

An architectural rendering of a city center, showing a dense cluster of buildings in various styles, including a prominent church with a steeple. The scene is viewed from an elevated perspective, with a soft, warm light. The buildings are rendered in a light, neutral color palette, with some darker accents. The overall atmosphere is one of a vibrant, modern urban environment.

From Suburb to Place

A New Center for the Town of Beloit

Edited by Kyle Talbott, Rachel Bergelin, Bescent Edeid and Aleksander Jenig

From **SUBURB** to **PLACE**

A New Center for the Town of Beloit



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This study of the future of the Town of Beloit in Rock County, Wisconsin was conducted by the *Rural Futures Studio*, which is part of the *School of Architecture and Urban Planning* at the *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*. The work was produced by fourteen students under the direction of Associate Professor Kyle Talbott in the year 2021.

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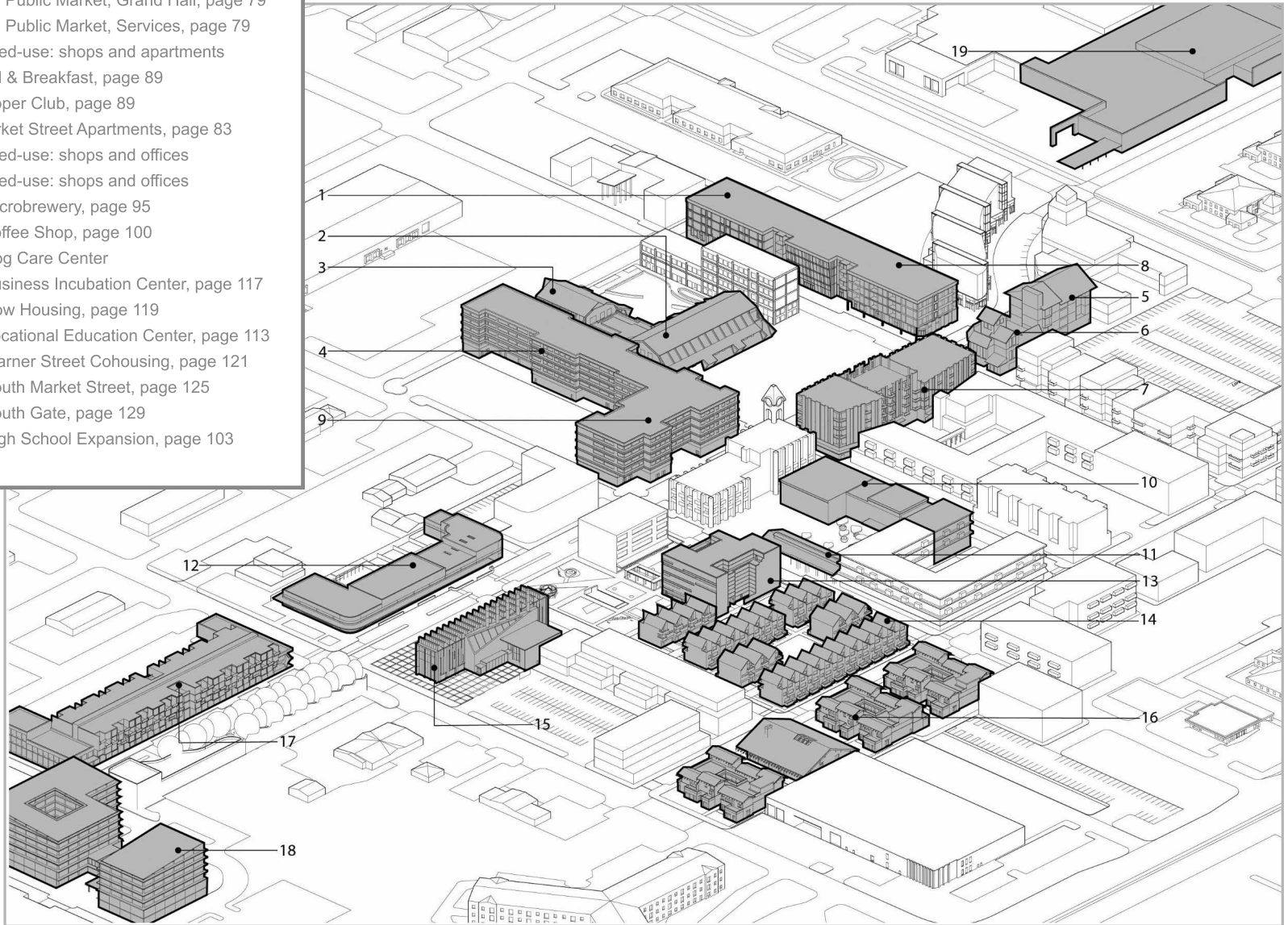


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Town of Beloit: Model of the existing business district transformed into a town center. Gray buildings are existing. White buildings are proposed.

PREFACE

THE WORK OF THE RURAL FUTURES STUDIO

The Rural Futures Studio helps rural and suburban communities in southern Wisconsin to envision what their town might look like thirty years in the future. In this process we consider population growth projections, anticipated cultural shifts, economic development and other demographic forces that spur growth and revitalization. We give special focus to the question of how a community can revitalize its existing downtown or historic center, or how it might create a new center. The Rural Futures Studio seeks to cultivate community identity and place-specific character. Each vision study we produce reflects the unique values of a community and its unique potential, which results in an individualized town center, one with a distinctive and memorable identity.

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The Rural Futures Studio has worked with three Wisconsin communities so far. In 2019 it studied the revitalization of a rural Main Street in Orfordville, published in *Small Town Big Future: Imagining Orfordville, Wisconsin in the Year 2050*. In 2020 it proposed the expansion of an already thriving downtown to include a lakefront promenade in Lake Geneva. And finally, in this volume, conducted in 2021, it studies the redevelopment of an existing industrial park into a new town center for the Town of Beloit.

The Rural Futures Studio employs a fresh approach to community planning that builds on the ideas of the *Strong Towns* movement. We reject the traditional top-down, “big developer” model that involves large amounts of risky debt for a municipality, that often sets up a town to fail in the long-run, and that produces generic and forgettable places. Instead we

use a bottom-up, small developer approach that allows a town to grow incrementally and organically, as needed and where needed, with less debt incurred by a municipality and with more active involvement of private business owners and townspeople. The result is not only more economically sustainable, it breeds a kind of place that forges lasting memories with distinctive buildings and streetscapes, which help to build a community's identity. We believe the incremental development process elevates quality of life.

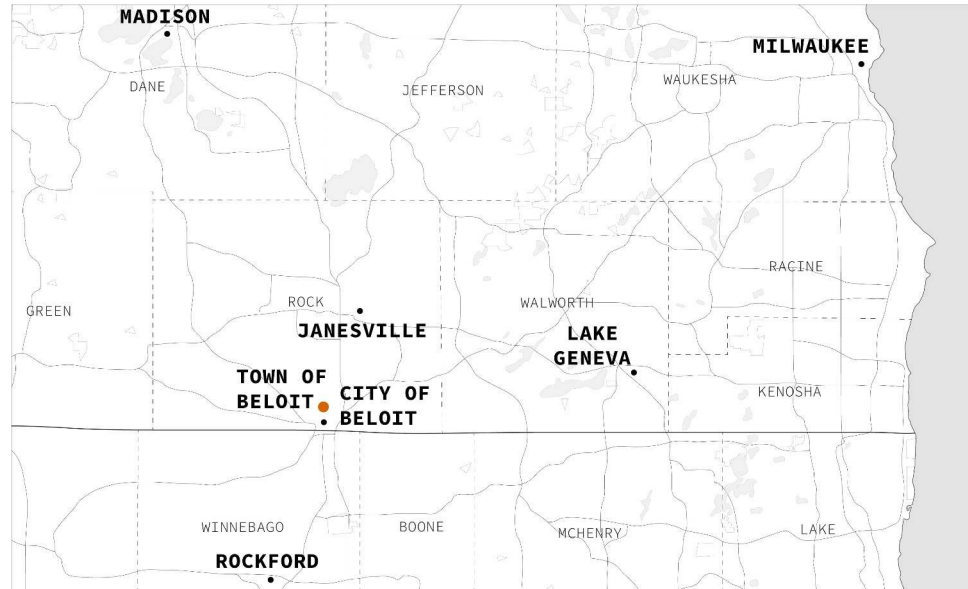
The Rural Futures Studio shows people what the future might look like, a future beyond typical suburban sprawl. We help people see a tangible example of what their town could look like as a thriving community made up of welcoming gathering places that draw people together from near and far. These places consist of bustling streetscapes full of shops and restaurants, beautiful town squares for festivals and events, and tranquil gardens for quiet contemplation. We visualize a town of people and places, not one of cars, barren roads and parking lots.

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We want to thank the wonderful people of the Town of Beloit for their collaboration and excitement about this vision study. We would especially like to thank *Community Development Director Tim Kienbaum* for his courageous leadership, *Town Administrator Tim Wellnitz* for his warm support, and long-time resident *Bill Wieland* for suggesting the Town of Beloit as a candidate for study.

TOWN OF BELOIT

THE CONTEXT AND THE CHALLENGE



The Town of Beloit (population approximately 7,700) is located in Rock County along the Rock River, about 50 miles south of Madison, the state capital of Wisconsin. The Town of Beloit is the northern suburb of the City of Beloit, a community of about 37,000 (with a metropolitan area of about 160,000 people), and one of the larger cities in the region. To the north of the Town of Beloit is rural countryside. The town's position in a largely rural county and yet at the fringe of a regional city gives the Town of Beloit a mixed character. It is somewhat rural and somewhat suburban.

The Town of Beloit is unincorporated, and pressure has grown in recent



Streets, sidewalks and stores offer utility value, but they are treated as generic equipment that makes the Town of Beloit look just like any other suburb. Streets become vast causeways dominated by asphalt and empty fields.

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years to merge with the City of Beloit. The Town of Beloit has resisted this annexation in part because of its superior school system, which would no longer be independent in the event of annexation. The Town of Beloit has been able to keep up with the growing demand for municipal services, but the challenge of remaining an independent township goes beyond sewers, street maintenance and garbage collection.

While the town administrators work hard to run an efficient and friendly municipality, they also aspire to plan for a beautiful, pedestrian-friendly environment that offers people the kind of community-gathering place that the town needs to solidify its identity as a self-sufficient town. The Town of Beloit has no traditional “Main Street” or historic center, which can help give it a distinctive and memorable character. In the Town of Beloit there are few places to go to gather as a community, formally or informally, to

FROM THIS ...



Delafield, Wisconsin



Lake Mills, Wisconsin

... TO THIS

In the historic downtowns of these regional neighbors, streets, sidewalks and stores offer utility value, **and** they are treated as unique places. Each building has an individual character, and each street is contained by and shaped by the buildings that surround it. Streets are treated as places where cars and pedestrians can happily co-exist. As a result, the towns shown in these photographs are easily identifiable to anyone who has visited them.



Delavan, Wisconsin

converse with a friend in a public setting, to have a coffee and people-watch, to window shop on a brisk spring day, or to go for an evening stroll with the family.

The Town of Beloit has instead followed the traditional model of suburban development in the American Midwest, a model that structures everything around a grid of arterial roads lined with strip shopping centers and big box retailers. Much of the open space in-between is filled with parking lots and generic grassy fields. The houses are predominantly single-family units, sitting each on its own acre or two of yard, placed along meandering streets that lead only to other meandering streets or eventually to another arterial road.

The central challenge for the Town of Beloit is how to create a place that feels like a town, and that offers people a place to live that has a unique character, one that makes it worth living *here*. To say, “We live in the Town of Beloit,” has to mean something. It has to offer a qualitative difference from living in the City of Beloit. In order for the Town of Beloit’s independence to be sustainable in the long run, this qualitative difference has to extend beyond the quality of the schools. It has to infiltrate the place itself.

A town is a place where the memories of a family take hold. Such a place intertwines with memories of birthday parties and graduations and first kisses and first jobs and a tragic loss of a loved one. When a town offers a special character that gets woven together with all of the beautiful happenings of life, people start to see themselves as part of the town, and the town as part of them. They become invested in the place. They care about its continued existence, and they want to stay. To leave the town would be to leave behind some irreplaceable part of themselves.

This kind of place-loyalty, this kind of devotion to stay in a town, to protect and develop it, is something that people rarely feel in the typical



- A: F J Turner High School
- B: Available Plot of Former Farmland
- C: Inman Parkway
- D: Prairie Avenue
- E: Bartells Drive
- F: Huebbe Parkway

Midwestern suburb. They can move to the other side of a metropolitan area to another suburb that looks pretty much the same, and life just goes on without connecting to the place. In order to evoke place-loyalty, people first need some sense of place, some sense that their town is a special and distinctive place to live. They need to feel that if they leave it, or lose it, things somehow won't be the same.

The future of the Town of Beloit as an independent municipality is not just a matter of excellently-run city services and infrastructure. This practical side of keeping the Town of Beloit independent is a vital ingredient, but the Town also needs a place-identity. It needs to be a town not just in name and in taxes, but in character. It needs to feel like a town.

It can be difficult for townspeople to relate to this idea. In today's generic suburbs made up of standardized roads and national chain stores, many people have forgotten what place-identity feels like. They think that a town is established by the road sign that says, "Entering Town of Beloit, Population 7,700," but place-identity is much more.

How can a generic suburb transform itself into a town with a distinctive character? The solution we explored with the Town of Beloit is to make a new town center. We propose to build a town center with a central street and a town square. We propose that these be built from scratch, located somewhere near a current nexus of town activity that can grow into a thriving center.

A town center can provide much-needed retail business space at street-level and leasable office space and housing units above street level. This gives most buildings along the central street a height of three to five stories. This setup is called a "mixed-use" streetscape, one in which different but complementary building uses (retail, office, housing) stack up together rather than separate as freestanding buildings. In the separated mode of development, we find an office building over here and an apartment building placed way over there. In a mixed-use neighborhood, in contrast, shops, offices and housing often occur in the same building.

Where to put the town center? The most prominent hub of community activity is currently the large and successful F J Turner High School and Middle School located on Inman Parkway. The school system is the pride of the Town, and one of the biggest draws for new residents. The high school is bustling with activity morning and afternoon, drawing students and parents from all over town in the daily ritual of dropping off and picking up. Placing the new town center in the vicinity of the high school would allow the new center to draw on the energy of the high school, and to reinforce it. Across the street from the high school is the Town's light

industrial and business park, which is a large swath (140 acres) of warehouses, workshops and small office buildings where many of the Town's non-retail businesses operate. A new town center might also draw from this concentration of productive energy.

Positioned between the high school to the north and the business district to the south and west is a large plot of available land. Once farmland, this plot is currently undeveloped and large-enough to provide the heart of a new town center. The resulting town center would border Inman Parkway to the north, Prairie Avenue to the east, Huebbe Parkway to the south, and Bartells Drive to the west.

Centered on this farmland, new development will need to weave together with a great deal of existing development in the vicinity, delicately navigating existing buildings in the business district, as well as the existing commercial strips along Inman Parkway and Prairie Avenue.

A NEW TOWN CENTER

KEY DESIGN STRATEGIES

The town center can be best introduced in terms of the following fourteen design strategies. Each strategy goes to the heart of what organizes the town center, how the town center builds up in layers, and how it fuses with its surroundings. Building a town center from scratch is a delicate process that requires a balance of respect for the existing buildings and infrastructure, on one hand, and a desire to see the town grow, on the other.

Each design strategy is depicted in various diagrams. These range in type from master plan overviews to three-dimensional illustrations. The first and most frequently used type of diagram is a figure-ground map. Simply put, a figure-ground map depicts where there are *buildings* versus where there is *space between buildings*, as seen from overhead, looking straight down on it from above. The buildings are illustrated by a solid color, while the space between buildings is white. Sometimes the buildings are shown in black or gray, and sometimes in orange. This varies according to the needs of each diagram, and the meaning of the different colors is defined in each diagram's key or caption. The contrast between the black and white allows us to see more clearly the relationship between buildings and open space. From this basis, we can analyze the built density of an area and determine where and how to add to the existing neighborhood. We can also study the relative size of existing and newly proposed buildings.

The three-dimensional illustrations allow us to explore what is happening in the vertical dimension. We use these drawings to represent the massing of the proposed town center, and we use them to analyze the height and proportion of each building mass in relation to its neighbors. We are also able to include additional details such as the slopes of roofs and the arrangement of windows, doors and balconies, which show some aspects of the individual character of the buildings.

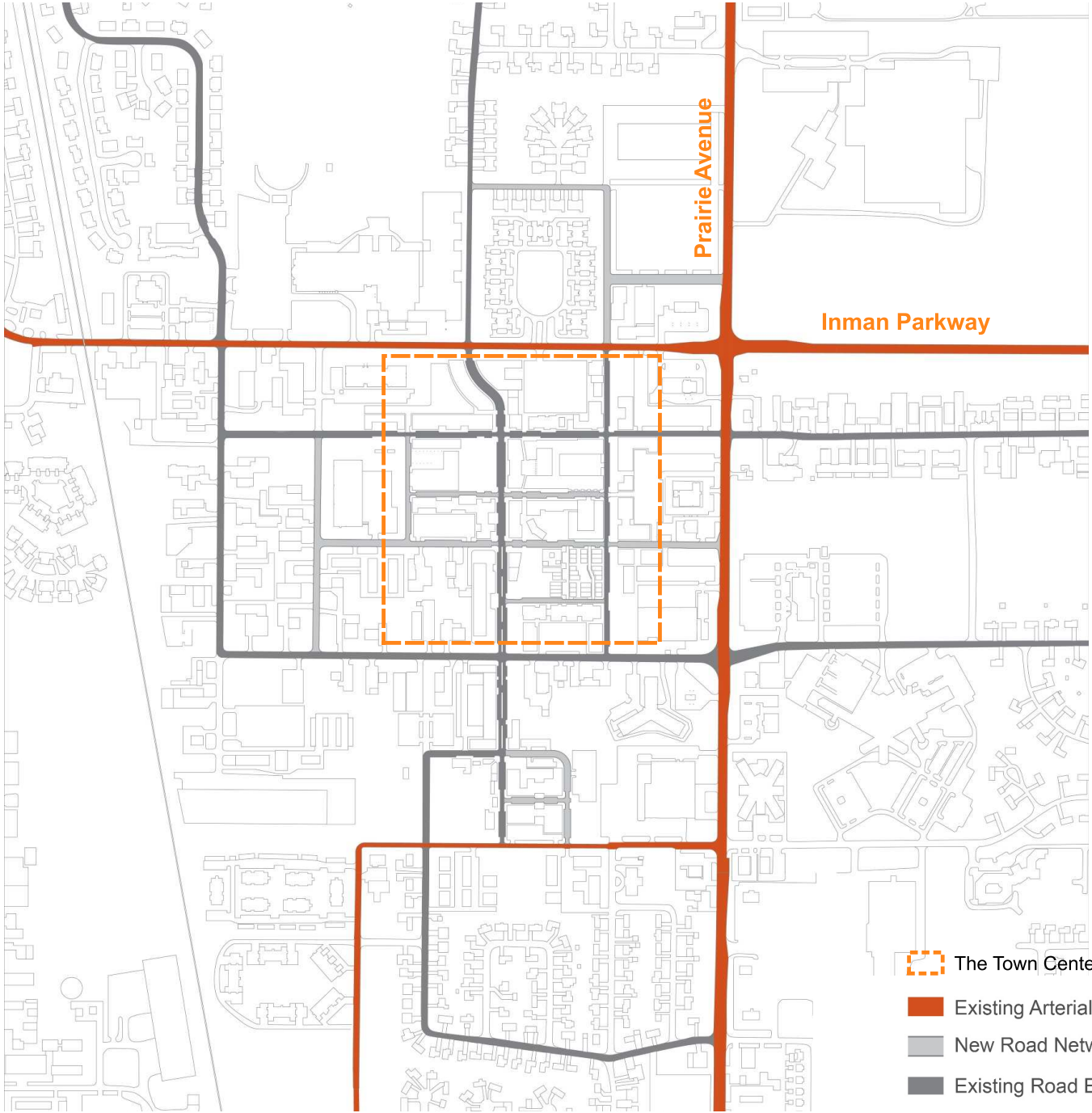
STRATEGY 1

HEAL THE STREET NETWORK

The existing business district inserts large blocks into the town's network of roads. The larger footprints of warehouses have benefited from long, unbroken blocks that are often over 1,500 feet in length. This creates a network of access better suited to delivery trucks than to pedestrians. Because these "mega-blocks" are larger in size than the kind of blocks normally found in pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods, they have caused disruption to surrounding residential streets. The mega-blocks often do not align with the surrounding streets, which has the effect of severing the business district from the rest of the town. It is hard to get into and out of the business district except at a couple of intersections that remain intact. Streets such as Graybill Drive and Gale Drive simply end at the outskirts of the business district, providing no continuous means of access into surrounding neighborhoods.

If the business district is to contribute to the town center, it will need to link into it at every possible street. And if the town center is to draw people into it with open arms, and from all surrounding neighborhoods, then it must unite with every available existing street that meets-up with the town center along its edges. This is often the first step in developing a new town center: *establish a strong continuity with existing streets*. This is accomplished by extending existing streets into the town center so that the town center becomes a seamless part of the existing street network.

Accomplishing this requires the removal of a few existing buildings that obstruct the crucial flow of future cars, bikes and pedestrians. These plots of land should be purchased and cleared in order to allow the streets to be healed.



 The Town Center

 Existing Arterial Streets

 New Road Network

 Existing Road Extensions

NEW NORTH-SOUTH STREET SEGMENTS

Street Segment ID	Street Length (feet)	Street Width (feet)	Sidewalk Width * (feet)
C	533	46	16
E	326	32	12
F	325	46	16
H	263	32	12
I	265	46	16
K	311	52	20
L	306	28	12
M	301	52	20

NEW EAST-WEST STREET SEGMENTS

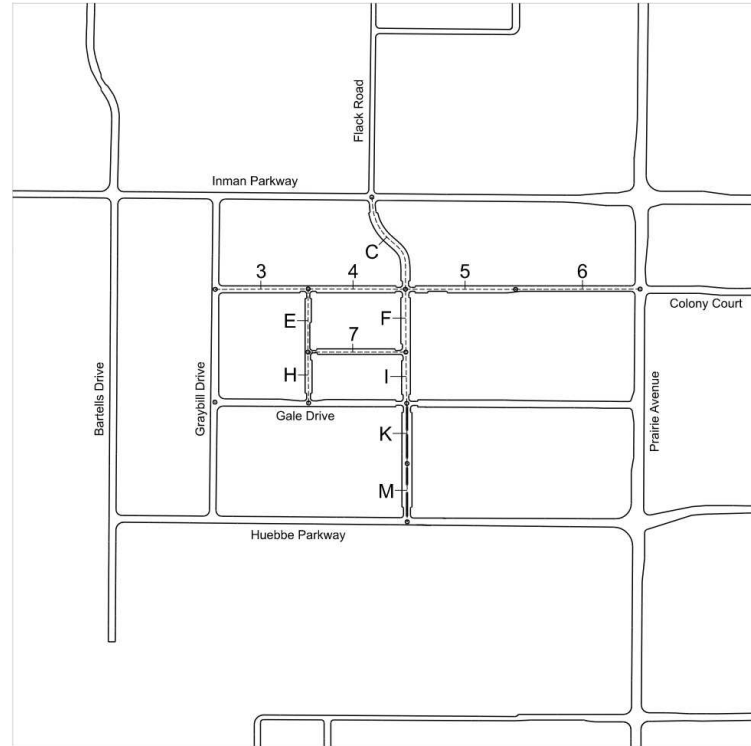
Street Segment ID	Street Length (feet)	Street Width (feet)	Sidewalk Width * (feet)
3	480	36	16
4	503	36	16
5	569	36	16
6	643	28	12
7	506	28	12

NEW NORTH-SOUTH STREET SEGMENTS

Total Street Length (feet)	Avg Street Width (feet)	Avg Sidewalk Width (feet)
2,630	42	16

NEW EAST-WEST STREET SEGMENTS

Total Street Length (feet)	Avg Street Width (feet)	Avg Sidewalk Width (feet)
2,701	33	14



Map showing the position and length of new streets in the *Minimum Viable Town Center* scenario. See the section *Scenario Planning for the Town Center: Three Possible Futures* for more information.

Map showing existing and new streets in the town center, and how existing streets are extended into surrounding neighborhoods. This provides greater connectivity between the town center and its surroundings.

**NEW NORTH-SOUTH
STREET SEGMENTS**

Street Segment ID	Street Length (feet)	Street Width (feet)	Sidewalk Width * (feet)
A	493	36	6
B	363	36	12
C	533	46	16
D	473	28	12
E	326	32	12
F	325	46	16
G	327	28	12
H	263	32	12
I	265	46	16
J	264	28	12
K	311	52	20
L	306	28	12
M	301	52	20
N	304	28	12
O	516	52	20
P	254	46	16
Q	243	46	16
R	244	36	12

**NEW EAST-WEST
STREET SEGMENTS**

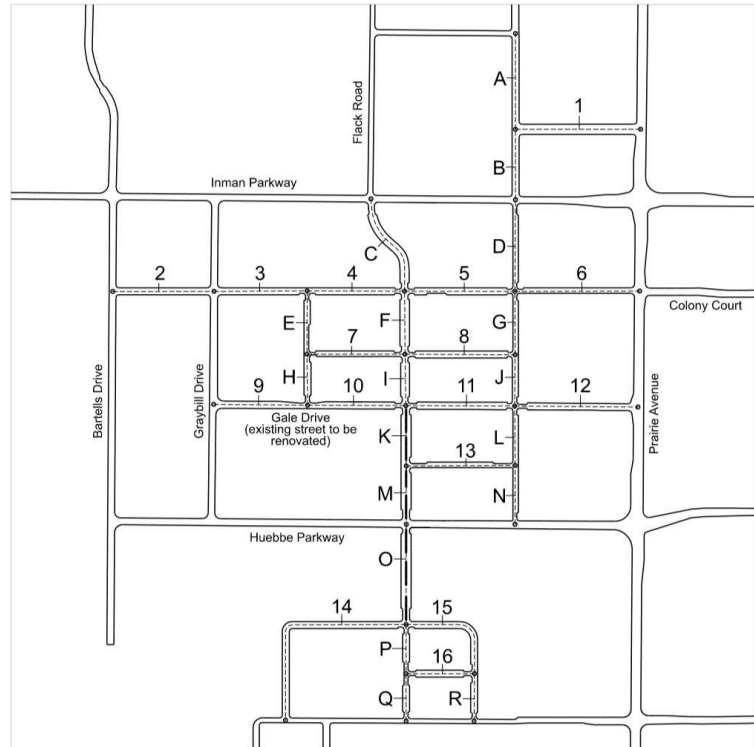
Street Segment ID	Street Length (feet)	Street Width (feet)	Sidewalk Width * (feet)
1	646	52	0
2	522	36	12
3	480	36	16
4	503	36	16
5	569	36	16
6	643	28	12
7	506	28	12
8	568	36	12
9	484	36	12
10	507	36	12
11	562	36	12
12	636	36	12
13	562	28	12
14	927	36	12
15	572	36	12
16	352	36	12

**NEW NORTH-SOUTH
STREET SEGMENTS**

Total Street Length (feet)	Avg Street Width (feet)	Avg Sidewalk Width (feet)
6,111	40	14

**NEW EAST-WEST
STREET SEGMENTS**

Total Street Length (feet)	Avg Street Width (feet)	Avg Sidewalk Width (feet)
9,039	36	12



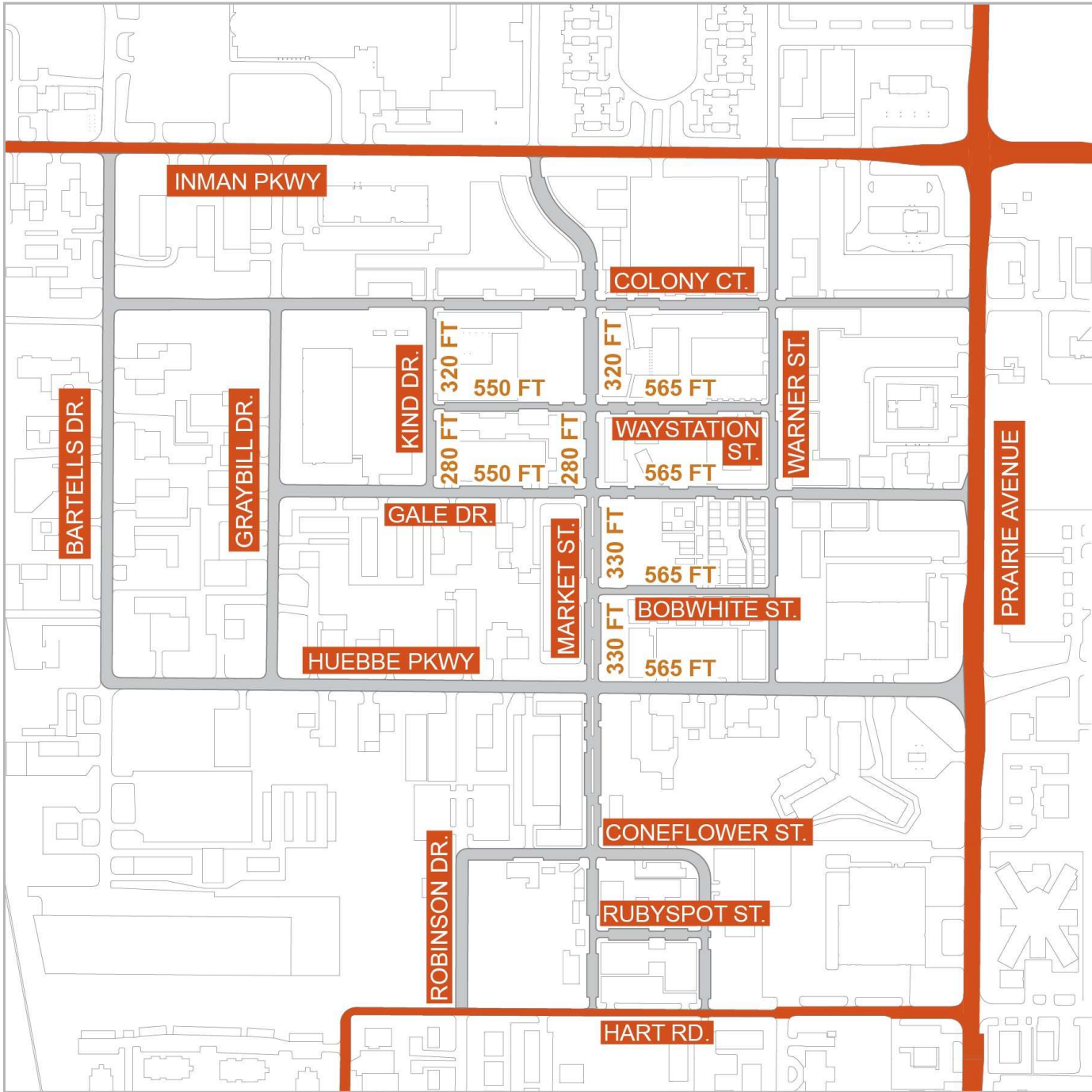
Map showing the position and length of new streets in the *Boom Town* scenario. See the section *Scenario Planning for the Town Center: Three Possible Futures* for more information.

STRATEGY 2

USE SMALLER, PEDESTRIAN-SCALE BLOCKS

The existing business district has long blocks suitable to accommodate large warehouses and truck transport. While the proposed town center seeks to maintain good truck access, it reconfigures the streets and blocks in the town center. To become a thriving place where people want to come, shop, eat, walk and converse, a town center needs to be sized according to the needs of pedestrians. The blocks must feel good to traverse on foot, as people walk around, window shop, and take in the beautiful streets at the pace of a stroll rather than a drive-by.

There is no established, scientifically-derived formula for a pedestrian-friendly block size. This is not so much a matter of engineering as it is a matter of quality of pedestrian experience - a matter of “look and feel,” of pace and variety of sights, of that ineffable sense of belonging that people get when things are scaled to the human body. In search of a benchmark size, we studied the typical block size in cities known for being exceptionally pedestrian-friendly, but the question is trickier than it might first seem. Manhattan, for example, is known for being delightfully walkable, but it operates at the mammoth scale of a metropolis, which has a very different feel from a small town. Manhattan’s block size stretches from 264 feet in the short direction to a gigantic 900 feet in the long. At the other end of the scale is Savannah, Georgia, which has a historic center with a typical block size of 200 feet x 300 feet. Its intimate feel leads many townscape connoisseurs to consider Savannah one of the most walkable towns in the United States. This block configuration was, however, the



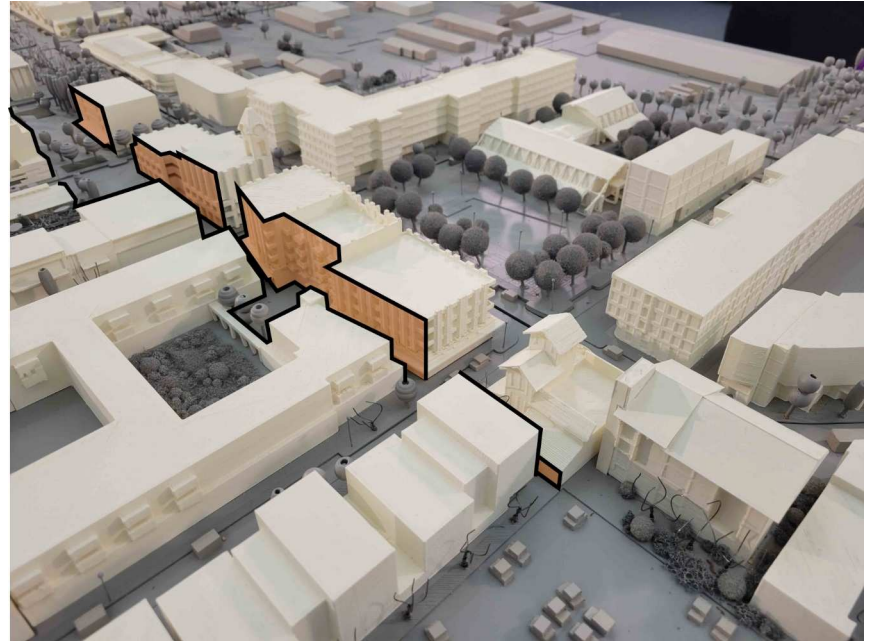
product of the pre-automobile age, and in many ways Savannah's streets are designed for pedestrians at the expense of automobiles. In a modern town center pedestrians and automobiles need to happily co-exist. The historic Chicago Loop provides an example of a more balanced approach. Its typical block size is 330 feet x 660 feet. While the Chicago Loop is a metropolitan-scale city, its block size seems to strike a better balance between the needs of pedestrians and automobiles. The typical block size in the proposed town center is closest to the Chicago Loop, but reduced in size somewhat to fit the needs of a small town. The typical block size we propose is 320 feet x 550 feet.

At some locations in the town center the block size is smaller. For example, we weave a *paseo* into the typical block structure, which has the effect of further subdividing some of the blocks into smaller portions. A *paseo* is a pedestrian-only street, usually positioned as a mid-block shortcut that allows people to move on foot through one or more blocks. Because a *paseo* does not accommodate automobiles, it can be narrow and winding. The "nook and cranny" feel of a *paseo* enriches the other streets of a town with further variety: an intimate, hidden feel that many people love. *Paseos* offer some of the most successful shopping streets in the world, in towns as diverse as Barcelona and Denver. The *paseo* proposed for the Town of Beloit cuts through three blocks, which reduces the block size in this area to 320 feet x 275 feet.

We propose naming this pedestrian-only side-street the *Market Paseo*. It gains further interest as a place where people can explore, shop and hang out with a series of small gardens and courtyards that plug into the *paseo* and that provide gathering places for smaller groups.

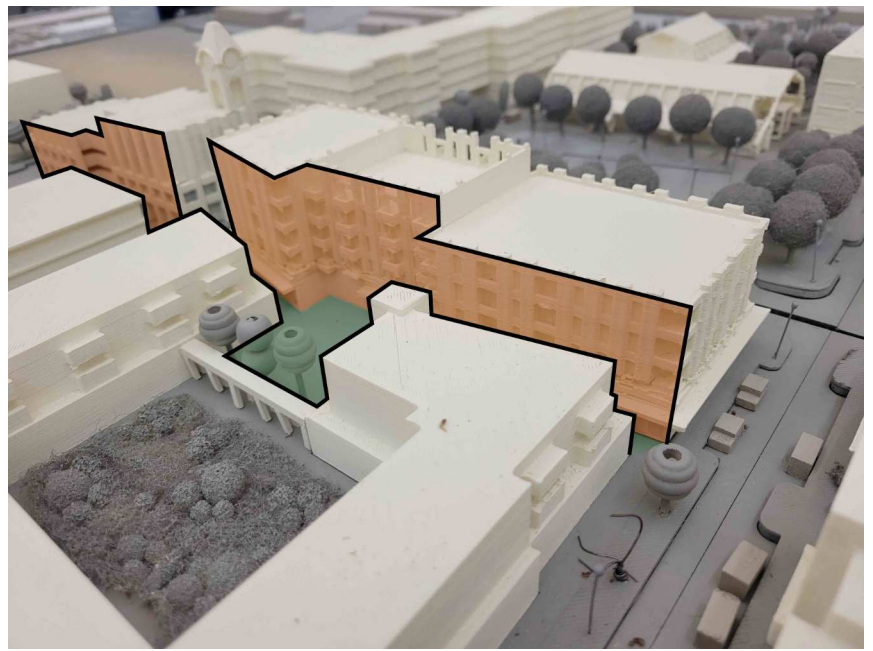
Map showing proposed block sizes for the new town center, as well as existing and proposed street names.

THE MARKET PASEO (Pedestrian Street)



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These maps and diagrams show the Market Paseo and its series of small courtyards. The Market Paseo runs north-south a half-block to the east of Market Street (the main street of the town center). The paseo offers pedestrians a quiet short-cut between the Main Town Square and The Commons to the south.



STRATEGY 3

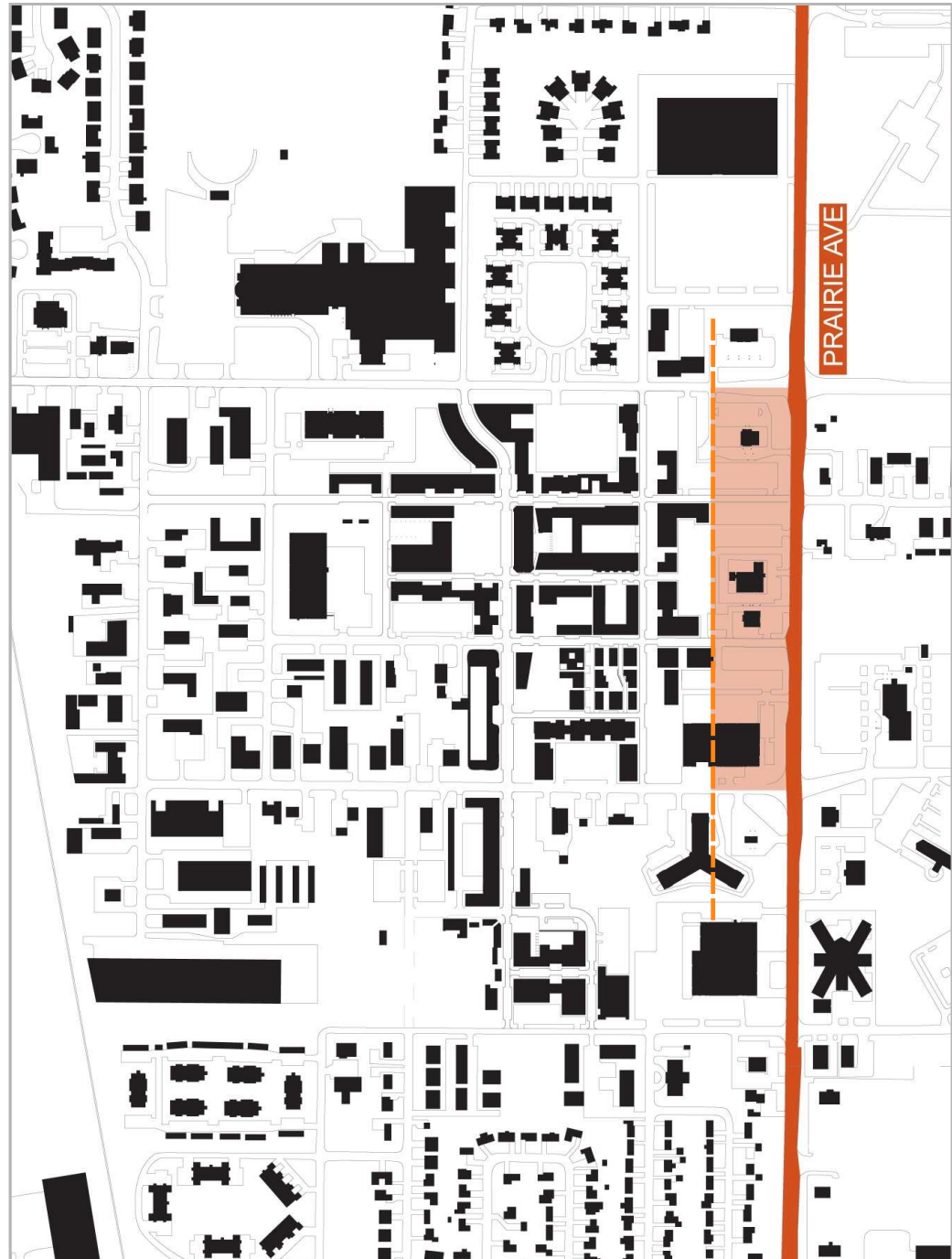
HOLD BACK FROM PRAIRIE AVENUE

Prairie Avenue is an arterial road running north-south along the east edge of the proposed town center. Traditionally, retail businesses from shopping centers to fast food restaurants gravitated to this “main drag.” Prairie Avenue exhibits the characteristics of a classic American automobile-dominated retail strip: a wide, multi-lane road – large easements to each side of the road – often no sidewalks for pedestrians – wide intersecting streets with large, complex intersections that are intimidating for pedestrians to cross – plentiful surface parking lots that abut the road for convenience automobile access – buildings spaced wide apart – and fast speed limits. This setup results from the assumption that people drive between destinations and walk only the short distance from a parked car to each business’s front door. This auto-strip setup is well-established along a generous stretch of Prairie Avenue. It would be very difficult to change it at this point. Instead of trying to retrofit Prairie Avenue into a pedestrian-friendly environment, our proposal accepts its auto-strip condition. We propose to let Prairie Avenue remain an auto-strip, and to leave a generous one-block buffer in-between it and the town center. This allows the town center to operate independently of the auto-strip and to establish a new kind of town composition that favors pedestrians.



The aerial view shows the Prairie Avenue auto-strip in the foreground and the town center in the distance. The auto-strip is treated as a separate layer. Rather than intrude on it, the town center lives behind it, keeping some distance between the center and Prairie Avenue.

This map shows how the town center and the Prairie Avenue auto-strip can co-exist side-by-side. This is better than trying to fuse the two together, which would only dilute the pedestrian-friendly nature of the town center.



STRATEGY 4

PUSH PARKING LOTS TO THE PERIPHERY OF THE TOWN CENTER

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Parking lots are where the needs of drivers and the needs of pedestrians really rub up against each other. Drivers want to park close to their destination – close to the center of the action. But in order to define a “center of the action” for them to go to at all, pedestrians need well-formed streetscapes and squares, which require human-scale spaces with clear boundaries. Such spaces are typically undermined by the wide stretches of asphalt that make up parking lots. The surest way to undermine pedestrians’ quality of experience in a town center is to put parking lots in the town center. What, then, is the solution? How can these seemingly conflicting needs be resolved? The following five parking strategies work together to produce a balanced harmony between the needs of drivers and pedestrians. Drivers are accommodated without undermining the quality of the pedestrian experience.

Before we look at the five strategies, it is important to acknowledge that parking is often a source of anxiety for town administrators. They have seen what happens in towns that become popular destinations – how people must fight for parking and how they grumble about it. Administrators understandably want to have a plan. So they search for guidance, and what they find is old ideas about parking loads that came to prevalence in the 1960s. In this age of auto-dominated-everything, the parking load numbers were set very high. For example, for every one housing unit, the recommendation was to provide two off-street parking spots! Following such guidelines, many small towns destroyed their

A: Parking lots on the periphery of the town center reduce traffic in the center, are convenient for drivers, and remain hidden from pedestrians while they walk along streets and squares.

B: Parking lots in courtyards provide "surgical" parking deeper into the town center while remaining hidden from pedestrians.

C: This large parking lot, which is accessed from Inman Parkway, is sized to accommodate a standard parking garage if future growth creates additional parking needs.

INMAN PARKWAY

A

C

A

B

A

A

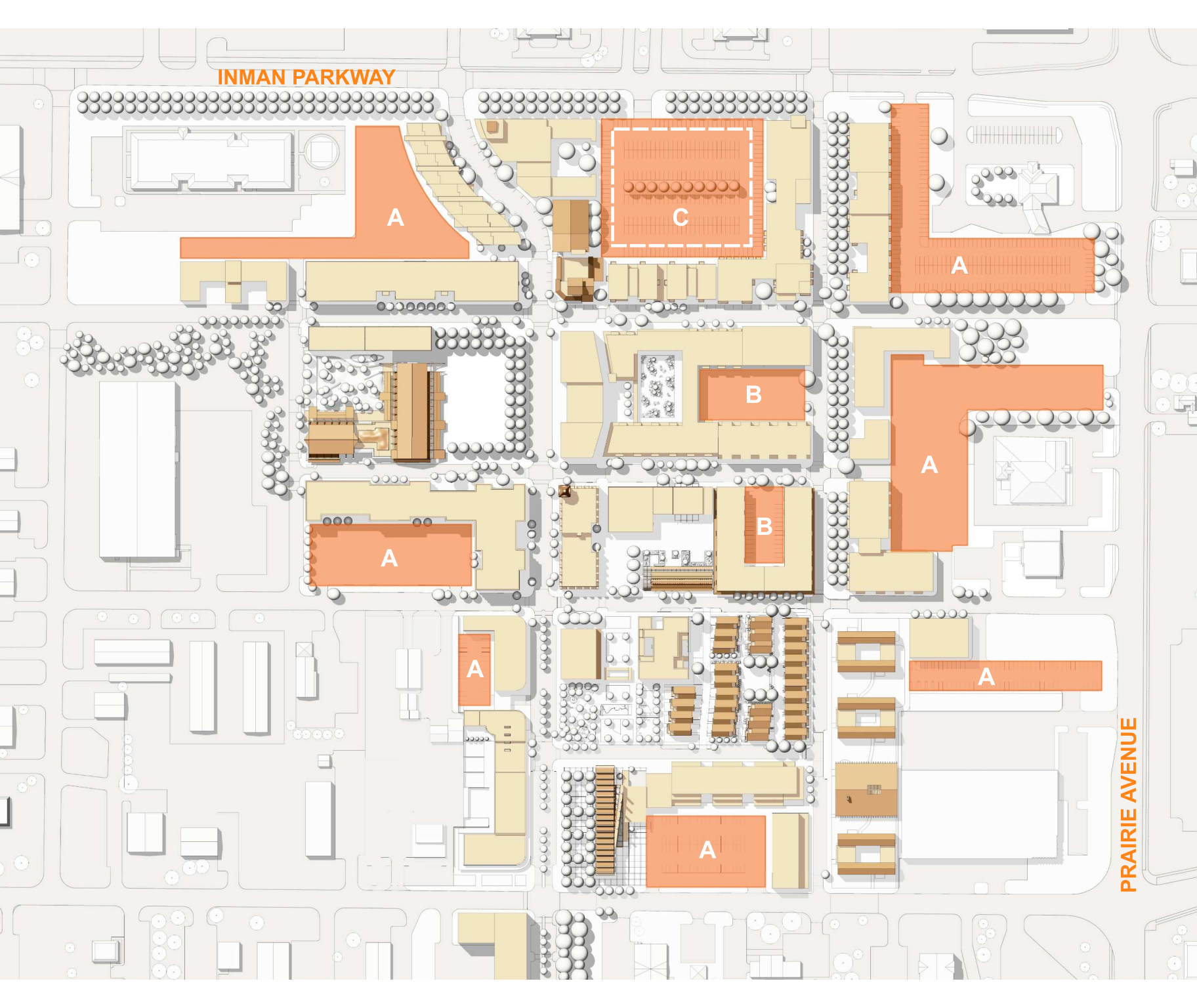
B

A

A

A

PRAIRIE AVENUE



streetscapes and squares, turning every available piece of land into a parking lot. It is important to resist this destructive pattern by remembering two simple things. **First**, you do not need as much parking as you think you need. The old guidelines are wrong, and they are now being disregarded by communities everywhere. **Second**, if your town develops a parking problem, that is an amazing sign of success! It means you have a thriving center where people want to be. Try not to fear the need for parking. It is very manageable with the following five strategies, which can form the backbone of a responsible parking plan.

The first parking strategy is: *Provide Ample Street Parking*. Line every street in the town center with parallel parking. It is easy to under-estimate how much parking need this strategy along can satisfy. Be generous with these parking spots. Do not over-regulate them with two-hour limits, and if possible, do not meter them.

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The second parking strategy is: *Provide One-Level of Parking underneath Each Mixed-Use Building*. We assume that in the proposed town center, each larger-sized mixed-use building will have one level of parking under the entire building footprint, which provides dedicated parking for housing or office space on the upper floors of that building.

The third parking strategy is: *Keep Parking Lots along the Periphery of the Town Center*. We incorporate many parking lots into the town center, on every side of it, at the periphery. The idea is that drivers park around the outer edge of the town, then walk from there into the center. This keeps walks short, and it allows parking lots to be *hidden behind* the buildings that line important pedestrian streets and squares.

The fourth parking strategy is: *Use a Parking Courtyard when a Parking Lot is Needed within the Town Center*. In a couple locations, we include small parking lots within the town center. We do this sparingly, and keep

each of these lots small, so it can be wrapped on three sides by the building it serves.

The fifth parking strategy is: *Plan Ahead for a Large, Community Parking Garage to be Built as the Town Center Grows*. The largest parking lot is positioned right off of Inman Parkway (an ideal location for drivers), and it is sized to accommodate a standard parking garage of four or five stories in height. The idea is that in the early years of the town center, this would be a surface lot like all the others. Then, if the town center grows to its most ambitious projected size, a garage can be built on the lot. To make this transition a smooth one, it is important to size the lot for the future garage, which has particular required dimensions.

STRATEGY 5

POSITION A CENTRAL STREET RUNNING NORTH-SOUTH, INTERSECTING WITH THE HIGH SCHOOL

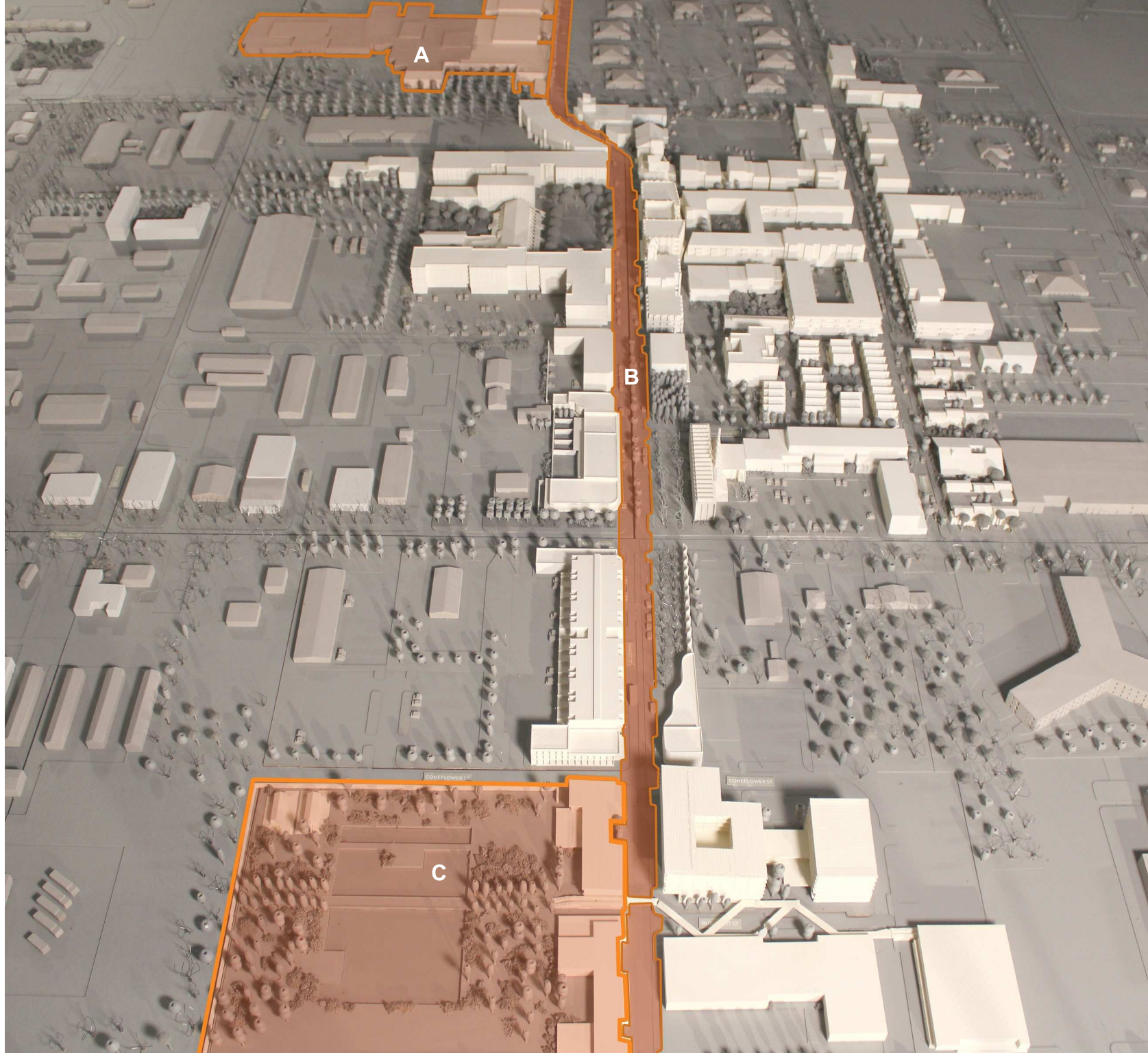
Rather than name the new central street “Main Street” as in many small towns, we suggest “Market Street,” which is also an often-used name for a town’s central street. “Market Street” seems to hold a better balance of connotations of the traditional past of small towns and also the bustle and open possibilities of towns growing into a new future. It reflects the importance of the business community in the creation of a thriving center.

At its northern end, Market Street crosses Inman Parkway to form a major new intersection, one that anchors to the corner of the high school. This allows the high school to cap the northern end of the town center, completing it and also becoming part of the action. Students, teachers and parents have seamless access from the town center to the high school, removing the need for automobile drop-off and pick-up for those families living in the town center.

At its southern end, Market Street connects to another large plot of available farmland, which might also be incorporated into the town center. This southern extension of the town center might provide community amenities such as athletic facilities and a large community park, which we have called South Park. These would act as major destinations at the south end of the town center.

At its full build-out, Market Street can extend up to eight blocks, making it the longest street in the town center. Because the blocks are short, however, Market Street retains the quiet energy of a small but rising community. A person can walk Market Street’s entire length in ten minutes.

This aerial view looks northward up the eight block length of Market Street (B). Capping Market Street at its north end is the high school (A), and at the south end is a large public park that we call South Park (C).



A

B

C

CONFLOWER ST

CONFLOWER ST

CONFLOWER ST



This map shows the major new intersection at the north end of the town center, where Inman Parkway and Market Street cross. The high school with its new, major addition form one corner of this important intersection, which allows the high school to become part of the town center.

STRATEGY 6

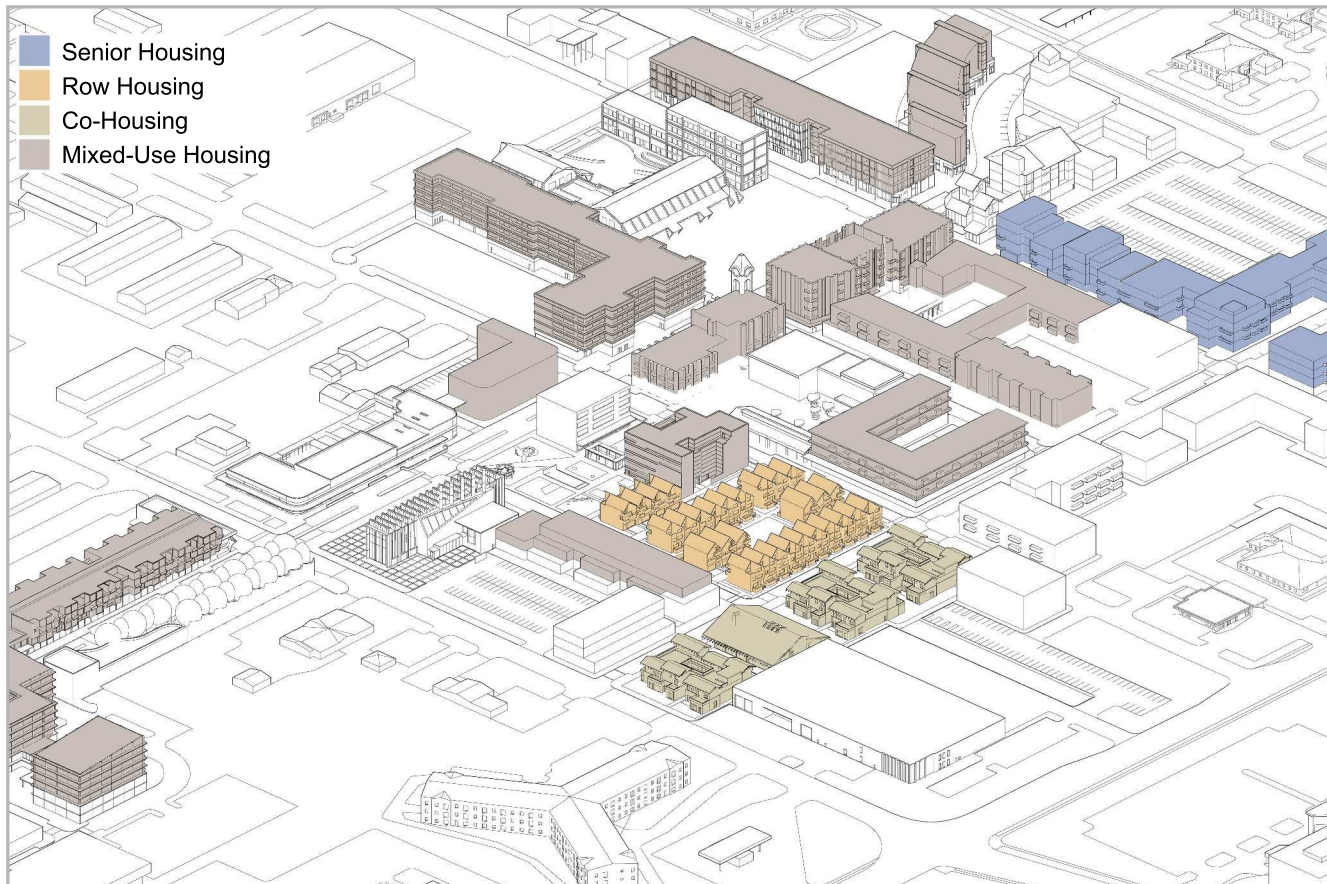
CONCENTRATE RETAIL, OFFICE AND HOUSING INTO MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

In a mixed-use development, housing, offices and retail businesses mix and mingle in a single, diverse and bustling neighborhood. A single building might hold two or three of these different uses. In a typical arrangement, shops and restaurants inhabit the ground floor, and then leasable office space or housing units inhabit the upper floors. Mixed-use buildings have a long history in American small towns. They traditionally line the downtown main street and define a lively streetscape. The liveliness comes in part from the different activities of retail shopping, office work and domestic living, which come alive in the town at different times of day and on different days of the week. In such neighborhoods there is a morning bustle as people prepare for their day, walk the dog, and stop for a coffee or maybe an early meeting with a colleague over breakfast. Mid-day sees offices at work and lunch-goers sitting in cafes, and in the evening, people stop for a drink after work, dine outdoors along the street, stop at a store to pick up groceries, or take a relaxing end-of-the-day stroll with a loved one. There is always something going on. The streets feel full and alive at a wide variety of times. This is so different from the way a typical segregated suburb operates, where office parks sit abandoned in the evenings and on weekends, where residential neighborhoods sit abandoned during week days, and where shopping and dining happen in some remote locations detached from everything else.

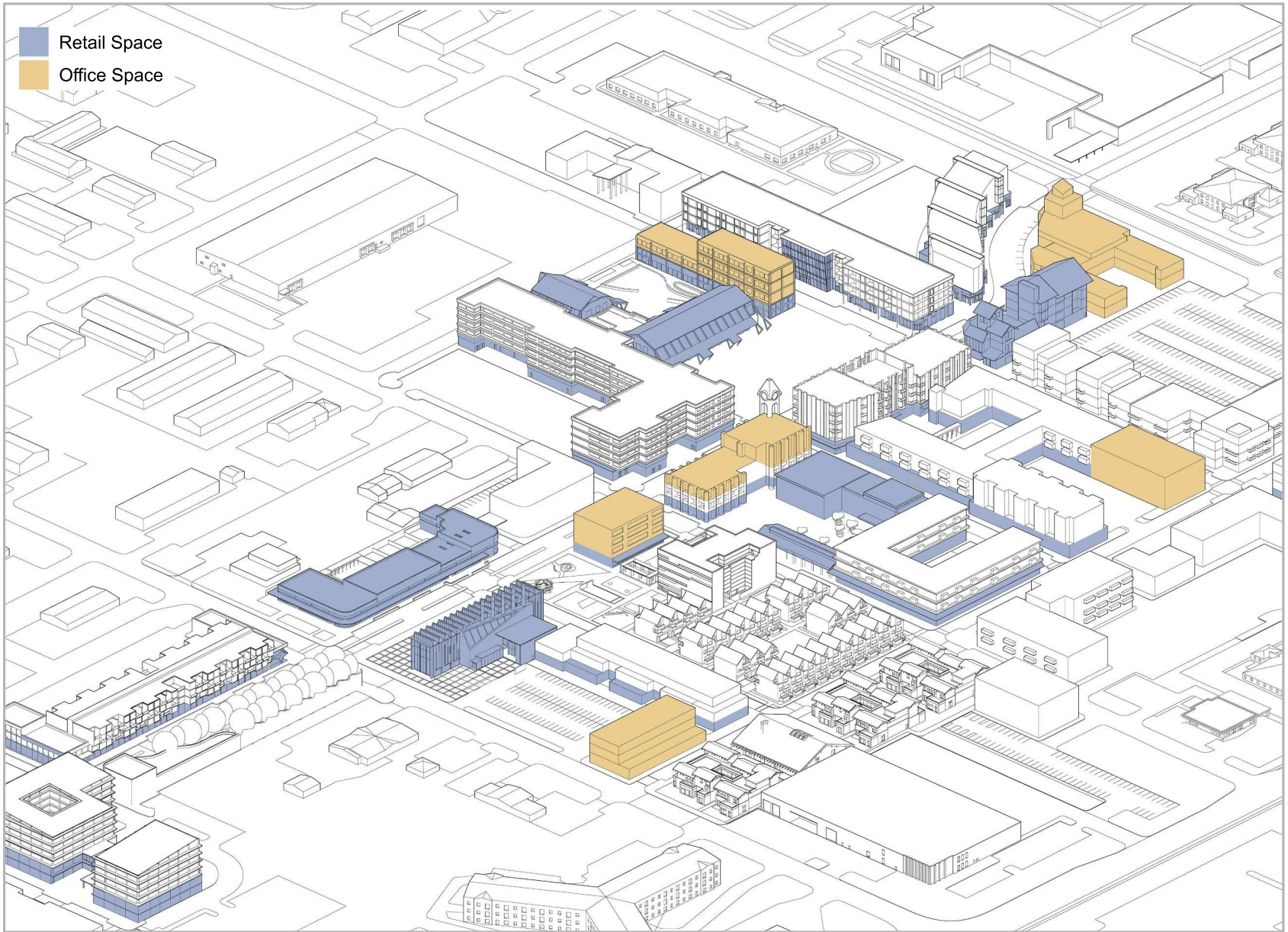
The diverse aspects of life that come together in mixed-use development feed on each other and become stronger together. The proposed town center is calibrated to provide enough retail shopping space

to support the needs of those living and working in the town center, as well as those who live throughout the community. It is calibrated to provide enough multi-family housing in the town center to strengthen the retail businesses. It is calibrated to provide housing options that allow people who work in the town center and in the adjacent business district to also live in the town center and walk or ride a bike to work. Just as diversity breeds resilience in other natural systems, neighborhoods with diverse activities and uses grow faster, withstand hard times better, and become gradually more distinctive environments with a unique character.

33



■ Retail Space
■ Office Space



STRATEGY 7

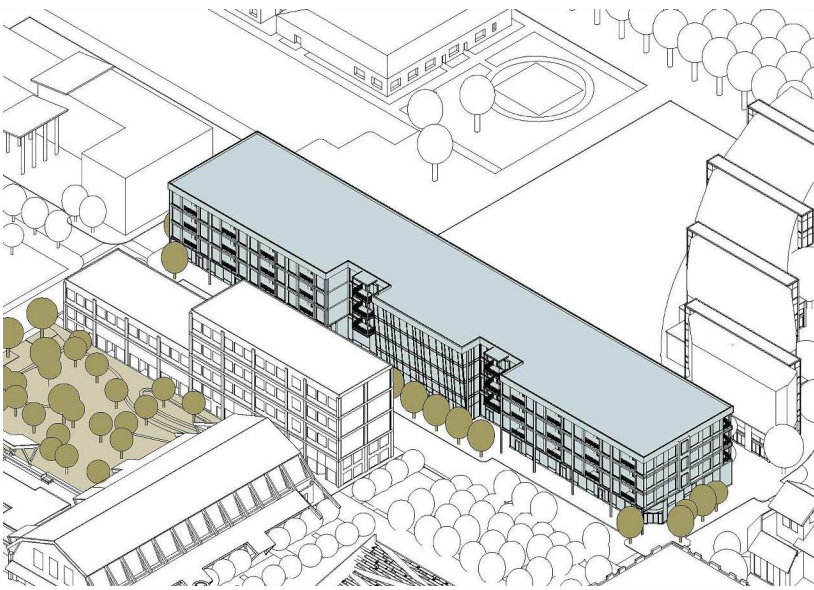
PROVIDE A VARIETY OF MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING OPTIONS

Housing is one of the biggest challenges facing the Town of Beloit. It has traditionally accepted the default suburban approach: cover all available land with single-family houses. The problem with this approach is that it spreads the smallest number of people across the greatest amount of land, thus reducing population density to a minimum. This might seem to create the kind of pastoral sense of spread-out rural life that many small town residents value, one that gives each individual her own stake in the landscape and plenty of privacy. But the price is high, and it creates a dire future for the town.

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Here is what happens. The town can only expand so far. It can only acquire so much land before it becomes land-locked, and once this happens the territorial size of the town is fixed. If that land is covered with single-family houses, then the total population of residents that the town can support remains low, too low to support the amount of local retail business that people desire, businesses that need a certain minimum customer-base to be sustainable. There might be a few shops or restaurants, but they are mostly limited to big national chains selling generic goods, exactly the kind of businesses that do not help the town develop a distinctive identity. And office-work employers will not come for the same reason. They setup shop where the workforce is more concentrated: in denser centers.

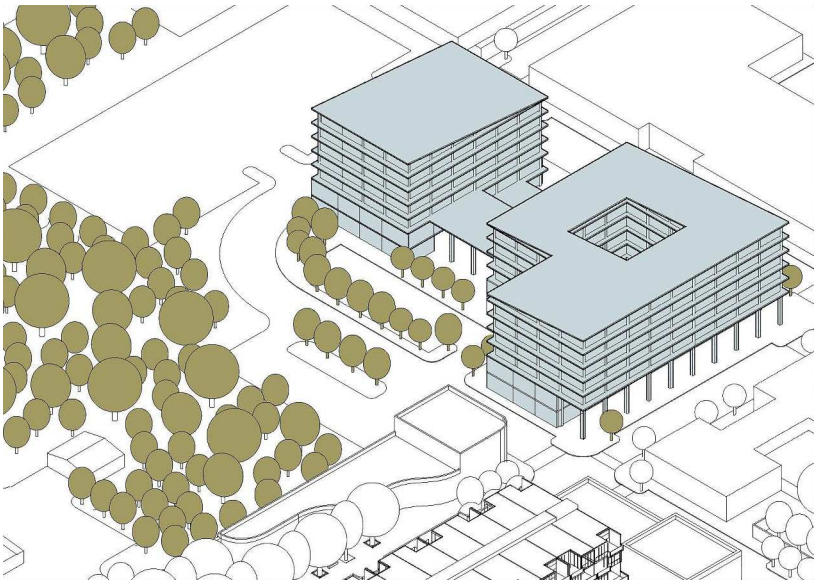
The fate of such a spread-out town is to become a so-called “bedroom community.” A bedroom community is a town made up mostly just of houses. It is a place where people live, but which offers few options for



Apartments for young professionals that border the Main Square and hug the Public Market, right in the center of the action.



Row housing for young families, located next door to The Commons Educational Hub.



Luxury condominiums that overlook the beautiful grounds of South Park, and enjoy a wellness center and recreation center right across the street.



Co-housing for families along a quiet side-street.

work, shopping, eating and leisure. People adapt to the lack of local businesses by becoming commuters. They drive to work. They drive to the store. They drive and drive. They have to drive everywhere.

Because the town cannot attract businesses, the tax-base remains low, and the municipality cannot make many improvements. Such a town will slowly stagnate over decades, not able to keep up with the latest and greatest improvements offered by newer, up-and-coming suburbs. Things start to look a little dingy, a little bit old, and it is just a matter of time before people in the town start moving away. They want to be where the stores and the streets are new, where the restaurants are interesting, and where everybody else seems to be headed. Property values then slump, and as the typical pattern goes, the whole town becomes one of those undesirable neighborhoods that people think about as a place that used to be a nice. What was the cause of it? Suburban sprawl. This all too common pattern of suburban decline starts with the spreading out of houses wide across the land.

37

The proposed town center envisions a sustainable future for the Town of Beloit. It envisions an approach to land use that will enable the town to continue thriving indefinitely. The foundation of this alternative future is *multi-family housing*, which leads to higher town population, which attracts businesses, which creates a diverse mix of uses and activities, which gives a town the economic foundation and the bustling energy it needs to thrive indefinitely.

Many suburbanites balk at the idea of higher-density housing. They picture in their minds dilapidated 1970s-style apartment buildings on the edge of town, where the "low-income people" live. This is an outdated image of what multi-family housing looks like, which often blocks townspeople from seeing a path into a thriving future. The proposed town

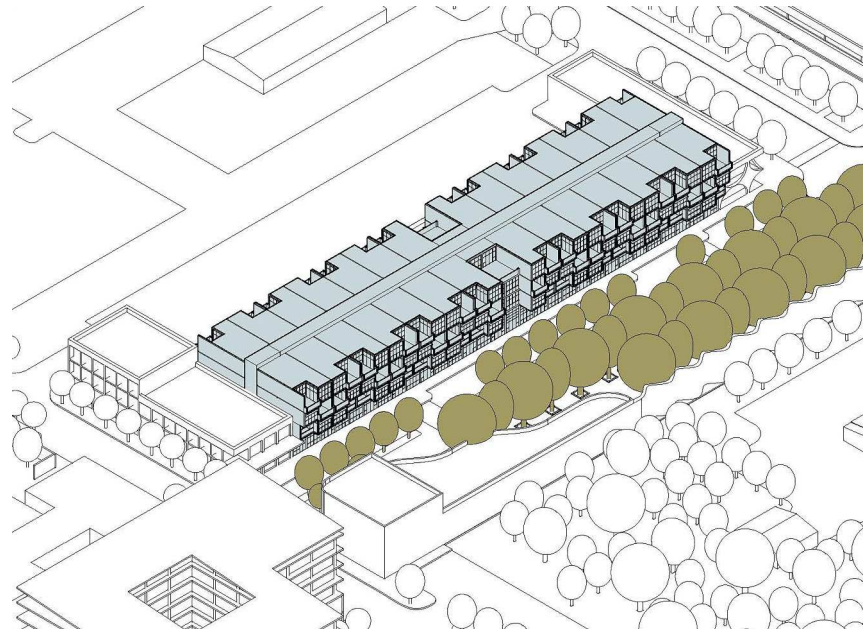
center includes a variety of higher-density housing types, which can help people see the bright possibilities of such housing options. The proposed town center shows how multi-family housing is a crucial ingredient in the making of an attractive and robust town center.

Apartments and condominiums are no longer the housing of the poor. Modern multi-family housing offers exciting luxury living that is especially attractive to young

professionals, families who are just getting started, and seniors who are in retirement. All three of these communities are currently under-served in the Town of Beloit because few appropriate housing options exist for them. Modern-day approaches to multi-family housing encourage a range of people operating in every stage of life to co-mingle, and to work together with surrounding neighborhoods of single-family home owners to build a bustling town center.



Luxury apartments overlooking the Main Square, and with easy access to shopping and restaurants.



Apartments for young professionals on the quieter south end of town, along the tree-lined end of Market Street.

STRATEGY 8

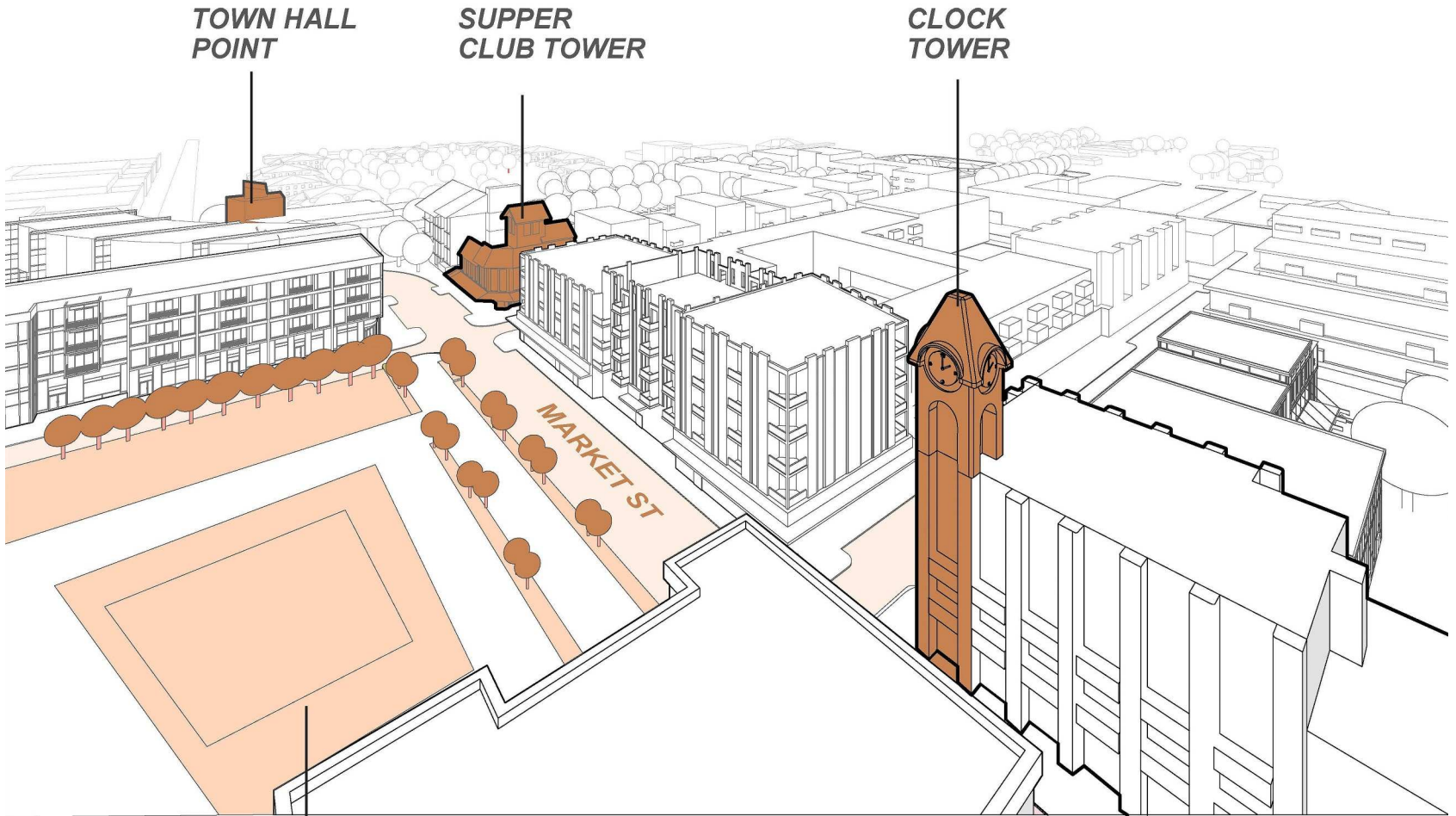
DEFINE A MAIN TOWN SQUARE ALONG MARKET STREET

39

As described above under the strategy “Position a Central Street Running North-South, Intersecting with the High School,” the proposed town center is organized around Market Street. Market Street is a memorable streetscape with buildings placed close together on each side of the street, filled with the storefronts of shops and the balconies of housing units above. It is punctuated occasionally by the clock tower and by an iconic supper club. It will make a wonderful place to stroll and shop on a Saturday afternoon. In this regard a good street makes an effective public gathering place. It is like the living room of the town where all sorts of informal activities unfold.

While Market Street is a vital ingredient in the town center, it is not enough. People also need a more formal gathering place, one where events can happen, such as a weekend arts and crafts festival, a car show, or a food truck tasting event. A town center needs a place that defines its actual center. A street, because it is a stretched-out linear thing, cannot quite do it. A town center also needs a town square.

A town square is the classic way to make a central, formal gathering place for a community. The town square embodies the identity of the community more than any other place. It is shaped around its edges by some of the town’s most iconic buildings, which add to the square’s distinctive character. The square is enclosed by buildings on all sides, which embrace and protect it, and give the square a memorable shape and size, one that is easily imagined and remembered. In other words, a town



**TOWN HALL
POINT**

**SUPPER
CLUB TOWER**

**CLOCK
TOWER**

**TOWN
SQUARE**

MARKET ST

An aerial illustration showing the intersection of Market Street and the Main Square. The Clock Tower and the Supper Club celebrate the intersection and mark its importance. The tower of the new Town Hall can be seen nearby in the distance.

square, to really exist, has to be defined spatially, not just in name.

The town square needs a lively business to act as its anchor, a place that can draw lots of people. Many town squares lack such an anchor, and so they sit quiet and empty except on Saturday morning when the farmer's market is there, for example. With an appropriate anchor business, the square is filled with life throughout the day and the week. The proposed town center offers an example of such an anchor for the town square: a public market offering an array of small-vendor businesses under a shared roof. The public market holds the focus of the whole square with its memorable barn-shaped roof and grand entrance.

The Main Square and Market Street together form the backbone of the town center. These are the two most important community spaces in the town. Without them both, the town center does not have the scaffolding needed to begin to accrue an identity as a place. It is important to note also that these two vital components must work together. They must combine forces, so to speak, to lay the foundation for an effective center. They need to physically intersect and fuse together, so that people walking down Market Street will naturally arrive at the Main Square, and people who seek out the Main Square will also naturally find Market Street. When they intersect and merge, they feed each other. One of the most exciting and energy-filled places in the town center will be the block of Market Street that engages the side of the Main Square. This location will likely have the greatest concentration of people in the town center, filled with bikers and pedestrians, cars and buses all linking up at this central hub of the whole town.

41

- A: The Main Square
- B: Shops and Restaurants
with Apartments Above
- C: The Public Market
- D: Leased Office Space
- E: Shops and Restaurants
with Apartments Above
- F: The Supper Club
- G: Shops and Restaurants
with Apartments Above
- H: The Clock Tower
- I: Leased Office Space
- J: The Market Paseo
- K: The Public Market Garden





B

I

H

A

C

K

D

G

J

COLON CL

E

F

WASTATION

STRATEGY 9

CLUSTER LANDMARK BUILDINGS AROUND THE MAIN SQUARE

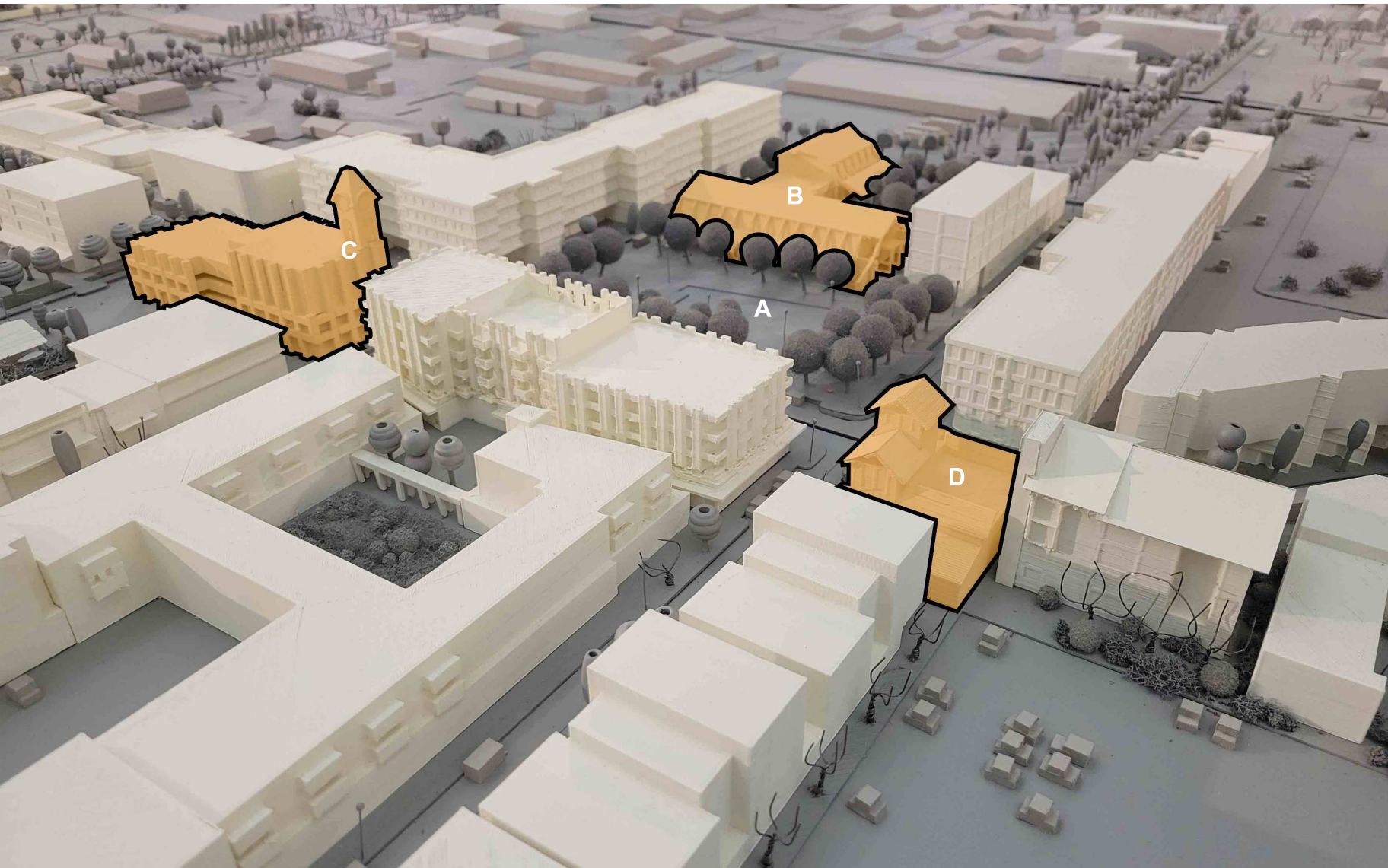
A town is made up of two kinds of buildings. The first kind has a simple, basic structure that is serviceable but ordinary. It makes up the majority of the buildings in a town center. It might include leasable office space and typical housing. These buildings are sometimes called the “fabric” of a town. They make up the common condition, which covers 80-90 percent of a townscape. The second kind is iconic and memorable. It has a kind of structure that stands out with a distinctive character. Buildings of this kind are sometimes called the “landmarks” of a town. They are usually few in number, and they offer prominent moments of distinction from the fabric of a town. Landmarks stand out and help give a town its individual character.

43

The position of landmark buildings matters. Wherever they occur, that part of a town center becomes more important. Pedestrians seek out landmark buildings because they indicate where something special and interesting is happening. When landmark buildings cluster around the main square of a town center, the landmarks and the square work together to give pedestrians a satisfying place to gather. The landmarks help show people where to gravitate, and the square receives them.

In the proposed center, three landmark buildings cluster around the Main Square. The first of these is the Public Market, which sits along the western edge of the Square. Its distinctive barn-form roof stands out and suggests a public gathering place. The second is the Clock Tower, located at the southeastern corner of the Square. The Clock Tower pins together

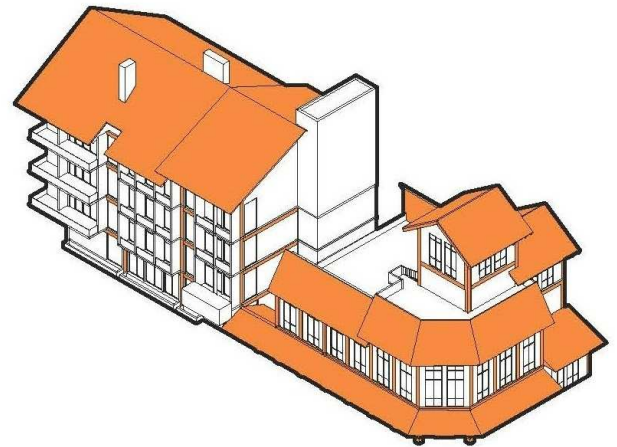
- A: The Main Square
- B: The Public Market
- C: The Clock Tower
- D: The Supper Club



the Main Square and Market Street, providing the tallest point in the town center, which can be seen from blocks away, and which more than any single element, marks the center of town. The third is the Supper Club, which anchors the northeastern corner of the Square, also along Market Street. While it is not as tall as the Clock Tower or as grand as the Public Market, the Supper Club inserts a rural vernacular building form along the edge of the Square. The almost residential feel of the Supper Club – with its gabled roofs, porches and generous overhangs – provides a welcome counterpoint to the larger buildings that surround it. Almost like a historic remnant from a bygone era, it serves to remind people of a simpler time when the town center was smaller and just getting started. We propose that whatever landmark sits at this location, whether it is a supper club or something else, it should be one of the first buildings constructed in the town center. It is a small, first anchor that gets the process of building the town center started, and can serve to remind people of the origins of the effort, even generations later.

45

This illustration of the Supper Club shows its rural Wisconsin vernacular roof forms, which give it a smaller scale and more traditional feel than the other buildings around the Main Square. As one of the first buildings constructed in the town center, it memorializes the milestone, early days of the town center-making effort.



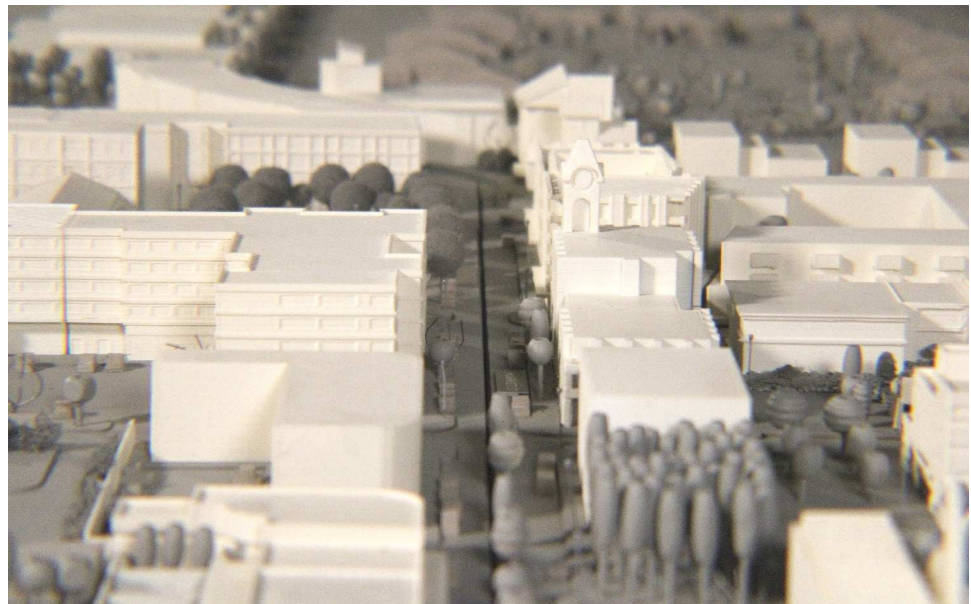
STRATEGY 10

PROVIDE DISTINCTIVE LANDMARKS ALONG MARKET STREET

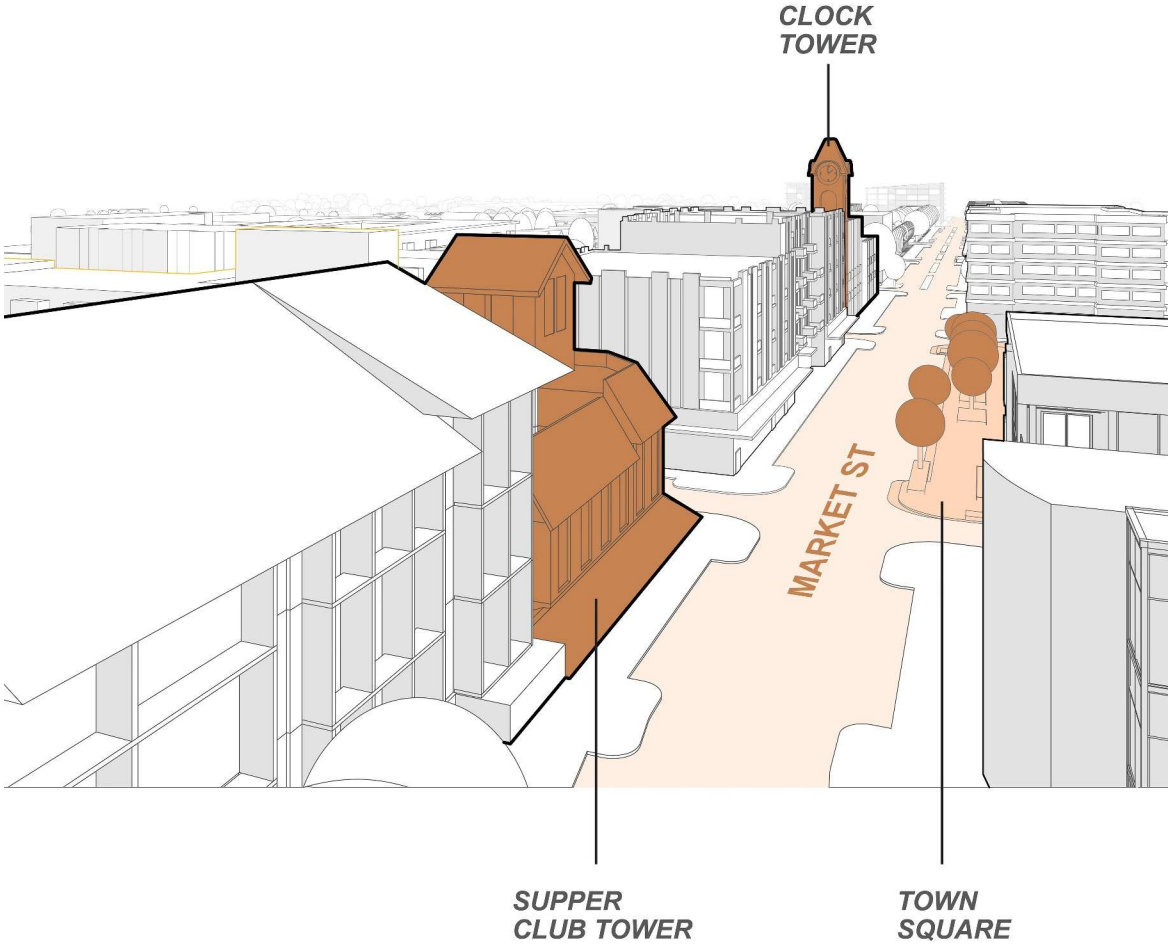
Market Street also needs landmarks positioned along its length. A landmark is often a tall structure, rising above its neighbors and catching pedestrians' attention. This describes the clock tower, which can be seen from anywhere on Market Street, and which helps pedestrians estimate their distance from the Main Square, no matter where they might be walking along Market Street.

The Clock Tower and the Supper Club operate as shared landmarks for both the Main Square and Market Street. They help pin these two main spaces of the town center together, so that the Square and the Street seem to be part of one townscape. These two landmarks sit at the intersection of Market Street and an east-west street (Colony Court and Waystation Street). This allows the landmarks to be seen from anywhere along these secondary streets, as well, which can act as a beacon to draw pedestrians into the center of town.

46



Various views of the landmark buildings along Market Street.



TOWN HALL POINT

SUPPER CLUB TOWER



**CLOCK
TOWER**

STRATEGY 11

PROVIDE WELL-FORMED COMMUNITY SPACE ALONG STREETS AND IN SQUARES

The *public spaces* of a town are volumes of outdoor air contained all around by the outer walls of buildings, which surround them. Usually these outdoor yet surrounded volumes happen along the thin line of a street or where a street opens into a town square. Streets and squares become effective community spaces only when enough buildings hold tight to their edges to give people a sense of being enclosed and contained within.

In a suburban sprawl condition there are few, if any such spaces. Streets are treated as broad causeways, many lanes wide, and edged predominately by parking lots and rolling grassy terrain that goes on and on. There is nothing to contain the street, nothing to define the edges of a volume of space through which the street runs. When pedestrians walk the edge of one of these open, wind-swept causeways, they feel like they are nowhere. They are adrift on a vast, edgeless expanse of countryside.

A town center needs enclosure - around its streets and squares - so that a clear place is marked out. When this happens, each street and square defines a protected zone that feels safe, contained and known. When people inhabit such places, they can understand clearly when they are "in town" or "out in the countryside." The space of streets and squares defines the extents of the town center, and without these spaces, there is no recognizable place that provides a respite from the endless stretches of open pavement, clustered houses and undeveloped fields.

When a town is made up of well-defined spaces, it lends itself well to wayfinding and a satisfying sense of exploration. Each space offers visual

A rich collection of squares, courtyards, gardens and streetscapes, varied in size and shape, bring a town center to life and offer people a collection of "outdoor rooms" where community life unfolds.

A: The Public Market Garden Courtyard

B: The Main Square

C: Colony Ct Streetscape

D: The Market Paseo

E: A Garden Courtyard

F: Waystation St Streetscape

G: Beer Garden

H: The Commons Square

J: The Curved Block of Market St

K: The Entry into the north end
of the Paseo

cues that suggest what kind of space will be encountered next, and this creates a sense of being part of a larger network of interrelated spaces, which work together to define the town center.

Along the edges of a street or square, it is helpful to create a collection of layers that give people plenty of small and comfortable places to walk through and linger in. Layers of space along the edges of streets and squares provides a refuge and a place to linger, which facilitates people-watching, eating lunch, or sipping a cup of coffee. Such layers are typically near the bustling flow of pedestrians as they walk and bike, but just far enough away to feel a bit more tranquil and protected.



STRATEGY 12

ESTABLISH A PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY STROLLING CIRCUIT

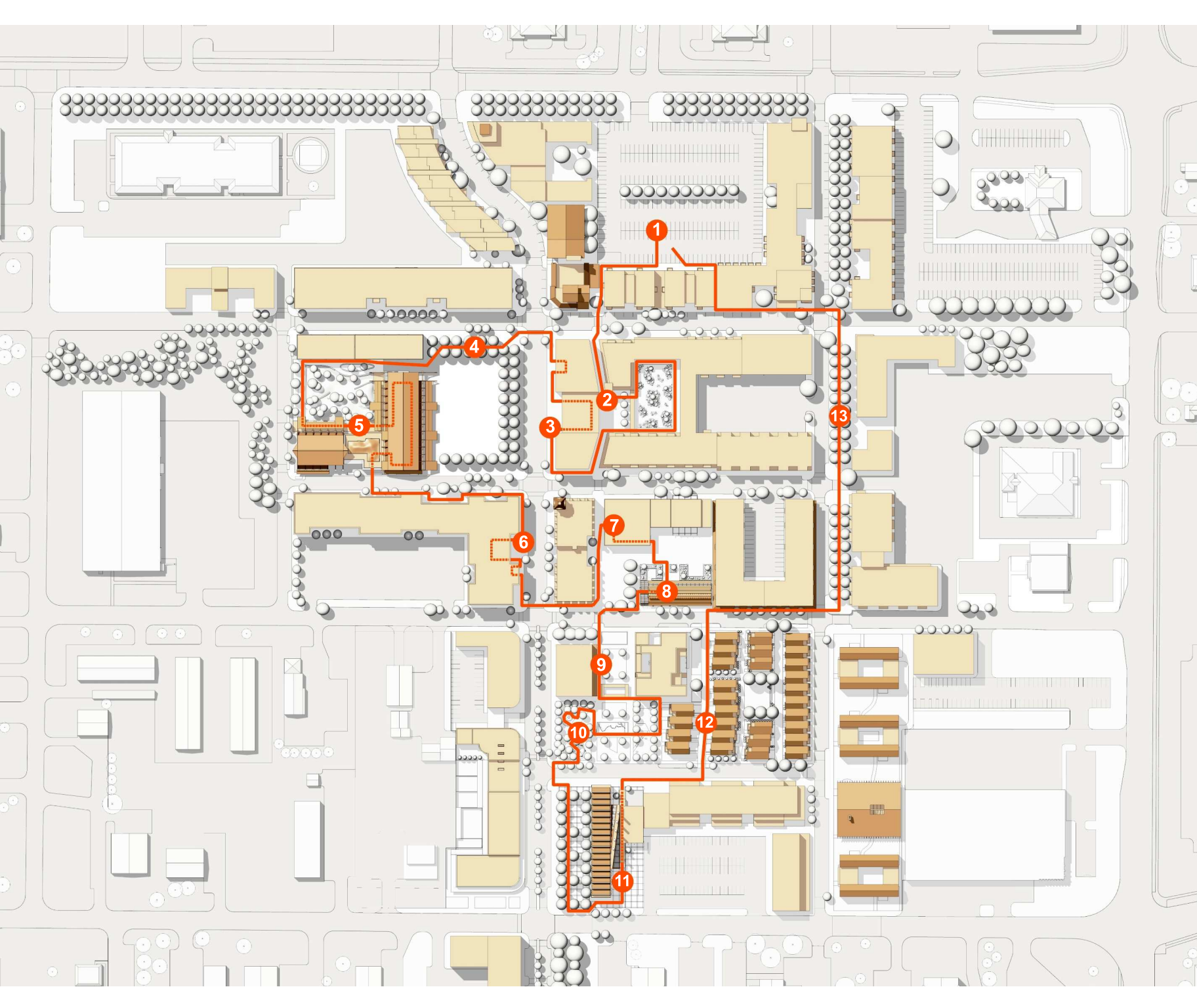
Urban planners of the 1960s envisioned an impeccably efficient America in which people drove along wide, smooth roads to pristine, generous parking lots, where they would leave their cars and walk directly into a building to acquire goods or services. After completing their business, they would promptly return to their cars and drive home. This vision has become a stark reality in the Town of Beloit, as it has in thousands of suburban communities. People now realize that living a good life requires so much more than transport efficiency. It is the quality of experience that unfolds along the way that makes all the difference.

51

A town center is more than a place to quickly conduct an exchange of money and goods. It is a place for people to stay and linger, to enjoy the experience of being there. A town center is successful to the extent people want to be there even when they have no practical business to conduct at all. One of the tests of a good town center is: do pedestrians want to walk the streets, taking a leisurely stroll about town? The luxury of a tranquil stroll is difficult to find in the suburbs. People walk the dangerous edges of country roads, just to have some place to go and walk. They walk along nature trails in undevelopable tracks of land, which can be pleasant, but the joys of strolling should also be accommodated by a town center. A good town center provides a *strolling circuit*: a network of streetscapes lined with shops, restaurants, squares and gardens, which draw the bustle of people and become a delight to traverse. A well-defined strolling circuit attracts people from far beyond the borders of town, enticing them to “come into

An example stroll around the town center:

- 1: Arrive at the main public parking lot
- 2: Enter the Market Paseo (pedestrian street) and walk through a courtyard garden
- 3: Window shop along Market Street
- 4: Walk through the Main Square under the trees and sit by a fountain
- 5: Get some lunch from a food vendor and sit next to the Public Market Garden
- 6: Do some more shopping on Market Street
- 7: Taste a regional beer at the microbrewery or...
- 8: ... get a refreshing cup of tea at a coffee shop
- 9: Listen to live music in The Commons
- 10: Let the kids blow off some steam in the children's play area
- 11: Watch the student-mechanics at the Vocational Education Center learn how to repair cars
- 12: Walk through a kid-friendly neighborhood
- 13: Stroll down a quiet residential street under a generous tree canopy



town” and enjoy a process of window shopping, people-watching, conversing, and stopping along the way for a meal, a beverage or some entertainment. This experience is fundamentally different from the quiet, solitary trek along a nature trail, and it is no less important to a high-quality life.

A strolling circuit is a vital part of how a town center functions as a “third place” - not home, not work, but a third center of life that focuses on leisure and social engagement. It is these less efficient, but no less needed, aspects of life that the 1960s urban planners always seem to forget about. Perhaps it is because a good strolling circuit defies formulas and statistical metrics. A good strolling circuit cultivates feelings of wellbeing and groundedness, and celebrates a magnanimous spirit of community. In terms of its configuration, a good strolling circuit loops through town across at least a few blocks, concentrated in the heart of town where people can experience the hustle and bustle of life, where they can see lots of interesting things going on, and where they can explore the newly-stocked delights of shops and restaurants.

STRATEGY 13

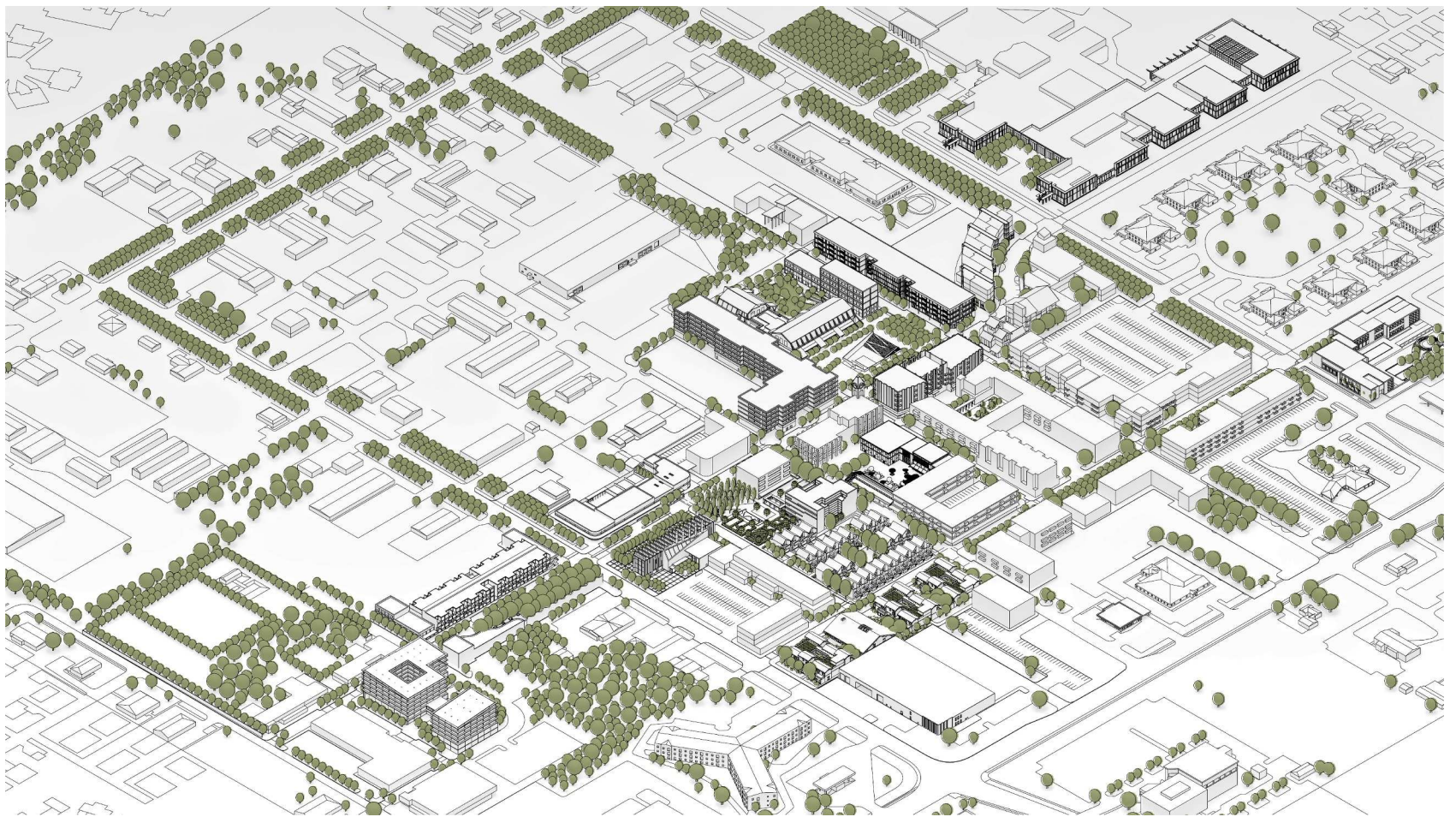
WEAVE TREES AND GARDENS GENEROUSLY INTO THE TOWN CENTER

Large cities have traditionally had a tense relationship with parks, gardens and natural settings. The “concrete jungle” tends to marginalize such greenery, keeping parks and gardens tightly bound and limited in number. Small towns, in contrast, have traditionally had an easy symbiosis with greenery. Often, a town’s Main Square doubles as a lush garden filled with ancient trees and beds of perennial flowers, right in the heart of town. Perhaps this easy bond with greenery happens because small towns sit in close proximity to the rural landscape. The people who traditionally inhabited small towns were farmers, ranchers and horticulturists who had a natural affinity for plants and trees.

54

A sense of agricultural wisdom no longer colors suburban communities. Their residents come from every walk of life, and the connection to nature is more precarious. While suburbs have no shortage of undeveloped land, and large fields and groves can often be seen while driving along country roads, this uncultivated land does not offer the rejuvenating experience of immersion in a beautiful natural world. For that, people need parks, gardens and tree-lined streets. They need to see nature woven together with their town, so that nature and the town present a harmonious whole. When people experience this, they can feel a certain oneness with the world, a certain kind of belonging that comes from a sense of a harmonious human relationship to nature.

Small towns benefit from the interweaving of trees and gardens throughout a town center. Rather than make a single, large, generic park



This aerial illustration shows the trees of the town center. Trees are one of the easiest and least expensive ways to enhance pedestrians' quality of experience. The more trees the better. Notice also that the tree-lined streets extend outward from the town center into the adjacent business district, especially along Bartells Drive, Colony Court, and Huebbe Parkway. This helps merge together the business district and the town center into a unified, larger neighborhood.

on the outskirts of town, it is better to create a collection of smaller “pocket” gardens tucked into leftover spaces right in the heart of the town center. It is better to fill public squares with trees and plantings, and to line every street with trees.

When making a garden, it is not enough to make a flat square of lawn with some obligatory shrubs along the edges. This kind of “gas station landscaping” happens all over suburban communities, and does little to create the sought-after harmony. In order to make the kind of beautiful cultivated places that people love, a town needs to go beyond the kind of plantings that require minimum maintenance. It is true that maintaining gardens is a significant expense for a municipality, and this is why municipalities should get out of the business of trying to do it themselves. A new approach is needed. Consider working with local horticulture societies such as *Madison Area Master Gardeners* and *Wisconsin Garden Clubs Federation* to develop a more collaborative approach to plantings and their maintenance. Such societies are often looking for land to cultivate, and they have the manpower, the expertise and the creative exuberance to build and maintain remarkable community gardens at minimal taxpayer expense.

One of the classic mistakes made in the development of a town center is to underestimate the value of tree-lined streets. The tendency is to sprinkle a few obligatory trees here and there, just to follow the formula. But this is not enough. Careful consideration should be made to the spacing of trees along streets, and to the species selected. These decisions require special expertise held by landscape architects. Civil engineers, despite all the value they offer in the process of building a town, do not have the expertise needed to make these crucial design decisions. Also consider the power of planting two or even three layers of trees along one side of a street to make what is traditionally called an *alleé*. We have included a couple *alleés* in the proposed town center.

Trees do not need to be added all-at-once. It might become a Town tradition to add five new trees to the town center each year, gradually expanding its greenery. The trees might be donated as memorials to notable citizens of the town, living and deceased. The more meaning can be attached to the trees -- and the more they can be tied into town traditions -- the better.

STRATEGY 14

INCORPORATE ELEMENTS OF THE WISCONSIN RURAL VERNACULAR INTO THE BUILDINGS OF THE TOWN CENTER

57

The growth of the American suburbs owes its success to national chain stores, which use economies of scale to reduce the cost of building stores in locations with low population density, which is characteristic of suburbs. The downside is, of course, that nearly every building in a suburb such as the Town of Beloit becomes a generic instance of a template store or template office building, one of thousands built again and again across the country by national corporations. Retail architecture is limited to strip shopping centers, “big boxes,” and “small box” fast-casual restaurants. Office architecture is limited to the innocuous corporate style found in any business park nationwide. In terms of human experience, the result is a townscape devoid of any connection to the particular place and to the particular community that is the Town of Beloit.

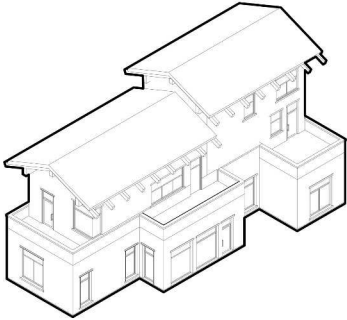
One way to resist this erosion of local culture is to infuse the architecture of the town center with motifs, materials and visual treatments that are reminiscent of the Wisconsin rural countryside. This might involve echoes of the delightful roof forms of agricultural buildings from barns to silos. It might involve the use of tough and weathered materials found so often across the countryside: silvered wood, corrugated metal, and stone masonry, for instance. These materials do not need to be used everywhere to have their warming effect. In some cases, limited highlights using such special materials can have a noteworthy, positive impact.

While some buildings in the town center should embrace elements of the rural tradition, others can still be treated as generic structures. The

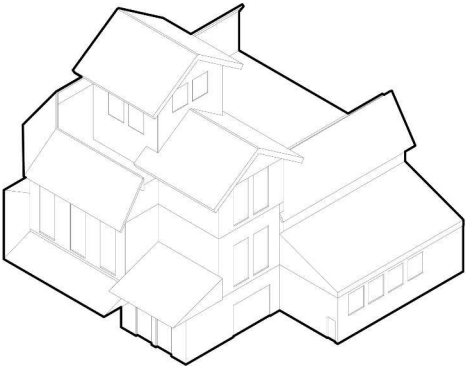
idea that ordinary buildings can provide a backdrop for a few buildings with exceptional and memorable character is an important principle of good town design. This is the idea described earlier: that of “fabric” buildings and “landmark” buildings. It resolves the apparent conflict between the need for low-cost national-chain architecture and the need for a special character of place. It need not be all-or-nothing. A blend of the two approaches is best. When a town center has a good blend, the more distinctive buildings that contribute most to the character of the town stand out, becoming the notable landmarks at key locations. These special buildings should command high-visibility locations along Market Street and around the Main Square, as described earlier, and also in other secondary squares such as The Commons.

The following catalog shows examples of such key buildings in the proposed town center. Here they are organized by some noteworthy traits of Wisconsin rural vernacular architecture.

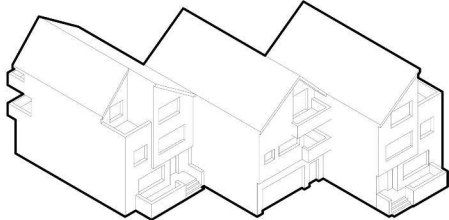
SMALL UNITS AGGREGATED TOGETHER



Warner Street Co-Housing

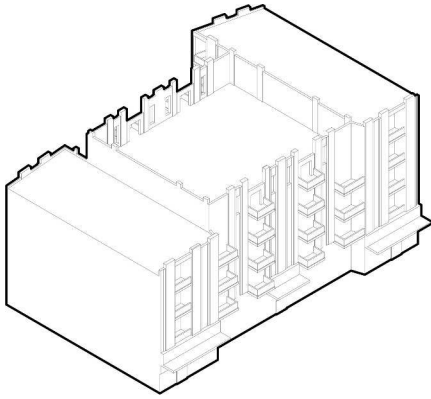


The Supper Club

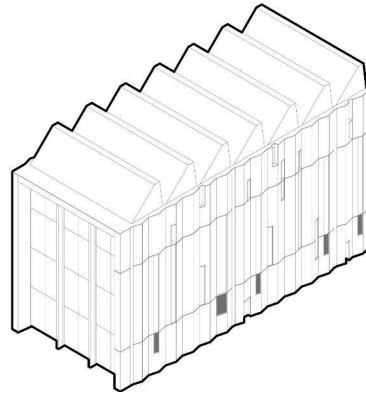


Row Housing at The Commons

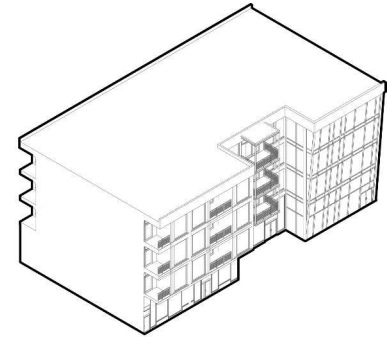
TALL AND PROUD WITH VERTICAL LINES



Market St Luxury Apartments



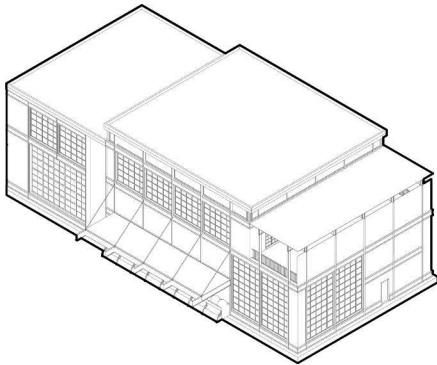
Vocational Education Center



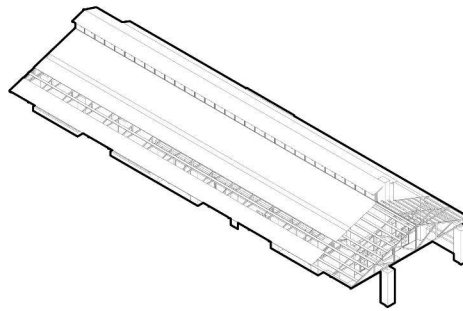
Young Professional Apartments

59

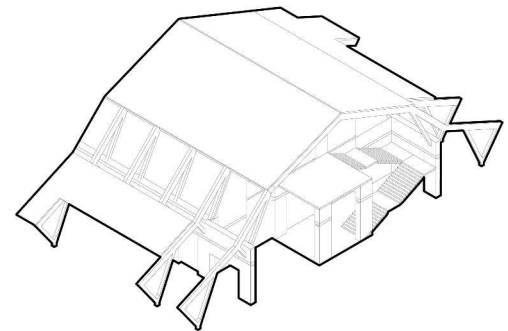
HONEST, STRAIGHTFORWARD CONSTRUCTION



Micro-Brewery and Restaurant

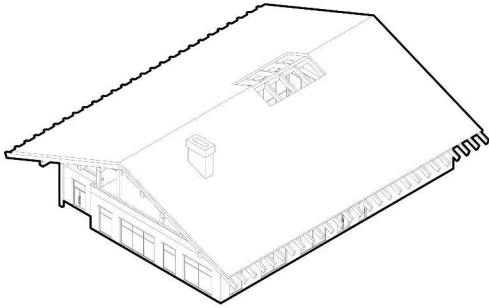


Coffee Shop

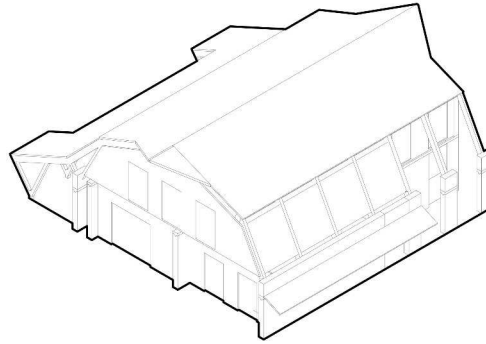


The Public Market

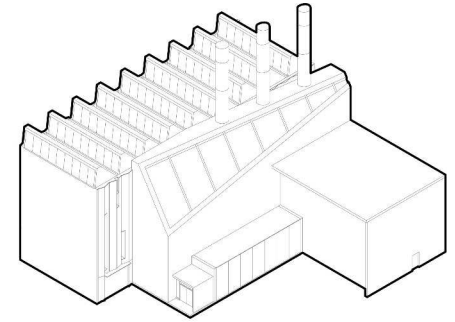
MEMORABLE ROOF FORMS



Warner Street Co-Housing

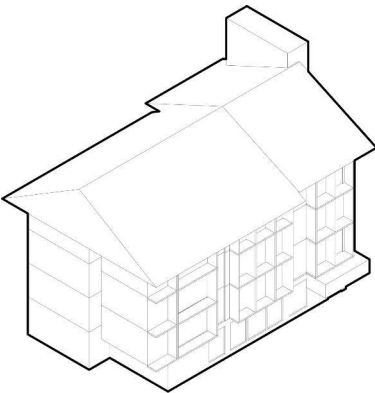


The Public Market

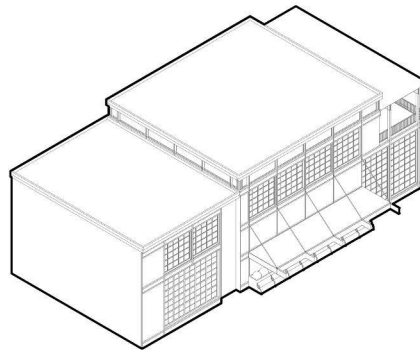


Vocational Education Center

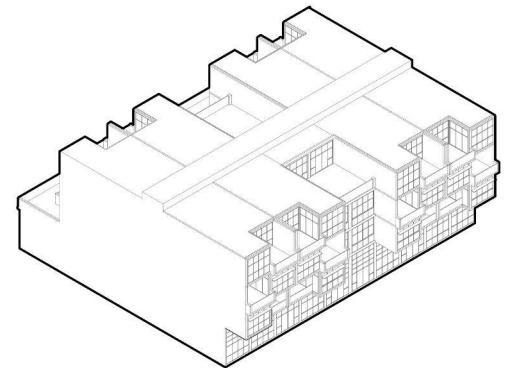
A LOOSE SENSE OF REPETITION



Bed & Breakfast



Micro-Brewery and Restaurant



South Market St Apartments

THREE POSSIBLE FUTURES

SCENARIO PLANNING FOR THE TOWN CENTER

The citizens of small Midwestern towns have an amazing can-do spirit. Living far afield from the robust infrastructure, redundant supply chains and social safety nets of metropolitan areas, the citizens of small towns pride themselves on being capable individuals who can take care of themselves. They have energy, confidence and know-how in abundance, and usually enough money to get quite a lot done. They are ready, willing and able to move their town forward, if but for one thing. They do not usually know how to identify what is “forward.” They do not know what their town should look like and become. They lack forward momentum only because they lack a clear vision of a better future.

61

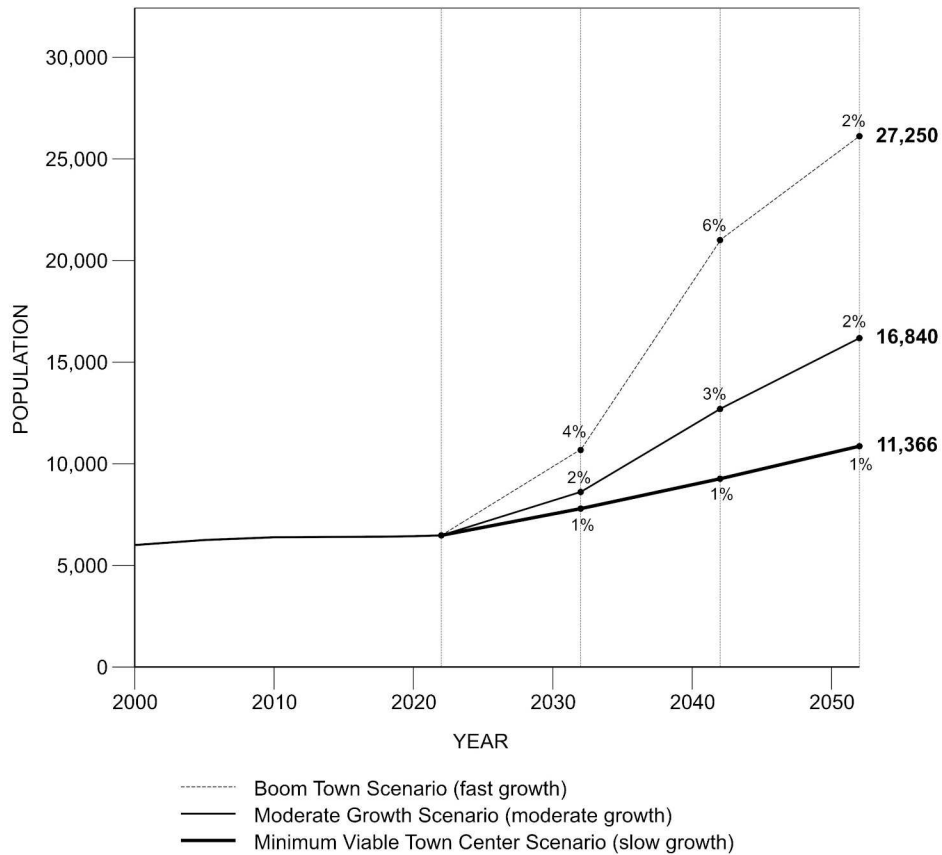
Visualization is a powerful thing. It is used by athletes who imagine themselves running their best race or throwing the perfect pass. Seeing it clearly in their mind’s eye is the first step toward realizing it in action. Likewise, business owners strategize the ambitious advancement of their operations in timelines, business plans and spreadsheets, projecting a clear path into the future. A community benefits from a similar kind of visualization. It needs to see a clear image of what its community could become, so it can direct its actions along some tangible course. Such a clear image is often all that is needed to activate the skill and determination of townspeople, and get them moving forward.

And yet the future is an elusive thing. There are so many variables involved.

How can one really know what the future holds? It is rarely sufficient to make a single future-projection and be able to say with any confidence that this one future is inevitable. Visualizing the future effectively requires consideration of a spectrum of possible outcomes. While this might seem like an impossibly broad spectrum, the science of *scenario planning* has shown that the spectrum of possibilities can usually be modeled effectively with three or four “scenarios.” Even if there are a million possible futures, most of these are only slight variations of each other, and so they can be lumped together into a surprisingly small number of truly different future scenarios.

Our proposal for a new town center for the Town of Beloit uses scenario planning to model a clear and attainable future. It does this using three scenarios, each driven by a different rate of future population growth for the town. We believe that this particular variable - town population - will be the driver of its future development, as it so often is with any small community. Because it is difficult to predict what the Town of Beloit’s population growth will be in the coming decades, we have visualized three possible futures, one based on a slow rate of growth, one based on a moderate rate, and one based on a fast rate. Even at a slow rate of growth, we believe the Town of Beloit can support a new town center, though one modest in size. At the fastest and most optimistic rate of growth, the town center could become a community hub of startling size and density, with huge implications for the economic prosperity and cultural identity of the town.

In order to appreciate the population growth projections we use as the basis of our three scenarios, it is important to understand the town’s growth in prior decades. Even at its slowest rate of growth, the Town of Beloit has grown at least 1% per year, per decade, so this becomes our benchmark for the slow growth scenario, which we call the “Minimum Viable Town Center” scenario. We define slow growth as 1% per year, per decade over



This graph shows the population projections for the three town center scenarios. In the year 2052, the Minimum Viable Town Center scenario assumes a population of 11,366. The Moderate Growth scenario assumes a population of 16,840. The Boom Town scenario assumes a population of 27,250.

three decades, until 2052, resulting in a population of approximately 11,000 persons.

The Minimum Viable Town Center scenario involves the least amount of new building and street development of the three scenarios, and yet it strives to nonetheless achieve the minimum amount of development needed to create a place that feels like a town center, and has a good chance to become the kind of thriving center of community life that is needed to make a successful place. For this reason, the Minimum Viable Town Center Scenario represents a minimum aspiration. Even if 1% growth per year across three decades seems ambitious, it is worth asking the question as a community, “What would we need to do to achieve at least this rate of growth?” The prize for achieving it is great: a viable town center that is thriving.

If we consider what is happening across the Midwest in similar sized towns that experience a boom, we can anticipate growth rates of up to 3-6% per year until 2052, resulting in a population in the Town of Beloit of approximately 27,000 persons. This future is what we call the “Boom Town” scenario. It involves a rate of growth associated with so-called boom towns, which typically see a 3x population growth across thirty years or less. In the event of a boom in the Town of Beloit, the town center would become a whole new district of development, providing an entire new neighborhood of shops, office buildings, restaurants, houses and parks. The photographs of the town center model shown throughout this book depict the boom scenario.

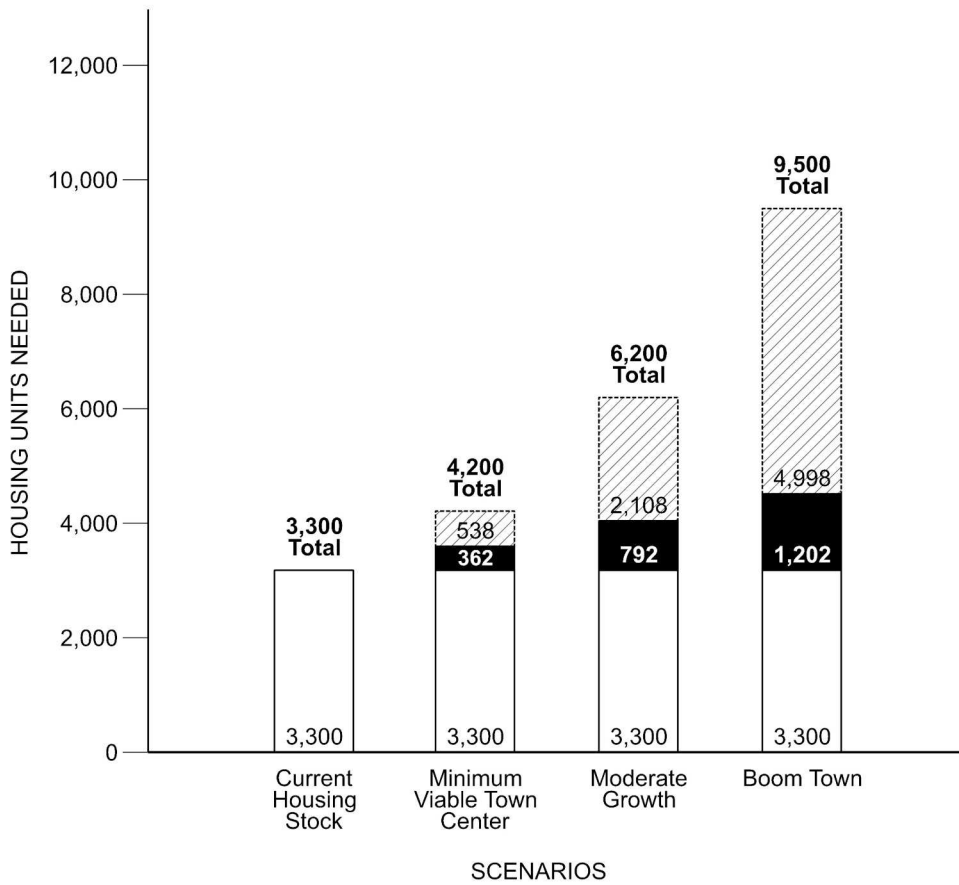
When the people who live in a small town like the Town of Beloit consider a boom scenario, their initial reaction is often one of doubt. They think, “That could never happen here. We will always be a small town.” But booms happen more often than you might think, and most small communities are unprepared when it happens. They, too, thought it would




never be so, and so they never made a plan. And when a boom hits, it hits fast. You are in the middle of it before you know it. There is no time to plan at that point. All a community can do is react, and that usually leads to bad outcomes. It leads to a gigantic missed opportunity. All the amazing resources that flood into a town during a boom get misallocated, driven toward town-making efforts that are disorganized, contradictory and based on stale, outdated ideas. Without a plan in place, when a boom hits people grab at whatever half-baked idea they can, because they are caught up in the wave. This is the danger of not taking the boom scenario seriously.

What are the chances of a boom happening in the Town of Beloit?

There are compelling reasons to think that the chances are pretty good. A boom happens when all the right demographic forces align to point to a town being an ideal place to live. When this happens, suddenly, everybody wants to live there and people start flooding in. To assess your chances of a boom, you have to assess your chances of becoming this kind of ideal place to live in the region. When people choose a place to live, one major consideration is the quality of the schools. This is perhaps the greatest strength of the Town of Beloit, which has one of the strongest school systems in the region. Another major consideration is proximity to larger cities with lots of job opportunities. The Town of Beloit is positioned within easy commute distance to the City of Beloit, Janesville, and Rockford, Illinois. Another major consideration is the cost of housing, which is very affordable in the Town of Beloit as compared to other towns in the region. Other things also work to the Town of Beloit's advantage, such as taxes being pretty low and the town administration being efficient and friendly. Also, the recent efforts of the City of Beloit to revitalize its historic downtown provides a helpful synergy. There are a lot of major and minor ingredients afoot that could lead to a boom.

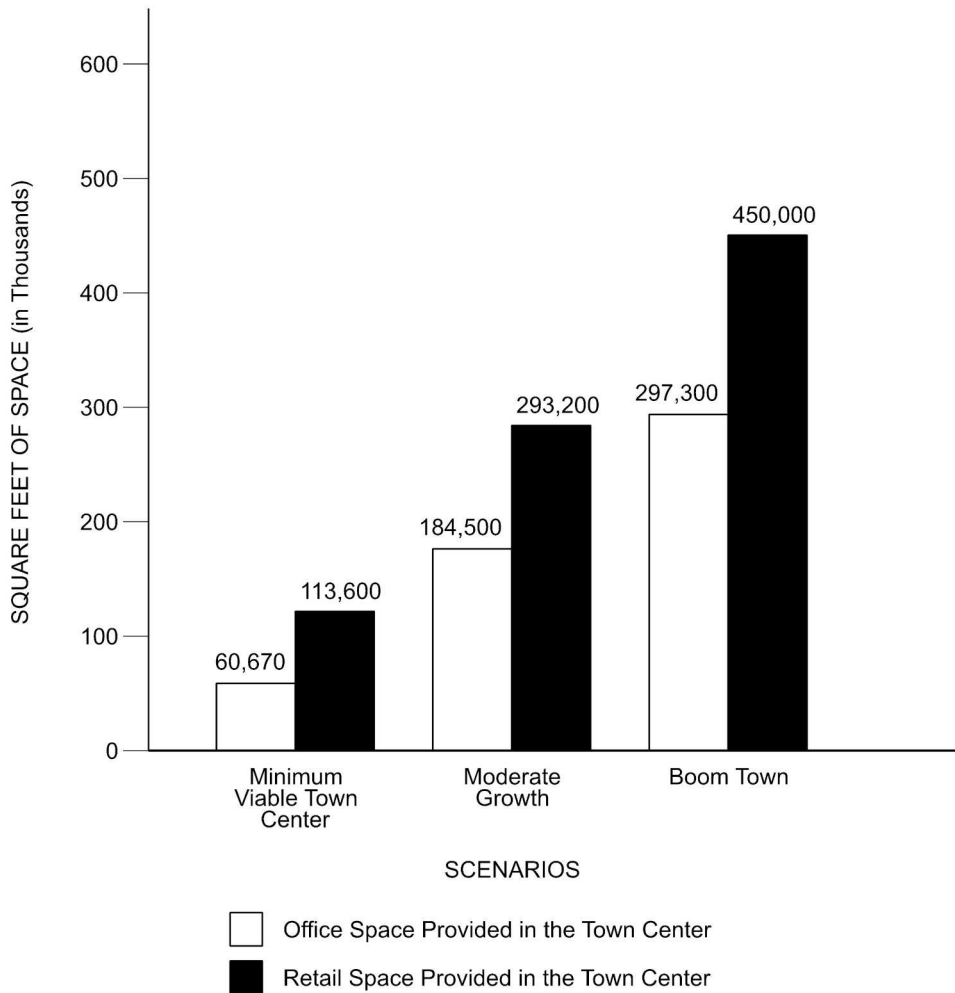
This graph shows the projected housing needs for each town center scenario. The Minimum Viable Town Center scenario requires little additional housing. The Moderate Growth scenario requires significant additional housing beyond what can be satisfied by the town center. The 2,108 new houses needed beyond the town center might be achievable with additional single-family houses. The real challenge comes with the Boom Town scenario. This scenario would require nearly 5,000 new houses outside of the town center. It is unlikely that the Town of Beloit has adequate remaining land to accommodate this number of new single-family houses. This indicates that in a fast growth future, multi-family housing would need to be provided even beyond the town center.



-  Additional Housing Units Needed (Beyond the Town Center)
-  Housing Units Provided in the Town Center
-  Existing Housing Stock

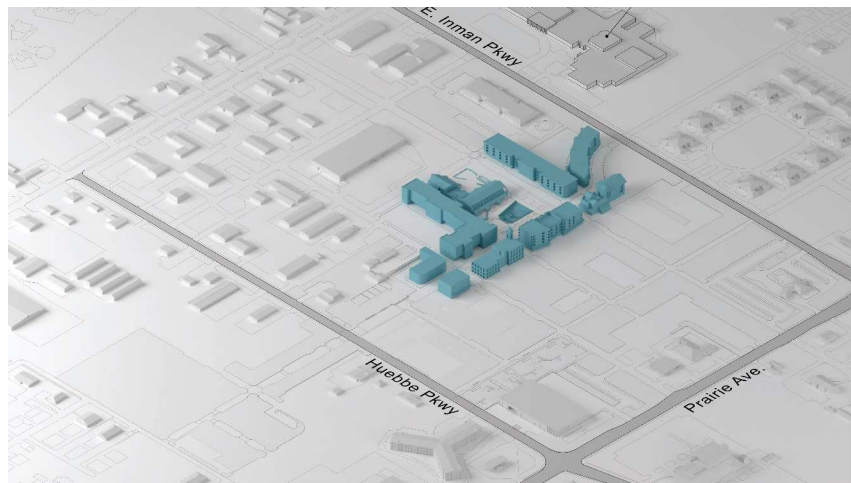
Even if a boom never happens in the Town of Beloit, it is nonetheless illuminating to consider the boom scenario. The boom scenario shows the most expansive, most optimistic version of the future, where the town becomes the most thriving version of itself. Visualizing this version of the future helps put all the lesser manifestations into context. The Minimum Viable Town Center scenario and the Moderate Growth scenario both rely on the Boom Town scenario to calibrate their degree of optimism and to set their more conservative development goals.

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This graph shows the total amount of new leasable office and leasable retail space provided by the town center in each scenario.

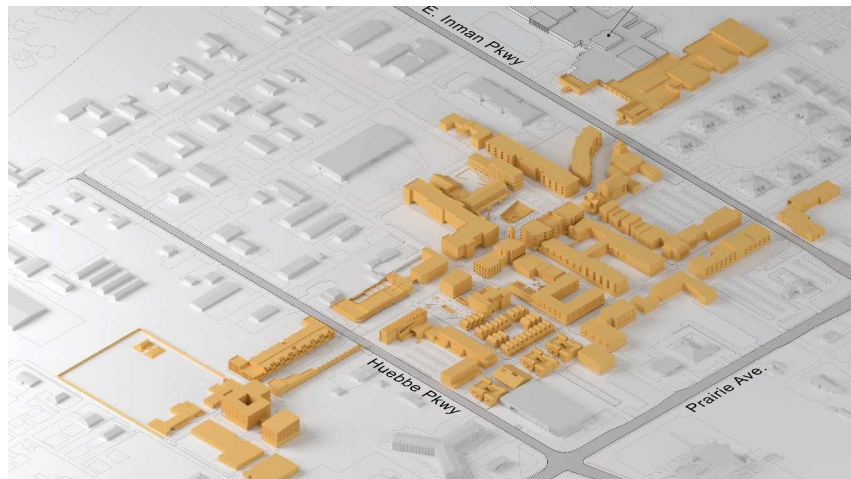
An aerial diagram showing the extent of construction involved in the Minimum Viable Town Center scenario. This scenario includes nine buildings, the Main Square, Market Street, and two east-west streets: Colony Court and Waystation Street.



An aerial diagram showing the extent of construction involved in the Moderate Growth scenario. This scenario adds: significant senior housing, the micro-brewery entertainment plaza, The Commons educational hub, and a new Town Hall building, as well as significant housing. Development stays constrained between Inman Parkway to the north and Huebbe Parkway to the south.



An aerial diagram showing the extent of construction involved in the Boom Town scenario. This scenario adds: The Warner Street residential neighborhood, the South Gate neighborhood to the south of Huebbe Parkway, and a significant expansion of the high school to the north of Inman Parkway.



LOOK AND FEEL

VISUALIZING THE TOWN CENTER

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In order to appreciate the proposed town center and relate to it on a personal level, the townspeople of the Town of Beloit need to see tangible images of what the place could look like. While maps and diagrams are helpful to understand overarching town development strategies, at some point people need to see what it would look like to live in such a town. In support of this important need, the proposed town center has been developed to a level of detail that goes beyond that of a typical master plan. We have taken over a dozen particular buildings and community spaces in the proposed town center and developed imagery that shows materials, construction details, garden plantings, sunlight and all the ingredients that make a place come alive.

Building materials and colors have a significant impact on the atmosphere of a place. We show a warmer color palette to create an inviting atmosphere. Many of our buildings feature wood, brick, weathered metal, and occasionally a pop of a brighter color for contrast. These natural, earthy materials soften a place, contributing to a more pleasing and comfortable environment.

You will notice that many of the images that follow show people inhabiting the place. By showing people and their interactions, it becomes easier to imagine what it would be like to live there. You might be able to better imagine yourself going to the brewery with friends on a summer weekend or watching your kids play in the Main Square after a day of shopping. Importantly, the images also include trees, bushes, grasses, and

flowers to show the potential of gardens, parks and tree-lined streets, which are an irreplaceable value.

In order to flesh out the town in this more immersive way, we have made many assumptions about the particular kinds of businesses that would setup shop in the town. This is purely for the purposes of helping people imagine what it could be like. We do not mean to suggest that particular plots of land should be used for the particular purposes we suggest, although something similar would probably make a good fit. There is no way to predict what particular businesses will come to the town center, and it is important to keep an open mind. So we are here riding a fine line. On one hand we want to represent a richly detailed vision of what the town center might be like, and yet we think about all of the images that follow as a set of open-ended possibilities, which are mere suggestions of how the town center might evolve. It is a simulation that plays out a set of particular possibilities for the sake of testing the previously discussed strategies in more detail. We hope you will allow yourself to be immersed in the simulation and to just see how it feels to you.

SLOW GROWTH SCENARIO

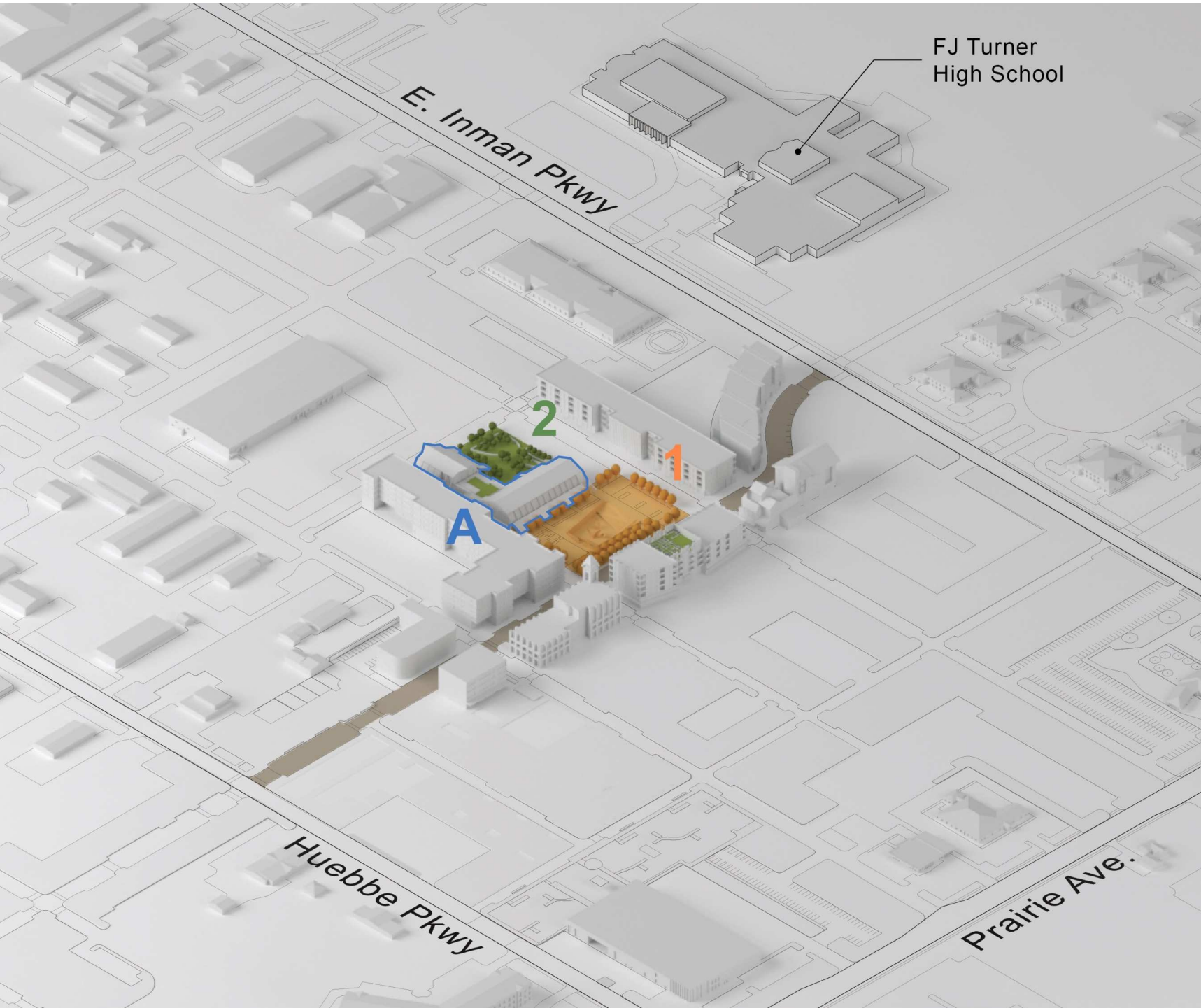
THE MINIMUM VIABLE TOWN CENTER

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Many small towns fall short of reaching the critical mass of buildings, streets and squares needed to make a thriving center that conveys a sense of being someplace special. The southern Wisconsin countryside holds many such small towns with centers that almost were and could have been. At some point in the past they started-up. A few businesses built storefronts near each other, and a street began to densify and turn into a “Main Street.” But then things fizzled. One thing that can help avoid this fate in the Town of Beloit is to define the Minimum Viable Town Center: the minimum number of streets, squares and buildings needed to make a small but thriving center. Defining clearly what this minimum threshold consists of can help motivate a community to keep going and to do what it takes to get there.

There is no scientific formula for this kind of estimate. We have used our experience in urban design and our knowledge of many similar small towns as the basis for making a visual estimate of what a Minimum Viable Town Center looks like. It includes one main street for commerce (i.e., Market Street) and a few, short supporting streets, which border one well-defined Main Square. We predict that nine buildings could adequately define Market Street and the Main Square. One of these buildings should provide a major public draw and act as a hub of community gathering. In the proposal, this is the role played by the Public Market. An additional draw is a community green space developed as a garden or park. In the proposal, this is the Public Market Garden. Enough streets must link from

A: The Public Market
1: The Main Square
2: The Public Market Garden



FJ Turner
High School

E. Inman Pkwy

A

2

1

Huebbe Pkwy

Prairie Ave.

the town center to Inman Parkway, Prairie Avenue and other surrounding streets to provide a few options for accessing the town center. Moving easily into and out of the center on foot, by bike and by car is essential to the town center's success. These access streets consist of an extension of the existing Colony Court into the town center, and the making of a new Waystation Street. Both these streets run east-west.

These are the basic ingredients that must be established first. This is the backbone of the town center.

The nine buildings and Main Square that make up the Minimum Viable Town Center scenario.

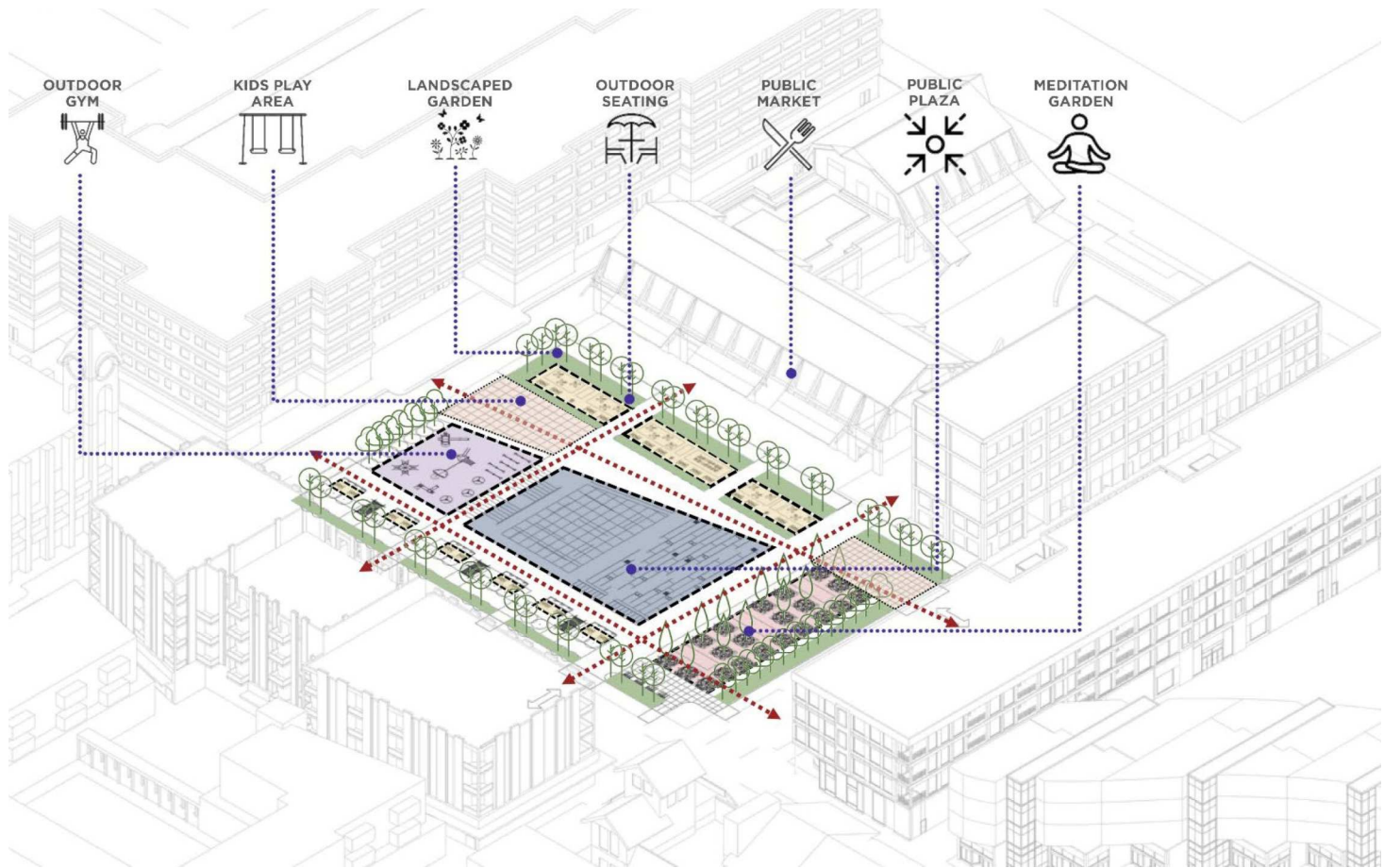


THE MAIN SQUARE

The Main Square is the social center of town. It offers the largest outdoor space in the town center, large enough to host festivals, arts & craft fairs, car shows and other community-wide events. It is a hub of commerce with many businesses lining the edges of the Square. Along one side is the Public Market, which is a destination for locals and visitors to the town center. The Square is organized into layers of space, which help to break up its large expanse into areas where smaller groups of people can feel comfortable relaxing. A sunken area in the middle of the Square provides an ideal location for outdoor concerts, speakers and temporary art display.

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This illustration shows how the walking surface of the Main Square is activated with many features and sub-areas.



The central, recessed area of the Main Square provides a focal point for live music, public presentations and the display of art and merchandise.





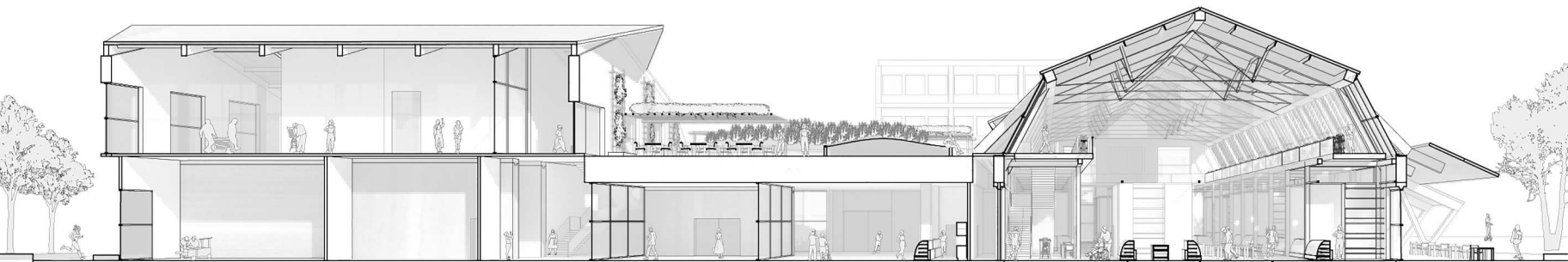
Smaller-scale spaces all around the edges of the Main Square provide places for people to sit in the shade, eat lunch, play with children and converse.



THE PUBLIC MARKET

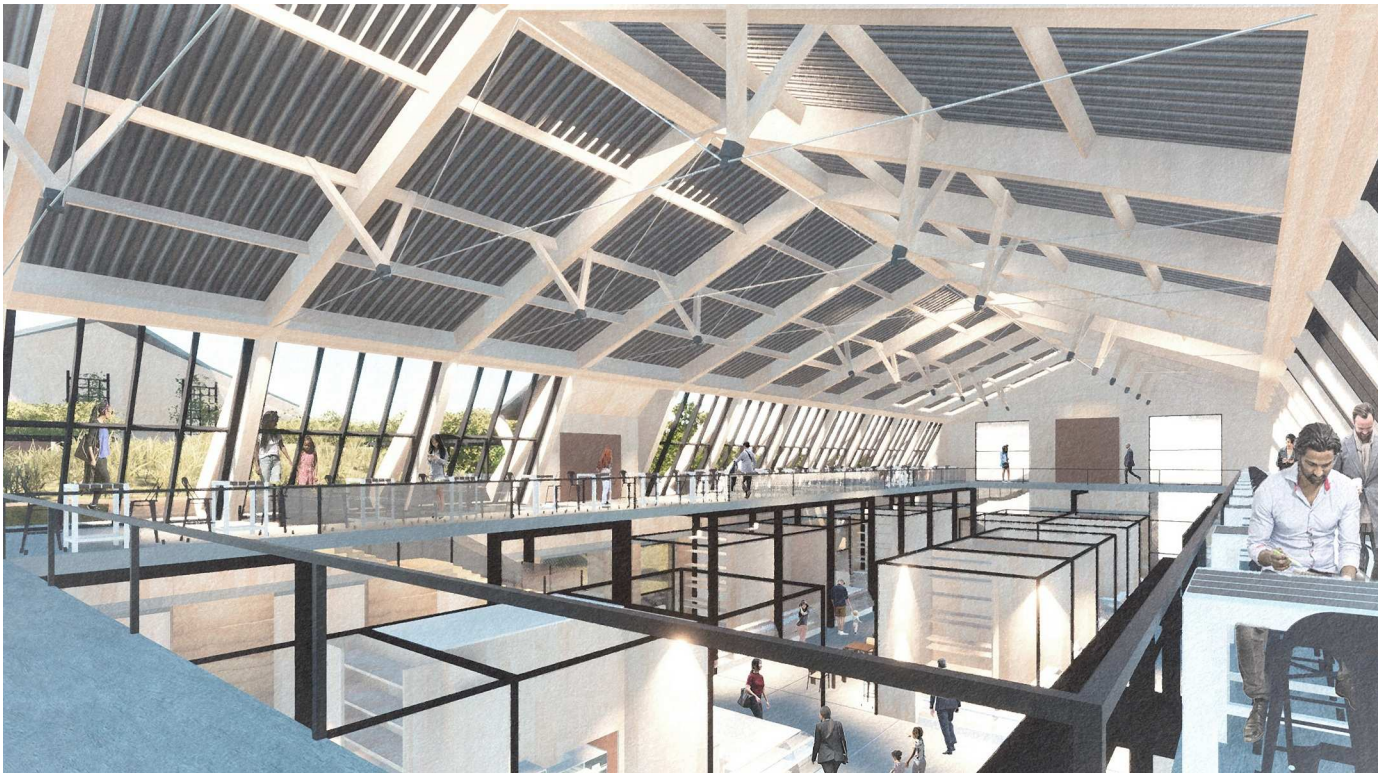
The Public Market is a landmark building and hub of community gathering, shopping and dining. As one of the first projects to be constructed in the town center, the Public Market provides an anchor destination for the town center from its early days. The Grand Hall, with its dramatic vaulted roof, provides leasable vendor stalls to small businesses that sell specialty foods, gifts, wine and other goods. All around the edges of the Market is outdoor seating for lunch and dinner, where people can eat and converse while looking out across the Main Square and the Public Market Garden. The Market offers a mezzanine for indoor dining. In an adjacent wing, the Market offers a maker space and educational programs related to starting a small retail business, and specifically, how to run a successful vendor stall in its Grand Hall.

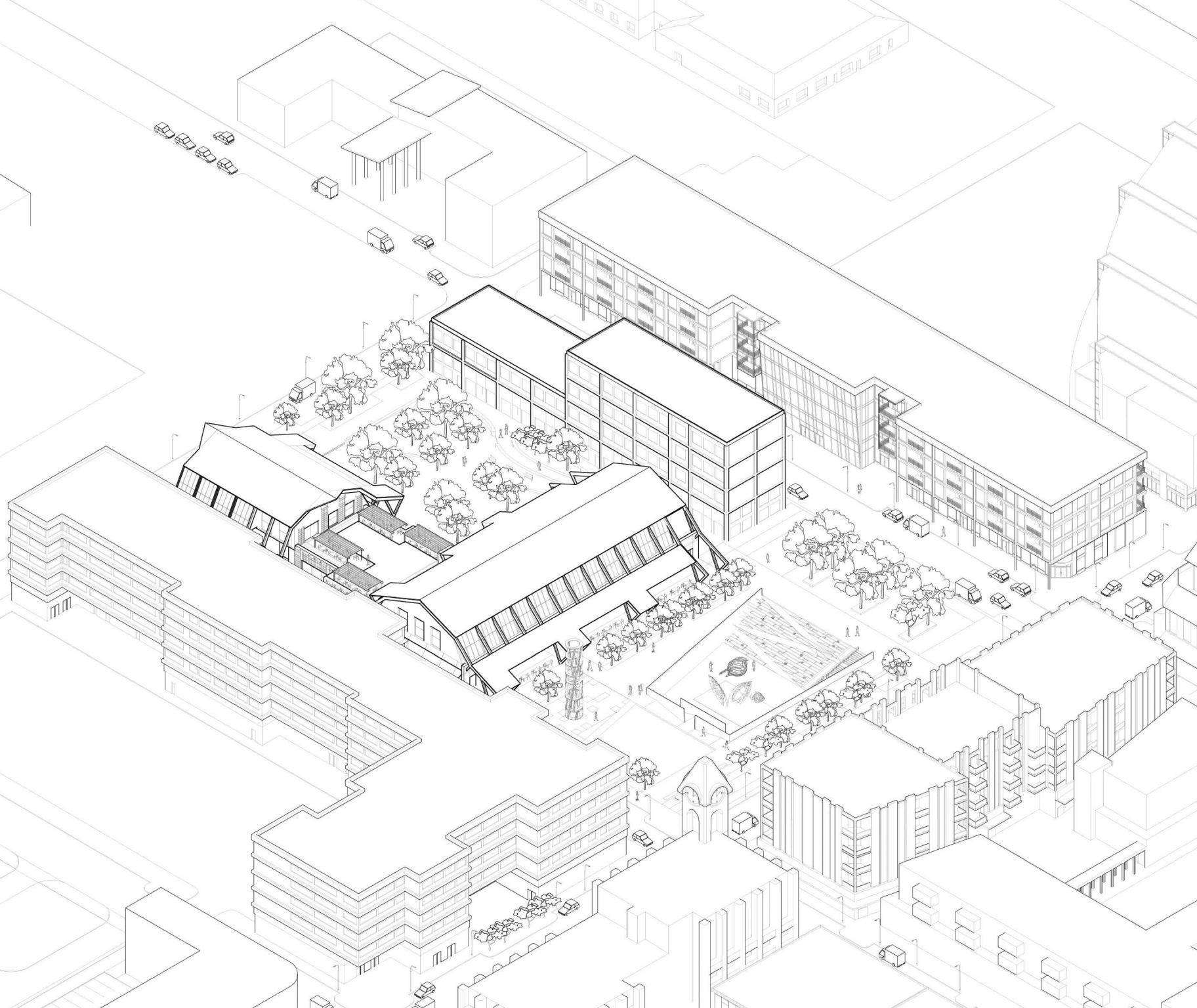
79





The Grand Hall provides self-sufficient stalls for food vendors and local sole-proprietor retailers.





MARKET STREET APARTMENTS

The Market Street Apartments are located directly across from the Public Market and serve as a defining edge to the Main Square. The backside of the building runs along the Market Paseo (i.e., the pedestrian-only street). The Market Street Apartments define a critical edge of the Paseo, which opens into a small plaza that in turn leads to a private courtyard garden. The Apartments provide a fulcrum of activity at the intersection of the Main Square, Market Street and the Paseo, and this establishes it as part of the heart of the town center. The bustle of people that will be drawn here is enhanced further with outdoor restaurant seating and lots of shops along Market Street and the Paseo. Generous balconies serving the housing units, above, give residents a chance to add to the energy of the street and the Paseo.

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Pedestrians access the ground-floor shops and restaurants from both Market Street and the Paseo, and so the ground-floor spaces are open, bright and airy, in order to establish a visual connection between the streets. In many places it is possible to see all the way through the building at ground-level, from one street to the other. A defining notch is created in the center of the building to visually indicate a mid-block access point where people can pass through the ground floor shops and restaurants.

The Paseo side of the Apartments offers a quieter and more secluded experience than the Market Street side due to its narrow walkway, and exclusion of automobiles. The building edges are angled slightly to create an intimate and even more enclosed walking experience that turns people's





attention to the nearby storefronts and gardens.

Market Street Apartments presents a majestic front to the Main Square and acts as one of the landmark buildings along Market Street. Its articulated envelope and vertical lines give it a regal character reminiscent of 19th century town centers. It works together with the other landmark buildings along Market Street, making a friendly gesture to both the Supper Club and the Clock Tower, which stand to each side. Where it comes closest to the Supper Club, the Apartments reduce height by one floor, to match the height of the Club. At the other end, where the Apartments come closest to the Clock Tower, the Apartments rise to five stories to comfortably match the Tower's height. This taller portion of the apartment block contains a rooftop garden and special, loft apartments.

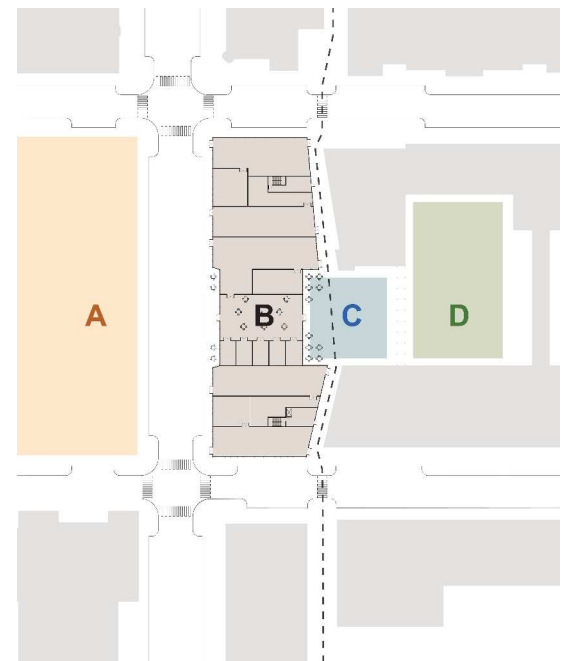
The ground floor of Market Street Apartments contains leasable space for a few long-term retailers and a couple of restaurants. The retail spaces allow small businesses and restaurateurs to gain exposure from pedestrian traffic moving from the Main Square to the Paseo. The second and third floors of Market Street Apartments house one and two-bedroom apartments, each with generous balconies overlooking either the Main Square or the Paseo Garden. The fourth (uppermost) floor includes spacious loft apartments and a rooftop garden to provide an outdoor space exclusively for residents. The rooftop garden is filled with planters that can be rented by residents for personal gardens. It also features four community balconies that overlook the town, a large pergola to meet or relax under, and three smaller pergolas for a more private garden experience.

The fourth (uppermost) floor includes spacious loft apartments and a rooftop garden to provide an outdoor space exclusively for residents. The rooftop garden is filled with planters that can be rented by residents for personal gardens. It also features four community balconies that overlook the town, a large pergola to meet or relax under, and three smaller pergolas for a more private garden experience.

The Main Square façade presents a strong and sturdy edge to help contain the large open space of the Square, and to present a more formal face to the Square. The vertical sections between balconies hold metal

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- A: Main Square
- B: Market Street Apartments, Ground Floor Shops
- C: The Market Paseo
- D: Courtyard Garden





panels. The metal is then softened a bit in appearance by a green façade system, which allows plants to climb the building. Yellow highlights at the windows provide a sense of celebration for all the events that will happen in the Square.

The Paseo façade offers a softer composition of warmer materials, including wood, which helps create an atmosphere of a small, quiet neighborhood. The more formal metal panels of the Main Square façade are here replaced with wood panels. Variation in wood types helps breakdown the facade into smaller areas that relate to human scale.

Roof garden with rentable garden plots for residents of the Market Street Apartments.



The Facade of the Market
Street Apartments facing
the Main Square



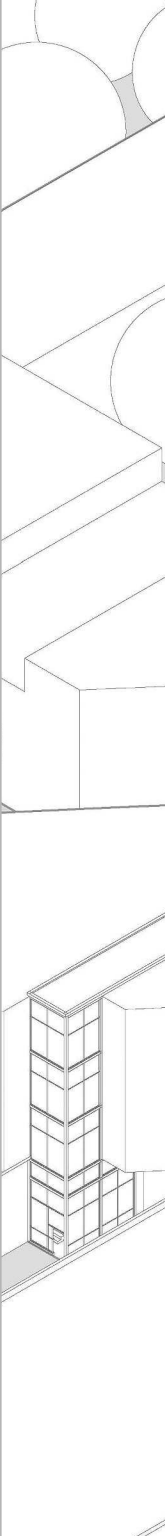
The Facade of the Market
Street Apartments facing
the Market Paseo



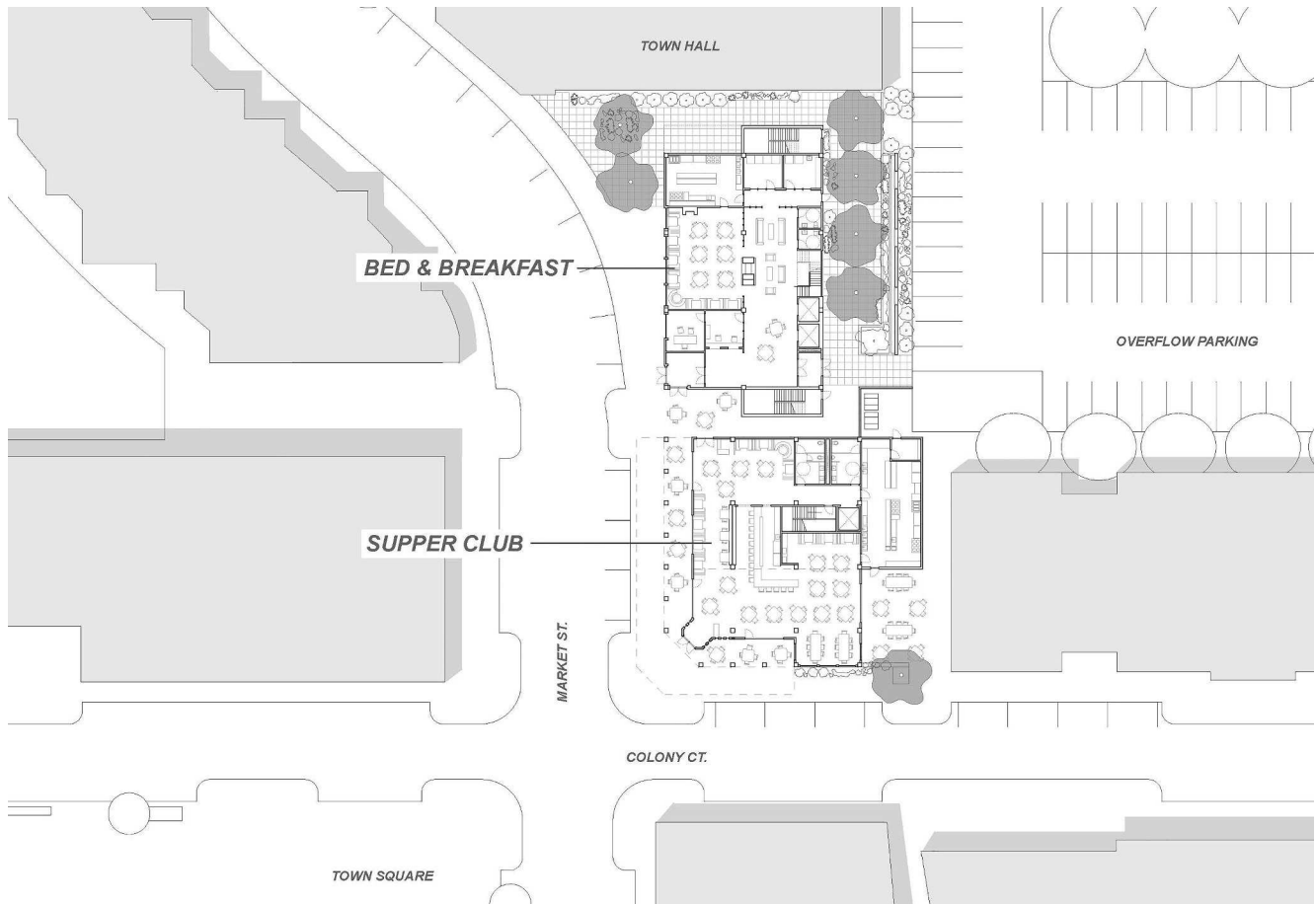
SUPPER CLUB and BED & BREAKFAST

Over time the Supper Club promises to become a Town of Beloit institution. It is a landmark building that stands at one of the most important corners of the Main Square, and its vernacular architecture emits a warm and inviting vibe. It is a place to gather in the evenings for a fine meal. It can host a family reunion or a wedding reception. Adjacent to the Supper Club and run by the same family is a Bed & Breakfast. This provides a homey place to stay right in the heart of the town center.

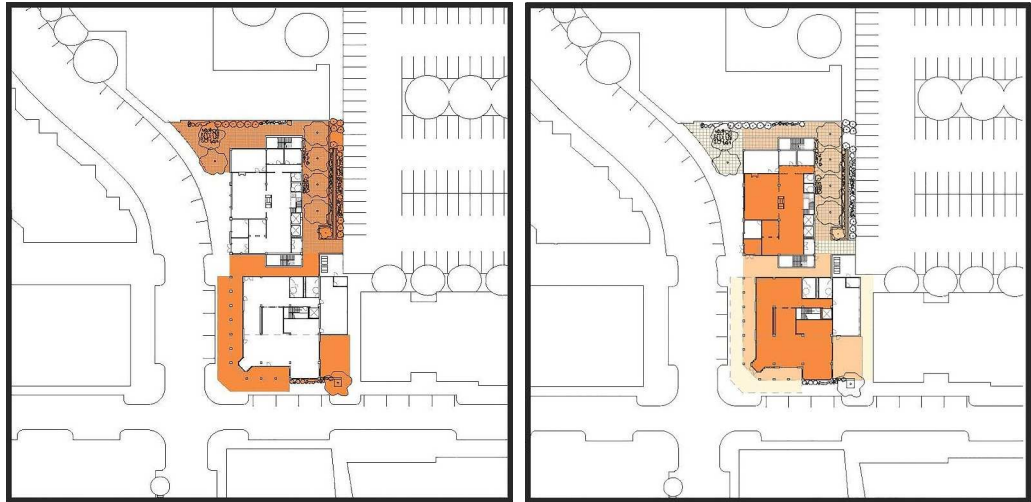
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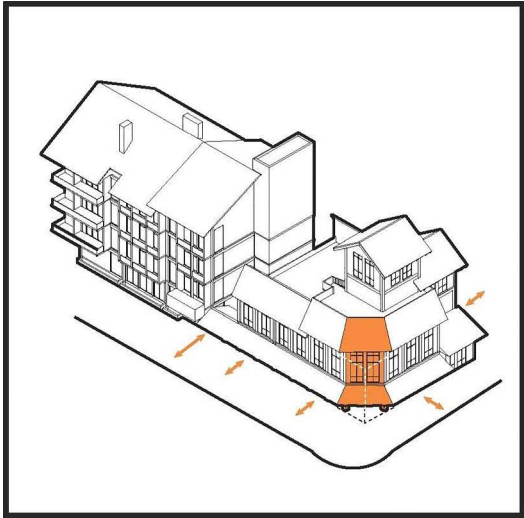
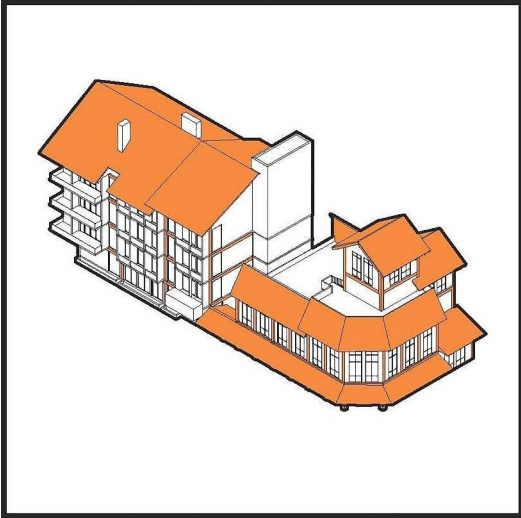
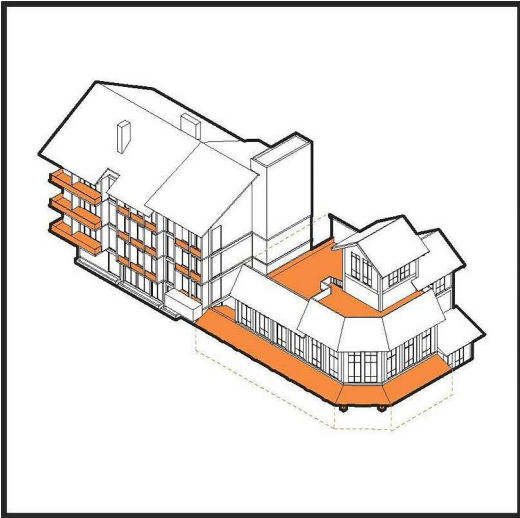




Ground Plan showing the Supper Club and the Bed & Breakfast, and their relationship to the street.



Dining Room of the
Supper Club



MODERATE GROWTH SCENARIO

THE MEDIUM-SIZED TOWN CENTER

In the Moderate Growth Scenario, the town center keeps growing beyond its Minimum Viable size, as defined in the previous scenario. It now is large enough to support a paseo (i.e., a pedestrian-only street), as well as significant senior housing, the micro-brewery entertainment plaza, The Commons educational hub, a new Town Hall building, and a significant amount of housing.

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Whereas the Minimum Viable Town Center appeals mostly to locals, in the Moderate Growth Scenario, the town center holds enough interesting businesses and settings to appeal to those who live beyond the Town of Beloit. People from surrounding towns begin coming to the town center, especially on weekends, to shop, eat and stroll the streets. The strolling circuit is now longer and richer, offering a more satisfying place to walk and people-watch. A few more local restaurants have setup shop in the center, and people enjoy a broader set of options for a distinctive meal.

The Moderate Growth Scenario significantly expands the amount of housing in the town center. By increasing the number of people who are living directly in the center, the feeling of a bustling, living community increases. Whereas in the Minimum Viable Town Center Scenario the streets still feel a bit empty during some times of day and week, in the Moderate Grow Scenario the streets are nearly always alive with at least a few people walking, talking, shopping and working.

- B: Business Incubation Center
- C: Vocational Education Center
- D: Micro-Brewery
- E: Coffee Shop
- 1: Main Square
- 2: Public Market Garden
- 3: Beer Garden
- 4: Coffee Shop Garden
- 5: The Commons



MICROBREWERY

Brewster's & Co. is a locally-owned microbrewery and wine house located at the corner of Waystation Street and Market Street, about a block away from the Main Square. Guests can enjoy locally brewed beer while taking a brewery tour. Guests can explore the second-floor balcony and event space, the glass atrium, and the year-round, indoor/outdoor beer garden. The adjacent garden offers an outdoor pavilion to host events and live entertainment.

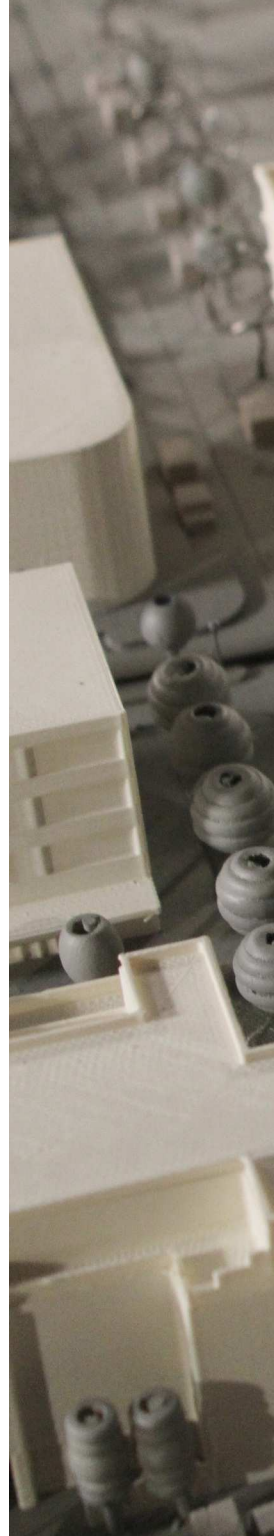
95

People in the Town of Beloit experience the full range of seasonal changes. While they enjoy outdoor activities and live music events, a lot of those experiences come to a halt in winter. The year-round beer garden allows festivities to continue indoors with an outdoor feel during colder months. The beer garden is accessible to pedestrians from the street and from the Market Paseo, and it is buffered from Market Street, so it provides a separate zone for adults seeking evening entertainment. Despite the fact that the Town of Beloit is a family-oriented community, its adult members deserve a leisure entertainment hub that caters specifically to them, one that provides them with an appropriate venue to meet and socialize.

A: Brewery

B: Indoor Beer Garden

C: Outdoor Beer Garden

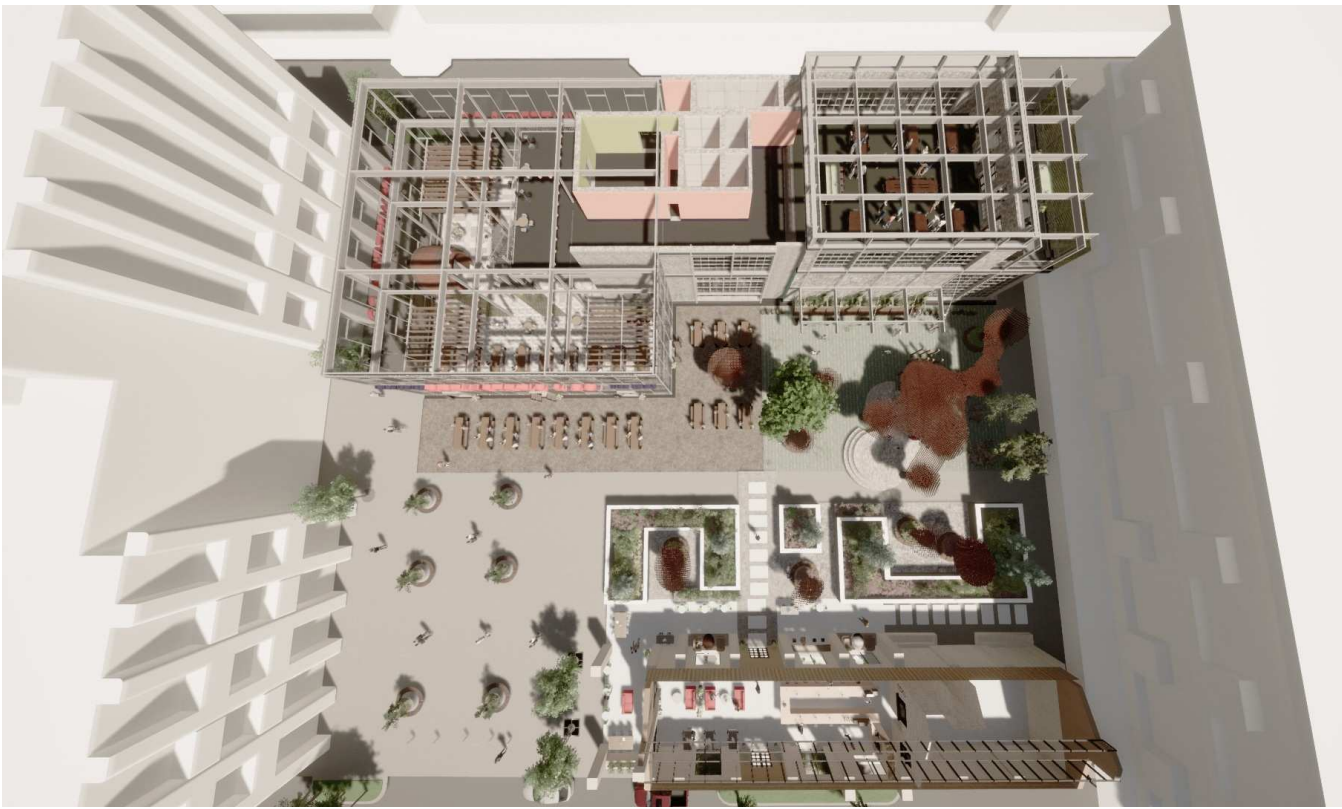




B

A

C







Indoor beer garden



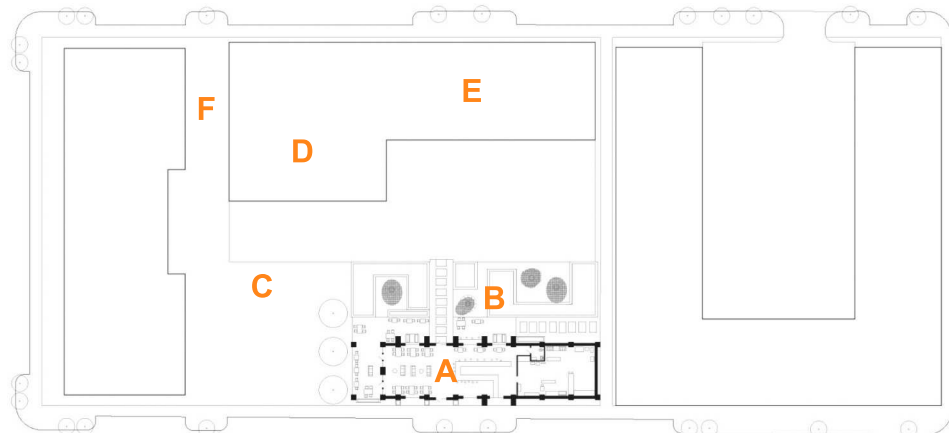
Side entry into the the indoor beer garden from the Market Paseo

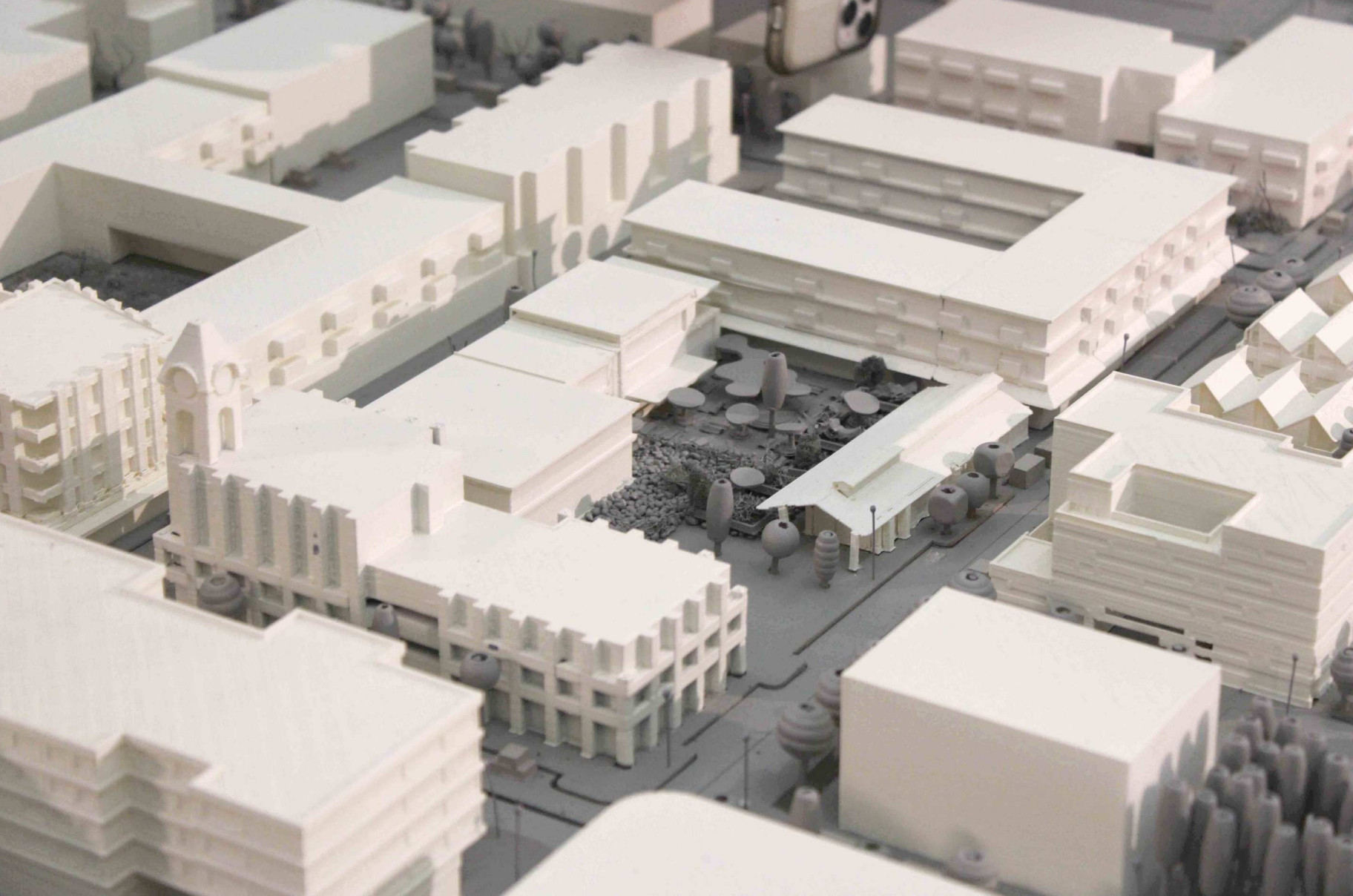
COFFEE SHOP

Every good town center needs at least one awesome coffee shop, where people can enact the morning ritual of coffee and hang out all day while they meet and do business. The Coffee Shop is tucked away on Gale Drive, east of Market Street, in the vicinity of the Market Paseo and Brewster's Beer Garden. It affronts Gale Drive and its back opens generously to the Beer Garden. The coffee shop is a long, gable-roofed volume one story in height. Its small size gives it an unassuming character that provides a place for casual meetings in a quiet, slower-paced neighborhood. Its gabled roof speaks to the comforts of home, and its stone and wood materials suggest the character of an old cottage or stable-house. It provides a destination for pedestrians walking down the Market Paseo, and a meeting place for students, teachers and entrepreneurs who gather in the nearby education hub.

100

- A: Coffee Shop
- B: Coffee Shop Garden
- C: Outdoor Beer Garden
- D: Indoor Beer Garden
- E: Brewery
- F: Market Paseo





The coffee shop lines one edge of a courtyard shared with the micro-brewery. These two businesses work together to create a vibrant garden courtyard that holds a beer garden, outdoor seating for the coffee shop, a music performance space, and garden plantings.

Interior of the coffee shop



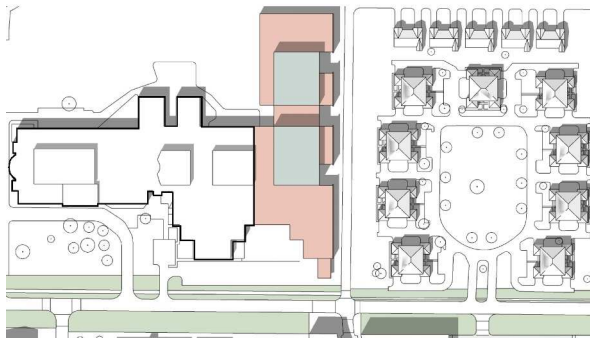
The coffee shop garden and outdoor sitting area, with the micro-brewery in the distance.



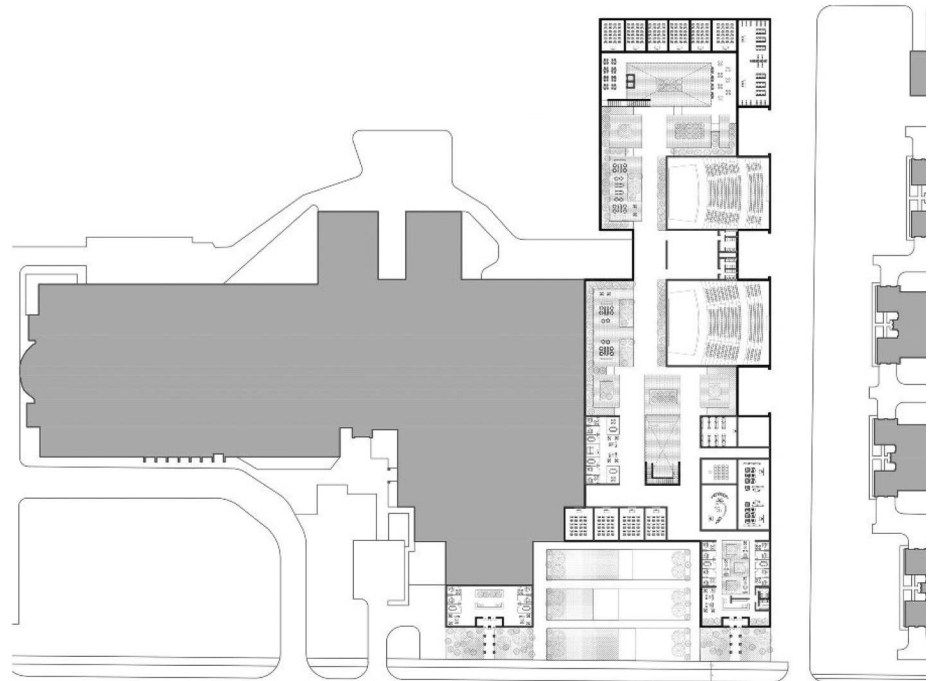
HIGH SCHOOL EXPANSION

We anticipate that the thriving F J Turner High School will continue to grow in coming years, which will involve a major addition to its current facilities. The proposed addition shown here extends the high school eastward to the intersection of Inman Parkway and Market Street, which allows it to meet up with and help define one of the major entry-points into the town center. In this way the high school caps the end of the town center, providing its concluding, northern-most landmark building.

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The site plan and ground floor plan of the High School Expansion shows how the Expansion fills in the gap between the existing High School and both Inman Parkway and Market Street, which helps to form a defined street intersection as the northern gateway into the town center. A new courtyard and gathering place is also formed at the front of the School.



Aerial view of the intersection of Inman Parkway and Market Street, looking toward the High School Expansion. The new courtyard of the school can be seen in the distance.



The "front" courtyard the the High School Expansion, which faces Inman Parkway.



The "back" courtyard of the High School Expansion, seen in the distance, with an indoor/outdoor atrium shown in the foreground. The atrium provides a place for larger student gatherings and community events.



INMAN BUSINESS CENTER

In addition to providing convenient office space along Inman Parkway, the Inman Business Center connects the proposed big box grocery store to its north with the town center. Town centers often benefit from a nearby - but not too nearby - big box store. Much like the anchor department store in a mall, the big box store draws a large number of people. Once in the vicinity of the town center, these shoppers can easily filter into the town center, where they can patronize smaller retail businesses and restaurants.

Inman Business
Center Park

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The Inman Business Center can be used to host small business conferences and other Town events within the business community. It also contains leasable office space that caters to digitally-oriented businesses such as software development, data inventory, and information technology management.

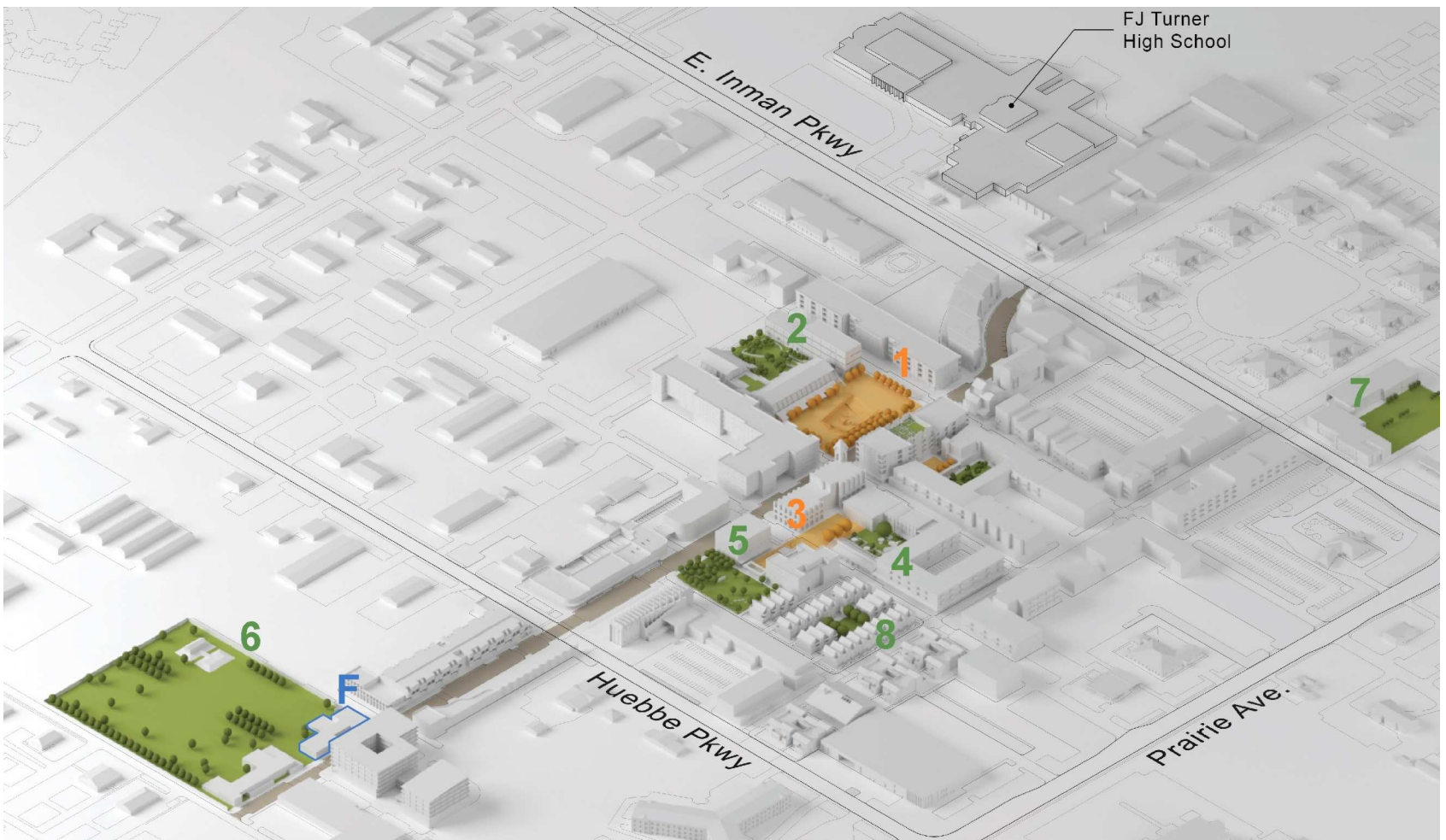
FAST GROWTH SCENARIO

THE BOOM TOWN

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The boom scenario involves a three-fold increase in the Town of Beloit's population over 30 years. In this fast-growth scenario, the Town transforms into a significant regional settlement that draws people from all over the county and from surrounding regional cities, to shop, work and seek entertainment. As a popular place to live, people move to the Town of Beloit at a rate that expands its housing needs significantly. It will require approximately 9,500 homes to accommodate its residents. There simply is not enough land to make that many single-family houses, and so in this scenario multi-family housing becomes essential. If the Town of Beloit is ever to grow to this size, even if it takes longer than 30 years to get there, then multi-family housing is the only way to do it.

In the boom scenario the town center has grown beyond a single neighborhood defined by the Main Square. There are now four distinct sub-neighborhoods in the town center. The first is what we might call "The Center of Town," which includes the original portion of the town center, concentrated around the Main Square and the Market Paseo. The second neighborhood is "Warner Street," which is located along the quieter residential street that parallels Market Street to the east, and which has now grown into a neighborhood of its own with additional housing, including many new senior living apartments. The third neighborhood is "The Education Hub," which provides a hub of education-related businesses and services. The fourth neighborhood is "South Gate," which extends the town center to the south of Huebbe Parkway. It offers additional housing



- F: Wellness Center
- 1: Main Square
- 2: Public Market Garden
- 3: Outdoor Beer Garden
- 4: Coffee Shop Garden
- 5: The Commons
- 6: South Park
- 7: Inman Business Center Park
- 8: Row Housing Community Green

and recreational amenities for the whole community.

The Education Hub neighborhood centers around the second-largest public square in the town center, which we call The Commons. This square links together a collection of businesses and educational institutions into an “educational hub” that focuses on community support, entrepreneurship and education. The Education Hub is like a mini-campus that appeals in part to high school students, who might come here after school for extracurricular programs that involve career development. It appeals to business entrepreneurs, who come here for business start-up support services and continuing education. It involves a satellite campus of a regional vocational school, such as Blackhawk Technical College.

The South Gate neighborhood is south of Huebbe Parkway. It develops the large plot of former farmland currently available at that location. South Gate is the recreation hub of the town center. Chronologically, it would likely be the final phase of town center development. It offers recreational facilities, a wellness center, a large public park and garden as well as a significant amount of housing.

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The Boom Town scenario showing development extending to the north of Inman Parkway and to the south of Huebbe Parkway.





VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

The Vocational Education Center offers educational programs and continuing education courses for various trades. It is a collaboration between trade school educators (such as those at Blackhawk Technical College), F J Turner high school and businesses in the adjacent business district. The Education Center is a convenient middle-ground where these parties can meet and interact. At the Education Center, the high school strengthens its connections to increasingly popular trade school education. Local businesses gain access to higher-skilled entry-level employees. The community encourages young adults to stay in town by offering educational opportunities connected to enticing career paths. And a regional technical college defers some of the costs of establishing a satellite campus through community collaboration.

113

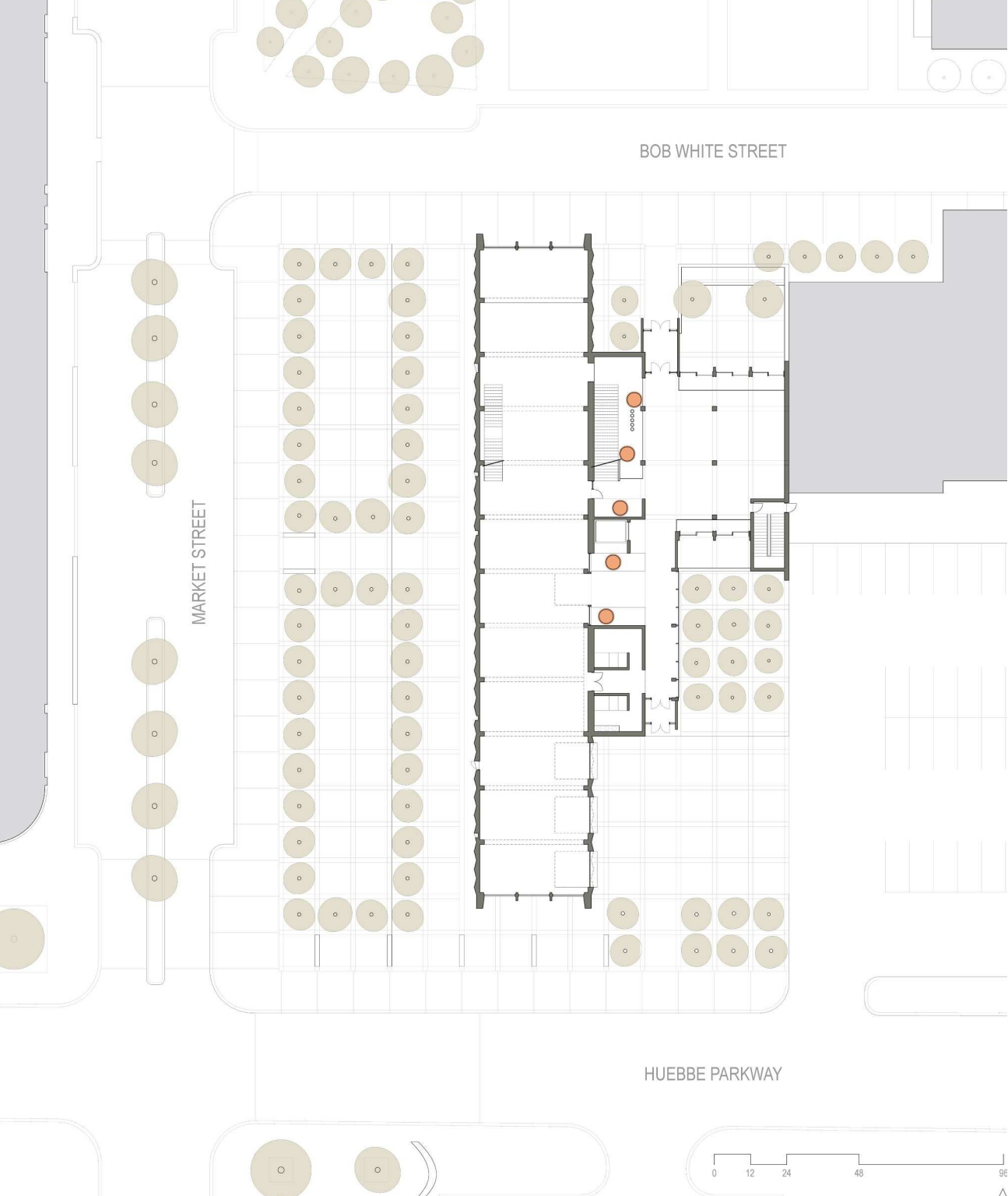




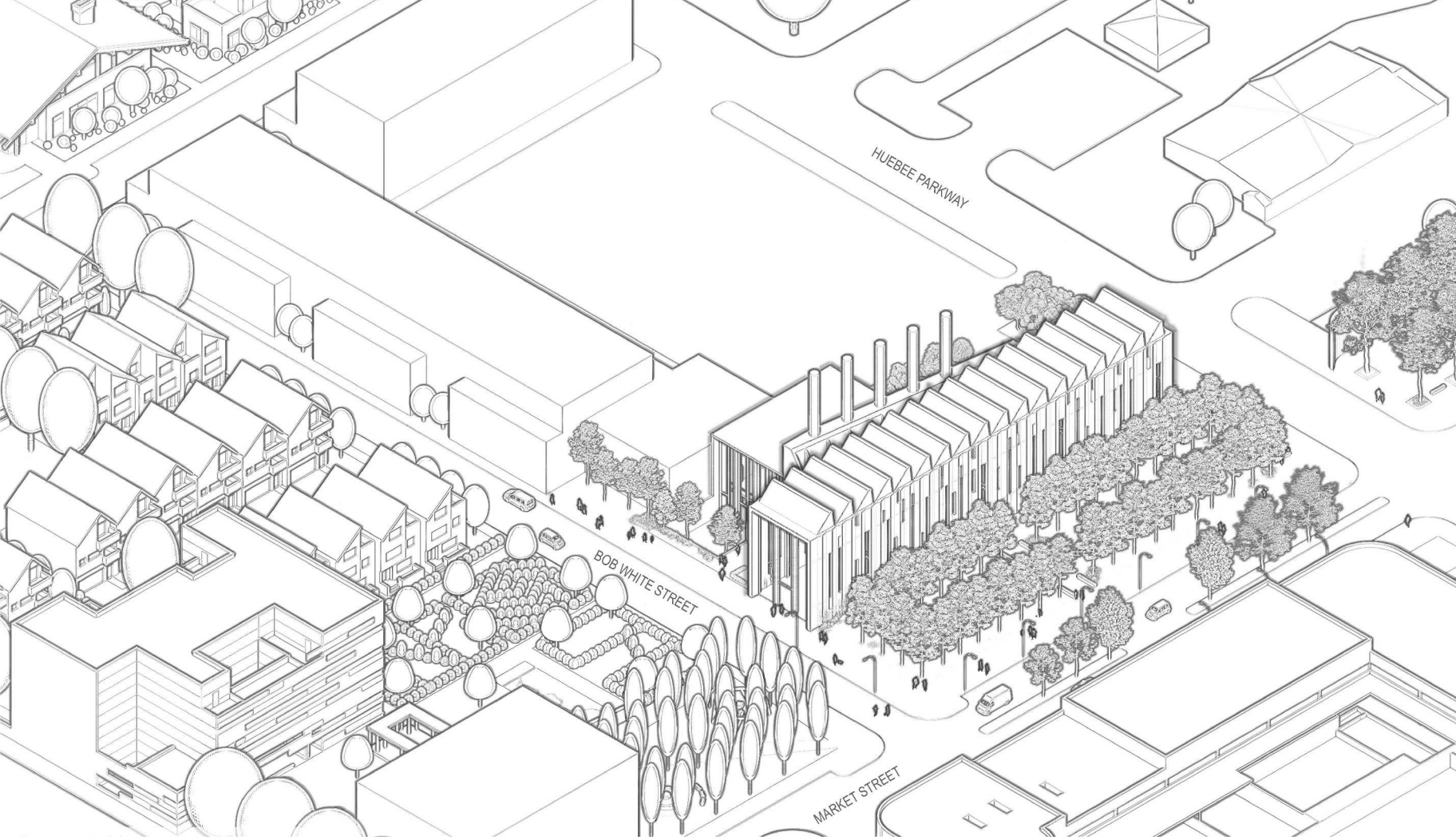
The front of the Vocational Education Center facing The Commons

Entry and lobby of the Vocational Education Center





Ground floor plan of the Vocational Education Center showing its giant shop space.



Aerial illustration of the Vocational Education Center showing how it completes the definition of The Commons along the south edge of this square and how it defines a side-garden of trees along Market Street.

BUSINESS INCUBATION CENTER

The Business Incubation Center is a community center and social gathering place for business owners and students. It offers short duration leases of raw space to small business start-ups (non-retail). Its spaces can also be used as temporary overflow space for local businesses who are growing fast. The Incubation Center also offers small business support services such as accountants, attorneys and marketing and promotion specialists, who provide fee-based service packages conveniently located in one setting. The Center also provides rentable conference rooms for professionals who normally work at home but need to occasionally meet face-to-face with clients and colleagues.

Three views of The Commons,
the second largest square in
the town center.

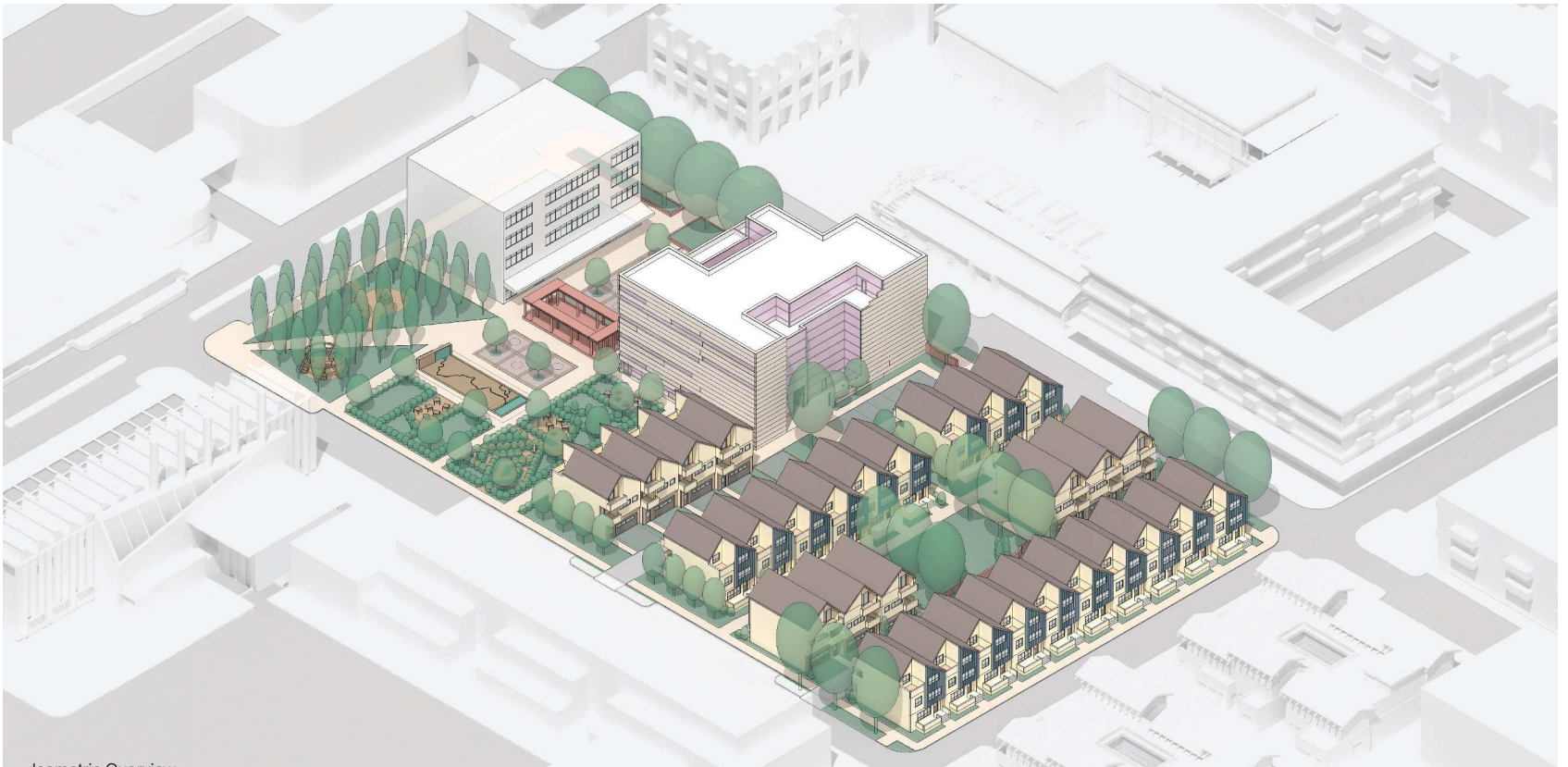




ROW HOUSING

Adjacent to The Commons is a neighborhood made-up of row houses, which offers a different feel from the multi-story flats that line Market Street. Tucked away quietly behind The Commons and away from Market Street, the Row Housing provides small yards, generous porches, some pedestrian-only streets, and a central green space for gatherings and sports. Where the Row Housing meets up with the Business Incubation Center, the row houses become Flex Housing, which provides a business office space on the ground level and a living space above, to make a convenient and economical live/work condition.

Aerial illustration showing The Commons, the Business Incubation Center and the Row House neighborhood. Here larger-scale buildings serving businesses and smaller-scale buildings providing housing can happily co-exist.





View of a typical pedestrian-friendly street in the row house neighborhood, and view of the community green space at the center of the row house neighborhood.



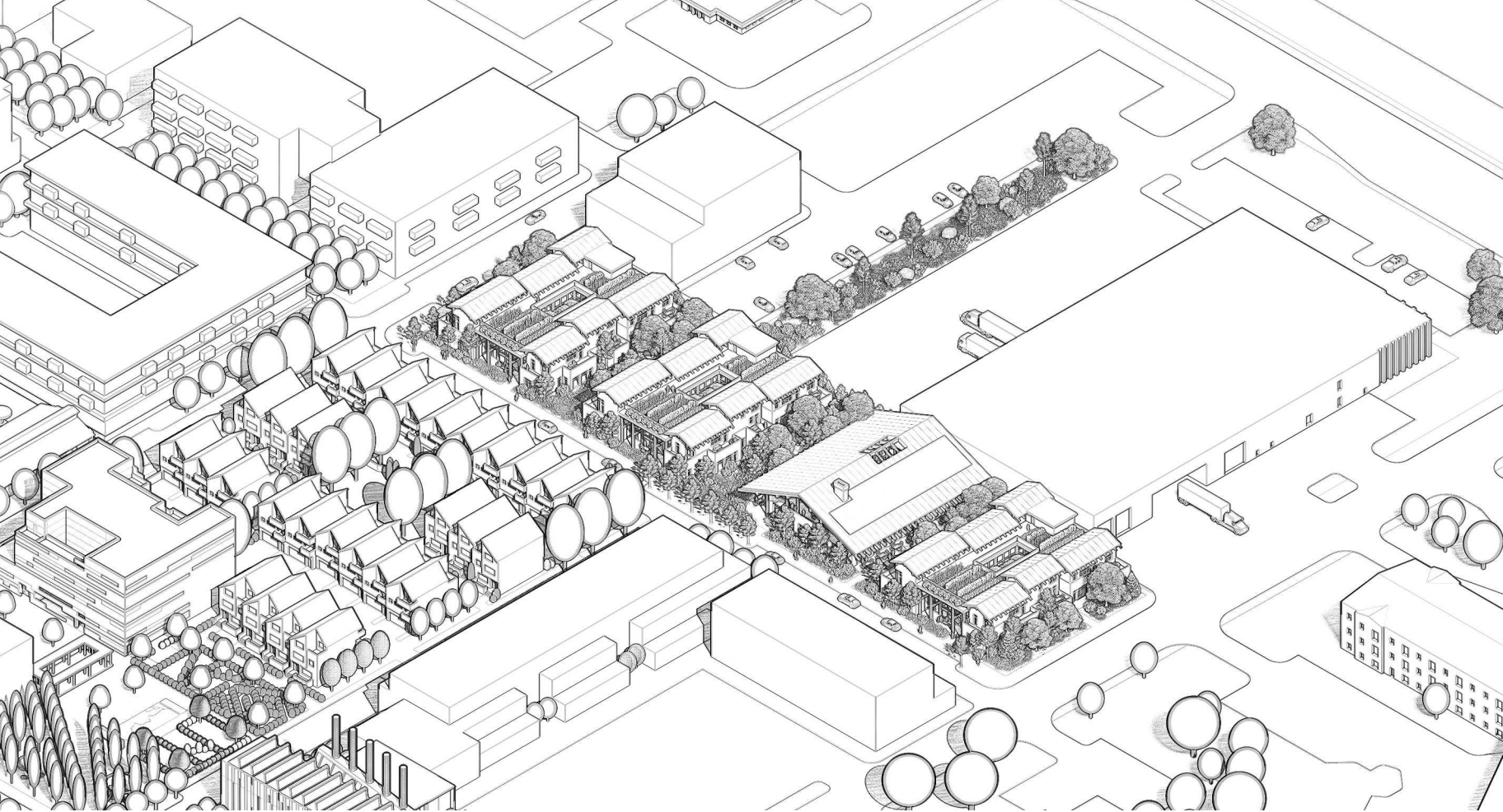
WARNER STREET COHOUSING

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The Warner Street Cohouse is a pocket neighborhood offering multi-family housing with an enhanced sense of community. The cohouse is composed of four buildings: three residential clusters of ten housing units each and a large community building for communal meals and gathering. Private residential units are smaller than average to allow for larger community spaces throughout the project. Units range from studio lofts to three bedrooms and come with private kitchenettes, bathrooms, and outdoor spaces. The units of each cluster are arranged around a central enclosed atrium that serves as both circulation and gathering space for the building's residents. Each cluster also features an internal courtyard and a rooftop garden for residents.

The large community building is the heart of the cohouse: it contains a commercial-grade kitchen and large dining room for residents to prepare and share regular communal meals. It also contains spaces for larger gatherings as well as smaller meeting rooms and nooks, a library, a crafting room, and two guest rooms for visitors. There are additional spaces for outdoor gathering as well, such as an extensive patio in the southern courtyard for al fresco dining, as well as an accessible lightwell on the second floor and a large, covered veranda facing Warner Street.

In between the buildings are lush gardens that imitate the edge of a Southern Wisconsin forest—tall, native grasses and wildflowers gradually give way to more densely-planted shrubs and trees. Larger, coniferous trees and bushes line the back of the property, providing a buffer between



Aerial illustration and model photograph showing how Warner Street Cohousing works with the Row Housing to form a residential neighborhood embedded in the town center and oriented primarily toward Warner Street.



the cohousing and the existing distribution center and parking lot to the east. While each of the interstitial courtyards are open to the public, the courtyard at the center of the property is designed especially to be an inviting outdoor room for the entire Town of Beloit community.

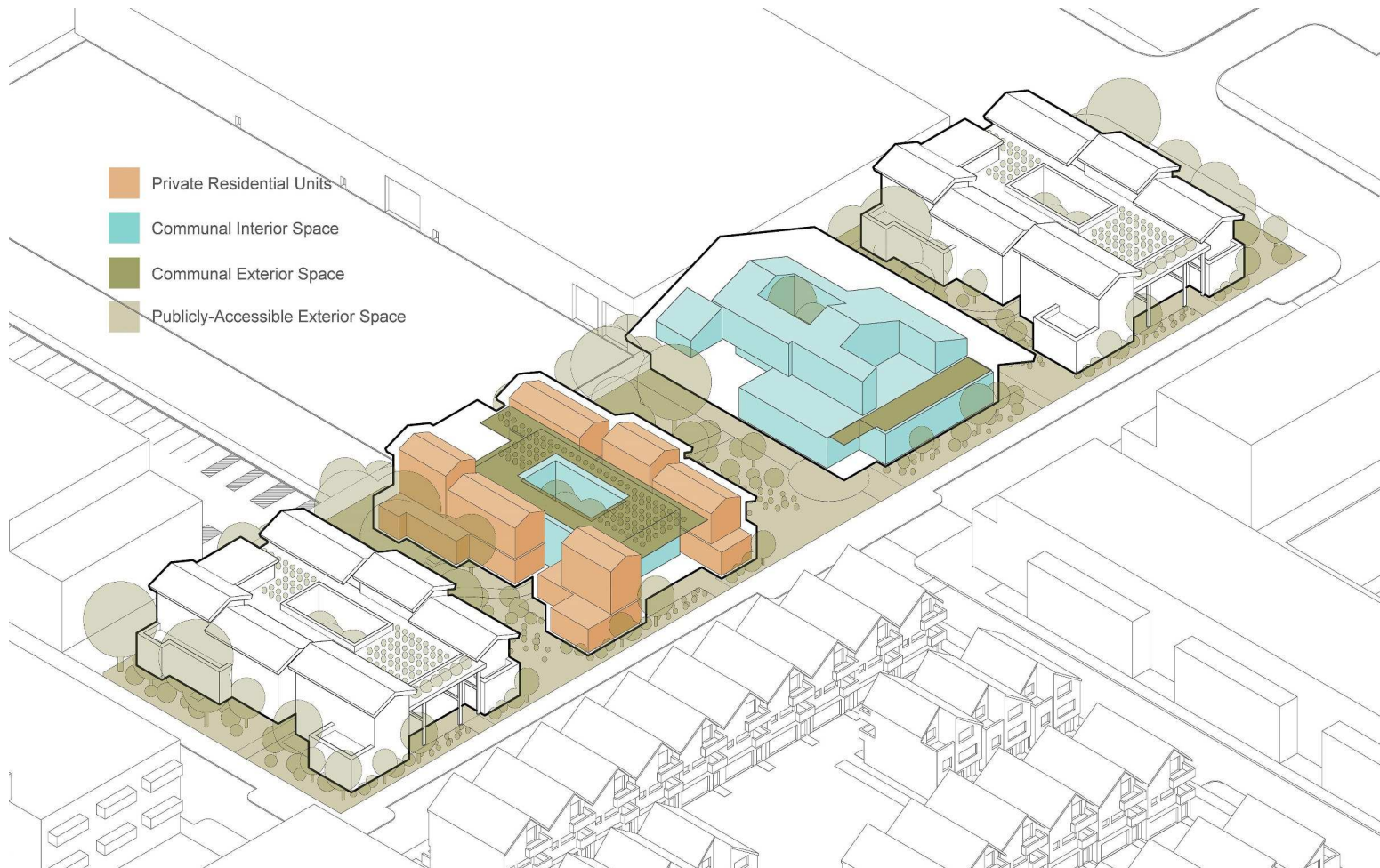
The Warner Street Cohousing will appeal to a wide range of residents, from professional singles and couples to independent seniors and young families. Sized to accommodate thirty living units, it encourages the development of a tight-knit neighborhood. Its welcoming communal spaces both inside and out encourage participation from residents and members of the broader community alike. We have included a few alternative housing types such as this one to help people stretch their imagination a bit, and consider that housing can take many forms, each with a unique potential to add to the good character of a place.

Perspectives showing how Warner Street Cohousing meets up with Warner Street and provides a lively edge for pedestrians.





This housing alternative shows how ten housing units can be combined into a single building while retaining a small-scale residential feel.



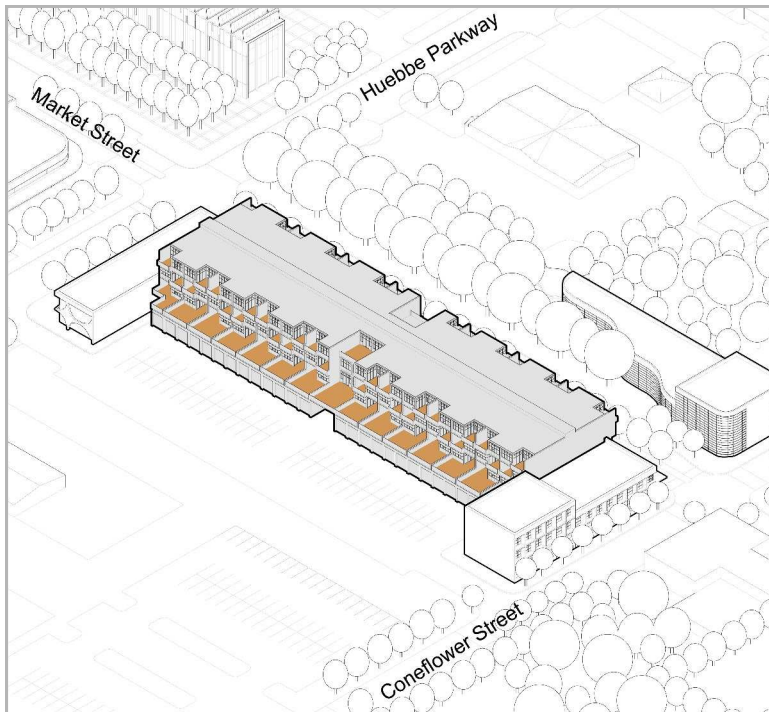
SOUTH MARKET STREET

South Market Street is a mixed-use development located along the southern extension of Market Street, beginning at Huebbe Parkway at its north and ending at Coneflower Street at the south. It links the town center to South Park, the Wellness Center, and the Recreation Center.

The housing consists of two-bedroom units with privately controlled outdoor space. Wide balconies provide views of the park across the street and of the Clock Tower in the distance. The park offers a nearby shaded summertime environment.

These flats are great for young professionals. Being located at the south end of town they are within a single block of two new parks. They are also within a short walking distance of the Wellness Center and the Recreation Center. Across the street to the north is a dog park/pet care facility. With a short walk to the north residents can patronize the Beer Garden.

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Perspective views showing the look and feel of Market Street to the south of Huebbe Parkway. Here, even Market Street transitions into a quieter residential street, although some shops and restaurants are still in the mix on the ground floor of this block, and some smaller-sized offices book-end the block.





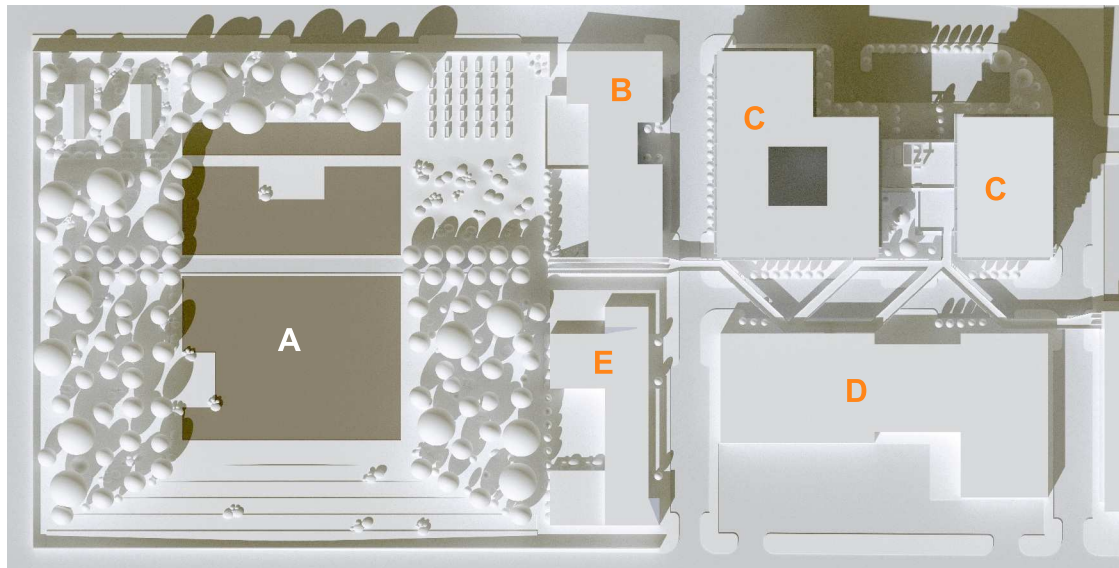


The small park across the street from the South Market Street development.

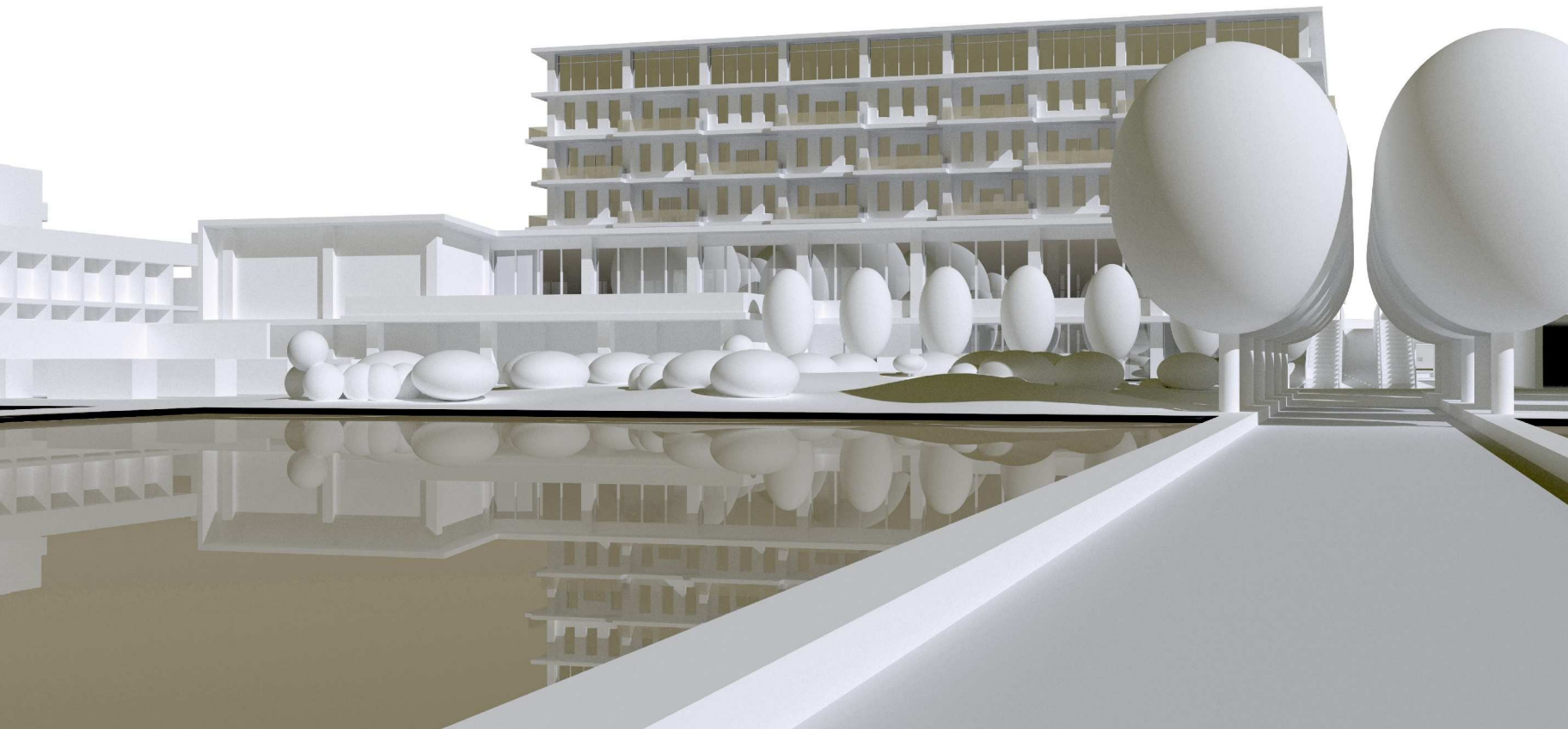
SOUTH GATE

South Park is an enclosed park and garden setting with a Wellness Center at its northeast corner. The back of the Wellness Center opens to the park. Yoga classes held on the terraces of the Wellness Center invigorate and motivate. South Park and its surrounding neighborhood provide a counter-balance to the hustle and bustle of Market Street. As pedestrians walk south on Market Street, they leave behind the busy heart of town. Bordered by South Park, the South Gate neighborhood feels tranquil and lush with trees and gardens. Across the street from South Park is a privately-owned Recreation Center, such as a YMCA, which offers a range of recreational programs including outdoor programs held in the park.

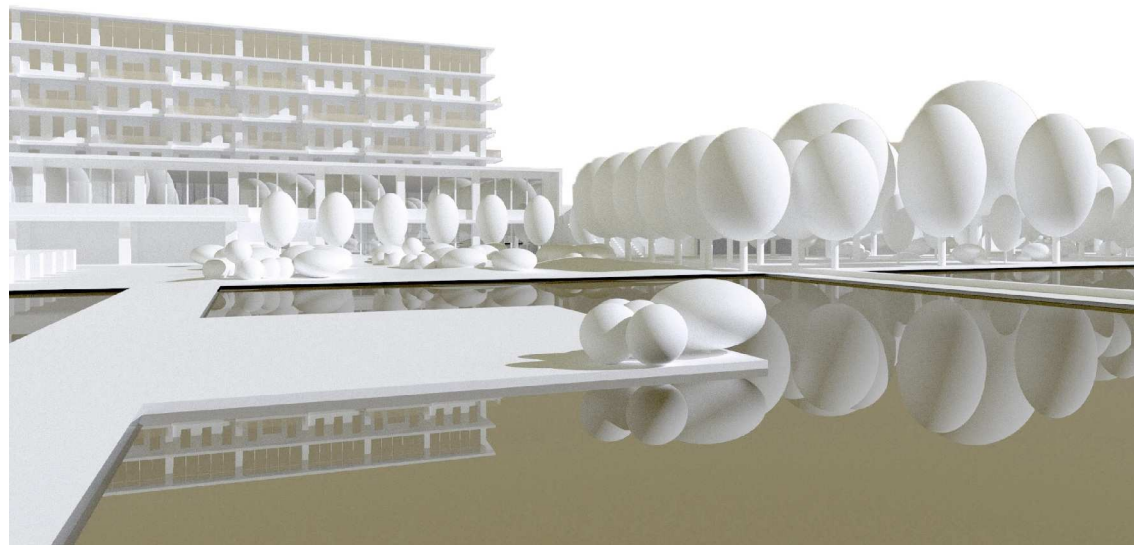
129



- A: South Park
- B: Wellness Center
- C: Multi-Family Housing
- D: Recreation Center
- E: South Park Bistro



South Park is organized around a large, central pond, which provides opportunities for fishing and paddle boats in the summer, and ice skating in the winter.



GETTING STARTED

EARLY STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN CENTER

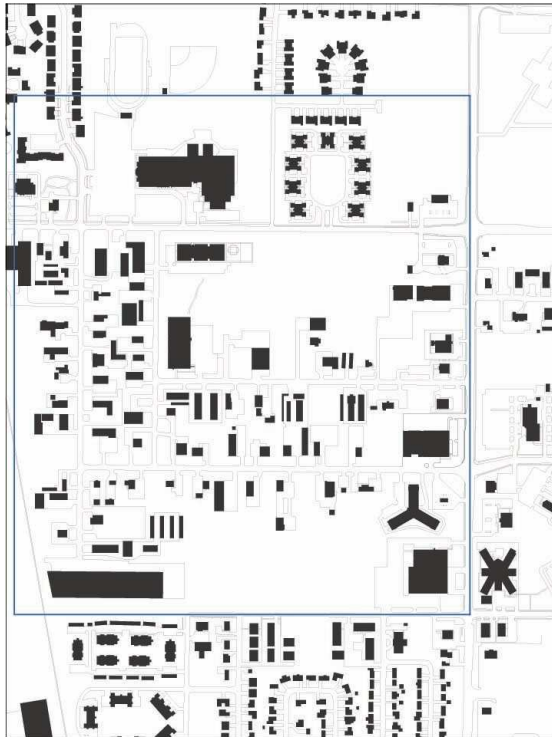
131

Building a town center from scratch requires decades. Complex problems must be bravely confronted and creatively solved. Municipal administrators must be willing to trust the judgment of local land owners and businesses, and loosen regulatory controls. Regulations formulated in past decades must be reconsidered and, in many cases, updated or revoked. A new town center cannot be built by a municipality. It has to be built by the citizens of a town, by the individual residents, business owners and small-scale developers who want to plant a stake here and work towards a better life. To accomplish this, land owners, businesses and developers must be willing to invest in a longer-term future, a future that requires more nuanced design strategies for the houses, offices and shops they will build. Such buildings will not look the way people are used to - the way they look in generic suburbs. Nothing worth doing ever comes about by clinging to “business as usual.” New ways of thinking are the order of the day.

It is common in the early stages of the development of a town center for the municipality to take on a lot of responsibility all at once, and a lot of debt. The desire is often to implement large swaths of new infrastructure (streets, sewers, utilities) before there is any sense of the demand, and before any prediction can be made about the pace of development that will unfold. By building too much, too soon, a municipality can incur a debilitating amount of debt. We believe that the *Strong Towns* approach is best in this regard: go slowly. Invest in infrastructure incrementally. Build-

out a street or two, then wait and see how it goes. As interest and activity mount, gradually expand. This approach requires more management on the part of town administrators, since it involves doing a sequence of smaller projects and contracts, rather than one mega-project with one contract given to one large developer, but it is worth the wait. The large developer will try to convince you that you can save money through economies of scale, but stay the course. Stay committed to the idea that this is going to be a long, complex process and that there is no way to convert it into a short, simple one. By embracing the incremental nature of the effort, you will win in the long-run.

To get a sense of what such an incremental approach might look like in the Town of Beloit, the following maps show how the development of the town center might unfold over time, starting from empty fields and under-utilized business district properties to the kernel of a town center. There is no way to predict if these will be the particular stages of early development. They are merely a simulation that captures one possible way it could unfold. But the “steps” shown here do hold a basic wisdom. They indicate what parts of the town center should be a priority, and which should therefore come first. Remember that the first scenario planning milestone is the *Minimum Viable Town Center*. The early steps of development should focus on achieving this much. The steps below indicate how to get started.



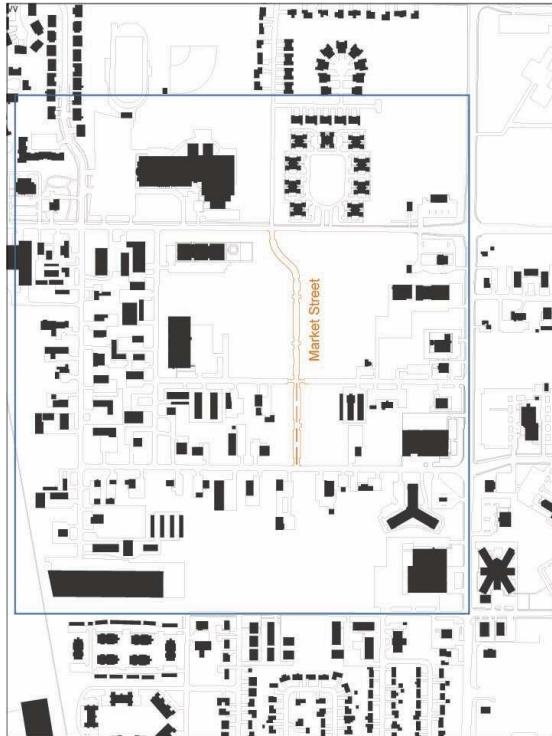
1 Existing Conditions

This map shows the existing conditions before any town center development begins. The blue box indicates the potential future extent of town center development.



2 Acquire 18.5 Acres and Remove Existing Buildings

The first piece of land to acquire is the former farmland along Inman Parkway across the street from the High School. Additionally, the land containing the existing buildings shown in orange in the map above should be acquired, so these under-performing buildings can be removed to make way for new development. The total to acquire is approximately 18.5 acres.



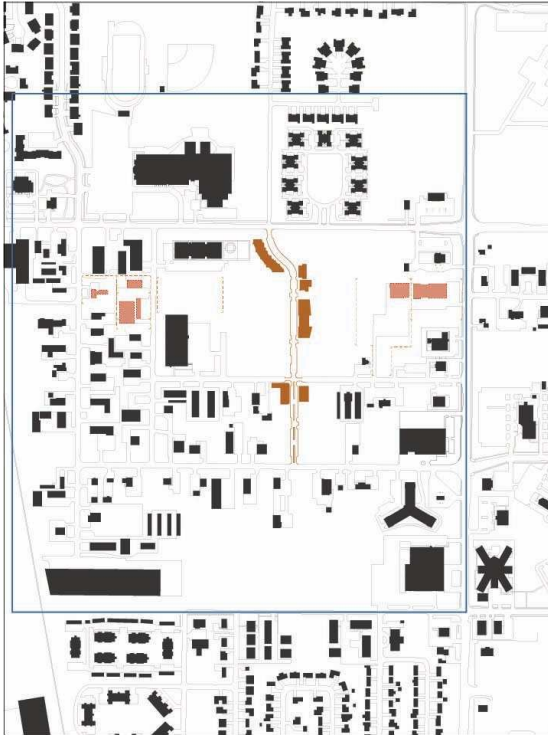
3 Build Market Street Infrastructure

The first piece of new development is the infrastructure for Market Street as it connects between Inman Parkway and Huebbe Parkway. This is likely to be a Town-funded project.



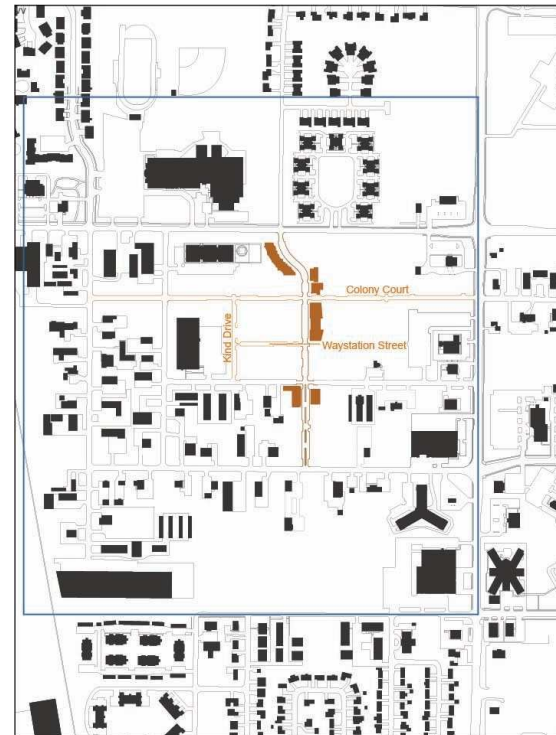
4 Work with Developers to Build Individual Building Projects along Market Street

Plots of land along Market Street can be sold for development. Here the goal, as far as it is possible, is to empower small developers to build individual buildings, rather than rely one one, large developer to do the whole thing.



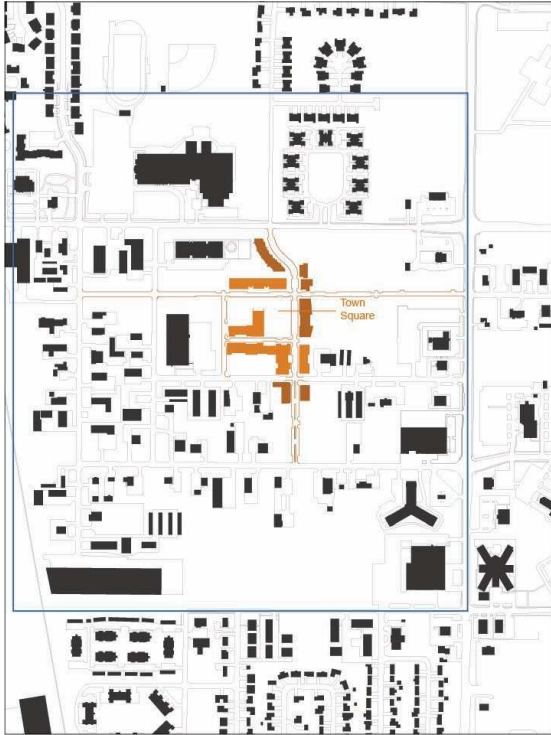
5 Acquire 10.5 Acres and Remove Existing Buildings

To prepare for the next infrastructure project, the Town should acquire two additional areas of land, one at the east edge of the town center, and one at the west, shown in light orange in the map above. The existing buildings here can be removed to make way for the first east-west streets of the town center. The total acres to acquire is approximately 10.5.



6 Build Colony Court, Kind Drive, and Waystation Street Infrastructure

Construct the infrastructure for Colony Court, Waystation Street and Kind Drive. Working together with Market Street, these streets define the edges of the Main Square, which sits at the intersection of all of these streets.



7 Work with Developers to Build Individual Building Projects Around the Town Square

Sell plots of land for development around all sides of the Main Square, using the buildings to define this important "center of town" space. As with the earlier Market Street development, whenever possible work with small developers who are willing to develop one building project at a time.



8 Gradually add more Building Projects to Reach the Minimum Viable Town Center

Gradually add more buildings that focus as much as possible on completing the Minimum Viable Town Center. However, this is where development forces might start moving in different, unpredictable directions. It is good to adapt and go with the flow. If the Main Square remains ill-defined, then special incentives might be needed to make sure that it is completed. A completed Main Square should be a priority.

RURAL FUTURES STUDIO Fall 2021



BUILDING-SPECIFIC CREDITS

Peter Ankerberg	Dog Care Center
Rachel Bergelin	Market Street Apartments
Roe Draus	The Public Market
Bescent Ebeid	Micro-Brewery, Beer Garden
Kelly Iacobazzi	Warner Street Cohousing
Aleksander Jenig	South Market Street
Yash Mehta	Main Square, High School Expansion, Inman Business Center
Andrew Rexrode	Vocational Education Center
Erin Seaverson	Business Incubation Center, The Commons, Row Housing
Erik Semb	South Gate
Jonathan Tews	Mixed-Use: Shops, Offices and Apartments
Maci Timm	Coffee Shop
Luis Tresgallo	Mixed-Use: Shops, Offices and Apartments
Jacob Woelfel	Supper Club, Bed & Breakfast, Senior Housing

