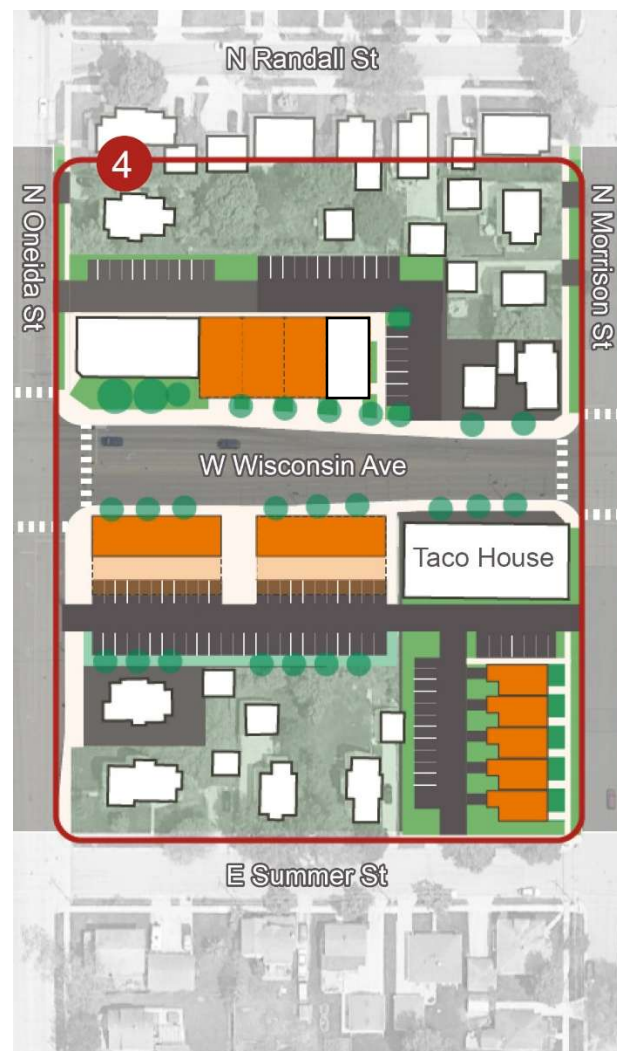
Certain properties, such as laundromats and gas stations, may be classified as brownfield sites due to potential environmental contamination. Property owners and developers are encouraged to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to pursue state and federal funding opportunities—such as EPA Brownfields Grants or programs offered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—to support environmental assessment and redevelopment efforts.

Activate the Building Frontage

Vacant buildings, underutilized sites and parking areas within the subarea present opportunities for redevelopment that can activate building frontages and enhance the public realm. The plans and renderings below illustrate a concept for redeveloping the former KFC site into a more pedestrian-friendly layout, with parking relocated to the rear of the building. Additionally, larger single-family lots in the nearby residential area could be consolidated potentially to support higher-density housing, such as townhomes or small multi-family buildings.



Area near the former KFC site existing



Area near the former KFC site potential

Existing



Future



A pedestrian friendly building frontage and streetscape should be interesting, comfortable, and safe as this example below illustrates.



Interesting	Comfortable	Safe
Building frontages should be pedestrian oriented and feature high transparency to create a more inviting and engaging streetscape.	Shade from street trees and awnings provide comfort for pedestrians. Landscaping adds visual interest.	Walkable streets should feel safe for everyone.

Storefront Improvements

Existing buildings and sites with visually disconnected frontages present opportunities to re-engage the community through improvements through building frontage environment. Potential financial assistance can be received through façade renovation programs, tax increment financing (should a tax increment district be established in the future), and business enhancement grants. These enhancements can provide a renewed sense of identity and foster stronger connection.

Storefront improvements have been shown to support retail retention and attract new businesses. The improvements may include, but are not limited to:

- Building façade enhancements
- Landscape upgrades
- Signage
- Public space amenities such as seating area and benches

Business Enhancement Grant

A storefront façade improvement project can take advantage of funding through the City's Business Enhancement Grant, which allows property owners or tenants to make critical exterior upgrades to buildings that are outdated or have suffered from deferred maintenance. The program is administered by the Appleton Redevelopment Authority (ARA) and is designed to encourage investment in commercial properties throughout the City of Appleton. The grant currently does not have a steady revenue stream. The plan recommends that the City promote and explore ways to establish the grant as a consistent resource for businesses.



The relationship between the building edge on private property and the sidewalk or amenity zone in the public right-of-way plays a critical role in shaping the character, comfort, and functionality of the public realm.

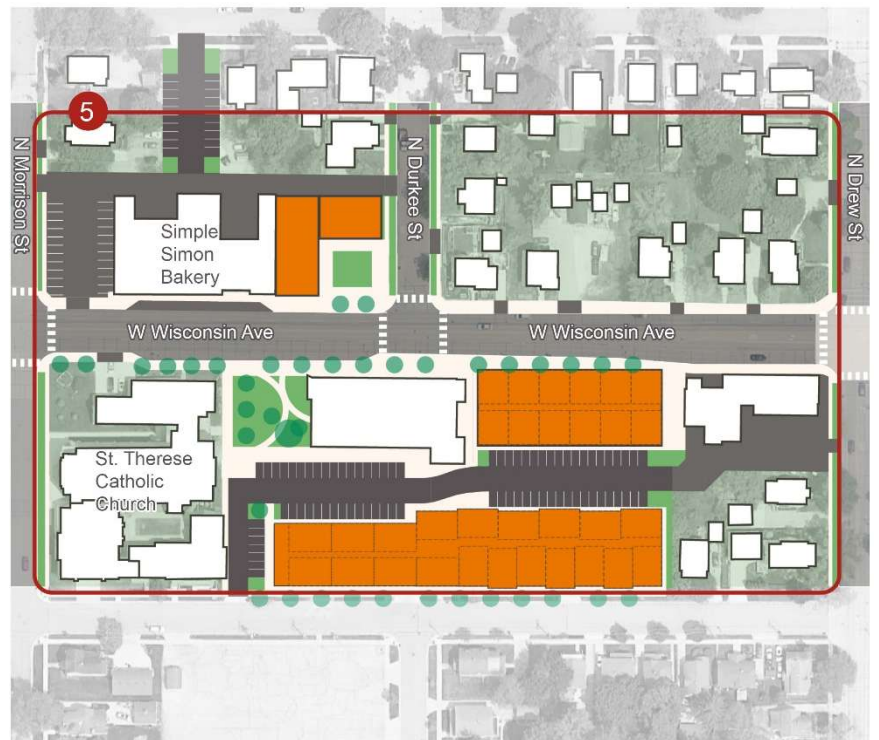
Expand Housing and Mixed-use Development

St. Thérèse Catholic Parish Area

The community garden fronting Wisconsin Avenue and the surface parking behind is owned by St. Thérèse Catholic Parish. Previously zoned as Public Institutional, the Parish requested a rezoning of the site in 2023 to C-1 Neighborhood Mixed-Use District. This zoning change enables the potential for multi-family and mixed-use development. Given the growing housing demand in the City of Appleton, redevelopment of this property could expand housing options and enhance the vibrancy of the subarea. With thoughtful design, the site could incorporate a community garden with potential green space that supports social gatherings and neighborhood interaction. This would attract more foot traffic and establish a destination for residents.



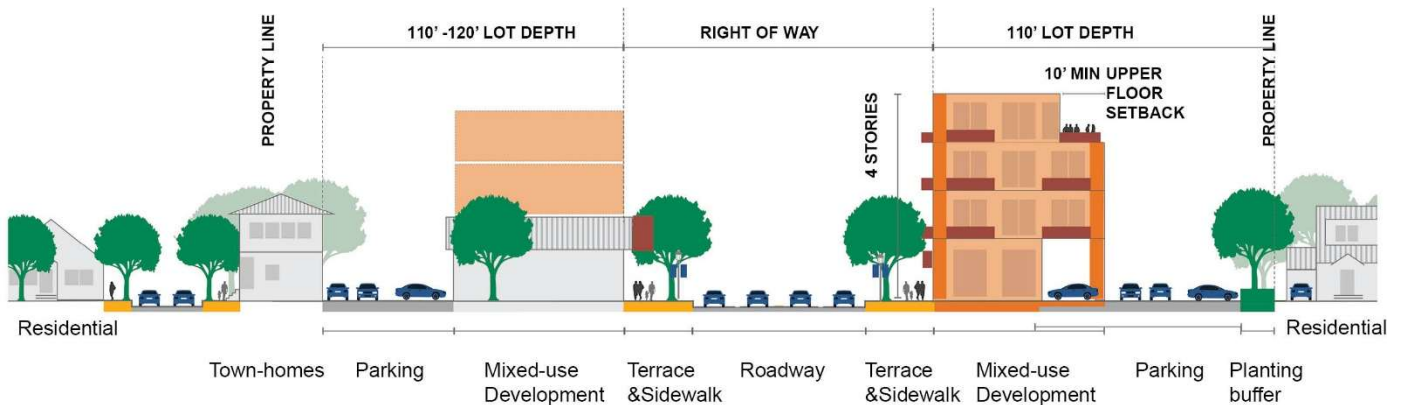
St. Thérèse Catholic Parish Area existing



St. Thérèse Catholic Parish Area potential

Transition from Mixed-use Development

New mixed-use developments should be thoughtfully designed to respect the existing neighborhood and transition gradually to lower-density residential areas. This approach maintains the existing neighborhood character while accommodating new growth. Landscaping, screening, and parking can work as a buffer between the development and neighbors.



N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave. Area

The underutilized parking lot and several existing single-family housing in poor condition near N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave. intersection could be potentially consolidated to support a mixed-used development fronting the Wisconsin Ave., with parking placed at the rear to promote a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape.



N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave. area existing



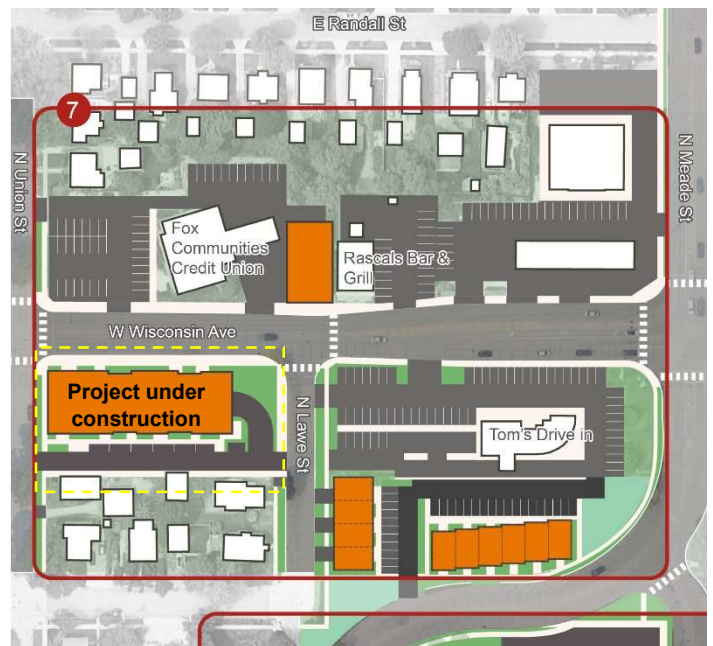
N. Drew St. and Wisconsin Ave. area potential

Redevelop the Auto-Oriented Businesses

603 E. Wisconsin Ave. was previously used as trailer parts and service shop. The large surface parking is visually unappealing and does not contribute to the overall character of the subarea. Construction is underway to redevelop the site into a new workforce housing development that includes some income-restricted units. The adjacent parcel, currently operating as an auto repair shop, also presents a potential redevelopment opportunity. Transforming this site would support mixed-use development, expand housing options, and improve the overall visual appearance of the area.



N. Lawe St. and E. Wisconsin Ave. area existing



N. Lawe St. and E. Wisconsin Ave. area potential

Appvion Operations Area

There are several large surface parking areas near Appvion Operations Inc. The area south of Wisconsin Ave. currently serves both as staff parking and maneuvering space for semi-trucks. While a portion of the parking area could be preserved for the operational needs of Appvion, the remaining area presents an opportunity for new development. This could include housing and services that support both Appvion staff and the general public, with active frontage along N. Lawe and E. Summer Streets. Parking and green space could be strategically placed to buffer the potential development from the adjacent railway.

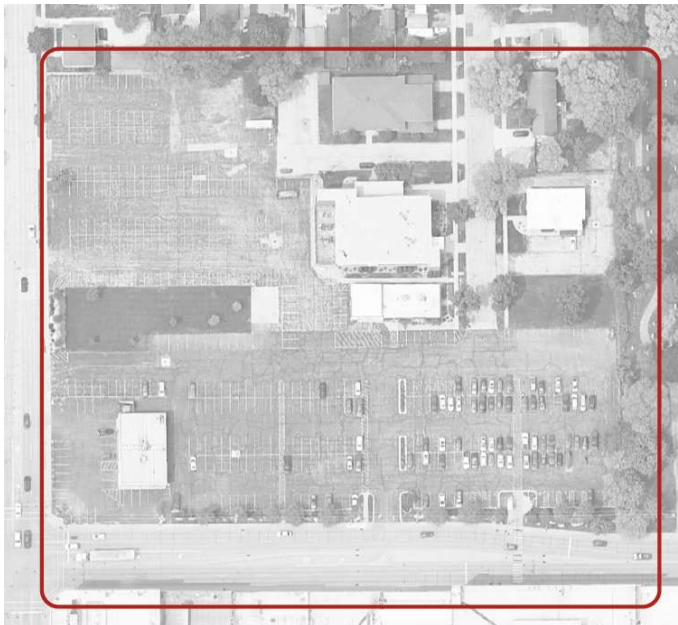


Parking area on the Southwest side of Appvion existing



Parking area on the Southwest side of Appvion potential

North of Wisconsin Ave., beyond the existing Appvion staff parking, lies another large surface lot. This area could accommodate a new building fronting North Meade Street, with rear parking to support a more pedestrian-oriented design. Both developments north and south would contribute to improving the overall character and functionality of the subarea.



Parking area on the north side of Appvion existing



Parking area on the north side of Appvion potential



4. Enhance Mobility

While Wisconsin Ave. is a major transportation roadway connecting multiple destinations in Appleton, the subarea is also a destination itself: places where people live and work, attend school, church, and shop. While accommodating vehicular traffic is important, the future design of the subarea must also be sensitive to residential context and the desire for neighbors to move around the subarea in other ways.

Strengthen Neighborhood Connections

Walking, biking, and transit are interconnected components of a strong, people-centered transportation network. A well-designed system of non-motorized facilities—including sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and safe street crossings—ensures that residents and visitors can travel to and between key destinations within the subarea without relying solely on private vehicles. Enhancing these connections supports not only mobility, but also economic opportunity, sustainability, and community health.

Transit Access and Infrastructure

Improving access to and from transit services is critical to creating a more inclusive and reliable transportation system. Bus stops along Wisconsin Ave. are located close to the roadway, where fast-moving traffic can pose safety concerns and create an uncomfortable experience for riders. Future improvements should include the addition of shelters, seating, and clear signage to enhance both comfort and visibility. Higher-density development and improved bike and pedestrian facilities could potentially increase ridership, which may lead to expanded transit service and improved accessibility for residents who rely on public transportation during non-standard hours.

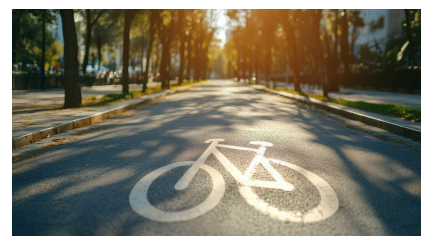


Bus stop seating example

Expanding Pedestrian Access

To strengthen neighborhood connectivity, direct and safe pedestrian routes must be prioritized—especially between residential areas and key destinations such as grocery stores, schools, parks, and community centers.

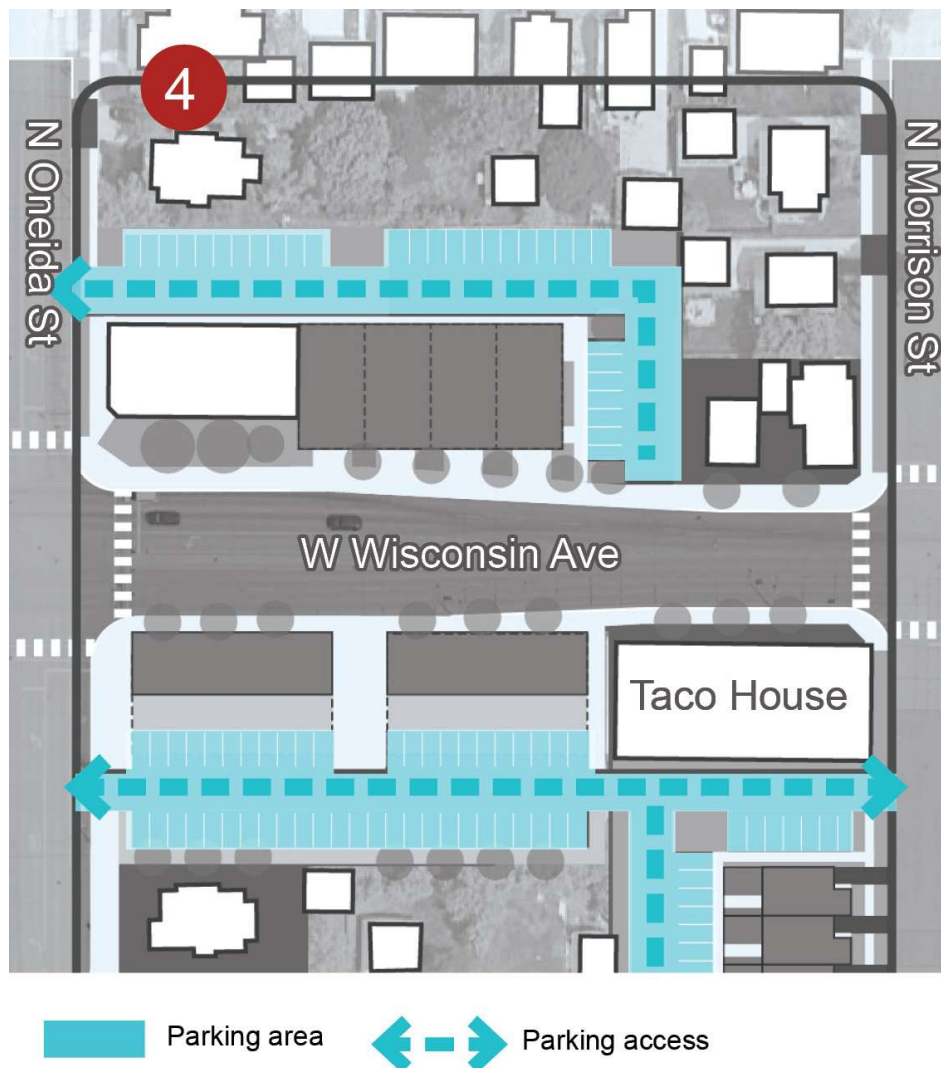
Currently, there is no dedicated bicycle infrastructure along Wisconsin Ave. Future bike lanes on N. Oneida St. could improve connectivity between the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea and the Richmond–Northland Subarea. Lawe Street is scheduled for reconstruction in 2026, which will include the addition of bike lanes. N. Drew St. currently has bike lanes south of Wisconsin Ave., but they terminate at the intersection. Extending these lanes north of Wisconsin Ave would provide a direct connection to Erb Park and Kaleidoscope Academy Middle School. Neighborhood streets can be more bike-friendly through the installation of signage and pavement markings that encourage cyclists to use these streets and alert drivers that bicycles are permitted to take the full lane. These improvements would help create a safer, more connected environment for cyclists of all ages and abilities.



Some neighborhood streets should allow bike to use the whole lane

Shared Parking Access

Many businesses along Wisconsin Ave. currently maintain independent vehicular access points. Implementing shared parking facilities and consolidated access can reduce the number of curb cuts, improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow, and potentially increase the overall parking capacity through more efficient layout and design. The plan below illustrates a potential redevelopment concept for the former KFC site, featuring shared parking and improved access to support a more cohesive and pedestrian-friendly environment.



Complete Streets Design Guide

Complete Streets are multi-faceted and holistic streets that support multimodal transportation, active commerce, and vibrant communities.

The City enacted the Complete Streets Design Guide in 2024. The design guide is used to support City of Appleton staff in identifying and implementing complete street design solutions from initial concept through final engineering as well as retrofitting existing facilities.

Tactical Improvements

Tactical improvements are short-term and low-cost quick build projects used to enhance mobility. Common strategies include repainting, signage, plastic curbs, planters, boulders, and barriers. The community can test ideas such as lane reductions, new bike lanes, or temporary buffers on streets before making permanent investments.

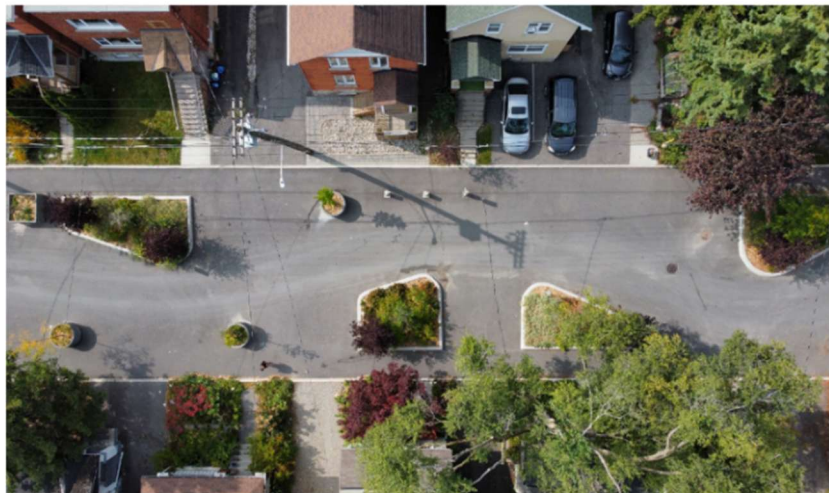


Image credit: Appleton Complete Streets Design Guide

Long-Term Improvements

Traffic calming retrofit for arterial streets emphasizes reducing vehicular lanes and widths, providing dedicated facilities for all modes of transportation, and creating shorter and protected crossings for pedestrians across the arterial.

Key elements may include lanes reconfiguration, medians, curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, protected bike lanes, and turning restrictions.

The community had voiced a strong desire to make the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea more walkable in the future including stronger connections between neighborhoods, improved sidewalks, and shade trees. A lot of the changes would require the reconfiguration of the street to allocate more spaces to walking and biking facilities.

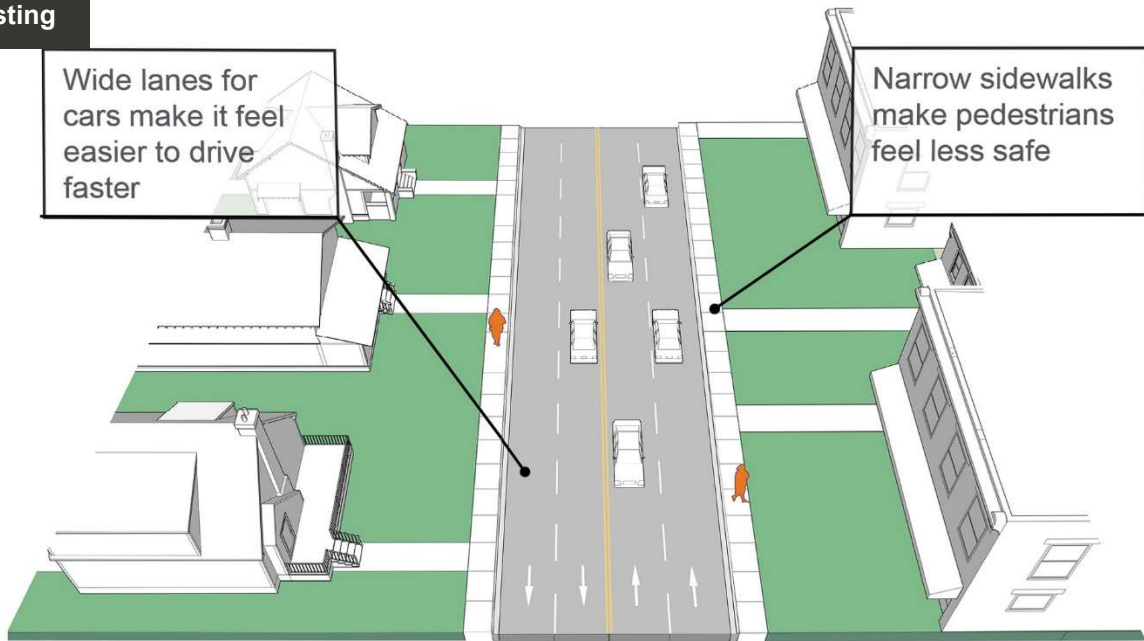
As a planning-level study, these recommendations are high-level in nature and intended to set the desired direction and nature of improvements with public engagement. The exact road configuration and details for Wisconsin Ave. design will require further study. Furthermore, the roadways designation as a state highway requires collaboration with the State Department of Transportation. Future studies should consider:

- Reduction in pavement width
- Driving lane width reduction
- Evaluate facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Provide landscaped terrace with street trees or other plantings



Wider sidewalks and on-street parking on College Avenue

Existing



Future

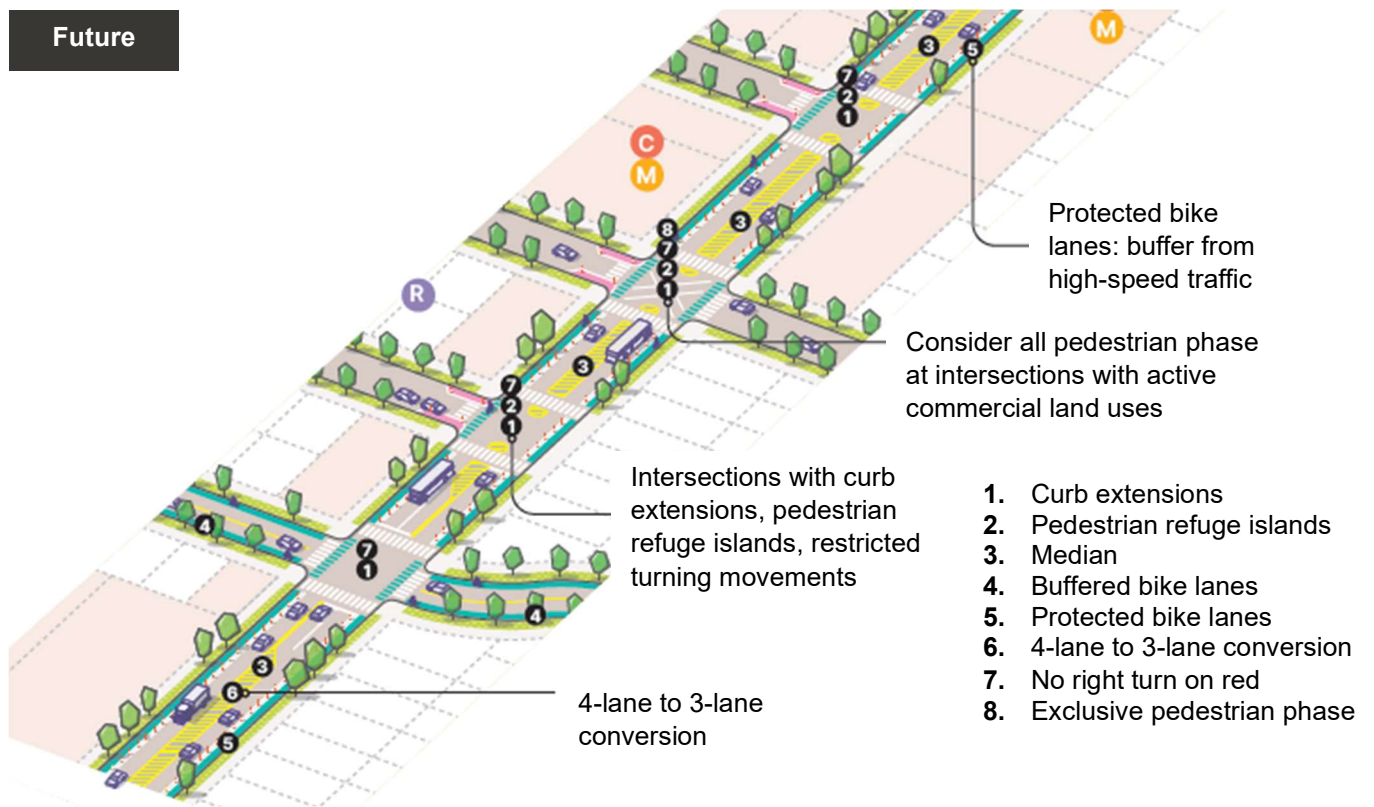
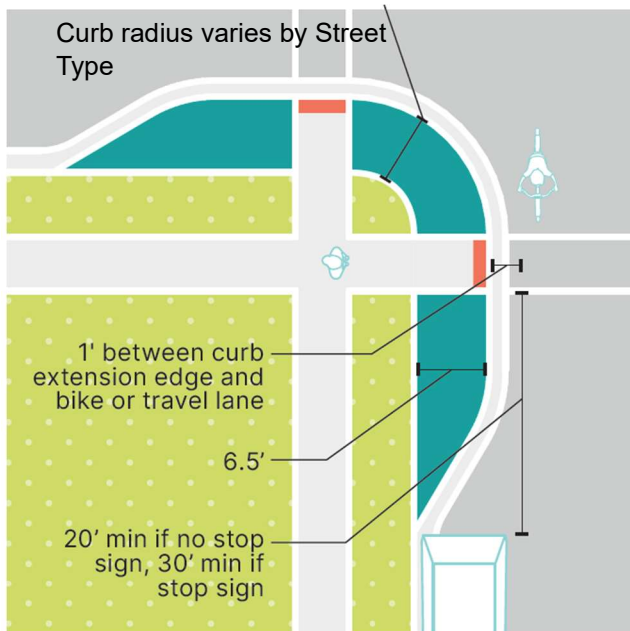


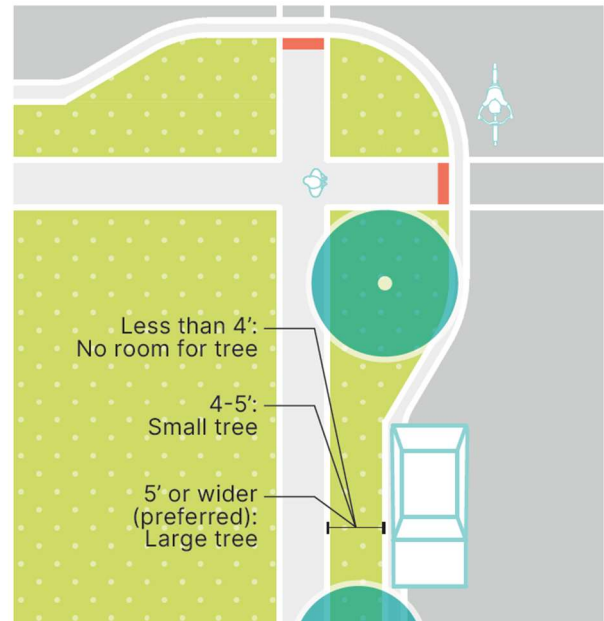
Image credit: Appleton Complete Streets Design Guide

Traffic Calming Measures

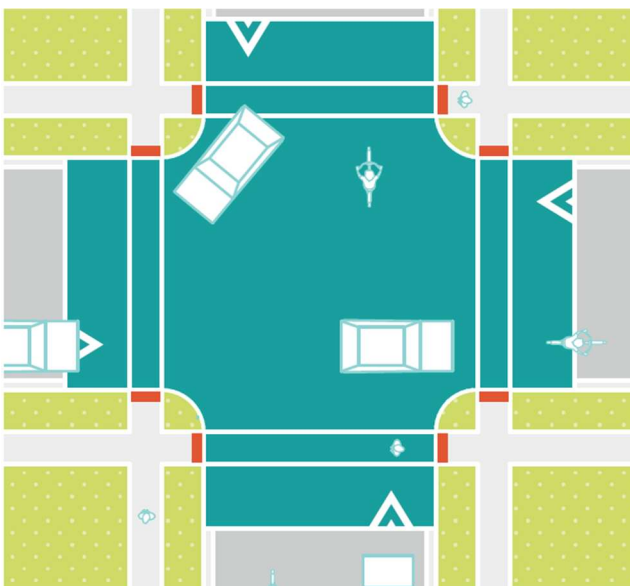
The application of traffic calming measures depend on design features, maintenance considerations, and specific locations. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The images below highlight the design elements that may be used for traffic calming.



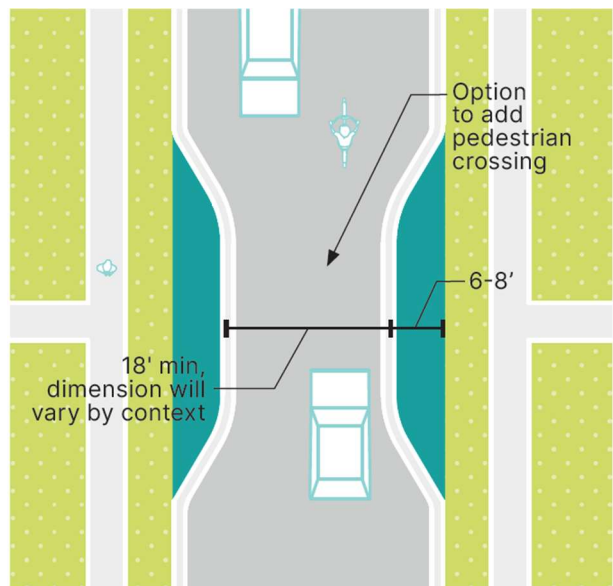
Curb Extensions



Street Trees



Raised Intersections



Pinchpoint

Image credit: Appleton Complete Streets Design Guide



5. Improve Community Character

Community character is essential to fostering a sense of belonging within a neighborhood. An engaging environment should reflect the identity of its community. The Wisconsin Avenue Subarea currently hosts a significant number of restaurants, and additional food vendors could help establish it as a dining-focused destination. Businesses within the subarea could also adopt a shared identity and branding to strengthen its sense of place.

The character of the Wisconsin Avenue area can be enhanced through sustainable and resilient design strategies. These approaches include improvements to the public realm, the integration of pedestrian-friendly amenities, and the incorporation of artful elements that enrich the overall public experience.

Public Realm Improvements

Increasing vegetation within the subarea, including adding street trees and plantings where possible, is key to enhancing the public realm and improving the overall experience within the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea. Utilizing native plants not only supports local biodiversity but also promotes sustainable, low-impact stormwater management. In addition, the streetscape should be equipped with a complete set of pedestrian amenities such as lighting, shaded seating areas, banners, wayfinding signage, trash receptacles, and other fixtures that contribute to a welcoming atmosphere. Efforts should also be made to reduce visual clutter by minimizing billboards, excessive signage, and exposed utilities, ensuring a cleaner and more cohesive streetscape.



The guide provides guidance on creating an attractive and welcoming public realm.

The Downtown Streetscape Design Guide provides guidance to ensure the streets of Downtown Appleton are highly multi-modal spaces with shopping and recreation, employment, open space, health and wellbeing, safety, and identity of the downtown area. The subarea transportation should follow the guide with an objective focus on multi-modal transportation.

How to implement public realm improvements

Implementing public realm improvements can begin with simple, cost-effective strategies that make an immediate visual and functional impact. Low-cost materials such as epoxied gravel, movable planters, and flexible seating can be used to reconfigure and activate underutilized spaces along the corridor.

Engaging local artists, business owners, residents, and community organizations in the design and construction process fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the spaces reflect the community's character and needs. Adjacent landowners and businesses can also play a valuable role in the ongoing maintenance, oversight, and programming of these public areas.

While comprehensive improvements often require significant time and resources, near-term interventions such as pop-up public spaces in existing parking lots or vacant parcels can serve

as a powerful tool to build momentum and community support. These temporary spaces provide immediate benefits and help lay the groundwork for more permanent investments in the future.



Wisconsin Avenue closed temporarily for special events. Image credit: River + Bay



Existing Mural at 230 E. Wisconsin Avenue

Create a Tax Increment District

During the engagement process, residents expressed strong interest in introducing more events and programming—such as *Bazaar After Dark*—to activate the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea. This corridor could be positioned as an "eat street" and a vibrant destination for dining, culture, and community events.

To support this vision, the City could consider establishing a Tax Increment District (TID). These tools could provide funding for public realm improvements, such as enhanced lighting, streetscaping, and public gathering spaces. These investments would help create a more event-friendly environment and encourage continued economic growth.

Create a Business Improvement District and Expand Programming

The City could consider encouraging the local property owners to form a Business Improvement District (BID) which could also serve as a coordinating body, working with local organizations, cultural institutions, and businesses to develop a year-round event calendar. Partnerships with local shops, restaurants, artists, and vendors could enable co-hosted events that reflect the community's identity and interests.

To facilitate activation, the City could establish a streamlined permitting process for temporary uses, including farmers market, food truck rally, etc. Pilot small-scale events—such as pop-up markets or mini festivals—can be launched to test ideas, build momentum, and gauge community response before scaling up to larger programming.

“

In my view, Wisconsin Avenue has been struggling with misperceptions more than anything. The result has been several vacant storefronts positioned between otherwise unique and valuable businesses. Some people might think it's naive to address deep social and economic issues with what amounts to a street party, but I believe that changing the narrative of a place can begin with a few good ideas and a handful of committed citizens, partnerships and businesses.

”

Adrienne Palm, Former Director of PULSE Young Professionals Network.

Greening the Subarea

The Wisconsin Avenue Subarea has several expansive surface parking areas, especially around Appvion Operations. These not only create an uninviting environment for both visitors and residents but also contribute to increased stormwater runoff due to the high proportion of impervious surfaces. This runoff can lead to nuisance flooding and water pollution.

Residents have expressed a desire for more vegetation within the area. In response, the integration of green infrastructure such as street trees, rain gardens, vegetated swales, and bioretention areas—can enhance the visual appeal while mitigating runoff impacts. The use of native plants is recommended wherever possible, as they support local wildlife by providing habitat and food sources. While terrace widths are constrained in this corridor, there may be strategic locations where these could be implemented within the public right of way or in private surface lots.

The images below illustrate several stormwater management techniques and strategies that could be implemented in the subarea to address various sources of runoff effectively and add greenery to the subarea.



Bioretention



Vegetated Swale



Tree Planting



Permeable Paving

Art and Wayfinding

The subarea should integrate art and interactive exhibits to enhance the community character. Specific locations for art within the subarea require further study. The plan recommends that project partners continue to engage with the local art community and community partners to identify potential locations and preferred types of installations. Temporary artwork can be used to generate awareness and build support for future permanent installations.



Image Credit: City of Appleton



Image Credit: Tempe Public Art



Image Credit: Eric Wafers



Image Credit: Konstantin Dimopoulos

6. Recommended Actions

Priority

Each action is assigned to a priority level based on how it was prioritized.

Higher priority actions

These actions or initiatives are considered critical to achieving the community's long-term vision and goals. They address urgent needs, have broad community impact, or are foundational to the success of other recommendations. High-priority items should be initiated in the near term (typically within 1–3 years)

Medium priority actions

These items are important to the plan's success but are less time-sensitive than high-priority actions. They support community goals and can be implemented once high-priority actions are underway or as resources become available.

Low priority actions

These actions are desirable but not immediately necessary. They may depend on the completion of higher-priority initiatives or the availability of future funding or capacity.

GOAL/STRATEGIES	LEAD	PRIORITY
Goal 1: Encourage redevelopment that increases housing supply and supports mixed-use development.		
a. Ensure zoning regulations support mixed-use and high-density residential development.	City	High
b. Redevelop underutilized parcels and parking lots to increase housing supply.	ARA/Private	High
c. Promote funding the façade program and utilization of façade improvement program. Revise the program to incentivize application and use.	Public/Private	Medium
d. Evaluate the creation of a TIF district for the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea.	City	High
e. Support mixed-use housing and commercial development to increase density and vibrancy on underutilized lots.	Private	High
f. Create more vibrant destinations that attract people and encourage community gathering, activity, and exploration. Incorporate year-round programming and events into the Wisconsin Avenue subarea.	Private	Medium
g. New development and redevelopment should have building frontages facing the street with parking located in the rear or side to support a pedestrian friendly environment.	Private	Medium
h. New development and redevelopment should focus on supporting and attracting local businesses. Encourage niche and specialty businesses to activate and fill available commercial spaces.	Private	Medium

i. Allow for thoughtful commercial expansion along Wisconsin Avenue that provides a gradual, compatible transition to adjacent residential areas.	Private	Low
j. Collaborate with stakeholders to secure state and federal funding - such as EPA Brownfield Grants or Wisconsin DNR programs - to support redevelopment.	City/Private/ State/Federal	Medium
k. Strengthen code enforcement efforts to address properties that are poorly maintained, ensuring compliance with property maintenance standards and supporting overall neighborhood character.	City	High

Goal 2: Enhance mobility and neighborhood connections

a. Implement traffic-calming strategies—both tactical and long-term—to improve safety and accessibility.	City/State	Low
b. Improve walkability and mobility along Wisconsin Avenue.	City/Private	Medium
c. Develop an access management plan that consolidates driveways, prioritize pedestrian safety, and improve traffic flow, to be implemented during site development or redevelopment.	City/Private	Medium
d. Improve signage directing visitors to rear parking areas to reduce confusion and enhance accessibility.	City/Private	Medium
e. Improve the safety and usability of bus stops near high-usage areas when developments or redevelopments occur.	City	Medium
f. Create direct pedestrian connections between neighborhood destinations. Enhance neighborhood connections through an extended and improved bike network.	City/Private	Medium
g. Encourage businesses to establish shared parking agreements to maximize parking efficiency and reduce land consumption.	City/Private	Medium
h. Implement plans and principles from the Complete Streets Guide	City/Private	Medium
i. Conduct a comprehensive traffic study for the Wisconsin Avenue Subarea to evaluate strategies for improving overall safety and traffic efficiency.	State/City	High

Goal 3: Improve streetscape and landscaping

a. Increase vegetation and reduce impervious surfaces within the subarea. Provide landscape buffers near roadways during site development and redevelopment.	City/ ANBA/ Private	High
b. Create a complete set of street amenities for pedestrians, including lighting, shade, seating areas, banners, wayfinding, trash receptacles, and other fixtures.	City/Private	High

c. Improve signage to clearly identify existing businesses in residential type structures.	City/Private	Medium
d. Encourage art and interactive exhibits	City/ ANBA/ Registered neighborhoods /AASD/Private	Medium
e. Reduce visual clutter of billboards, signage, and utilities	Private	Low
f. Bury overhead utility lines as part of the site redevelopment process	City/Private	Low
g. Streamline temporary use permitting to encourage activation of spaces during non-peak times.	City/Private	Medium
h. Support the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) if desired by the property owners within the subarea.	City/Private/ ANBA	Medium

List of Abbreviations:

AASD: Appleton Area School District

ANBA: Appleton Northside Business Association

ARA: Appleton Redevelopment Authority