



Village of DeForest

Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy

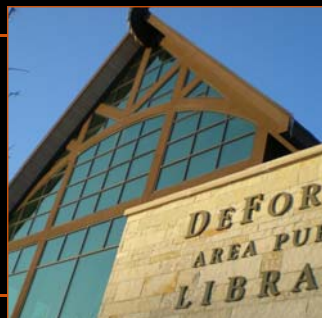


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1. Introduction

Planning Purpose

The Village of DeForest's downtown has traditionally been the heart of the community, although recent growth and development have resulted in expansion of the Village away from its historic center. A Village survey done in 1994 indicated that downtown revitalization and the development of more retail in the downtown was a priority of residents. Public input received during the preparation of the Village of DeForest Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2006) reinforced this desire for an active, vital downtown. Despite the Village's investment in its downtown over recent years, vacancies and limited commercial activity have generated concern about the ability of the downtown to sustain itself in the long-term. This study responds to this need by creating a strategy that will help the downtown succeed.

A high priority of the Village has been to fill vacant commercial space and other vacant or underutilized parcels in the Village with an appropriate mixture of uses that will create stronger economic activity in the downtown.

The goals of this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy* are to:

- Spotlight downtown opportunities related to the Village's regional position
- Suggest how the Downtown DeForest can specialize and showcase the Village's unique assets.
- Create a revitalization concept for the downtown building on past successes and focusing on priority areas.
- Recommend a feasible use-mix for the downtown that will create the activity and vitality to enhance it as an economic development asset for the Village; a commercial and activity center for Village residents; and a place where residents and visitors want to live, work, shop and play.
- Reflect and support ongoing planning initiatives, like the Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters initiatives and potential adjustments to a tax increment financing district.
- Develop an implementation strategy for achieving additional investment and activity in the downtown.

Study Area Boundary

The primary study area of this *Strategy* is the Village's downtown, defined as the area generally bounded by Stevenson Street and Fireman's Park on the east, past Main Street to the west, including the intersection of North Street and Main, and Jefferson Street to the south, although extending along the rail line at Market Street. The study area is shown on Map 1. The study includes both lands within and outside of the boundaries of Tax Increment Financing District (TID) #1.

The Planning Process

The planning process was led by the DeForest Redevelopment Authority (DRA), with assistance from its staff and consultants. The initial phase of the process to complete this *Strategy* was completed over a roughly 6-month period in 2006-07, and recommenced in 2008 incorporating the results of other planning initiatives. The process to complete this *Strategy* included the following key stages:

- Information Gathering and Data Collection: including existing conditions site inventory and preliminary market evaluation.
- Stakeholder Focus Groups: Three separate focus groups were conducted involving local officials and staff, downtown business representatives, and other business and community organization representatives.
- Interviews: Interviews were conducted both early on and later on the process. Interviews were intended to gather information, as well as to review preliminary ideas from the plan document. Property owners of sites described later in this study as “near term redevelopment sites” were a particular focus of the outreach.
- Opportunity Concept Development and Presentation: Preliminary and later refined opportunities were developed and discussed with the DeForest Redevelopment Authority, Planning and Zoning Commission, and Village staff.
- Initial Presentation of *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy*: The full *Strategy* was presented at a Joint Meeting of the Village Board and DeForest Redevelopment Authority in January 2007. It was later presented to the Plan Commission in early 2008.
- Refine Downtown Revitalization Concept: The *Strategy* went through several rounds of refinement to incorporate input, most recently in late 2008, to reflect updated conditions, studies, and attitudes.
- Detailed Implementation Component: The final step in preparation of the *Strategy* was to prepare highlight priority implementation actions, review potential funding sources, and suggest timing for major projects.

Summary of Related Planning Efforts

The Village of DeForest Comprehensive Plan, adopted in August 2006 and annually amended, serves as the blueprint for future growth and development in the community. Many of the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan relate to the Village’s downtown area. Recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan cited below are most closely related to this downtown-specific planning effort.

- Continue to retain community facilities in the downtown area, including the Municipal Building complex, Post Office, and DeForest Area Public Library.
- Attract new events that will continue to draw people to the area, such as farmers’ market, festivals and celebrations.
- Encourage continued revitalization of the downtown area through redevelopment of properties in designated areas.
- Encourage commercial developments that are most appropriate for the historic downtown to locate or remain there, rather than in other commercial districts in the Village.
- Identify and update specific targeted sites for redevelopment, emphasizing more intensive use and redevelopment of existing commercial/mixed use sites.
- Pay special attention to design and scale when considering approvals for new and renovated buildings in the downtown areas.

- In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce and DeForest Redevelopment Authority, work on a multifaceted economic strategy for continued revitalization of the downtown, focused on business attraction and retention.
- Promote the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services, offices, professional services, and community uses through marketing, investment and incentive strategies.

A number of other planning and related documents were referenced when developing this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy*. These documents include:

- Village of DeForest Park and Open Space Plan
- DeForest Area Chamber of Commerce Studies
- Tourism Assessment Recap and Recommendations (Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau)
- Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities and Priority Projects (Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters, June 2008)

2. Study Area Existing Conditions

At the time this document was prepared, the downtown area featured a mix of retail and service-oriented businesses residential development. Both public and private investment has been directed to the downtown over the previous decade. For example, the first phases of the Village's multi-year downtown redevelopment project, commenced in the 1990s, have resulted in an attractive municipal campus and assemblage of mixed-use buildings in the downtown.

The existing land use mix within the project study area is represented on Map 1: Existing Conditions. The existing land uses are categorized and described below.

Retail Commercial

This category includes retail, goods, and food service related businesses, comprising about 8% of the study area. There are several retail commercial properties along the northwest side of Main Street and along Holum and Commerce Streets.

Existing retail commercial uses within the study area include restaurants, a bar/tavern, grocery and beverage stores, personal service oriented businesses, other service related businesses (e.g., automobile), entertainment, and other hobby related businesses and activities.



Office Commercial

This category includes office and service-related businesses, comprising about 15% of the study area. Offices are dispersed throughout the study area. They range from large single-tenant office buildings (e.g., DMB Bank on North Main Street) to small residential-conversion office spaces, to large multi-tenant buildings.

Map 1: Existing Conditions

Mixed Use

This category is defined by a mixture of retail, office, and residential uses; typically first story commercial use, second and third story residential use. In the study area, this category includes the existing Town Square development buildings, as well as the building on the corner of Main and Commerce Streets. This category encompasses about 3% of the study area.

The four-building Town Square development offers 72 apartments and 15,300 square feet of commercial space. Commercial tenants include two service oriented business (insurance and design), a fitness center, and a frame shop. Nearly all of the residential and commercial spaces were leased at the time this document was prepared.



Residential

Uses in this category include single, two-family, and multiple family residential uses dispersed throughout the study area, representing about 26% of the study area. Single and two-family housing is located throughout and just beyond the study area, and is in varying states of repair. The largest multi-family developments include the Carriage Way apartments. There is also a senior housing complex located on North Main Street.

Industrial / Heavy Commercial

This category generally includes light industrial, indoor manufacturing, storage, and some related commercial uses. Examples of industrial uses in the study area include EVCO and Chase Lumber. These uses tend to be located on the periphery of the study area. They occupy about 17% of the study area.

Institutional

This category includes public buildings, churches and schools. In the study area, there has been much recent investment in the municipal campus and nearby areas, including:

- Village Municipal Building remodeling in 2004 and 2006.
- The 22,500 square foot DeForest Area Public Library, completed in 2002, which also houses the DeForest Area Historical Society, Alternative Education, and meeting rooms.
- Streetscape improvements, primarily along Holum Street and Main Street accompanying the Town Square development.
- The Public Services Facility, completed in 2000, which houses the Village's public works, streets, utilities, parks and recreation and maintenance functions.
- A Public Safety Building, which houses the police, Fire/EMS, Village Municipal Court, built in 1998.
- The recently remodeled DeForest Area Community & Senior Center at North and Main Streets.



Institutional uses comprise about 5% of the study area.

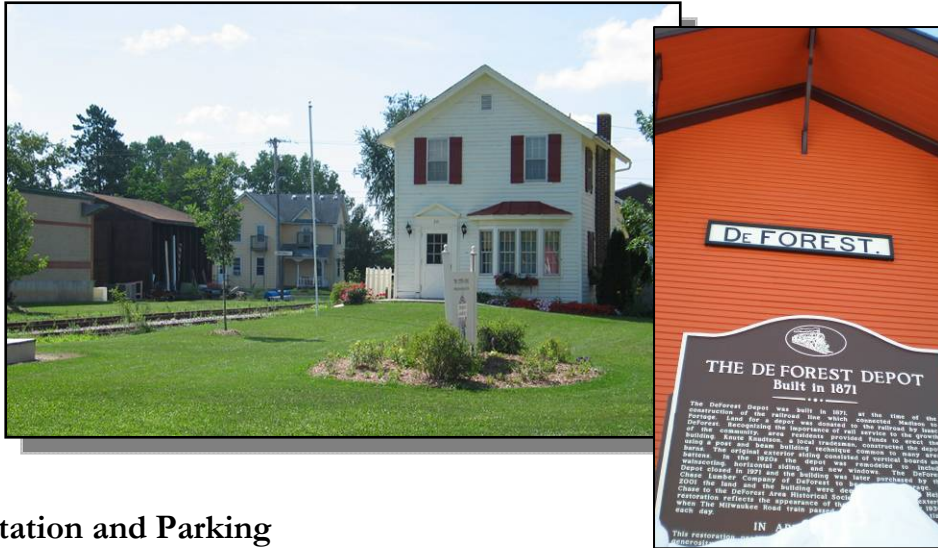


Park/Open Space

This category includes public parks, environmentally sensitive lands and natural resources. Within the study area, public open spaces include Fireman's Park and Veteran's Memorial Park. The regionally-important Yahara River corridor also runs through the study area. Park and Open Space uses comprise about 18% of the study area, which is relatively high for a downtown area.

Historic Structures

Several structures with historically significant appearance or features have been identified in the study area. These include the Lyster House at 201 DeForest Street, the DeForest Railroad Depot building at 215 Market Street (restored in 2008), and several homes with architectural character listed on the State's Architecture and History Inventory.



Transportation and Parking

The major transportation thoroughfares through the study area are Main Street (CTH CV) (running north-south) and Holum Street (running east-west). The portions of both of these roads through the study area include 2 lanes of traffic, and on-street parking. North Street (CTH V) also runs east-west through the northern portion of the study area. The Main Street bridge was reconstructed in 2008.

In some stretches of the study area, Main Street (CTH CV) includes sidewalk along both sides of the street. However, there are some segments lacking sidewalks, creating a disconnected pedestrian circulation system through the area. However, the Village added a path to Main Street between the Yahara River and North Street in 2008.

Holum Street has sidewalks on both sides from Main Street to the railroad tracks. On the south side of Holum Street sidewalks extend to just past Stevenson Street. On the north side of Holum Street, the sidewalks extend to Eagle Point Elementary School.

North Street is also an important east-west street in the northern portion of the study area. There are limited sidewalk connections along this arterial. There is currently a stop sign at the intersection of North Street and Main Street, however upgraded traffic control at this intersection (probably signalization) is recommended in the Village's 2006 Comprehensive Plan.

Commerce Street and DeForest Street runs roughly parallel to Holum Street to the south. These are important connections in the downtown circulation system. There are sidewalks on both sides from Main Street to the railroad tracks. Past the railroad tracks, sidewalk extends on the north side of the street to Stevenson. From there and around Fireman's Park, sidewalk is limited.

Community Profile

The “big picture” forces driving the growth and change throughout the Village of DeForest are several:

- Rapid growth in the 1990s and early 2000s. There was a more than 50% increase in population between 1990 and 2000. The estimated 2005 population was 8,288.
- Excellent access to the Village via Interstate 90/94/39, Highways 51, multiple major interchanges, and several state and county highways. Programmed highway improvements and expanded regional transit opportunities will result in significant change. For instance, Highway 51 is scheduled to be reconstructed as a freeway through the DeForest area in 2012-2014. This project will result in the closure of access to Highway 51 at Holum Street, limiting direct access from Highway 51 to the Downtown to a new interchange at CTH V/North Street.
- Expansive land area. The Village is unique in having two portions of the Village that are geographically separated. The north is characterized by both historic and recent Village development. The southern portion of the Village, a recent addition, includes the North Towne Corporate Park and vacant areas planned for mainly regional commercial and office/research development.
- Growth outward, which has generated momentum to revitalize and ensure the continued health of the centralized downtown area.
- Positioning at the edge of the Madison metropolitan area. DeForest has realized trends in residential and industrial growth that are connected to Madison, as well as its north-metro community neighbors.
- Exceptional schools, a well-educated workforce, and quality job opportunities in a variety of industries.
- An interconnected system of natural resources that includes the Upper Yahara River, linking the northern and southern portions of the Village.
- An expanding Dane County research, hi-tech, and bi-agricultural business sector, within which DeForest industries are players (e.g., Sanamax biodiesel, ABS).
- High quality agricultural land that defines the Village’s edges. The Village is impacted by, affects, and can benefit from regional trends in the agricultural economy.

Demographic Market Analysis

An analysis of the demographic characteristics of the population in and around the study area provides insight into potential market opportunities. This analysis examines three market areas centered on the downtown: the Pedestrian Area, which encompasses a half-mile radius; the Village Area, which includes a five-mile radius; and the Regional Area, which considers a 15-mile radius.

Community Tapestry of DeForest

To provide a snapshot view of the lifestyle and consumer characteristics of the Village of DeForest area's population, the following ESRI Business Information's "Community Tapestry" analysis for the Village, based on general demographic information, provides insight into the composition of a community. ESRI Business Information Solutions' Community Tapestry segmentation system classifies U.S. neighborhoods into 65 market segments based on their socioeconomic and demographics composition from 2000 Census data projected to 2005. Segments are combined to identify Life Mode summary groups with similar consumption and demographic patterns.

DeForest Area 2006: Tapestry Groups in Rankings

- 29.5% **Sophisticated Squires.** Residents in this group enjoy cultured country living on the fringe of urbanized areas. These urban escapees are mostly married-couple families with children that range from toddlers to young adults. The majority of householders are between 35 and 54 years old and are highly educated. The median household income is \$80,500.
- 26.3% **Up and Coming Families.** With a median age of just 31.9 years, this group consists mainly of young, affluent families with younger children. Nearly two-thirds of residents aged 25 years and older have a degree or some college credits. The median household income is \$68,400.
- 25.3% **Main Street USA.** This group represents the typical U.S. mix of household types. Approximately half of the households are composed of married-couple families and nearly one-third are single-person or shared households. The median household income for this group is \$51,200.
- 11.0% **Green Acres.** Married couples, with and without children, comprise 71 percent of the households in this group. The median age is 39.9 years and more than half who are aged 25 years and older hold a degree or attended college. The median household income is \$62,300.
- 7.8% **In Style.** Households without children comprise more than two-thirds of this group. The population is slightly older, with a median age of 39.3 years and a median household income of \$67,800. Nearly 40 percent of the population aged 25 years and older hold a bachelor's or graduate degree.
- 0.1% **Prosperous Empty Nesters.** Residents in this group are enjoying the lifestage segue from child rearing to retirement. The median age is 47.2 years. Population growth in this segment is increasing slowly, at 0.8 percent annually, but the pace is likely to accelerate as the baby boomers mature. The median household income for this group is a \$66,200.

Pedestrian Area Analysis (1/2 mile radius)

- **Age.** Almost 30 percent of the population in the Pedestrian Area is younger than 18. As this large group is mainly dependant upon adults for transportation, the Village's downtown could provide youth- and family-oriented destinations within walking or biking distance. Additionally, about one-fifth of the population in this area is considered "middle-aged" (35 to 45 years old). It is likely that these adults are parents as related children are present in three-quarters of households. Nearly eight percent of the population is 65 or older, the lowest percentage of all three comparison Areas.
- **Income.** The estimated median household income in 2006 was \$71,103 with 66 percent of household earning between \$50,000 and \$149,999 per year. After taxes, households in this area had a median disposable income of \$51,465. These figures indicate that this Area's earnings are slightly below the Village as a whole.
- **Education.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost one-third of the population age 25 and older had attained a high school level education and nearly 20 percent of the same population had earned a bachelor's degree.

Village Area Analysis (5 mile radius)

- **Age.** Age distribution in the Village Area is similar to that of the Pedestrian Area, with nearly 30 percent of the population in the Village Area younger than 18 years old. Similarly, this suggests opportunities for youth- and family-oriented activities. Additionally, about 17 percent of the population in this Area is considered "middle-aged" (35 to 45 years old). Further analysis of the "Community Tapestry" of DeForest suggests that married-couple families are the predominant household type.
- **Income.** The estimated median household income in 2006 was \$74,069, with over 66 percent of household earning between \$50,000 and \$149,999 per year. After taxes, households in this area have a median disposable income of \$52,744. Both the median household income and median disposable income are slightly higher than that of the Pedestrian and Regional Areas suggesting significant spending power.
- **Education.** Similar to that of the Pedestrian Area, almost one-third of the population age 25 and older had attained a high school level education and over 20 percent of the same population had earned a bachelor's degree.

Regional Area Analysis (15 miles radius)

- **Age.** Age distribution in the Regional Area is slightly different than that of the Pedestrian and Village Areas. Nearly one fifth of the population in the Regional Area is younger than 18. Additionally, the 18 to 24 age group constitutes a significant percentage of the total population as a result of the large UW-Madison and MATC student body. This percentage is twice as large as the same age group in the Pedestrian and Village Areas. About 15 percent of the population in this area is considered "middle-aged" (35 to 45 years old), which is slightly lower than the other Areas.
- **Income.** The estimated median household income in 2006 was \$56,491, with almost half of household in the area earning between \$50,000 and \$149,999 per year. After taxes, households in this area had a median disposable income of \$40,784. Both the median household income and median disposable income are considerably lower than that of the Pedestrian and Village Areas.
- **Education.** According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 22 percent of the population age 25 and older had attained a high school level education and over 24 percent of the same population

had earned a bachelor's degree. These figures indicate that higher education attainment in the Regional Area is slightly higher than that of the Pedestrian and Village Areas.

Key Conclusions of Demographic Market Analysis

A number of findings related to the future use mix and opportunities for new development in the downtown emerge from review of the demographics in and around the Village and suggest the following:

- High proportion of children and teenagers in the Village spotlight opportunities for family and youth activities.
- Broad age distribution suggests opportunities for all age groups—youth, families, middle-age, and seniors—including coffee shops, a family restaurant, entertainment venues, and parks.
- The aging population suggests new housing opportunities for retiring “Boomers” and “Empty-nesters,” and new models of independent and assisted living oriented residential development for the elderly.
- The high and growing youth and elderly population demonstrates the importance of a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment.
- Relatively high disposable incomes suggest strong potential for retail.
- Much of the educated workforce commutes out of the Village for work, which provides an opportunity to capture the resident market in the evening and on weekends for convenient entertainment and shopping.

Summary of Public Input

There were several focus groups held as part of the process to identify issues and opportunities for the study area. Three were held on August 3, 2006. The consultant also conducted individual interviews with property owners. The major findings from the public input are summarized as follows.



Downtown DeForest has Untapped Potential

There are several gaps in the Village that could be filled in the downtown to better serve the needs of the residents of the Village. Examples of the types of businesses for which there is demand include a family-friendly sit-down restaurant or pub, live music venue, ice cream parlor, year-round recreational activities, kid and family friendly businesses, and entertainment for singles and older residents.

Preserve and Enhance the Unique Community Identity and Downtown Health

The Village is experiencing growth pressure on its edges that will continue to shape the community. Particularly as “DeForest South” develops, the geographic center of the Village will be pulled from the downtown area. Furthermore, the types of uses located in new Village growth areas may threaten the health of existing or potential businesses in the downtown. Facilitating sustainable growth and



development for the entire Village, while preserving the health and character of the downtown, will be critical.

Civic Pride – Ready for Revitalization

The Village has achieved great success with the first stages of its downtown redevelopment. While celebrating the accomplishments to date, it will be important to proactively market the downtown, fill vacancies, and explore additional opportunities for redevelopment and infill development.

Market Potential Shaped by Regional Relationships and Local Demand

DeForest is a part of the Madison Metropolitan area. As such, much of the resident workforce commutes into Madison or elsewhere in the Metro area for work, shopping, and entertainment. At the same time, as the northern gateway to Dane County, DeForest draws commuters from the north. As the Metro area continues to grow, DeForest will continue to be an attractive

community to live and work in – both for people seeking a quieter alternative to Madison, as well as those from outside the Metro area looking for job opportunities. For its residents, DeForest can offer a convenient alternative to shopping, dining, and seeking entertainment in Madison. Focusing on offering the services, shopping, gathering places and entertainment venues that Village residents seek on a regular basis will mean the downtown can fill some of the local demand and reduce leakage of spending out of the community.

Desire a Sustainable Use Mix that Draws Tourists and Serves Residents of All Ages

To best serve the residents of the Village, the downtown needs to offer a range of activities that respond to the diversity of age-groups and family types in the Village – from the young to the old; singles, young families, empty-nesters, and retirees. Beyond fulfilling its primary role of serving the community, the Village can also brand its downtown as the place to attract visitors through making strategic improvements, establishing retail niches and destination uses, and facilitating community events.

3. Opportunities Analysis

Regional Opportunities

To begin to identify opportunities and strategies for the downtown, it is useful to take a step back and examine the regional context. Ultimately, the regional context of the Village strongly shapes what is possible, and what will be successful in the downtown.

Location Within the Metro Area Shapes Opportunities and Challenges

The Village's place in the Greater Madison Metropolitan area brings opportunities that come with growth. As the Village and other north-metro communities embrace these opportunities build unique economic niches.

- Madison growth pressure results in expansion toward DeForest
- Opportunity to build and enhance “north metro community” relationships
- Intergovernmental agreements with neighboring communities

The Area Has Many Transportation Assets

The Village has outstanding transportation access that not only makes it an attractive home to commuters to live, but also convenient accessibility and operations for workforce from outside the Village and for new businesses to locate.

- Interstate 39/90/94
- Interchanges at CTH V/Interstate and Hwy 19/Interstate
- US Highway 51, which is scheduled to be converted to a four-lane freeway by 2014
- Canadian Pacific Railroad, which also provides future opportunities for commuter rail
- Dane County Regional Airport, which has been undergoing expansion in recent years

World Class Farmland Can Help Create Identity and Activity

The high-quality farmland surrounding the Village is both a “quality of life” and an economic asset. As the bioeconomy initiative is gaining momentum statewide, within Dane County and the Madison Metro area, the Village is at a geographic and knowledge-based hub of this economy. The Village has an opportunity to capitalize on its agricultural heritage and proximity to agricultural land and inputs by encouraging companies in research and product development.



Map 2: Regional Opportunities

The Village is Part of the Northeast Regional Employment Center

The Village is located within a portion of the metro employment area that is recognized for its accessibility, receptiveness to new business, and growth potential. Examples of major northeast metro employment centers include:

- Corporate offices
 - American Center
 - Sun Prairie Business Park
 - High Crossing Environs
- Research
 - Innovation Springs Business Park
 - Center for Industry and Commerce
- Industrial
 - DeForest Business Park
 - North Towne Corporate Park



The Village Can Better Celebrate Regional Recreational Resources

The Yahara River system unites the north and south portions of the Village of

DeForest, as well as connects to Madison and the region's chain of lakes. The Yahara runs through the heart of the Village's downtown. In 2008, the Village participated in an analysis performed by the Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters focused on particular opportunities associated with the Upper Yahara River. This resulted in a document call the Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities and Priority Projects. The Village also has high-quality parks and open space system and a five-year Park and Open Space Plan.

Some key opportunities from these two plans that relate specifically to the downtown include:

- Creating opportunity for creating and enhancing land and water trails in and to the downtown area, including:
 - Recent Bridge Replacement on Main Street and future bridge replacement on North Street
 - Land trail connection linking Western Green Trail to Delkamp Trail
 - Generally enhanced trail connections between the River, schools, and library
- Land and water trailhead opportunities with launches, signage, informational kiosks, rest areas, parking and other amenities
- Enhancements to Veterans Park, including adding land and water trailheads and interpretive signs
- Redevelopment and repurposing of Fireman's Park to serve as a community festival park, coupled with providing a community park focused on athletic fields elsewhere

Downtown DeForest Should "Serve Residents First"

By offering the range of services, shopping, dining, gathering places, and entertainment venues that residents seek on a regular basis, Downtown DeForest can more effectively serve Village residents. Residents will benefit from the convenience of having more of what they need and desire nearby, increasing a sense of community and reducing driving time and trips to other communities to fulfill their needs. Encouraging the types of businesses and activities that serve residents also re-circulates more spending within the Village. As a positive side effect, achieving a critical mass of businesses

that support residents can also provide a draw for visitors and spawn businesses that will also attract tourists.

The Village Can Better Serve Consumer Markets from Surrounding Communities

As the northern gateway to Dane County, the Village has the opportunity to pull customers from rural areas, or communities outside of Dane County. Its good location and easy access provide this opportunity. Unique niche specialties in the Village would provide an even greater pull. Residents within 15-20 miles—particularly from the north—could travel to DeForest for goods and services instead of to Waunakee, Sun Prairie or Madison.

“Downtown DeForest” Can Be Marketed as a Destination

The downtown could be enhanced as a critical center-point for the Village – economically, socially, and culturally. Given recent redevelopment success and the public and private investment directed to the downtown in the last decade, the Village should continue to direct its efforts to achieve a more vibrant and active downtown. The remainder of this study will present several strategies to achieve this.



Market Opportunities Related to the Market Niche

The broader regional opportunities discussed in the previous section can be further focused to suggest opportunities for different types of uses within Downtown DeForest. The following suggests categories of uses that should be more actively pursued in the downtown, and describes why the downtown has strong potential for these uses.

Downtown Residential

- Central location for residents
- Adjacent to existing services
- Potential future commuter rail
- Accommodate all markets within the downtown
 - Young professionals
 - Seniors & Aging Baby-boomers
 - Madison transplants

Entertainment/Retail

- Capitalize on downtown character as asset
- Activities that compliment existing retail and service businesses
- New businesses that capitalize on surrounding agriculture and recreation along Yahara River
- Higher density of agglomerated niche businesses to create a tourism destination
- Unique specialty retail and entertainment – draws patrons from surrounding communities
- Four-season activities (e.g., indoor recreation, ice rink)
- Accommodate all markets and serve Village residents
 - Families with young children and/or teens
 - Students (in close walking distance to the middle school and high school)
 - Singles and Empty-nesters
 - Seniors



Employment – Knowledge Worker (Secondary Impact)

- Office space in second stories of new and existing buildings
- New start-up businesses in downtown
- Live-work opportunities, particularly in the Commerce Street area

Summary of Promising Future Uses for DeForest's Downtown

- Restaurant (family-friendly, supper club, diner, fish-fry, pizza, brewpub, banquet room, ethnic)
- Specialty Food Service (Ice-cream, dessert, deli, butcher)
- Hobby-oriented stores (crafts, electronics, yarn/fabric, scrapbooking)
- Office supplies, Bookstore, Music
- Niche shopping (galleries, jewelry, household specialty items)
- Sports and recreation shopping (bikes, paddling)
- Recreational activities (indoor sports, dance)
- Markets, shows, festivals (farmers market, flea market, kid friendly-festivals)
- Entertainment (neighborhood pub, places to listen to music)
- Services (IT, computer repair, photography, health related, barber)

DeForest Central Area Opportunities and Market Niche

To fully understand downtown area opportunities and market niches, existing and future Village-wide commercial development should be understood. This step will help to maximize downtown success by minimizing repetition or competition among commercial use areas. Commercial development in the downtown study area and the broader central portion of the Village can be categorized into three areas with distinct land uses and building form – Commercial Redevelopment Crossroads, Auto-Oriented Commercial, and Historic Downtown. These are illustrated on Map 3.

Commercial Redevelopment Crossroads

This gateway commercial area, at the intersection of North Street and Main Street, offers infill and redevelopment opportunities. Existing commercial uses include a small grocery store, car wash, liquor store, bank, and a strip mall. UW Health also operates a medical clinic, and EVCO has a substantial industrial presence. All of these uses are designed for automobile access. Buildings are located away from the streets with parking in front. Sidewalk connections are limited and each business has its own parking lot.

Future uses could include office, medical center expansion, neighborhood retail and services such as a bank, restaurants, day-care, family activity centers, or indoor recreation. As sites redevelop, site design should be integrated between businesses to provide opportunities to share parking and roadway access. Buildings should be oriented toward Village streets with pedestrian connections to sidewalks. Off-street parking lots should be located behind buildings and landscaped.

Auto-Oriented Commercial

A large commercial district currently exists south of downtown. This auto-oriented district is comprised of two retail strip malls containing uses such as a grocery store, video store, dry-cleaner, fast food restaurants, drug store and discount store. Two newer banks and a new office building recently located in this area. This area is popular with patrons and serves both the Village and surrounding area. These businesses will likely continue to prosper and the uses should generally not be duplicated in the historic downtown area to the north.

Historic Downtown

Future uses in the historic downtown area should be unique to the Village and build upon regional opportunities. Niche retail uses such as gift shops, hobby shops, bookstore, children's boutique, galleries, and artisan shops should be directed toward the downtown. These uses help define the downtown and Village identity, and fit well into a dense urban building form. Other uses that should concentrate downtown include local services, food and entertainment, civic uses, urban housing, public spaces, indoor recreation and a potential transit stop.

Downtown Use-Mix "Themes"

The Opportunities Analysis suggests some strong "themes" in potential new uses. These can be cast to create a unique identity and niche for the Village and its downtown.

Agriculture and Food: The Village's agricultural context and some of the needs identified suggest that food could be a focus in the Downtown. Examples include specialty shops – a deli, butcher, popcorn, bakery, ice-cream; a "Blue Ribbon Steakhouse" drawing on the presence of ABS in the Village; a country-western bar; a farmers market and restaurants that promote locally grown foods –bolstering the surrounding area's agricultural economy.

Youth: The demographics in the Village support new development that is kid-focused and friendly. New daycare opportunities; year-round activity centers like indoor recreation, an ice-rink, and activities; family-restaurants, pizza parlor; a "diner" and ice cream/soda fountain catering to pre-and post high school athletic events and after-school.

Recreation: The Village's river and trails and access to the countryside suggest opportunities to create a recreational focus. The Village can serve as a trailhead to the River and the countryside – bicycle rental and supply stores to access area trails and roads; a paddling shop with canoe/kayak rental; and other active sporting goods.

Map 3: Central Area Opportunities and Market Niches

4. Revitalization Concept Plan

The Revitalization Concept Plan map (Map 4) suggests a mixed approach to downtown area revitalization to maximize economic opportunities, while retaining viable uses and acknowledging reasonable public and private investment that cognizant of economic realities. The map also suggests options for locating market niche uses and specific design concepts in some of the identified areas. Map 4 illustrates several geographic areas of focus, which include: Near-, Mid-, and Long-Term Redevelopment Areas, Site/Building Enhancement Areas, Housing Rehabilitation Focus Areas, and Recreation Areas. These are addressed in turn below.

Near-Term Redevelopment Areas (Illustrated on Map 4)



Near-Term Redevelopment Areas are suggested as higher priority and/or shorter redevelopment areas, with a potential likelihood of redevelopment within five to ten years. These sites are those with key visibility, particularly focused at key corners of Main and North Streets and Main and Holum Streets. These intersections function as an increasingly important downtown gateway and central “four corners” area respectively. These sites are also generally underutilized and/or contain businesses that may be better suited for other parts of the Village. Finally, Near-Term Redevelopment Area sites are those that, given landowner interest, actual or potential site availability, or other factors, are most likely to be available for redevelopment in the near-term.

Redevelopment of these sites may be initiated by a private developer or by the Village. Most of the Near-Term Redevelopment Areas are located within the boundaries of TID #1, or could be encompassed within minor expansions to TID #1. The areas include the following (numbers correspond with the numbers on Map 4).



3. Gateway Commercial Redevelopment (Southwest corner of North and Main Streets)

The corner of Main Street and North Street serves as the downtown gateway from the north, and the aesthetics of site development should be a careful consideration. This entryway to the downtown will be even more important once access from Highway 51 is removed from Holum Street in the future. An attractive, prominent building at Site #3 would better announce this entrance compared to current uses; a two-story building should be located on the corner.

Quality architecture and materials should be encouraged, such as stone and brick. This site would be ideal for a bank and compatible offices due to its prominent corner location. Other potential uses include a high-quality gas station / convenience store (see above photo), daycare, dry cleaner, retail shop, or other community retail services. Assembly of more than one property in this area would probably be necessary for effective redevelopment.

5. Key Corner Redevelopment Site (Northwest corner of Holum and Main Streets)

This prominent corner site will have high market potential and is therefore recommended for near-term redevelopment, with an emphasis on quality architecture and materials. The new building should be 1.5 to 3 stories tall and be located close to the intersection to help define the “four corners.” Potential future uses include a restaurant/entertainment use, supper club, brewpub, or local services. Opportunities to capture and take advantage of rear yard views of the Yahara should be explored. The lots in this area may be combined to create a larger redevelopment project.

6. Key Corner Redevelopment Site (Northeast corner of Holum and Main Streets)

This large site is a key redevelopment site with a high market value and high visibility. It is currently in Village ownership, and is recommended for very near term redevelopment. Potential future uses include a family diner and niche retail uses such as a gift shop, hobby shop, book store, bike shop, or specialty food/deli; office and health-related uses could be located on upper stories. Quality architecture, materials and site design will set a precedent for future downtown buildings. The building should be located at the corner with direct access to the sidewalk. The building should be 1.5 to 3 stories in height, ideally with awnings or other similar features along the street to create a pedestrian friendly streetscape. Retail parking should be located on-street and to the rear of the building. At the time of redevelopment, streetscape treatments matching the south side of Holum Street should be installed. Amenities such as pedestrian lighting, benches, street streets, terrace pavers and banners will help define the niche retail core of the downtown.



10. Food and Entertainment Redevelopment (Southwest corner of Holum and Main Streets)

The tavern on this corner is a reuse of a former home. This building could be further renovated or redeveloped into a commercial building of similar architectural style as other downtown buildings. The renovated or new building is recommended to house a family-friendly café, restaurant, or pub with quality architecture (like an Ella's Deli or Red Robin)



and 1.5 to 3 stories in height to define the corner and downtown core. Achieving a critical parcel size will be a challenge for this site, and potential combination with currently residential lots to the south may be advisable. One of these is a home of historic significance that could potentially be relocated elsewhere.

12. Potential Acquisition for Park (Residential lots on corner of Stevenson and DeForest Streets)

Future acquisition of these two residential lots at the northwest corner of the main Fireman's Park block would help support the Village's efforts to implement a plan to revitalize and change the mix of cultural and recreational offerings in Fireman's Park. More detail on park opportunities is included in the Village's Park and Open Space Plan and in #13 on a subsequent page in this section. Alternatively or in addition, redevelopment of the two single family homes adjacent to Fireman's Park would assist the Village in implementing additional parking or other civic uses.

Mid-Term Redevelopment Area (Illustrated on Map 4)

Sites designated as Mid-Term Redevelopment Areas are relatively strong candidates for redevelopment. However, given various factors including market conditions, perceived viability of existing uses, perceived property owner desires, and Village/DRA priorities and capacity redevelopment of these sites is not anticipated in the next few years. Still, the Village will be receptive to private initiatives to spur redevelopment of this area sooner if desired. The Mid-Term Redevelopment Areas (at the northwest and northeast corners of Main Street and North Street) are highly visible and important to establish the downtown gateway and improve the image of the Village. Redevelopment of these sites may also be affected and driven by future improvements to North Street. The Mid-Term Redevelopment Areas include the following, with numbers corresponding to the two areas shown on Map 4.

1. Redevelopment for Office or Parking (Northwest corner of North and Main Streets)

The current use of this site is a bus company near the northwest intersection of North Street and Main Street. Options for this site relate to a private entity or the Village working with the current user on potential relocation. If that occurs, one option is to make the site available for the adjacent user to the east (EVCO) to expand. Another option is for the site to be redeveloped for a different, more intensive and downtown-friendly business or office use. Any redevelopment concept for this site should provide for sufficient off-street parking, given the current off-street parking shortages in the vicinity.

2. Potential Medical Campus Expansion or Other (Northeast corner of North and Main Streets)

This site currently contains a medical clinic and various other storage-oriented uses near the northeast corner of North and Main Streets. Options for the site include expansion of health care and related services, including those for the elderly. A wellness center promoting more integrated and holistic health options could be considered. As part of redevelopment, a more logical parking arrangement with the adjacent Community Center should be pursued, and access from public streets to the sites should be improved. Alternatively or in addition, this area may also be appropriate for additional housing. Either of these ideas, or other redevelopment options, should include discussion of assembly of more than one property.

Site/ Building Enhancement Areas (Illustrated on Map 4)

The Site/Building Enhancement Areas, indicated by light blue highlighting on the Revitalization Concept Plan (Map 4), suggest some broader parts of the downtown where priority will be placed on enhancing the existing business viability, aesthetics, and/or functionality; rather than on redevelopment. Enhancements that will be encouraged and/or supported include, but are not limited to, building façade improvements, landscaping, lighting, and signage enhancements; access improvements – including parking, pedestrian, and bicycle; and potentially business support and/or assistance to maintain and enhance the viability of existing businesses in the area and bring in new businesses. When and if these current uses or buildings choose to relocate or become non-viable, redevelopment in line with the other recommendations in this *Strategy* may be pursued.

4. Main Street Commercial - Site or Façade Improvements and Enhancements (West side of Main Street from Veterans Park area to just north of Antique Lane)

This large area houses a mix of uses that are anticipated to remain viable and essential for the area, including a grocery store, a mix of strip-mall retail, and a professional office building. Rather than focusing on redevelopment and relocation of these uses to other places, the Village will focus on working with property owners to enhance the aesthetics, functionality, and viability of these businesses and sites. Consolidated access and improved aesthetics along Main Street will be a Village focus. For example, where possible, the Village will promote shifting commercial parking toward the rear of the lots (or at least buffering parking) and screening dumpsters, thereby creating a more pedestrian friendly streetscape.

The southern portion of this site, which houses the Professional Building, has a prominent location between the Yahara River, the core of downtown DeForest, and Veteran's Memorial Park. Protection of the River, visibility of the River, and access to it should be particular considerations. Expansion of this building should be considered.

7. Holum Street - Site / Façade Improvements and Commercial Conversions (North side of Holum Street from Library area to Public Safety Building)

These parcels, on the north side of Holum Street both east and west of the rail line, are strong candidates for both site and building façade improvements and commercial conversions of existing, attractive residential structures. This approach would help improve the attractiveness and viability of the buildings and lands



uses here. Bringing a greater number of more attractive commercial uses to this area would also support the commercial redevelopment envisioned to the west (see area #6 on Map 4). The addition of public streetscape amenities—such as pedestrian lighting, benches, street trees, terrace pavers and banners—will also help define this stretch of Holum Street as a retail street.

In total, commercial conversions and building façade, landscaping, lighting, and signage upgrades along this stretch of Holum Street would enhance it as a pedestrian-focused commercial street. With

improvements, an upgraded “entertainment center” could be created from the current bowling alley. Additionally, the current residential structures on this block could easily support commercial uses like a hobby shop, book store, gift shop, specialty kitchen store, baking supply store, children’s boutique, art gallery, or artisan shop.

11. Main and Commerce - Site / Façade Improvements and Commercial Conversion (Main Street from south of Holum Street to Commerce Street, and Commerce Street from Main to Market Street)



This area, located on the southwestern edge of the downtown, is conceptualized as a “live-work” district. This concept envisions opportunities to operate a small office, service, or retail business, while in many cases having residential uses (often for the proprietor) in the same building. Changes in this area should reflect and retain residential and small commercial character by converting the uses of existing buildings, and upgrading facades and sites as appropriate, rather than redeveloping the sites. With such conversions, these sections of Main and Commerce Streets could emerge as a walkable window shopping experience.

The mainly commercial properties along the west side of Main Street are likely candidates for site or façade improvements.

Along Commerce Street the row of historic character homes may be converted, as opportunities present themselves, into combinations of retail and service spaces, with potential for

continued residential use as well. One recent example of “live-work” space is the renovation and relocation of a popular Village bakery to the lower level one of the house structures in this area. A bed and breakfast is another possible use that capitalizes on the size, location and historic character of some of the homes.

Other possible uses in this area as a whole may include office uses such for an attorney or dentist; or niche retail including a gift shop, bookstore, hobby shop, or children’s boutique.

14. Market Street / Chase Lumber Area

The west side of this site is primarily single-family homes and the eastern portion is occupied by Chase Lumber. The Village desires to retain Chase as a viable business within the community and downtown. Over time the Village intends to work with Chase, as opportunities present themselves, to upgrade the appearance and functionality of the property and buildings. Residential and commercial site and façade enhancement efforts may be applied in this general area.

Housing Rehabilitation Focus Areas (Illustrated on Map 4)

Having a sizable residential population in the downtown area provides a market for existing and future downtown businesses. Attractive downtown and near-downtown neighborhoods also create a better living environment for residents, a more inviting downtown experience for visitors, and a more attractive environment for potential investors in the downtown.

The Village will strive to retain and enhance existing housing and neighborhoods within and adjacent to its downtown. In particular, the Village has identified two Housing Rehabilitation Focus

Areas, one east of the commercial downtown and one west, in which it wishes to target efforts. These Focus Areas were selected because they cover areas where the housing and neighborhoods, in general, are in need of repair, rehabilitation, or upgrade. The Village intends to collaborate to enhance these Focus Areas as desirable, safe and clean places to live.

DeForest is a participant in Dane County's CDBG/HOME Consortium, through which the County and local communities gain eligibility for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment partnership funding, and other housing programs from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Village intends to utilize its partnership with Dane County to access available CDBG/HOME funds to launch an initiative to help private property owners rehabilitate housing in and near the downtown, increase homeownership where possible, and consider housing redevelopment as a final option. The initiative will be aimed at both current homeowners, current rental property owners, and potential homeowners, and may include techniques such as:

- Downpayment assistance
- Reduced rate mortgage loans, and possibly mortgage payment assistance in hardship cases
- Reduced rate home improvement loans or grants
- Financial assistance to upgrade residential properties and/or bring them into code compliance. (The Village will also continue to identify and help eliminate code violations through enforcement.)
- Infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods (e.g., street lighting, sidewalk repair).

Long-Term Redevelopment Areas (Illustrated on Map 4)

Long-Term Redevelopment Areas are expected to redevelop after Near-Term Redevelopment Areas, generally after ten or more years. These sites generally contain viable businesses or homes, which may have higher value marketability for other uses in the future, particularly housing. These sites are, from a market perspective, less likely to redevelop soon based in large part on their comparatively isolated locations. In these locations, the Village may support redevelopment if it is desired by the landowner, even if it is proposed in the next ten years.

In brief, future opportunities for Long-Term Redevelopment Areas (shown as areas #8 and #9 on Map 4) include the following:

- Potential infill on what is now a horse grazing field north of Holum Street along the railroad tracks (area #8). If the current historic depot south of Commerce Street is not adequate or available, this location could be used for a commuter rail station area. Other or alternative future development could be for housing. Floodplain limitations will need to be noted.
- The collection of buildings near the northwest corner of Holum Street and Stevenson Street currently houses service type uses. Due to its location on the edge of the downtown, future uses could be either local service or niche retail. This area is located away from the core of the retail downtown area, so redevelopment potential is not as great as in other locations. Potential future uses could include a clothing store, dentist office, lawyer, computer services, or daycare.
- Potential future redevelopment of the large area north of Holum Street and east of the railroad tracks is likely to have a housing focus, with some opportunities for multi-family residential to provide a transition from more intensive downtown land uses to residential neighborhoods.

Historic uses suggest some environmental conditions and due diligence prior to any Village-initiated or supported redevelopment. Soil testing and remediation may be necessary.

- The area located north of DeForest Street and adjacent to the municipal campus is a potential expansion area for Village facilities, public parking related to Village facilities or Fireman's Park, or additional recreation-based businesses. Stores here (or elsewhere in the downtown) could focus their sales toward recreational uses such as bicycles, paddling, sporting goods, adventure sports, or athletic shoes.

Recreation Areas (Illustrated on Map 4)

Fireman's Park is envisioned to undergo a significant transformation over the next several years. The size of the Fireman's Park has limited the ability of the site to accommodate the increasing demand for its current uses, such as the softball tournaments which have been very successful in the Village. The Village is therefore actively pursuing a new community park site featuring a larger sports complex. Fireman's Park is recommended to continue to contain uses that promote activity and potential "spill-over" benefits to existing businesses. Fireman's Park is recommended to be repositioned as an urban park, with a potential range of uses to include an outdoor stage and gathering place ringed with clusters of picnic areas, expansion of the existing paved path for location of markets and fairs, public art, open play areas, a skate park, and retention of existing playground equipment. The portion of the park located west of Stevenson Street could remain as an active play area with the baseball diamond, playground, and covered pavilion. This concept is explored more fully in the Village's Park and Open Space Plan and ongoing implementation steps.

Veteran's Park will also evolve to serve, in contrast to Fireman's Park, as a more passive downtown park, natural area, and retreat. Suggested facility enhancements include a Yahara River canoe launch and a path network to better link the park to the rest of the downtown, and to better link the downtown to the remainder of the community. There are substantial opportunities to link the downtown with paths to the southwest and northeast, along the Yahara River where possible. The southwest connection would be to and through to the existing pathway in Western Green Park. The northeast connection would link to the existing path on Stevenson Street north of North Street. Connecting to this path would establish a path connection between the DeForest Business Park and the downtown.

Map 4: Revitalization Concept Plan

5. Implementation Strategy

The Village of DeForest already has a strong start toward implementing this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy* due to its proactive Village staff, as well as its DeForest Redevelopment Authority (DRA) and Village Board leadership. Successful implementation of this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy* will require continued coordinated effort amongst a number of groups and people in the Village. This section outline the actions needed to implement this overall *Strategy*, suggests the lead roles in executing each action, estimates costs where possible, suggests potential funding sources, and advises a timeframe for completing key implementation actions.

Implementation Roles

Guiding investment in and attracting the highest and best use mix for Downtown DeForest will require a proactive coordinated effort of numerous people and groups with complementary roles. These groups are included described in more detail as follows.

Village Board

Working in cooperation with the DeForest Redevelopment Authority, the Village Board leads all the policy and decision making with regard to funding and public expenditures. The Village Board typically has the ultimate approval authority for proposed redevelopment projects.

DeForest Redevelopment Authority (DRA)

The DeForest Redevelopment Authority (DRA) in DeForest typically leads redevelopment efforts in the downtown area. Within this area, DRA powers presently include the ability to:

- Own, lease, sell, acquire, and manage property
- Bond, borrow, invest, and raise funds
- Acquire, assemble, relocate, demolish, and prepare sites for redevelopment
- Recruit developers
- Advise on terms for redevelopment assistance
- Guide redevelopment projects
- Advise the Village Board on tax incremental district (TID) financing matters
- Administer the Chase Fund (as described further below)

Planning and Zoning Commission

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviews private development proposals, determining proposed land use compatibility with this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy*, the Comprehensive Plan, and Village ordinances (e.g., zoning and subdivision).

Development Review Team

Continued revitalization of Downtown DeForest will require an ongoing and sometimes significant professional time commitment, beyond what elected and appointed Village officials can offer. To assist with implementation, the Village will utilize its staff Development Review Team, which administers the day-to-day implementation operations. Members of the Development Review Team include the Village Administrator, Finance Director, Public Works Director, Planner, Planning and

Engineering consultants, and Attorney. Under the DRA's and Village Board's direction, the Development Review Team:

- Guides day-to-day redevelopment activities such as facilitating development, preparing intergovernmental agreements, initiating regulatory changes, and conducting technical reviews of development projects.
- Works closely with local real estate developers and brokers, and conducts regional searches as necessary for higher profile projects.
- Develops marketing materials, directs developer recruitment, and prepares requests for proposals.
- Provides legal advice in negotiating development agreements, preparing documents for the acquisition or sale of property, and ensuring compliance with statutory and ordinance requirements.
- Manages the design, bidding, and construction of public improvements such as street, utility, and stormwater upgrades.
- Monitors the construction of private developments to ensure compliance with approved site plans, building plans, and development agreements.
- Identifies potential public agency partners early in the life of a specific development project to whom outreach should be sought in anticipation of any permitting or regulatory issues which may arise that could potentially slow down a development project.
- Provides TID management advice including: advising on long-term debt financing and executing borrowings; evaluating the financial soundness, business plans and tax increment impacts of projects seeking development assistance or requiring public improvements; auditing the TID financial statements; preparing the annual compliance report; and preparing the next fiscal year's TID budget request.
- Continually evaluates the financial condition of the TID and satisfying all governmental reporting requirements for the district.
- Provides regular reports to the DRA regarding meetings held with potential developers.
- Revises and updates the *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy*, as needed for approval by appropriate Village agency.

Other Public Agencies

Other groups or agencies that may play a role in redevelopment success are the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR), the Department of Commerce (WisDOC), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, amongst others. WisDOT will be involved with all improvements made to Highway 51 and other highways that might impact development in the downtown. WisDNR and WisDOC may become involved as it relates to redevelopment of brownfields or other permitting issues. WisDNR and the Army Corps may become involved if there are permitting issues related to downtown development around the Yahara River if floodplain and floodway issues are significant.

The DeForest Area Chamber of Commerce is also a potential key player on activities related to the success of the downtown. Roles include potential programming of downtown space with business-related activities (e.g., farmers market), and coordination on marketing efforts. The Village will maintain close contact with the Chamber on the refinement and implementation of this Strategy.

Implementation Actions

Implementation of this *Strategy* will occur with focused effort on the part of all the groups described above. Although this concept will be fully achievable only after years of commitment to implementation, short-term implementation steps are critical to establishing momentum, accomplishing projects with catalytic impact, and establishing Downtown DeForest as a Village-wide priority for both the public and private sections. The following have been identified as some of the key actions for implementation of this *Strategy*.

Redevelopment Site Implementation

The Village's role in redevelopment will vary from site to site, depending on the Village's ownership status with respect to the site. Areas designated as Near-Term Redevelopment Areas on Map 4 are most likely to be the initial redevelopment projects. In general, the Near-Term Redevelopment Areas are located in two places.

The intersection of Main and Holum Streets is the heart of the downtown and should be branded as such, becoming known as the "Four Corners" or something comparable. Special attention should be paid to both the use mix and the building and site design of all three of the other corners of this intersection to ensure that the character of this intersection sets the bar high for all that will follow. Successful redevelopment of this four corners area will serve as an anchor and catalyst for future redevelopment efforts in the downtown. Requiring a one and one-half story minimum building height and building placement near the sidewalk will also create a greater sense of place.

The intersection of north Main and North Streets serves as the northern gateway into the downtown, so careful attention should also be paid to the uses that develop at the intersection, as well as the style and quality of architecture. A prominent two story structure on the southwest corner, for example, would signify that visitors are entering downtown.

For any redevelopment area (Near, Mid or Long-Term) properties in which the Village or DRA envisions potentially holding an ownership interest, the redevelopment process should generally proceed as follows:

1. Discussion with current owner(s) of site and determine relocation and other requirements, if any.
2. Due diligence prior to site acquisition, including environmental assessment.
3. Development Review Team or private developer develops and refines site concept plan.
4. Forward site concept plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission, DRA, and Village Board for review.
5. Begin zoning or processes for other required Village approvals (alternatively may occur or continue after #7).
6. Site acquisition.
7. Recruit developers for site, perhaps including preparation of Request for Proposal (RFP) and evaluation of responses. Any RFP should include use recommendations directly from this *Strategy* and describe incentives available for the specific project. As properties are assembled, site-specific RFPs can be prepared for targeted projects. Individual site RFPs are often the most successful way to accomplish projects that are consistent with the vision set forth in this *Strategy*.
8. Begin negotiations with developer.

9. Start or continue zoning processes.
10. Prepare development agreement.

For many of the redevelopment areas (Near-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term) identified on Map 4, the Village and DRA do not anticipate public acquisition. In these cases, a few of the above steps are not necessary or may be simplified.

Capital and Infrastructure Improvements

Infrastructure improvements will enhance the physical quality of the downtown, and serve as an incentive to the private sector, whose existing or potential businesses will ultimately benefit from these investments. These capital and infrastructure improvements range from those generally intended to enhance the downtown area as a whole, and those more directly associated with Near-Term or Long-Term Redevelopment Areas.

Gateways and Wayfinding Signage

In order to maximize the marketability of businesses in Downtown DeForest, it is important to improve visitors' ability to navigate to downtown attractions and businesses and understand when they have arrived.

A gateway is an obvious point of entry to an area. Ideally, a gateway should signal a sense of arrival when a traveler has reached his or her destination. In DeForest, the existing gateways to the downtown area are non-descript, lack character, and in some cases draw attention to less-than-attractive buildings or uses (particularly at North and Main Streets). Establishing improved gateways through redevelopment, code enforcement, and public improvements (e.g., downtown gateway signage) is an opportunity for DeForest to project its desired image, signal that one has reached a destination, and create a positive first impression.

Very closely related is the concept of wayfinding – knowing where you are going, how to get there, and when you have arrived. Strategic routing is a key component of wayfinding. When considering wayfinding to Downtown DeForest, the goal should be to provide a positive visitor experience from the time the visitor leaves their point of origin or enters the Village, to the time he or she reaches the downtown destination. Routing visitors to the downtown via the most attractive, safe, and hassle-free routes is paramount. Wayfinding signage should be introduced to direct visitors around and to the downtown, particularly at major Village entry points (e.g., Highway 51, east and west North Street, east and west Holum Street, north and south Main Street, Main Street and Vinburn Road, Main Street and Windsor Road).

Installing gateway and wayfinding signage is a high priority. The timing for installation of a wayfinding signage system should correspond with the expected reconstruction of Highway 51, in other words by 2014. At the same time, consolidation and removal of some existing signage on Main Street south of North Street would assist in easier wayfinding in the downtown and reduce visual clutter. Some of the potential locations for gateway or wayfinding signage are sites for which the exact timing of redevelopment is somewhat uncertain (e.g., the southwest corner of Main and North Streets). Therefore, decisions on gateway and wayfinding signage placement and timing will need to consider whether existing conditions in all desirable long-term sign locations are appropriate or desirable for signs in the shorter-term. Factors include whether installed signage is likely to be disrupted by future redevelopment; if there are logical short or long-term locations for the same sign; and if such signage can be designed and installed to be moved if needed.

Pedestrian Enhancements and Streetscaping

In Downtown DeForest, there are portions of the streets that are less amenable to pedestrians due to the condition of the streetscape or lack of pedestrian facilities.

Listed below are streets that should feature more pedestrian-oriented amenities to more fully integrate the pedestrian environment in the downtown area. Physical improvements to Main Street that include upgrading to urban standards and including bike lanes and sidewalks or paths along the entire length of the street are recommended in the Village's Comprehensive Plan. Along North Street, reconstruction to a four-lane urban roadway, with sidewalk or path on both sides, is advised. A traffic signal at North and Main Street would also increase pedestrian friendliness. The development of sidewalks along other streets in the downtown, such as Commerce Street, DeForest Street, and around Fireman's Park where sidewalk is limited will also be considered as part of the physical improvement plan for the downtown.

Parking, streetscaping, and configuration of the northernmost extension of Main Street (north of CTH V) and the surrounding buildings and lots should be reconsidered. The Village intends to work with property owners in the area to explore alternative parking configurations to promote a more functional parking situation and pedestrian environment in this area.

Pedestrian-oriented amenities for consideration--particularly along the major throughfares of downtown (Main, Holum, North, DeForest Streets)—include sidewalk enhancements, benches, drinking fountains, lighting, marked street crossings (through signs and/or paving treatments), and wayfinding signage. The actual amenities provided will be determined by more detailed streetscape planning, engineering, and budget considerations.

Fireman's Park Redevelopment

Fireman's Park is a downtown amenity that has great potential to benefits to general activity and business levels in the downtown. Community events in this park—such as Friends of the Dragon Art Fair and movies and concerts—bring numerous residents and visitors to the downtown . The park's potential can be enhanced with a greater number and variety of events, specialized facilities for and programming of ongoing activities, and marketing to potential users within and outside the community.

As a component of the preparation of the Village's Park and Open Space Plan, the Village prepared a preliminary concept plan for Fireman's Park. This concept plan has been subsequently revised and cost estimates prepared. The cost estimates are reflected in the Implementation Framework table at the end of this section. One potential component of Fireman's Park redevelopment is acquisition of two residential parcels located along Stevenson Street in the north-central portion of the park. Physical links between the park and downtown businesses should also be enhanced by sidewalk and wayfinding sign improvements.

Veteran's Park Improvements

The Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities & Priority Projects document, prepared by the Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters with Village assistance, had as one priority to increase river-based activities in the downtown area. Through that effort, the Friends suggested projects affecting Veteran's Park. Suggested improvements for Veteran's Park include a canoe launch with a gravel access road, a segment of an interconnected river pathway system, vegetative shoreline restoration, native/meadow plantings, a picnicking site, and a Yahara River interpretive kiosk/shade structure. A concept plan illustrating these potential improvements is provided in the Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities & Priority Projects document noted above.

As part of the downtown revitalization strategy, the Village supports and intends to participate in this initiative, with input from the veterans as well. Initiatives like a canoe launch would bring more activity to the downtown, eventually leading to potential dining and outfitter business opportunities.

Downtown Path Connections

Through the Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities & Priority Projects effort, the Friends also identified several opportunities for broader path connections better linking the downtown to the river, and the downtown to the rest of the community as a whole. These included a path paralleling the Yahara River, as well as segments south from North Street, to the river, and schools to the library. Recommended path segments would connect the Bakke Conservancy Area/ Delkamp Trail with Western Green Park, better connect Veteran's Park to the downtown area, and connect the west end of Holum Street with the path in Western Green Park in conjunction with a Holum Street Trailhead.

The Holum Street Trailhead concept includes both a proposed path segment and trailhead with parking area at the west end of Holum Street. The proposal would involve the Village or private property owner land acquisition for use as a trailhead parking area, offering stalls for path users and for visitors to surrounding downtown uses. The existing sidewalk on the north side of the street could also be extended to the west in this area. This project, if pursued, should be completed in conjunction with Village utility projects that are anticipated for this same area

All potential paths and this trailhead concept are illustrated on Map 5, Downtown River Activities, and described in greater detail in the Upper Yahara River User Analysis, Future Opportunities & Priority Projects document.



Kiosks/Interpretive Structures

Informational kiosks and interpretive structures are another way to spotlight both the Yahara River and Downtown amenities. Either Veterans Park, the Holum Street Trailhead area, or both could be home to a larger informational kiosk and interpretive structure focused on path/waterway directions; river information, including include watershed maps, trail route maps, nature interpretation information on plants and animals found in the watershed; and information about the downtown, its businesses, and community highlights. Suggested locations of kiosks are provided on Map 5, Downtown River Activities.

Gathering Place Enhancements near Library and Town Square

Since the construction of the DeForest Area Public Library and Town Square development, there has been an interest in enhancing the functionality and aesthetics of the open spaces around these projects.

The first open spaces of interest are both north and south of the library building. Creating an attractive courtyard and a more logical and defined sidewalk connection between Market and Library Streets has been the focus. Improvements like a walkway, seating areas, trellises, planters, mural and

enhanced lighting would improve the character of the area and provide an inviting outside space. The Village has had, for a few years, a concept plan for these types of improvements.

Also, the Village had a concept plan prepared for the development of Town Square Park, located west of Library Street and south of Ethun Street to more effectively utilize the existing outdoor space. This second concept plan includes landscaping, seating, a pathway, and potential informational signage.

Map 5: Downtown River Activities

These projects are collectively intended to provide amenities to spotlight existing investment in the downtown area, promote a greater sense of community by providing additional gathering places, and generally enhance the quality and activity levels in the downtown area.

General Revitalization Facilitation

The Village intends to support existing businesses and recruit new businesses to the downtown at the same time the Village undertakes capital improvements and supports redevelopment projects described above. While at times business enhancement activities will result from redevelopment projects, in many cases extensive redevelopment will not be required for business recruitment. The following general activities will be undertaken to enhance the viability, number, and diversity of businesses in the downtown.

Help Retain and Expand Existing Downtown Businesses

Retaining and expanding downtown-appropriate businesses that are already there is a cost-effective way to help the downtown prosper. In addition to assisting individual, local businesses such activities also create a business climate that is attractive to new development and investment from others. Generally, to help support existing businesses in the downtown area the Village will:

- Work in partnership with local businesses to facilitate development approval, code compliance, effective business operations during road construction, and similar in-kind assistance.
- Help cultivate and make available local, regional, State and Federal funds for business financing, marketing, and building and site improvements. The Village intends to maintain a funding program for business enhancement and improvement.
- Maintain and enhance the overall quality of life and vitality of the community and the downtown to instill confidence in existing businesses and attract new businesses.

Undertake a District-wide Marketing Initiative

The Village will work to create a marketing initiative to “brand” the downtown’s transformation from a service district which primarily serves local residents to a mixed-use, retail and entertainment district that also attracts visitors. A partnership with the Chamber of Commerce may be appropriate for such an effort. This marketing initiative should describe the vision for the downtown and explain planned public improvements, such as streetscaping and wayfinding. Marketing materials could include printed and electronic media formats that celebrate the downtown vision and would then form the basis of direct solicitations (e.g., requests for proposals) for certain uses at specific properties. The branding of the downtown should also be reflected on wayfinding and gateway signage, other streetscape improvements, and informational kiosks.

Implement a Business Recruitment Strategy

The downtown requires a greater number of more diverse businesses to fully achieve the vision outlined in this *Strategy*. Ideas for desirable and appropriate businesses are highlighted in previous sections of this document. In addition to general marketing, the Village intends to implement a business recruitment strategy for the downtown. This strategy should include efforts to:

- Assist existing DeForest area residents start businesses in the downtown, perhaps with assistance through the Dane County CDBG program.
- Bring branches of local and regional businesses to the downtown, such as banks and familiar Madison-area restaurant chains.

- Specifically target and recruit key missing businesses for the downtown, either directly or through developers of redevelopment sites. These include, for instance, a coffee shop, a bookstore, and a casual family-friendly restaurant or pub.

Funding Sources

Successful downtown revitalization depends on strong Village leadership. It also depends on those leaders generating excitement and investment among existing and potential downtown property owners, businesses, and developers. Still, a reasonable commitment to public funding support is also critical. This is because business development and redevelopment is usually more expensive in the downtown than in “greenfield” sites at the edge of the community. Also, older downtown infrastructure and parks are often in the greatest need of reinvestment and reinvention to meet modern needs.

Potential public funding sources include the general fund, tax increment financing, impact fees, community funds and endowments, CDBG/HOME funds (for housing-related projects in particular), brownfield grants, State Stewardship grants (for park and trail projects), and other grants. There are local organizations in the Village that may also be willing to contribute, including the DeForest Area Foundation and Chamber of Commerce. In order to achieve the vision included in this *Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy*, several funding sources will need to be strategically applied and matched to “best-fit” projects. An overview of two key sources follows. Figure 2 at the end of this section suggests the most appropriate sources for each of the major projects suggested under this *Strategy*.

Tax Increment District (TID) Financing

Often, redevelopment and other activities in downtown areas are reliant on TID funding support. Prior to the adoption of this *Strategy*, the Village removed properties from TID #1 (which covers parts of the downtown), in part to free up capacity for the creation of additional or expanded TIDs. Concurrent with the preparation of this *Strategy*, the Village was examining its TID possibilities Village-wide to best carry out its economic development priorities. The outcome of this larger analysis of the Village’s financing capacities and directions will, in part, determine the extent of the Village’s use of TID financing to fund activities in and for the downtown.

The existing TID #1 covers some, but not all of the downtown area described in this *Strategy*. Clearly, projects within TID #1 that are described in this *Strategy* may legally be funded through that TID. Further, recent changes to Wisconsin tax increment financing law allow a TID to fund projects within ½ mile of TID boundaries that benefit properties within the TID. Therefore, many of the redevelopment, infrastructure, and revitalization activities described in this *Strategy* could be funded through TID #1 without any further boundary change to TID #1. However, amendments to the TID Project Plan for TID #1 will likely be necessary to assure that all desired activities are listed in that Project Plan. Given this, simultaneous boundary amendments may also be appropriate to include certain additional downtown properties in TID #1. These include additional properties along and near Holum Street, Fireman’s Park, and the properties around the Main/North Street intersection.

Overall, the types of projects and level of TID funding support to implement projects within this *Strategy* will require a detailed understanding of TID capacity, the desired retirement date for TID #1 and the Village’s flexibility in potentially extending that date, expected tax increment to be generated

by private development projects supported or incented by TID funding, the possibility of supporting downtown projects via non-TID sources, and other factors.

Chase Fund for Economic Development

In 1996, the Village of DeForest received a gift from the Chase Family in the amount of \$100,000 to be used to encourage and assist business development in the Village in ways that would provide substantial benefits for the citizens of the Village. This fund remains available and the value has appreciated significantly over time. This fund is controlled by the DRA. As a part of the strategic implementation of this *Strategy*, the Chase money can and should be used as an incentive tool to help strengthen existing businesses, recruit new businesses into locations in the downtown, or to generally improve the business climate in the downtown area.

Criteria for eligible borrowers, grantees, and uses of funds should be based on the extent to which the project advances the directions within this *Downtown Revitalization Concept Plan & Implementation Strategy*. Business start-up and growth should be a funding priority. This would include potential borrowers creating new businesses proposed to be located in the Downtown and existing businesses looking to relocate and/or expand in the downtown. Finally, public improvement and overall downtown marketing projects should be eligible. Figure 1 outlines the Village's and DRA's general criteria for providing project assistance via the Chase fund.

Implementation Priority Framework Table

Successful implementation of this *Downtown Revitalization Concept Plan & Implementation Strategy* will require a number of actions from a number of different players over time. Figure 2 is an attempt to prioritize implementation of the key actions identified in this *Strategy*, based on a brainstorming session of the DRA following its initial review of this *Strategy* as well as other Board, Staff, and Village Committee input and discussions. The figure lists all of the Implementation Actions set forth in the *Strategy*. For each, it assigns a level of priority--high, medium, or low. In general, high priority actions should take place first and lower priority actions later. Each Implementation Action is also given a relative cost comparison (high, medium, low) that corresponds to the overall cost for the action (and not necessarily the cost to the Village / DRA given the potential for grant funding). For some actions, like redevelopment assistance, it is not possible to estimate costs until a particular project presents itself. Finally, the table includes a description of the lead group for each action and suggests potential funding sources.

Figure 1: Eligible Projects and Factors for Chase Fund

Types of Projects Funded		
<u>Type of Financing:</u> Loans Grants	<u>For:</u> Business Start-Up Existing Business Expansion or Improvement Downtown marketing Public infrastructure	<u>For business start-ups or expansions:</u> Focus on businesses identified as needs in this <i>Strategy</i> Locally-owned and non-franchise business preference
Specific Project Examples		
Land purchase, building remodeling, façade improvement, equipment purchase, private or downtown marketing initiatives, job training, wayfinding signage, infrastructure tied to economic development		
Project Funding Selection Factors		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How well does the proposed project contribute to downtown revitalization and character? This factor covers the Village’s/downtown’s need for the particular type of business, the project’s relationship or benefits to existing businesses, or the aesthetic or image improvements the project offers the downtown. 2. How well does the project advance the overall economic health of the Village? This factor covers relationships/benefits to existing businesses, impacts on tax base or job creation, ability of the project to attract visitors to the Village and its downtown, and specific relationships to the economic opportunities identified in the <i>Downtown Revitalization Concept & Implementation Strategy</i>. 3. What financial considerations give this project merit? This factor covers the documented need for financial assistance to make the project happen, the availability of/ability to leverage other sources of funding if Chase funding is provided, the extent of personal resources, risk, and investment in the project, expected viability and long-term profitability of the proposed business, and the expected ability and timeline for repayment (for loan funding). 4. Is the Chase Fund the most appropriate source of funds for the project? Though this factor, the Village/DRA will consider whether the Chase Fund is the best source of public support for this project, given the availability and constraints associated with other potential sources. 5. Is the amount of funding reasonable given other desired uses for the Chase Fund? This factor considers the amount of Chase funding that is requested relative to the other expected needs for Chase funding. Figure 2 provides some guidance relative to this factor. 		

Figure 2: Downtown Implementation Framework