Februrary 28, 2000

Wausau Central Business District Master Plan

CITY VISION
ASSOCIATES

Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc.
Vandewalle & Associates

CITY OF WAUSAU

407 Grant Street
Wausau, WI 54403

A RESOLUTION:

Plan Commission re: Adoption of *Wausau Central Business District Master Plan.*

FILE NO. 99-0227
Introduced 01-11-2000
Referred
Reported Back
Adopted 01-11-2000
Other
Committee/Commission Action:

Plan Commission Approved 5 - 0

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Planning Committee, working with CityVision Associates, members of the Common Council, City staff, Central Business District interests and the general public, has prepared a *Wausau Central Business District Master Plan,* and

WHEREAS, the general purpose of the plan is to help guide future development within the Central Business District, and

WHEREAS, it is recognized that not all of the elements and recommendations of the plan may be carried out as provided for in the plan and that the plan may be amended from time to time, and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission met on December 16, 1999 to review the *Wausau Central Business District Master Plan* and adopted the Plan as an element of the City Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and Comprehensive Planning Committee recommend adoption of the Plan by the Common Council, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Wausau adopts the *Wausau Central Business District Master Plan* as an element of the City Master Plan and as a guide for the future development of the Central Business District.

Approved:

Linda Lawrence

Linda Lawrence, Mayor

MasterPlanAdoption2000Res1.11
Prepared by: Joe Pribanich

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Linda Lawrence, Mayor, City of Wausau

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I. INTRODUCTION

In March 1999, the City of Wausau hired CityVision Associates of Madison, Wisconsin to prepare a comprehensive master plan for the Wausau Central Business District. The study area for this master plan includes the central part of the city generally bounded by 3rd Avenue, 6th Street, Bridge Street and Thomas Street.

It is critical for Wausau to have a comprehensive master plan for its Central Business District (CBD). Downtown Wausau functions as the heart of the community and the health of downtown has direct impact on the health of the entire community and the surrounding region. Both City and County government are centered in downtown. Since Wausau will continue to invest in downtown infrastructure and the private sector will continue to invest in building renovation and new developments in and around the downtown, a comprehensive master plan is needed to guide these investment decisions. A comprehensive master plan is also needed to strengthen the relationship between the Downtown Central Business District and the community as a whole.

This master plan document is intended to provide a guideline to assist the City, public agencies, developers, business owners, property owners and others in their short-term and long-term redevelopment activities. Implementation of the master plan will require flexibility, balance and cooperation among various entities to achieve the highest and best use for the central area. Master plan recommendations included in this document will require further analysis and design, public input and City Council approval in order to be implemented.

This master plan has been prepared based on information derived from personal interviews and public input sessions; review of previous studies, reports, plans and data about the City and the CBD; on-site reconnaissance; the knowledge and expertise of the consultants; and feedback from the Steering Committee, City staff, City Council and the public on findings and recommendations. A list of the printed material reviewed during the planning process is provided in the **Appendix**.

PUBLIC PROCESS

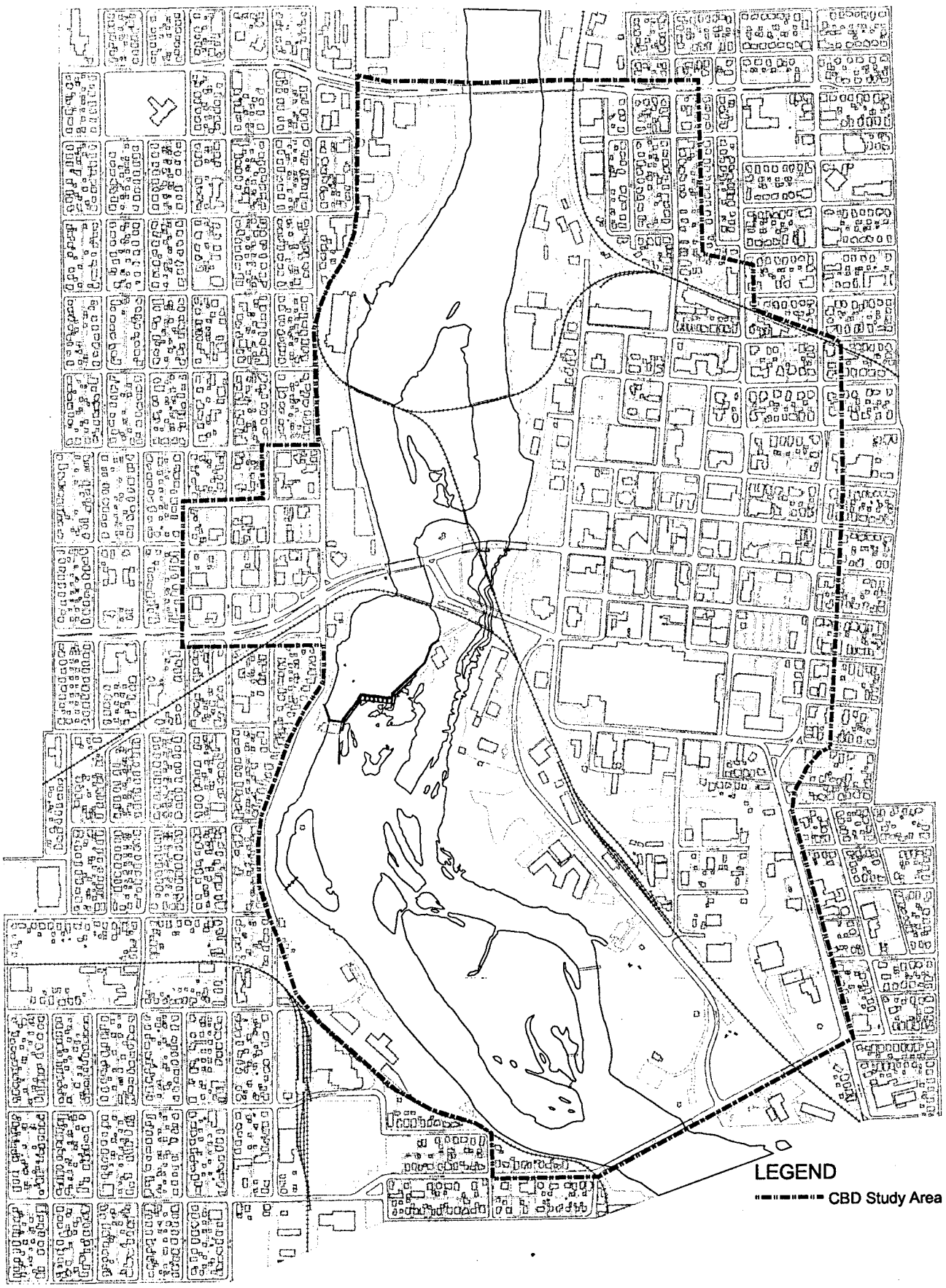
The Wausau Central Business District Master Plan has been developed over the past nine months through a thorough public review and input process. The Wausau Comprehensive Planning Committee was charged with the responsibility to coordinate the project, review consultant findings and recommendations, and serve as the principal recommending body to the Common Council. In addition, an ad hoc committee representing the broad interests of the community was formed to ensure community participation in the planning process. This committee, identified as the Central Business District Redevelopment Steering Committee, provided feedback on plan recommendations to the Comprehensive Planning Committee and CityVision Associates.

A total of ten meetings were held during the master planning process to solicit public input, review findings and approve recommendations. These meetings included:

- A two-day planning workshop in Wausau to inventory the study area's physical and economic conditions, and to conduct personal interviews with individuals and groups about the future of downtown Wausau **(Appendix)**.

- A Community Forum held at Franklin School to facilitate consensus about planning goals and priorities **(Appendix)**.

- A Community Forum held at Franklin School to discuss the vision for downtown Wausau and facilitate consensus about initial redevelopment opportunities.



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Wausau Central Business District Master Plan

Study Area

CITY VISION
ASSOCIATES
Schreiber/Anderson Associates
Madison, WI

Vandewalle & Associates
Madison, WI

Base map provided by:
City of Wausau GIS Department

- A Community Forum held at the Grand Theatre to present and receive input on preliminary master plan recommendations.

- Six review meetings and work sessions with the Comprehensive Planning Committee and Central Business District Redevelopment Steering Committee to review and refine redevelopment recommendations and implementation strategies **(Appendix).**

- Six work sessions with City staff to review redevelopment recommendations and implementation strategies.

- Meeting in Wausau with property owners and developers to test redevelopment concepts.

- Public presentation of the draft CBD Redevelopment Master Plan to the Common Council, Plan Commission and the public.

VISION STATEMENT

Downtown Wausau is the heart of the City and surrounding region. It is the nerve center of retail trade, financial transactions and governmental activities in the region. Downtown Wausau gives our community and those who identify with Wausau a strong sense of place. More than any other part of the City, downtown defines Wausau as a community. City officials, business leaders and residents from throughout the Wausau Urban Area recognize the importance of downtown to our heritage and to our future. They are vitally interested in strengthening the social, cultural and economic position of downtown for the betterment of everyone.

For downtown Wausau, the next 20 years will not simply be a continuation of the past. There will be dramatic changes in many of the elements that help define our downtown. Redevelopment of the riverfront for open space and public purpose and connecting this area to the commercial core will enhance the area's appeal to all visitors. Expansion of civic, cultural and entertainment spaces and programs will help create renewed business and visitor interest in downtown.

Downtown Wausau's unique architectural and physical character will have renewed vibrance. People from throughout the region will recognize downtown's uniqueness and gather here to work, shop and enjoy the many available social, cultural and entertainment options. The physical improvements made to the downtown and the heightened activity in the central area will help generate new employment opportunities and stimulate interest in living downtown.

MASTER PLAN GOALS

The primary goal for the Wausau Central Business District Master Plan is to create a comprehensive long-range (20 year) vision and implementation strategy for the redevelopment and economic restructuring of downtown Wausau. The key objectives of the master plan include the following:

1. Establish downtown Wausau as an important multi-use activity center for the community and the region including recreational, cultural, residential, retail, entertainment, office, high-tech business and government land uses.

2. Center the economic future of the CBD around the Wisconsin River by expanding the Wausau CBD to encompass development sites on the east and west sides of the river.

3. Identify new tax base development in the CBD that can be used to support public investment in transit, parking, street improvements, pedestrian improvements and public space development.

4. Expand civic uses and activities in the CBD to establish the downtown as a cultural destination for the community and the region.

5. Improve public access to the CBD including improvements in traffic circulation, mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle circulation, commuter and excursion rail, parking, and community wayfinding.

6. Strengthen the historic downtown core as a pedestrian-oriented retail, entertainment and cultural district.

7. Preserve the historic character of the downtown while accommodating new urban infill development.

8. Establish a new theme and identity for the Wausau CBD related to the Wisconsin River and its unique historic, recreational and scenic character.

9. Improve the connections to surrounding neighborhoods and community destinations such as the Marathon County Library, YMCA, the Wausau Center, the Grand Theatre, and the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum to strengthen CBD economic opportunities.

10. Build partnerships between the State, County, City, local government and the private sector to accomplish comprehensive redevelopment goals.

II. ANALYSIS

A. MARKET ASSESSMENT

Wausau continues to support a strong downtown business mix indicative of favorable economic conditions and proper positioning within the marketplace. Typically a market area's ability to support new development is based on population, employment, and income data. Wausau's population has grown 4% from 1990 to 1995 (37,060 to 38,703), and is projected to grow 3% from 1995 to 2000 (38,703 to 39,807), which is in line with Marathon county growth. According to staff of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC), the population of the entire trade area delineated is approximately 378,421 persons. Total households within the trade area are 139,060. From 1996 to 1997, employment in the Wausau area grew by 4.1%, and is expected to grow by at least 2.5% annually during 1998 to 2003. Areas of growth are attributed to the trade and service sectors complimented by strength in manufacturing. 1990 figures state the median household income of the trade area's population is $27,451.

The Wausau Center Mall, according to its General Manager Mark Craig, is ranked 3rd out of seven regional malls in the Northwest region based on sales dollar per square feet and an occupancy rate of 95%. Total retail space in the Central Business District (CBD) is approximately 930,786 square feet, including 428,786 in the Wausau Center Mall and approximately 502,000 square feet elsewhere in the CBD. Even though the concentration of retail in Wausau has expanded to three areas, potentially diluting the downtown business traffic, sales have remained the same or improved, indicating that the downtown area remains a viable shopping destination. Wausau continues to draw most significantly from the following counties: Marathon, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Portage, Taylor, Wood along with Clark, Price, Shawano, and Vilas. A parking survey conducted by staff of the NCWRPC in 1997 shows the bulk of vehicles come from the areas bounded by Minocqua, Rhinelander, Antigo, Stevens Point, Marshfield, and Medford.

There are numerous opportunities for the CBD to capitalize on the strong traffic visiting the Wausau Center Mall. Additional emphasis needs to be placed on improving public perception regarding adequate parking, and changing the reputation of the downtown as a difficult place for motorists and pedestrians to navigate. Lastly, the CBD would benefit by emphasizing its unique character and expanding the variety of specialty stores. This would improve the desirability for the mall patrons, visitors and new customers to venture out to the downtown stores and restaurants.

Downtown Wausau is also recognized for its strong events and attractions such as the Grand Theatre, Center for Visual Arts, Festival of the Arts, Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wisconsin River Logjam, Kayak Races, and the Blues Fest. Wausau has become a regional destination for these events and attractions. The Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum was named the "Favorite Museum in Wisconsin" and attracts international as well as regional visitors. Historic and architecturally significant properties are incorporated throughout downtown Wausau and linking to the East Side. The philanthropy and vision of Wausau's cultural sector continues to support theatres and museums, as well as the Central Wisconsin Ballet, Conservatory of Music, and a Symphony. Showcasing the CBD is just the next step in enhancing the options for people who visit the Wausau area.

As competition continues to grow in surrounding communities, such as Appleton and Stevens Point, as well as within the Wausau urban area, it is important to remember why people continue to enjoy and visit downtown Wausau: for its convenience, the mall, the area's unique architecture and character, and its variety of events and cultural attractions.

B. TRANSPORTATION ASSESSMENT

The goals of our transportation evaluation focused on the following:

1.) Enhancing traffic flow around and through the CBD.
2.) Providing a user-friendly traffic system for visitors.
3.) Providing safe, attractive and convenient pedestrian circulation patterns.
4.) Enhancing access to downtown retail and commercial uses.
5.) Reducing truck traffic through the downtown retail district.
6.) Providing multi-modal transportation improvements and connections for transit, bicycle and commuter rail.

The City of Wausau is served by several state and county trunk highways that serve as the main spine of the transportation system entering the urban area (**Figure 1**). The state highways include USH 51, STH 29, and STH 52. The USH 51 corridor serves as the major transportation link through the urban area. The county highway system includes CTH N, CTH U, CTH K, CTH W and CTH Z. This external road network in turn feeds a local roadway network that includes Wausau Avenue, Franklin Street, Town Line Road, Grand Avenue, Stewart Avenue, Bridge Street and Thomas Street.

The central urban core of the City of Wausau has evolved around the old state highway system that carried all traffic through the urban center. The system is constrained by the river and a limited number of bridge crossings that occur at three locations: Bridge Street, Stewart Avenue, and Thomas Street. As a result, the street system has evolved into a traffic circulation pattern that relies on a few one-way paired streets to carry the majority of traffic into and through the downtown area (**Figure 2**). The central one-way spines for this system include 1st and 3rd Avenues and 5th and 6th Streets for the north/south traffic flow. East/west traffic flow is carried through the area by the Scott/Washington/Forest Street one-way pair system. There are several ancillary streets that are also one-way including 1st Street, 2nd Street, 3rd Street, and McIndoe Street.

Traffic Circulation

There are three main entryways into the downtown area from the west. Each of these entryways is defined by a river crossing. The northern entry is at Bridge Street with the major connections at 3rd Street, 5th Street and 6th Street. A 2nd entryway is at Stewart Avenue with the split of Scott Street and Washington Street. The 3rd entry is Thomas Street and its intersection with USH Business 51 or Grand Avenue. The major intersections are Thomas/Grand Avenue and Grand Avenue/Forest Street.

Because of the high traffic volumes through the downtown area, the configuration of the street system, and the geographical constraints, it is important that the major corridors through the urban area remain focused on the existing one-way pair system. **Figure 3** shows the existing (1998) and projected (2020) traffic volumes on selected downtown streets.

<u>North/South One-Way Connectors</u>

- 1st and 3rd Avenue on the west side of the river. 1st Avenue carries an average daily traffic volume (ADT) of 7,700 vehicles northbound, while 3rd Avenue carries 14,400 vehicles. 1st Avenue is being reconstructed in 1999; 3rd Avenue is scheduled for reconstruction in 2001. **Because of the higher traffic volumes, it is important that these streets remain a part of the one-way pair system.**

- 5th and 6th Streets are on the east side of the river. 5th carries two lanes of traffic while 6th Street carries three lanes. Like 1st and 3rd Avenue the traffic volumes on each street varies. 5th Street southbound carries an ADT of 6400, while 6th Street north bound carries up to 15,800 vehicles.

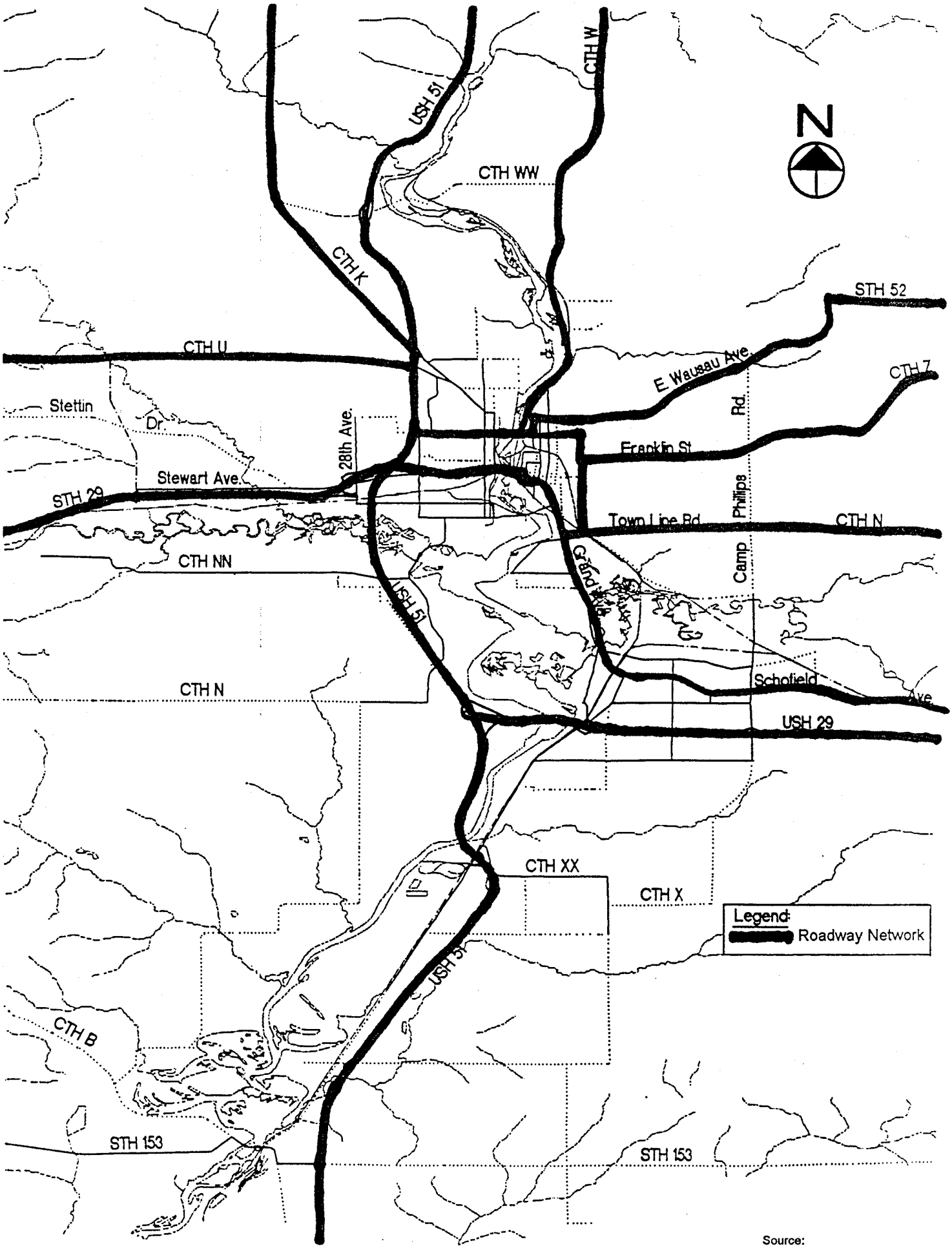


Figure 1: Existing Urban Roadway Network

Source:
Long Range Transportation Plan
for the Wausau Metropolitan Area

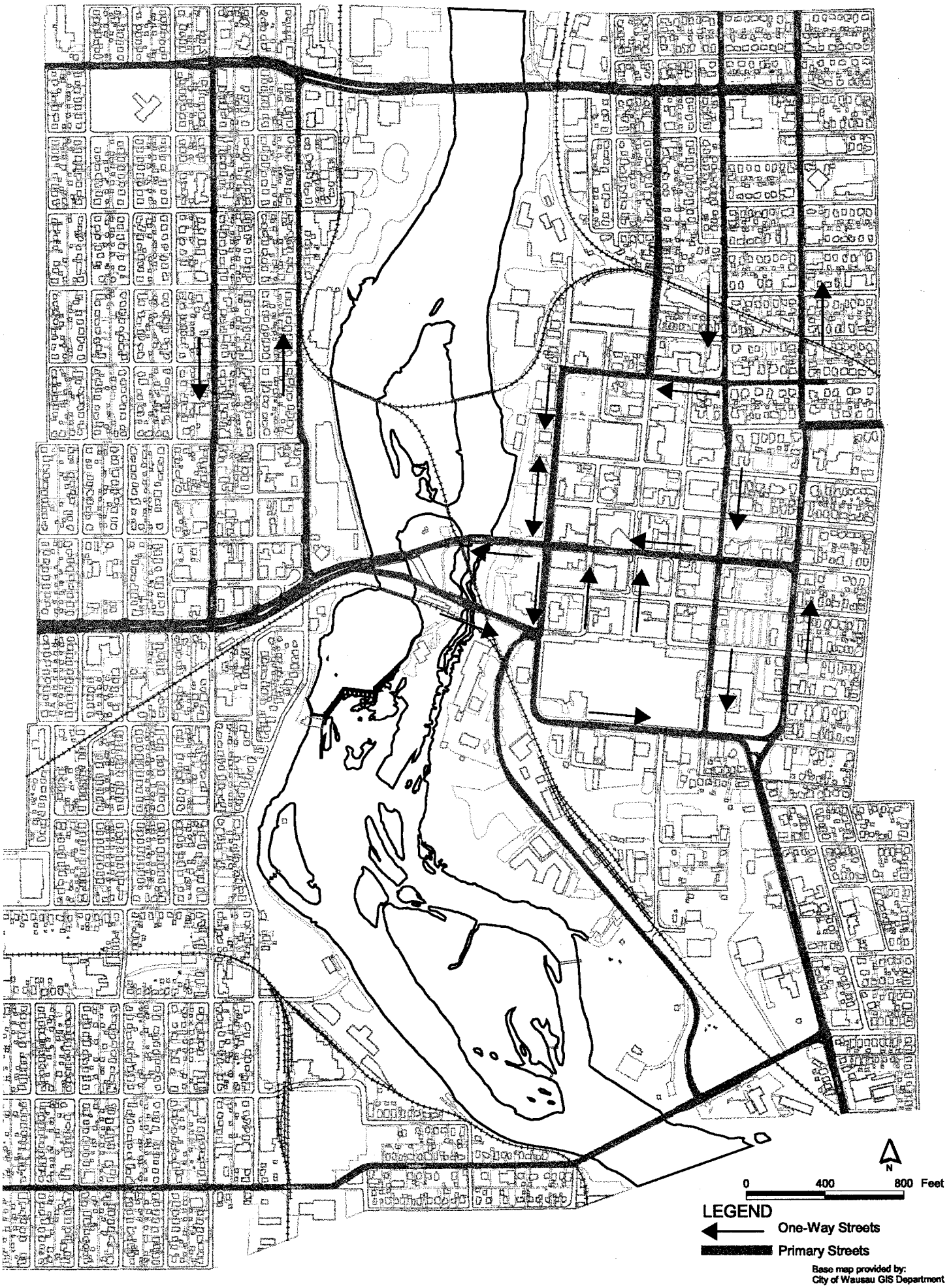


Figure 2: Existing CBD Transportation Network

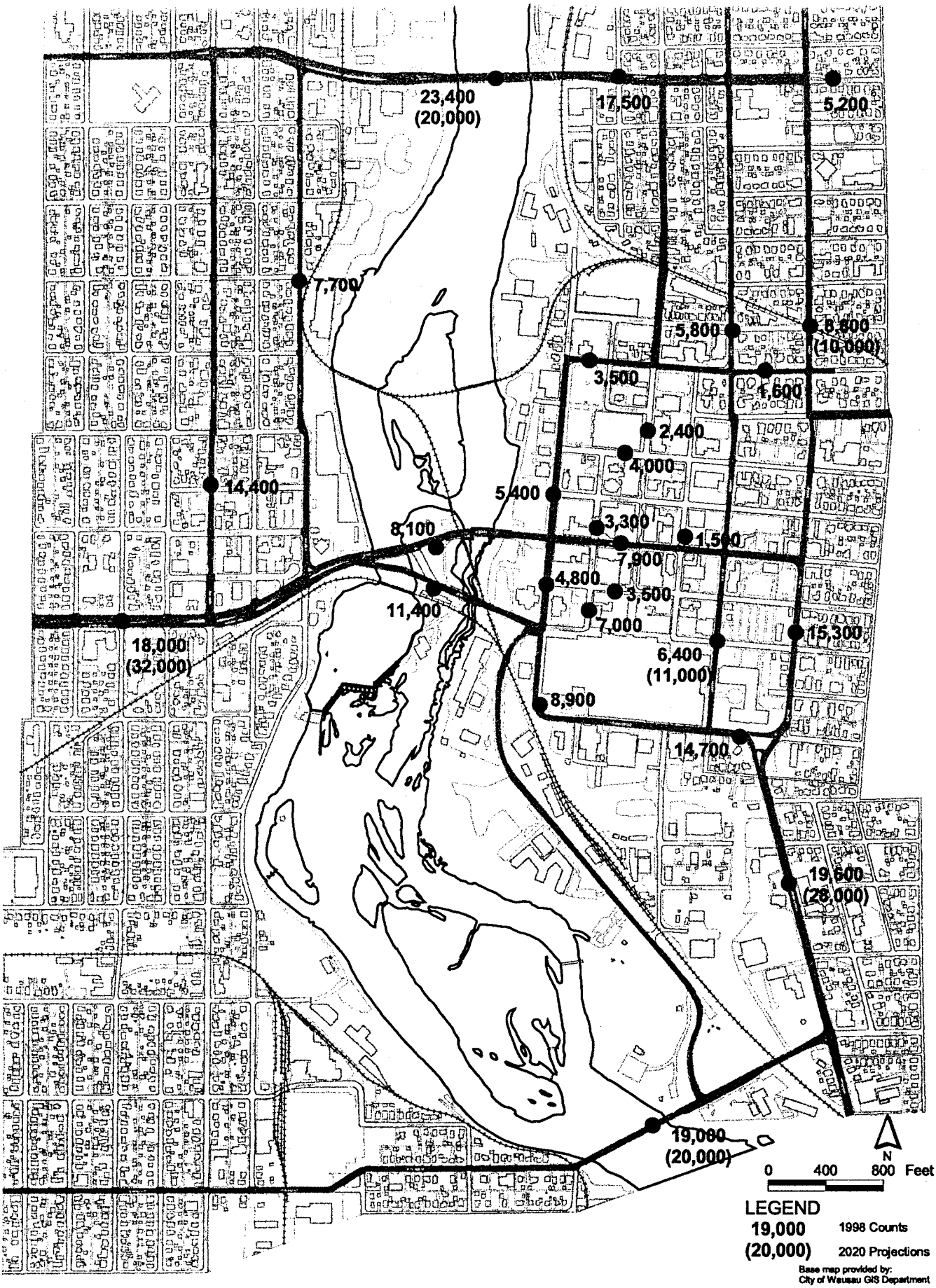


Figure 3: CBD Traffic Volumes

There is obviously stronger traffic flow in the northerly direction than in the southerly. **Due to the high traffic volumes, these streets should remain as a one-way pair system.**

- 1st Street is a one-way street southbound from McIndoe Street to Grant Street. Between Grant and Scott Streets it functions as a two-way street. South of Scott it again functions as a one-way street. It carries 4,800 to 5,400 vehicles per day. The street has a very limited amount of on-street parking. **Because of the low traffic volumes and the importance of this street as a connection to the redevelopment areas along the river, the segment from Washington to Scott should be converted to a two-way street.**

- 2nd Street is a one-way north bound from Washington to Grant Street. It carries 3,300 vehicles per day except for the one block section from Washington to Jefferson, which carries 7,000 ADT. This street also has limited parking. **Because of the lower traffic volumes, this street could be converted to a two-way system if 1st Street were also converted to a two-way to help draw off the northbound traffic between Washington and Jefferson.**

- 3rd Street is one-way from Jefferson to Grant Street. The northern portion of the street carries 2,400 vehicles per day. This section of street is narrow with diagonal parking on one side. **Further investigation should occur to determine the feasibility and practicality of converting this street to a two-way street.**

East/West Connectors

- W. Scott/Washington/Forest is the major east/west connector through the downtown area. Scott carries about 7,900 vehicles through the downtown area and Forest Street carries 8,900. Each street is one-way and carries three lanes of traffic. **These streets should remain part of the one-way system due to the high traffic volumes.**

- Bridge Street is a major east/west connector on the north side of the central urban area. It is a two-way street that carries about 17,500 vehicles per day up to its link with 5th and 6th Street.

- McIndoe Street is a one-way street westbound between 6th Street and 1st Street. McIndoe carries 1600 to 3,500 vehicles per day. There is limited on-street parking available. **This street could be converted to a two-way system due to the low volume of traffic.**

Intersections

There are a number of street intersections that would be impacted by the conversion of the one-way streets to two-way system. These intersections include 1st and Scott Street, 1st and W. Washington Street, 2nd and Scott Street, 3rd and Scott Street, McIndoe and 5th Street, and McIndoe and 6th Street. These intersections may need to be rechannelized or widened to accommodate the additional volume and turning movements.

The three main entryway corridors are all major access points and have intersections that may need to be reconfigured or upgraded.

- Stewart Avenue—Current intersection analysis indicates that the intersection at 1st Avenue has a low level of service for the eastbound left turn movement during the p.m. peak traffic period. **This improvement should be addressed.**

- Washington Street—**Access to the riverfront area to the south should be provided either by reconfiguring the 1st /River Drive/Washington Street intersection or by reconfiguring the 1st Street/Forest Street intersection to connect to River Drive.**

- Bridge Street—**The main access to the downtown area from the north is proposed to be 3rd Street which may require a reconfiguration of this intersection from its present design.** This entry will provide direct access to the redevelopment area south along the riverfront area

- Grand Avenue—Access to the riverfront area from the south would be enhanced by improving existing access from Thomas Street onto River Drive just before the intersection of Grand Avenue. The intersection of Thomas Street and River Drive indicates a low level of service for southbound vehicles turning left. **Because of the weaving and heavy turning movements, the intersection of Forest, Grand, 5th and 6th Streets should be investigated for improvement.**

Figure 4 illustrates initial recommendations for CBD traffic flow and intersection improvements. These recommendations should be further evaluated as part of a comprehensive transportation plan for the CBD.

Parking

An inventory of parking in the downtown area was conducted by staff of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in 1992 and updated in 1998. The inventory included both on-street parking and off-street parking. Based on this inventory, there are a total of 6,800 parking spaces in the downtown area of which 5,732 are off-street and 1,068 are on-street. Of the 5,732 off-street spaces, 2,047 spaces are located in parking ramps and 3,685 are on surface level parking lots. Approximately half of the parking spaces are private and half are public. The ramp parking lots are located in the Wausau Center complex and the two municipal parking ramps.

Occupancy studies of the downtown parking area were conducted in the 1992 parking study. Results of that study indicate that the occupancy rate varies between 40 to 67% occupancy during the peak weekday hours for both on and off-street parking. Private parking lots had the highest occupancy during the weekday but the lowest on weekends. Public parking lots had the highest occupancy rate on Saturday (68%), with as high as 80% occupancy in the retail/office core.

Parking adequacy is the ability of the parking supply to satisfy the demand for parking spaces. A functional supply of parking spaces should include a sufficient cushion above the peak demand for spaces. This cushion is necessary to allow for vehicles parking and leaving simultaneously, and to reduce the time required searching for the last few available spaces. The cushion also helps account for vacancies created by misparked vehicles and spaces lost due to snow cover and construction.

A parking system operates at peak efficiency when occupancy is 85% to 95%. Parkers will experience delays and frustration while searching for a space when occupancy exceeds these levels. If an adequate cushion is not available, parking facilities may be perceived as inadequate even though there are some available spaces. The effective supply of spaces, typically 85% to 95% of the actual capacity, is often used to calculate the adequacy of a parking supply.

The occupancies recorded during the surveys indicate that there appears to be enough parking to meet the overall demand. The observed occupancies are well below the 85% to 95% level.

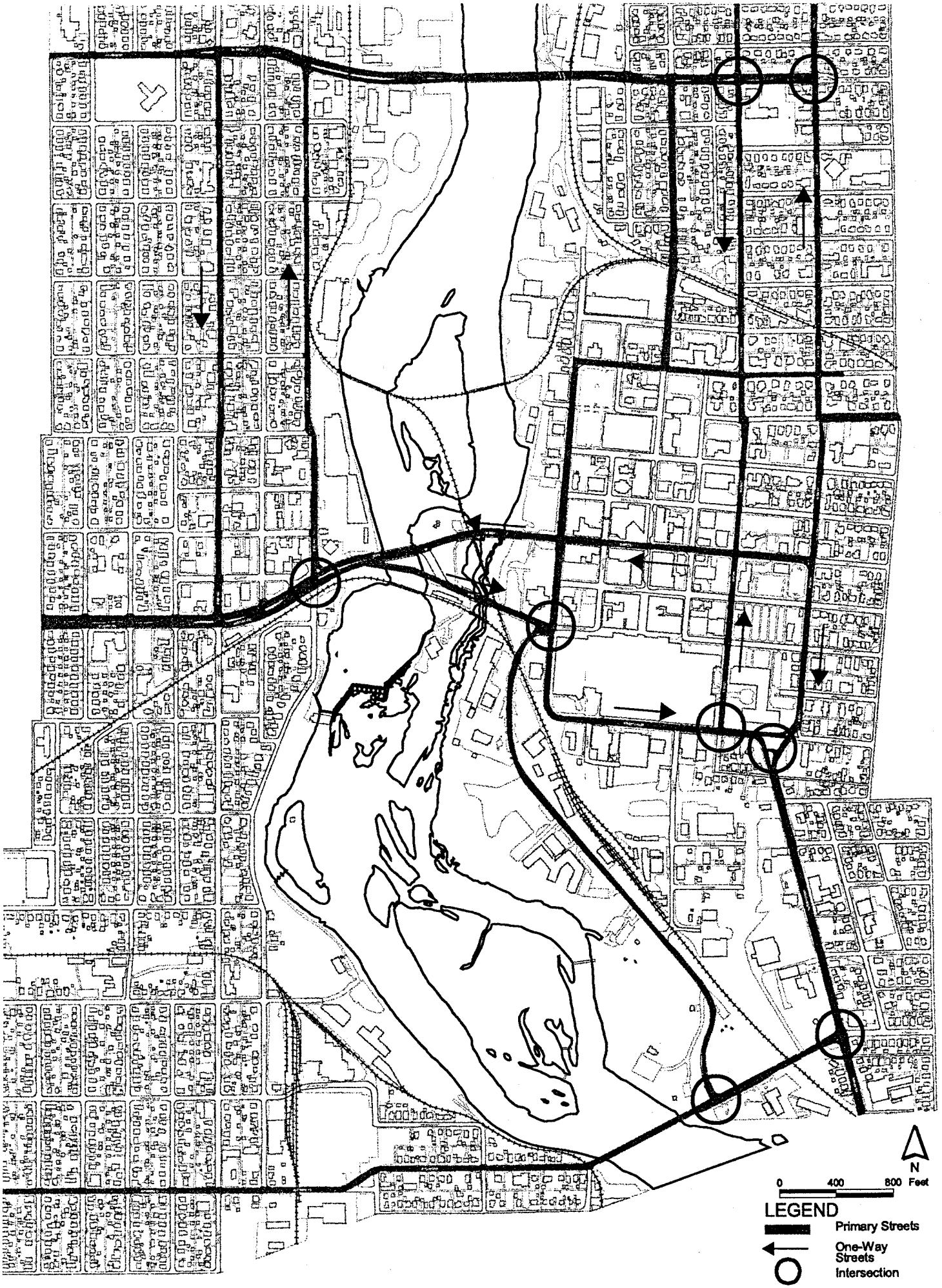


Figure 4: Recommended Traffic Flow and Intersection Improvements

When compared to the total amount of commercial square footage in the Central Business District (CBD), there appears to be an adequate supply of parking to meet the demands of existing levels of development. There are, however, certain areas where the location or distribution of parking may not be adequate, particularly to serve retail business needs. Businesses fronting along the 3rd Street corridor do not have a convenient supply of parking spaces to meet peak retail periods occurring particularly in the winter time, where desirable walking distance between other parking areas and 3rd Street is shortened by cold weather. During the office work week, the parking supply convenient to 3rd Street is densely occupied. After office hours and on weekends, parking could be more intensely managed to better support retail peaks. This includes both public and private office parking spaces.

Parking needed to support new development needs to be planned and developed as part of the Master Plan. With this strategy in mind, the majority of the new parking will be developed at the time that new uses are established. Most of the identified redevelopment sites have on-site parking solutions.

Expansion of the Arts and Theatre District, including the 400 Block activities, are existing uses that may require expansion of convenient parking nearby. **To respond to this potential need, it is recommended that the Municipal surface lot north of the Courthouse be considered for ramped expansion in the future as more demand occurs. The other area where parking expansion may be necessary to conveniently meet the needs of existing uses is in the vicinity of the Library and Riverfront.** Plan recommendations focus on the reconstruction of the Jefferson Street ramp in a manner that not only accommodates redevelopment, but also adds to the total number of public parking spaces available within the Jefferson Street corridor. **A 3rd recommendation is to create more convenient parking for the 3rd Street corridor by increasing the number of on-street parking spaces available around the City Center Block.**

The West Side Business District has an adequate supply of surface parking, but will require increased parking as use of this area intensifies. The adequacy of parking is partially based on the needs of East Bay and possible future expansion. **A parking management plan should be developed for this district to increase the amount of cooperative parking opportunities.** We will explore the opportunity to increase the total number of parking spaces by a better layout of private lots fronting Stewart. Access to parking in the West Side District is an issue to be addressed. The one-way north/south pairs complicate both the use of any on-street parking, and the use of wayfinding to direct people to existing private lots. Signage identifying access to parking is a beginning. **Any new redevelopment in the West Side District will have to accommodate the development of new parking.**

The trends related to where employees of retail and service businesses park should be analyzed in more depth, particularly in the areas previously described above as having potential peak time deficiencies. Efforts should be made to ensure that retail employee parking does not occupy prime customer parking sites. Numerous studies and part of the interviewing process identified areas where parking peaks do create a problem (such as the Library). There is a need to define those face blocks and land uses where conflict occurs in regards to parking.

Past studies and opinion surveys have all highlighted the fact that there is a consumer perception of inadequate parking in the CBD except at the Wausau Center Mall. Most of this perception in other downtown areas in Wausau is attributed to lack of wayfinding and designation of available parking lots. In some instances, the one-way street pattern in downtown Wausau adds to this perception of not being able to easily access available parking. The transportation recommendations outlined in the 1st part of this analysis would greatly reduce this perception of inadequate parking supply by consumers. **The comprehensive wayfinding program should be considered a high priority, along with reducing the number of one-way local streets within the CBD.**

Transit

The current transit system is in need of an upgraded terminal in the downtown area. Because the transit system is a radial pulse system, it is important that the terminal be located in the downtown area near the hub of the activity. **Exploration of a new transit site location or reconstruction on the existing site would need to be considered.**

Pedestrian/Bicycle

The current designated bike path system in the downtown area includes both an on and off-road bikeway system as shown in **Figure 5**.

The core of the on-road system includes 4th Avenue on the west side of the river and 7th Street on the east side. East/west interconnection is provided by Bridge Street, Stewart Avenue and Thomas Street.

The off-road bike/pedestrian system focuses on the River Edge Parkway System. This system is in the early stages of development. Upon completion it will extend along both sides of the river through the downtown area. On the east side it currently extends from Thomas Street to Franklin Street. It will eventually extend north to Gilbert Park. An important element of this parkway is its interconnection to the downtown area at various points and its interconnection to the neighborhood areas on both the west and east sides of the river.

The parkway on the west side of the river now extends from River Street to Riverside Park. This path will eventually extend from Thomas Street to Schofield Park. **It is important that these paths provide connections to each of the three major river crossings (Bridge, E. Washington/Scott, and Thomas Street) as well as to the downtown street system and activity centers.**

C. URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

The following text provides a general assessment of the Wausau CBD's visual character and physical setting. Improvements to the CBD's physical environment will be necessary to stimulate redevelopment and enhance the downtown as a destination for residents, employees, customers and visitors.

Main Approach Corridors to CBD

The Wausau CBD is located near regional transportation corridors including U.S. Hwy 51, Interstate 39 and STH 29. The STH 52 (Stewart Avenue) corridor should be considered the "Primary Gateway" into the CBD to serve visitor traffic to the downtown. The character of this corridor between the interstate and CBD should be enhanced using signage, landscaping, and streetscape elements. More intensive landscape and streetscape enhancements should be made along Stewart Avenue from 3rd Avenue to the Falls Bridge. Views to the Wisconsin River should be created where possible to announce the "Gateway" into the CBD. Streetscape improvements have already been made to the Falls Bridge. **Design guidelines for the corridor should be prepared to guide enhancements and redevelopment.**

CBD Entrances

The Wausau CBD is a major community destination, but is not visually well defined from major travel corridors. Bridge Street, Thomas Street, Grand Avenue, 5th Street and 6th Street are major community resident travel routes to the CBD. 3rd Street, Scott Street, and Washington Street are primary streets that enter the east side business district. 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue are key streets that enter the west side business district. Special landscape and signage features should denote entrances to the CBD. **A review**

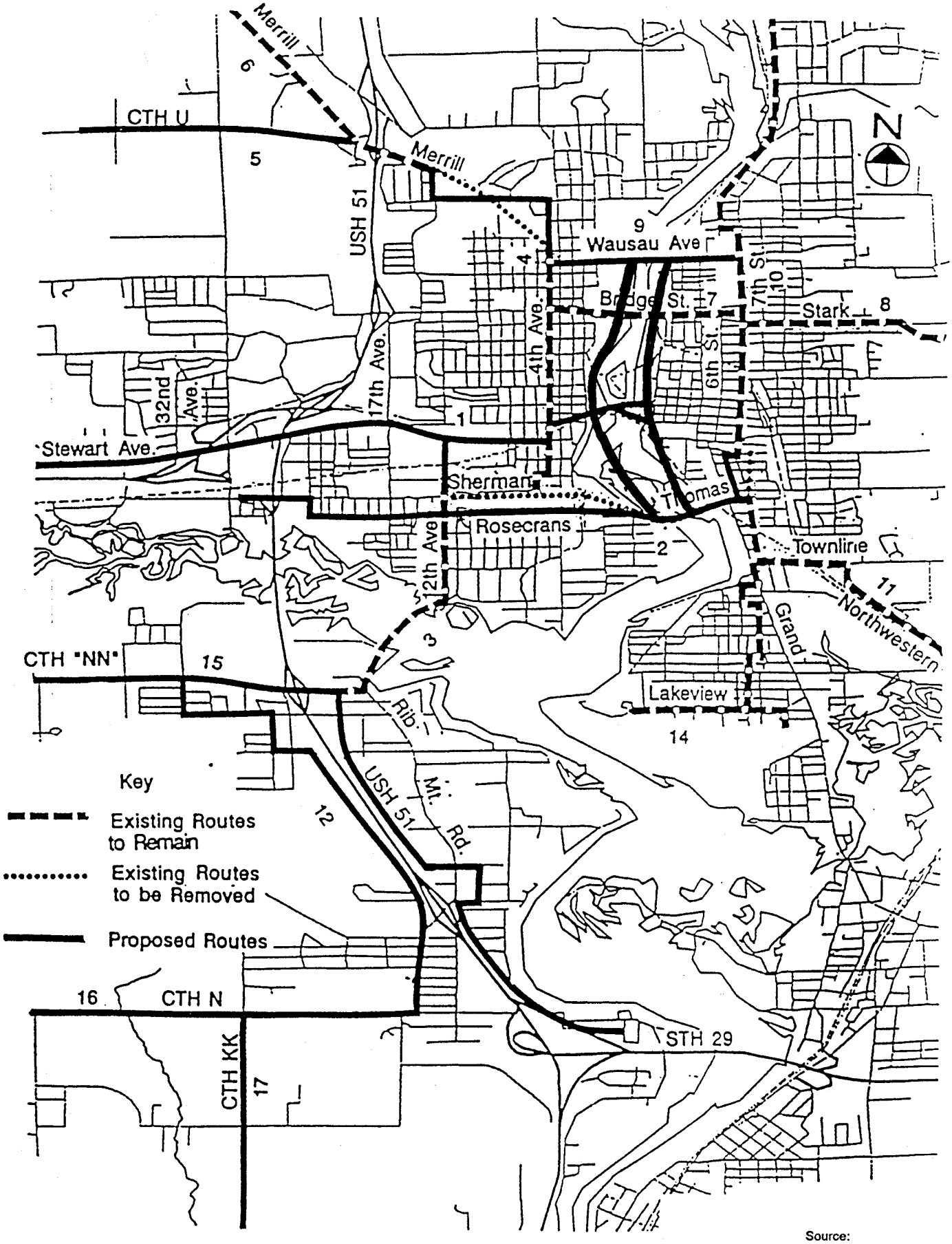


Figure 5: Recommended Bike Path System

Source:
Long Range Transportation Plan
for the Wausau Metropolitan Area

of the current signage is suggested to ensure that current signage is adequate to direct visitors and residents to the CBD.

Architectural Character

The Downtown Historic District is bounded by 1st, 5th, Grant and Washington Street. The unofficial boundaries of the Andrew Warren Historic District and Proposed East Hill Historic District are Hamilton, McClellan, 5th and 13th Street. These historic districts have a visually distinctive "sense of place" because of their historic character, unity of scale, and density of development.

The downtown has a mix of building styles and uses that is not homogenous with the building styles in the Downtown Historic District. **The Downtown Historic District has a unique character within the CBD and should be preserved. Successful revitalization of the downtown will be dependent on maintaining historically interesting and significant buildings and enhancing their historic appearance, along with improving existing building facades to complement the historic character of the downtown. Design guidelines should be prepared to ensure the preservation of the historic character of the downtown.**

Industrial areas to the north and west of the retail district along both sides of the Wisconsin River are the least attractive and consistent part of the CBD. Several large industrial buildings, some vacant, hinder the development of the river edge parkways, block views of the river and dominate this area. The entire industrial area within the CBD boundaries is in need of rehabilitation and redevelopment to create a better identity and visual character. Any redevelopment in this area should focus attention on the Wisconsin River.

Streetscape Character

Streetscape improvements (historic ornamental lighting, banners, street trees, planters, and special pavements) that currently exist on Scott Street, 3rd Street and 4th Street create a strong visual identity for the CBD. **Additional streetscape improvements should be provided on main pedestrian corridors that connect the CBD with adjacent neighborhoods and visitor destinations. Arterial and collector streets, which carry visitor traffic in and around the CBD, should also receive streetscape improvements. A program to bury overhead utilities along major motor vehicle routes and primary pedestrian corridors in the CBD should be established.** Similar streetscape improvements have been implemented in La Crosse, Sheboygan and Beloit.

Key Viewsheds

The Wisconsin River is the most significant feature in the CBD's visual landscape. **Views to the Wisconsin River should be opened up at CBD entrances. New development and rehabilitation of sites adjoining the Wisconsin River should be planned to provide views of the river from public streets.**

Several public buildings such as Wausau City Hall, Marathon County Courthouse and Marathon County Public Library, and several historic churches are strong visual focal points and orientation points for the CBD. **A landmark lighting program should be considered to enhance the nighttime character of the CBD.** Kenosha and downtown Milwaukee are examples of communities with landmark lighting programs. **Also, new public architecture should be designed to fit the historic character of the downtown.**

There are areas in the downtown that require a stronger visual character. This can be accomplished through the use of streetscape elements, landscaping, removal of billboards and redevelopment of properties. These areas include but are not limited to the Forest Street side of the mall, the west side

business district, the parking lots and franchise businesses along 6th Street, the approach to the CBD from the 3rd Street neighborhood and the corner of 1st and Washington Street to the mall. **Design guidelines should be developed to aid in redevelopment efforts.**

D. CBD FRAMEWORK PLAN

Prior to developing detailed master plan recommendations for the Wausau CBD, CityVision Associates prepared a CBD Framework Plan to establish the broad planning relationships that will need to be considered to achieve the physical and economic revitalization of the CBD. This framework plan includes the following:

- Relationship of the CBD to the Region
- Relationship of the CBD to the Community
- Key CBD Organizational Components
- CBD Land Use Districts and Transportation Opportunities

Relationship of the CBD to the Region (Figure 6)

The following relationships should be strengthened to establish the Wausau CBD as a center for regional tourism and economic opportunity.

1. Promote downtown Wausau as a destination and orientation point for cultural and sports-related tourism.

2. Promote downtown Wausau as a trailhead for a regional bicycle system.

3. Promote special events, festivals, museums and retail mix in downtown Wausau that address regional tourism related to cultural heritage, arts, music and sports.

4. Work to establish the Upper Wisconsin River as a heritage trail and national scenic river similar to the Lower Wisconsin River. Downtown Wausau should be a major destination along the Wisconsin River system.

5. Promote excursion rail connections between downtown Wausau and statewide destinations.

6. Promote long-term commuter rail connections to downtown Wausau.
   - Tourism "trail" between Door County and Minneapolis
   - Northwoods and Upper Peninsula
   - Marathon County

Relationship of the CBD to the Community (Figure 7)

1. The CBD should be promoted and connected to the community and to nearby visitor and community destinations, including the following:
   - Rib Mountain
   - Cedar Creek
   - Wausau Insurance
   - Wausau Community Hospital
   - Airport
   - Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum
   - North Central Technical College
   - Marathon County Fairgrounds and Park
   - U.W. Marathon County
   - Nine-Mile Recreation Area

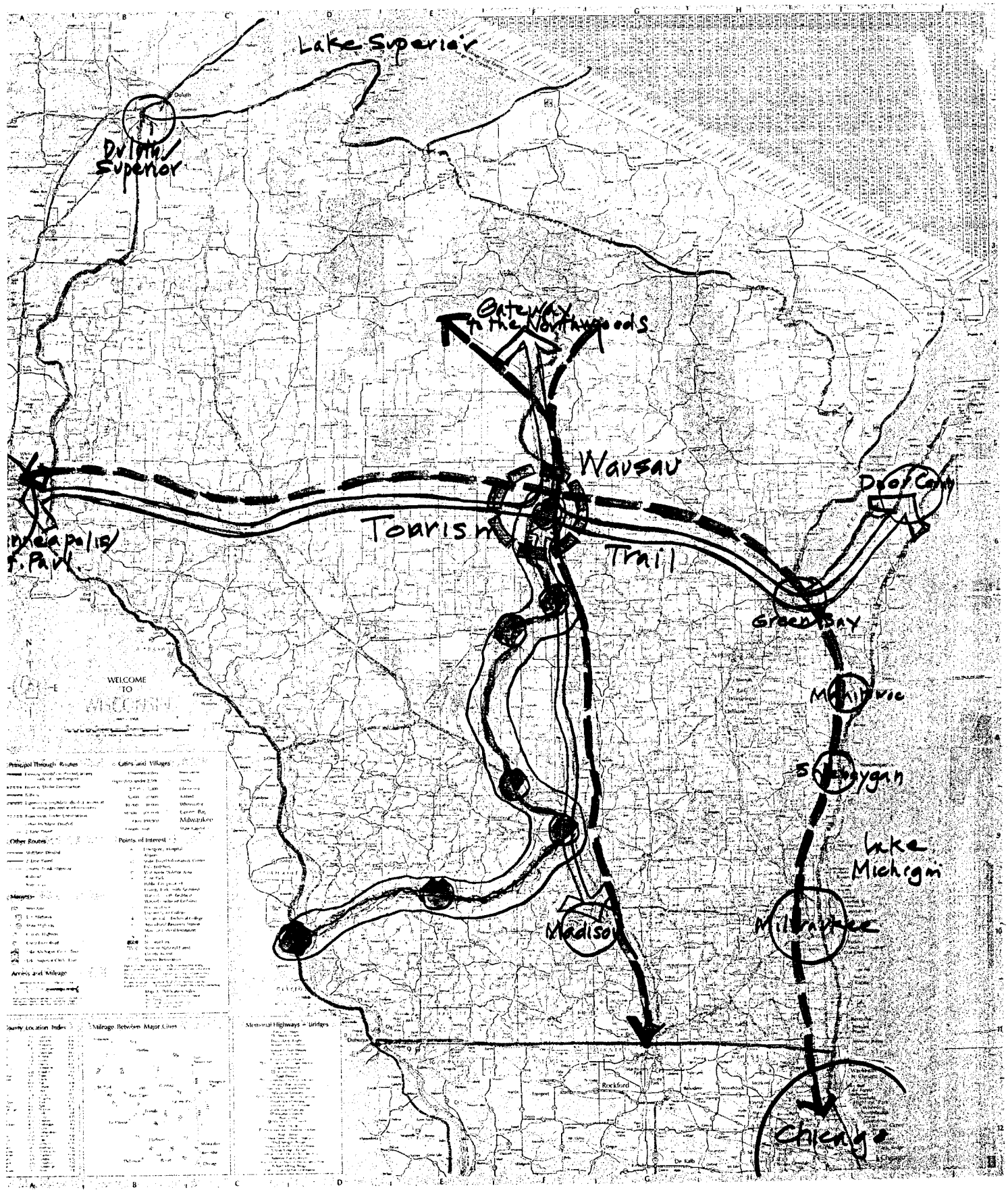


Figure 6: Relationship of the CBD to the Region

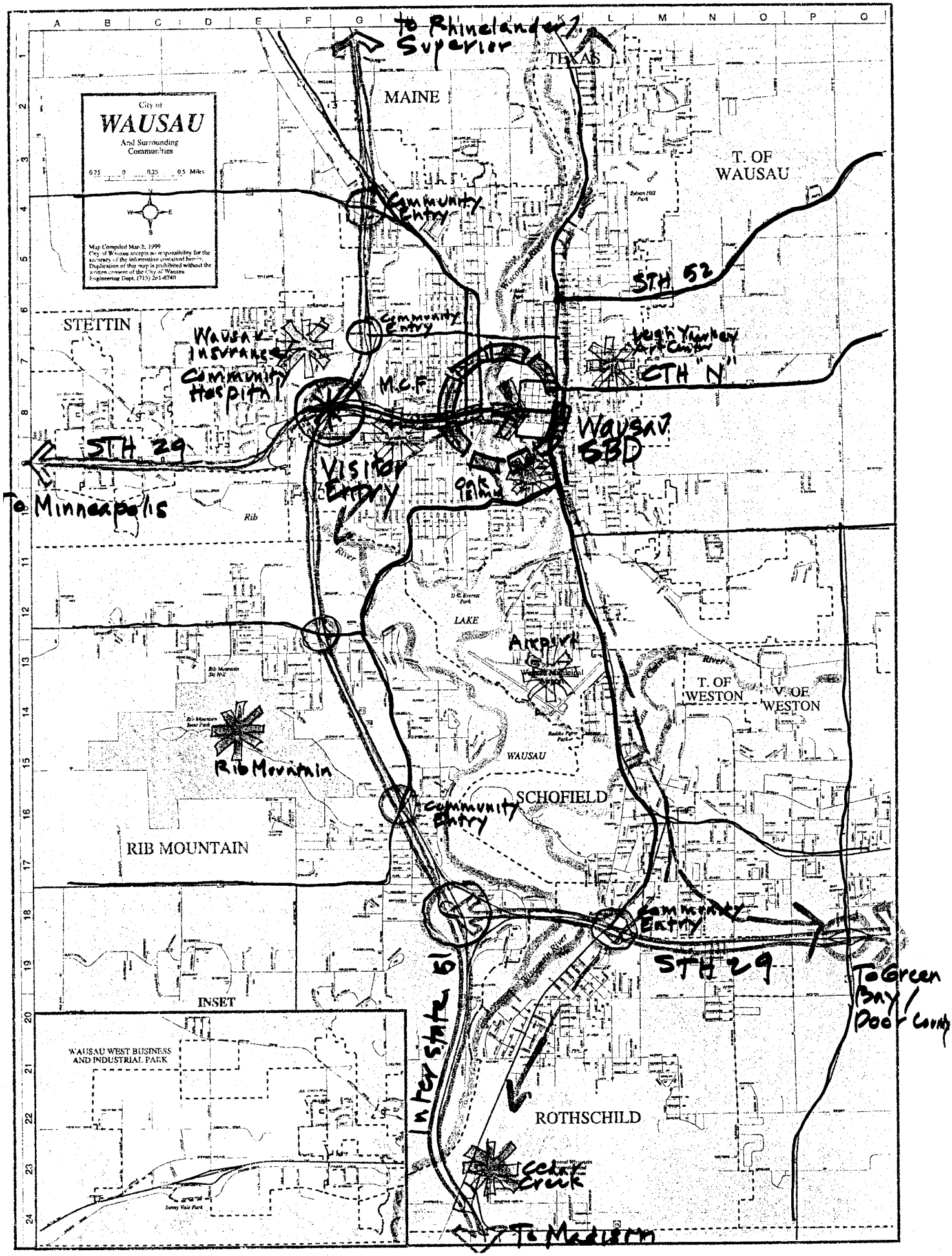


Figure 7: Relationship of the CBD to the Community

2. The major visitor entrance to the Wausau CBD should be located at the Stewart Avenue/ STH 52 interchange at U.S. Hwy. 51/29.

3. Community-wide signage directing visitors and residents to the CBD should be placed on major community arterials including Grand Avenue (Business 51), Thomas Street (CTH N), Merrill Avenue (Business 51), Bridge Street, Wausau Avenue (STH 52).

Key CBD Organizational Components

CityVision Associates proposes the following general framework for the Wausau CBD as a context for recommending specific opportunities. Key components for this framework are illustrated in **Figure 8** and include the following:

Study Area

The study area encompassing physical and economic recommendations for the CBD should include the area between Bridge Street on the north and Thomas Street on the south. This area should also include the immediate neighborhoods bordering the Central Business District.

Wisconsin River

The Wisconsin River is the focal point for the central area. Existing and new CBD land uses should be reoriented to address the river. The Wisconsin River should be developed as a community-wide open space with maximum public access and a major asset that will stimulate real estate investment.

Neighborhoods

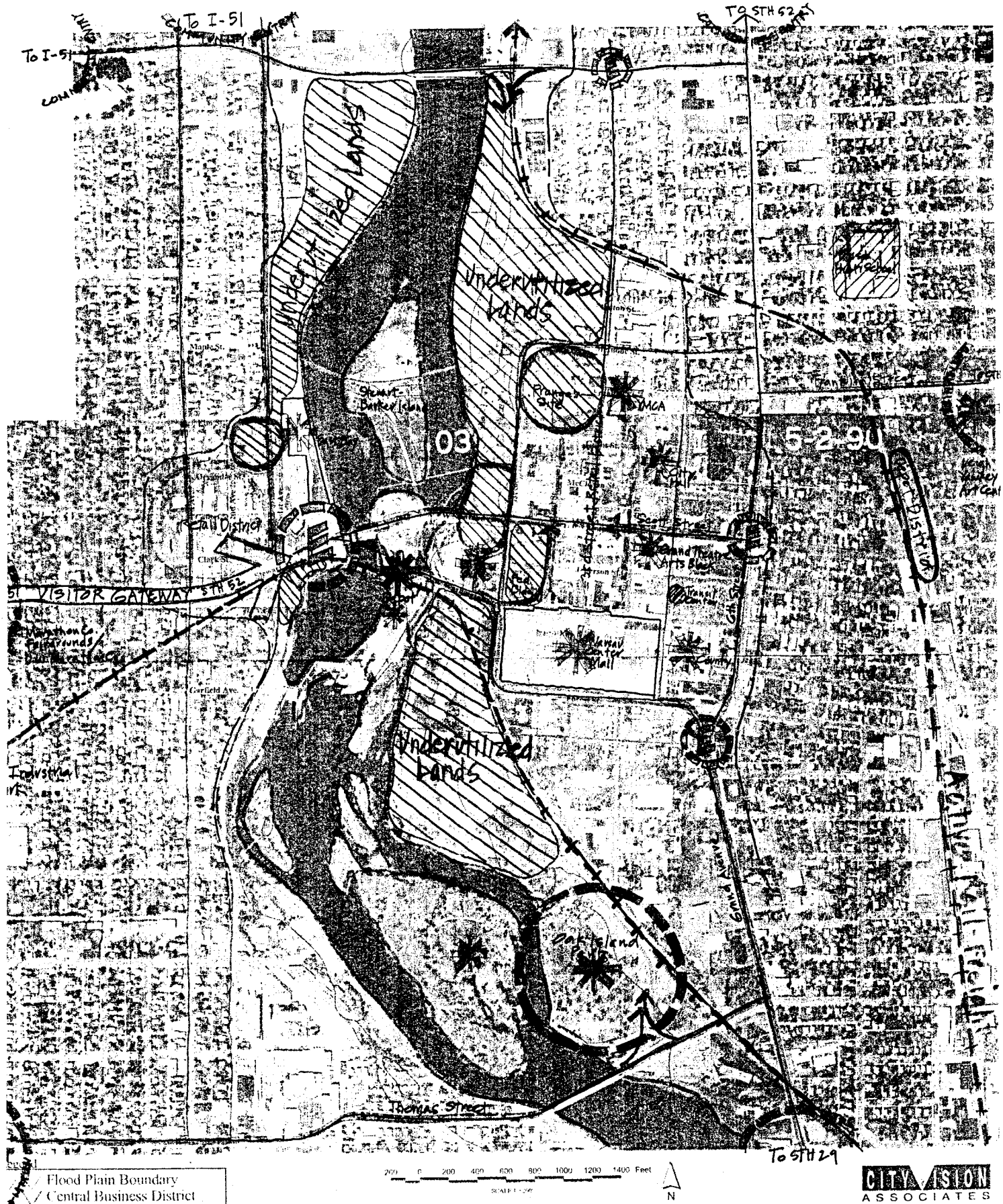
The residents of neighborhoods surrounding the CBD represent a primary customer base for the downtown. Neighborhood rehabilitation and revitalization should proceed concurrently with Central Business District redevelopment. Unique assets of individual neighborhoods should be identified and strengthened. **Neighborhoods should be identified by name to promote the central area as a diverse and multifaceted place to live.**

Visitor Gateway Entrance

Stewart Avenue/STH 52 should be developed as the primary visitor gateway entrance to the CBD. The character of this corridor between the interstate and the CBD should be enhanced. **A major CBD entrance feature should be located on the west side of the Washington Street bridge.** The westside business district is an important part of the CBD entrance experience.

Community Entrances

Bridge Street, Thomas Street and Grand Avenue/6th Street are major community resident travel routes to the CBD. Signage to CBD destinations should be placed along these corridors to direct residents to downtown destinations. 3rd Street, Scott Street and Washington Street are the primary streets that enter the eastside business district from these travel routes. 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue are key streets that enter the westside business district from these travel routes. CBD entrance signs should be placed at the intersections of these streets and primary travel routes.



City of Wausau Central Business District
Master Plan

Figure 8: CBD Framework Plan

Destinations

The CBD includes several major community and visitor destinations:

- Wausau Center
- 3rd Street Retail District
- Marathon County Library
- County Courthouse
- City Hall
- Grand Theatre and Arts Block
- YMCA
- Oak Island Community Park

Traffic flow within the CBD should be evaluated to facilitate easy access to these destinations. A CBD directional signage system should be developed to identify these and other important destinations.

Underutilized Lands

A large land area adjoining the Wisconsin River within the CBD, including sites abutting Bridge Street on the west side of the river and MBX and Hammer Blow on the east side of the river, are underutilized and blighted and may be impacted by the actual presence or the perception of environmental conditions which affects their reuse. Redevelopment of these lands for residential, business and high tech uses will be critical to connecting the CBD to the river and stimulating economic opportunity.

Multi-Modal Transportation

Access to the CBD should be improved for all modes of travel.

Pedestrian Circulation

The CBD should be emphasized as a pedestrian area. Pedestrian connections to the river and between the east and west side business districts should be improved. Traffic calming measures should be considered in corridors that are intended to carry a high volume of pedestrian traffic.

Traffic Flow

The CBD traffic flow should be reevaluated to improve access to downtown destinations while maintaining efficient circulation for traffic moving around the downtown to other parts of the community. Parking facilities should be clearly signed and easily accessible to major streets.

Transit

Downtown is the major transit terminal for the community. **Pedestrian circulation from the transit terminal to CBD destinations should be improved.**

Bicycle Circulation

A community-wide bicycle circulation system with connections to the downtown should be identified. A major trailhead for intersecting bicycle routes should be located on the river near Washington Street.

Rail

The railroad depot on Washington Street should be considered as a terminal for excursion rail and future commuter rail.

CBD Land Use Districts and Transportation Opportunities

Land Use Districts

Preliminary CBD land use districts are summarized in the following text and keyed to **Figure 9**. The primary focus of these districts is on riverfront sites, both east and west. The repositioning of the downtown area with new housing, new jobs and new visitor destinations is needed to enhance the market potential of the existing retail business district. Redevelopment of all these districts should be part of a comprehensive implementation strategy, in order to achieve a long-term successful and sustainable downtown Wausau.

A. West Side Downtown Entry District

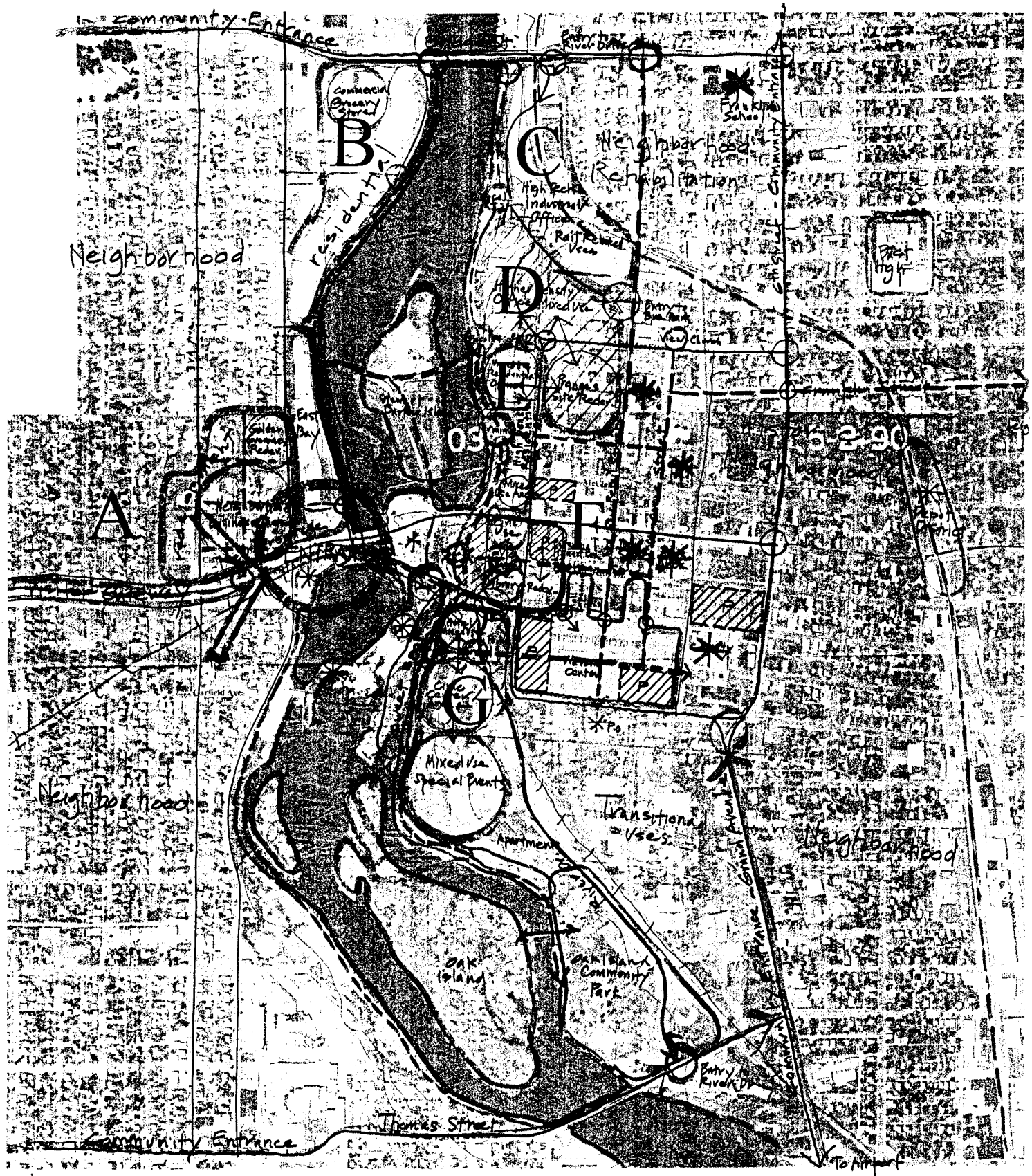
The West Side Entry District has good visibility and a 1998 traffic count on Stewart Avenue of 19,500 vehicles per day. The business mix along Stewart Avenue frontage should be analyzed in more detail to determine market appeal. The primary goal for this district is to better position it as a destination in the trade area. One opportunity is to evaluate this location for sports and outdoor recreation retail. The West Side Entry District needs to be strengthened as part of the downtown. Streetscape, signage and an identity program are needed. The Golden Guernsey Dairy is part of this redevelopment district. Even though this site does not front on Stewart Avenue, the reuse planning should better link the site to frontage uses. East Bay should be considered one of the anchors to the district. Special attention should be given to working with East Bay and its retail outlet store.

B. West River District North

This redevelopment district has good exposure and traffic access to Bridge Street. This area will require review of environmental and geotechnical conditions prior to detailed master planning. Property assemblage and completion of one industrial relocation will be necessary. The opportunity for waterfront residential development should be explored 1st; however, in order for this district to be properly positioned in the market place, it will require comprehensive redevelopment planning. This waterfront district should be tied to the existing neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the west. Market-rate, higher density rental housing would be the highest and best use in a context of providing more living opportunities in the Central Business District. Access to this redevelopment district will need to be configured off of Bridge Street. Because 1st Avenue is a one-way northbound street, it is imperative that a riverfront district entrance be created between North 1st Avenue and the river. The roadway frontage on Bridge Street should be planned as neighborhood commercial. The master plan for this neighborhood commercial area should create a "front door" for the riverfront housing.

C. East River District North 1

The active freight rail line goes through this district along the riverfront. Therefore, the district is not ideally suited for riverfront housing. In addition, the majority of this land was used in the past by heavy industry. It is probable that environmental conditions along the riverfront will suggest non-residential usage in the future. This district provides the opportunity to position downtown Wausau into marketing for high-tech business development. The opportunity offered by a combination of river frontage with great office views, and industrial lands that could be used by



City of Wausau Central Business District Master Plan

Figure 9: CBD Land Use Districts

companies for research and development facilities is a market that should be explored. Many high-tech companies will not go into suburban industrial parks. There are examples of other communities recruiting these companies to downtown areas where there are amenities for highly-trained employees who come from urban college campus settings.

D. *East River District North 2*

The majority of this district has historically been manufacturing and distribution. Two of the specifically-identified redevelopment sites – the former Murray Machinery and Marathon Millwork properties – fall within this district. The highest and best use for this district would be to provide a business center aimed at creating jobs for the downtown residential neighborhoods. This district could be marketed in combination with East River District North 1 for office spaces and high-tech businesses with riverfront views and rail and state highway access. To successfully market the East River North districts, better entry access from Bridge Street will be necessary. The most logical access is 3rd Street, which should be revitalized by streetscape improvements and rehabilitation of existing buildings. This mixed-use office, research and industrial center is an opportunity that should be further explored.

E. *East River District Middle*

The river frontage in this district lends itself to the development of high-density residential housing. Condominium or owner-occupied housing should be explored 1st for market feasibility. The view of Rib Mountain across the river to the west could provide a unique downtown, "high-end" living opportunity. Riverfront housing could be incorporated into a mixed-use setting with retail and commercial development at the intersection of Scott and North 1st Street, and along the frontage of North 1st Street, where several viable businesses currently exist. In development of this market opportunity, it is recommended that the name "River Drive" replace the North 1st Street address. A River Drive address would have power in marketing a mixed-use riverfront project. Riverboat docking should also be explored as an enhancement to the marketing of this district.

F. *The Riverfront "Superblock" District*

This district is made up of the area bounded by Scott on the north, Washington Street on the south, and 2nd Street on the East. It includes the Public Library, the Federal Building, and the Jefferson Street Public Parking Ramp. The "superblock" opportunity to be further explored is to make this district pedestrian and riverfront related. Automobile traffic would still cross this district, but pedestrians would have the right-of-way. The Jefferson Street ramp could be expanded and made part of a larger redevelopment site that extends north to Scott Street. A high-density, mid-rise Class A office building could be accommodated with new structured parking and expansion of the Jefferson Street ramp. The "superblock" presents the best opportunity for expanding the downtown office workforce, due to its proximity to parking and its potential for river views and long views to the west. The site abutting 1st Street, north of the Library, should be kept in architectural scale with the river, and its ultimate use should be riverfront-oriented.

G. *East Riverfront District South*

This is potentially the strongest redevelopment site in the downtown area. The river frontage of this district has been developed as the City's whitewater course. It is the most unique riverfront setting that we have seen in Wisconsin. The ability to assemble a large parcel suggests it could be an opportunity to revisit a civic and convention center. Floodplain and environmental conditions will have to be considered in the design. This district has excellent traffic access and visibility at the intersection of Washington Street and River Drive. One of the significant

advantages of developing this site is that it could easily be skywalk-connected to the Wausau Center. Connecting to the enclosed mall and its available surplus parking could greatly enhance the mall's excitement and destination value. With proper development of this district, the mall could be directly linked to the riverfront and the visitor-destination potential of the river. Riverfront lodging, combined with riverfront civic space, could be a significant anchor to the mall and the downtown.

Transportation Opportunities

Traffic Flow

1. The one-way arterial CBD street system should include the following streets:

   - Washington Street
   - Scott Street
   - Forest Street
   - 5th Street
   - 6th Street
   - 1st Avenue
   - 3rd Avenue

   All other streets (1st Street, 2nd Street, McIndoe Street, and 3rd Street) should be considered for two-way traffic flow, to facilitate easy access to CBD retail, business, residential, institutional and recreational land uses. 3rd Street between Scott Street and Grant Street should remain one-way until the street is reconstructed. At that time, converting the street to two-way should be considered.

2. A riverfront drive feeding new riverfront uses north and south of Washington Street will be an important access route for the downtown. The easy connection between a riverfront drive and the local and arterial street system is critical to the future CBD traffic flow.

3. 3rd Street should be redeveloped to serve as a key downtown entrance corridor from Bridge Street.

4. Turning radius at 2nd Street and Washington Street should be increased slightly to improve traffic flow into the CBD.

Parking

Two future parking ramps have been identified for the downtown. A parking ramp on the public parking lot site north of the County Courthouse between 5th Street and 6th Street will serve Wausau Center, Grand Theatre and Arts Block, 3rd Street Retail District, County government, offices, etc.

An expanded parking ramp on the block north of the Federal Building will serve new office uses, the library and new riverfront civic uses, the 3rd Street Retail District, etc.

Pedestrian Circulation

Downtown redevelopment will be enhanced by establishing an interconnected pedestrian circulation system that links the riverfront, parking sites, transit center, and downtown destinations. There are several critical elements to this system including:

1. *River Edge Parkway*

   The River Edge Parkway loop system proposed by the River Edge Commission should be implemented. This loop system should be connected to a community-wide pedestrian/bicycle trail system. Riverfront nodes should be identified and developed at key riverfront access points and land uses. A major riverfront plaza and open space should be developed in association with civic uses north and south of Washington Street. The design of these spaces should create a dramatic entrance to the CBD.

2. *Jefferson Street/Civic Square*

   Jefferson Street is critical to linking the Grand Theatre and the 3rd Street Retail District to the river. A riverfront plaza west of the library and a civic square/performing arts area in front of the Grand Theatre are two opportunities for open spaces that can be programmed for special events and activities that will enhance the pedestrian experience, downtown character and downtown economic opportunities.

3. *4th Street*

   4th Street between the Wausau Center and McIndoe Street is a civic street that interconnects several civic destinations including the Wausau Center, Grand Theatre/Arts Block, City Hall, City Hall Park, Yawkey Park and theYMCA.

4. *Grant Street*

   Grant Street connects the river with redevelopment sites, YMCA, City Hall and the historic neighborhood to the east.

5. *3rd Street*

   3rd Street is both an important downtown entrance and a pedestrian street that interconnects the Wausau Center, the retail district, redevelopment areas and neighborhoods to the north.

6. *Wausau Center*

   The Wausau Center has an interior pedestrian system. A future enclosed walkway between the Wausau Center and a potential riverfront civic center should be explored to better connect the downtown with the riverfront. This connection will also facilitate shared use of parking between the riverfront and the Wausau Center.

7. *Washington Street*

   Washington Street should be improved as a pedestrian/bicycle friendly street to enhance the connection between the eastside and the westside business districts.

III. MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following master plan recommendations identify physical improvements for redevelopment of Wausau's Central Business District. **Figure 10** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for the CBD. Specific master plan recommendations are divided into three categories that include Redevelopment (R), Transportation (T), and Streetscape and Urban Design (S). Master plan recommendations identified in these categories are numbered and keyed to master plan graphics as noted **(Figures 12 through 21)**.

A. REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS (R) – Figure 12

The following recommendations identify districts in the CBD that offer redevelopment potential. The master plan also proposes an expansion to the current CBD boundaries. The recommended CBD boundaries and proposed redevelopment districts are identified in **Figure 11**. Redevelopment districts may include a broad range of building and site improvements including new construction, infill construction, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, historic preservation and rehabilitation, and façade improvements and cleanup of environmentally impacted properties. Redevelopment of these districts should be planned comprehensively, addressing land use mix, parking, transportation and streetscape to achieve the desired economic and visual character goals for the CBD. Important considerations for redevelopment include enhancing the downtown as a civic destination, increasing tax base and downtown investment opportunities, creating jobs, developing new housing, increasing tourism, strengthening the retail core, preserving historic resources, creating a positive downtown identity, and building new land use relationships around the Wisconsin River and the redevelopment of environmentally impacted properties or Brownfields. The following identification of redevelopment districts refines earlier conceptual recommendations for CBD land use patterns **Figure 9**.

West Side Entry District

The West Side Entry District has good visibility and traffic counts on Stewart Avenue. The business mix along Stewart Avenue frontage should be analyzed in more detail to determine market appeal. The primary goal for this district is to better position it as a destination in the trade area. One opportunity is to evaluate this location for sports and outdoor recreation retail. East Bay should be considered as one of the anchors to this district. Special attention should be given to working with East Bay and its retail outlet store. **Figure 13** summarizes the following detailed redevelopment recommendations for this district:

R1 This is a prime office site that could capitalize on the riverfront views. Any new structure should have an architectural character that establishes a strong CBD entrance identity.

Because the site has dramatic waterfront potential, we suggest taking advantage of its location as an entryway. The site does have visibility and should be able to contain a higher and better use and contribute tax base. The current use could be reintegrated into an expanded project.

R2 A multi story structure should be the focus of redevelopment for this site with ground floor retail/restaurant and upper floor office uses. Parking spaces could be shared with the adjoining uses. Architectural character of the new building should establish a strong CBD entrance identity.

This site is currently a full service restaurant, the Water's Edge Cafe, on the waterfront. This restaurant is a reuse of a building that was not designed as part of the waterfront. The goals are to allow for outside dining with a view of the river and to use this site more intensely. Due to its

Figure 10: CBD Redevelopment Master Plan

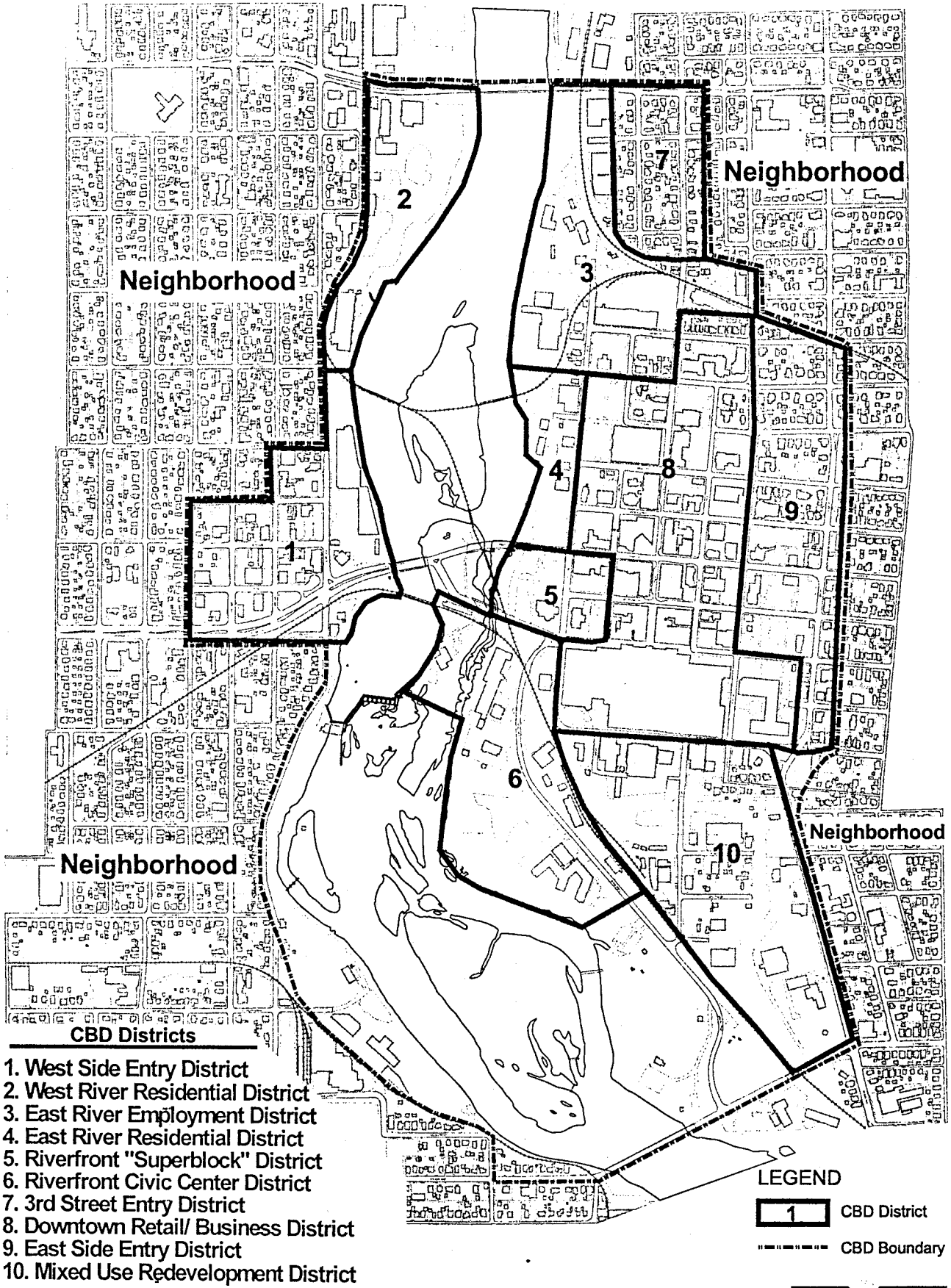


Figure 11: CBD Boundary and Redevelopment Districts

Base map provided by:
City of Wausau GIS Department

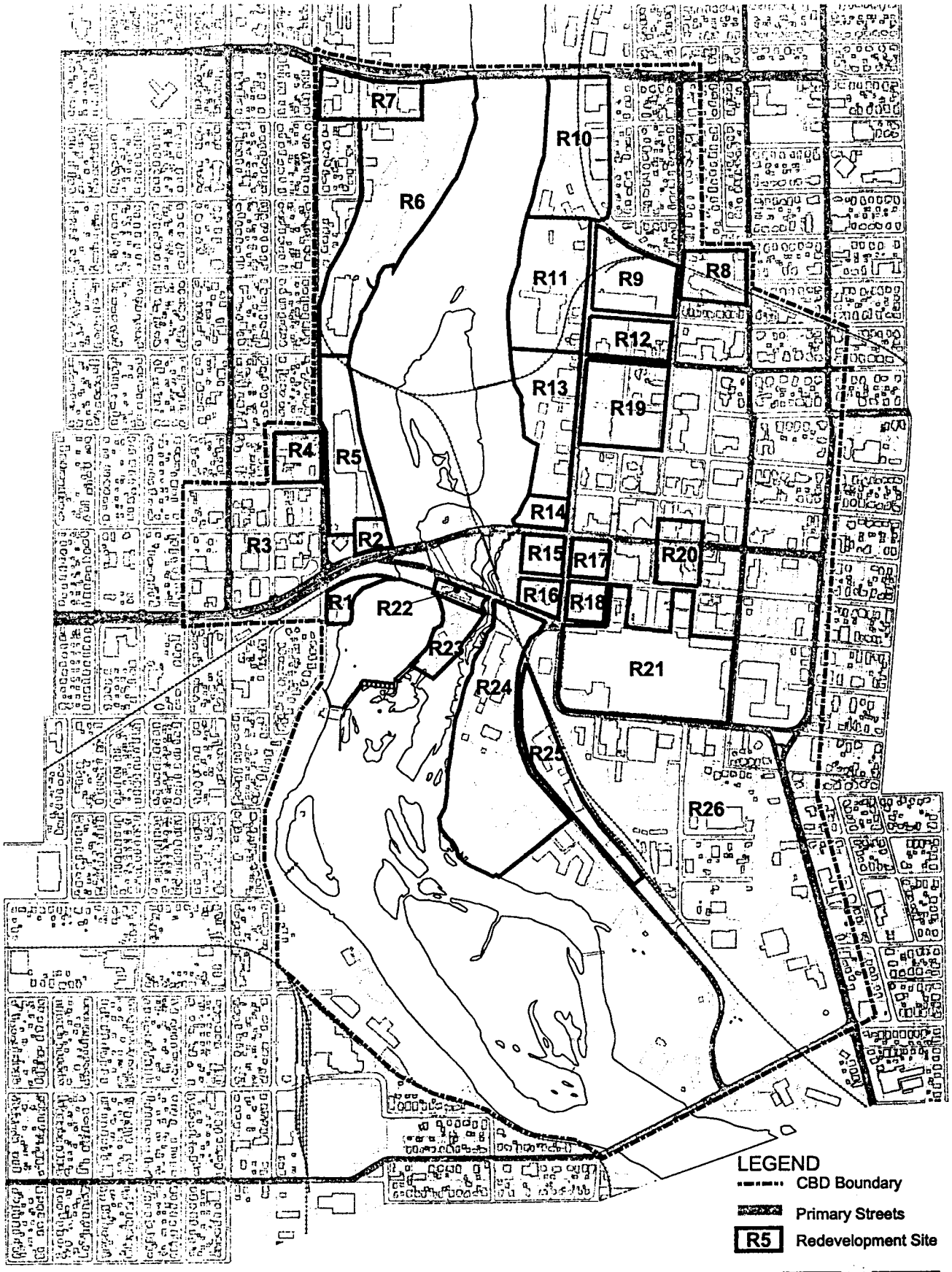
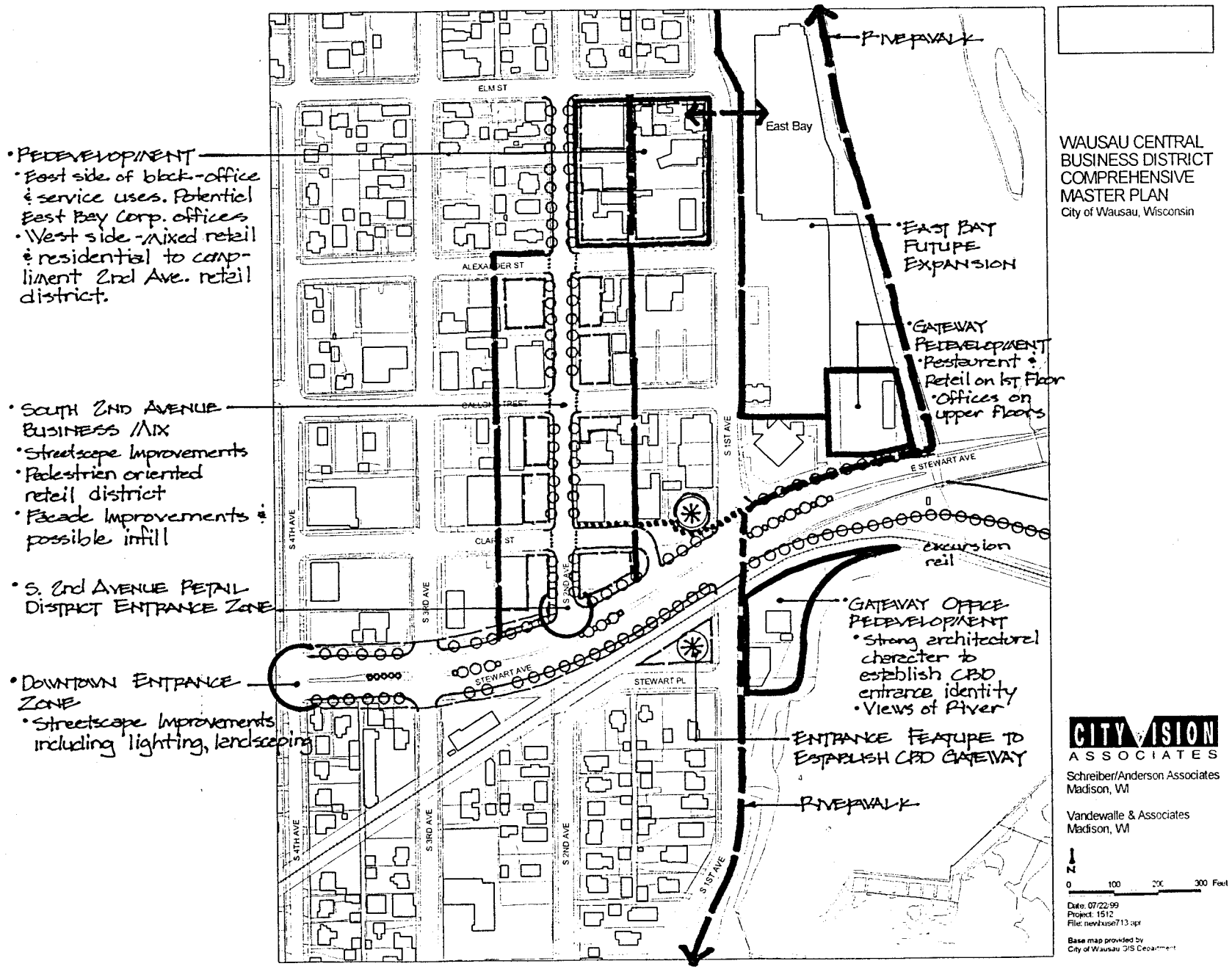


Figure 12: Redevelopment Recommendations

Base map provided by:
City of Wausau GIS Department



WAUSAU CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN
City of Wausau, Wisconsin

CITY VISION ASSOCIATES

Schreiber/Anderson Associates
Madison, WI

Vandewalle & Associates
Madison, WI

N

0 100 200 300 Feet

Date: 07/22/99
Project: 1512
File: newbase713.apr

Base map provided by City of Wausau GIS Department

Figure 13: West Side Entry District

good real estate location, we believe the market would allow for a mixed-use building and the creation of a true waterfront restaurant.

R3 Business mix and streetscape improvements should be made here to establish 2nd Avenue as a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood retail district with improved connections to the riverfront. Historic preservation, and streetscape improvements along the Stewart Avenue frontage will enhance the CBD entrance character.

R4 The eastern half of the Golden Guernsey site should be redeveloped for office and service uses. The western half of the site should be redeveloped for mixed retail, office and residential uses to compliment the 2nd Avenue Retail District.

On the Golden Guernsey site, the historic office building should be evaluated for designation as a local historic landmark. A strong effort should be made to preserve this structure for mixed uses if it is found to be locally significant.

R5 Future expansion of East Bay including a potential multi-story corporate office development with enclosed parking and riverfront improvements for public and private use.

West River Residential District

This redevelopment district has good exposure and traffic access to Bridge Street. This area will require review of environmental and geotechnical conditions prior to detailed master planning. Property assemblage and completion of one industrial relocation will be necessary. The waterfront district should be tied to the existing neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the west. Access to this redevelopment district will need to be configured off of Bridge Street. Because 1st Avenue is a one-way northbound street, it is imperative that a riverfront project entrance be created between North 1st and the River. The roadway frontage on Bridge Street should be planned as neighborhood commercial. The master plan for this neighborhood commercial area should create a "front door" for the riverfront housing.

R6 Redevelopment of riverfront lands for medium to high density, moderately priced multi-family housing. Pedestrian access to the riverfront from the west side neighborhood along Maple Street and/or Cedar Street should be established.

R7 The neighborhood retail and service uses established in this area should help to support the west side neighborhood and new riverfront housing development.

East River Employment District

This district has been identified as the East River Employment District. However, as we move forward to implement the concept of a high-tech zone, we may want to create a new marketing name specific to this district as part of the marketing strategy. The majority of this district has historically been manufacturing and distribution. The main freight rail line of the Wisconsin Central Railroad LTD goes through this district along the riverfront. Therefore, the district is not ideally suited for riverfront housing. In addition, the majority of this land was used in the past by heavy industry. It is probable that environmental conditions along the riverfront will suggest non-residential usage in the future. This district provides the opportunity to position downtown Wausau into marketing for high-tech business development. The opportunity offered by a combination of river frontage with great office views, and industrial lands that could be used by companies for research and development facilities is a market that should be explored. Many high-tech companies will not go into suburban industrial parks. There are examples of other communities recruiting these uses to downtown areas where amenities for highly–trained employees coming from urban college campus settings are attractive.

Two of the specifically identified redevelopment sites—the former Murray Machinery and former Marathon Millworks properties—fall within this district. The highest and best use for this district would be to provide a business center aimed at creating jobs for the downtown residential neighborhoods. This district could be marketed in combination with office spaces and high-tech businesses with riverfront views. To successfully market this district, better entry access from Bridge Street may be necessary. The most logical access is 3rd Street, which should be revitalized by streetscape improvements and rehabilitation of existing buildings. This mixed-use office, research and industrial center is an opportunity that should be further explored. **Figure 14** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for this district.

R8 Rehabilitation of the former Marathon Millwork property for mixed use office, research and light industrial uses that can co-exist with the adjoining residential neighborhood. Architectural character improvements should be made to the part of the building frontage along 3rd Street.

R9 Rehabilitation of the former Murray Machinery property for a mixed use office, research and industrial center or a potential incubator business center. Potential rail access. Infill development along 3rd Street for corporate offices connected to new business uses.

R10 Redevelopment of the rail corridor for high-tech business or light industrial uses. Shared public and private use of the riverfront.

Because the rail does exist, there may be an opportunity to reuse existing buildings for light manufacturing, storage, and distribution for science product development. It is unlikely, however, that this district will find the rail advantageous to recruiting new businesses. This district strategy is to use the existing buildings as incubators for new startup science businesses that would ultimately become tenants in Class A office buildings oriented to the riverfront.

R11 Redevelopment of former industrial riverfront lands for high-tech businesses with riverfront views. Shared public use of the riverfront.

The goal is create a minimum of 1,000 new jobs. The residential structures within this area should be analyzed for their condition and impact on more comprehensive redevelopment. It is possible that good quality residential structures can be integrated as a mixed-use component or to move residential structures to an appropriate location. This should be addressed during the implementation phase.

R12 This site should be redeveloped for business and employment uses that compliment the East River Business District with potential retail frontage along 3rd Street.

East River Residential District

The view of Rib Mountain across the river to the west could provide a unique downtown, "high-end" living opportunity. Riverfront housing could be incorporated into a mixed-use setting with retail and commercial development at the intersection of Scott and North 1st Street, and along the frontage of North 1st Street, where several businesses currently exist. In development of this area, consideration should be given to extending the name "River Drive" to replace the North 1st Street address. A "River Drive" address would have power in marketing a mixed-use riverfront project. Riverboat docking should also be explored as an enhancement to the marketing of this district. **Figure 15** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for this district. **Figure 16** provides a "birds-eye" view of how redevelopment of the district could look.

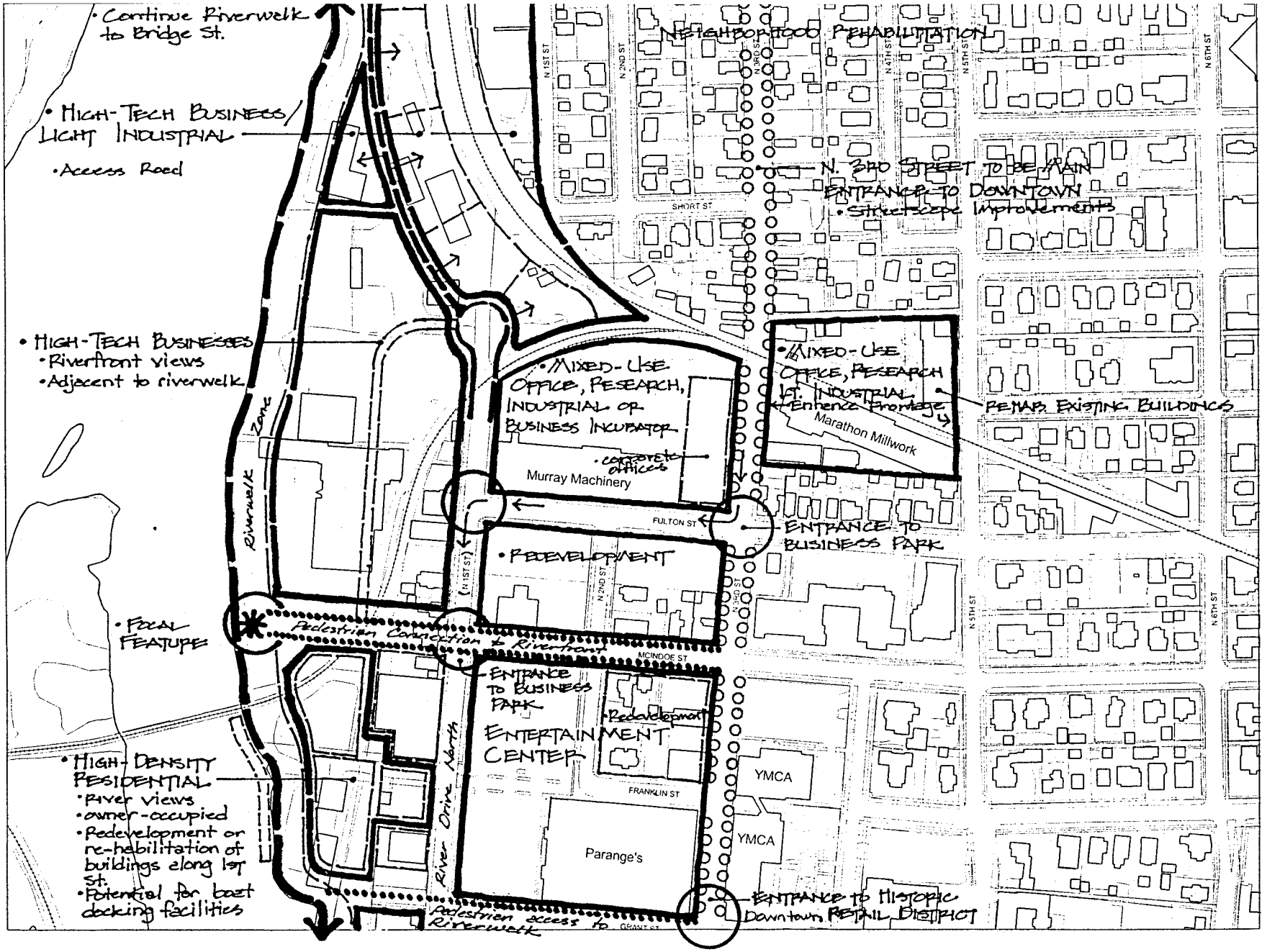


Figure 14: East River Employment District

WAUSAU CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN
City of Wausau, Wisconsin

CITY VISION ASSOCIATES

Schreiber/Anderson Associates
Madison, WI

Vandewalle & Associates
Madison, WI

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Date: 07/22/99
Project: 1512
File: newbuse713.apr

Base map provided by:
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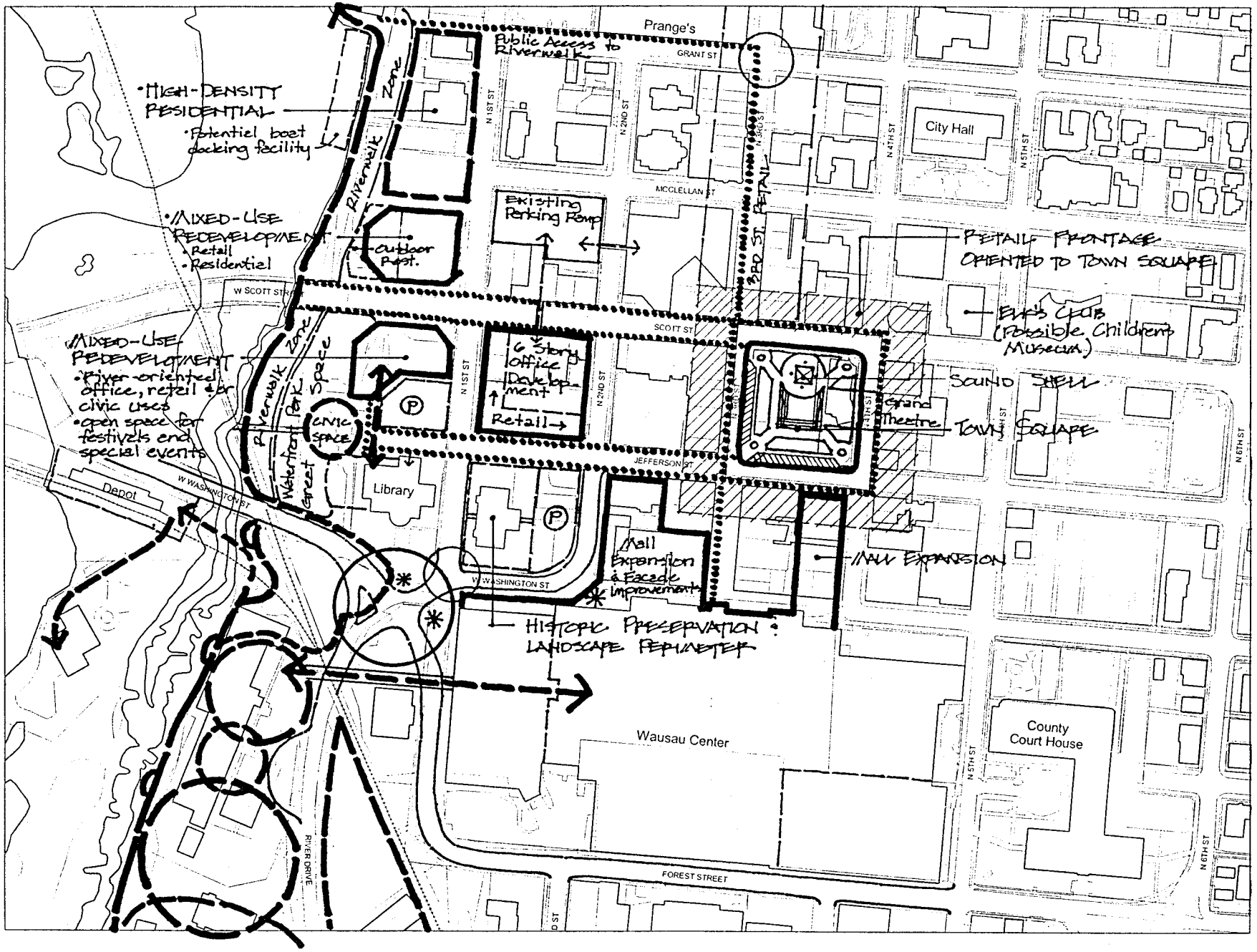

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Date: 07/22/99
Project: 1512
File: newbase713.apr

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Figure 15: Downtown Residential and Business District

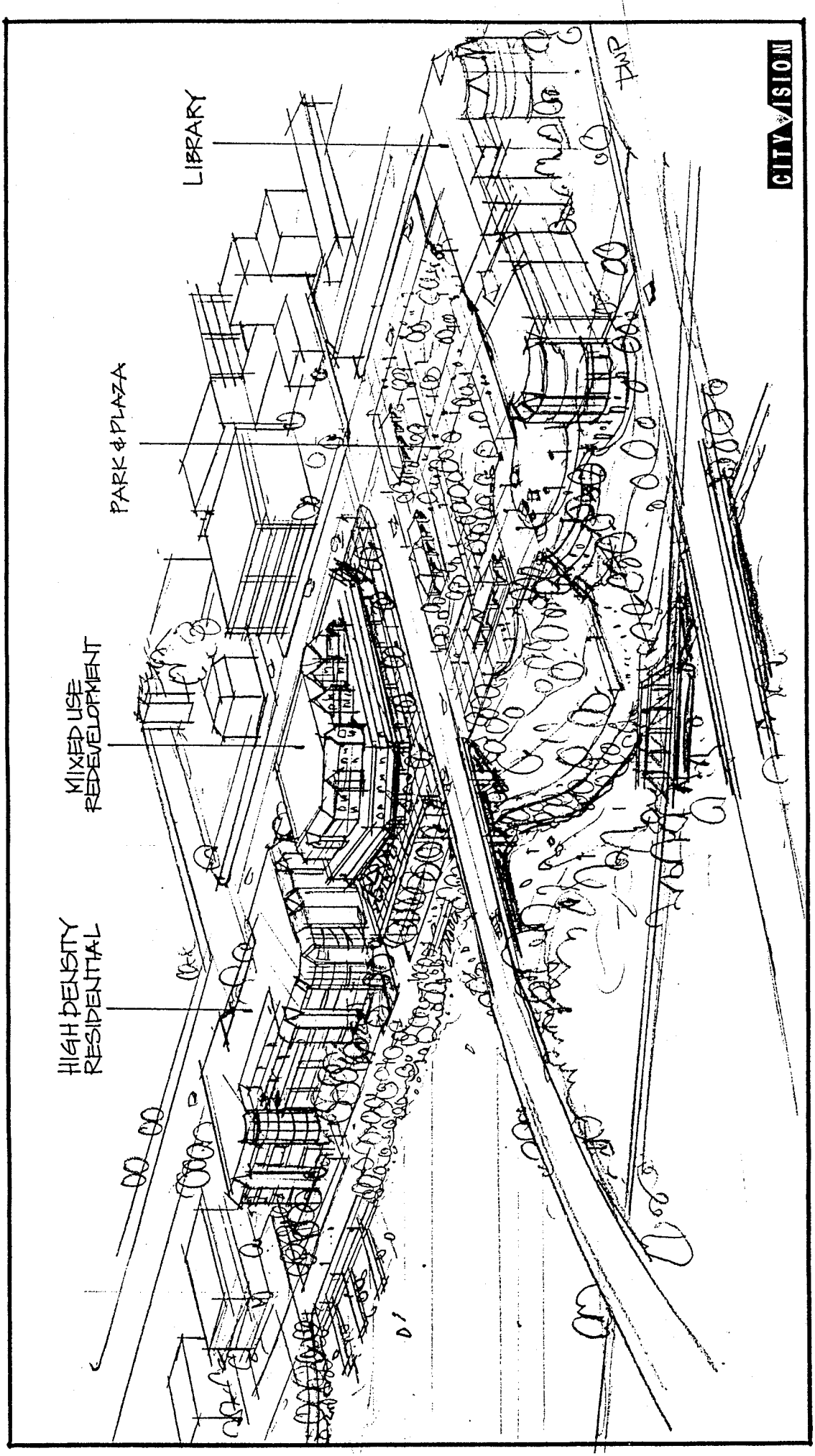


Figure 16: Aerial Perspective: East River Residential District

R13 Redevelopment for high-density condominiums or owner-occupied housing with riverfront views. Redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of the existing building frontage along 1st Street for service and retail uses to support the new riverfront residential and business development. Shared public and private use of the riverfront with potential boating facilities to serve new residential development. Existing health care services could remain in this area.

R14 Three-story, mixed-use redevelopment for upper floor residential, ground floor retail uses on 1st Street, and a lower floor restaurant along the riverfront. Shared public and private use of the riverfront, with the reservation of riverfront open space to serve as ancillary space for community festivals and special events.

Riverfront "Super Block" District

This district is made up of the area bounded by Scott Street on the north, Washington Street on the south, and 2nd Street on the East. It includes the Public Library, the Federal Building, and the Jefferson Street Public Parking Ramp. The "Super Block" district should be pedestrian-and riverfront-oriented. Automobile traffic would still cross this district, but pedestrians would have the right-of-way. The Jefferson Street ramp should be enlarged when reconstructed and made part of a larger redevelopment site that extends north to Scott Street. The "Super Block" presents the best opportunity for expanding the downtown office workforce, because of its proximity to parking and its potential for river views and long views to the west. The riverfront site north of the Library should be kept in architectural scale with the River, and its ultimate use should be riverfront-oriented. **Figure 15** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for this district. **Figure 17** provides a "birds-eye" view of how redevelopment of this district could look.

R15 Mixed use redevelopment for river-oriented office, retail and/or civic uses. Civic uses could include a youth/senior center, community center, and/or meeting rooms with potential connection to the library. Maximum 2½ stories from riverfront grade to allow river views from the adjoining office site east of 1st Street. Allowance for surface parking and drop off to serve the library and a public promenade from Jefferson Street to the river. Reservation of open space on the western portion to serve community festivals and special events.

R16 Potential westerly expansion of library including an upper-floor outdoor reading deck and a landscaped courtyard facing the river. Enclosure and screening of loading areas.

R17 Development of river-oriented, mid-rise Class A office building with ground floor retail uses on Jefferson Street and 1st Street and high density structured parking. New parking structure to be sized to provide parking support for adjoining and civic uses. An enclosed skywalk to the McClellan Street parking ramp should be evaluated. This skywalk in combination with the existing skywalk to the M&I Bank Building will link two major parking ramps and two major office/employment centers.

R18 Historic preservation and reuse of the former Federal Building should be open to incorporate mixed-use retail, restaurant and office. Open space and landscape improvements on the west side of the site to compliment the library and enhance the entrance to the CBD. From a long-term perspective, the east side of the Federal Building block should be considered for commercial redevelopment that compliments the character of the Federal Building. The current parking lot should be paved and landscaped as a temporary use prior to development. The need for this lot will diminish when the parking structure to the north is expanded. The turning radius at the northwest corner of Washington Street and 2nd Street should be increased slightly to provide for smoother traffic flow, but discourage high-speed traffic.

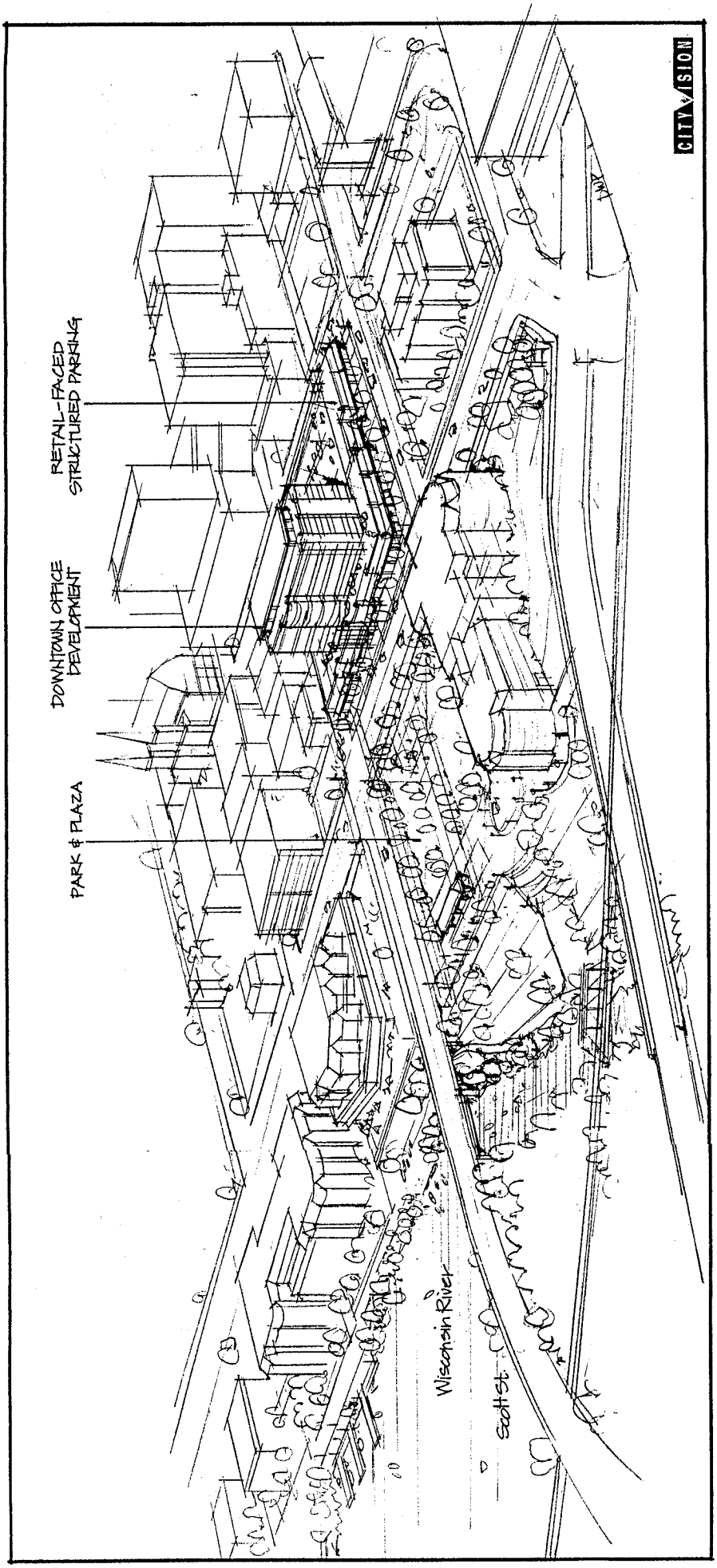


Figure 17: Aerial Perspective: Riverfront "Super Block" District

Downtown Retail Business District

The Downtown Retail Business District encompasses Washington Street to the south, 1st Street to the west, 4th Street to the east and Grant Street to the north. The repositioning of the downtown area with new housing, new jobs and new visitor destinations is needed to enhance the market potential of the existing retail business district. **Figure 15** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for this district.

R19 Redevelopment of the former Prange's block for commercial uses focused on entertainment **Figure 14**.

Past efforts to find a retail anchor for the former Prange's site to draw people from the mall to the North end of 3rd Street have not been successful. It is not an ideal retail location from an access and visibility point of view. Entertainment districts anchored by movie theatres have been successful anchors to retail development. The Prange's site has the site area and parking availability to accommodate entertainment use. In the implementation strategy, we will be recommending that you target marketing efforts to national developers of entertainment concepts. This should include discussions of recruiting an IMAX theatre as an anchor.

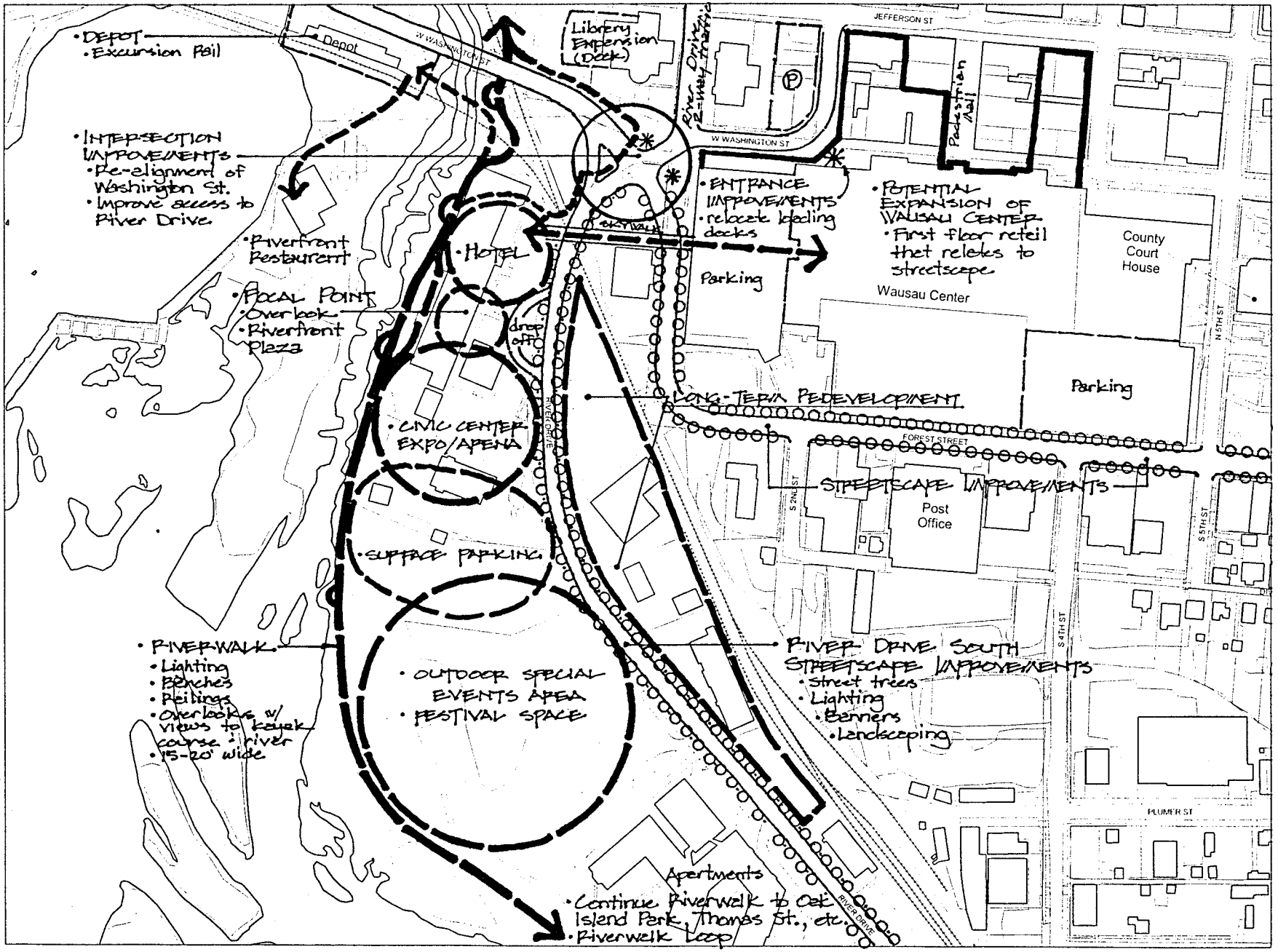
R20 The City Center Block between Scott Street and Jefferson Street should be developed as a civic square and public open space programmed for special events and uses that will enhance retail and cultural arts activities in the downtown. Expanded on-street parking around the square to serve the retail district and the Arts Block. Development of a sound shell with a comfort station and concessions area to support outdoor music events and public use of the square. Rehabilitated, historically designed retail storefronts on Scott Street and Jefferson Street to face the new civic square.

R21 Future expansion to the Wausau Center could include the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the 2nd Street and 4th Street frontages with internal walkways connected to the mall. It is also desirable to develop a new retail frontage and aesthetic improvements for the mall along Washington Street to create a more attractive focal point and entrance to the Central Business District. Loading areas in this location should be enclosed or relocated.

Riverfront Civic Center District

This is potentially the strongest redevelopment district in the downtown area. The river frontage of this district has been developed as the City's whitewater kayak course. It is the most unique riverfront setting that we have seen in Wisconsin. The ability to assemble a large parcel suggests it could be an opportunity for a civic and convention center. Floodplain and environmental conditions will have to be designed around. This district has excellent traffic access and visibility at the intersection of Washington Street and River Drive. One of the significant advantages of developing this site is that it could easily be skywalk-connected to the Wausau Center. Connecting to the enclosed mall and its available surplus parking could greatly enhance the mall's excitement and destination value. With proper development of this district, the mall could be directly linked to the riverfront and the visitor-destination potential of the River. Riverfront lodging combined with riverfront civic space could be a significant anchor to the mall and downtown. **Figure 18** illustrates general redevelopment recommendations for this district. **Figure 19** provides a "birds-eye" view of how redevelopment of this district could look.

R22 Historic preservation and reuse of the former railroad depot as a short-term excursion rail depot and a long-term commuter rail depot connected to adjoining retail, hospitality and civic areas should be further evaluated.



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City of Wausau, Wisconsin

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Figure 18: Riverfront Civic Center District

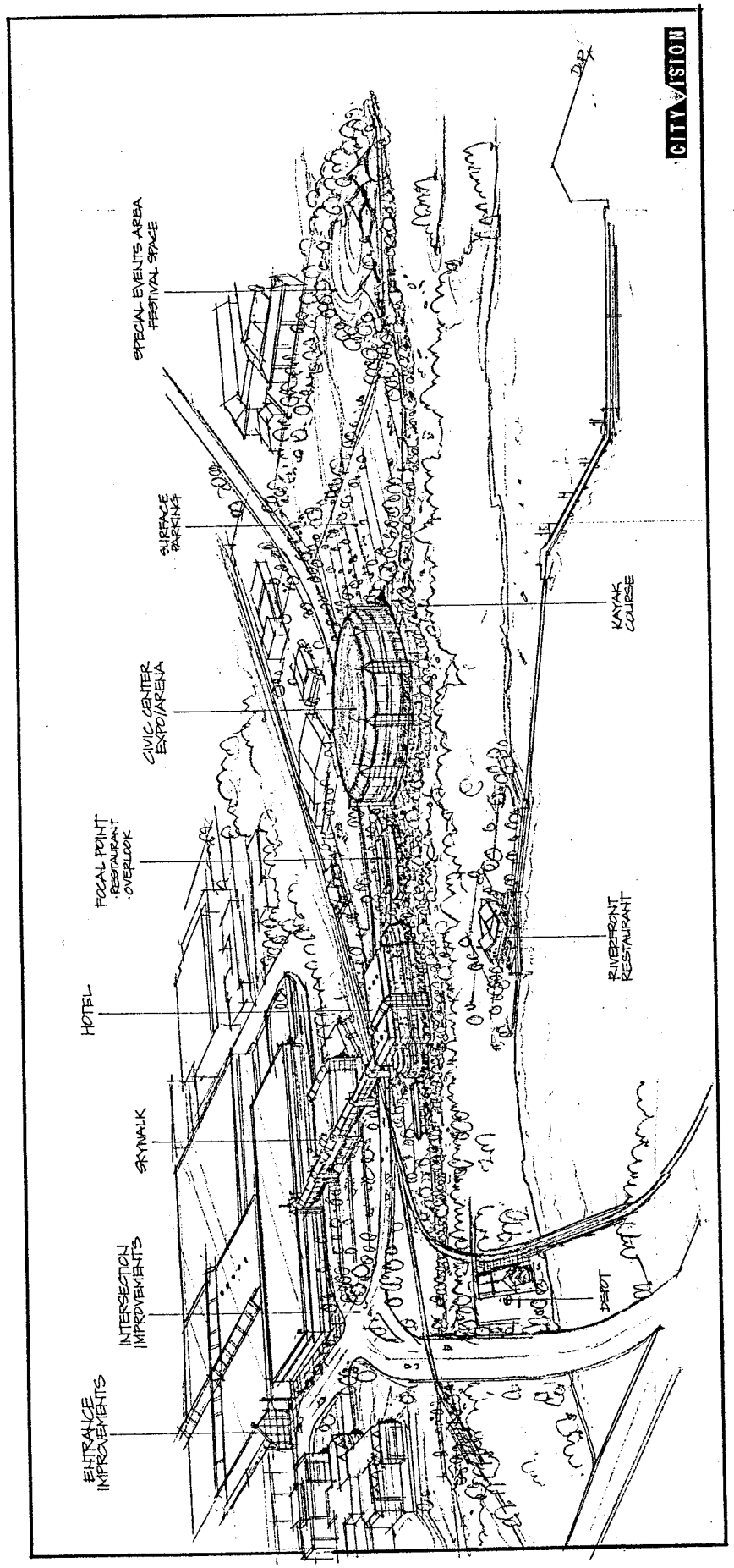


Figure 19: Aerial Perspective: Civic Center District

R23 Reuse of an historic mill for a riverfront restaurant or corporate office use.

R24 Redevelopment of Wausau's premier river frontage for riverfront lodging and riverfront civic center. Potential for support retail and entertainment uses related to civic center and riverfront activities. Potential development of surface parking and a large outdoor special events area to the south connected to serve civic center and riverfront activities. Potential skywalk connection between the Wausau Center and a riverfront hotel to link the mall with the riverfront and connect the hotel/civic center with structured parking.

R25 Long-term redevelopment of existing industrial uses for the tourist and visitor uses that support the destination value of this new riverfront area. This could include such uses as a logging museum, dairy museum, children's museum, and other visitor attractions.

Mixed Use Redevelopment

This district represents the area south of the Wausau Center which includes a mix of commercial and residential land uses. Long term redevelopment of this area should include uses that strengthen and enhance the downtown residential and business mix.

R26 Long-term redevelopment of the area south of the Wausau Center should include a mix of commercial and residential uses designed to create a pedestrian friendly environment. Commercial uses should be the focus of redevelopment for lands adjoining Forest Street and Grand Avenue. Housing could be developed along the high bank to take advantage of the views. Uses visible from South River Drive should be designed to compliment the Civic Center District and the parkway along the Wisconsin River.

B. TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS (T) – Figure 20

The following recommendations identify transportation improvements for downtown Wausau including automobile, transit, rail, pedestrian and bicycle circulation. Important considerations for transportation improvements include improving access to the downtown for all travel modes, strengthening the downtown as a community and regional destination, and providing wayfinding improvements to direct residents and visitors to downtown destinations.

Street and Intersection Improvements

T1 Designate and sign Stewart Avenue/STH 52 as the primary visitor entrance to the Wausau CBD. Provide a sign for the Wausau CBD on Interstate 39 near the Stewart Avenue interchange.

T2 Designate, sign and improve the primary arterials that lead to and move traffic around the CBD. This system includes 5th Street and 6th Street (one-way pair), Bridge Street and Thomas Street, Washington Street and Forest Avenue (one-way) and 1st Avenue and 3rd Avenue (one-way pair).

T3 Sign and improve 3rd Street, 1st Avenue, McIndoe Street, Scott Street (one-way) and Washington Street as key entrance corridors to the downtown from the primary arterial street system.

T4 Convert McIndoe Street, 1st Street, 2nd Street (north of Jefferson Street) and 3rd Street (Scott Street to Jefferson Street) to two-way traffic flow. Further evaluate the potential to convert 2nd Street between Washington and Jefferson and Washington between 1st and 2nd to two-way traffic based on the engineering design for the Washington/River Drive/1st Street intersection. Improve the turning radius at 2nd Street and Washington Street.

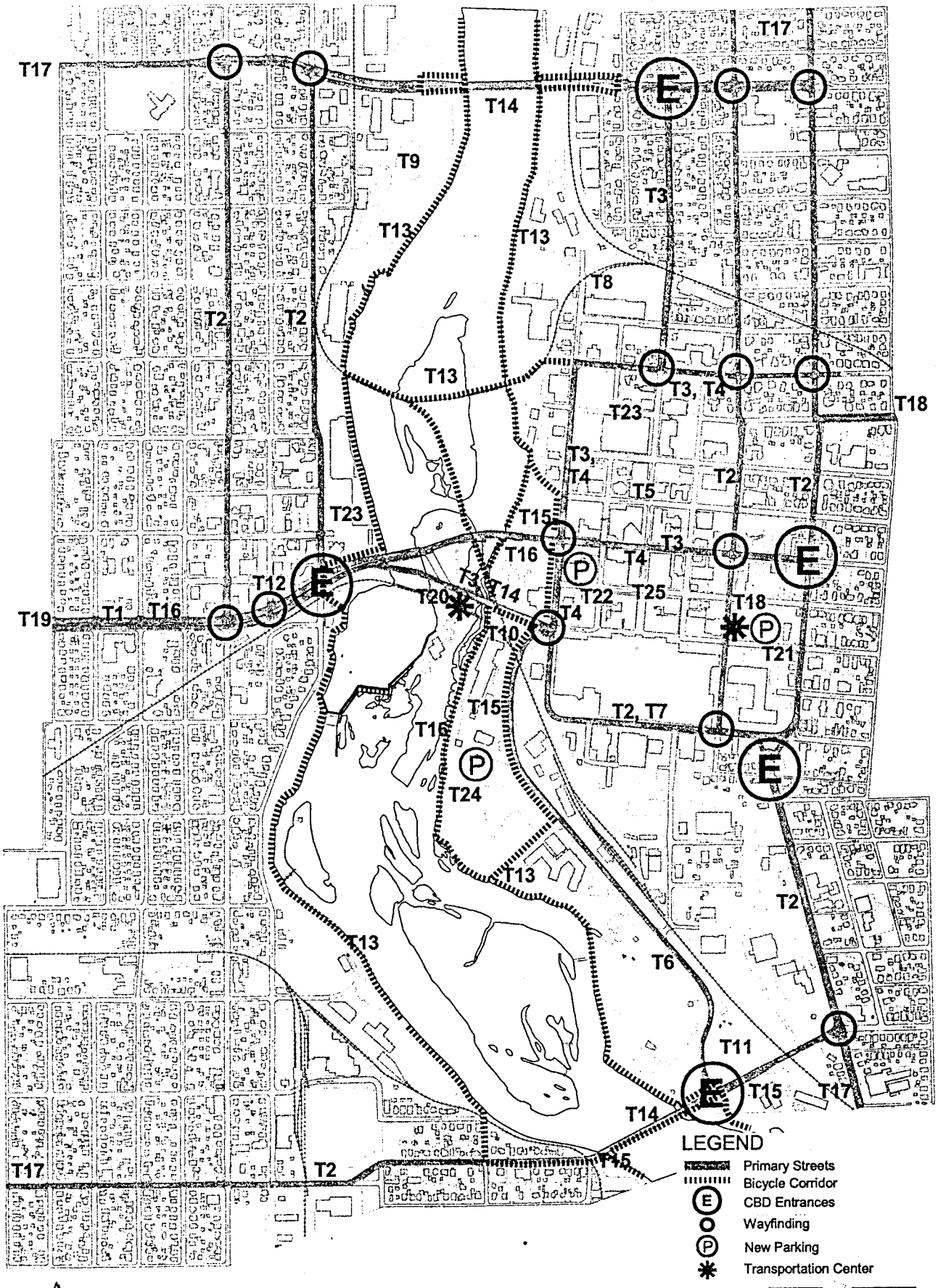


Figure 20: Transportation Recommendations

Base map provided by:
City of Wausau GIS Department

T5 Evaluate the conversion of 3rd Street between Scott Street and Grant Street to two-way traffic flow at the time that the street is ready for reconstruction.

T6 Sign and improve River Drive south as a key entrance corridor to the riverfront redevelopment area between Washington Street and Thomas Street.

T7 Improve traffic flow on Forest Street to provide safe access and exiting for the Wausau Center parking ramps, safe merging for the 5th Street/6th Street/Grand Avenue arterial corridors and future access to redevelopment areas south of the Wausau Center.

T8 Improve 1st Street north of McIndoe Street as a new riverfront drive to serve the East River Employment District. Rename 1st Street as River Drive (north) to promote its new role as a primary riverfront access corridor.

T9 Coordinate new public street access to the West Side Riverfront Residential District with development plans for the area.

T10 Reconstruct the Washington Street/Forest Street/1st Street/River Drive intersection to facilitate a more attractive and efficient entrance to the downtown and riverfront. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

T11 Improve the intersection at Thomas Street and River Drive (south) as a key entrance to the riverfront redevelopment area between Thomas Street and Washington Street. Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

T12 Improve the intersection at 2nd Avenue and Stewart Avenue as an entrance to the 2nd Street neighborhood retail district.

Bicycle Facilities

T13 Develop a riverfront bicycle transportation system in conjunction with riverfront parkway improvements recommended in the River Edge Master Plan. Identify on-street bicycle corridors to connect CBD residential, retail and business uses with this primary north/south bicycle system.

T14 Provide for on-street bicycle accommodations at all CBD bridge crossings (Bridge Street, Washington Street, Thomas Street) to provide connecting links for the riverfront bicycle loop system. Provide safe crossings at arterial streets for a riverfront bicycle system.

T15 Provide separate bicycle lanes in the areas of high pedestrian use such as the riverfront zone along the kayak course.

T16 Provide an on-street bicycle lane along Stewart Avenue to connect the Wausau CBD with UW-Marathon County and the Marathon County Park and Fairgrounds. This system could be extended to connect with community destinations on the west side of Wausau.

T17 Prepare a community wide bicycle/pedestrian facilities plan to identify on-street and off-street bicycle connections to the Wausau CBD.

Transit Improvements

T18 Provide a new inter-city and intra-city downtown transit terminal on the site of the existing transit center.

T19 Evaluate the potential to develop a rubber-tired trolley loop system along Stewart Avenue to connect public and private destinations on the west side of Wausau with CBD destinations including:

- Westside Business District
- UW-Marathon County
- Marathon County Park and Fairgrounds
- Wausau Insurance
- Wausau Community Hospital

Excursion Rail and Commuter Rail

T20 Evaluate the potential to redevelop the historic depot on Washington Street for a short-term excursion rail and long-term commuter rail depot to serve the Wausau CBD. Provide walkways to connect the depot with major CBD destinations including long-term parking facilities.

Parking

T21 Provide future structured parking to serve the 3rd Street retail district, Arts Block, Wausau Center and commercial and civic uses on the east side of the downtown.

T22 Provide structured parking as part of a new office building development on the site of the existing Jefferson Street parking ramp. This new ramp will serve the 3rd Street retail district, riverfront uses and commercial and civic uses on the east side of the downtown. Design of the new ramp should include retail frontage along Jefferson Street and 1st Street.

T23 Explore the potential for shared use of existing surface parking lots to serve adjoining commercial uses.

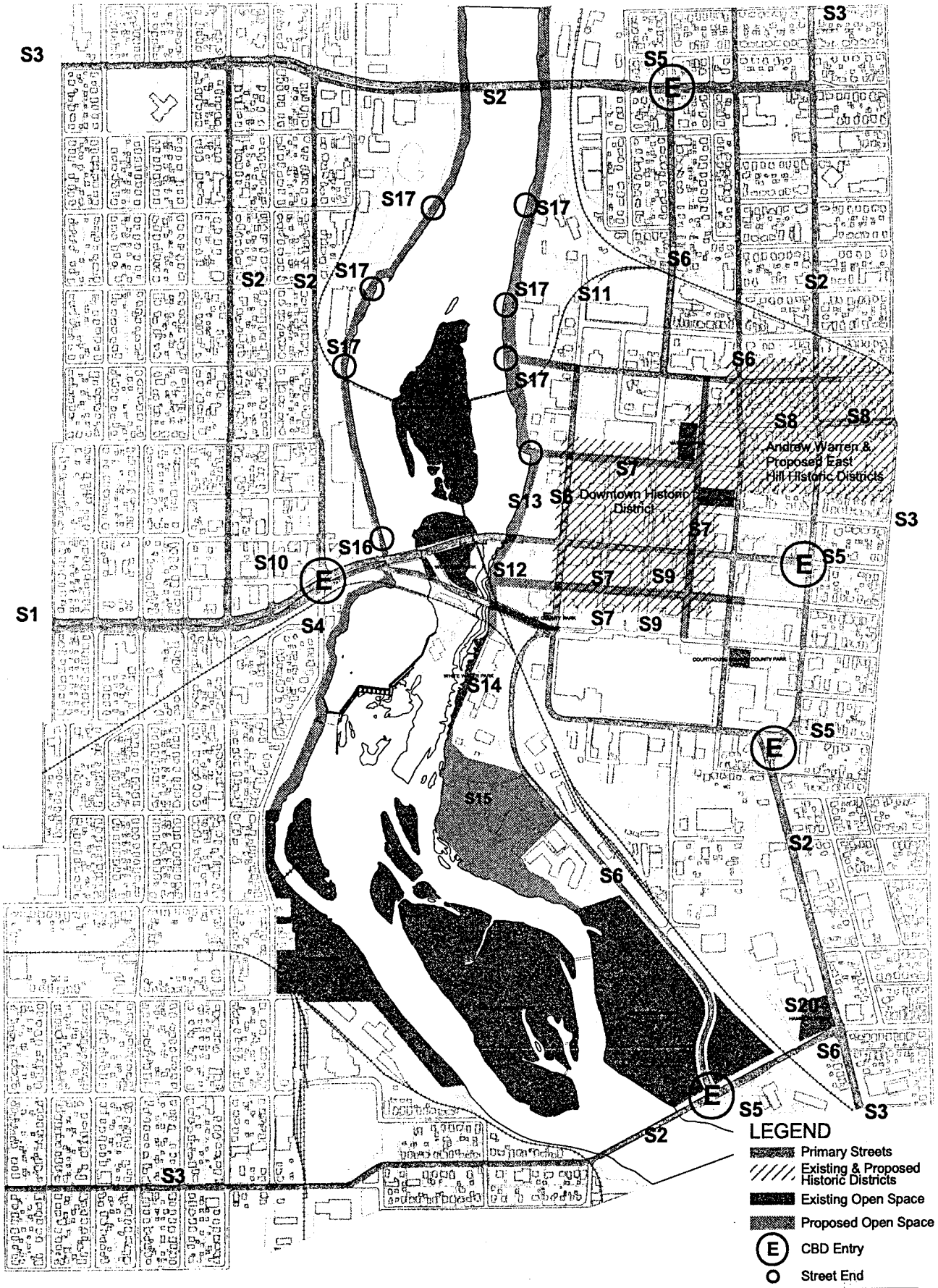
T24 New parking site to support proposed civic center and festival grounds uses.

T25 Provide additional diagonal on-street parking on 3rd Street and Jefferson Street by setting the curbline back around the Civic Square.

C. STREETSCAPE AND URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS (S) – Figure 21

The following recommendations identify comprehensive streetscape improvements for downtown Wausau. Important considerations for streetscape improvements include enhancing the pedestrian character of the downtown; enhancing the major entrances and approach corridors to the downtown; strengthening the connections between the downtown, riverfront and adjoining neighborhoods; and strengthening the historic character, identity and the natural beauty of the downtown and the Wisconsin River.

S1 Provide streetscape improvements on Stewart Avenue from Interstate 39 to 3rd Avenue as the primary gateway entrance to the CBD. Improvements should include ornamental roadway lighting, landscaping and trailblazer signage to the CBD.



Wausau Central Business District Master Plan

Figure 21: Streetscape and Urban Design Recommendations

S2 Provide streetscape improvements on all arterial streets serving the CBD including Thomas Street between the Wisconsin River and Grand Avenue; Grand Avenue/6th Street between Thomas Street and Bridge Street; Bridge Street between 3rd Avenue and 6th Street; and 1st Avenue/3rd Avenue between Bridge Street and Stewart Avenue. Improvements should include ornamental roadway lighting, landscaping and directional signage to CBD destinations.

S3 Provide trailblazer signage on all community arterial corridors leading to the CBD from the regional highway system.

S4 Develop a major entrance feature at the Stewart Avenue entrance to the CBD between 3rd Avenue and 1st Street. Streetscape improvements include an entrance sign, boulevard and right-of-way landscaping, ornamental roadway and pedestrian lighting, directional signage to CBD destinations, and coordinated architectural improvements for buildings bordering this important corridor.

S5 Provide additional entrance features to the CBD with entrance signs, landscaping and wayfinding at Thomas Street and River Drive south, Grand Avenue and Forest Street, Scott Street and 6th Street, and 3rd Street and Bridge Street.

S6 Provide streetscape improvements for key CBD entrance corridors including 3rd Street, McIndoe Street, 1st Street, and River Drive south. Streetscape improvements should include ornamental pedestrian lighting, landscaping and directional signage.

S7 Provide streetscape improvements on key pedestrian streets that link downtown civic destinations. Streetscape improvements should include ornamental pedestrian lighting, landscaping, furnishings, special pavements and pedestrian signage that are similar to completed improvements on 4th Street. Key pedestrian streets include:

- Jefferson Street between the river and the Transit Center
- Grant Street between the river and City Hall
- 4th Street between the Wausau Center and McIndoe Street
- Washington Street between the river and the Wausau Center.
- 3rd Street between Grant Street and McIndoe Street

Public streetscape improvements should be coordinated with architectural facade and building improvements and parking lot landscaping to enhance the pedestrian environment.

S8 Provide ornamental pedestrian lighting and historic signage for the residential streets in the Andrew Warren Historic District.

S9 Develop a civic square on the 400 block between the 3rd Street Retail District and the Arts Block. Streetscape improvements should include landscaping that complements the buildings and pedestrian scale lighting, ornamental planters at all four corners, a potential fountain display, plazas for outdoor performances and activities, a sculpture garden and plaza in front of the Grand Theatre, and landscaped terraces around the perimeter of the square to accommodate a farmer's market. A sound shell for outdoor concerts should be evaluated as a potential architectural focal point for the civic square and the downtown. A sound shell could include a comfort station, concession area, and storage space for staging events. The civic square should be designed as a pedestrian "crossroads" to facilitate pedestrian connections between the retail district, the Arts Block and other downtown land uses. The civic square should include an informational kiosk to orient visitors and residents to activities and destinations in the downtown area.

S10 Provide streetscape improvements to enhance the west side business district as a pedestrian friendly neighborhood retail district. Streetscape improvements should also link the retail district with the river.

S11 Streetscape improvements should be extended north of McIndoe Street along the new River Drive north that will serve the proposed East River Employment District. An entrance feature to this business district should be located at the intersection of McIndoe Street and River Drive north (1st Street).

S12 A major riverfront plaza and open space should be developed between Washington Street and Scott Street. This space will provide an opportunity for programmed water-related special events connected by Jefferson Street to the 3rd Street retail district, the civic square and the Arts Block. This space should be designed as a major focal point for the Central Business District.

S13 Waterfront plaza and open space north of Scott Street to serve the kayak course and new riverfront mixed use commercial and residential uses. Improvements should include docking facilities to enhance recreational boater access to the Wisconsin River.

S14 Extension of the waterfront plaza and open space south of Washington Street to connect proposed civic center and related hospitality and entertainment uses with the river. Improvements should include public plazas, seating areas and streetscape amenities to enhance public access to the kayak course.

S15 Open space improvements for outdoor special events and festivals related to civic center programming. Landscape improvements should be provided in this area to extend the natural park character from Oak Island Park to the civic center district.

S16 Development of a waterfront plaza on the west side of the river as a focal point for the west side business district and an entrance feature to the CBD.

S17 Development of expanded open space and riverfront amenities (benches, overlooks, docking etc.) along the river edge parkway to enhance recreational opportunities on the riverfront for trail users and adjoining neighborhood residents, businesses and commercial uses.

D. WAYFINDING APPROACH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Wayfinding is a method of directing people into and around the community through the use of readable and easily identifiable sign graphics. Simply put, it is "finding your way". A consideration in wayfinding is to locate signs in a logical, consistent manner along travel routes used by autos, bikes, or pedestrians.

Wayfinding signs offer a repetitive, recognizable element in the streetscape by employing a system of distinctive logos, graphics, shapes and color to communicate different messages. Wayfinding is important to the visitor because of the clear welcome, direction and convenience it provides. It also affords an opportunity to communicate the history of a place to the resident and visitor, as well as important destinations.

Wausau has a basic wayfinding system in place that directs residents or visitors to destinations in the CBD. This system should be redesigned to incorporate a logo for the CBD and additional destinations.

Sheboygan, La Crosse and Beloit are examples of cities that have wayfinding systems similar to the one described below.

The following additional signage should be provided:

Trailblazer signs lead visitors along community arterials to the CBD. These are simple signs with a CBD logo and place name.

Directional signs lead people to specific public destinations in the CBD (i.e. special districts, civic buildings, parks, parking, etc.) These signs should be placed along primary streets serving the CBD.

Entrance Features will announce the entry points into the CBD through the use of entry signs, arches, gateways, banners, flags, landscape displays, etc.

Street signs can incorporate the CBD logo and identify street names within the CBD boundaries.

Directories/Informational Kiosks should be provided at key pedestrian locations in the downtown to provide community and visitor information, orientation maps, and announce community events. Potential kiosk locations include the Civic Square, Library, Riverfront, Wausau Center, City Hall, County Courthouse, Transit Center, public parking and other important public destinations.

Interpretive signs can provide information about historic and unique features in the CBD.

Banners should be used along primary streets serving the CBD to provide identity and celebrate holidays and special events.

Parking lot signs should be placed at entrances to public parking lots and designed to include the CBD logo and place name.

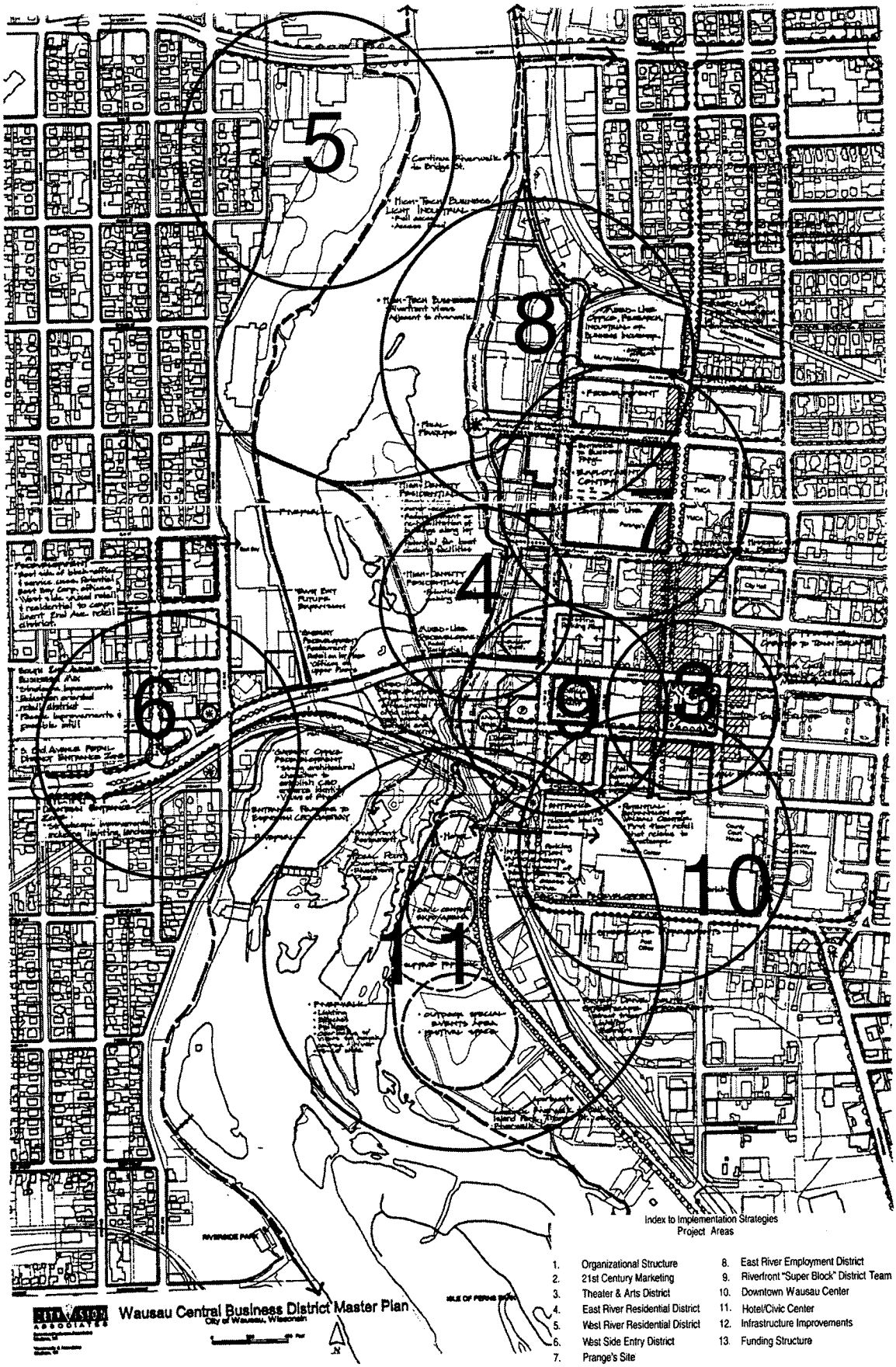
I. WAUSAU: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

The following recommendations for implementation have been broken into project areas and prioritized. These are the priority activities to be focused on during the next three-year implementation period. A separate implementation document and timeline have been created. The Project Management Team will work closely with these documents and keep the timeline up to date with modifications and changes.

It is important to understand that these priority project activities should be implemented concurrently in order to create a comprehensive pattern of economic activities. Pursuing individual projects will not, by themselves, create new market opportunities for businesses and developers in the downtown area.

It is also very important that all the participants in implementing a downtown economic restructuring plan understand that it is a dynamic process, and must be managed and guided to take advantage of new information and currently unidentified opportunities. For this reason, the 1st draft of an implementation plan is intended to provide a framework for managing project implementation as a three-year process.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Wausau Central Business District Master Plan
City of Wausau, Wisconsin
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2. 21st Century Marketing
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4. East River Residential District
5. West River Residential District
6. West Side Entry District
7. Prange's Site
8. East River Employment District
9. Riverfront "Super Block" District Team
10. Downtown Wausau Center
11. Hotel/Civic Center
12. Infrastructure Improvements
13. Funding Structure

1. Proposed Organizational Structure for Project Management

The Wausau Central Business District Master Plan provides an economic and physical blueprint that is the objective of implementation. This planning phase is referred to as "concept development." The next steps in implementation are "concept refinement and construction." Although these next steps involve some planning and design, the primary focus is shifted to business and developer negotiations, marketing, preliminary engineering, financial analysis and construction management. It is extremely important in organizing for implementation that processes of decision-making and negotiating be streamlined and simplified. It is also important that an implementation process create an effective public-private partnership or joint venture. Understanding that final decision-making on funding and public policy rest with the City Council, a Project Management Team ("PMT") should be created to manage the many details of project implementation, and advise and recommend to the Council.

The following organizational recommendations should be implemented as soon as possible to efficiently and effectively restructure the economy of the downtown:

A. A Project Management Team should be created to manage implementation of the thirteen project activities outlined in this report. The following chart is a preliminary recommendation on the make-up of the PMT and staffing of the implementation effort. It is expected that as part of implementation - and after much discussion this project chart will be modified and approved by the City Council. A smaller Executive Committee should be formed with the essence of the public/private partnership. This Executive Committee will meet more often than the PMT and keep projects and coordination flowing.

B. Finalize implementation organization structure, and seek City Council confirmation.

C. Develop an advisory committee structure for each of the implementation activity areas that involve public participation, and provide advice to the PMT. The committees will be appointed by the PMT and composition will be decided by the PMT. All committees should be kept small (approximately 6-9 members).

D. Develop a communications network between the City and State and Federal representatives and agencies, which would be part of implementation in the form of obtaining grants and approving special legislation.

E. Create a Developer Negotiating Team that is specifically responsible for developer recruitment and preliminary negotiation of developer agreements. The team will be comprised of the Mayor, city attorney and appropriate representation specific to the project.

F. Develop a working agreement or memorandum of understanding with Central Wausau Progress that has, as its primary objective, downtown revitalization. This is a conduit to private donations and working relationships with other state and national non-profit organizations interested in downtown revitalization.

G. Evaluate the feasibility of creating a Main Street organization with a primary focus on business recruitment and marketing.

Proposed Organizational Structure for Project Management

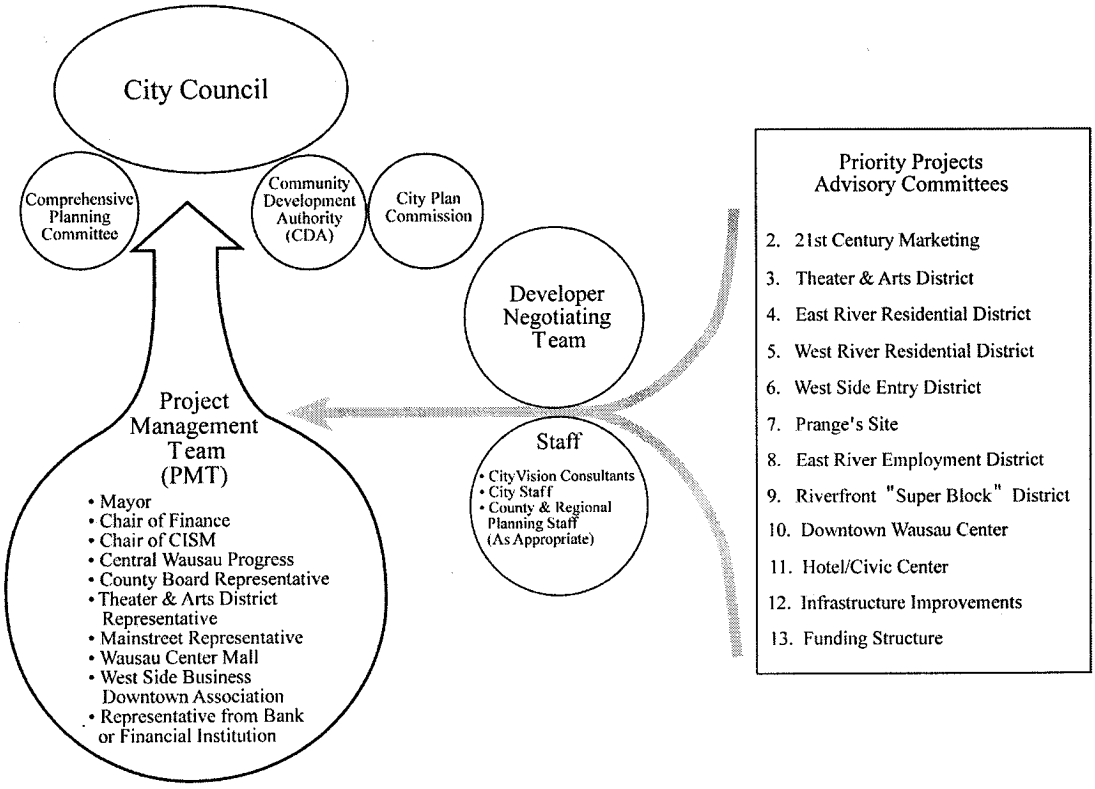


Figure 23: Proposed Organizational Structure for Project Management

2. Redefine the Marketing Image of Downtown Wausau in the Twenty-1st Century

It is extremely important that downtown Wausau defines itself as a waterfront downtown. From tourism to residential to office, the market value of locating downtown is enhanced by the notion that the "river runs through it." The waterfront redevelopment sites identified in the Master Plan should be marketed as waterfront properties. The downtown, as a whole, should also be marketed around the river, e.g., "Wausau Downtown Riverfront." Marketing "nameology" and waterfront images should be made primary parts of the marketing materials to promote downtown as a destination.

A. Develop an advisory committee to provide a new marketing theme for downtown.

B. Retain a marketing consultant to advise on the adequacy of the existing name, logos, images and themes.

C. Prepare a comprehensive downtown marketing plan, and identify potential funding sources for implementation.

D. Prepare marketing materials as recommended in the marketing plan.

E. Work cooperatively with state and local marketing groups to better network Wausau to increase visitor destinations in the downtown. A primary target of this marketing should be to inform and capture the visitors moving from the Twin Cities to the Door County/Green Bay area.

F. Reinvent a Wausau downtown community events program that is closely coordinated with the Theater and Arts Block project, with the goal of increasing the frequency and quality of public events in the downtown area.

G. Continue to explore the feasibility of developing an excursion train relationship between downtown Wausau, Madison and the "Northwoods."

H. Continue to explore the feasibility of creating cultural facilities such as a children's museum, a natural history center, river interpretive center, etc.

I. Historic preservation will be incorporated as appropriate.

J. Encourage a positive attitude and perception for the promotion of CBD.

3. Theatre and Arts District

The Theatre and Arts District is defined as the City Center Block (also referred to as the 400 Block) and the current Grant Theater site. This project is currently in final design stages, and is ready to be implemented. The City has acquired the property, demolition is underway, and the cultural community is prepared to assist in the development, programming and management of the City Center Block as a part of the Theater Block. This project can be implemented by the Summer of 2000, and could mark a groundbreaking for the new initiative for downtown Wausau. This project, properly implemented, will also generate new downtown users, who would have an immediate positive impact on the Wausau Center and 3rd Street businesses.

A. Develop an agreement between the City and the Theater Block Project to lease, develop, construct , manage and program the City Center Block.

B. Develop a three-year operating budget which identifies funding needs.

C. Funding for operation and maintenance of the City Center Block should consider requesting allocation from the Room Tax revenue collected by the City.

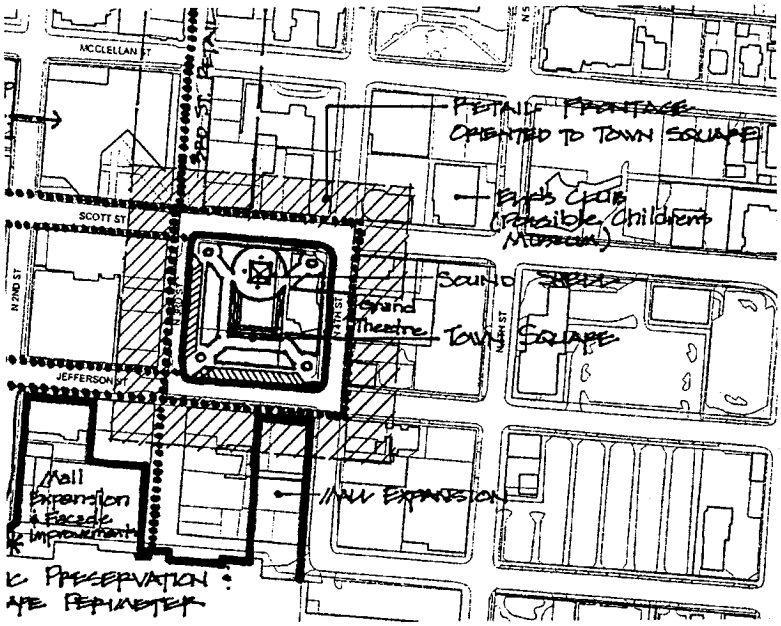
D. For Phase I public improvements to the City Center Block, consideration should be given to converting 3rd Street to two-way traffic flow, creating additional diagonal parking on 3rd Street and Jefferson Street, and making streetscape improvements on Jefferson Street.

E. Establish a donor program to seek funds and community involvement.

F. Develop a marketing strategy to program events and market locally and regionally for Summer 2000 events.

G. Coordinate arts programming on the City Center Block with the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum.

H. Develop a name for this district.



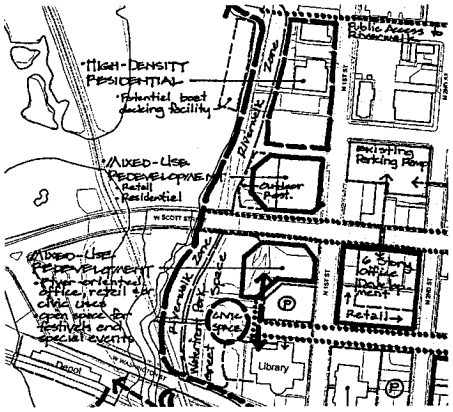
4. East River Residential District

The Master Plan identifies the lands along the River north of Scott Street as being prime for condominium or other owner-occupied attached housing. The Community Development Authority (CDA) has assembled this property, and the local development community has expressed significant interest in pursuing a mixed-use commercial/ residential project as the beginning of a larger riverfront housing project. This project would be feasible to begin in the year 2000. This project will primarily be a developer-driven project with coordination by the CDA and the developer negotiating team of the PMT.

A. Establish architectural and design standards that can be incorporated within a rezoning of the property to allow the intended use. Involve the Landmarks Commission in this activity.

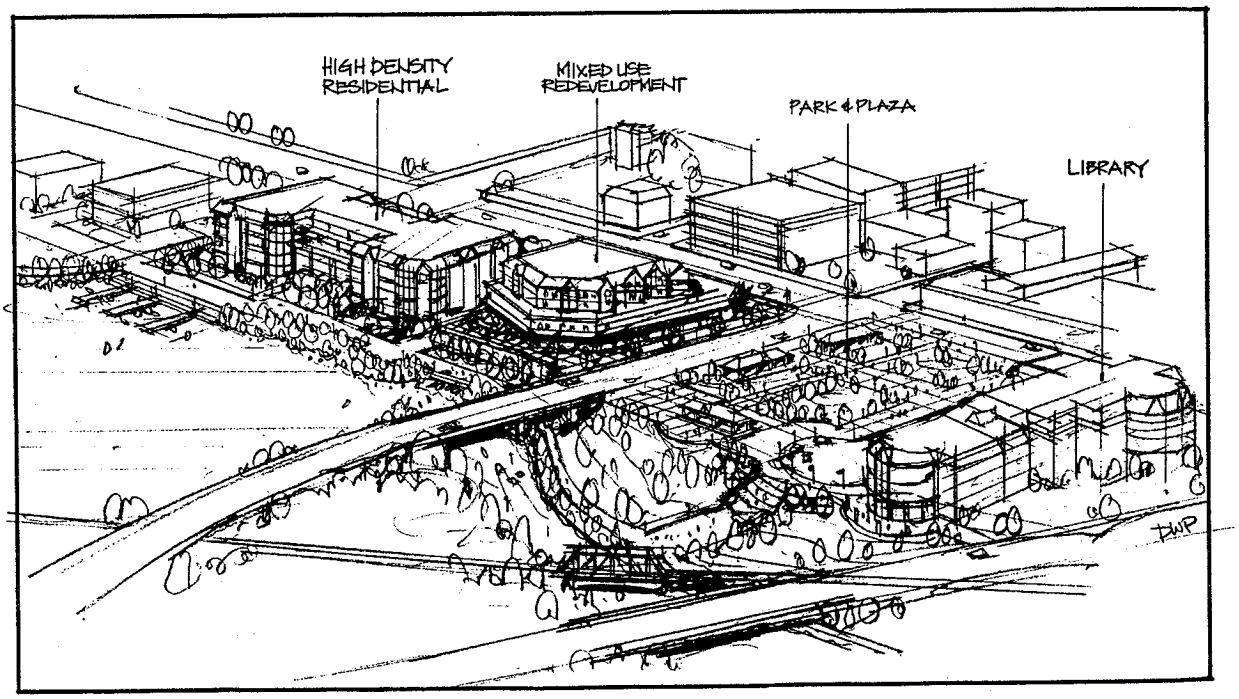
B. Recruit a developer for the City-owned property through a developer recruitment procedure or request for proposals process. This should be implemented within the next sixty days.

C. Prioritize the design refinement of the River Edge Parkway along this project, with the possibility of investigating low-impact watercraft docking. Involve the Parks Department.



D. Attempt to rename 1st Street to "North River Drive" as a part of providing a stronger "market address."

E. Evaluate the feasibility of repaying the 108 HUD loan used to assemble the property so that a more appropriate land use standard can be achieved.



5. West River Residential District

This is also a high priority project due to the fact that there is a landowner / developer in the process of proposing a neighborhood grocery store and mixed-use residential project. The current landowner has stated a willingness to develop consistent with the Master Plan. Environmental conditions appear to be satisfactory for immediate development.

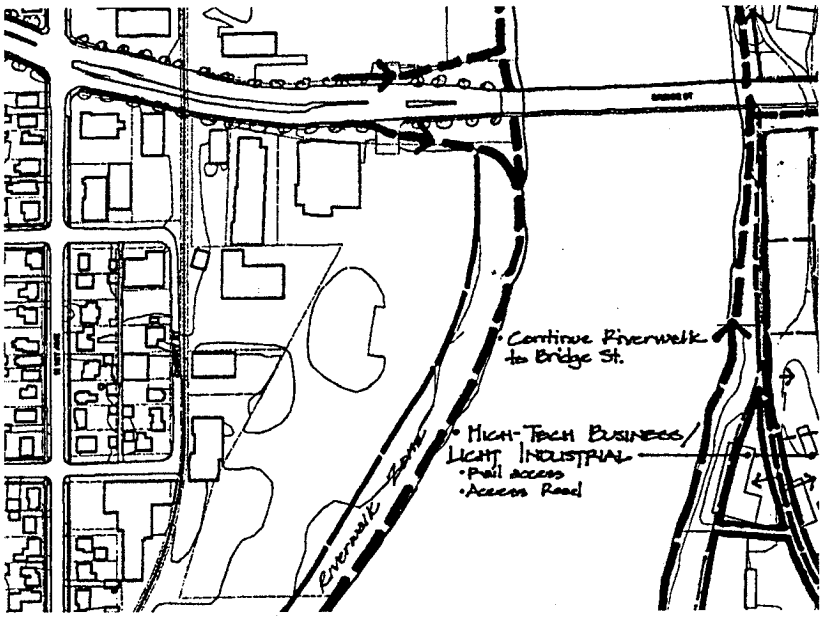
A. Work with developer on plans to assure compliance with guidelines and the Central Business District Master Plan.

B. Evaluate current traffic and street entrances off Bridge Street, and prepare a plan to make improvements necessary to accommodate this riverfront redevelopment.

C. Create a new Tax Incremental Financing District to incorporate this site, and possibly the West Side Entry District.

D. Work with the CDA to pursue the relocation of MBX Inc. and the elimination of blighted buildings in the area as part of Phase II of the West River Residential District.

E. Incorporate the River Edge Parkway into the redevelopment of this district.



6. West Side Entry District

Streetscape and circulation improvements, as well as a parking management plan, should be made to this business district. It is called the "entry district" because it is the main entry into the downtown area. Improvements should be made as a high-priority project to improve market conditions for existing businesses.

A. Set up a recruiting strategy to attract sport and outdoor recreation retail establishments to complement the anchor store, East Bay. Joint use of the East Bay parking lot should be pursued.

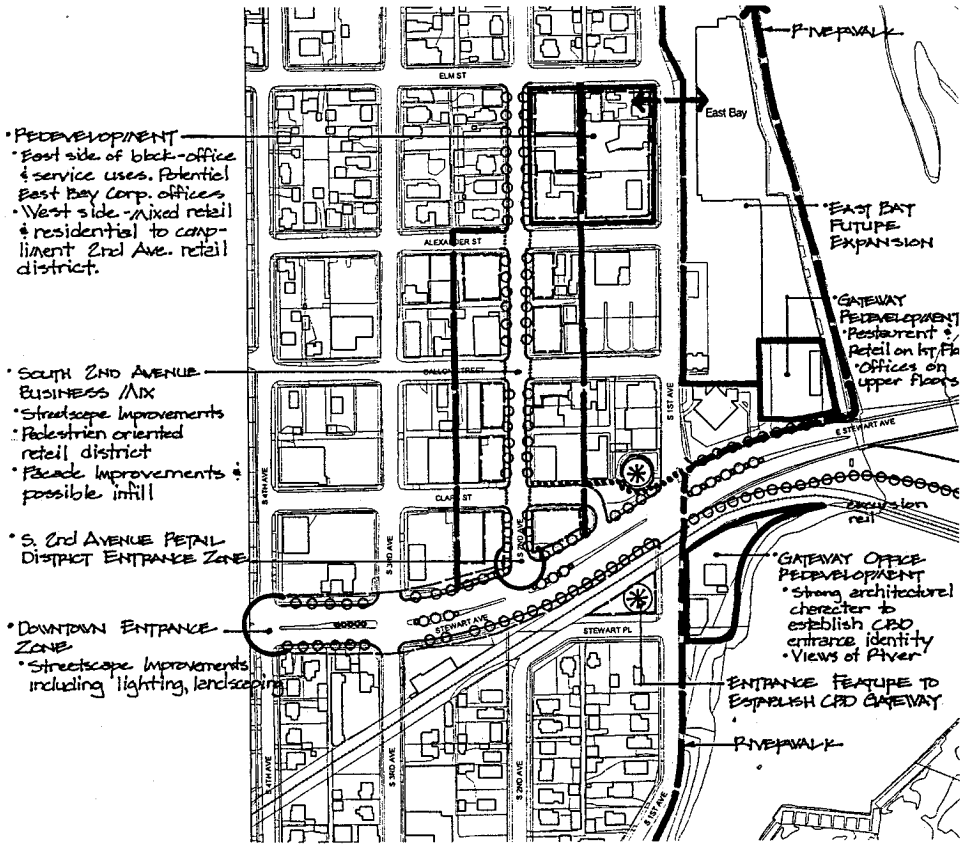
B. Conduct an architectural and financial analysis on the Golden Guernsey site for redevelopment into mixed-use, office and residential.

C. Link pedestrian travel between the East and West Side of the river. Provide walkways and evaluate rubber-tire trolley loop along Stewart to the West Side Business District.

D. Involve East Bay in planning for possible future expansions within the District.

E. Work with Water's Edge Café on building and site plan modifications that would improve orientation to the Riverfront.

F. Develop a Parking Management Plan to include assessment of signage, parking times, metering, efficiency and effectiveness.



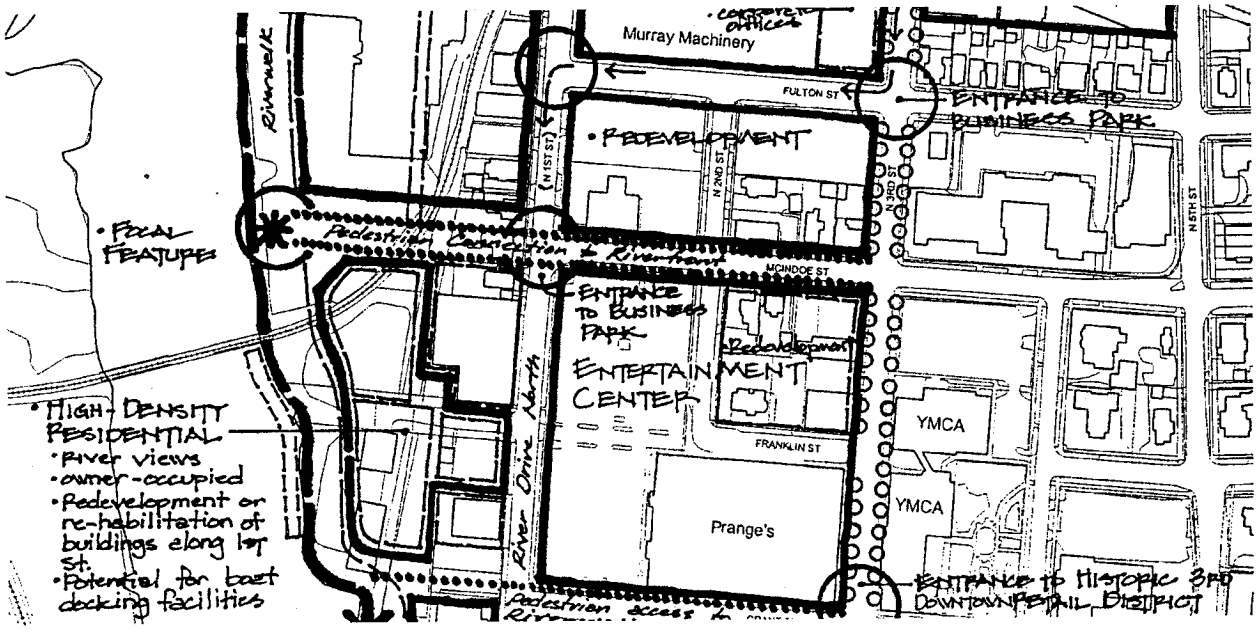
7. Prange's Site

There is still a desire to find a reuse for the former Prange's site that would strengthen the retail businesses along 3rd Street and create a downtown anchor. Over the past decade, many reuse ideas have been attempted. It is recommended that a focused marketing effort be undertaken to investigate the potential of creating a downtown entertainment district that is anchored by motion picture theaters. The national market has several new downtown development approaches to this type of project that could be feasible in Wausau.

A. Identify entertainment district development companies and expand market research on the possible fit within the former Prange's site area.

B. Work with state and local investors who are currently involved in the motion picture business.

C. This effort should be led by an advisory committee with assistance from Central Wausau Progress and other private sector development groups. This preliminary research should be conducted as soon as possible during this winter.



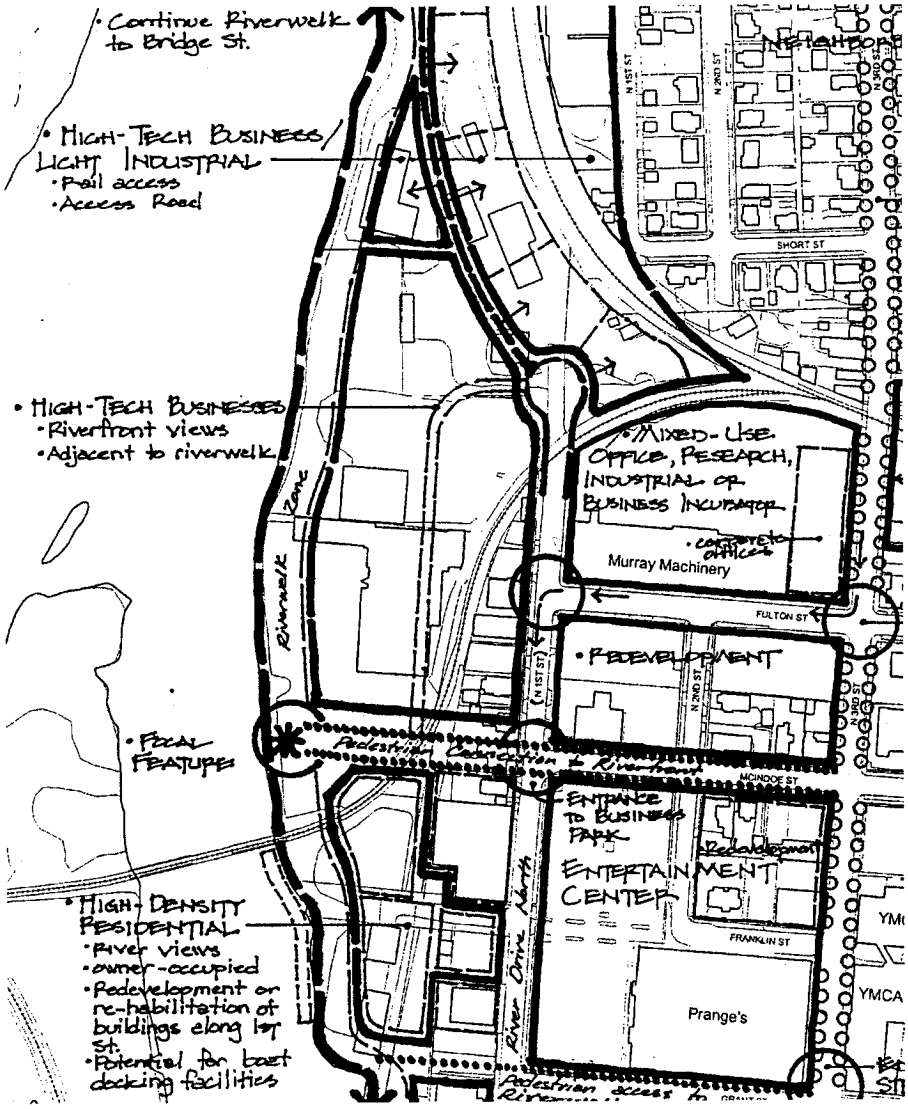
8. East River Employment District

The lands identified in the Master Plan for a high-technology employment marketing initiative are currently underutilized and, in many cases, blighted properties. The opportunity to create a downtown, high-tech business district would provide not only jobs but a more comprehensive blight elimination plan.

A. Review all existing environmental data and determine if additional environmental studies are needed for the land use intended. Coordinate remediation as necessary.

B. Assess utilizing state and federal grants.

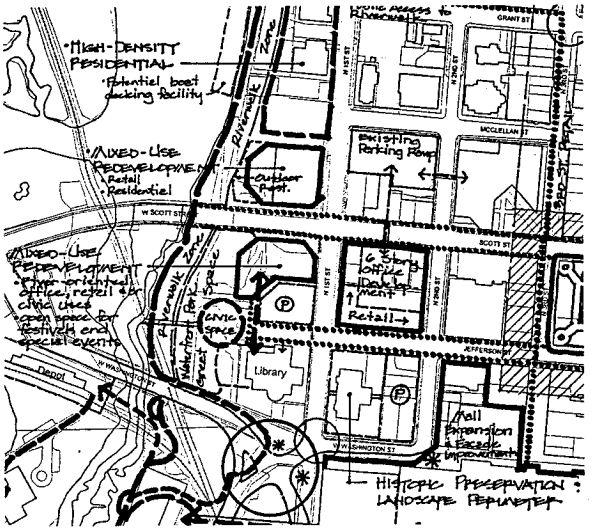
C. Prepare a Phase II marketing study which identifies the high-tech business market niche most appropriate for this location in Wausau, Wisconsin.



9. Riverfront "Super Block" District

The Jefferson Street Parking Ramp is in need of replacement and expansion. The majority owner of the balance of the block has stated an interest in proposing comprehensive redevelopment to include an expanded Jefferson Street ramp. The Central Business District Master Plan implementation identifies opportunities for corporate office expansion in this area.

A. Work with the existing majority landowner/developer to prepare a conceptual building plan. The building plan should incorporate the reconstruction of the public parking ramp with cost estimates for improvement of the ramp. The private developer should take the lead in this project, with City coordination on the public infrastructure. A professional office marketing plan should be in place during the Winter of 1999-2000.

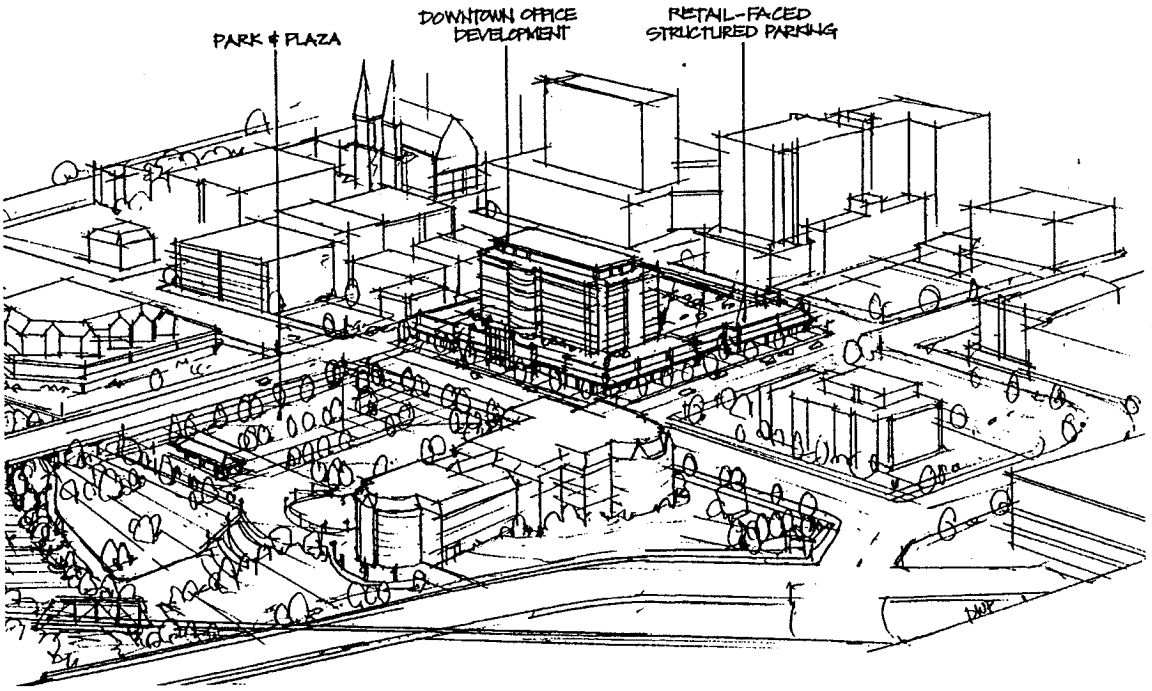


B. Assist the developer with tenant recruitment.

C. Continue to recruit either a public or private reuse for the former Federal Building. A private reuse is determined feasible. The architectural integrity of the building should be maintained.

D. Refine a streetscape and layout plan for the Jefferson Street corridor, from the proposed Transit Center site through the Superblock project area, and connecting with the Library and Riverfront.

F. Work with the Transit Authority in seeking funding for reconstructuring Jefferson Street as a transit-pedestrian corridor.

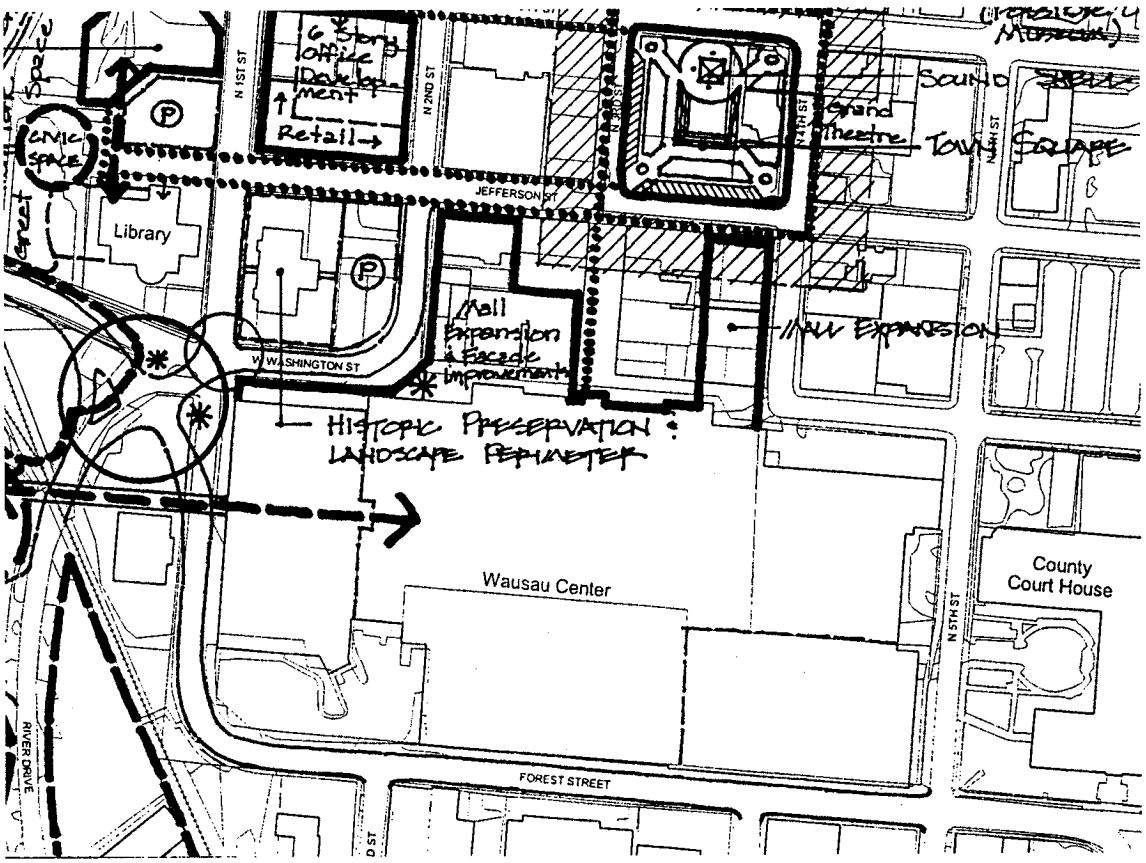


10. Downtown Wausau Center

It was recently announced that the Wausau Center is for sale. It is particularly important to investigate Master Plan recommendations for possible expansion of the Center. It will be important for future buyers to see possibilities for expansion and how they will be a part of a new emerging downtown economy. The Hotel and Civic Center project in the recommended location will enhance the future vision and value of the Wausau Center.

A. The private sector in Wausau should form a joint marketing relationship with mall management and the Richard Jacobs Group to search for a buyer. Once perspective buyers are established, the Central Business District Master Plan and overall objectives for the mall's growth should be emphasized and shared.

B. Plans for mall expansion and the possibility of connecting to a Hotel/Civic Center should be refined as part of marketing graphics. The pace of marketing should be dictated by the Wausau Center management.



11. Hotel/ Civic Center

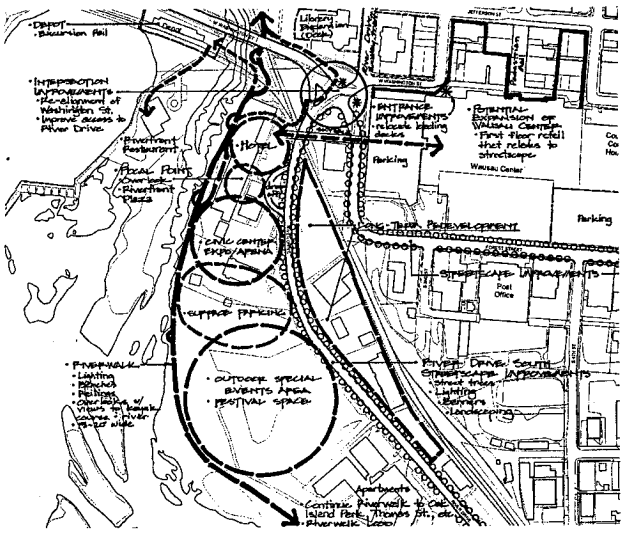
The Master Plan has proposed a new riverfront location for a downtown hotel. It is important to the overall economic structure of the downtown that there be waterfront lodging. The lodging will no doubt require Civic facilities to complement the market.

A. Establish a City/County Civic Center advisory committee to explore new approaches to achieving this project goal.

B. Additional investigations should be undertaken on environmental and floodplain issues.

C. The private sector should take a lead in identifying potential hotel development interests as part of a next step of market research. Significant interest has been expressed through the Phase I research.

D. A more detailed traffic engineering analysis should be undertaken to explore alternatives for improving the River Drive-Washington Street intersection to accommodate this project. This part of the project should be undertaken by the City.

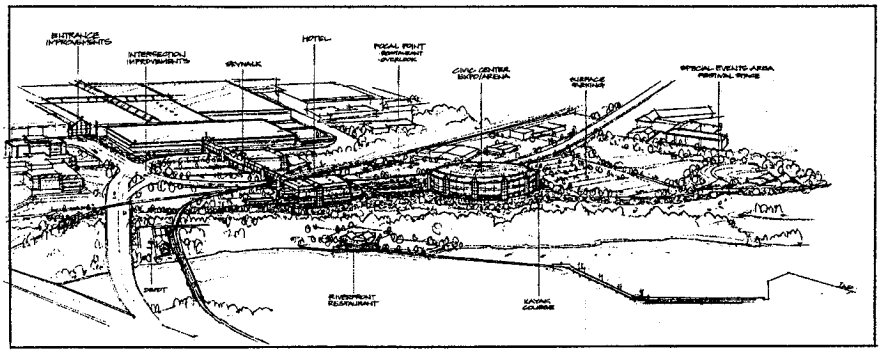


E. A more specific redevelopment plan should be created for this project area. The plan should include land assemblage feasibility, creation of a Tax Incremental Financing district, and the land use, zoning and architectural standards needed to guide developer interest.

F. The Riverfront through this project area should be master planned in more detail to identify the appropriate building setback, and how public spaces could be integrated into a proposed private development.

G. A Civic Center advisory committee, as suggested earlier, should develop a program and facility plan that identifies the potential for Civic Center type uses in combination with corporate training, conventions and meetings.

H. Because of the location of the rail line adjacent to the hotel site, the excursion rail initiative should be coordinated through the PMT, and made part of this project.



12. Infrastructure Improvements

The Master Plan has made specific recommendations on traffic circulation, parking, pedestrian walkway patterns, streetscape priorities and wayfinding and signage improvements. It is important that the public infrastructure be programmed in coordination with the private development projects listed above. A special advisory group should begin developing a budget and timeline for individual projects and be prepared to react quickly to new development proposals requiring improved public infrastructure.

A. Implement a strategy to expand the two-way traffic pattern as recommended in the Master Plan.

B. The intersection of River Drive and Washington Street should be the target of engineering studies to find a long-term solution for this street network.

C. Closely coordinate improvements to the mass transit system as recommended in the Master Plan. Mass transit funding opportunities should be expanded to include a trolley shuttle in Jefferson Street intermodal improvements.

D. Develop an expansion to the existing wayfinding system that is consistent with the recommendations of the Master Plan. Providing enhanced signage and wayfinding should be planned over the Winter and implemented by May, 2000.

E. A comprehensive evaluation of environmental and pollution conditions along the waterfront should be undertaken with assistance from state and federal environmental agencies. Grant funds are available for such activities.

F. Streetscape improvements in the West Side Entry District and around the City Center Block project should be implemented in 2000.

G. Refine the City's River Edge Master Plan to include the recommendations of the Central Business District Master Plan. Priority should be given to development of the Parkway in areas where private development is scheduled for 2000.

H. Begin a structural analysis of the Jefferson Street ramp and be prepared to work with a private developer of the Super Block project on reconstructing and incorporating this structure into a public private development project.

I. Incorporate existing zoning, ordinances, and entitlements assuring the process works with the city departments and developers. The process and committee structure must allow for community development and should not be seen as "red tape."

J. Improve the turning radius at the intersection of Washington Street and 2nd Street to improve traffic flow.

K. Landscape and pave the city parking lot east of the Federal Building.

13. Funding Structure

Below are general sources of funding for implementing the recommended improvements:

A. Tax Incremental Financing may be a source of funding for public improvement. The existing TIF districts have a revenue stream that will be programmed to be the primary funding source for implementation. There will be a need to work with the planning staff to maximize TID monies. One specific recommendation to be utilized in the implementation strategies include the statues below:

   In 1995, the Wisconsin Legislature amended Section 66.46, Wis. Stats. to allow for TIDs, to "donate" the excess revenue stream to another existing TID that may not have the same level of increment stream. A TID may "donate" excess tax increment revenues for a 5-year period with an optional additional 5-year period. The "donor/recipient" TID concept is limited to TIDs created prior to October 1, 1995 and to those districts that have the same overlying taxing jurisdictions.

   It is recommended that a review of TIDs #1, 2, and 3 be conducted to determine if this strategy would be feasible. If affirmative, amendments to the appropriate TIDs should be made to implement this strategy.

B. State and Federal transportation funding will be a primary target for matching grants in 2000.

C. Private sector corporations and individuals have expressed a great deal of concern and interest in helping improve the downtown as the civic center of the community. Currently, this source of funding is not being well-utilized. Many of the public projects listed above could be funded with a combination of private sector contributions and public dollars. That will be a goal of these strategies.

D. Special legislative initiatives will also be relied on to fund larger and more expensive project activities. This will involve coordination with State and Federal elected officials and presenting projects in a way that better fits legislative intent. Existing program funding will also be used, but some of the projects in this downtown restructuring plan will require special initiatives.

E. The focus of implementation is on expanding downtown's relationship with the River. It is recommended that Wausau take the lead in declaring the upper Wisconsin River an "American Heritage River." The American Heritage River program is a national initiative which focuses state and federal resources on river and downtown enhancement projects.

F. Wausau has a history of foundation support for major civic and cultural projects. Foundation support in particular should be focused on the Theater and Arts District project as a 1st order of priority. It is important to work closely with the existing foundations to program initiatives that are consistent with their funding capabilities for future projects.

G. Continue to investigate B.I.D. recommendation.

H. Investigate application for the TEA and PFED grants for the High Tech Riverfront development. These grants are contingent upon job creation and retention and consist of matching funds for roadway and other infrastructure projects.

I. Marathon County should be encouraged to financially contribute to the development of projects such as the Civic Center, Public Library, street improvements, etc. and also participate in programming activities for the Grand Theatre, City Center Block, and other public facilities that attract county resident use.

APPENDIX A: CITYVISION ASSOCIATES MISSION STATEMENT

CityVision Associates offers a distinctive blend of urban design, economic planning and municipal engineering intended to identify creative and implementable solutions for the functional, organizational and management problems facing urban centers. Our team's mission is to assist municipalities and private-sector development groups with the organization, research, planning and design needed to "vision" a new future for their central cities and neighborhoods.

Our professional staff includes urban planners, economic development specialists, market analysts, landscape architects, urban designers, architects, civil engineers and transportation engineers. The professionals on our team are personally committed to the belief that the older parts of our cities are viable economic, cultural, and opportunity centers for the communities and the regions that they serve.

APPENDIX B: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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