



STREETSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES AND DIRECTIONS

Ripon, Wisconsin | June 2025

A report supporting a technical visit supported by:
Wisconsin Economic Development Program

Prepared for:
Ripon Main Street, Inc.
Wisconsin Economic Development Program

Prepared by:
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Purpose

The Wisconsin Main Street Program administers an economic development program targeting Wisconsin's historic commercial districts. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation staff provide technical support and training to Wisconsin communities that have expressed a grass roots commitment to revitalizing their traditional business districts using a comprehensive strategy based on historic preservation.

Communities selected to participate in the Wisconsin Main Street Program receive periodic technical assistance visits to help identify emerging opportunities or address challenges. The 2018 Downtown Ripon Tech Visit was specifically tailored to build on past work and success, to identify new and emerging opportunities, and to leverage investments being made by the public and private sectors.

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The Wisconsin Main Street Program exists as a branch of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, serving more than thirty communities with a focus on downtown vibrancy. This report is the result of the Wisconsin Main Street Program's technical consulting services, which are offered to participating communities based on local needs and requests. These services are most often intended for more advanced Main Street communities, allowing them to benefit from specialists in any range of topics relating to enhancing the vibrancy of their downtown area. In the case of Ripon Main Street, Inc., this report focuses on streetscapes, building on a similar visit conducted in 2018 that largely offered directions for Watson Street, Ripon's "Main Street." In the current report, the focus is West Fond du Lac Street and East Fond du Lac Street—two entries to downtown and important access points to historic Watson Street, perhaps with some stray advice relating to Watson Street or other areas in or near downtown.

This technical visit builds upon the work accomplished in 2018 but is guided by the same goals to identify and advance:

- Potential improvements and enhancements for the streetscape and public spaces in downtown Ripon to reflect and complement previous and planned developments in the downtown and the surrounding area.
- Opportunities to create stronger connections to existing anchors, potential redevelopment sites, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Opportunities and strategies to introduce special features and enhanced amenities that promote a pedestrian-friendly environment and a stronger sense of discovery, and that continue to attract new users to downtown Ripon.
- Ideas for elements and treatments to downtown's streetscape and public spaces that, implemented over a period of time, will help to create a more cohesive design and rhythm in the public realm, tell a story of downtown's evolution, and support continued investment and entrepreneurial activity.



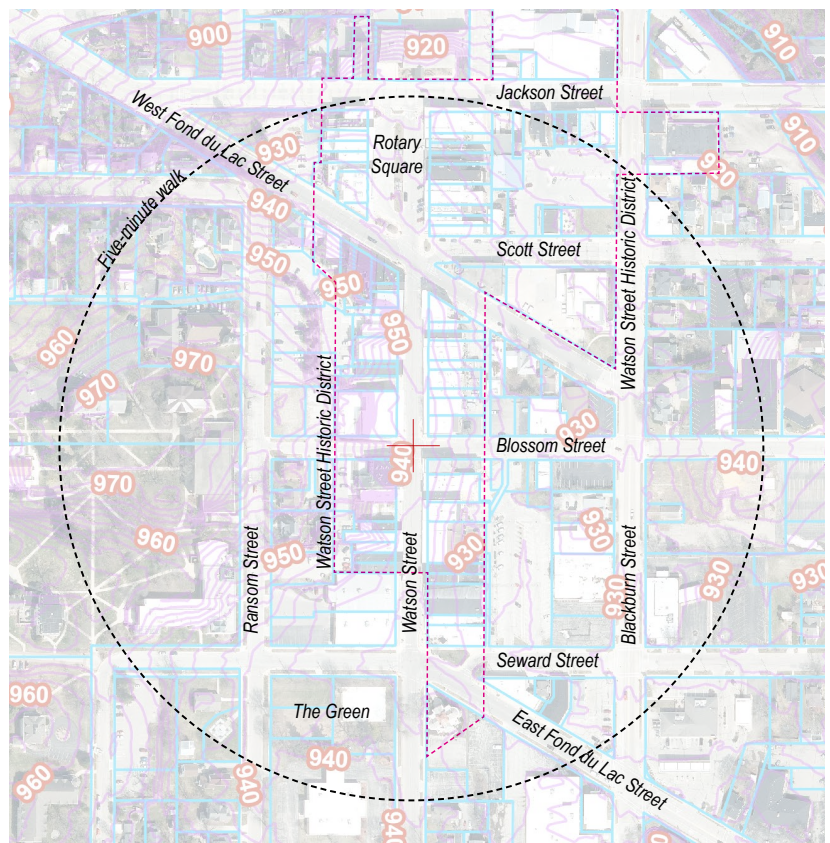
After the first technical visit, Ripon Main Street pursued downtown tree planting that has resulted in beautification of Watson Street. Importantly, the community saw fit to plant trees in sidewalk cutouts AND to maintain those trees by watering, pruning, and other sometimes intensive care. A variety of trees now populate Watson Street and other places in downtown, with the variety being important in withstanding diseases and infestations that might otherwise wipe out a singular tree species.

The first visit encouraged the creation of a more beautiful experience for pedestrians (and motorists) through the introduction planters at storefronts, which many retailers or building owners seemed to pursue. A few benches as seating areas have also been added near building entries. Earlier recommendations also sought the evolution of spaces where buildings once stood; while this has been somewhat implemented, as the spaces created support private establishments, they offer more “green” to the downtown landscape. Among the more notable improvements was the introduction of overhead lighting along a good portion of Watson Street. String lighting runs along the cornice of downtown buildings, making occasional runs across the street, providing a highlight and attraction for downtown visitors. All of these improvements would occur in the setting of a very much intact downtown, one with strong built fabric and a welcoming scale.

It is noted and worth repeating that downtown Ripon is ideally suited for pedestrians—except for Scott Street (which will be described further) and one block of Blossom Street (which is steep for pedestrians and becomes more steep west of Watson Street). It’s ideal because downtown, from Rotary Square to The Green is accommodated within a five-minute walk.

While those enhancements are significant, the community expressed a desire to continue its efforts to improve downtown through more streetscape improvements. Overhead lighting has not been extended north of West Fond du Lac Street and Scott Street, an area where lighting needs to extend across an extraordinarily wide block of Watson Street.

This same portion of Watson Street suffers from separation from the rest of downtown Ripon. A five-legged intersection, one leg of which is Scott Street, makes crossings more



difficult for pedestrians and the street character is markedly different. Watson Streets south of Fond du Lac Street/Scott Street is relatively narrow, with buildings set at the back edge of sidewalks, and a two-way, two-lane street lined with parallel parking. To the north of the intersection, buildings are set around a space probably twice as wide as Watson Street to the south, placing buildings at the very edge of a composition with the sky becoming far more dominant.



On the south side of downtown, East Fond du Lac Street presents an experience that might be described as uninviting—that is, it's not a bad environment but it doesn't create an attraction or suggest a connection to Watson Street and downtown or to Ripon College, set just at the west edge of Ripon's downtown.

Downtown Ripon isn't described wholly Watson Street and those few streets feeding into it. West and East Fond du Lac Streets along with Blackburn Street form the edge to downtown and are, in fact, the state highway connecting the community to the world outside. While strides to make the pedestrian experience of Watson Street are important, neglecting to take on those opportunities on West and East Fond du Lac Streets and Blackburn Street would certainly diminish the potential of downtown.

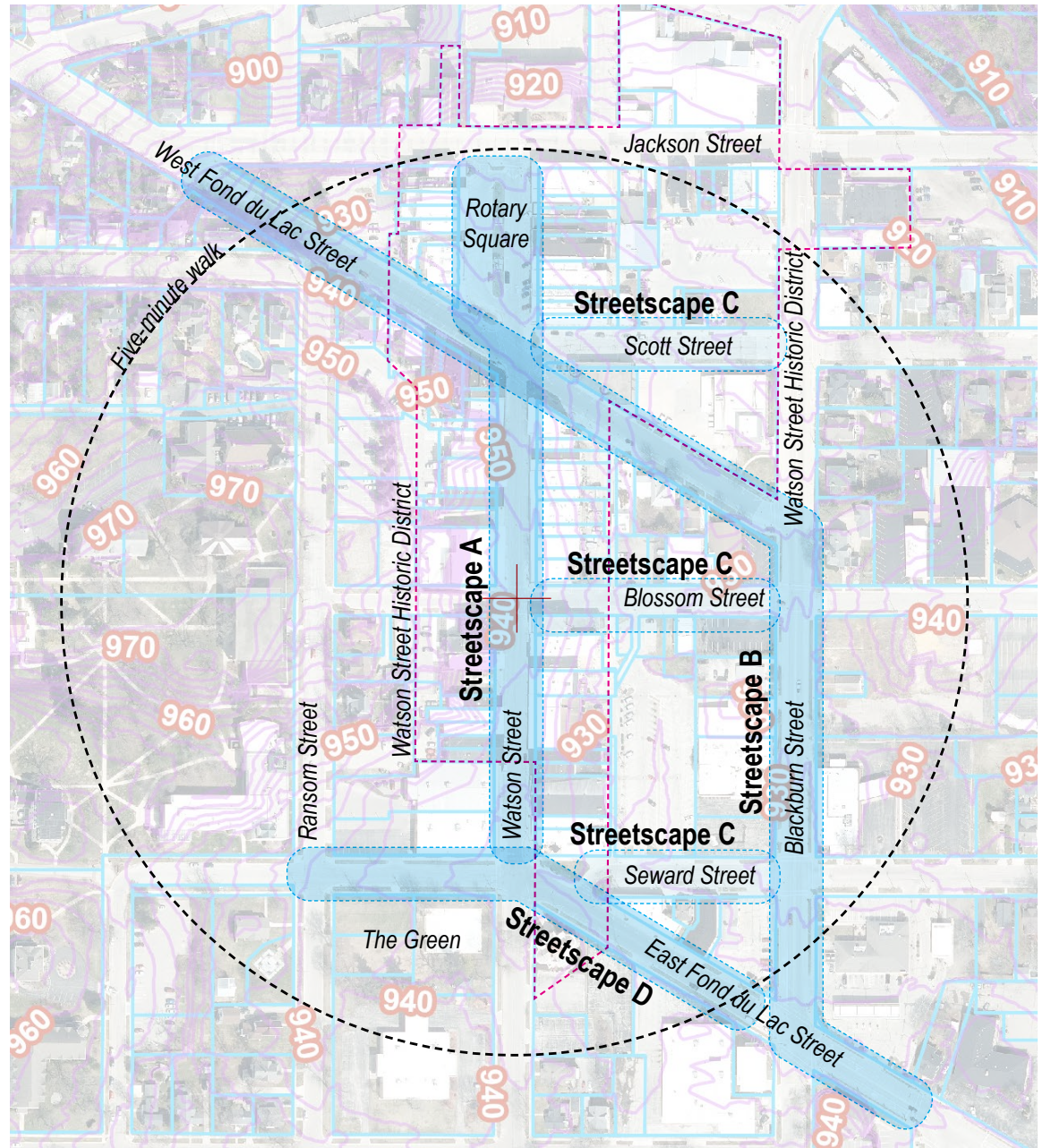
This investigation takes no issue with the work accomplished on Watson Street. In fact, those seemingly small and incremental improvements add significantly to the experience of pedestrians. The varied street tree plantings, front door planters and furniture, and even the not so public spaces just beyond the line of building faces feels just right for a downtown that has been growing and evolving for more than a hundred years. The addition of a lighting spectacle of overhead string lights add a touch of whimsy and delight that sometimes somber historic buildings cannot. Eventually, with the introduction of artful additions of lighting or seating on a block basis, the Watson Street streetscape truly comes alive. It's now the other streets of downtown that need and deserve attention.

First, though, it might be good to consider how downtowns have evolved. While perhaps always the economic, social and civic center of a community, it's common for downtowns to suffer from the utilitarian—where good enough might have sufficed and decoration in a place meant to conduct business might have lent an air of extravagance. Think of the “cobra head” streetlights, which are perfectly suitable for illumination and certainly made to endure harsh Ripon winters. They're also perfectly lacking in human scale and interest. But this is, perhaps, the case for many downtowns as they experienced a first evolution aimed at cost efficiencies and ease of care. It wasn't a wrong direction but it failed to recognize that places intended for human activity benefit from more intense care, where extravagance might be valued just slightly more than efficiency, and most important where those places were valued for their potential to coalesce human activity more than any other place in a community.

This might mean that those steps taken toward a downtown streetscape for Ripon, even if small and incremental, are exactly proper, but now the focus should change to the ways in which other streets and places begin to do their part in supporting human activity and vibrancy of place. In that way, streetscape improvements in this report look to nearly all the streets of downtown.

Traditional streetscapes

For many downtowns, much attention is directed to walking surfaces, lighting, and furniture as the basis for the streetscape. While each play a role, there are places like downtown Ripon where the formality of a crisply patterned sidewalk with regular spacing of street lights is not necessary. Many downtowns are mixes of architectural styles and buildings heights, and many have opening between buildings that result in less continuous “street walls”—the container of the downtown pedestrian experience. Trees—the greatest visual factor—are often left as an afterthought, sometimes because they require ongoing care, or because they interfere with views to buildings and signs. In fact, the basic patterns of a streetscape might be formed around trees almost opportunistically—as



is happening in downtown Ripon. Here, the species of trees varies within a somewhat limited palette and they are planted where openings exist or could be created. Ultimately, a mostly shaded walk might be achieved. There will still be lighting—simple in design and efficient in getting illumination to walking and driving surfaces. Furniture and storefront planters will arrive where they’re desired, with more showing up as more shopkeepers catch on. And overhead lighting, as simple as it may be, creates an emphasis that extends the pedestrian experience long past daylight hours.

Recommendation 1 – Continue to evolve an incremental streetscape but expand its footprint in downtown to streets beyond Watson Street.

- 1.1 Allow existing and functioning sidewalks to remain. If they form a safe and continuous walking surface, it's all that's needed underfoot. Where sidewalk panels are cracked, broken, or heaving, consider removal for a tree planting space.
- 1.2 Pursue opportunities for additions to Watson Street's streetscape where and when they occur, adding shade and green to the core of downtown.
- 1.3 Seek opportunities for continue planting trees within the palette already established by Main Street Ripon. Opportunities might focus on the following, in order, although a major street, utility, or redevelopment project might turn the focus to that location:
 - North end of Watson Street around Rotary Square (Streetscape A);
 - West Fond du Lac Street, East Fond du Lac Street, and Blackburn Street (Streetscape B);
 - Seward Street, Blossom Street, Scott Street between Blackburn Street and Watson Street (Streetscape C); and
 - Seward Street and East Fond du Lac Street between Blackburn Street and Ripon College.
 -
- 1.3 Use the palette of street trees already used in downtown, expanding it when cultivars appropriate for downtown are introduced.

Blackburn Street. This street, along with portions of West and East Fond du Lac Streets, is under the county's jurisdiction, and functions as the through-route, bypassing downtown but just barely. Its character is utilitarian, functioning mostly for vehicle movements with only few businesses oriented to the street. A simple landscape might be comprised of opportunistic tree plantings (planting where space exists) and low hedges, which can form a stronger "edge" to the space while simultaneously screening cars in downtown's large parking reservoirs.

The demonstration drawing looked only for those locations where a surface observation revealed sufficient space for a tree to be planted and where a tree canopy would not obscure street lighting. Subsurface investigations might be more limiting but adjustments in spacing can be accommodated because the goal is not a perfectly regimented layout. Species selection might continue to use the palette used on Watson Street as those trees can be pruned of lower branches to maintain sightlines necessary for traffic and desirable for views to storefronts.

A lower level planting is desirable in locations along Blackburn where parking is the abutting activity. Hedging plants would largely obscure parked cars if plants are selected for a maximum height of about 2.5 feet. Plants that grow larger are possible for use but would require pruning, which often encourages the plant to grow faster at its top (which will

DOWNTOWN RIPON STREET TREE PALETTE

As part of the first round of streetscape improvements, Ripon Main Street created a list of trees it would pursue for installations in downtown Ripon. The list was vetted for species characteristics relative to a downtown setting and for alignment environmental factors affecting the health and vigor of the tree. While other species might be considered as special features, this list forms a basic palette of trees for downtown Ripon.

State Street Maple	<i>Acer miyabei</i> 'Morton'
Crimson King Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i> 'Crimson King'
Armstrong Gold Maple (columnar)	<i>Acer rubrum</i> 'JFS-KW78'
Northern Glow Maple	<i>Acer pseudosieboldianum</i> x <i>A. palmatum</i>
Autumn Blaze Maple	<i>Acer x freemanii</i> 'Jeffsred'
Blue Beach	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>
Katsura	<i>Cercidiphyllum japonicum</i>
Ginkgo	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos inermis</i>
Kentucky Coffee (seedless)	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>
Wildfire Black Gum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> 'Wildfire'
Accolade Elm	<i>Ulmus davidiana</i> var. <i>japonica</i> 'Morton'
Triumph Elm	<i>Ulmus</i> 'Morton Glossy'

DOWNTOWN RIPON HEDGE PALETTE

While not commonly used on downtown streetscape, some plants, when grouped appropriately offer screening of undesirable and utilitarian features of a downtown. Having a "go to" list not only makes it easier for individual property owners to implement screening of parked cars, trashing and recycling areas, and above-ground utilities, it builds consistency in a landscape across a downtown. There may be other plants requiring more attention used as highlights against a hedge, but in this list the hedging plants are chosen for their ease of care and ability to withstand the forces of a downtown environment.

Green Mountain Boxwood	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i> 'Green Mountain'
Little Rebel Dwarf Red Twig Dogwood	<i>Cornus alba</i> 'Jeffred' Little Rebel
Smooth Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i>
Panicle Hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>
Mint Julep Juniper	<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> 'Monlep'
Little Princess Spirea	<i>Spiraea japonica</i> 'Little Princess'
Anthony Waterer Spirea	<i>Spiraea x bumalda</i> 'Anthony Waterer'
Miss Kim Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i> 'Miss Kim'
Dwarf Korean Lilac	<i>Syringa meyeri</i> 'Palibin'
Hetz Midget Arborvitae	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> 'Hetz Midget'

require even more pruning) and lose vegetation density in the lower portion of the plant. The best plants might be those that maintain proper heights but that can be rejuvenated by cutting them back nearly to the ground. The hedge palette notes those plants that can sustain such aggressive rejuvenation pruning.

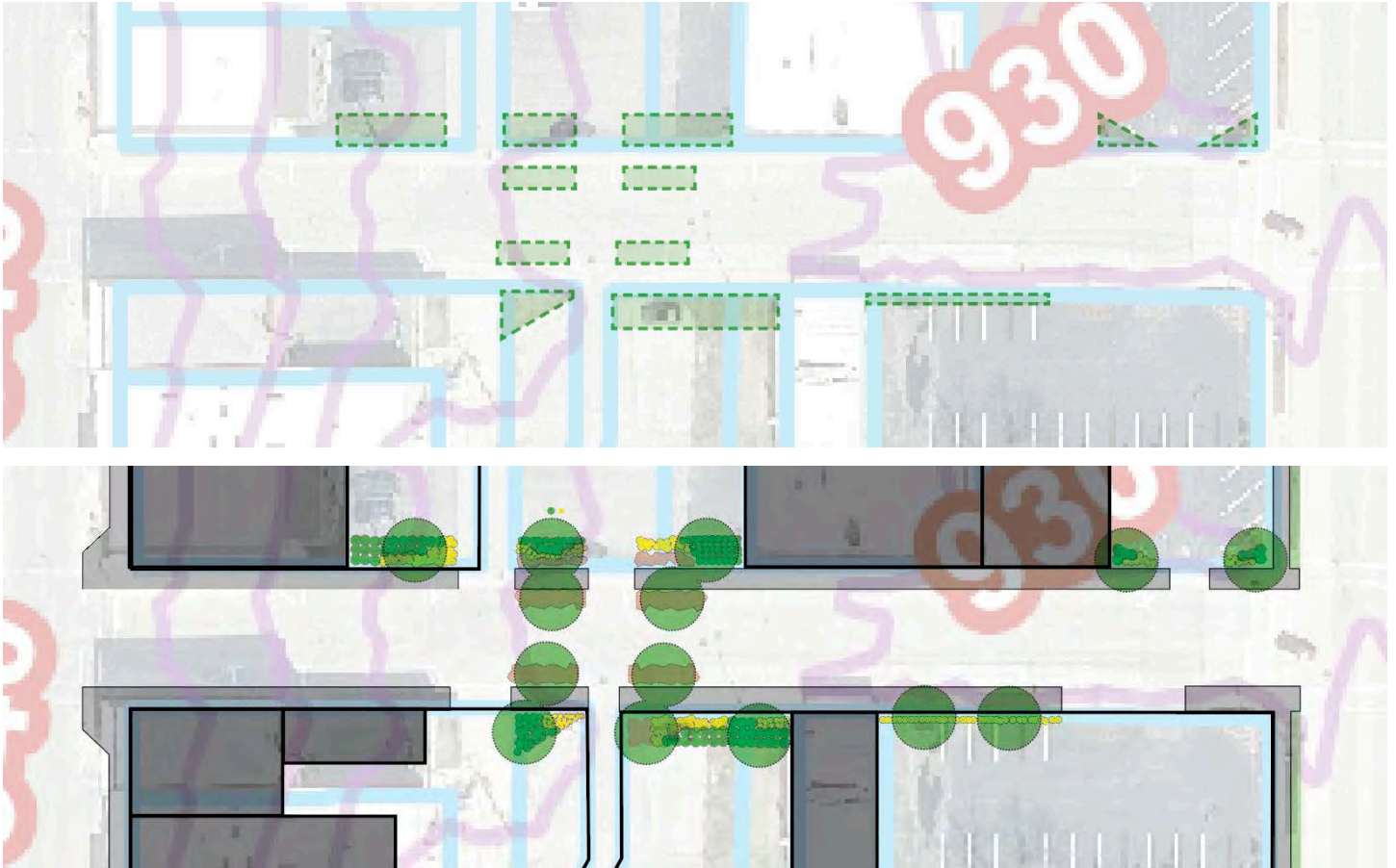
A factor for Blackburn Street that might be less significant for other downtown street plantings is the effect of de-icing salts on plantings. Even with traffic at the low posted speed limit, salt drift is a concern. Salt drift happens as the deicing chemical move into solution with melted snow and ice and are then displaced (splashed) by traffic, allowing a mist of salt to be created. This mist can drift onto nearby plantings. For Blackburn Street, the use of salt tolerant plantings is critical.

Tree locations should be reviewed with the county's transportation department to ensure they do not encroach into clear zones related to travel lanes. Because Blackburn Street is a low speed roadway (25 miles per hour), the clear zone might be quite limited based on the presence of a six-inch curb and assuming a "horizontal clearance" from the face of a curb to an object near the roadway of 18 inches.

Recommendation 2 – Develop a streetscape along Blackburn Street between West and East Fond du Lac Streets comprised largely of overstory trees and hedges.

- 2.1 Identify locations within the right-of-way where tree plantings might occur in sidewalks where partial removal would maintain at least 6 feet for pedestrian movement or in openings where no sidewalks exist immediately behind the curb.
- 2.2 Where openings within the right-of-way do not exist, explore areas beyond the sidewalk where buildings are not present or are set 15 feet or more from the sidewalk, identify locations where tree plantings might occur. Secure permissions necessary for planting and tree care; this might best happen through an easement but could happen through a less binding memorandum of understanding between the property owner and the entity responsible for the trees.
- 2.3 In a similar way, seek locations for hedges, particularly where a hedge would eventually obscure parked cars.
- 2.4 Use wood chips to cover planting areas. While they might be easily displaced and will degrade with time, they are readily available and easy to replace or augment.
- 2.5 Recognize the maintenance required for the perpetuation of the streetscapes in terms of time and materials required. Align expansions of streetscapes with the capacity for their on-going care.

Seward Street, Blossom Street, and Scott Street. A streetscape for Seward Street, Blossom Street, and Scott Street might largely parallel recommendations for Blackburn Street, with the major difference being jurisdiction and traffic character. The process of seeking "plantable" spaces would match that used for Blackburn Street but clear zones and other engineering requirements might be more lenient as these streets are under the



jurisdiction of the City of Ripon. Importantly, the opportunities for planting may not occur on public lands, resulting in a private owner determining whether to create a space for planting or lose parking spaces. Both are important.

A key consideration for planting along a street is the operation of the street. Guidance for planting along roadsides with 30 mph design speeds (speeds in downtown Ripon will be lower in most situations) suggests a clear zone, or the area for an errant vehicle to recover, should be ten feet wide as measured from the edge of the travel lane. Most streets in downtown have an eight foot parking lane, which would be included in the recovery zone. However, with a curb at the edge of the street, the clear zone might be reduced to two feet beyond the face of the curb. A goal for providing as much clear, traversable space as possible should be followed, and sight lines at intersections and driveway exits should be considered, but those parameters allow for tree plantings along most streets in downtown.

A major difference is the effects of traffic character. Traffic speeds are lower so salt drift is reduced and there are places where parked cars on the street might intercept some salt drift. Still, the use of salt-tolerant plantings is an important consideration because sidewalk maintenance might depend on the direct application of deicing chemicals which

WINTER SIDEWALK CARE

Even as downtowns strive for enhancements using streetscape elements, including trees, the need for removal of snow and ices poses a significant threat to the health of plants (and, as more people choose to live in or near downtown, to pets). There is no question about the need for creating a safe and walkable winter environment. How that care is performed makes a great difference in the ability to perpetuate enhancements. The following list offers some guidance related to winter sidewalk care that might be employed with streetscape improvements.

1. Recognize that accumulation of snow in some areas may be alright. Ripon is located in a place that has a real winter season, so people expect snow. Clearing of absolutely every flake may not be necessary. For instance, keeping some snow around light pole bases might be considered a part of a winter decor for downtown while it protects the poles from damage resulting from skid-steer loaders or corrosive de-icing chemicals.
2. Salting sidewalks is a good safety practice but many de-icing chemicals, including salt, is corrosive to the sidewalk itself. The better practice is a focused application of salt where icing occurs--as opposed to broadcasting the salt widely over all walking and driving surfaces. Less salt is used, sidewalks are less harmed, and lesser amounts of salts in solution enter waterbodies near Ripon, recognizing salts are detrimental to aquatic life.
3. De-icing chemicals typically contain sodium chloride, which is generally unsafe for plants. While more expensive, calcium magnesium acetate (commonly called CMA) is more plant-friendly.
4. In spring, good practice suggests planting areas be flooded with water to help salts leech past the root zone of plantings to help limit the effects of salts used during the winter.

might, as they phase into solution form, move directly to the soils around plantings.

The effect of streetscape improvements along these streets is two-fold: (1) overstory trees and hedges offer a green invitation to the core of downtown along Watson Street for motorists on Blackburn Street and (2) pedestrians parking their cars in the large parking lots east of Watson Street are afforded a more pleasant walk to Watson Street.

Pieces of this streetscape pattern might merit special attention: Seward Street west of Watson Street, in perhaps an evolved state, might function more like Watson Street and an enhanced pedestrian link between Ripon College and the core of downtown along Watson Street. In addition, this stretch of Seward Street abuts the Village Green, suggesting this one block of Seward Street is more like Watson Street than an entrance to downtown from Blackburn Street. This part of Seward Street is also addressed under “Downtown Spaces” and “Development as Streetscape” in this report.

Like that part of Seward Street west of Watson Street, a portion of Scott Street plays in central role in linking the narrow portion of Watson Street with its widened part, referred to as Rotary Square. This report directs attention to this part of Scott Street under “Development as Streetscape.”

East Fond du Lac Street. Where it's generally apparent that downtown Ripon exists from a West Fond du Lac vantage point, it's less clear where downtown exists from Black-

burn Street at it merges into East Fond du Lac. Elevation of its character should seek more planting spaces as discussed for Blackburn Street, Blossom Street, Seward Street, and Scott Street. However, those streets are generally more utilitarian in their function than East Fond du Lac, which functions as an anchoring street for downtown and an key access point for Ripon College—both of which are invisible at East Fond du Lac Street near Blackburn Street.

This report looks to bolster the entry effect of East Fond du Lac Street by creating a gateway near Blackburn Street. In the demonstration, features are added in the Fond du Lac Street boulevards as close as practicable to Blackburn Street, with mostly plantings on the south side and more sizeable markers on the north side noting both Downtown Ripon and Ripon College. Where expansive ground level plantings are important day-time expressions, illumination is the key at night, with playful illumination being a great addition. The use of materials and forms from downtown and the college helps reinforce the markers as a gateway.

Recommendation 3 – Develop a streetscape along Blackburn Street between West and East Fond du Lac Streets comprised largely of overstory trees and hedges.

- 3.1 Identify locations within the right-of-way where tree plantings might occur in sidewalks where partial removal would maintain at least 6 feet for pedestrian movement or (as in contrast to Blackburn Street) in openings where no sidewalks exist immediately behind the curb; exercise care in placement of plantings to accommodate opening car doors.
- 3.2 Where openings within the right-of-way do not exist, explore areas beyond the sidewalk where buildings are not present or are set 15 feet or more from the sidewalk, identify locations where tree plantings might occur. Secure permissions necessary for planting and tree care; this might best happen through an easement

DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC SPACE

Downtown spaces are created for the gathering of community and the welcoming of visitors. They are intended to be places of planned or serendipitous meetings, large and small events, or a refuge from life's sometimes hectic pace. As a result, much attention should be directed to the accommodation of human activity. One factor stands out, perhaps, among others when designing a public place.

In *A Pattern Language*, one of the planning world's great treatises on the creation of spaces and features based on human parameters, Christopher Alexander notes the limits of human perception. As humans, we can recognize the details of a human face in ways that allow recognition only to a distance of about 70 feet. Beyond that dimension, those details blur. The ability to recognize a person within that dimension tells us a lot about how big a space might be before it becomes uncomfortable for people. In fact, as a place of gathering, it's a welcome aspect if one can recognize a friend within that same space. At the same time, it might help people more readily identify others as visitors and respond appropriately.

but could happen though a less binding memorandum of understanding between the property owner and the entity responsible for the trees.

- 3.3 In a similar way, seek locations for hedges, particularly where a hedge would eventually obscure parked cars. Where salt drift or salt spray might be limiting for selection of plants along Blackburn Street, plantings along these street are likely less susceptible as a result of traffic character. This would allow the use of more plants, especially those with more significant seasonal color.
- 3.4 Use wood chips to cover planting areas. While they might be easily displaced and will degrade with time, they are readily available and easy to replace or augment.
- 3.5 Create a marker for downtown and the college on East Fond du Lac Street, as near to Blackburn Street as practicable.

Downtown Spaces

Downtown Ripon is blessed with two public spaces at the ends of downtown. Rotary Square, the wide area at the north end of Watson Street, seems separated from the rest of Watson Street while presenting a unique opportunity to reinforce it as unique in the patterns of downtown. The Green, located at the south end of Watson Street, is downtown's (and the community's) park. This report continues to offer guidance about the evolution of these spaces, as they should be considered as much a part of the downtown experience as a streetscape along Watson Street.

Activities in spaces. It's already recognized by Ripon Main Street that having downtown spaces is not enough. They need activation and downtown, in general, needs visible human activity. Events at The Green, whether tied to retail events or not, are important in reinforcing downtown as a center of the Ripon community. As improvements are discussed for Rotary Square and The Green, it must be noted that features added are intended to draw people to those spaces; that is, features added to spaces do not exist on their own.

Rotary Square. At the north end of Watson Street, the patterns of downtown change—widen—to become Rotary Square. While still lined by buildings typical of downtown, Rotary Square loses the sense of compactness one might experience in the rest of downtown. It's simply really wide, and as a result the human experience is diminished. Further, the space between building faces is occupied by parked cars with a narrow raised green space between them, which seems not enough to really bridge that gap.

Rotary Square, in the previous streetscape report, was noted for its capacity to support major events and festivals. Those ideas for activation should be perpetuated. This report will direct attention to other physical improvements intended to bring more human scale to the space.

Beyond separation of building faces. Rotary Square seems separated from the rest of downtown by a five-legged intersection of Watson Street and West Fond du La Street/ Scott Street. Here, the continuity of building faces that exist in Rotary Square and along Watson Street is lost, only to be replaced by streets. The next section of this report suggests a means of bridging that gap with an idea called Scott Square.

Overhead and cornice lighting should be introduced to Rotary Square and its buildings, just like the rest of downtown. Lighting runs across the square would be too long, so a new feature at the raised green space in the middle of Rotary Square will likely be required to support the lighting feature. Recognizing the patterns of overhead lighting (over street) are different, the patterns of lighting might also change. Instead of simply crossing the street, those lighting strings crossing the space of the square might become more circular or spiraled, maintaining the basic effect but becoming more playful in response to a different pattern of downtown.

The Green. Rotary Square’s complement at the south end of downtown is The Green, a large grassy park with a bandstand as a focal point. The Green is key point of activation for downtown and the community, hosting concerts, holiday events, and other attractions throughout the year, with programming curated by Ripon Main Street. Improvements to The Green are wholly a response to its success, not a correction of any failure.

The evolution of The Village Green, like other improvements in downtown, can—should—be considered incrementally to minimize or eliminate breaks in programming, which could lead to any event finding a new home. At this point, it seems practical to pursue each of several initiatives supporting The Green as independent projects:

Entry gate	While the space is porous, the “gate” orients clearly to downtown. Highlighting this entry simply by making it more substantial could draw people to the space, with enhancements that reflect a performance environment and a screen listing upcoming events. In the demonstration, the gate is comprised of tubing in the form of stage rigging, with the tubes supporting an all-weather video screen. It might be possible to go beyond a listing of upcoming shows to share advertisements for downtown businesses on the screen, perhaps even for a sponsorship fee.
Refectory	As The Green gains popularity, the desire for on-site food and comforts has increased. While food trucks and portable toilets might provide a way of accomplishing those goals, a more permanent structure would better serve the need. Using modified



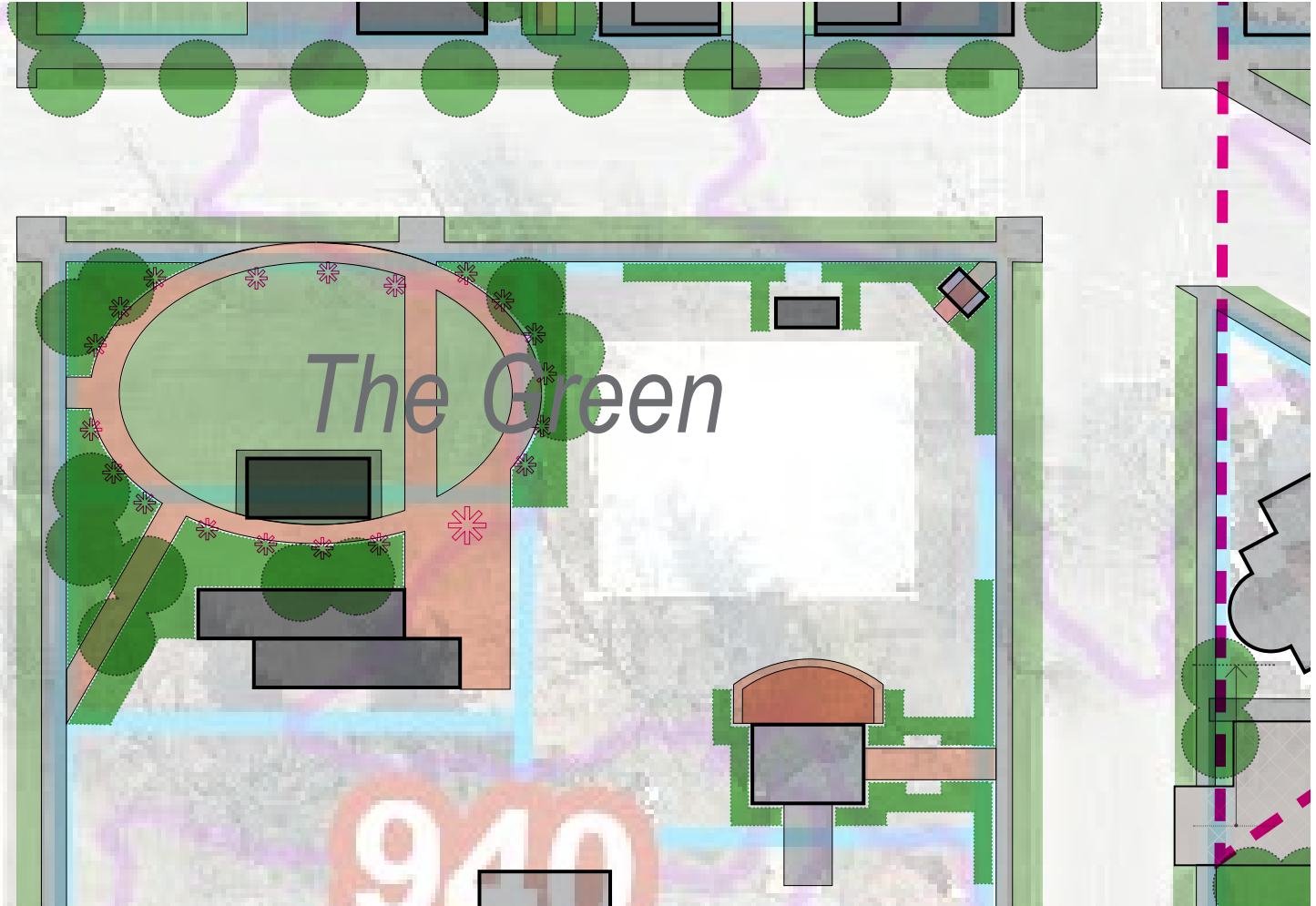
shipping containers as a base structure, a space for food preparation and sales could be created, with a second structure providing restrooms that might be required both as a result of the more permanent food service and to better support events. The scale of some events may still direct an opportunity for food trucks and the need for portable toilets, but the establishment of permanent facilities supporting the space adds to its attraction and utility.

Using shipping containers as structures is, perhaps, more easily implemented as they could be created offsite for delivery and quick installation. In fact, already modified shipping containers are available.

The extension of sewer and water service to the shipping containers will be necessary as building officials will view them as permanent structures.

Town and gown garden

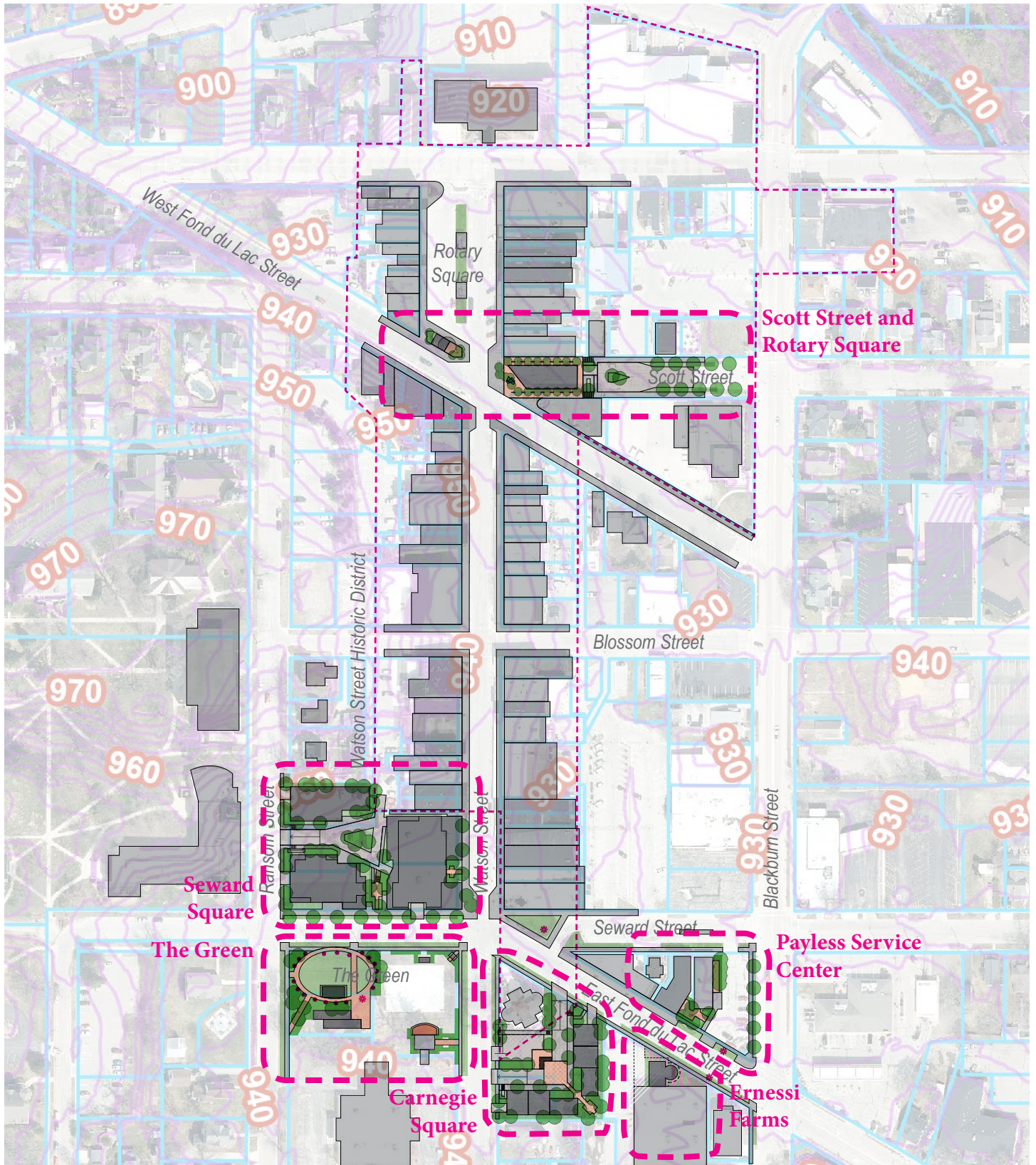
A portion of the space of The Village Green is owned by Ripon College, but college representatives would be supportive of the use of that space for enhancement of The Green aligned with enhancement of the primary entry to the Ripon College campus. This kind of space should be usable as a part of The Green when events occur but might also be an experience of its own when events are not happening.



The demonstration illustrates a walking loop connected to a realigned Seward Street sidewalk and a patio space related to the refectory. The walk is bounded by gardens and markers commemorating notable local and college individuals, organized as a celebration of the unique character of Ripon.

Stage

The focal point of The Green is a small bandstand that supports many but not all performers. Some performers require a larger stage or more room for sound equipment. Using the existing bandstand as its core structure, an extension might be encouraged, like an apron in front of stage (technically, a proscenium). It might be constructed with tubing echoing the entry gate and allowing for easier rigging of equipment for performances.



With the potential for more expansive performances, The Green may see the need for improvements directed to the performance itself. Lighting and sound would be better controlled through a control/sound booth. While upgrading performance characteristics, it might also reduce setup and teardown times related to more complex performances. It might also allow performers with lesser resources to produce events at levels higher than with their own equipment.

The control/sound booth might be constructed with a slightly elevated platform created from tubing, like the entry gate and stage enhancements. Underground conduits would link the booth to sound and lighting elements at the stage. Equipment would have to be secured in a weatherproof and secure enclosure, perhaps similar to those used by utilities to protect their facilities.

Recommendation 4 – Pursue improvements to downtown’s existing public spaces, ensuring aesthetic improvements are matched with compelling programming that brings human activity to downtown.

- 4.1 Implement feature lighting to Rotary Square to align with the overhead lighting along Watson Street, considering ways that are complementary but not necessarily the same as Watson Street.
- 4.2 Define the bounds of The Green with fencing and hedges, particularly emphasizing the entry from Watson Street and Seward Street; implement technical improvements (control/sound booth, lighting controls, etc.) allowing for more sophisticated presentations by performers.
- 4.3 Collaborate with Ripon College on the town and gown garden celebrating notable individuals from Ripon and college graduates and highlighting their accomplishments; establish criteria for inclusion; and design a garden spaces with monummentation that can be reasonably implemented over time.

Development as streetscape

It’s reasonable to think of development and redevelopment as a way of amplifying downtown Ripon’s streetscape. While mostly built out along Watson Street, some locations present an attraction to developers bringing new activities or uses, particularly

housing, to downtown's mix of vibrancy. Locations depicted in this report to renewal are important because they are either largely void of use or even empty, they haven't been considered as possible development sites, or they are occupied by a building that lacks activity and downtown character. Those opportunities are presented in this report as concepts. As such, they might be compelling as an initial illustration but they merit particular attention relative to market potential and economic feasibility.

A factor that is embodied in the demonstrations shown in the report, but one that might not be so immediately recognized, is an idea of incrementalism. While there might be good opportunities for new development in downtown, it's not at a scale that would draw large nationally recognized developers. It's more likely that investment at the scale demonstrated in this report will come from local or regional investment because the square footage of retail demonstrated is small, as are the numbers of residential units suggested.

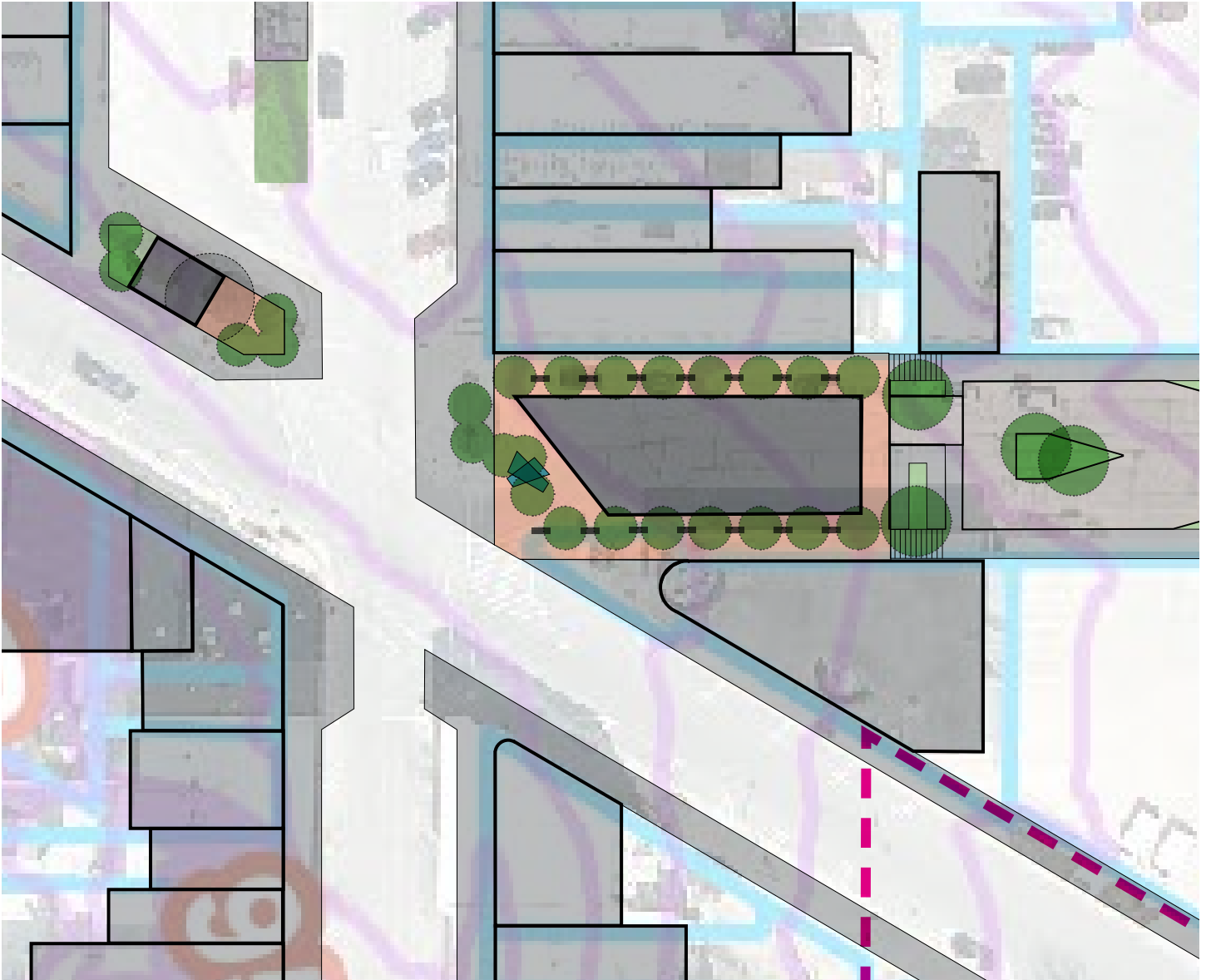
Specific to East Fond du Lac Street, representatives of Ripon College note this street as being important to accessing its campus. Prospective students and their parents are directed to this route as it gets them to a desired destination most directly. However, the street lacks inviting features that draws visitors to the college and downtown.

It's critical that introductions into downtown reflect a proper character, one founded in downtown Ripon's character, detail, patterns, and scale, all of which are part of its historic charm. But reflection does not intend mimicry. New development can reflect the scale and detail of historic buildings without a false application of historic features. New development should be of its time, not a copy of some other period.

To be certain, this report, when it speaks to development or redevelopment, is intended to be illustrative, not directive. There is no mandate for renewal of properties discussed but perhaps it provides an opening for a conversation about change aligned with the character of downtown Ripon.

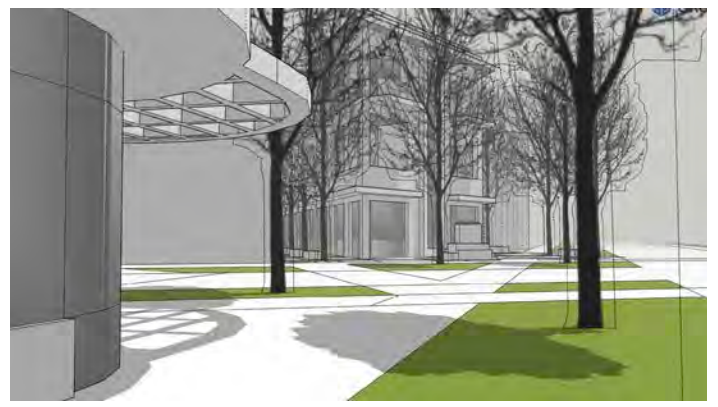
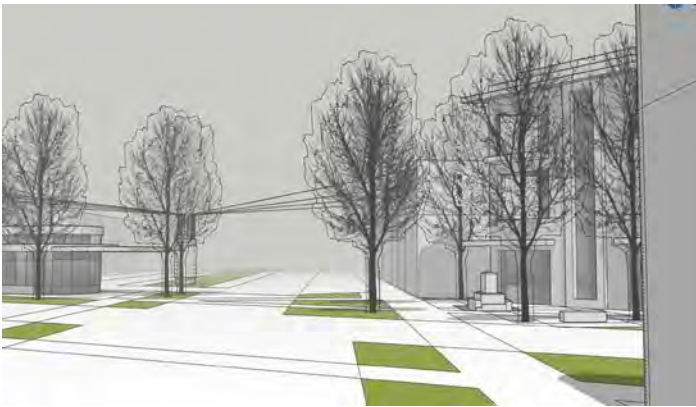
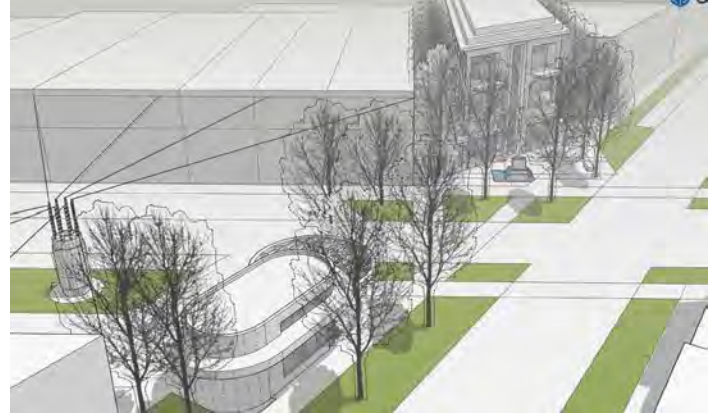
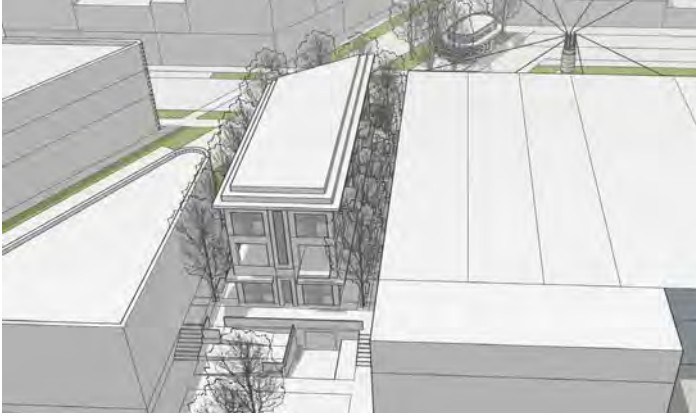
Scott Street (Sites A and B). Noted earlier in this report, the five-legged intersection at Watson Street and Scott Street creates a gap in the pedestrian experience. It's not only a long intersection to cross compared to other streets intersecting with Watson Street, it breaks the rhythm of downtown buildings resulting from four block faces of nearly continuous "street wall" along Watson Street.

Filling the gap might reimagine Scott Street with a wide median near Watson Street to create a pedestrian-centered focus—perhaps using a playful fountain as a centerpiece, surrounded by shading trees. This concept bridges the gap with human activity, reducing the experienced distance between the narrow portion of Watson Street and Rotary Square. Stepping further, that gap might be filled with a new building comprised of retail with living spaced above. Traffic on Scott Street might be limited with no direct access to Watson



Street, but pedestrian movements might be perpetuated on sidewalks surrounding the building and remaining at the elevation of Watson Street, with a “balcony” overlooking the terminus of Scott Street. The west terminus of Scott Street would be in the form of a turnaround, but larger vehicles may have to use a route through a parking lot to turn around.

New street (pedestrian) level uses might be small shops, perhaps imagined as incubator spaces for new downtown businesses. These small spaces would create new and affordable spaces for small startup shops and service providers. The hope would be that these businesses would be cultivated until they have grown to the point where they might occupy a larger storefront in downtown. Importantly, this “street level” use needs to match the



general architectural heights of storefronts along Watson Street at something, probably 12 feet at an absolute minimum and more likely 14 to 16 feet.

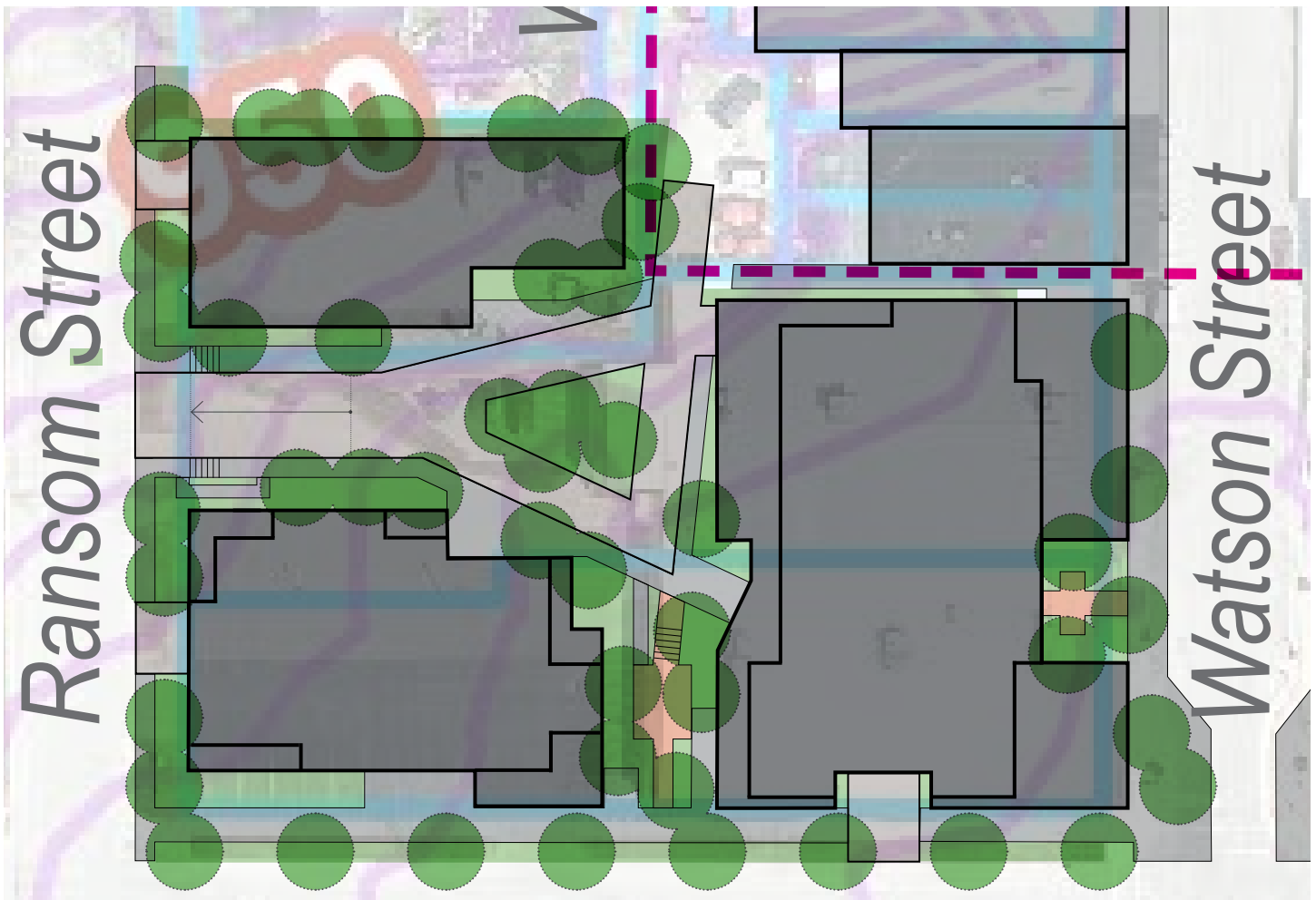
Residential uses above might be apartments or condos organized on three or four levels. Not enough is known about the market in Ripon to suggest a size or mix, but the relatively small footprint of the building suggests a total quantity of six to eight units on two or maybe three levels. The number of units might result from the number of interior parking spaces created on the Scott Street level, on level below the shops and Watson Street.

Just as a reimagining of Scott Street presents an opportunity to bridge the gap between the core of downtown and Watson Street, the island between West Fond du Lac Street and Rotary Square presents a similar, although smaller and hopefully mostly transparent, opportunity for bridging. In the demonstration a small and almosts jewel-like building could be imagined, recognizing that some downtown businesses, like a coffee shop, require very little backroom area and a relatively small public area. Regardless of use, the building functions to bridge the separation in the pedestrian experience.

While the demonstration includes a building, the space might also function with some interactive art piece or a similar kind of attraction. The key is the ability to draw pedestrians across the street, allowing them a sort of stepping stone into Rotary Square.

Seward Square. A more intensive redevelopment opportunity exists at the northwest corner of Watson Street and Seward Street, where it is understood the use of the existing building may be changing. This site presents larger opportunity due to the size of the site but it also presents a way of creating a building—or buildings—that are more contextually appropriate to downtown Ripon than a one-story building lacking in character when compared to most buildings in downtown. Having a redevelopment pattern that includes several buildings may allow for greater flexibility in implementation, as a single very large building does not need to be constructed ahead of market opportunities.

Removal of the drug store building reveals a site of unusual size for downtown but this report strives to add incrementally to the fabric of downtown and expand pedestrian expe-





riences. As such, the clearance of the drug store site might result in two or three development sites surrounding a publicly accessible square. Development should be one hundred percent retail or eating/drinking establishments along Watson Street. Seward Street frontages might match Watson Street uses near the Watson Street but allow for residential at street level—or just above street level to create some separation from pedestrians on the sidewalk. Residential uses would occupy upper floors of buildings, with a total height of three or four stories—with Watson Street storefront heights at non-residential uses. Parking for residential uses would be below the street level use.

Heights of the buildings may need to be somewhat flexible. It's most important to get the street level relationships correct but the need for an economically feasible development might dictate one building be taller—maybe one story taller. To keep taller portions of buildings aligned with a great pedestrian experience and the character of the rest of downtown, buildings should be stepped back at the second levels and above and include balconies, terraces, or other articulations. Those balconies and terraces are important not only in the design of the building but because they add human activity to the building and create opportunities for eyes on The Green and surrounding streets.

The “square” of Seward Square might be very much like a garden courtyard, surrounded by buildings with overlooking residential units and perhaps an outside eating area for one of the street level eating/drinking establishments. Whether the “square” is public or private is not nearly so important as it being publicly accessible.



Carnegie Square. The former Carnegie Library anchors the south end of downtown, standing proud even as it is surrounded by parking lots—very unlike the character of Watson Street. Without investigation to prove their utility, it seems like those parking areas are rarely filled and are mostly unused. Reimagining a more downtown-like pattern that respects the Library by not encroaching too close is one key; filling a gap in the experience of a downtown and college access is another.

In this report's demonstration, the parking lots are reimagined as rowhomes or even rowhomes with flats above with a narrow lane allowing access to their front doors, all of which surrounds a "square" resulting from the evolution of the Library's parking lot. Parking would happen below, so the first floors are elevated somewhat above the lane and the "square."

The "square" would be used on most days for parking, just as it is today. Some days, parking might be given up for an event—a market or an expansion of a event or celebration expanded from The Green. The "square" might be elaborated through a whole renovation that makes it more like a plaza that can accommodate parked cars, or maybe it's just a creative pattern of paint that makes it more pedestrian centered. What key, though, is the "square" and the lane offer some separation from the new residential development to the

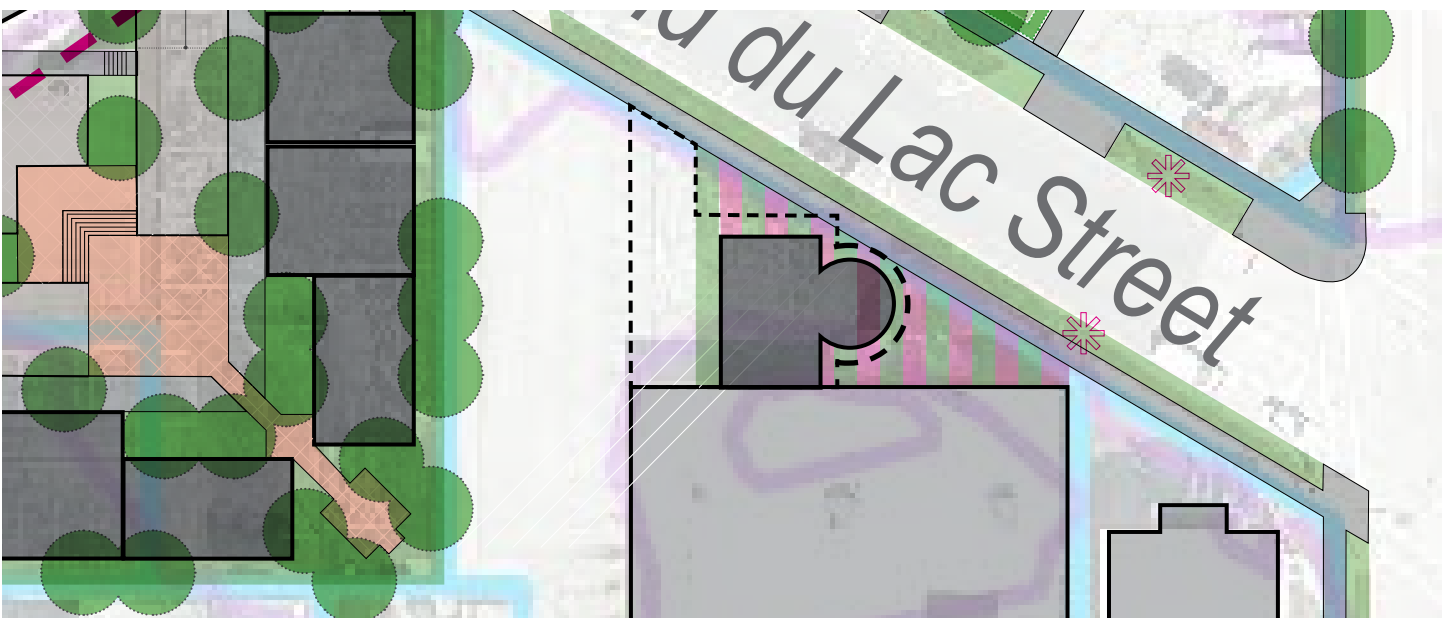


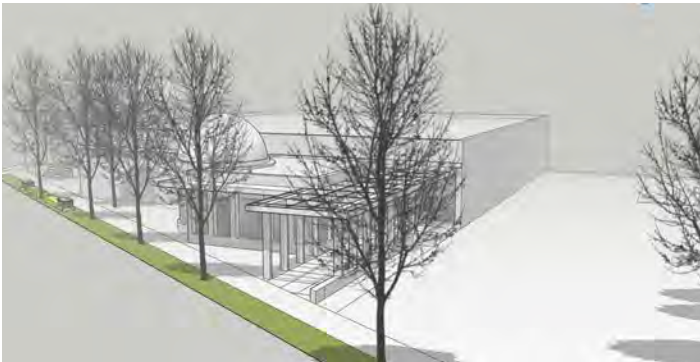
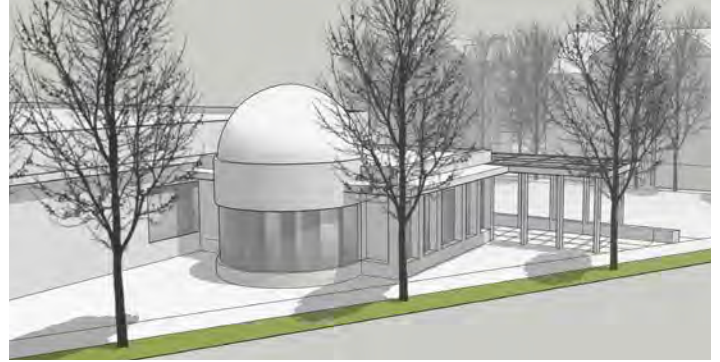
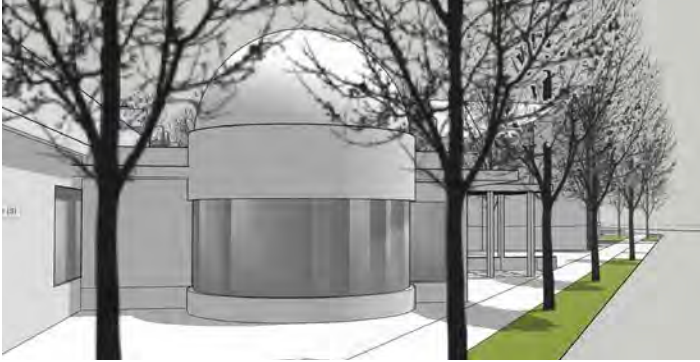
Carnegie Library, allowing it to remain the focal point for the south end of downtown. As in other development demonstrations, incrementalism is key. Two buildings are shown in the demonstration, recognizing that the market for downtown housing might be somewhat limited. However, where most existing downtown housing happens over storefront, these units, being somewhat remote from Market Street might be wholly residential in use.

Ernessi Farms. Just east of the opportunity to create Carnegie Square, Ernessi Farms stands as a unique use in downtown. To a trained eye, the former use of the Ernessi Farms building is clearly retail in orientation. While its character hasn't changed, its function has been dramatically renewed in ways that fit downtown. That is, it's quiet, attractive, and productive, but sort of unknown. The unique function of the new building might be demonstrated by a front yard reflecting its nature in agricultural production. While this might highlight the business, it's also important because the building is positioned on an important entry to downtown along East Fond du Lac Street.

Two demonstrations are shared in this report, both of which aim to add to the experience of the street and complete the fabric of an entry street. One demonstration is a simple landscape comprised of geometric single species plantings, reflecting agricultural fields but beginning to share information about what happens inside the building. Low walls bound the street side of the plantings, with a low wall with the name of the company extending along a sidewalk reaching to East Fond du Lac Street.

The second demonstration supposes the business needs additional space for its administrative operations. A new building would be situated in the "front yard," creating a better

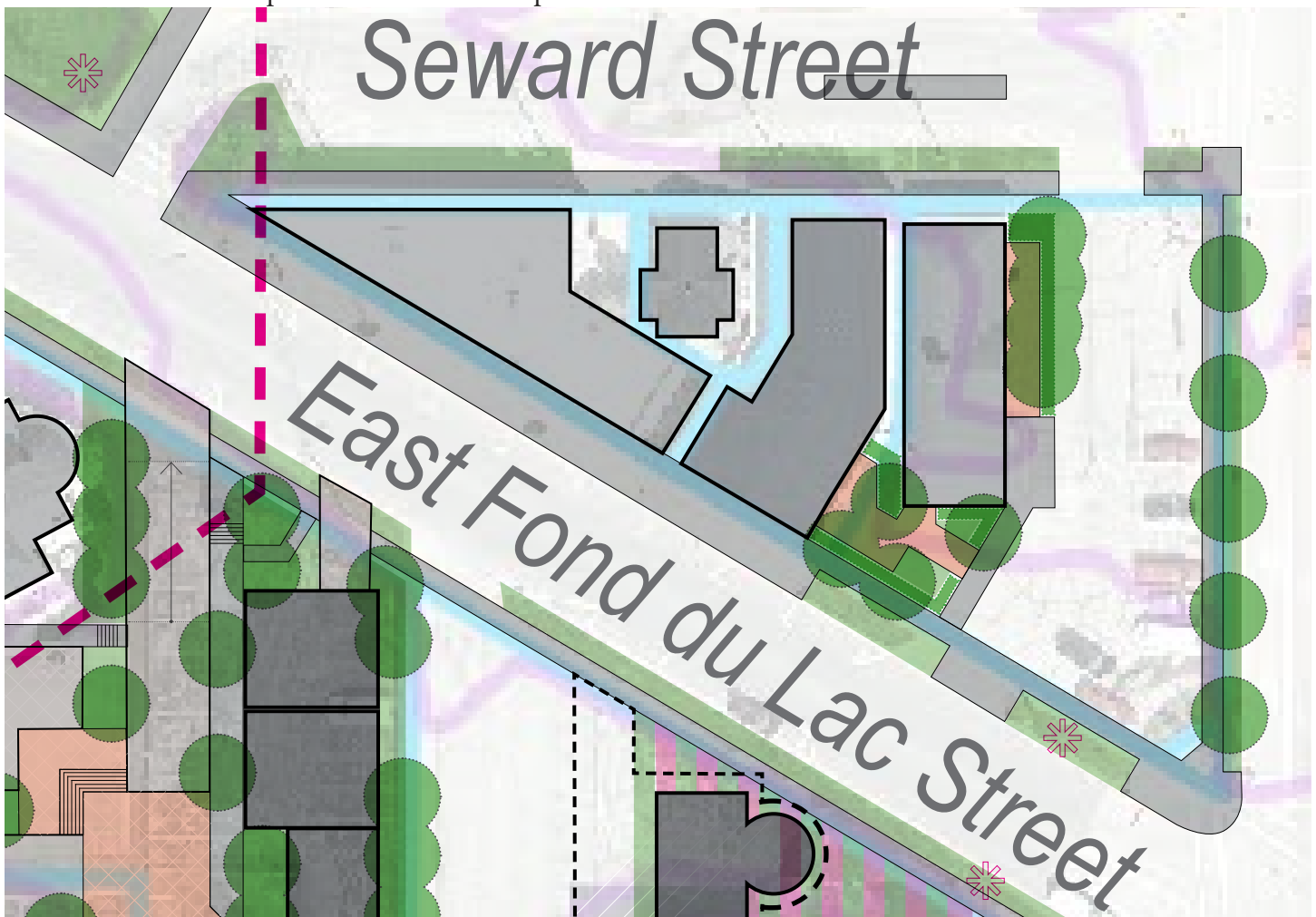




connection to the street but also allowing passersby to gain a basic understanding of the nature of Ernessi Farms business. The demonstration makes a direct allusion to agriculture. A final resolution may not need to be so overt but a silo form might be considered a striking complement to the formal pediments and domes of the former Carnegie Library, just a little further along East Fond du Lac Street and visible as a part of a visitor's viewshed along the street as one enters downtown.

Like other suggestions related to development and redevelopment, there is no mandate being put to Ernessi Farms. Doing something interesting that space enhances the experience of the street while telling a bit of the business' story.

Payless Service Center. Uses like automotive repair businesses are necessary but often lack aesthetics aligned with a vibrant downtown. More than that, the basic business purpose relies on storing cars in a parking lot until they can be serviced and returned to their owners. For Payless Service Center, that parking lot happens at one of the primary access points to downtown Ripon.



In a reimagination of the use, the focus should be on ideas that bring visible human activity to the site and the building. In fact, the ways that building functioned to service cars might be a path toward activation. Consider a microbrewery or small restaurant where the service bays and their garage doors allow the opportunity for inside/outside eating, with doors opening onto partially covered patio spaces during clement weather. The extension of human activity to the site becomes an invitation, not only to this use but to all of downtown.

The very nature of downtowns is that they are always changing. With some consideration, there may be other sites or buildings in downtown worthy of reimagination, sometimes as a result of deterioration or age, sometimes the result of obsolescence. Most often, evolutions will be incremental but they should always be viewed as a means of increasing human activity in downtown.

Recommendation 5 – Seek redevelopment that fills gaps in the experience of downtown, brings new residential opportunities, and reflects downtown’s character and scale.

- 5.1 Review downtown zoning to ensure potential new development can be accommodated, particularly relative to height and bulk guidance; update zoning as appropriate or establish parameters for planned development directed to individual redevelopment projects, wherein zoning guidance is established on a project by project basis (for instance, allowing variances that achieve overall intentions for downtown and the community and that make a project feasible); direct particular attention to parking requirements for residential uses, recognizing project lenders may require at least one parking space per dwelling unit regardless of a lesser threshold that might be established by the city.
- 5.2 Set redevelopment opportunities demonstrated in this report—along with others into priority for pursuit, with separate categories for publicly and privately led projects; attempt to categorize redevelopment opportunities by their scale, which will aid in outreach to developers with experience in varying degrees of scale and complexity.
- 5.3 Conduct a high-level feasibility analysis of redevelopment projects, essentially testing the viability of each project with the community and representatives of qualified development entities; note area of challenge as those factors will become a focus for public participation in a private project.
- 5.4 Prepare a request for proposals for any projects determined to be the responsibility of the City of Ripon; engage owners of private parcels by reviewing demonstrations of this report to determine interest in or need for redevelopment; for those development entities interested in pursuing projects, make certain the city’s entitlement process are clear and not encumbered by extended timelines for review.

