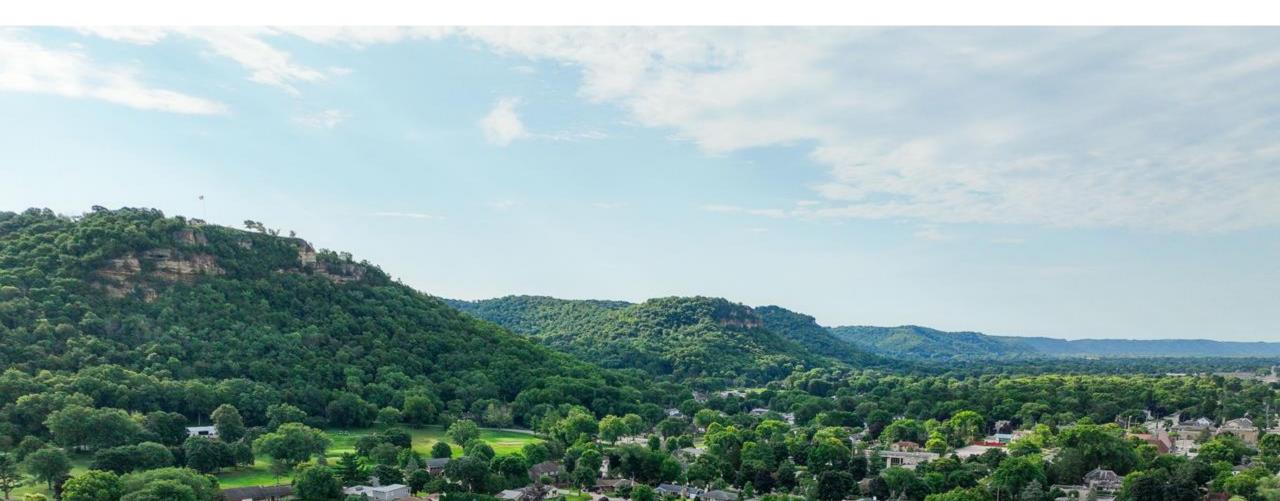
# Room to Grow

How Zoning Affects Our Environment



# Welcome

Andrew Ericson, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse Natalie Heneghan, Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region

## We are zoning enthusiasts.

# Overview

Zoning basics

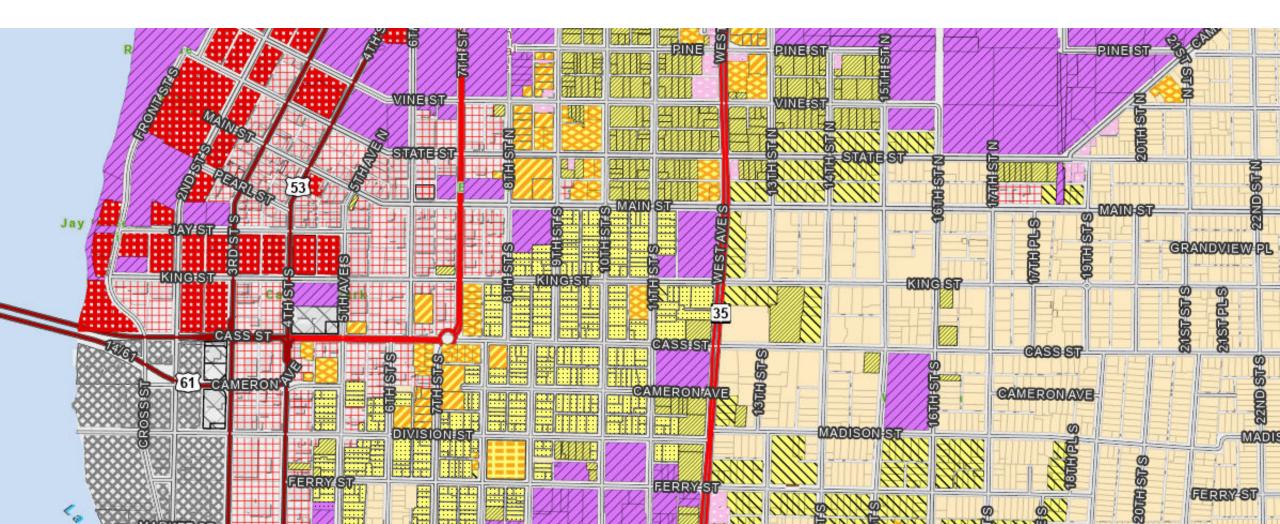
La Crosse's zoning code through the years

Zoning impact on the environment

Direct impact on La Crosse's Environment

What's next? What's possible?

# Zoning







#### 1910 - Baltimore

1916 - NYC

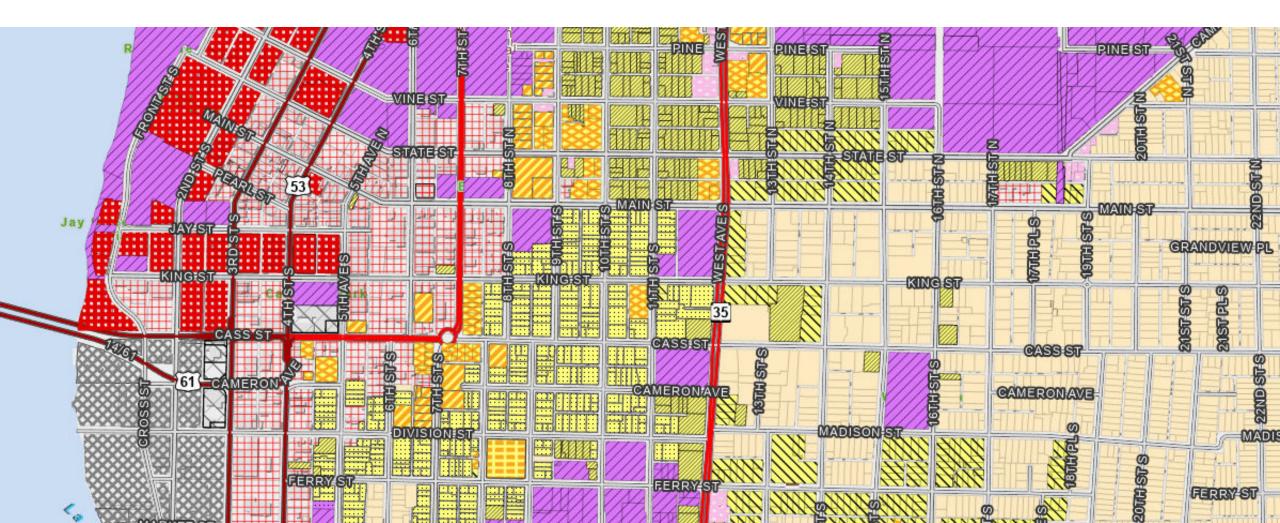
## What does zoning do?

Establish uniformity throughout an area

Govern property use

Manage appearance of properties





"Times change and the community changes with them. A good zoning ordinance must change with the community to which it applies, or it may become a hindrance to orderly development."

- La Crosse Tribune, January 2, 1956



quality of housing in La Crasse - effort is the result of a lengthy and the stability and bealth of our study by a committee of city coun neighborhoods. It's time we grove til members and citizens - includ those concerns more time and at- ing some landlorite

tention. LAY TELE P.H. This issue was one of several studied in a recent La Crosse Foundadion needs assessment of the city. "Te Make a Difference." 9-25-28 University of Wisconsin-La Crosso speiclogist Jac D. Bulk studied bousing issues and concluded that La Crosse had some prob-

some serious housing deterioration held by each council member in certain areas. This doterioration Block by block, the changes can be is clearly connected to joint tenant discussed. and landlord irresponsibility in city That's a positive approach, but sectors that are prodominately con- we would recommend another poststituted by rental units.

That is why the city planning di map that will restrict what can be

Mayne Patrick Zielke was con cerned that the stringert changes would be approved by the council without adequate public notice. So he threatened to viste the legislation which started the process - unless city meetings are held in all 18 council districts.

That makes sense. Now, under the council's plan, when the pro-"It is no secret," he wrote, "that posed poning changes are unveiled the city of La Crosse is undergoing this fall, public meetings will be

tive way of looking at the zoning

#### Laws would protect single-family areas

#### By GARY RADLOFF

Of the Tribune staff City ordinances attempting to reduce the encroachment of duplex homes and apartments into single-family residential neighborhoods were passed by the La Crosse Plan Commission Monday.

The commission approved the final pieces of legislation stemming from a year long, comprehensive study of zaning and housing ordinances. AV TE(B D.7 The major part of the plan approved Monday is a citywide zoning map study attempting to create a more standard zoning plan for

the city. 1-5-90 A mayoral veto looms over the plan because it may change the zoning designation for large parts of the city.

The zoning map change may create more areas zoned for single-family homes. There is currently only one area of the city zoned single-family. The building of apartments and duplexes is

restricted in single-family zoned areas. "There is a lot of erosion of single-family neighborhoods," said Ron Bracegirdle, city

the house will probably be purchased ... then five more students will move in." Bracegirdle said changes need to be made in the zoning map to prevent more high-density housing such as duplexes and apartments

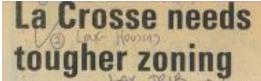
reolacing single-family homes. "There will be substantial zoning changes and this will reduce the allowable density, Bracegirdle said.

The commission approved legislation that takes a two-pronged approach to the problem. The first ordinance addressing the problem would change the city zoning map. This would likely result in more areas zoned for single-family homes.

Most city homes are in areas zoned residence district, which which allows a variety of uses such as duplexes and larger apartments

The second piece of legislation would require a conditional use permit for any owneroccupied home in single-family or residence zoned districts to be leased or occupied by more than two unrelated people.

This conditional use requirement also sets standards by which the permit could be



La Crosse's neighborhoods troversial. What happens to are in trouble. Here are a few of the symptoms: 1-8-98 . The construction of aparlment buildings in areas that once were dominated by owneroccupted, single-family homes. \* Problems arising in neighborhoods where the only realdents are either student renters of eiderly homeowners. These include noise and vandalism. · Parking problems, associated with the apartments.

Last year, a special committee of Common Council members and citizens studied these problems and recommended several asseeping changes in La-Crosse's housing and toning

apartments already in existence" They would probably be allowed as "nonconforming uses" but properties that are vacant for at least a year may have to comply with the newer restrictive zoning.

\* A law that any apartment occupied by more than two unrelated persons would require a conditional use permit from the city. This is specifically intended to limit the number of students or other tenants allowed in apartments. Donald Meinert, a member of the City Plan Commission, put the issue this way: "There are certain sections of the city occurried by

From the 1930s through the 1990s, a series of zoning code rewrites occur in La Crosse. Key themes that emerge include:

- Public health
- Preserving property value
- Cleaning up patchwork laws + exceptions to the rule



From the 1930s through the 1990s, a series of zoning code rewrites occur in La Crosse. Key themes that emerge include:

- Limiting encroachment of student housing
- Limiting encroachment of rentals of any kind



By the late 1990s, single-family zoning dominates residential areas. R1, or Single Family Residential, composes the second highest percentage of land use at 19%, topped only by Conservancy at 22.9%.



Other residential uses, including Low Density Multi-Family (duplexes, triplexes, etc.), Multi-Family Residential, and Special Residential total 4.5% of land use.



## Missing Middle Housing









## Lot size

Lot size increases over time with every new zoning rewrite

- Pre-1938 = less than 5,000 sq ft
  1938-1966 = minimum 5,000 sq ft
- After 1966 = minimum 7,200 ft

## Affordability

City of La Crosse	1999 Census	2020 Census	
Number of owner-occupied units	9,198	10,610	
Median home value	\$85,100	\$183,300	
% spending 30% or more on housing	18%	13.6%	
Number of renter-occupied units	10,380	11,661	
Median monthly rent	\$449	\$941	
% spending 30% or more on rent	36.2%	44.1%*	
Minimum wage	\$5.15/hour	\$7.25/hour	
Median salary (county)	\$39,483	\$46,438	

+215% (\$196,600 in 2023)

+210%

+118%

\*24.7% spend more than 50% of income on rent

Consequences:

- We're running out of space
- Buildable land rapidly increases in value, costs passed on to buyers and renters

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- Car dependency built into our city don't have density to uphold healthy transit infrastructure
- Parking lots

# Zoning and the Environment

- Zoning can incentivize Sprawl:
  - $\circ$  Excess Car Use
  - $\circ$  Impervious Surfaces
  - Fragmentation and Encroachment of Ecosystems
  - o Higher Energy Inputs

- Zoning can incentivize Smart Growth
  - o Walkability/Bikeability
  - $\circ$  Transit Friendly
  - Preserves Open
    - Space/Ecosystems (broadly)
  - $\circ$  More efficient use of energy

## **Emissions Reduction**

#### **Carbon Pollution Avoided in 2033**

(Millions of tons CO<sub>2</sub>e per year)

(	D	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80
Total emissions									

Direct reductions from reduced driving (i.e. less electricity used or gasoline burned)

Indirect reductions from vehicle lifecycle pollution (vehicle manufacturing-related emissions and upstream oil emissions)

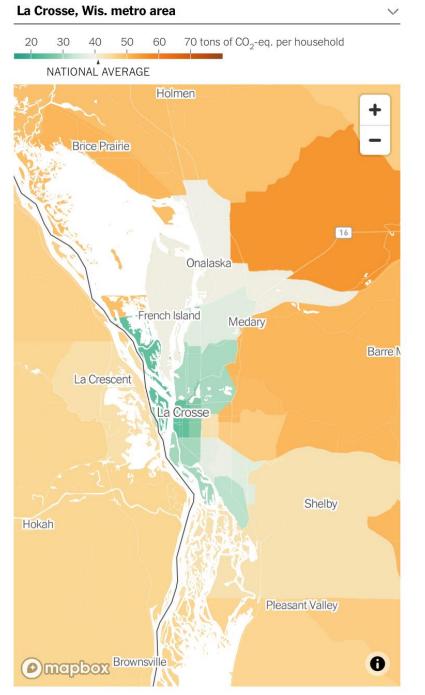
Non-transportation sector pollution avoidance

Exhibit 1. Total emissions avoided through reduced driving, vehicle lifecycle pollution avoidance, and other pollution avoidance.

Source: https://rmi.org/why-state-land-use-reform-should-be-a-priority-climate-lever-for-america/

## Climate Impact per Capita

• Source: NYT, Climate Impact of Your Neighborhood, Mapped (Dec. 13, 2022)



Note: Metro area names have been simplified.

## **Car Dependency**

#### **Transportation Performance**

Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per capita for all passenger vehicles within the City of La Crosse for the year 2023 via Google EIE.

Data Year	2023		
Average Daily Distance, Total	1,197,260		
La Crosse Total Population per USGBC Population Calculator	60,670		
Daily VMT Per Capita	19.733975111		

## Car Dependency Continued

Table 3: Community-Wide Annual GHG Emissions by Source Category

Source	Annual GHG Emissions (MT CO <sub>2</sub> e)					Percent Change		
Category	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	<b>'19-'23</b>	'20-'23	
Electricity	260,955	196,849			183,388	-30%	-7%	
Natural Gas	215,482	209,040			213,017	-1%	+2%	
Transportation	266,169	226,700			258,014	-3%	+14%	
Solid Waste	29,502	31,239			25,529	-13%	-18%	
Wastewater	407	407			455	+12%	+12%	
Total	772,515	664,235			680,403	-12%	+2%	

Info Source: GHG Inventory Tool, www.paleBLUEdot.llc

## Transit

#### Toward greener transit: Carbon-efficient density thresholds for public transit vs. private vehicles

Bumsoo Lee º 🖾 , Sungwon Lee <sup>b</sup> Ӓ 🖾

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2025.104641 7

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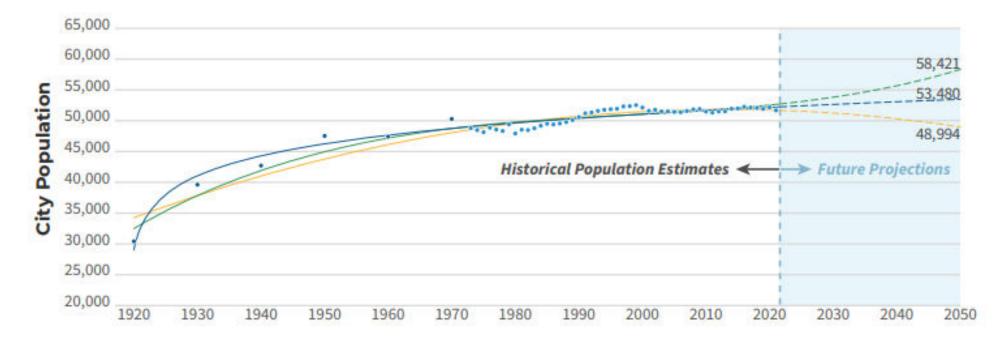
Minimum Density required for transit to be more carbon efficiency than driving - 3.4 persons per acre

Carbon benefits increase beyond that. At 8.6 persons per acre benefits significantly shift up

By developed space in La Crosse (not including conservancy) 6.1 per acre.

## Population Growth - City

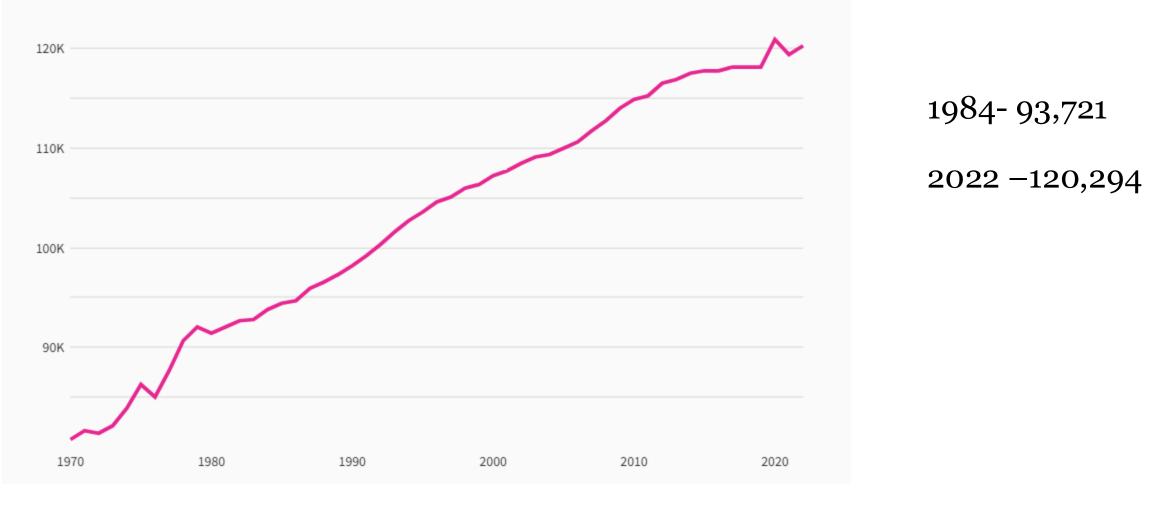
▼ Figure 1.2: City of La Crosse Population Projections.



Source: Forward La Crosse (comp plan)

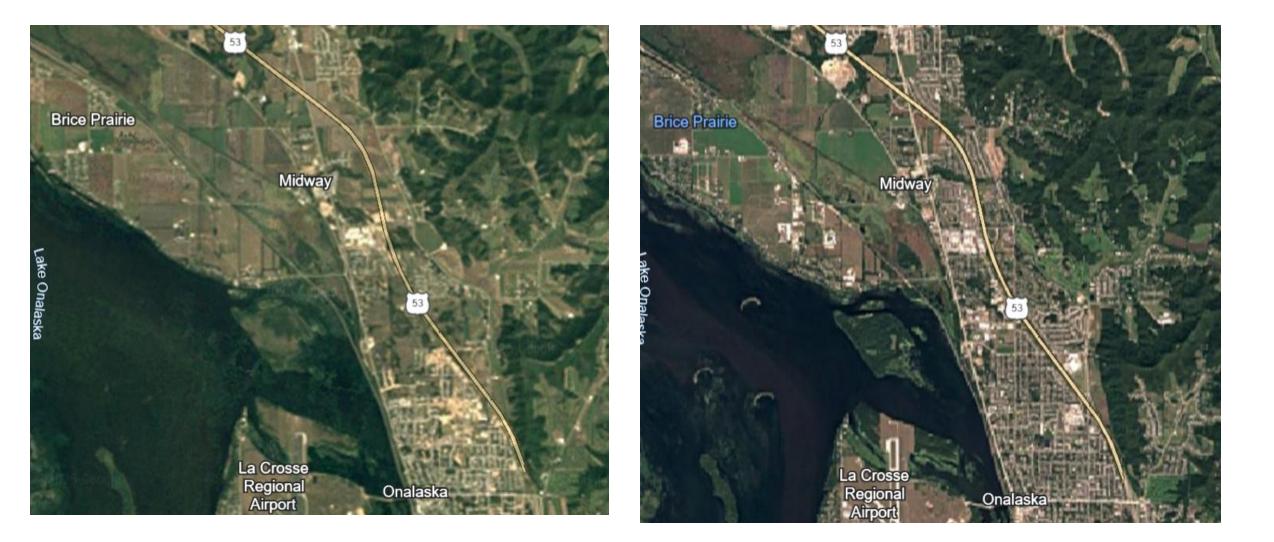
## **Population Growth - County**

#### **Population in La Crosse County**



https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/wisconsin/county/la-crosse-county/?endDate=2022-01-01&startDate=1970-01-01

## 1984 to 2020 Onalaska

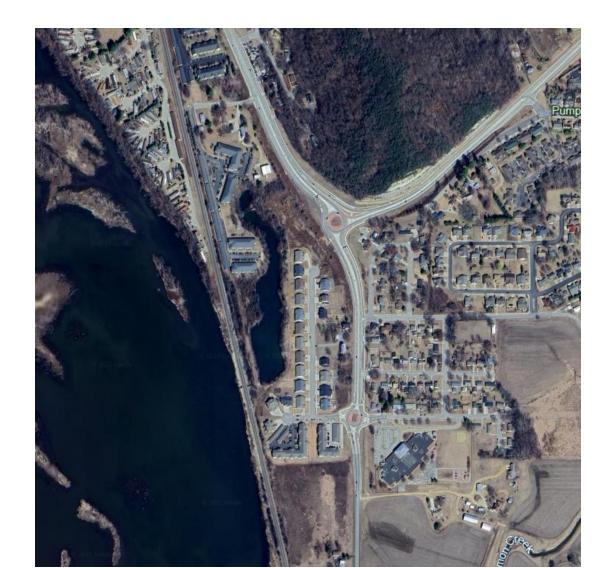


## 1984 to 2020 Holmen



## 2003 to 2025 La Crosse

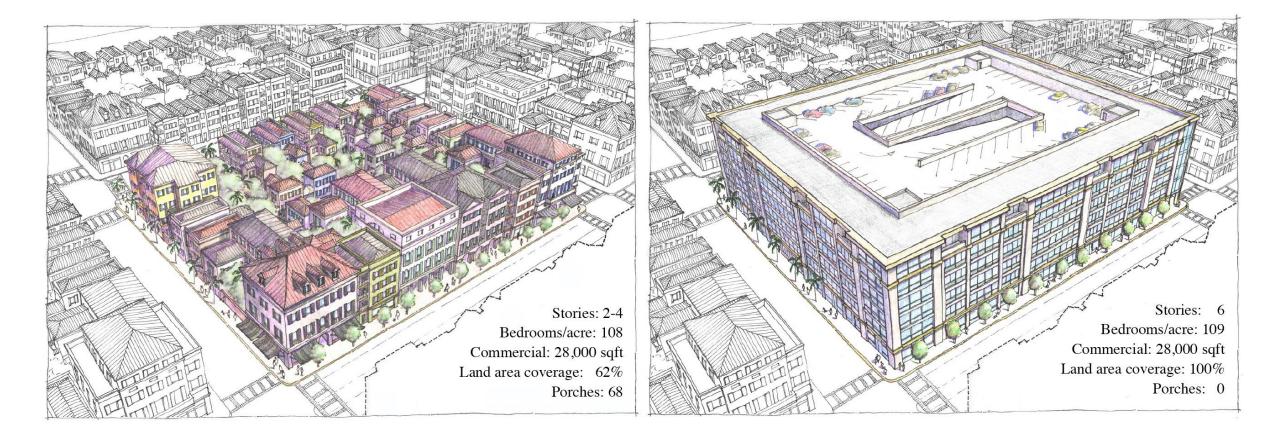




## 2015 to 2022 La Crosse



## Density Can be Green



Source: https://www.civicconservation.org/casestudy

## Water

- Lawns don't infiltrate as much as you think
- Low density means more off-site impervious infrastructure (roads, parking lots)
- Stormwater infrastructure (ex: rain gardens) can make up for more impervious surface.

#### **EXAMPLE 1: ONE-ACRE LEVEL**

Scale of Analysis	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C	
One Acre	1 house	4 houses	8 houses	

https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/protecting-water-resources-higher-density-development

#### **EXHIBIT 3:** Total Average Annual Stormwater Runoff for All Scenarios

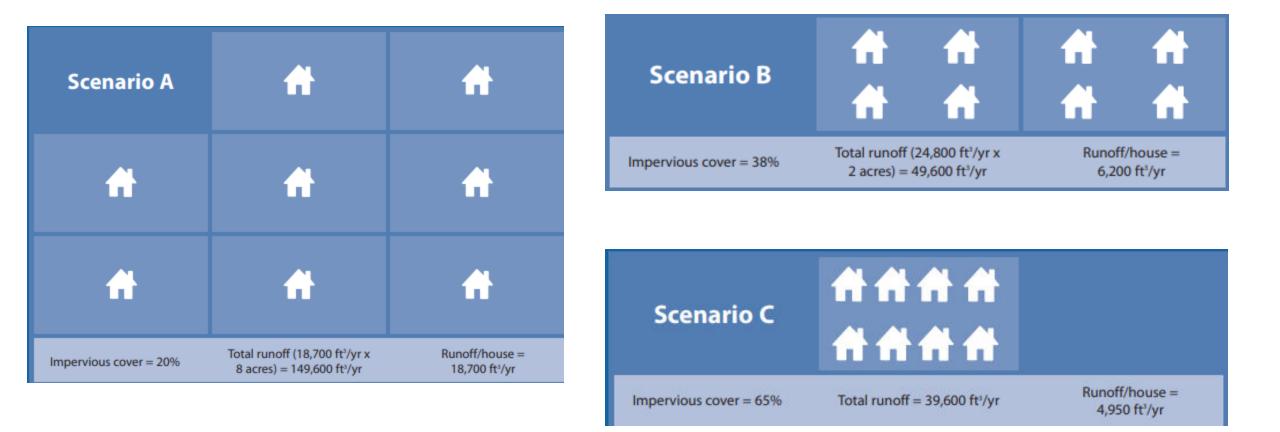


https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/protecting-water-resources-higher-density-development

#### **EXAMPLE 2:** LOT LEVEL

Scale of Analysis	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C	
Lot	8 houses built on	8 houses built on	8 houses built on	
	8 acres	2 acres	1 acre	

https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/protecting-water-resources-higher-density-development

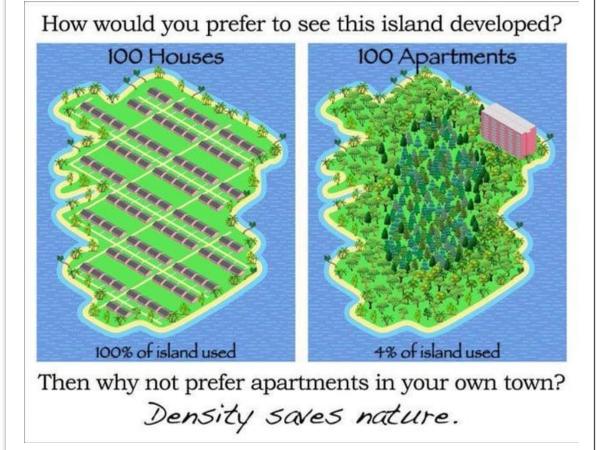


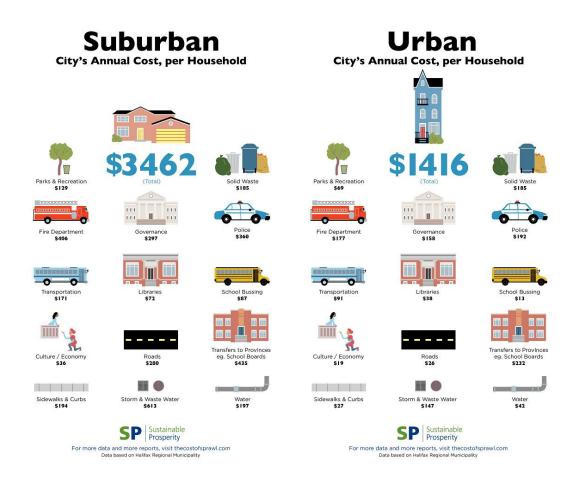
https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/protecting-water-resources-higher-density-development

#### **EXHIBIT 5:** 10,000-Acre Watershed Accommodating 10,000 Houses

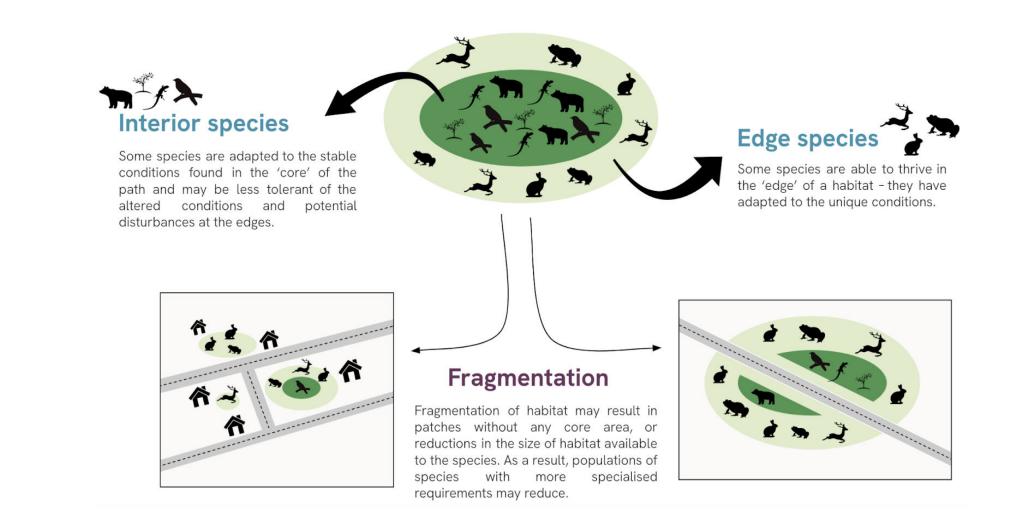
Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C
10,000 houses built on 10,000 acres produce: 10,000 acres x 1 house x 18,700 ft <sup>3</sup> /yr of runoff = <b>187 million ft<sup>3</sup>/yr of</b> stormwater runoff Site: 20% impervious cover Watershed: 20% impervious cover	10,000 houses built on 2,500 acres produce: 2,500 acres x 4 houses x 6,200 ft <sup>3</sup> /yr of runoff = 62 million ft <sup>3</sup> /yr of stormwater runoff Site: 38% impervious cover Watershed: 9.5% impervious cover	10,000 houses built on 1,250 acres produce: 1,250 acres x 8 houses x 4,950 ft <sup>3</sup> /yr of runoff = 49.5 million ft <sup>3</sup> /yr of stormwater runoff Site: 65% impervious cover Watershed: 8.1% impervious cover

https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/protecting-water-resources-higher-density-development





## **Core Species vs Edge Species**



https://www.natcapresearch.com/resources/what-is-the-fragmentation-of-ecosystems

#### 2003 to 2024 La Crescent



Zoning Information

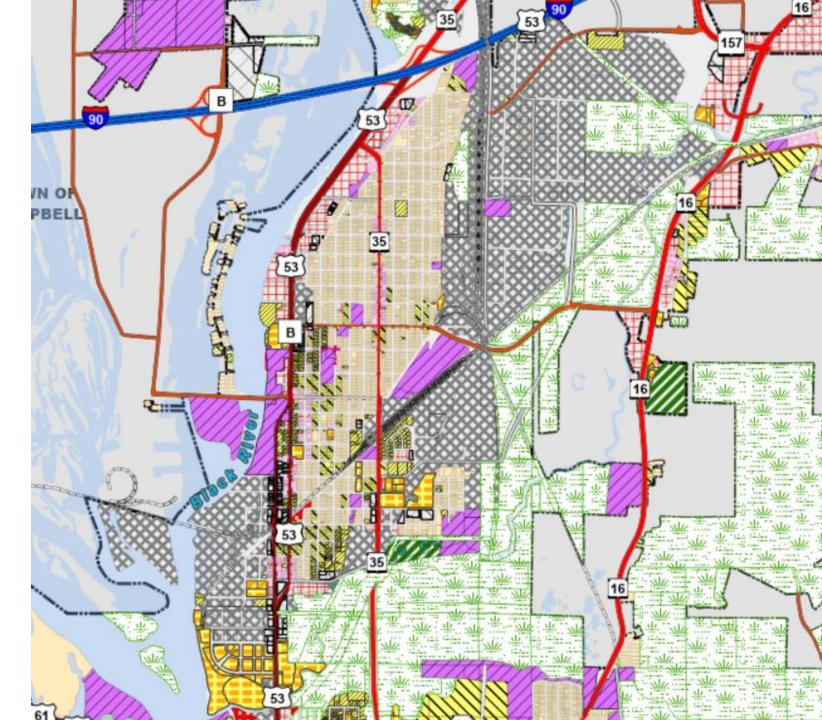
R1 - SINGLE FAMILY

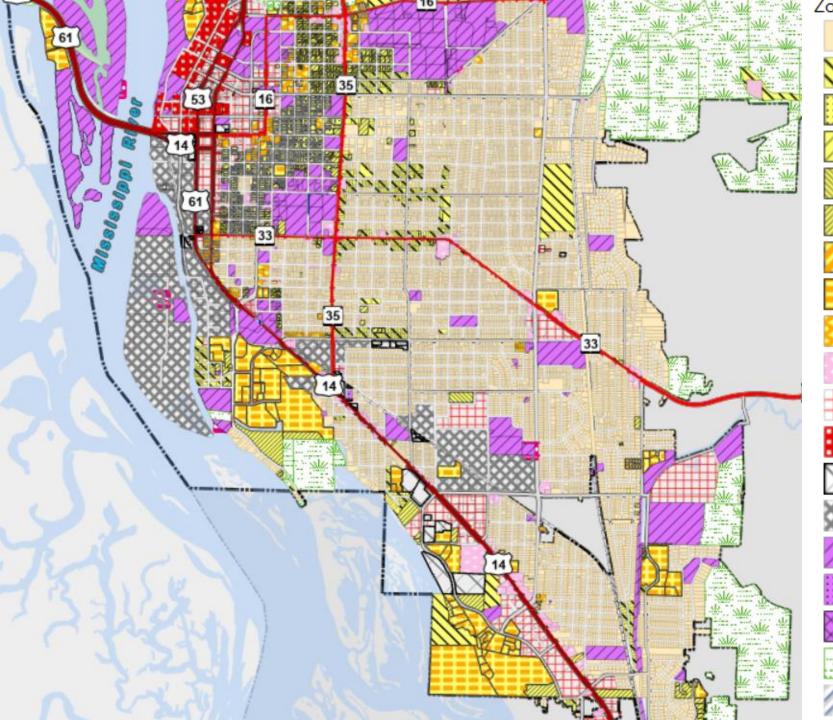
R2 - RESIDENCE

- WR WASHBURN RESIDENTIAL
- **R3 SPECIAL RESIDENCE**
- R4 LOW DENSITY MULTIPLE
- R5 MULTIPLE DWELLING
- R6 SPECIAL MULTIPLE
- PD- PLANNED DEVELOPMENT
- TND TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEV.
- C1 LOCAL BUSINESS
- C2 COMMERCIAL
- C3 COMMUNITY BUSINESS
- M1 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
- M2 HEAVY INDUSTRIAL
- PS PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC
- PL PARKING LOT

8

- UT PUBLIC UTILITY
- CON CONSERVANCY
- FW FLOODWAY





Zoning Information **R1 - SINGLE FAMILY R2 - RESIDENCE** WR - WASHBURN RESIDENTIAL **R3 - SPECIAL RESIDENCE R4 - LOW DENSITY MULTIPLE R5 - MULTIPLE DWELLING R6 - SPECIAL MULTIPLE** PD- PLANNED DEVELOPMENT TND - TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEV. C1 - LOCAL BUSINESS C2 - COMMERCIAL **C3 - COMMUNITY BUSINESS** M1 - LIGHT INDUSTRIAL x M2 - HEAVY INDUSTRIAL PS - PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC PL - PARKING LOT UT - PUBLIC UTILITY 1 CON - CONSERVANCY FW - FLOODWAY

## What's next?



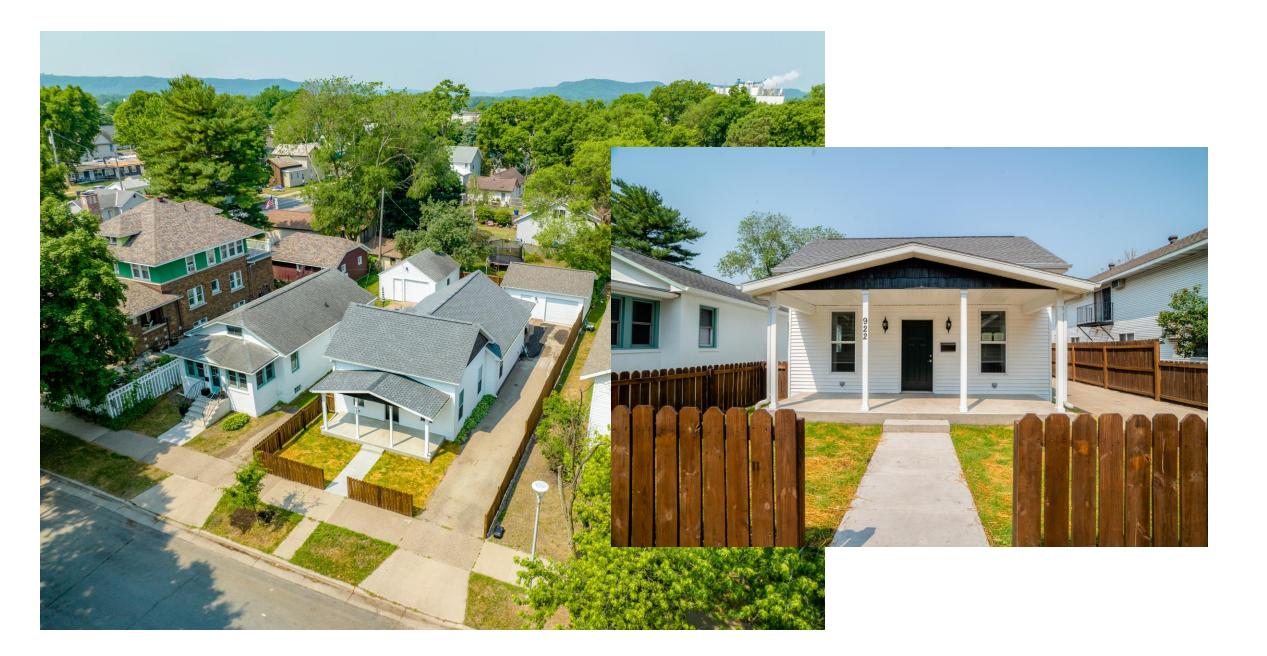
## What's next? What's possible?

It's possible to write a zoning code that aligns with our goals for the environment, while also reducing cost of living, supporting schools, and building a healthy tax base.

Become a zoning enthusiast!

### What's next? What's possible?





#### THE TYPES



Duplex: Side-by-Side



**Duplex: Stacked** 



**Bungalow Court** 



**Carriage House** 



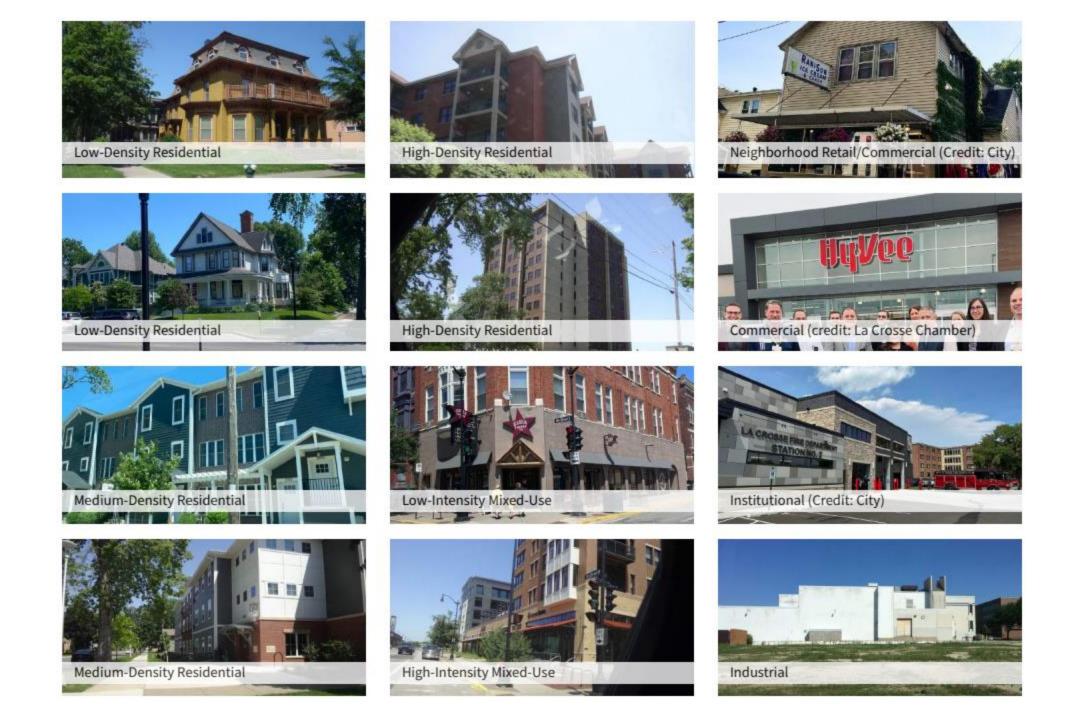
Fourplex



Multiplex: Small

## ACTIVITY

# Build your "Sustainable La Crosse" through ZONING!



## **Activity Instructions**

- Create a zoning legend • Zoning Options
  - Conservancy
  - Lower Density Residential
  - Higher Density Residential
  - Lower Intensity Mixed Use
  - Higher Intensity Mixed Use
  - Commercial/Industrial
  - Public/Other
- Rezone your "Sustainable La Crosse"
- Talk with others about your zoning decisions.

### **Group Share**

# What's next?

Visit <u>www.forwardlacrosse.org/</u> to learn about the 2025 Zoning Code Update

Meet your councilmember: <u>www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/city-</u> <u>council</u>

Contact ALL councilmembers: email <a href="mailto:zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org">zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org</a>

# Thank you!

