

Final Site Plan

3rd Order of Sisters of St. Joseph Convent

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In Fulfillment of the Requirements for NRES 489 – Applied
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Holland, Ph.D.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

We are a group of students enrolled in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. In fulfillment of our various degree requirements, we are tasked with the completion of a final Capstone course. This course, titled “Natural Resources 489: Applied Natural Resource Planning”, is created with the purpose of providing real-world experience wherein students assist a client with a current community need.

The City of Stevens Point approached our class in the hope of creating a plan for the Sisters of Saint Joseph Convent Site, Parcel ID Numbers: 281240829240033, 281240829240046, 281240829240047, and 281240829240099. This land, previously owned by the Sisters, was officially donated and transferred to the City of Stevens Point in 2023. The City has since expressed a need for new opportunities in both outdoor recreation and housing. Our class has worked this semester to create a plan that will fulfill both needs in Stevens Point while prioritizing ecological and community values.

Our class was divided into two groups. These include Housing and Outdoor Recreation (Figure 1). The Outdoor Recreation group, Morgan Goff, Ella Stadel, and Riley Hubanks, maintained the objective to *“to collaborate with the community and City staff to create an area where everyone can enjoy the natural environment”*. This group worked to

provide recommendations on the northern portion of the site. This area is approximately 20 acres. The Housing group, Anna Menominee and Audrey Webster, had the objective to *“to collaborate with the community and City staff to create more housing that meets the needs of Stevens Point for both the present and the future”*. This group worked to provide recommendations for the southwestern portion of the convent site. This is approximately 3 acres.



Figure 1. Site divisions for the final site plan. Divisions are distinguished by use. Created by Ella Stadel.

In February of 2025, our team met with City staff, Door2Dreams, and two Sisters from the Convent. Door2Dreams is a non-profit organization focused on providing housing to adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (Door2Dreams, n.d.). As seen in Figure 1, Door2Dreams will use around 6 acres of the site to develop their vision. Our goals for our meeting in February were to 1) provide an overview of the project, 2) present our first impressions of the site, and 3) discuss potential visions for the project. Since our first meeting, we have conducted preliminary analysis, hosted a community input session, performed final site analyses, completed precedent research, and held a second community input session to receive final feedback for our site design. We present our recommendations in this final site plan.

Conclusion

The following chapters outline detailed accounts for each component of our planning process. In Chapter Two, we describe our background research on the site. This includes a need assessment based on a First Impressions analysis, as well as other relevant data analysis. Chapter Three outlines our community engagement process and results. Chapter Four presents additional research and data following our first community input session. In Chapter Five, we create goals for the site and provide real world examples that achieve these goals. Chapter Six proposes a final master plan for both housing and outdoor recreation. Chapter Seven describes the next steps the city may take in order to implement this proposal.

Chapter Two: Preliminary Analysis

Introduction

We began this project by conducting a First Impressions survey of the City of Stevens Point. The First Impressions survey is a widely used tool to assess communities' assets and weaknesses (Department of Economic Development, n.d.). Each team visited a variety of sites to assess current assets and relevant needs within their focus area. Following this survey, our teams researched a variety of resources to better understand potential areas of focus for the project. We then created some general recommendations to guide discussion at our Community Input Session, which is described in Chapter Three of this report.

Housing

The City of Stevens Point has various ongoing community struggles. One of these issues is an increasing housing shortage. To develop a greater understanding of the Stevens Point community, we conducted a First Impressions survey and evaluated four different neighborhoods. These neighborhoods include the Northside Neighborhood, the Sustainable Neighborhood, Conifer Estates Neighborhood, and Park Ridge/Jefferson Neighborhood. During this survey, we observed both strong points and points of improvement for the City.



Figure 2. Picture of a house located in the Northside Neighborhood.



Figure 3. Picture of a modern duplex located in the Northside Neighborhood.



Figure 4. Picture of a house located in the Sustainable Neighborhood.



Figure 5. Picture of a house located in the Conifer Estates Neighborhood.



Figure 6. Picture of a house located in Park Ridge/Jefferson Neighborhood.

These observations are as follows:

Strong Points:	Points of Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Existing/Older Homes – Vacant Lots for New Homes – New Homes – Apartments/Rental Housing – Transitional Housing – Senior Assisted Living – Group Homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lacked housing for first-time homebuyers – Affordable housing options

After we conducted our First Impressions survey and discovered points of improvement, we conducted a preliminary site analysis. We researched existing conditions of the site, statistics about the points of improvement, and related information that was needed. With our preliminary site analysis research, we noted key points as we continue our planning of this site.

Our first finding was that this plot of land is currently zoned commercially according to the City of Stevens Point Zoning Map. The site will need to be rezoned to residential before development can begin.

Additionally, we used the U.S. Census Bureau data to find the median household income in Stevens Point, which is \$56,218 (2023). Many financial advisors recommend that an individual's home should cost no more than 2.5x one's annual income (McWhinney, 2025). This implies that an average home in Stevens Point would have to cost around \$125,000 to accommodate the median range of City residents. According to Red Fin, the median sale price for a home in Stevens Point is \$315,000 (RedFin, 2025). If we assume this financial advice to be reasonable, the average household will need to receive \$126,000 a year to afford the median home. In comparison, the national median household income in 2023 was \$80,610, and the national median first-time household income was between \$95,900-\$97,000 (Cozzi, 2024).

According to American Community Survey data in Stevens Point, 49.8% of City residents (5,512 units) own their dwellings, whereas 50.2% of residents (5,551 units) are renters (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Despite the close margin, it is revealed that more individuals rent their homes in Stevens Point as opposed to own. This may be partially explained by the number of university students that chose to live off campus and rent in Stevens Point.

Figures 7 and 8 reveal data from the City of Stevens Point Housing Affordability Report (2024). Figure 7 looks at the "Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income." 64% of Stevens Point residents are spending less than 20% of their monthly household income on housing. As a reference, financial advisors recommend that individuals spend roughly 28% of their income on housing (McWhinney, 2025). On the other hand, 20% of residents spend 20%-29.9% of their monthly household income on their housing. This exceeds the recommended amount but does not qualify as unaffordable.

Concern does arise, however, for 16% of residents who spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. This is considered unaffordable housing. Figure 8 looks at the "Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income." A significant difference between Figure 7 and 8 is the inclusion of homeowners. When we solely observe renters, we see that 52% of Stevens Point renters spend more than 30% of their household income. This group includes students that will spend a greater amount of their income on rent. This

is because they are full-time students and do not work either part-time or full-time jobs. At any given time, this may account for roughly 3,000 to 4,000 renters. Beyond students, all other Stevens Point renters are assumed to be long term residents. This reveals that many non-student residents spend 30% of their income on rent. This points to an overall concern of housing affordability for renters in the City.

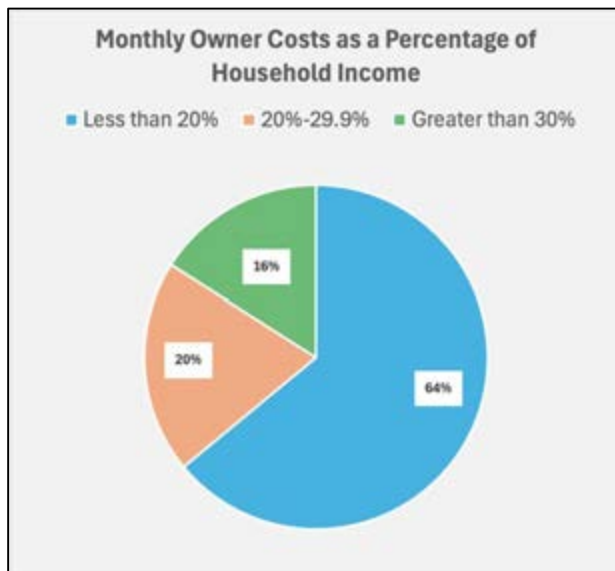


Figure 7. Monthly Owner Cost as a Percentage of Household Income in Stevens Point, WI.

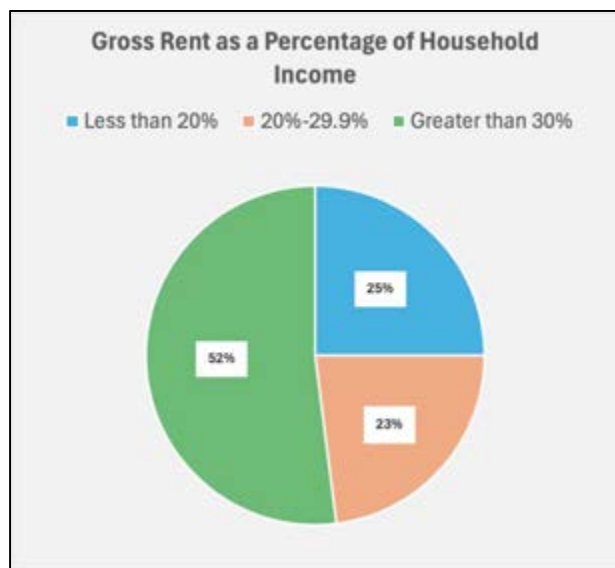


Figure 8. Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in Stevens Point, WI.

After reviewing Stevens Point housing affordability data, we researched state trends on house ownership. Figure 9 is taken from the University of Wisconsin – Madison Community Economic Development Extension (2024). This figure examines Wisconsin Home Ownership by Age. Following 2022, the percentage of homeownership within each

age group decreased, excluding the 75 to 84 year and 85 year and over groups. This trend correlates with the rising prices of housing across the market.

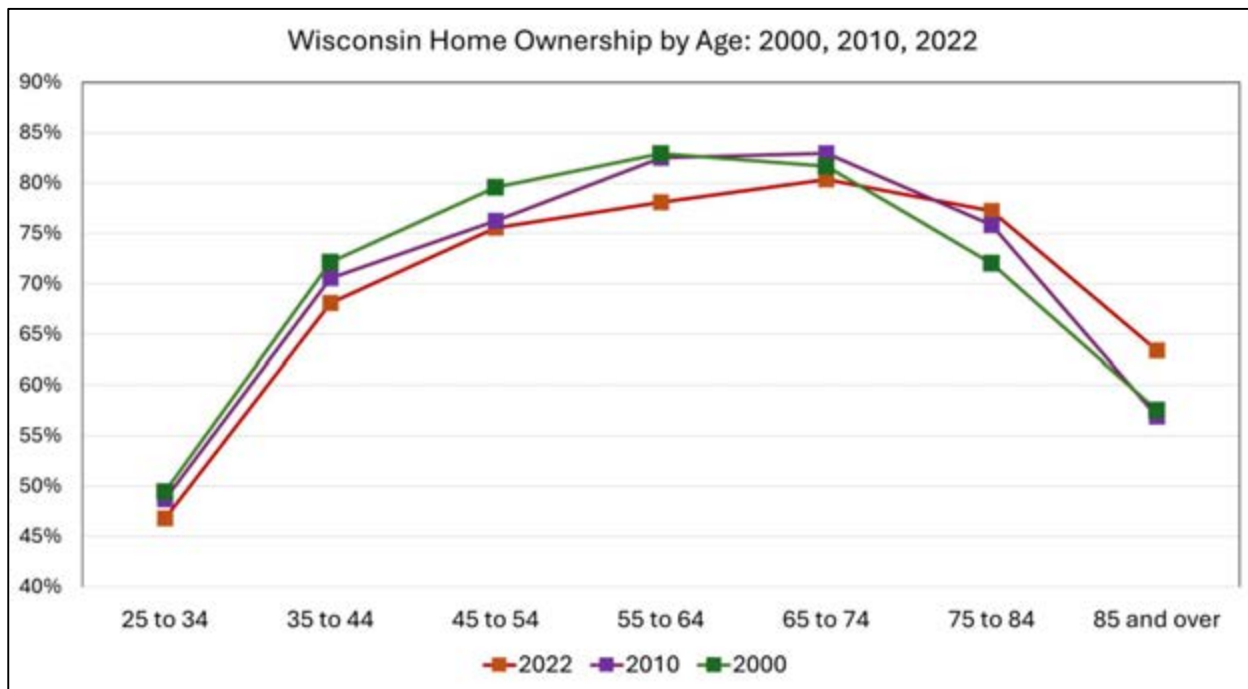


Figure 9. University of Wisconsin-Madison Community Economic Development Extension Chart of WI Home Ownership by Age.

Based on our analysis, we made two recommendations in preparation for our community engagement sessions. Our first recommendation was to create more affordable housing, using either single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, tiny homes, or zero-lot-lines on our project site. Our second recommendation was to create more starter homes for first-time homebuyers.

Outdoor Recreation

Our Outdoor Recreation group evaluated 22 parks with natural and/or recreational space in the City of Stevens Point. We used the First Impressions survey tool to examine the City on January 23rd, 2025, visiting parks including, but not limited to, Pfiffner Pioneer Park, Seramur Park, and Atwell Park. We noted which amenities each park contained and where they were located. In the following weeks, we visited additional parks individually to reach a better understanding of their amenities. Some of these parks included Mead Park and Iverson Park (Figure 10). Additionally, we reviewed the Stevens Point Area



Figure 10. Sledding hill at Iverson Park.

website (Stevens Point Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, n.d.), the City of Stevens Point Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2023-2028) (City of Stevens Point, 2023), and Google Maps (Google maps, n.d.) to obtain a strong understanding of recreational opportunities in the City. Our findings on park amenities and recreational opportunities in Stevens Point are summarized in Figure 11.



Figure 11. Recreational opportunities and amenities in Stevens Point, WI, as observed by the Outdoor Recreation group.

Once we completed our research, we noted multiple strengths and points of improvement for the community. These strengths included: 1) a strong presence of multigenerational activities, 2) a large variety of outdoor sports opportunities, and 3) ample community gathering spaces such as pavilions, shelters, and open fields. Points of improvement included: 1) a lack of even distribution of accessible playgrounds, trails, courts, and 2) smaller parks and areas can lack shade or seating.

After gathering this information, we reviewed the NES Ecological Services Wetland Delineation Report from 2019 for the convent site. Figure 12 is the Delineated Wetland Map from this report (Havel, 2019). This report states that there are four separate wetlands located on the site. By georeferencing the delineated map using ESRI's ArcGIS Pro, we calculated that these four wetlands account for 60% of the outdoor recreation site. We

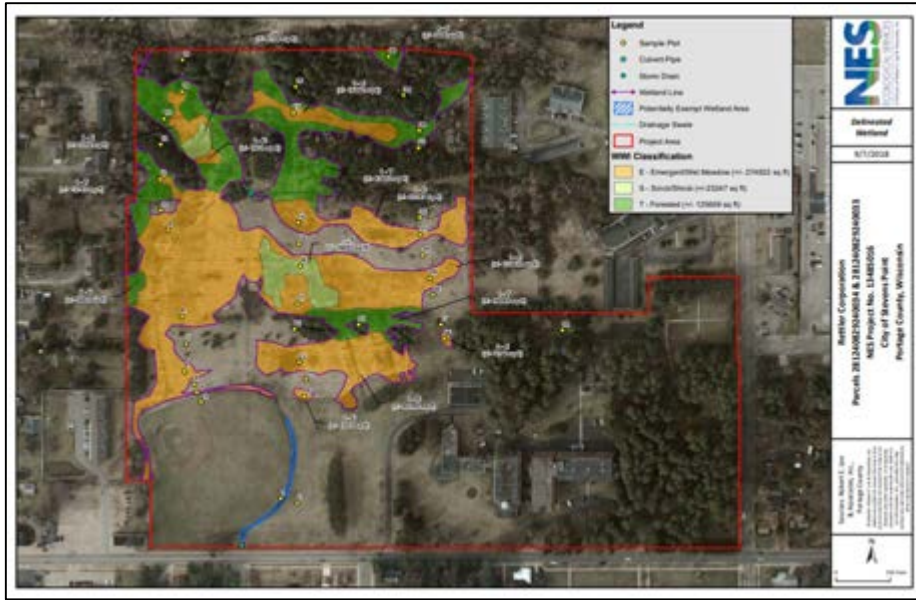


Figure 12. NES Ecological Services Delineated Wetland Map, 2019.

reviewed relevant information from the City of Steven’s Point Comprehensive Plan (City of Stevens Point, 2006), the Code of Ordinances (City of Stevens Point, n.d.), and other resources for this site and its wetlands. The City’s Comprehensive Plan indicates that 50% of pre-settlement wetlands remain. Furthermore, removal of wetlands can

have negative and long-lasting effects on the environment. These impacts may include increased stormwater runoff, loss of habitat, and increased damages associated with flooding. Additionally, the Stevens Point Code of Ordinance Chapter 23.021(a) states that wetlands are a Conservancy District, defined by the presence of environmentally sensitive lands. This means that there are limitations on the development of delineated wetlands. Current permitted uses for Conservancy Districts include:

- Garden Plots
- Solar Arrays
- Tree Plantations
- Bicycling and Hiking Trails
- Public Parks, Playgrounds, and Athletic Fields
- Study and Research of Plant Material, Fish, and Wildlife

Later, our team visited the site to further evaluate the space. We noticed that the site is already well used as there were informal walking paths visible on the snowpack. We further noticed that there is a bench and a well-used gazebo on the property as well. This gazebo may require reconstruction or removal in the near future due to its deteriorating state.

Figures 13-15 are images from the site visit. We shared these images during our Community Input Session to provide the public with an understanding of the landscape in its current state.



Figure 13. Open area of the Convent site.



Figure 14. Photo of the Gazebo located on the Convent site.

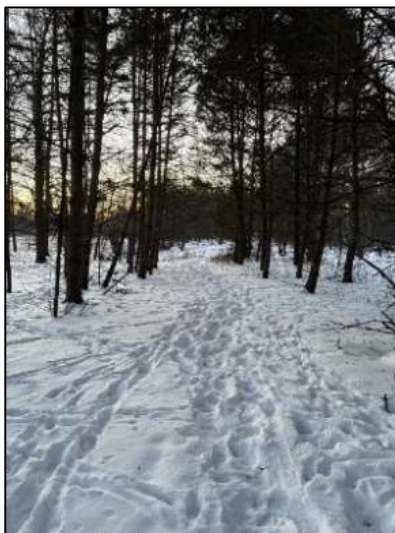


Figure 15. High foot-traffic area on the Convent site.

Finally, based on our analysis, we made two recommendations in preparation for our community engagement sessions. Our first recommendation was to use the current permitted uses for the site. This would ensure that we cause minimal harm to the wetland ecosystem. Our second recommendation was to create a recreational space for community integration across social boundaries.

Conclusion

The data we collected from our First Impressions survey and further research helped guide us in our planning process. We compiled our information into two separate posters to share at the community engagement session, which we discuss in Chapter Three. Overall, this process helped guide our conversations with community members and provided context to our site in relation to the City as a whole.

Chapter Three:

Community

Engagement

Introduction

Following our preliminary site analysis, our teams used our First Impression survey and research as a foundation for gathering feedback. Our Capstone course created a charrette to gather ideas and considerations from the community. A charrette is a tool commonly used by planners to engage community members in a more collaborative setting. The charrette process is often used for visioning and usually includes a variety of hands-on materials for residents to visualize their ideas.

Our charrette was held on March 6th, 2025, at the Schmeeckle Visitor Center in Stevens Point from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Community members were first greeted by Riley Hubanks, who introduced the project and our planning process. Participants were then instructed to move toward one of the two project groups: Housing or Outdoor Recreation.

Housing

Audrey Webster provided information from the preliminary site analysis to introduce the housing element of the project. After speaking with Audrey, participants moved toward Anna Menominee's charrette.



Figure 16. Anna Menominee and community members gathered around the housing group charrette table.

At this charrette, there were four basemaps outlining the housing parcel. Participants received sticky notes, markers, pens, a guide of the five housing types, and a survey that asked which housing type they would like to see the most or the least in this space.

We analyzed the charrette results afterwards and compiled the survey results into excel. The following figures show our results:

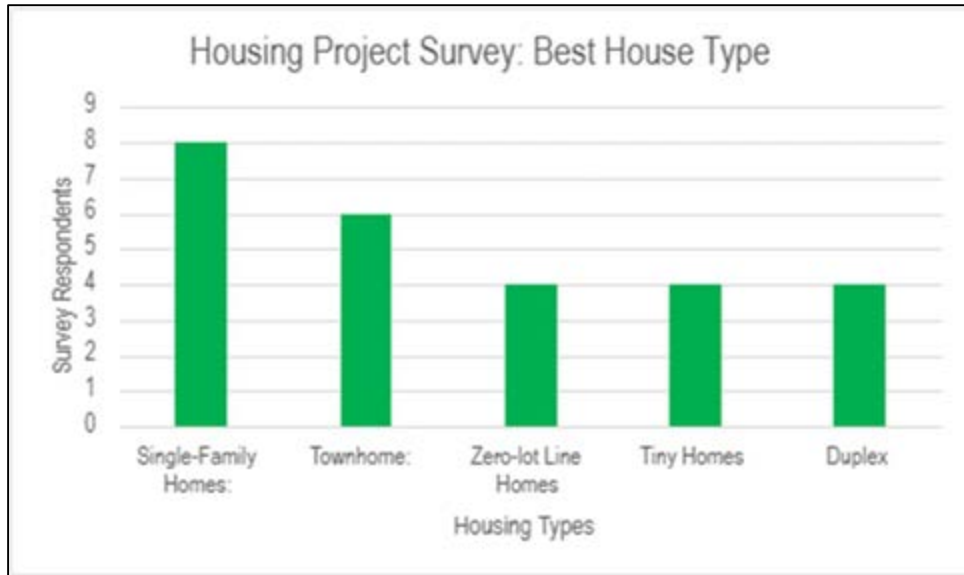


Figure 17. Survey results from community members regarding the housing type they would like to see us plan for.

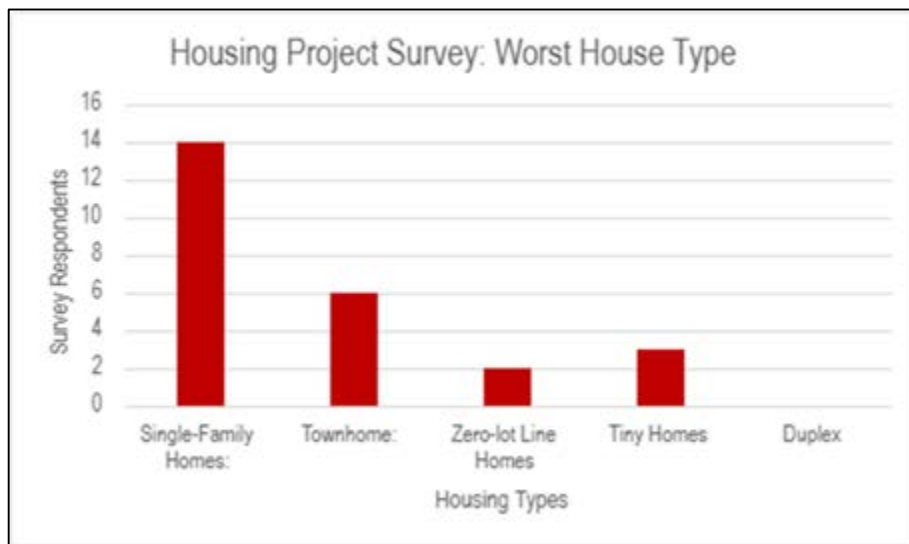


Figure 18. Survey results from the community members regarding the housing type they would like to see us plan for.

Table 1. Key points from conversations and written feedback from the housing charette process.

Physical Housing Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiny home/tiny town • Coop housing multi use • Community housing • Mixed housing • No apartments and no townhomes • Affordable starter homes • Affordable housing (smaller) • Condos • Family size lots • Small yards • Affordable, owner-occupied Townhouses, condos, duplexes • View of greenspace • Cluster zoning
Ownership of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community land trust • Owner-occupied • Commercial first floors
Buffers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve open space to buffer protected area • No parking lots on Maria • Attractive shrub/tree screens on Maria
Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero Carbon Energy • No gas service lines • More volume density • Sandhill cranes • Underground renewable energy infrastructure (geothermal) • Energy efficiency/future proof • Green • Solar on homes
Street Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cul-de-sac • Pocket neighborhood with connectivity not Cul de sac • Cul-de-sac (2 votes) • Extension of 3rd
Community Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground • Community garden • Trails • Aquatic center • Covered bike racks • Shared spaces • Dome – indoor sports • Connect to Door2Dreams

Outdoor Recreation

After speaking with Riley Hubanks or Anna Menominee, participants were led toward Morgan Goff. Participants were given an overview of the preliminary analysis collected by the Outdoor Recreation group. Once this presentation was complete, participants were directed towards Ella Stadel's charette.

The Outdoor Recreation charette utilized a variety of materials for visioning. This included four copies of a basemap (Figure 19), sticky notes, colored pencils, markers, pens, string, and printed cutouts of permitted uses. Participants used these materials in a variety of ways to showcase their ideas. Participants also provided verbal feedback which was then written down on a sticky note for future analysis.



Figure 19. Basemap of the outdoor recreation site for the community input session.

The charette provided a valuable opportunity for community members to share their visions for a recreational space. Many participants suggested that future development should preserve the wetlands by pursuing low-impact development opportunities. A few key responses focused on sharing this space with surrounding educational entities as well as creating ADA accessible trails and seating areas. Additionally, many responses included planting native species as well as ways to grow food for the community. All community suggestions were weighed and considered by the Outdoor Recreation group (Table 2).

Table 2. Community input organized as strongly supported (repeated 3 or more times) and other suggestions.

Strongly Supported Ideas	All Other Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi use trail/accessible trail for hiking and biking • Connection to Green Circle • Boardwalks across wetlands • Connection from SPASH to Farmshed • Community Gardens • Orchards • Greenhouses • Picnic tables and benches • Outdoor education partnership with SPASH and/or UWSP • Native plantings and prairie • Playgrounds • Dog park • Runoff considerations for housing areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi use path on northern boundary • Mountain bike pump track/trail • Solar panels – ground mounted • Wind power • Climate adaptive research station • Sensory garden • Community shelter with solar • Fitness station on park path • Flowering orchard (cherry blossom season) • Wildlife preserves • Small Outdoor amphitheater • Tree nursery • Athletic fields for school and family/ NO athletic fields • Nature “rejuvenation” benches • Minimal development and wildlife friendly • Food forest • Work with landscape • Natural screen by shrubs and trees on Maria drive • Deed as conservation preserve • Work with SPASH to develop path along their property as well • Deer management station • Butterfly garden • Frisbee golf • Group campsites and firepits • Bike rack • Parking lots • Wind path through cemetery • Paved walking paths and benches • Leave land natural • Plant more trees • Invasive species management • Splash pad • Water retention reuse • Wildlife friendly solar • Trash/recycling/compost bins • Pickleball court

Conclusion

The community engagement session was a vital part of our planning process. The use of the charette process allowed us to have more open conversations with community members. All the feedback we collected from the charette process was used to inform us in the following phases of our project. This helped us supplement our additional research, which we discuss in more detail in Chapter Four: Site Analysis.

Chapter Four:

Site Analysis

Introduction

Each group performed a site analysis specific to our projects. We utilized the feedback received at the community input session to inform further research. We finalized our site analyses by looking at specific types of housing and recreational opportunities that aligned with community visions. Then, we further examined municipal and government resources to investigate how the community's ideas could come to life.

Housing

After the community input session, the Housing group conducted an additional site analysis to assist in the creation of our master plan and guide our precedent research. During the community input session, we heard many community members express the need to ensure that new housing should be both affordable and owner-occupied. To ensure long lasting affordable housing, we examined how the City of Stevens Point could use Tax Incremental Finance Districts and a Community Land Trust. Both tools also support owner-occupied housing.

We received 36 responses to our charrette survey and 10 of these responses contained errors. The survey results revealed that the two favorable housing types are single-family housing (eight votes) and townhomes (six votes). Zero lot line homes, tiny homes, and duplexes were tied (four votes each). Interestingly, the least favorable housing types are also single-family homes (14 votes) and townhomes (six votes). Tiny homes received three votes, zero-lot line homes received two votes, and duplexes received zero votes.

The survey results correlated with the feedback we received at the community input session. Some community members were not in favor of townhomes. These individuals noted that there are many within the area. Other participants, however, stated that townhomes were an affordable and efficient land use option. Single-family homes were a popular topic of discussion. Many noted that a single-family home would give more privacy to families, but that they also may have negative environmental impacts.

After speaking with residents and analyzing feedback, we chose to focus on single-family homes and townhomes. These structures provide a way to build multiple housing options as well as prioritize community space.

Additionally, we revised the road we created for our charrette process. Many participants stated during the charrette that a cul-de-sac was not favorable. The revised mapped plan can be seen in the Master Plan section where it outlines a one lane traffic road that was more favorable to community feedback.

Outdoor Recreation

As mentioned in the Preliminary Site Analysis, the Outdoor Recreation site was calculated as 60% wetlands using the boundaries from the Wetland Delineation Report completed in 2018 by NES Ecological Services (Havel, 2019). Using the National Resources Conservation Services' (NRCS) Web Soil Survey tool, we found two WDNR wetland indicator soil types on this site (Havel, 2019). These included meadland loam and point sandy loam, which are both somewhat poorly drained, have high runoff classes, and are six inches in depth to the water table. Point sandy loam extends to 80% of the site, while meadland loam extends to 20%.



Figure 20. Map showing distance between current dog park and parcel site.

After reviewing the results from the charette process, we decided to look at dog parks in Stevens Point. Prior to community suggestion, our group had not considered a dog park as a potential outdoor recreation opportunity. Currently, there is one dog park. It is located on the southern portion of Stevens Point, which is about 2.5 miles away from the project site. This dog park is 30 acres and was funded by the Point Dog Park Committee through the City of Stevens Point (City of Stevens Point, n.d.).

Our preliminary site analysis and feedback from the community revealed where current community gardens are. We used the three community gardens already located in Stevens Point as guidance for how to structure a new garden (City of Stevens Point, 2013). We noted that any potential perennial plantings should accommodate hydric soils within the wetlands and that the construction of boardwalks will be necessary for parts of trail that cross seasonal standing water.



Figure 21. Community gardens in Stevens Point.

Conclusion

The site analysis serves as additional information necessary to formulate our master plan design. Our Housing group focused on analyzing community survey data for potential housing opportunities. Although the results varied among community preferences, we were able to incorporate single-family homes and townhouses. Our Outdoor Recreation group analyzed wetland components and current recreation opportunities. Both group's site analyses revealed potential uses that are further studied in real world examples. These examples are detailed in Chapter Five: Precedent Research.

Chapter Five:

Precedent

Research

Introduction

Each group created goals for the projects by analyzing the suggestions given by community members, reviewing City regulation, and considering economic feasibility. We wanted the goals to be heavily influenced by community feedback so that the area contains diverse and accessible amenities. Keeping these goals in mind, each group found successful examples in midwestern communities that were relevant to their goals.

Housing

The Housing group collected community feedback from the previous community input session on March 6th, 2025. We reviewed the data and highlighted what aspects community members wanted to see us focus on during this project. We then researched relevant case studies based on our two goals. These studies are described below.

Goal 1: Create a Community Land Trust to Maintain Long-Lasting Affordable Housing

During our first community input session, community members stated that they wanted to see affordable and owner-occupied housing in our project. We examined the community's feedback and determined two ways to make our proposed properties both owner-occupied and affordable. We determined that the use of a Community Land Trust (CLT) or a Tax Incremental Finance District (TIF District) would be the best option. To ensure their feasibility, we looked at two case studies, one focused on a CLT and the other on a TIF District. Both case studies reveal successful program implementation which led to affordable and owner-occupied housing for the residents.



Figure 23. An example home from Homes Within Reach.

A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a non-profit organization which acquires and retains ownership of the land. Individuals or families then purchase and own the house that is built on this land. The CLT then provides a long-term ground lease to home buyers to secure their rights to use the land. Then when the homeowners decide to sell the house and move, the non-profit or the next homebuyer purchases the home at a formula-driven price, not the market value to ensure the home remains affordable. In Bloomington, Minnesota, the West Hennepin Affordable



Figure 22. West Hennepin Affordable Housing Land Trust and Homes Within Reach Program.

Housing Land Trust (WHAHLT) and Homes Within Reach (HWR) established and implemented a program in 2002 that created a Community Land Trust in 44 communities, with 12 still active today, in western suburban Hennepin County. This created many affordable homes and apartment complexes throughout western Hennepin County available for its residents (2016).

A Tax Incremental Finance District (or TIF District) is an economic tool used by communities and municipalities to encourage future development that would not occur without the municipality's input. In a TIF, property values are frozen and the tax revenue from any increase in value is called an "increment". This increment may be used to promote/pay for development within the TIF District. A municipality can spend or lend money for several uses, including housing. When the TIF expires, typically 20 to 30 years later, the incremental value is paid to the respective taxing entities. In 2024, the City of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin City Council approved the installation of infrastructure in the Ridge View Estates subdivision, creating new multifamily homes and single-family homes, some being owner-occupied housing. The City Council then approved offering a pay-go tax increment financing package to the developer including a total of \$3,342,640 in returned tax increment between 2027 and 2041. This is based on a minimum of \$14 million in added value in TID #9 (2022).

Goal 2: Create Community Connections

Many community members expressed a desire to develop a community space for the residents of this subdivision. They envisioned a place where residents could come and be together and enjoy the outdoors. This shaped our goal of creating community connections within our subdivision.

The first case study, located in the Twin Oaks subdivision in Madison, Wisconsin, was developed by the Habitat for Humanity of Dane County (HFHDC), a non-profit organization in the United States. This subdivision prioritizes homeownership and affordability. They planned to build 93 single-family homes and 49 owner-occupied condominiums (Mori, 2006). HFHDC planned to build $\frac{1}{2}$ -- $\frac{3}{4}$ of the homes and sell those homes to families whose income is 60% or lower than the Dane County median, which according to the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$82,838 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Like our project site, the plans for the Twin Oak subdivision took into consideration the wetlands present there. This left a lot of open space available to residents. HFHDC created a friendly street network for pedestrians

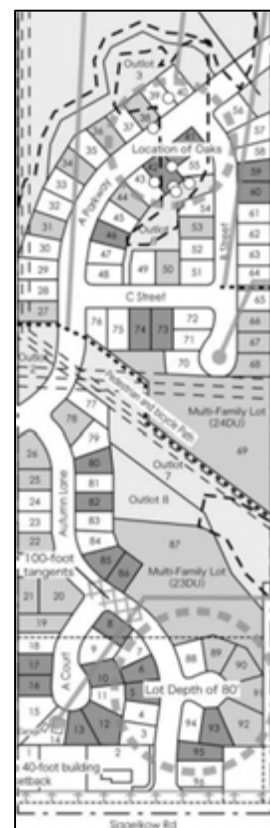


Figure 24. Site Plan for the Twin Oaks Subdivision in Madison, WI.

and cyclists to safely get around the subdivision in an active way. Furthermore, both Lots 55 and 77 were dedicated as parks (Mori, 2006).



Figure 25. Photo of Townhomes created for the Milltown Residence Development in River Falls, WI.

second floor a town-home style with two-to-three-bedroom options. This project was a collaboration between the City of River Falls and the development team. The goal of this development was to create a space that encourages sustainability, engagement, and safety (ThreeSixty, n.d.).

The DeSanctis Park offers open space, trails to walk through, and a creek. This park near the housing development similarly mirrors our project site, as our open space plans



Figure 26. Photo of DeSanctis Park in River Falls, WI.

Our second case study is from the Milltown Residence Development in River Falls, Wisconsin. This project is a housing plan involving 84 townhomes adjacent to DeSanctis Park. This housing project, situated on seven acres of land, prioritizes sustainability and the diverse needs of the community. The homes are split into first floor and second floor options, with the first floor being more of an apartment ranch style with one-to-three-bedrooms, and the

are adjacent to the housing site. This project is like ours in Stevens Point, as it connects a natural area to housing. During our planning process, we want to connect the housing project with the outdoor recreation project, to create a comprehensive final plan.

Outdoor Recreation

Our previous research and community input session revealed overwhelming support for maintaining open space on our site. Residents also emphasized their desire for an added sense of community in the neighborhood. We are proposing to maintain the natural aesthetic of the land while creating structured features that emphasize shared values within the city. Our goals for the site are as follows:

- Goal 1: Foster a stronger sense of community through open space
- Goal 2: Provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities

- Goal 3: Create access to nutritious foods

With these goals, we found case studies located in Wisconsin which backed up our goals. Each case study was carefully analyzed, and concepts were pulled from each of them when creating our final recommendations.

Goal 1: Foster a stronger sense of community through open space



Figure 27. Jefferson County Dog Park Map.

When trying to find a way to incorporate a sense of community while preserving open space, we looked at community input. Many residents expressed that a dog park would be a great way to achieve this goal. The need for this amenity was further revealed by our observation that there is only one other dog park in the area, located in southern Stevens Point. The case study we looked at for Goal 1 was the Jefferson County Dog Park, located in Jefferson County, Wisconsin. This 109-acre dog park, located in Johnson Creek, WI, has two large dog areas and two small dog areas (Jefferson County Parks Department. WI, n.d.). This allows pets and their owners to recreate while promoting healthy practices in our community. There are annual and day passes per dog to

partially fund management of the property. These funds also go towards the various amenities at the park, which include a pet playground, shelters, handheld water pumps, restrooms, pet waste bags, and trash cans. There are also activities for dog owners and non-dog owners which include snowshoeing, hiking, and cross-country skiing. We took inspiration from this case study for our final proposal.

Goal 2: Provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities

There was overwhelming support to add accessible trails in this open space. We decided to focus on providing accessible outdoor recreation opportunities so that all people can enjoy the space. For this goal, we looked at Bearskin State Trail, an 18-mile trail located in Oneida County, WI. The trails are ADA accessible as they are made with crushed granite, are eight feet wide, are mostly level, and have boardwalks (Oneida County, 2025). For parking, there are paved and gravel parking lots as well as handicap parking spaces and restrooms. Allowed on the trails are biking, hiking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing.

Next, we wanted to incorporate educational signs on the trails, so we looked at a second example. Newport State Park, located in Door County, WI, features over 30 hiking

trails, some of which are ADA accessible. This park's trails have audio and tactical interpretive signs placed throughout the trails (Lake Ledge Naturalist, n.d.). These signs are accessible for those with impaired vision, are hard of hearing, and those with wheelchairs.



Figure 28. Photo of Bearskin State Trail.



Figure 29. Photo of Interpretive Sign from Newport State Park.

Goal 3: Create access to nutritious foods.

Our last goal focuses on creating access to nutritious foods for the community. There was overwhelming feedback from community members about improving access to local foods. As community gardens are already permitted use by the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances, we thought this was a great idea (City of Stevens Point, n.d.). Farmshed, SPASH, Door2Dreams, Pacelli, and nearby community members could all benefit from a community garden.

The first case study we looked at was the YMCA Community Food Forest located in La Crosse, WI, which was established in 2016 with a vision to “increase access to healthy food within an urban landscape” (La Crosse YMCA, n.d.). It is a community partnership between the YMCA as the landowner, the Hunger Task Force of La Crosse as a community organizer, resident permaculture experts, and nearby neighborhood associations. This food forest had specific characteristics which include many perennial edible plants, multiple swales that capture rainwater and mitigate runoff, benches, and walkways.

Lastly, we looked at the Kane Street Community Garden, also located in La Crosse, WI. The key aspect of this community garden is that it has accessible planting beds to ensure that all can participate in gardening activities (The Hunger Task Force of La Crosse, n.d.). We wanted to emphasize the accessibility aspect so everyone could come to this area and enjoy what it has to offer.



Figure 30. Photo of volunteers working at the YMCA Community Food Forest.



Figure 31. Photo of raised garden beds at Kane Street Community Garden.

Conclusion

This chapter revealed a variety of real-world examples that provide inspiration for the development of our master plan. In the next chapter, Chapter Six, we propose a master plan for the site that includes considerations from our analyses, community feedback, and precedent research.

Chapter Six:

Master Plan

Introduction

This chapter details the final recommendations for each component of our project site. These recommendations were formulated through preliminary and site analyses, community input, and real-world examples. On April 24th, 2025, we held a second community input session at the Schmeeckle Visitor Center in Stevens Point from 4:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Community members were first introduced to the project and our planning process. Participants were then provided with the precedent research discussed in Chapter Five, as well as a draft of the master plans. This feedback was incorporated into the following plans, as well as Chapter Seven of this report.

Housing

Our group created this master plan based on the feedback we received during the community input session and our analysis and research of relevant case studies. We have compiled the necessary data to create a plan which prioritizes long-lasting affordable housing and community integration.

When considering housing types to recommend in this housing development site and assessing the community's feedback, we choose to include townhomes and single-family homes. We recommend developing one townhome with a lot size of 15,000 square feet in compliance with the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances. The lot size of this townhome meets the minimum requirements for three units. We then recommend developing eight single-family homes. The lot size of these single-family homes will be a minimum of 4,000 square feet in compliance with the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances. We recommend that the City of Stevens Point encourages the developers to construct these homes and townhomes with a natural design to limit its environmental impacts.



Figure 32. Visual representation of the proposed townhome at the site. Includes three units within the townhome and native landscaping. Created by Audrey Webster.



Figure 33. Visual representation of a proposed single-family house at the site. Includes native landscaping. Created by Audrey Webster.

When considering ways to create community connections, we recommend that the City of Stevens Point add the following components:

First, we recommend that the City creates a community of outdoor space. The outdoor space would be for residents to come together and enjoy the natural area. We propose amenities including a seating area for residents to enjoy, a trail connection to the Outdoor Recreation Group's proposed trail network, an open space for residents to enjoy, and a firepit so the space can be used all year round.

Second, the City may prioritize the inclusion of a boulevard and sidewalks. We recommend developing a sidewalk system on one side of the road that is a minimum width of five feet in compliance with the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances. This width also ensures it is accessible by a wheelchair. We recommend the inclusion of a one-way street with a width of 16 feet to slow traffic, create more privacy, and provide access to emergency vehicles. We recommend a boulevard with native landscaping. This may include native trees and prairie grasses to increase biodiversity and provide increased privacy in this neighborhood.



Figure 34. Visual representation of the proposed community space. Includes access to the proposed trail networks, seating area, a firepit, and open space. Created by Anna Menominee.



Figure 35. Visual Representation of the proposed boulevard space. Includes native trees and prairie grasses. Created by Anna Menominee.

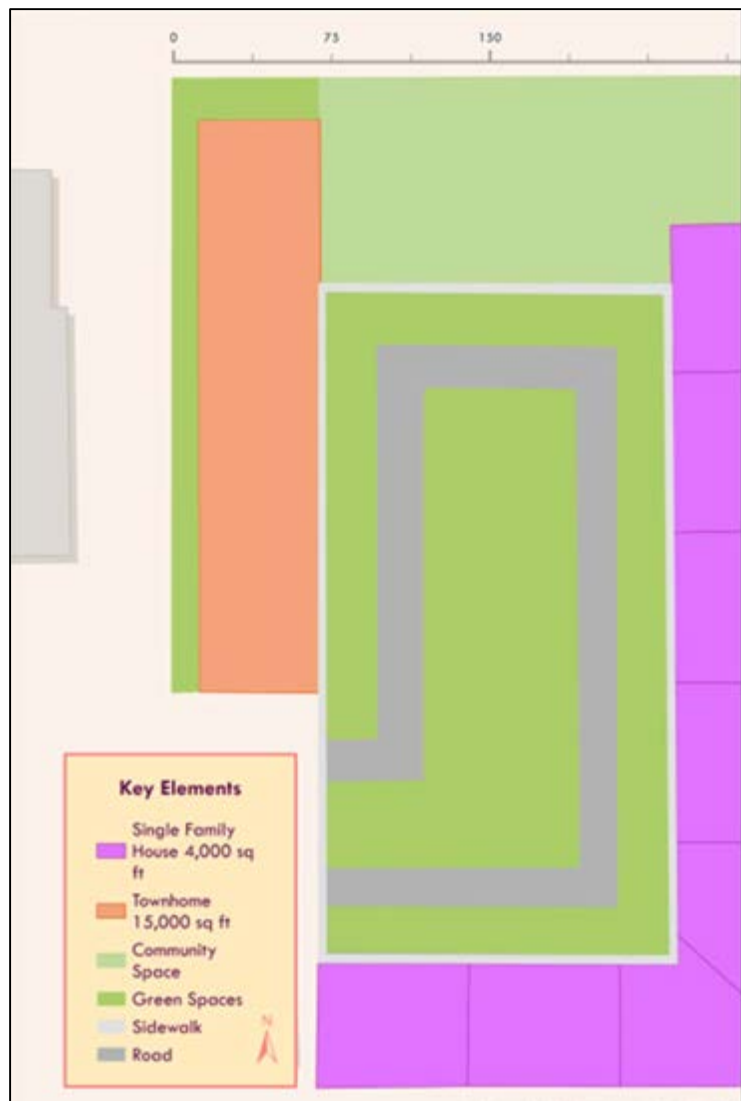


Figure 36. Site layout of the proposed housing development site. Includes single-family homes, townhomes, a road, sidewalks, and community green space. Created by Anna Menominee.

Our group then used our research to define our goals and determine ways we can make our recommendations happen. One way is to create a Community Land Trust (CLT) with non-profit entity. Individuals or families would purchase the home from the non-profit and own the home that is built on this land. The CLT then provides a long-term ground lease for home buyers to secure their rights to use the land. Then when the homeowners decide to sell the house and move, the non-profit or the next homebuyer purchases the home at a formula-driven price. This formula-driven price is calculated to ensure the home price remains affordable while providing a small return on investment to the initial homebuyer.

Another way is to implement a Tax Incremental Finance District (TIF District) which is an economic tool used by communities and municipalities to encourage future development that would not occur without the municipality's intervention. When implementing a TIF District, the property values in the area are frozen and the tax revenue that is generated from the increase in value, also called the "increment," is used by the city to pay for the development. TIF Districts can last 20 to 30 years so ensure there is no burden on the taxpayers. When the TIF District expires, the incremental value is paid to the municipality that has paid for the new development.

When examining the two options to make this housing development happen, there are partners that the City of Stevens Point can work with for both options. If the City of Stevens Point chooses to create a Community Land Trust, we recommend that the City works with the University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point Center for Land Use Education (UWSP CLUE) and the Madison Area Community Land Trust (MACLT). The UWSP CLUE offers a variety of educational resources and workshops that are related to community land trusts. Also, UWSP CLUE can provide knowledge relevant to the boulevard and community open space during the planning process when deciding which native species to plant and the layout of the community open space. The City of Stevens Point can work and learn from the MACLT to establish a CLT because the MACLT has developed several successful community land trusts in the Madison Area. If the City of Stevens Point chooses to establish a TIF District, we recommend that the City partners with Lawns Gone Native and the University of Wisconsin - Madison Extension Ashland County. Lawns Gone Native is a City run program that supports Stevens Point residents that want to establish more native species in their landscaping (City of Stevens Point, n.d.). Using Lawns Gone Native resources can guide planners and developers of which native species would be best to plant in the boulevard, community open space, and offer recommendations to future developers. The University of Wisconsin - Madison Extension Ashland County offers educational programs that assist communities in community economic development initiatives including TIF Districts.

Outdoor Recreation

Our previous research and engagement revealed overwhelming support for maintaining open space on this site. Residents further emphasized their desire for an added sense of community in the neighborhood. In response to this desire, our team recommends that the City designates 18 to 20 acres of the parcel as structured open space. We further recommend that the City adds three design elements that are consistent with the permitted uses and conditional uses described in 23.02.1(a) of the City of Stevens Point Code of Ordinances. These uses include an accessible recreational trail, community garden and orchard space, and a dog park (Figure 37).

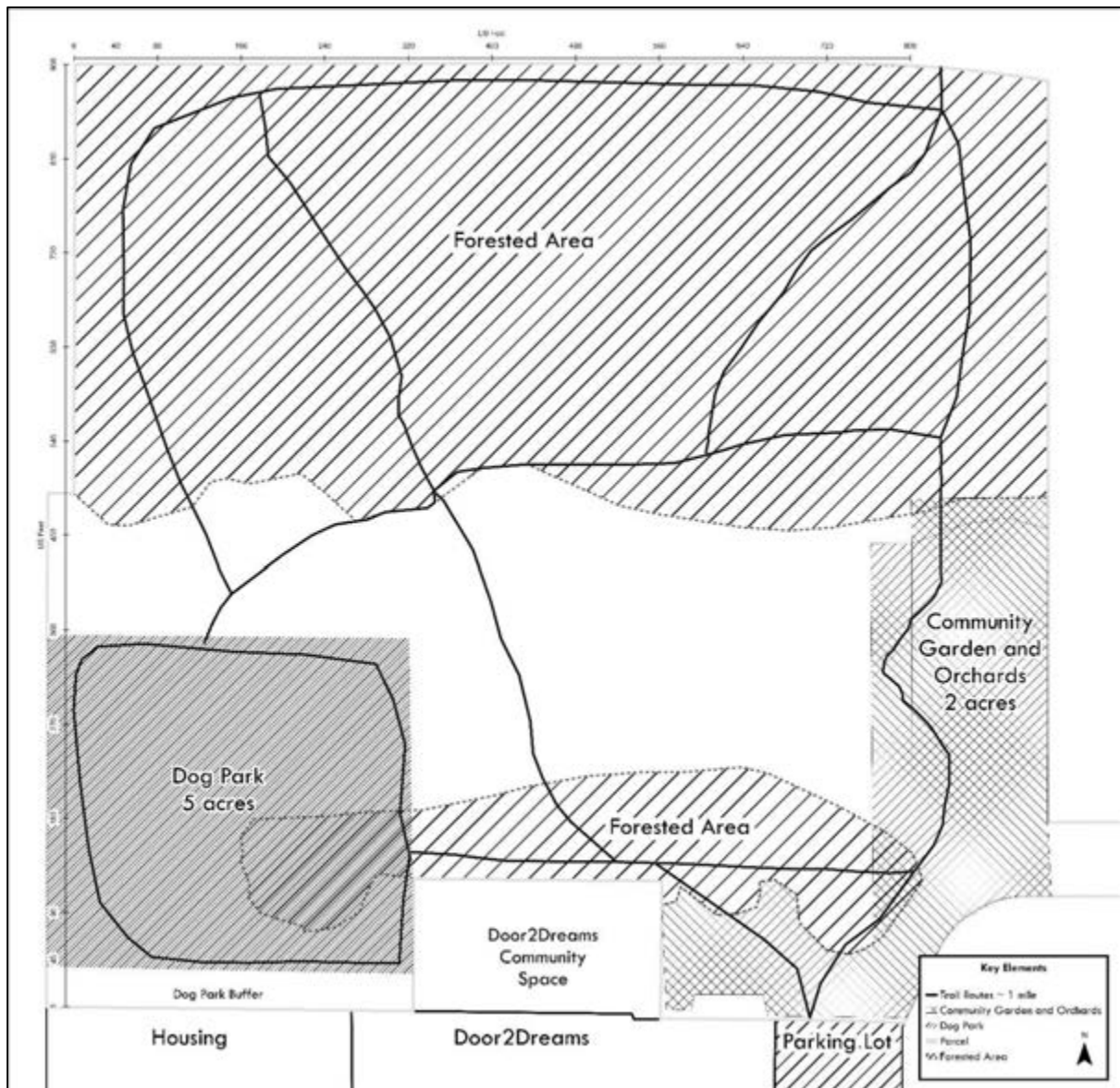


Figure 37. Site layout for proposed outdoor recreation master plan. Includes an accessible trail network, a dog park, and a community garden and orchard space. Created by Ella Stadel.

Dog Park

Our team determines that there are many ways to accomplish Goal 1: to “foster a stronger sense of community through open space.” After carefully considering community feedback and real-world examples, we believe that the addition of a dog park to this site will assist relationship building throughout the neighborhood. Dog parks allow pet owners and pet lovers to share a third space. This space prompts human interaction when dogs play with one another, creating a conversational opportunity.

We propose that around five acres of the site be structured as a fenced dog park (Figure 38). This dog park may be placed near the southwestern corner of the site to maximize the use of unforested space. The park may include benches for seating placed near natural shade. We further propose that a walking loop is added to the interior perimeter of the area to allow for continued walking for pet owners. We recommend that the city may plant a 40-foot buffer along the southern border, as well as maintain the existing 90-foot buffer between the proposed fence line and an adjacent apartment complex on the western border. We recommend that these buffers be comprised of deer resistant coniferous species such as eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), Arborvitae “Green Giant” (*Thuja plicata* 'Green Giant') or Spruce (*Picea* spp.) The western border currently contains mature trees and will require less planting than the southern border.



Figure 38. Visual representation of proposed dog park. Includes trail access, seating, and open space. Created by Morgan Goff.

Accessible Trail Network

Stevens Point residents overwhelmingly support the incorporation of accessible elements into a minimally developed space. This leads us to Goal 2: to “Provide accessible outdoor recreational opportunities”. We recommend that the City creates a structured trail

system with environmental education components that comply with the current ADA Standards for Accessible Design.

The proposed trail was created by using GPS to trace currently used routes that were made visible during snowpack (Figure 37). Our team recommends that these routes be formalized with the addition of a few connecting trails, as well as an interior dog park loop. A critical element of this design is a trail that will connect the Stevens Point Area High School (“SPASH”) on the northern boundary to Farmshed and Maria Drive along the southeastern boundary. The trail will be comprised of two surface types: crushed granite and boardwalk (Figure 39). The exact distances of each trail surface are not currently estimated. Boardwalk distance must be determined using known wetland delineation and standing water levels observed in spring. All soils on the site are recognized as hydric and therefore have flooding potential, therefore exact placement of boardwalks may best be determined from observation. Boardwalks may be constructed with standard dimensional lumber and appropriate anchors. Areas that do not experience regular flooding may be leveled to a slope no greater than 1:20 and laid with crushed granite. This will ensure a surface appropriate for users with various mobility challenges is available. All trails are advised to be at least five feet in width to comply with ADA Standard 403.5.3 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010). The total length of the trail system is roughly one mile.



*Figure 39. Visual representation of an accessible trail network. Includes crushed granite and boardwalk examples.
Created by Riley Hubanks.*

We proposed that the trail incorporates educational signage throughout the network. This includes a sign to honor the Sisters of Saint Joseph, a sign about the property’s history, a sign about wetlands in Wisconsin/Portage County, and other topics deemed valuable by stakeholders. We recommend that these signs are visual, tactile, and auditory (Figure 40) to improve educational access.



Figure 40. Visual representation of educational signage. Includes visual, auditory, and tactical components. Created by Riley Hubanks.

Community Garden and Orchard

Finally, the local community expresses a strong desire described in Goal 3: to “create access to nutritious foods”. Many residents wish to continue to localize food systems that are both high quality and affordable. Additionally, residents feel that this space should be useable for hands on education and community experiences.

We recommend that part of the parcel should be designated for a Community Garden and Orchard space to meet local needs. The proposed space is two acres and runs along the south and eastern boundaries of the property. The project will surround the trail that connects SPASH to Farmshed. It is also placed so as to avoid some of the wetlands and standing water in the area. The gardens are designed to incorporate perennial plantings, ADA accessible planting beds, inground beds, and an orchard walk along the main trail (Figure 41). Perennial plantings will require little maintenance compared to seasonal plantings. These may include foods such as currants (*Ribes spp.*), blueberries (*Vaccinium spp.*), raspberries or other brambles (*Rubus spp.*), rhubarb (*Rheum spp.*), or similar. ADA accessible planting beds will be built at two heights: 24” for wheelchair access, and 30” for individuals to stand who may have difficulty bending. These beds will be ideal for crops that grow no larger than two feet in diameter. Inground beds will be used for larger plants such as squashes and corn that may overcrowd smaller crops. Finally, we proposed an orchard walk along the path. This design is inspired by a community member’s wish to have some sort of “blossom celebration” by creating a space which boasts spring flowers. Fruit trees such as apples (*Malus spp.*), plums and cherries (*Prunus*

spp.), and pears (*Pyrus spp.*) will be planted, along with other edible trees and shrubs such as elderberry and sea buckthorn. Finally, benches and picnic tables are recommended to be placed within the garden space to allow individuals to enjoy the aesthetics of the landscape. Exact planting and seating will vary depending on which organizations assume responsibility for the garden space. This two-acre plot is not recommended to be the responsibility of the city, rather it is suggested to be based in a partnership described in the “Next Steps” chapter of this report.



Figure 41. Proposed layout for community garden and orchards. Includes accessible planting beds, seating opportunities, and a garden loop off of the accessible trail. Created by Ella Stadel.

Parking Lot

The City of Stevens Point, businesses located within the Convent building, as well as community members have expressed the need to include a parking lot on this site. This will allow improved access to recreational areas, as well as organizations such as CREATE Portage County and Farmshed. For this reason, we propose that a parking lot be added to the southeastern boundary of the property (See “Introduction”, Figure 1). We recommend

that this parking lot be constructed to prevent any significant increase in stormwater runoff. This may include a variety of designs including, but not limited to, semipermeable surfaces, swales, stormwater ponds or similar.

Conclusion

This chapter details the Housing and Outdoor Recreational groups master plan and final recommendations for the City of Stevens Point. These recommendations are based on community feedback, site analyses, and real-world examples. The next chapter, Chapter Seven, details the next steps for the project. These include funding, partnerships, and regulatory actions.

Chapter Seven:

Next Steps

Introduction

This chapter reveals potential next steps for the City of Stevens Point in order to implement our master plan designs. Each group defines short term steps that can be taken to cover upfront costs and create project frameworks. We then recommend long-term steps that will sustain the project once development of the site takes place.

Housing

Short-term

As the City of Stevens Point implements this project, the list below provides information on the short-term steps that can be taken:

- Rezone the parcel from commercial to residential
 - [City of Stevens Point Planning and Zoning Department](#)
 - Discussion at a City of Stevens Point Planning Commission Meeting
 - If approved, send the amendment to the Common Council
- Reach out to the different partnerships for implementation of the following ideas:
 - Community Land Trust possible partnerships:
 - [UW-Stevens Point Center for Land Use Education](#)
 - [Madison Area Community Land Trust](#)
 - TIF District
 - [University of Wisconsin – Madison Extension Ashland County](#)
 - Native Lawns
 - [Lawns Gone Native Program in City of Stevens Point](#)
 - Ensure that the community spaces and green spaces are planted with native Wisconsin plants

Long-term:

The following are long-term steps we recommend that the City of Stevens Point takes to advance the planning process:

- Creating a Community Land Trust
 - Key Partners:
 - [City of Stevens Point](#)
 - [UWSP Center for Land Use Education](#)
- Establish a TIF District
 - Key Partner:
 - [City of Stevens Point](#)
- City of Stevens Point creates a bid process for developers
 - Form a [BID Planning Committee](#)

Outdoor Recreation

Short-term

As the City of Stevens Point implements this project, the list below provides information on short-term steps that can be taken:

- Secure funding for the dog park by:
 - Applying for grants
 - Example: [PetSafe Unleashed Grant](#)
 - Fundraising and community initiatives via events
- Secure upfront funding for the Accessible Trail Network by:
 - Applying for grants
 - Example: [Driving Mobility and Accessibility on Public Lands Grant](#)
 - Example: [WDNR Recreational Trails Program](#)
- Secure upfront funding for the Community Garden and Orchard Space
 - Applying for grants
 - Example: [Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin](#)
 - Example: [Community Possible Grant – US Bank](#)
- Establish partnerships for the management of the Community Garden and Orchard Space
 - Create a partnership with the [Stevens Point Area School District](#) for nutrition, agricultural, and environmental education
 - Reach out to [Farmshed](#) and [Golden Sands RCD](#)

Long-term

The following are long-term steps we recommend that the City of Stevens Point takes to advance the planning process:

- Create a long-term funding mechanism for the dog park by:
 - Requiring Daily and/or Annual Park Passes
- Investigate connection between Accessible Trail Network and the [Green Circle Trail Network](#)
- Establish partnerships with local community organizations and educational institutes to maintain trail conditions
 - May include [Stevens Point Area School District](#), [University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point](#), or [Pacelli Catholic Schools](#)
- Establish distribution opportunities for food grown in the Community Garden and Orchard Space

- Create a partnership with the [Stevens Point Area School District](#) for inclusion in [Summer Food Service Programs and National School Lunch Program](#)
- Create a partnership with local nonprofits to distribute to those in need
- Offer produce to monthly community meals and similar opportunities in the City

Conclusion

The Capstone students defined both short- and long-term steps for the City of Stevens Point to take when implementing their recommendations. Our Housing group recommends reaching out to possible partners and rezoning the site. The long-term steps of this group include creating a Community Land Trust or establishing a Tax Incremental Finance District. Our Outdoor Recreation group's short-term steps specify finding funding sources for each project on the site. The long-term steps include creating partnerships with local entities and establishing sustainable funding. Both groups define short- and long-term steps for the City of Stevens Point for successful implementation of our final plan.

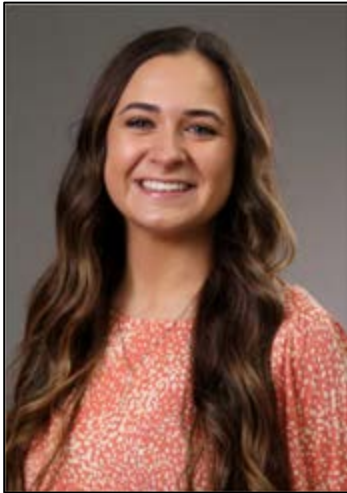
About the Authors

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Morgan Goff is a senior studying Conservation and Community Planning at UWSP. She has minors in GIS and Spatial Analysis and Business Administration. She will be continuing her education in the Master of Business Administration program at UWSP in the Fall of 2025 while working for UW-Extension's Center for Land Use Education. She will be deploying in 2026 with the Wisconsin Air National Guard.



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Riley Hubanks is a senior studying Natural Resource Planning at UWSP. She is very excited to be working for North Central Conservancy Trust as the Outreach & Development Coordinator starting in June. In her free time, she enjoys being outside, cooking, spending time with her family and friends, and playing with her cat, Nellie.



Anna Menominee

Anna Menominee is a senior at UWSP studying Conservation and Community Planning with a minor in Urban Planning and Geodesign. After graduation, she will be working as a Planning Intern for the City of Stevens Point working on various projects. In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors, spending time with family and friends, and writing.



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Ella Stadel is a senior at UWSP currently completing her Bachelors of Science in Conservation and Community Planning. Immediately following her graduation in May of 2025, Ella will work for Washington County as a Community Development Analysis, focusing on an owner-occupied affordable housing initiative as well as other community planning projects. In her spare time, Ella enjoys playing the piano, cooking, and spending time with her friends and family.



Audrey Webster

Audrey Webster is a senior at UWSP studying Conservation and Community Planning with a minor in Community Economic Development. After graduation, she will continue her internship as a Planner at the City of Waupaca Community and Economic Department. In her free time, Audrey enjoys spending time with her family and friends, being active outdoors, and traveling to new places.

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