

Strategic Planning And Revitalization for Communities

SMALL COMMUNITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Prepared by the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation in partnership with East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University. Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Technical Assistance for Rural Transportation Systems.

About this Case Study

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Founded in 1988, the NADO Research Foundation is the nonprofit research affiliate of the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) that identifies, studies, and promotes regional solutions and approaches to improving local prosperity and services through the nationwide network of regional development organizations. The NADO Research Foundation shares best practices, offers professional development training, analyzes the impact of federal policies and programs on regional development organizations, and examines the latest trends in small metropolitan and rural America. In addition, the Research Foundation helps bridge the communications gap among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. Learn more at www.NADO.org and www.RuralTransportation.org.



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Project Introduction

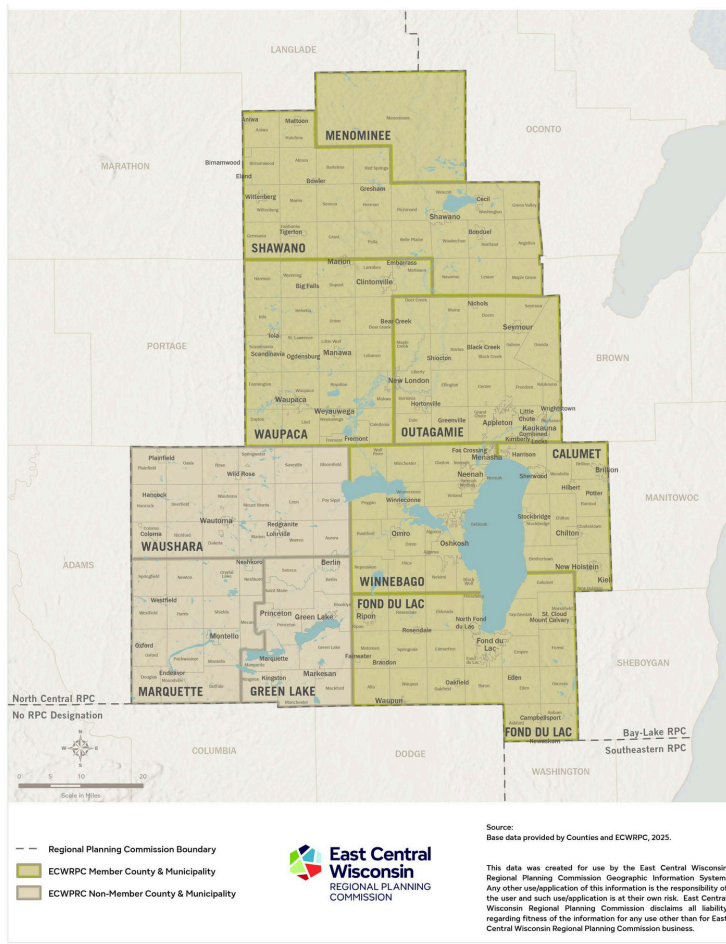
Regional planning organizations are most successful when they empower their communities to pursue forward thinking initiatives that strengthen connectivity and quality of life. This paper introduces an on-the-ground programming framework designed to help regional organizations support planning in their local communities. By emphasizing practical, community-centered implementation, the framework offers an approach that other regional development organizations can adapt to meet their needs—ultimately contributing to stronger, more connected regions.

SPARC (Strategic Planning And Revitalization for Communities) is a program administered by a Wisconsin regional planning organization, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC), that delivers targeted planning support to rural Wisconsin communities. Through visioning sessions, one-day intensive workshops, professional design consultation, and follow-up grant assistance, SPARC helps small communities translate planning goals into actionable projects centered on economic development and mobility.

Since its launch in 2021, SPARC has served 17 rural Wisconsin counties, leveraging state, federal, and foundation funding sources. The program has yielded tangible outcomes including infrastructure improvements, downtown revitalization, and successful grant applications to support project development. Beyond direct project results, SPARC has strengthened regional partnerships and built local planning capacity.

About ECWRPC

Regional Development Organizations (RDOs)—also referred to as Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), Councils of Government (COGs), or other similar entities—play a vital role in supporting community, economic, and infrastructure development across multiple counties and municipalities. While the structure, programs, and funding of RDOs vary by state, their overarching mission is to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and coordinated regional planning and development.



In Wisconsin, RPCs are organized under a state statute and operate as official, area-wide planning agencies for designated geographic regions. The RPCs have governing bylaws and are tasked with addressing issues that cross individual governmental jurisdictions. Their services may include comprehensive planning, economic development, environmental management, transportation, and other direct technical assistance that addresses issues of concern within their participating communities.

Figure 1: ECWRPC Counties (Source: ECWRPC)

Established in 1972, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC) serves as the designated planning agency for the ten-county East Central Region of Wisconsin. A map of the counties represented by the RPC can be found in Figure 1 above. ECWRPC leads regional planning and development efforts in these counties through key programs such as their designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), as well as other rural transportation and economic development initiatives (East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, n.d.). One method the RPC uses to support these initiatives is through the small community technical assistance program—Strategic Planning And Revitalization for Communities.

SPARC Background

Strategic Planning And Revitalization for Communities

SPARC is a program that supports rural communities (population 10,000 or less) with long-term visioning through a one-day, intensive planning workshop and subsequent grant and opportunity identification. The SPARC program aims to help local governments and stakeholders identify and plan actionable projects that advance economic development and transportation goals through the assistance of Regional Planning staff and consultants.

Communities in the ECWRPC region vary in terms of size, available resources, and staff capacity. Many focus primarily on managing daily operations and lack the capacity to pursue additional projects, often resulting in missed opportunities for more strategic development and long-term planning. SPARC provides an environment for communities to engage in long-term visioning and brainstorming, helping communities to dream and getting them out of the rut of thinking, “This isn’t possible because I can’t take on one more task.” Through collaborative workshops, RDO staff and consultants develop conceptual drawings, often for innovative or non-traditional developments, within designated project areas. This process helps communities translate ambitious long-term goals into practical visions. Following the workshops, ECWRPC then works closely with local leaders to identify actionable steps for implementation and identify and assist with grant applications. ECWRPC staff partnered with consultants to support community visioning and develop conceptual drawings; however, different structures of program implementation may work depending on internal capacity and expertise.

During the development of SPARC, ECWRPC identified placemaking as a key strategy for rural community development. Placemaking is a people-centered approach to planning, designing, and managing public space that strengthens community connections and improves wellbeing (Project for Public Spaces, 2007). By bringing amenities and public space improvements to small communities, placemaking helps create community-centered environments that support local businesses, attract investment, and encourage multi-modal transportation. Economic development and transportation initiatives are central to placemaking efforts, as they shape the way people interact with and move through their communities. SPARC is one method that ECWRPC utilizes to support local placemaking and long-term revitalization.

Funding Sources

SPARC was initially launched with funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Following a successful first year of programming, ECWRPC, recognizing the value of the program, began to seek additional partners and funding sources. In 2025, ECWRPC collaborated with the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADORF) to secure technical assistance funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that enabled redevelopment visioning with a lens on mobility and access. SPARC continues to gain momentum, with ongoing interest and potential support from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and other regional and state-level partners. Based on availability of funding during the programming cycle, ECWRPC has worked closely with Ayres Associates, a primarily-Wisconsin-based landscape architecture and development firm, to implement and develop this programming.

Planning and Implementation Process

Timeline

After a few years in operation, SPARC has evolved into a streamlined planning process that spans approximately six months from initial coordination to implementation. The general timeline is outlined below, with further details provided in the following sections:

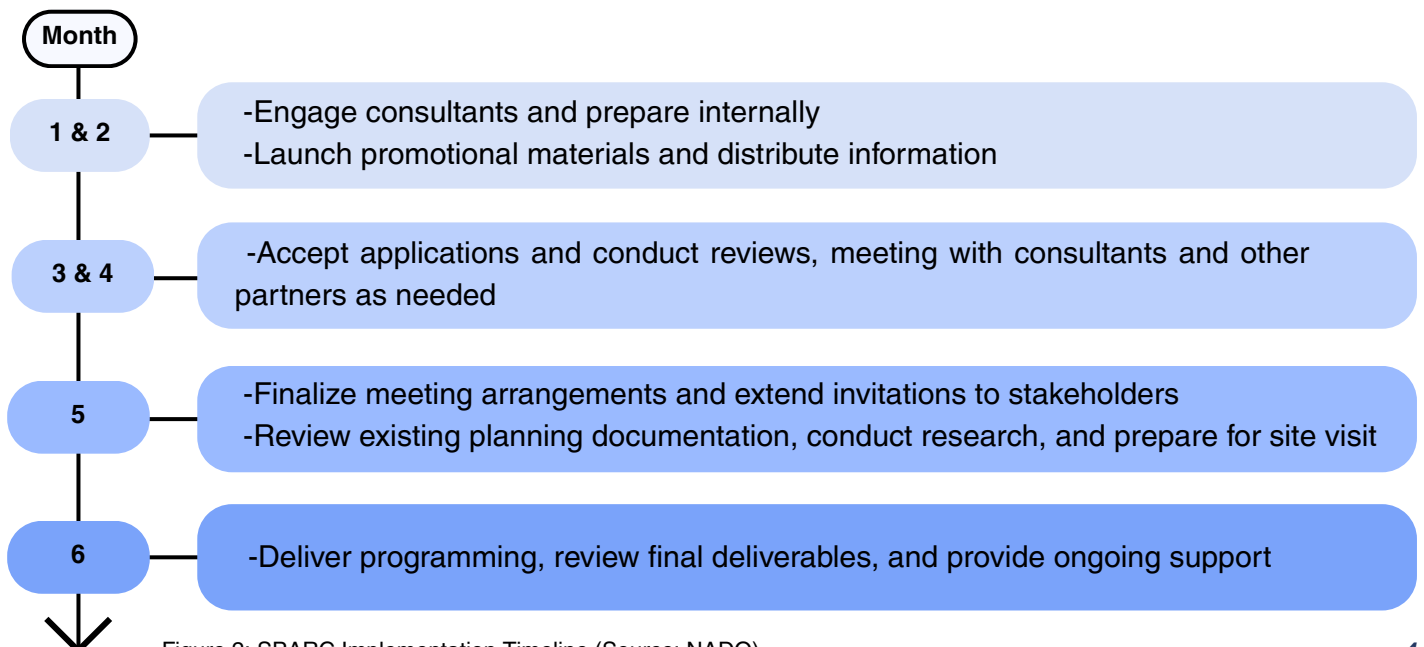


Figure 2: SPARC Implementation Timeline (Source: NADO)

Promotion

ECWRPC's outreach efforts are tailored to engage community partners through multiple channels. ECWRPC distributes flyers and informational materials at meetings with community partners and maintains direct communication with local contacts via phone and email. LinkedIn is also utilized to expand the program's visibility and reach a broader audience. An example of these promotional efforts can be found in Figure 3, above. As effective as these methods have proven, strong relationships with community stakeholders and municipal staff ultimately enhance the program's reach and impact.

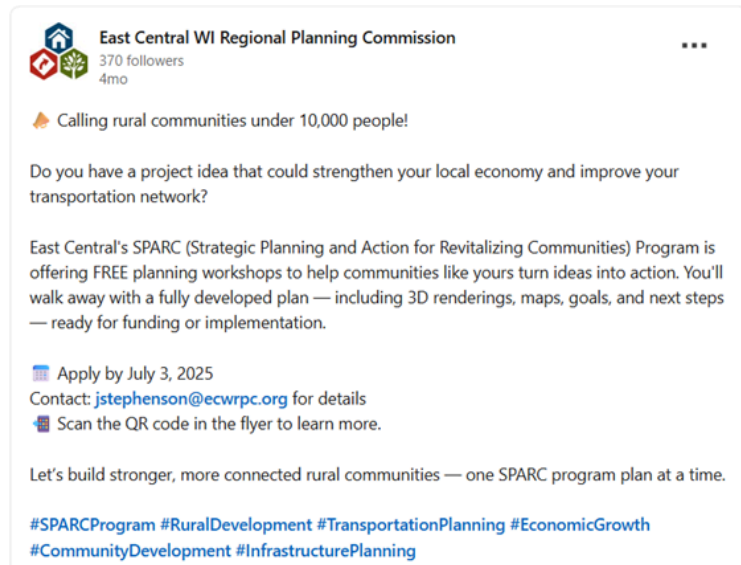


Figure 3: SPARC Promotional Materials (Source: ECWRPC)

Application Process

ECWRPC employs a straightforward, easy application to identify potential partner communities. Designed to be accessible and informative, the application, available in Appendix A, asks for basic details such as the community's name, applicant's name and role, and contact information. Applicants are also asked to describe a high-level proposed project area and include basic information about its anticipated economic and transportation impacts. The community's capacity to support the initiative is also addressed in the application. This general framework helps ECWRPC assess local priorities and gauge the level of commitment from interested communities.

After receiving applications, ECWRPC collaborates with its Economic Development Committee to evaluate submissions and select project partners. The Economic Development Committee is composed of Commission Board members who are elected leaders within their respective communities. The committee uses a basic scoring rubric to assess each application across key criteria: transportation impact, economic development potential, strength of project concept, community need and alignment, capacity and commitment, and innovation and creativity. Each category is assigned a specific point value, and applications are scored accordingly. The full rubric is available in Appendix B.

In the most recent program cycle, out of 10 applications, ECWRPC selected four primary communities to work directly with consultants, while also identifying two additional communities for targeted in-house support. Involving the Economic Development Committee in the review process fostered a sense of ownership among committee members and deepened their engagement and investment in community success.

Preparation

Preparing for each SPARC site visit takes a mix of behind-the-scenes prep and on-the-ground coordination. Before the visit, consultants and ECWRPC staff reviewed background materials such as city planning documents and community websites to get familiar with the local context.

ECWRPC coordinated with community partners to secure a meeting site and handle meeting logistics. Necessary logistics included a private space to meet equipped with tables and chairs, and with access to reliable Wi-fi. Display technology was also helpful but not required. While it was up to the local partners to invite stakeholders, the consultants assisted by sharing materials and championing the importance of stakeholder input. Typically, around 15 community stakeholders were involved in the project including city staff, local business owners, planning committee members, engineers, public works directors, and local elected officials.

To better understand the project areas, ECWRPC also did walk-throughs and captured drone footage of the project sites. The consultants prepared by printing detailed maps of the sites and bringing supplies for hands-on brainstorming and drawing during the sessions.

On-Site Facilitation

Each SPARC site visit was a full-business-day event, running from 8:30am-5:30pm, with a structured agenda to guide the process. An example agenda can be found in Appendix C. Involvement expectations varied between the community stakeholders and consulting partners, with locals being involved for the first few hours and at the end of the day and consultants working a full day on project tasks and development.

The day began with introductions and a discussion of participant roles and project context. This was followed by a community visioning session, facilitated by the consultants, where stakeholders discussed local needs, priorities, and opportunities. Interactive tools like cards and white boards were used to spark conversation around five-year visions and community priorities. After the discussion, a group of core participants joined a guided walkthrough of the project site to get a closer look at the project area. A group of New London, Wisconsin, stakeholders can be seen surveying the project site in Figure 5. At this point, the stakeholders were free to go while the consultants drafted concepts based on what they heard and saw.

The consultants worked to translate stakeholder input into preliminary designs, drawings, and recommendations, as seen in Figure 5 on the following page.



Figure 5: Left: Site Visit with Project Stakeholders (Source: NADO) | Right: Ayres Associates mocking up drawings (Source: NADO)

High-level concepts were produced by consultants, allowing the communities to envision a long-term goal with a focus on details and implementation to come later. As the consultants worked, the stakeholders were welcomed to stop by and provide feedback.

Typically scheduled for 30-60 minutes, the day concluded with a formal feedback session, allowing the consultants to share designs. The consultants took feedback during this time to refine the final deliverables, which they typically compiled and shared in a final report in the weeks following the visit.

Deliverables

Final deliverables from the SPARC program include a written program summary and community report prepared by the consultants, actionable next steps and additional support provided by ECWRPC, and any other community specific materials as requested. The deliverables are intended to support the community in sustainable development, grant applications, and community buy-in.



Figure 6: Ayres Associates Deliverable Examples (Source: Ayres Associates)

Excerpts from previous deliverable reports can be found in Appendix D, with an example shown in Figure 6 above.

The consulting partners provided a written summary document with visual drawings of the project area, along with key recommendations and insights into potential community, economic, and transportation impacts. The report also includes observations, stakeholder insights, and site inventory and analysis.

During the 2025 project year, NADORF and the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University also assisted with SPARC deliverables—providing insight into state and federal regulations for projects, identifying potential funding sources, and contributing practical considerations for implementation. While national partners are not typically involved in the program, their technical assistance was included this year due to the specific grant funding received.

After the SPARC programming sessions have concluded, ECWRPC assists communities in creating action plans, working toward incremental progress, and identifying grants. And beyond the project deliverables, ECWRPC continues to support project goals and community priorities identified during the visioning sessions. While these communities may be small, the SPARC project areas represent just one component of an overall community vision, with potential to catalyze economic development and improve transportation access within the communities and within the region.

Program Impacts and Outcomes

SPARC has successfully enabled ECWRPC to deliver direct technical assistance to 17 small communities across its region, with a few communities benefiting from multiple years of programming. A map of participating communities can be found in Figure 7 on the following page. Communities who have participated in the program have reported feeling more supported and better equipped to plan for growth, while ECWRPC has gained a clearer understanding of local projects and priorities. The program has created a space for stakeholders to come together, share ideas, and receive expertise and guidance. The region has also benefited through improved collaboration and the creation of more robust communities.

Through this process, ECWRPC staff, city officials, and community partners have developed new skills in mapping, facilitation, planning, and grant writing. ECWRPC and the community partners have added these new skills (e.g., drone mapping) to their existing in-house expertise as well as benefiting from contracting partners on specialized tasks. While consultant deliverables from SPARC often reflect longer-term goals, communities ultimately leave with meaningful deliverables and a renewed sense of support for local projects.

SPARC Participants: 2022 to Present

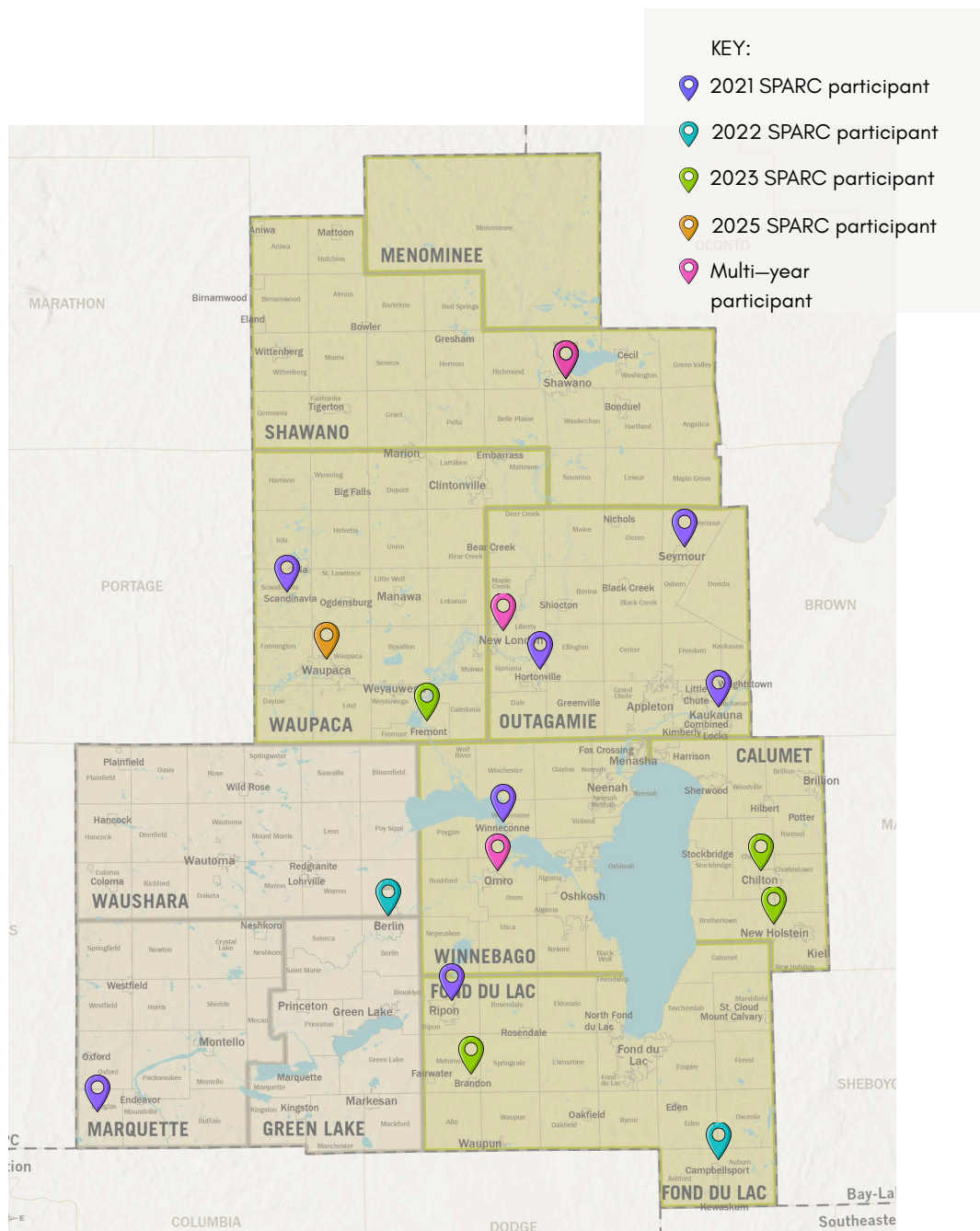


Figure 7: Mapped SPARC Participants (Source: NADO)

Beyond the direct outcomes of the SPARC programming, there were also indirect benefits related to relationship and community building. ECWRPC strengthened existing connections and established new relationships with city stakeholders, including groups they do not regularly engage with, such as school board members and local business owners. These connections enable ECWRPC to better support its members and maintain an increased awareness of projects, both related and unrelated to SPARC. Additionally, cities gained more direct access to ECWRPC programs and staff, and fostered stakeholder involvement in development initiatives.

Impact Examples and Outcomes

Shawano is a multi-year (2022 and 2025) participant in SPARC that has experienced notable benefits. As a participant in 2022, local stakeholders identified downtown redevelopment and traffic management at a local harbor as key priorities within their community. Based on the visioning session and recommendations from consultants and ECWRPC, the City of Shawano reconfigured a parking lot and installed boat slips to improve vehicle circulation, including EMS access and boat launch access at the harbor. An example of recommendations and implementation made as a result of SPARC can be seen in Figure 8, below. The city also made significant strides in downtown revitalization by acquiring key properties and expanding parking availability, enhancing both economic development potential and transportation access.

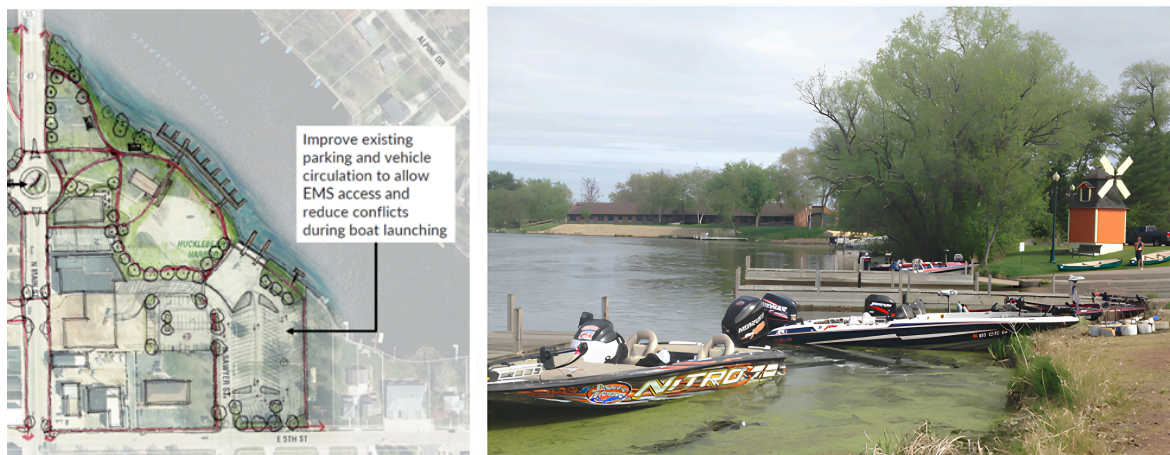


Figure 8: Shawano, WI Project Drawing and Implementation (Source: Ayres Associates + City of Shawano)

Shawano continued to engage with SPARC as a 2025 applicant, shifting its focus to the development of a new park in an underutilized industrial area. The community's familiarity with the program, along with the consultant's established relationships, enabled deeper connections and more targeted support during the 2025 program year.

Shawano is just one example of the many participating communities who have taken steps to implement the recommendations provided through SPARC. Leveraging various funding source—including federal, state, local, private and foundation dollars—communities have integrated ideas from SPARC into their overall placemaking efforts. While each community focused on different priorities based on local needs and visions, a consistent placemaking theme was connected to all the projects. SPARC empowers small communities to think big, prioritize community visioning in future development, and take actionable steps with support from regional partners. Throughout the years of implementation, these elements have all become core to SPARC's mission.

Appendix A: SPARC Application

Source: ECWRPC

SPARC Application – Sourced from ECWRPC Website. Applications accepted through online form via the website.

The Strategic Planning And Revitalization for Communities (SPARC) Program provides one day, intensive workshops designed to help rural communities (population 10,000 or less) identify and plan for projects that advance both economic development and transportation goals. SPARC focuses on actionable strategies that strengthen local economies, improve connectivity, and enhance overall quality of life.

Through a collaborative, hands-on approach, communities work alongside planning experts to explore innovative ideas that reflect local values and opportunities. Whether it's reimagining a downtown corridor, improving access to key destinations, or enhancing pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, SPARC encourages proposals that clearly demonstrate the intersection of transportation and economic development.

The end product is a professionally crafted plan that includes:

- Clear goals, objectives, and implementation steps*
- A prioritized action plan tailored to the community's capacity*
- Preliminary design concepts, including 3D visual renderings to help visualize the project's potential*
- Identification of key stakeholders and partnership opportunities*
- A roadmap to pursue funding, including guidance on grant readiness and eligibility for programs like WisDOT TAP, CDBG, and EDA*

The SPARC plan is more than just a vision—it's a tool communities can use to take the next step, secure funding, and move forward with confidence.

Applicant Information

Community Name (Required):

Name (Required):

Title/Role:

Phone:

Email (Required):

Address:

Street Address:

Address Line 2:

City: State / Province / Region:

ZIP / Postal Code:

Country:

Is your municipality's population under 10,000? (Y/N) (Required):

Project Details

This section is your opportunity to introduce the proposed project and explain its purpose. Focus on what the project is, where it will take place, and what you hope to accomplish by implementing it.

Please describe the proposed project. (Required)

What specific outcomes are you hoping to achieve? (Required)

Transportation Impact

Explain how your project addresses transportation challenges or creates new opportunities in your community. Consider factors like safety, connectivity, access, mobility, and how different travel modes (walking, biking, driving, etc.) are supported.

How does your project address transportation-related issues or opportunities (connectivity, safety, mobility, access, multi-modal options, etc)? (Required)

Economic Development Impact

Describe how your project contributes to economic development at the local or regional level. Think about how it may attract investment, support local businesses, create jobs, support tourism, or improve economic resilience.

How does your project support local economic development strategies and how does your project link back to the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)? (Required)

Community Need and Alignment

Use this section to demonstrate why the project matters to your community. Show how it addresses a pressing need and aligns with your existing goals, plans, or priorities.

Describe the need for this project in your community. (Required)

How does this project align with your community's existing plans, goals, or identified priorities? (Required)

Capacity and Commitment

Highlight your community's readiness and ability to participate in the one-day SPARC workshop. Identify who will be involved and demonstrate your commitment to collaborating and following through with the planning process. Communities who have strong public involvement have been shown to be the projects that are most likely to get implemented.

Describe your community's ability to participate fully in the one-day SPARC workshop. (Required)
Who will be involved locally (e.g., municipal leaders, businesses, nonprofits, residents)? (Required)

Additional Information - anything else you'd like to add?

Authorization

By submitting this application, the applicant affirms that the information provided is accurate and that the community is committed to participating in the SPARC program if selected.

Name of Authorized Representative (Required)

Date (Required)

Appendix B: SPARC Rubric

Source: ECWRPC

| SPARC Program Project Scoring Rubric | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Project Name: | | | |
| Criteria | Scoring Guidance | Points Available | Point Earned |
| Transportation Impact | How well does the project address transportation challenges or opportunities (connectivity, access, mobility, safety, multi-modal options)? | 25 | 0 |
| Economic Development Impact | How clearly does the project tie to economic revitalization, business development, workforce access, or other measurable economic benefits? | 25 | 0 |
| Strength of Project Concept | Is the project idea clear, realistic, and feasible? Are the goals and actions well thought out? | 15 | 0 |
| Community Need and Alignment | Does the project address a clear, demonstrated need in the community? Does it align with local or regional plans, goals, or identified issues? | 15 | 0 |
| Capacity and Commitment | Does the applicant demonstrate readiness, local buy-in, and capacity to follow through after the workshop? Do they identify partners/stakeholders? | 15 | 0 |
| Innovation / Creativity | Does the project show creative thinking, unique approaches, or innovative partnerships? | 5 | 0 |
| Total | | 100 | 0 |

Appendix C: Visioning Workshop Agenda

Source: City of Shawano, WI



City of Shawano

Visioning Workshop Agenda

8:30 AM – Arrival and Initial Meeting

Meet with key individuals, including the applicant and others directly involved in submitting the SPARC application. This will provide an opportunity to establish context, review objectives, and discuss expectations for the day.

9:00 AM – 10:30 AM – Visioning Session

Facilitated discussion with key stakeholders identified by the applicant. This session will focus on identifying community needs, priorities, and opportunities related to the project area.

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM – Site Visit

A guided walk-through of the project site with core participants. This is intended for individuals directly involved in planning and implementation, rather than the full stakeholder group.

11:30 AM – 4:30 PM – Concept Development

Collaborative working session among the technical assistance team to develop preliminary design concepts and recommendations based on input gathered during the morning sessions.

4:30 PM – Regroup and Preliminary Feedback Session

Key stakeholders from the morning visioning session will reconvene to review the initial concepts and provide feedback. Following this session, the team will refine the deliverables further and provide a final report to the community in the weeks following the workshop.

Appendix D: Excerpts from Ayres Final Report

Source: Ayres Associates

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND REVITALIZATION FOR COMMUNITIES

2025 SPARC

PROGRAM SUMMARY

OCTOBER 2025



PREPARED FOR



East Central
Wisconsin
REGIONAL PLANNING
COMMISSION

PREPARED BY

AVRES

VISITS WITH COMMUNITIES

Communities throughout the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission area were invited to apply to receive assistance through the SPARC program. The ECWRPC, with input from NADO, Ayres Associates, and others determined which communities had the strongest applications.

The ECWRPC staff then worked with the communities to arrange the workshops. The format generally involved Ayres and ECWRPC and NADO staff arriving in the morning and meeting with key stakeholders to understand the community's concerns, then the Ayres, ECWRPC, and NADO staff and local representatives would do a "walk-about" to take pictures and further understand the issues and opportunities. The Ayres staff typically spent the afternoon drawing and developing solutions. At the end of the session, a presentation was given to whomever wanted to return to see the draft recommendations. After the visit, the recommendations, which were in the form of Power Point presentations and/or sketches were refined and the presentation was sent to the community for their future use. The presentations are summarized in the following pages.

SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 3, 2025 - Shawano

Thursday, September 4, 2025 - New London

Friday, September 5, 2025 - Omro

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 - Waupaca



CITY OF **SHAWANO**

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S CHALLENGES

The City of Shawano is looking to develop a new park on the southeast side of the city, to better serve the residential neighborhoods being built nearby. This area is lacking in recreational opportunities and is surrounded by industrial uses, so a usable public green space would be beneficial for not only the neighborhoods but for the industrial workers. The community's primary concern for this park is creating safe, accessible multi-modal connections to and from the neighboring schools, residences, and businesses.

WHAT AYRES PROVIDED

Upon visiting the site and realizing the topography was extreme, and that the community valued potential connections and site uses more than a detailed site design at this time, Ayres created inventory and analysis graphics to highlight connections and high-level bubble diagrams to show how the site could be broken up into various uses for future development and open space. The City of Shawano intends to work on a detailed design with stakeholders after final site boundaries and uses are decided.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The design session resulted in the following recommendations:

- Formally define park and development boundaries (create a Certified Survey Map)
- Work with adjacent property owners
- Pursue full design
- Apply for funding
- Work on bicycle/pedestrian access over time

SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The maps on the adjacent page show how the team started to understand the context around the site and how multi-modal connections could start to form. The site has a lot of adjacent schools, parks, and residential neighborhoods that are advantageous for a successful park in the future. Thinking about future residential development in a growing city, we can plan for connections greater than what exists today, including sidewalk infrastructure, crosswalks, and bicycle infrastructure such as trails and bike lanes on city streets.

THE PROGRAM

The Design Material Palette:

- Natural: stone, logs, native grasses / trees
- Industrial: powder-coated steel, concrete, sheet pile inspired seat walls
- Sustainable: bioswale landscape, permeable pavers, LED lighting

Program Elements:

- Nature Play / Bouldering (Size: 3,000 sf)
- Sledding / Tubing Hill (Size: 5,000 sf)
- Pickleball Courts (Size: 7,500 sf)
- Mountain Bike Skills Course / Pump Track (Size: 2,500 sf)
- Fitness Loop / Stations (Size: 0.5 - 1 mile loop, 8 - 10' wide)
- Flexible Lawn / Ice Rink (Size: 0.5 acre)
- Group Pavilion / Shelter (Size: 750 sf)
- Cultural Plaza (Size: 500 sf)
- Picnic / Grilling Nodes (Size: 900 sf)
- Walking Loops (Size: inner loop 0.25 mile, outer loop 0.75 - 1 mile)
- Community Gardens (Size: 2,500 sf)
- Quiet Seating Areas / Council Ring (Size: 500 sf)
- Restroom Facility (Size: 1,000 sf)
- Parking (4,000 sf 10 spaces)
- Bike parking

Total program area: about 2.5 acres

SITE PLAN OPTIONS

The high-level site plans on the next pages highlight land use options for the City's future park. Ayres presented four options to appeal to different desires that the community has expressed.

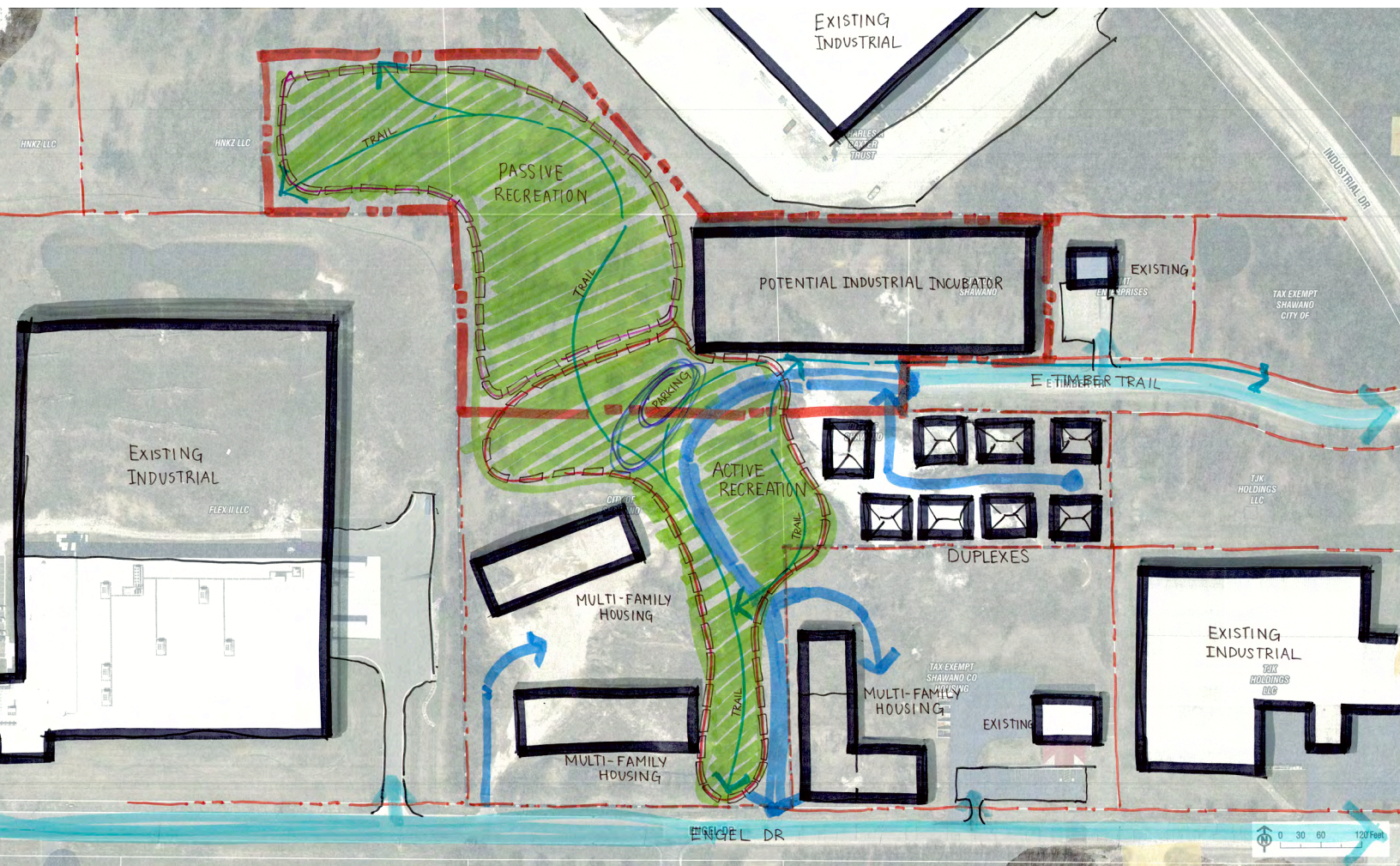
These plans are intended to help the City determine park boundaries and determine what parts of the land they will use for recreation vs. development.



03

This option shows the site accommodating more residential opportunities

The third option explored what it would look like if Shawano wanted to bring more housing into their community, connecting the residential land use to the north and south. On the high point of the site, multi-family residential units could be added with great views all around. Duplexes could be built along E Timber Trail to create a more welcoming streetscape. The park would then weave through these land uses, still maintaining a connection from north down to Engel Drive.



04

This option shows the site only servicing residential and park uses

The fourth and final option explored what it would look like if the site did not accommodate additional industrial, only focusing on park space and recreational opportunities. Multi-family residential units could be added along E Timber Trail to increase visibility and appeal along that street, creating a welcoming entrance to the park. This option maximizes park frontage along Engel Drive.

NEXT STEPS

The City of Shawano share these four approaches with stakeholders and determine the best division and use of the land.

Once that is decided, the City can establish new property lines and then pursue potential funding for a detailed park design.

Potential funding options are outlined on the following page.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The community has many opportunities available for them to pursue, with the recommendation that they start with T-Mobile Hometown, WEDC Vibrant Spaces, Walmart, AARP, the Community Foundation. Please reference the comprehensive list provided by ECWRPC for more information.

T-Mobile's Hometown Grant Program

<https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants>

Walmart Foundation – Spark Good Local Grants

<https://www.walmart.org/how-we-give/program-guidelines/spark-good-local-grants-guidelines>

AARP Livable Communities' Grants

<https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>

Vibrant Spaces

<https://wedc.org/programs/vibrant-spaces-grant/>

Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region

<https://www.cffoxvalley.org/grants-scholarships/grants/grant-opportunities/>

- ***Community Vision Fund Grants***
- ***Grants from Families of Funds***
- ***Donor-Directed Grants***

WISDOT TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program)

<https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/aid/tap.aspx>

WDNR Stewardship Local Assistance and Federal Recreation Grant Programs

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Stewardship/ApplyLUG>

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/aid/LWCF.html>

Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education (SFE) Grant Program - Wild Ones

<https://wildones.org/seeds-for-education/sfe-application/>

USDA – Department of Agriculture Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program#overview>

Potential Grants for Community Art Projects

- ***Wisconsin Arts Board (WAB) – Creative Communities Program***

<https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Pages/Community/CCP.aspx>

- ***Phantom Art Galleries – Wisconsin***

<https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/pages/Community/PhantomArtGalleries.aspx>

- ***NEA Grants for Art Projects***

<https://www.arts.gov/grants/grants-for-arts-projects>

- ***National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town Program***

<https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town>

CITY OF OMRO

DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S CHALLENGES

The City of Omro is looking to enhance their downtown along S Webster Avenue between the pedestrian bridge over the Fox River and Huron Street. The City is hoping improvements would help improve traffic flow and accessibility, add vibrant community gathering spaces, and increase foot traffic and economic engagement with local businesses. A defined plan from the design team could help them to pursue future funding and implementation, and spark inspiration and action from the community members.

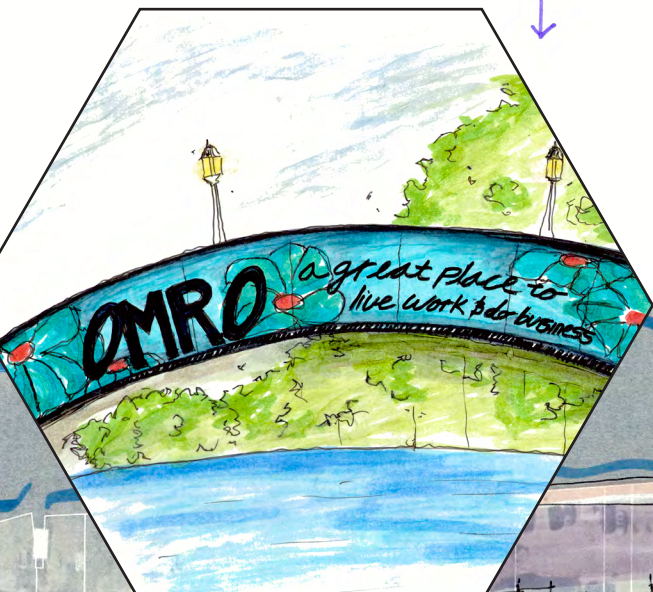
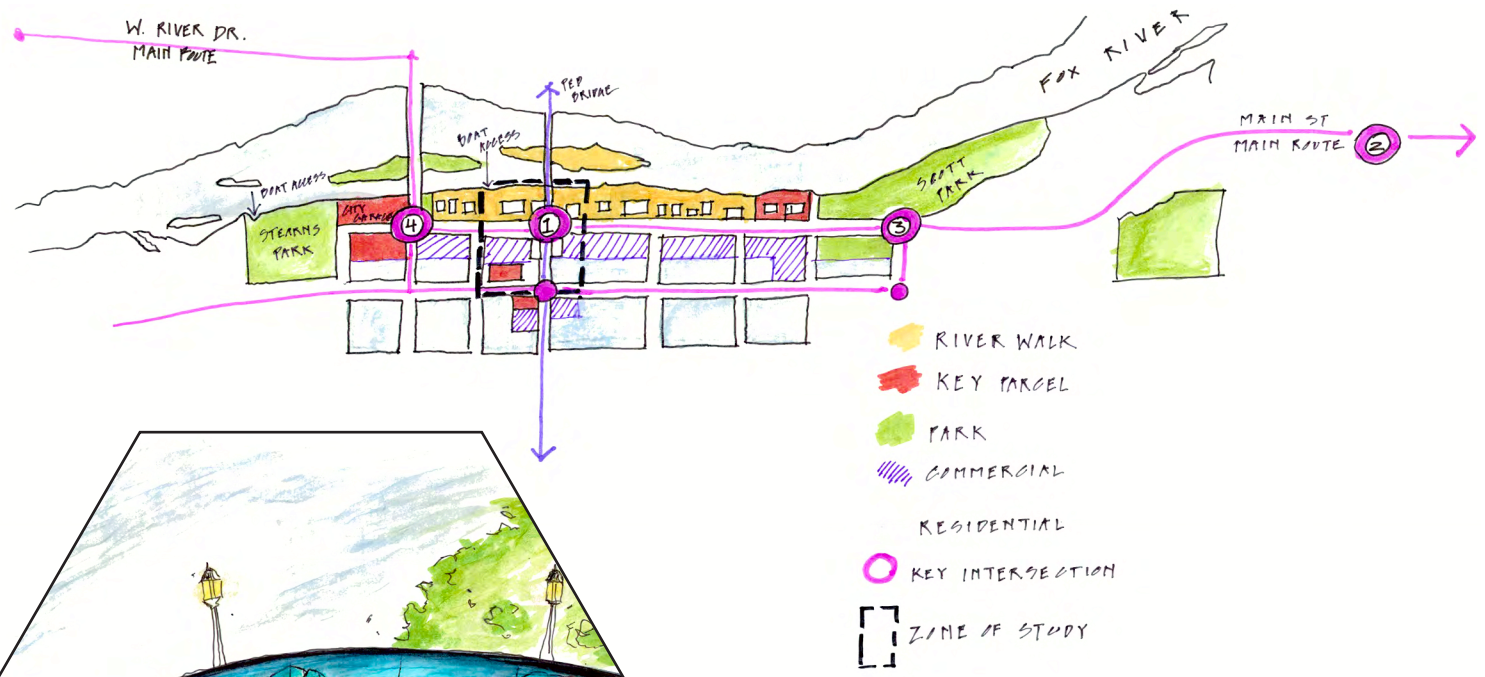
WHAT AYRES PROVIDED

This community received assistance in 2021, so the team wanted to build upon the past work. The team first determined what the community prioritized for their downtown and the demographics of the city. After creating an inventory and analysis of existing land uses and circulation through downtown, a downtown plan was created with plans, sections, and perspectives. These materials should help the community envision a revitalized downtown and pursue funding.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The design session resulted in the following recommendations:

- Along Webster Avenue, pursue development on each side, with closures for events
- Remove parking at the base of the pedestrian bridge to create a seamless connection south
- Demolish the former Dollar General building and redevelop as retail
- Pursue townhome development on W Huron Street
- Continue conversations with DOT on stop signals along Highway 21
- Pursue new Public Works/EMS outside of downtown, market current Public Works site for redevelopment



DOWNTOWN PLAN

The analysis map on the adjacent page shows how the team started to understand the land uses and circulation in Omro's downtown. Key intersections were identified, emphasizing the importance of safe crossings for pedestrians and traffic calming measures for vehicles. The Downtown plan graphics show street enhancements along Webster Avenue, with street trees, planting buffers, widened sidewalks and outdoor dining and seating opportunities. The plan also highlights new development for the community and associated parking solutions.

