

Update of Water Street Commercial District Plan



Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan

City of Eau Claire
January, 2009



RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN AS PART OF THE CITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

WHEREAS, the Eau Claire City Plan Commission has studied and considered the update of the Water Street Commercial District Plan as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Plan Commission recommended adoption of the Water Street Commercial District Plan on January 5, 2009 and made a finding that said plan is consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan except as provided hereafter.

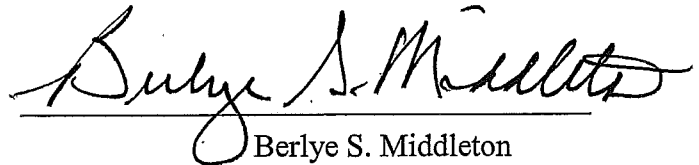
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to Wis. Statutes; Section 66.1001, the City Council, as an aid to the Plan Commission and the City Council in the performance of their duties, does hereby adopt the Water Street Commercial District Plan, a copy of which is on file in the office of the City Clerk and open to public inspection during normal business hours, as part of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Eau Claire and is incorporated into this plan by reference.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in adopting this plan that the City Council finds said plan to be consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan, specifically Physical Character Chapter, Objective 5 (Mixed- and Multi-use Development / Policy 1 Neighborhood Center Scale), except for the expanded area of the Water Street Commercial District Plan.

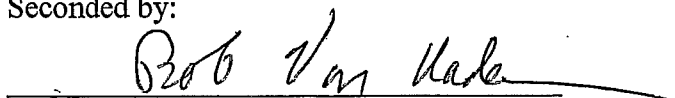
Adopted,

January 13, 2009

Motion to adopt the resolution


Berlye S. Middleton

Seconded by:



Bob Von Haden

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING ADOPTION OF THE
WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Water Street Business Improvement District requested the Eau Claire City Plan Commission update the Water Street Commercial District Plan which was prepared in 1982; and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission appointed a 15-person committee to assist in updating the plan and directed the Department of Community Development to work with this committee in updating the plan; and

WHEREAS, the draft update includes: a commercial district profile, identification of issues, development of vision and goal statements, and development of recommendations to address issues and problems that have been identified; and

WHEREAS, the City of Eau Claire adopted a Comprehensive Plan on September 27, 2005, in accordance with the provisions of Wis. Statutes; Section 66.1001; and

WHEREAS, the City Plan Commission finds the update of the Water Street Commercial District Plan to be consistent with said Comprehensive Plan; specifically Physical Character Chapter Objective 5 (Mixed and Multi-use Development), Policy 1 (Neighborhood Center Scale).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Eau Claire City Plan Commission recommends to the City Council that the update of the Water Street Commercial District Plan be adopted as part of the City of Eau Claire's Comprehensive Plan.


Secretary, City Plan Commission

Adopted,

January 5, 2009

Table of Contents

	Page #
Introduction	
Purpose, Boundaries, Background, Description.....	1
Planning Process.....	6
Planning Area Profile	
Population	8
Housing	8
Land Use	11
Zoning	13
Traffic Circulation & Parking.....	16
Transit.....	19
Historic Properties	20
Floodplain.....	20
Parks & Open Spaces.....	21
Resources & Assets.....	23
Problems & Issues.....	25
Water Street Goals & Objectives	
Vision	31
Land Use & Urban Design.....	32
Parking & Transportation.....	32
Bicycle & Pedestrian Environment	33
Open Space, Parks & Riverfront	33
Business Environment/Image & Physical Appearance.....	34
Water Street Recommendations	
Land Use & Urban Design.....	36
Parking & Transportation.....	44
Bicycle & Pedestrian Environment	48
Open Space, Parks, & Riverfront	49
Business Environment/Image & Physical Appearance.....	51
Appendix A: Plan Update Committee	
Appendix B: Class B Liquor Licenses	

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The objective of the Water Street Commercial District Plan is to provide property owners, businesses, residents and policy makers with the following:

- information about the conditions that currently exist within the planning area;
- provide a framework to base decisions regarding improvements and planning policies;
- outline public and private initiatives in the area over the next 5-15 years.

This plan serves to further define the City's Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by the City of Eau Claire in September of 2005. The Comprehensive Plan stresses the importance of planning for Eau Claire's existing commercial areas and older neighborhoods, which are an integral component in forming the image and fabric of the community. The Comprehensive Plan also seeks to encourage more vital commercial centers, which provide pedestrian and walkable environments.

This plan has been prepared as a cooperative effort between property owners, businesses, Historic Randall Park and Third Ward Neighborhoods, University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire (UWEC), and the City in an effort to identify issues facing the planning area, develop a means to resolve these problems, and create a sustainable business environment. Updating the Water Street Commercial District Plan has involved:

- the evaluation of the recommendations contained in the 1982 plan;
- an assessment of current conditions within the area;
- business and citizen input concerning attitudes and perceptions of persons familiar with the Water Street area;
- update of the vision and goals of the 1982 plan;

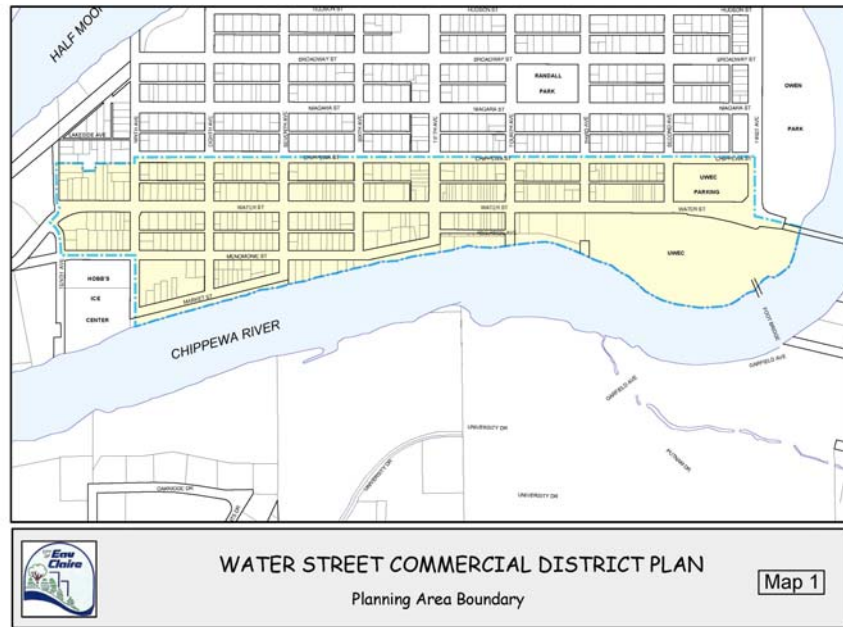
- the establishment of a new set of attainable strategies to address issues and problems the area is currently experiencing.

Boundaries

The planning area for the Water Street Commercial District is shown in Map 1 and includes the area bounded by: the Chippewa River on the south; First Avenue and Chippewa River to the east, Chippewa Street to the north, and Tenth and Ninth Avenues to the west. This planning area is located

within the southern portion of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association boundaries; therefore policies contained in the adopted neighborhood plan for Randall Park are also applicable to this plan.

Although the document focuses on the commercial areas within the planning boundary, the plan also encompasses residential areas located to the west and southwest of the core commercial area.



Background

The Water Street Commercial District Plan was originally prepared in 1982 through the collaboration of City staff, property owners, business owners and neighborhood residents in response to a number of issues affecting the area. Through a year long process, the original plan was prepared to set forth recommendations to address issues such as image of the area, insufficient parking, inappropriate building façade treatments, mix of businesses, property conditions, and condition of the riverfront.

Over the past 26 years, the Water Street Commercial District has made significant strides in many areas and today exhibits a character and charm that is unique to Eau Claire and western Wisconsin. With its close proximity to the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, unique mix of businesses, historic character, unique buildings and location along the riverfront and recreational trail, the area is not only a destination for the neighborhood and University, but for the City and beyond.

Some of the significant strides made over the past 26 years include:

- Reconstruction of Water Street with the inclusion of pedestrian crossings and bump-outs.
- Addition of decorative streetlights, trees, benches, and entryway signs.
- Enlargement of the UWEC parking lot located northwest of First Avenue and Water Street.
- Installation of traffic signals at the intersection of First Avenue and Water Street.
- Acquisition of floodplain properties at the northwest corner of First Avenue and Chippewa Street.
- Development of additional off-street parking at the southwest corner of Chippewa Street and Fourth Avenue.
- Extension of the recreational trail along the river, including the acquisition of a house at 105 Menomonie and construction of a gazebo and historic marker along the river.
- Riverfront beautification in the 400 block of Water Street, including parking improvements and building façade improvements.



- Construction of several new infill buildings in the 300 and 400 blocks of Water Street (Stave and Hoop – 342 Water, The Tannery – 427 Water, and Dooley’s Pub – 442 Water.)
- Historical rehabilitation of the Pioneer Block building.
- Development of a good mix of retail and restaurants in the district.
- Creation of the Water Street Business Improvement District (BID) in 1990.
- Improvement of the image of the area through strong leadership.
- Improved promotion of the area and the scheduling of family and community related events and activities.
- Development of strong ties between the BID and the UWEC administration.
- Coordination of efforts between the BID and the Bridge Coalition (a coalition of community organizations working to address issues of “binge drinking” and problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption.)
- Creation of a National Register Historic District within a portion of the area.
- Collaboration between the BID and Downtown business in promotions and marketing by joining Downtown Eau Claire, Inc. (DECI).
- Reduction of the 100-year floodplain within the planning area.
- Realignment of Menomonie Street and Water Street at 10th Avenue to provide improved access to Clairemont Avenue.
- Improvements and design changes of Owen Park.

Although much progress has been made over the years, problems and issues still exist in the area and those interested in the well being of the Water Street Business District feel the need to have this plan reevaluated, studied, and updated. Therefore, property owners and businesses approached the Plan Commission in the fall of 2006 to initiate the process of updating the plan. Work on updating the plan commenced in May of 2007.

Description of the Planning Area

The Water Street is one of the oldest areas in the City, platted in 1856 as Eau Claire City. The original commercial core included the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Water Street, which provided easy and convenient access to the Chippewa River for travel and transport of goods from the south. Twice weekly, steamboats arrived at the Water Street landing to unload passengers and goods. In 1882, a devastating fire ignited from one of the steamboats swept through the Water Street area destroying all the buildings within the three block area, all toll, 73 buildings were destroyed. Within days of the fire, building owners agreed to rebuild, this time with brick and by the end of 1883, most buildings had been rebuilt. Today, the planning area includes a mix of land uses, including commercial (service, retail and office) and residential land uses as well as facilities owned by the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire.

To the west of Sixth Avenue along Water Street is a mix of commercial buildings and single-family and duplex dwellings; these dwellings are mostly renter occupied. Finally, a mix of one and two-family dwellings are located along Menomonie Street and the south side of Chippewa Street.



The eastern portion of the planning area includes two UWEC buildings, the Human Sciences and Services Building and the Haas Fine Arts Center. In addition, University parking is provided on the north side of Water Street within the 100 Block and on the south side to the west of the Fine Arts Building.

A more detailed description and analysis of the planning area is provided in the profile chapter of the plan.

Planning Process

In the fall of 2006 the Water Street BID requested the City Plan Commission to consider working on updating the Water Street Commercial District Plan, which was originally prepared in 1982. Upon completion of other planning projects, the Plan Commission directed City staff to begin the process of updating the plan in May of 2007.

To assist in the preparation of the plan, the Plan Commission appointed a 16-member committee to work with City staff in updating the plan. Membership of this committee included persons representing: property owners, business owners, landlords, students, the University, Bridge Coalition, and the Historic Randall Park and Third Ward Neighborhood Associations. A listing of the committee members is included in Appendix A. This committee was formed to:

- oversee the planning process;
- obtain business and citizen input;
- offer feedback on plan alternatives, components, and drafts.

In order to assist the committee in providing feedback regarding neighborhood issues, the group decided to conduct two surveys; one of businesses located within the planning area and the other of persons frequenting the area. The survey of businesses was mailed in June of 2007 to all the businesses within the planning area and 44 surveys were returned and tabulated, which represented a 61% return rate.



The second survey was an on-line survey posted on the City's website during the month of June of 2007. The community was informed about this survey through various means including: news releases to the media, interviews with the media, informational flyers posted at Water Street businesses, information and links posted on the University's website and notifications

through the neighborhood associations. A total of 886 persons completed the survey, with a good mix of both students and older adults

(non-students) responding to the survey. (Results of both surveys are summarized in separate reports, which are available for review at City Hall, Department of Community Development.) The committee utilized input from these two surveys to assist in the identification of issues and concerns and the responses were also utilized to help formulate the development of recommendations contained in the plan.

The committee also obtained input from various organizations and City and County officials regarding issues and possible recommendations for the planning area. This input was obtained through a series of meetings and included officials from: Luther Hospital, the Chippewa Valley Convention Tourism Bureau, UWEC, City/County Health Department, City Inspections Division, Community Development Department, Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department, Public Works Department, and Police Department.

Once a draft of the plan was prepared, the committee met with the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association Steering Committee on September 16, 2008 to discuss the draft plan. This meeting was scheduled because the Water Street Planning area is within the boundaries of the neighborhood association.

The committee also held an informational meeting on the draft plan on October 1, 2008. All businesses and property owners within the planning area were invited to this meeting to solicit input on the draft plan. Attendance at this meeting was light, but comments were positive about the plan and past efforts of the Water Street BID.

Finally, the draft plan was posted on the City's website during the months of September, October and November in an effort to obtain additional community input.

PLANNING AREA PROFILE

This section provides an overview of background information pertaining to the Water Street Commercial District planning area. This information has been compiled from sources such as the 2000 Census, an analysis of existing conditions within the planning area, and a review of City Assessment information. This information is useful in illustrating current conditions within the planning area and determining trends that may require further analysis.

Population Information

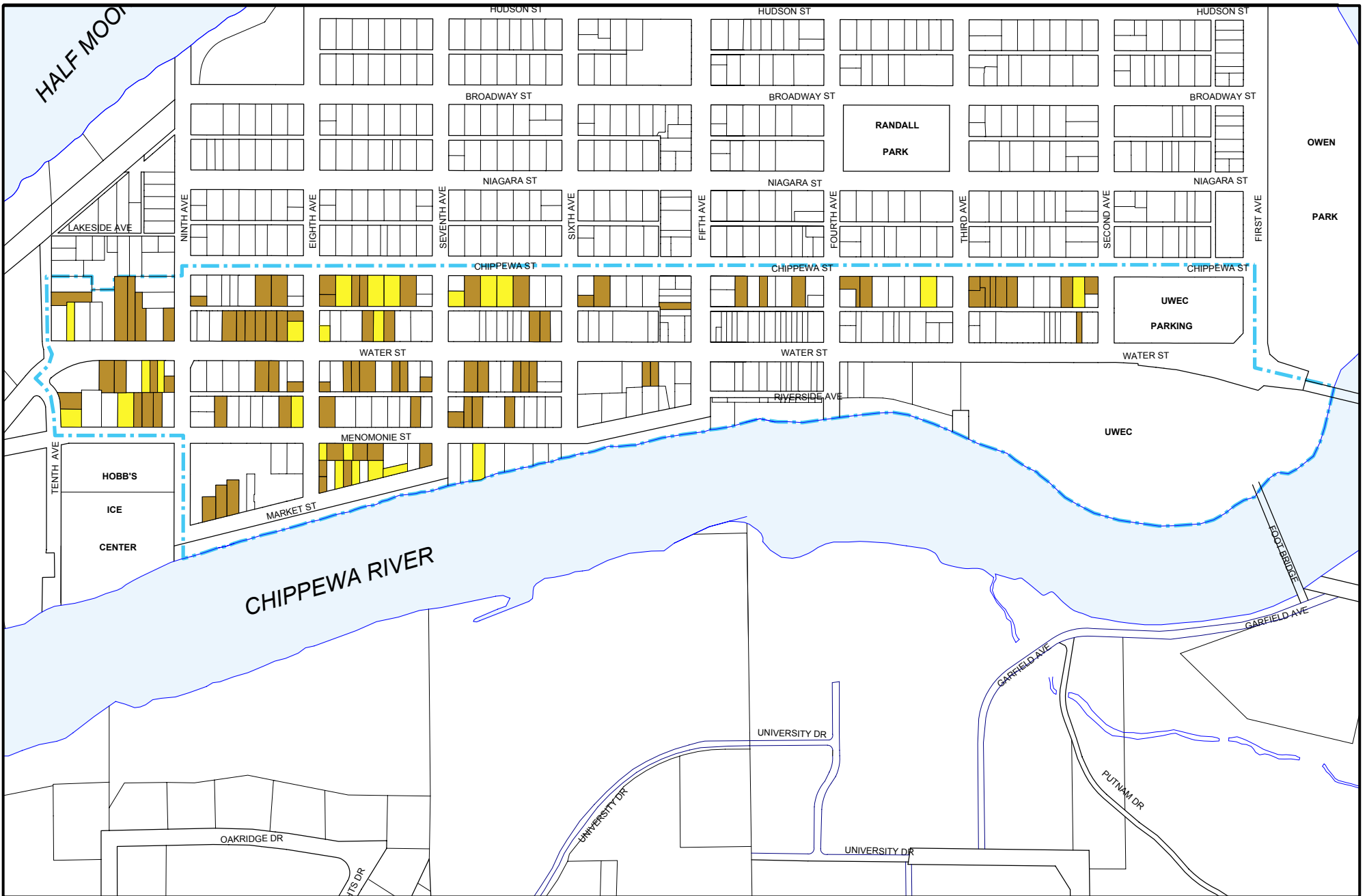
The total population within the planning area was 1,034 persons in the year 2000. This compares to 985 persons in 1982 when the plan was first prepared. The following is a summary of this population information.

Total Persons:	1,034
Males	538
Females	496
Median Age	22.1 years old
Median Age (city-wide)	29.4 years old
Persons per hshd.	2.78 persons
Persons per hshd. (city-wide)	2.38 persons

Housing

There are 372 occupied housing units within the Water Street Commercial District. Census figures indicate that 334 dwelling units or 90 percent are renter occupied and 38 (10%) are owner occupied. Map 2 illustrates the location of the single-family housing units by tenure based on City Assessment data.

The age of the housing stock within the district is quite old and is an issue as the majority of the dwelling units were constructed prior to 1900. To assess housing condition, the committee utilized a housing condition survey that was undertaken by the City/County Health Department in 2004. Map 3 illustrates that 84 of the 220 structures surveyed (38%) were in poor to fair condition. An additional 67 of the structures (30%) had 3 to 4 defect points noted against the structure,



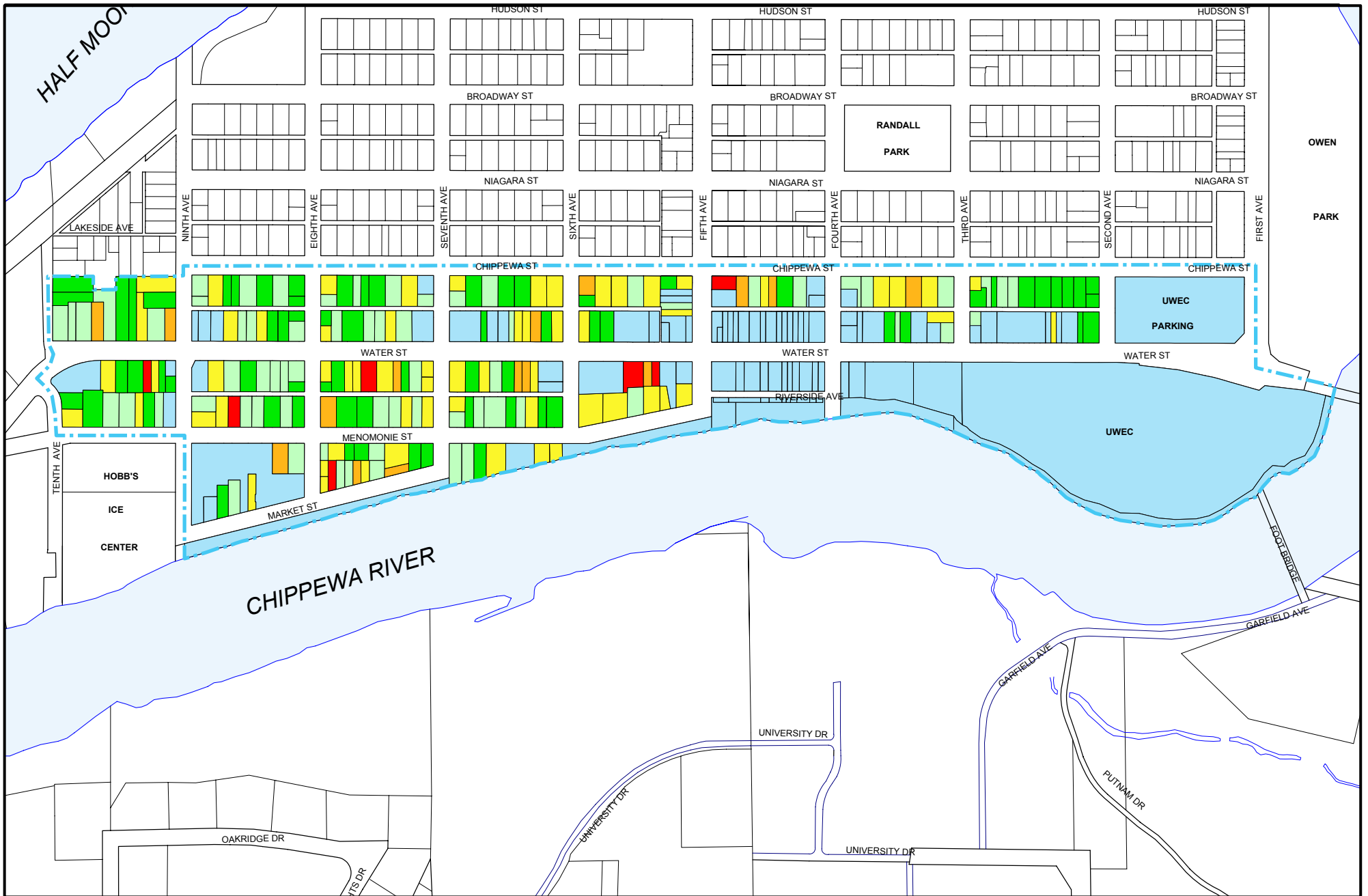
WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Single-Family Dwellings - Tenure

Map 2

- Owner Occupied
- Renter Occupied





WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

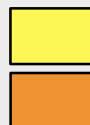
Housing Condition (Source: 2004 City/County Health Dept. Housing Survey)



Less than 3 Defect Points (69)



3 or 4 Defect Points (67)



5, 6 or 7 Defect Points (62)



8 or 9 Defect Points (15)



More than 9 Defect Points (7)



Vacant or Non-Residential Parcels (82)

Map 3

which indicates further deterioration issues. The condition of housing does not appear to have significantly improved since the time of the survey and the committee feels that many of the housing units in marginal condition at that time may be in worse condition at the present time.

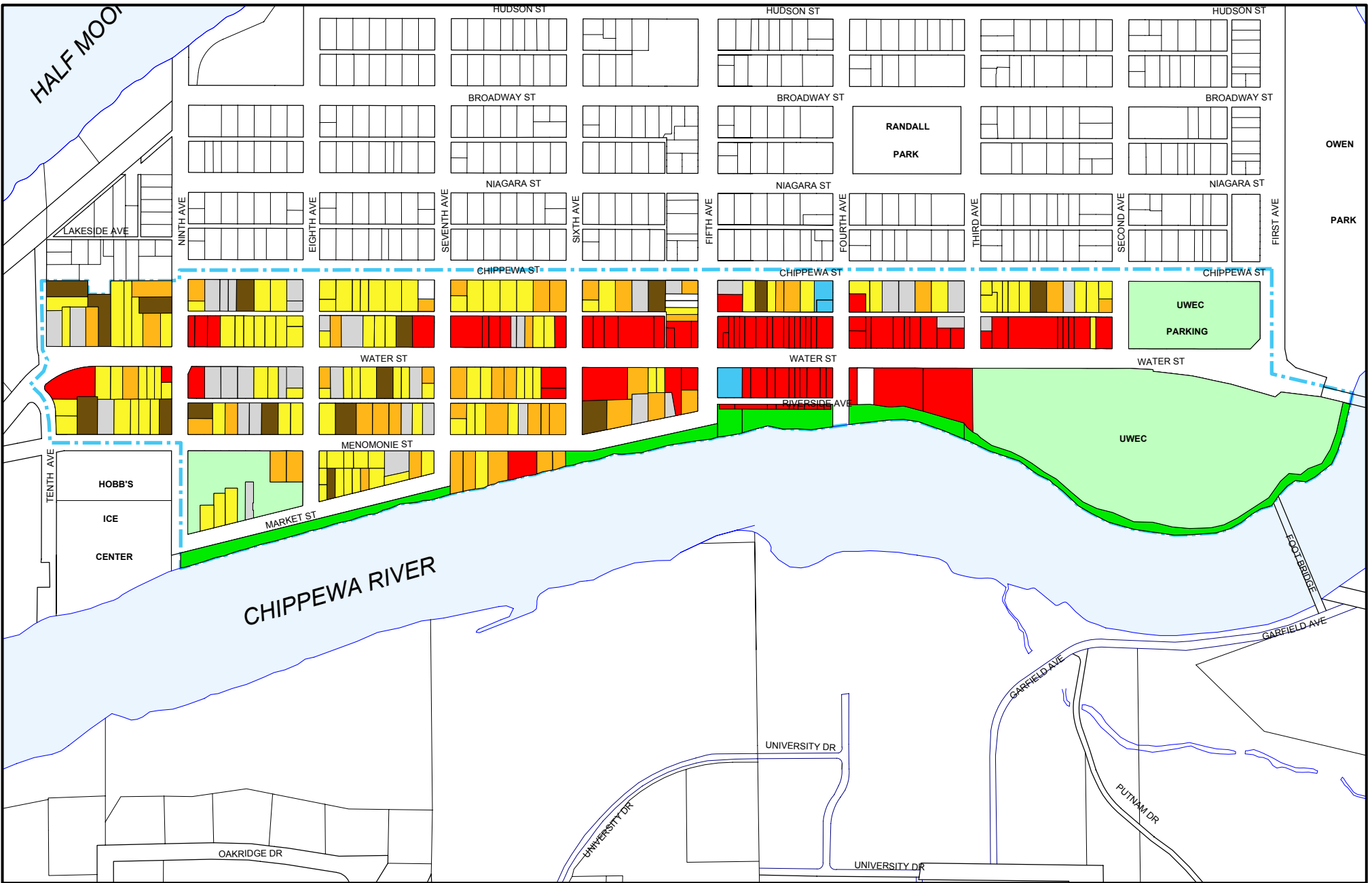
Land Use

Land Use within the planning area is illustrated on Map 4. As shown, the commercial focus within the district is along Water Street and within the 200, 300, 400 and 500 blocks. To the west of Sixth Avenue, commercial development is intermixed with residential dwellings that consist primarily of single-family dwellings, duplexes and rooming houses.

The following is a breakdown of land use by parcel:

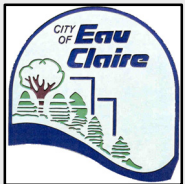
Land Use	# of Parcels
Single-family	110
Duplex	48
Rooming house	37
Multiple-family	16
Commercial	76
Park and open space	3
UWEC	2
City Parking	2
School/Church	1










Table 3 provides a more detailed analysis of the use of the buildings within the 200-500 blocks of Water Street. As shown, slightly over 50% of the first floor commercial space is utilized for various retail uses. The remaining 50% of the first floor commercial space is divided fairly evenly between office, restaurant and taverns. This analysis shows little to no vacancies of existing commercial space within this area. This is typical of the current market demand for commercial space in this area, where commercial space is in fairly high demand.



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Land Use



- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
|  Vacant |  Duplex |  Roominghouse |  School or Church |
|  Single Family |  Multiple Family |  Commercial |  Park or Open Space |
| | | |  City Parking |

Map 4

Table 3
Water Street Building Inventory
200 thru 500 Blocks

	Office/Bank	# of	Retail	# of	Restaurant	# of	Tavern	# of
	Sq. Ft.	Establishments	Sq. Ft.	Establishments	Sq. Ft.	Establishments	Sq. Ft.	Establishments
200 block	2,443	2	9,042	3	6,292	2	0	0
300 block	11,621	4	18,330	5	1,056	1	9,662	5
400 block	1,312	2	25,286	17	14,967	5	14,783	4
500 block	5,016	2	19,604	7	667	1	0	0
Total	20,392	10	72,262	32	22,982	9	24,445	9
% of Total	14.6		51.6		16.4		17.5	

A review of assessment information (Table 4) also indicates that 50 apartment units are also located in the four-block area, most of which are second floor dwellings. Four houses also exist, three of which are located in the 500 block of Water Street.

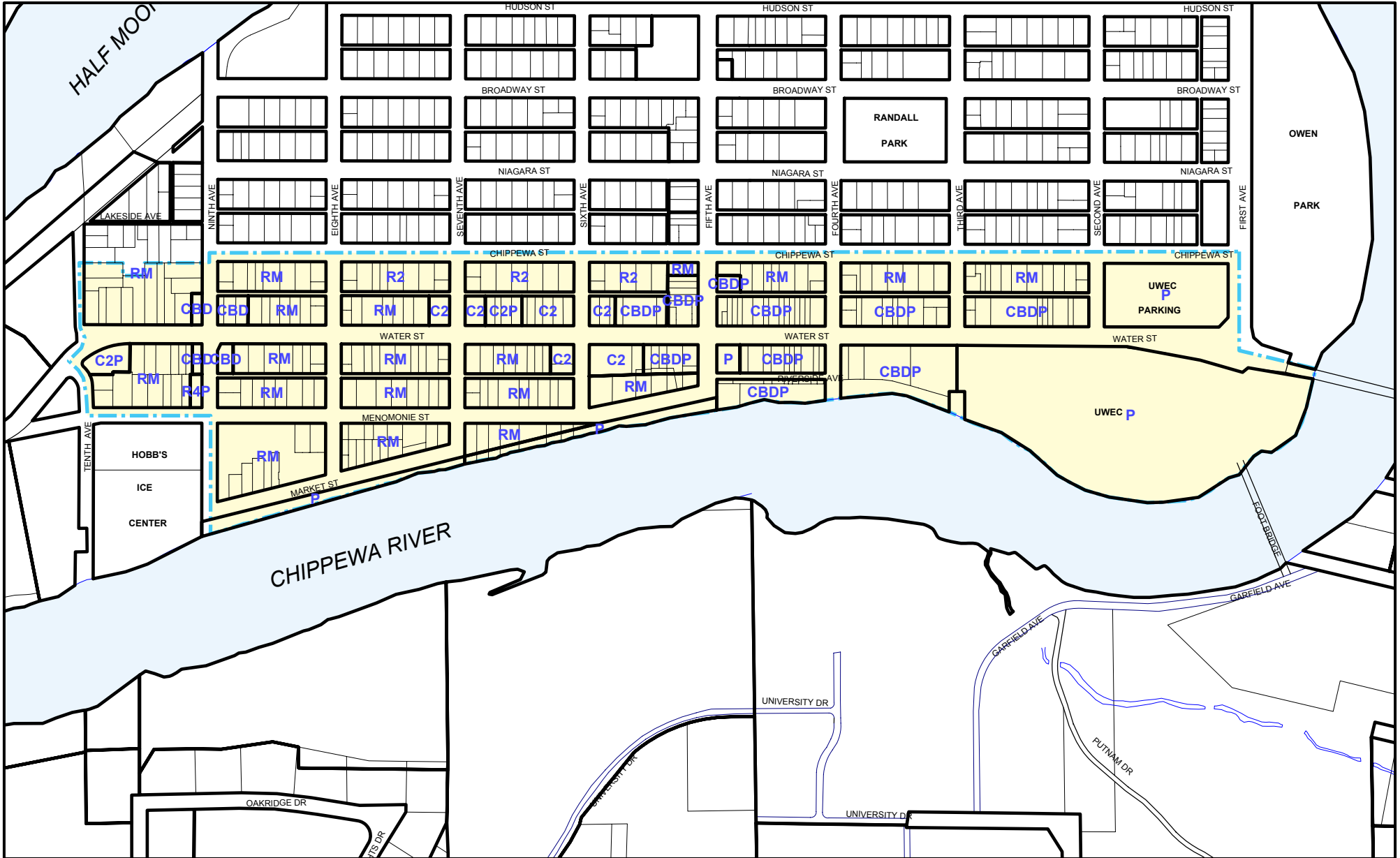
Table 4
Apartments

	Number	Houses
200 block	2	1
300 block	6	0
400 block	37	0
500 block	5	3
Total	50	4

Finally, the issue of the number of Class B liquor licenses and taverns within the planning area was a significant issue back in 1982. At that time, the plan indicated that nine Class B liquor licenses were active within the planning area. A review of City records indicates that the current number of Class B liquor licenses is fifteen; six are classified as restaurants and nine are classified as taverns. Appendix C illustrates the location of these licenses and distinguishes between the restaurants and taverns.

Zoning

Zoning for the planning area is illustrated on Map 5. The Water Street planning area is located within the southern portion of the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood, which was formed in 1978. The neighborhood association was created as a result of changes that were occurring in the residential character of the neighborhood. This change in character occurred as a large number of owner occupied homes were converted into rentals and rooming houses and issues related to the commercial district negatively effected neighboring residential areas.



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Zoning

Map 5

Special zoning provisions both residential and commercial areas were adopted as a result of these concerns and were called Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) regulations. These regulations were tailored to the unique structural, demographic and historic character of the neighborhood and commercial area.

In 1992, the City's zoning regulations were updated, and as part of the update process the NCD regulations were incorporated into the general zoning code of the City. The regulations unique to Water Street, which primarily effect the 200 through 500 blocks of Water Street, were folded into the CBDP zoning of this area. These regulations focus on the unique character of Water Street and include:

- Taverns and restaurants require a conditional use permit;
- The current plan established a limit on the number of Class B liquor licenses within the area, but the City Council has issued additional licenses for restaurants in recent years;
- Vehicle service uses require a conditional use permit;
- Dwellings including first floor dwellings to the rear of a commercial tenant space and those on the second floor would require a conditional use permit;
- Retail and service businesses are permitted, but uses such as wholesaling are not permitted;
- Motor vehicle drive-ups are not permitted in order to encourage and promote the pedestrian environment, curb cuts in mid-block locations are limited, and building gaps along the street are discouraged;
- Certain dimensional standards apply to the area as well. These relate to building height (35 feet max.) and front yard setback (not more than 10 feet for buildings).

The additional provisions relating to the 400 block of Water Street include the following:

- New construction shall occupy the full width of the lot;
- New curb cuts are not permitted, except for crosswalks;
- New parking lots must have a 60' setback from the front;

- Design plans for new construction should be reviewed by the Water Street Merchants Association, now the BID.

The other commercial areas along Water Street (west of Sixth Avenue) are zoned C-2P, C-2, and CBD. They include a mix of office, retail and service type businesses.

The residential portion of the planning area is zoned Mixed Residential (RM), which is also a carry over from the previous NDC zoning regulations. The RM District zoning regulations allow greater dwelling unit density than the R-2 district, yet provide limitations pertaining to dwelling conversions and density that are not contained in the R-3, thus addressing issues that the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood was experiencing in the late 1970s and 1980s.

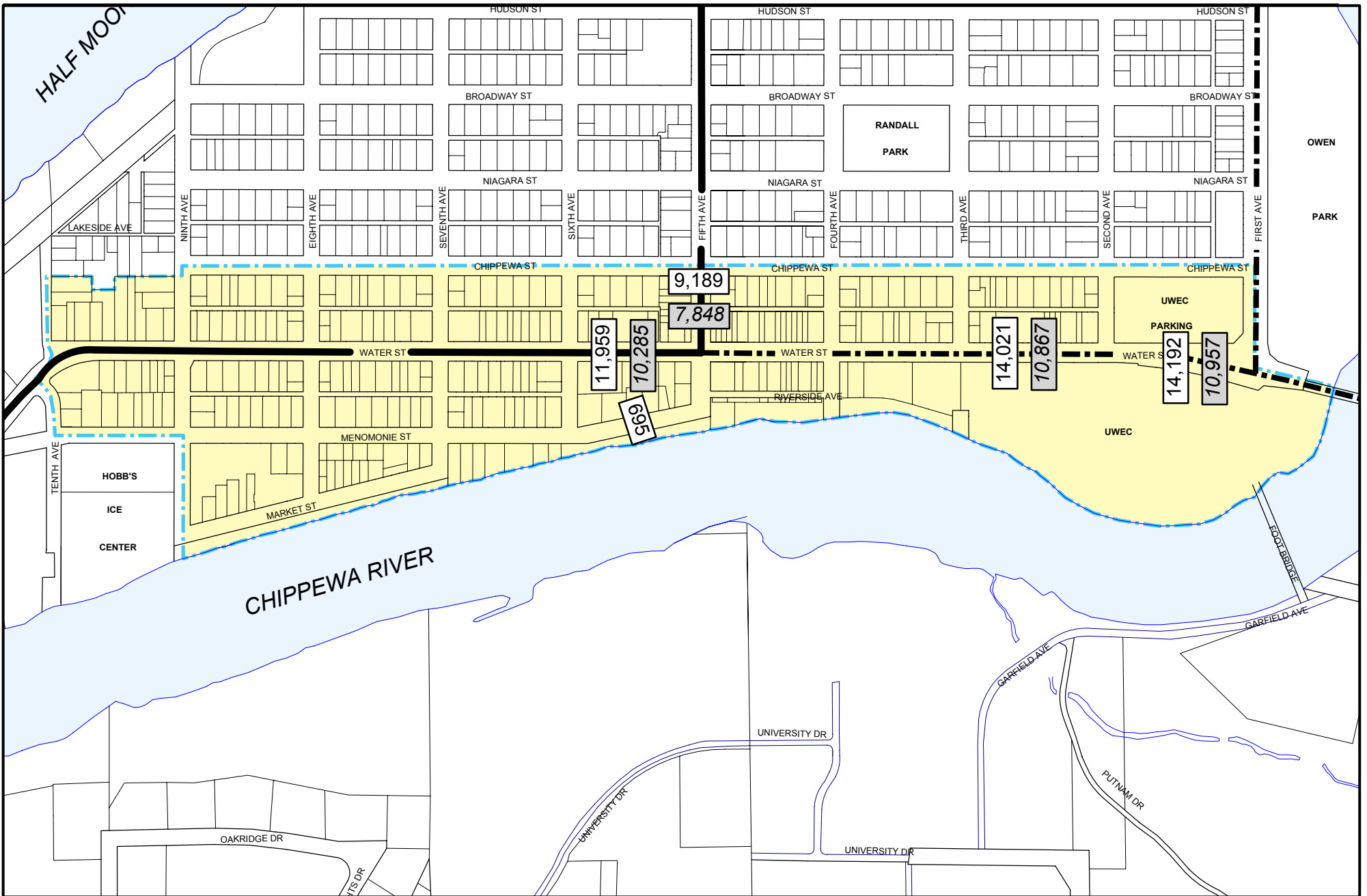
Traffic Circulation and Parking

Water Street is classified as a principal arterial to the west of Fifth Avenue and a minor arterial to the east of Fifth Avenue. Fifth Avenue is classified as a principal arterial extending north of Water Street. Traffic counts taken in May and June of 2007 are shown on Map 6. These counts indicate that traffic volumes along Water Street decline during the summer months when the University is not in session. The change in traffic volumes is most pronounced in the vicinity of the University between First and Third Avenues, however volumes vary from May to June further to the west in the vicinity of Fifth Avenue.

Traffic has also increased on Water Street and Fifth Avenue since 1982. Table 5 illustrates the changes in traffic volume since the original plan was prepared.





Location	1981	2007
Fifth Ave (north of Water St.)	8,670	9,189
Water St. (west of Fifth Ave.)	9,810	11,959
Water St. (First Ave./bridge area)	13,080	14,192

The design configuration of Water Street has also changed since 1982. At that time, Water Street was designed as a 4-lane facility. The street was reconstructed in two phases in 2003 and 2005, at which time the street was redesigned into a three-lane facility. Bicycle lanes were included from Sixth Avenue, west to Ninth Avenue.



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Street Classification - Traffic Counts

	Principal Arterial		24 Hour Traffic Count - May, 2007
	Minor Arterial		24 Hour Traffic Count - June, 2007

Map 6



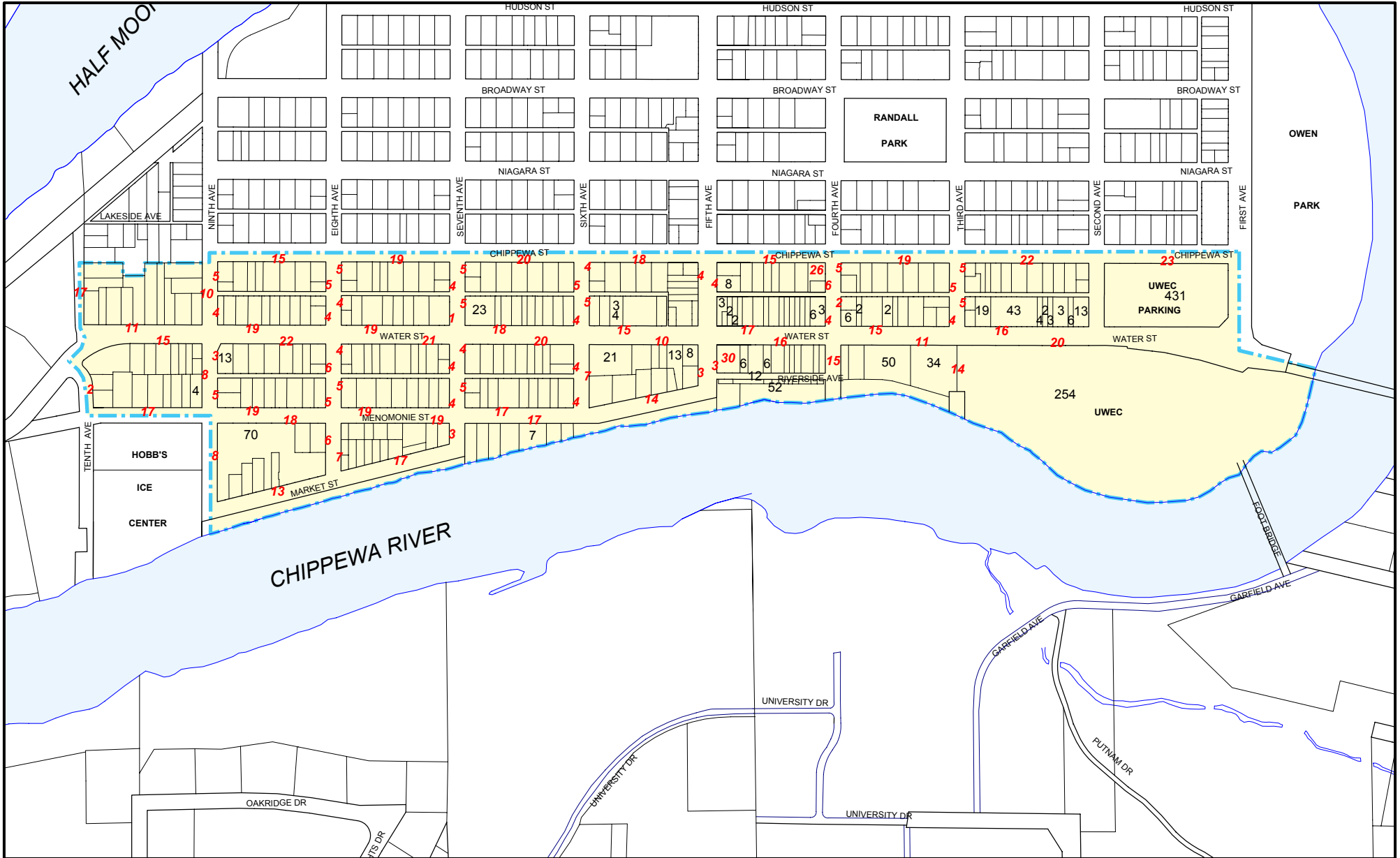
The original plan discussed traffic congestion on Water Street as an issue, particularly at peak times such as during the noon hour and late afternoon hours from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. An analysis of current traffic has not found major issues with traffic congestion along Water Street or within the planning area. However, traffic congestion is an issue during peak times in the vicinity of the Water Street Bridge, particularly for westbound traffic at First Avenue.

Parking availability was a key issue at the time the original plan was prepared. Shortages of off-street parking seemed to be particularly acute within the 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Water Street during the evening hours. This increased parking demand was a result of traffic generated by restaurants and taverns. Recent business and community surveys undertaken for this plan indicate that parking availability continues to be an issue.

Based on concerns pertaining to shortages of off-street parking back in 1982, the original plan recommended that the City provide additional off-street parking. Two primary alternatives were proposed, one involved the purchase of properties on the south side of Chippewa Street within the 400 block and the other proposed the closing of Fifth Avenue to the south of Water Street, which would have enabled the expansion of the existing City parking lot located at the southeast corner of Water Street and Fifth Avenue. The closing of Fifth Avenue was not implemented and only a 26-vehicle parking lot was built at the intersection of Chippewa Street and Fourth Avenue through the purchase of one residential property at the southwest corner of Chippewa Street and Fourth Avenue.

A survey of parking availability was undertaken as part of the analysis in an effort to assess parking issues within the planning area. Map 7 provides a summary of the on-street and off-street parking that is available. An analysis specifically of the 200 through 500 blocks of Water Street, indicates that there are approximately 339 public parking spaces available either on-street or in the two City parking lots. Another 336 spaces are available in this area that are privately owned, controlled and maintained.

To provide a quantitative analysis of parking needs for the area, these numbers were compared to the City's required off-street parking standards in an effort to help document business and customer concerns and comments that there is a parking shortage within the core area of Water Street. Based on the inventory of uses and tenant space square footages for the 200 through 500 blocks of Water Street (see Table 3), and applying the City's parking standards contained in the zoning code, approximately 783 parking spaces would be required. This represents a



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Parking Availability

Map 7

10 No. of Public Parking Spaces

10 No. of Private Parking Spaces

shortage in parking of approximately 108 parking spaces. This figure takes into account a 10% reduction in the parking requirements due to the availability of bus transit and a 5% reduction for providing bicycle-parking facilities.

An analysis focusing only on the 300 and 400 blocks of Water Street also illustrates that there is a differential between the inventory of parking and demand. Within this two block area, there are approximately 221 public parking spaces available either on-street or in the two City parking lots, while 194 privately owned and controlled spaces are located in this area. Parking standards indicate a parking requirement of approximately 592 spaces for the 2-block area, which includes the 15% reductions for transit and bicycle facilities. This represents a shortfall of approximately 177 spaces.

The committee recognizes that the parking demand varies throughout the day as morning and afternoon parking demand is generated primarily from the retail, office and restaurant uses, while the evening parking demand is generated primarily by the restaurants and taverns and to a lesser extent from retail. Therefore, the actual difference between the supply and need may be less than that shown using standards contained in the zoning code. However, the committee feels that a shortage in parking does exist in the core commercial area and providing additional off-street parking is necessary and would be beneficial for the businesses, abutting neighborhood area and would promote growth of the Water Street Commercial District.

Finally, two other parking related changes occurred since 1982. The first involved parking design improvements and riverfront beautification work along the Chippewa River within the 400 block of Water Street. Private parking along the south side of what was an alley, (now Riverside Avenue) was paved, curbed and signed for each of the businesses. The project resulted in a much more attractively designed parking area, more efficient use of the parking lot and a better delineation of the spaces. The second change involved the vacation of Third Avenue to the south of Water Street to provide private parking.

Transit

There are three bus routes that currently serve the planning area. All three provide service along portions of Water Street and also within the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood to the north. These routes include: Mount Washington-Delong, University-Stein Boulevard, and West

Clairemont-Altoona. Several additional routes are available either to the north along Lake Street or to the east along State Street.

Historic Properties

As previously noted, the Water Street area began to develop in 1856, but most of the original buildings were destroyed in the 1882 fire. The majority of the buildings along Water Street today, were constructed shortly after the 1882 fire. The historic significance of these buildings was recognized in 2007, when the majority of the 400 block of Water Street was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Several other historically significant buildings are also located within the planning area as shown on Map 8. Other buildings of note include 602 Water

Street (Ottawa House,) 526 Menomonie Street (Adin Randall House,) and 322 Water Street. In addition, the Water Street Commercial District is located just south of the Randall Park Historic District, which is listed on both the National Register and designated as a City Landmark District.

Floodplain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Wisconsin DNR conducted a re-evaluation of the 100-year floodplain boundary within the City of Eau Claire in 1993. As a result of this study, many areas were removed from the floodplain, several of which were located within the Water Street planning area.

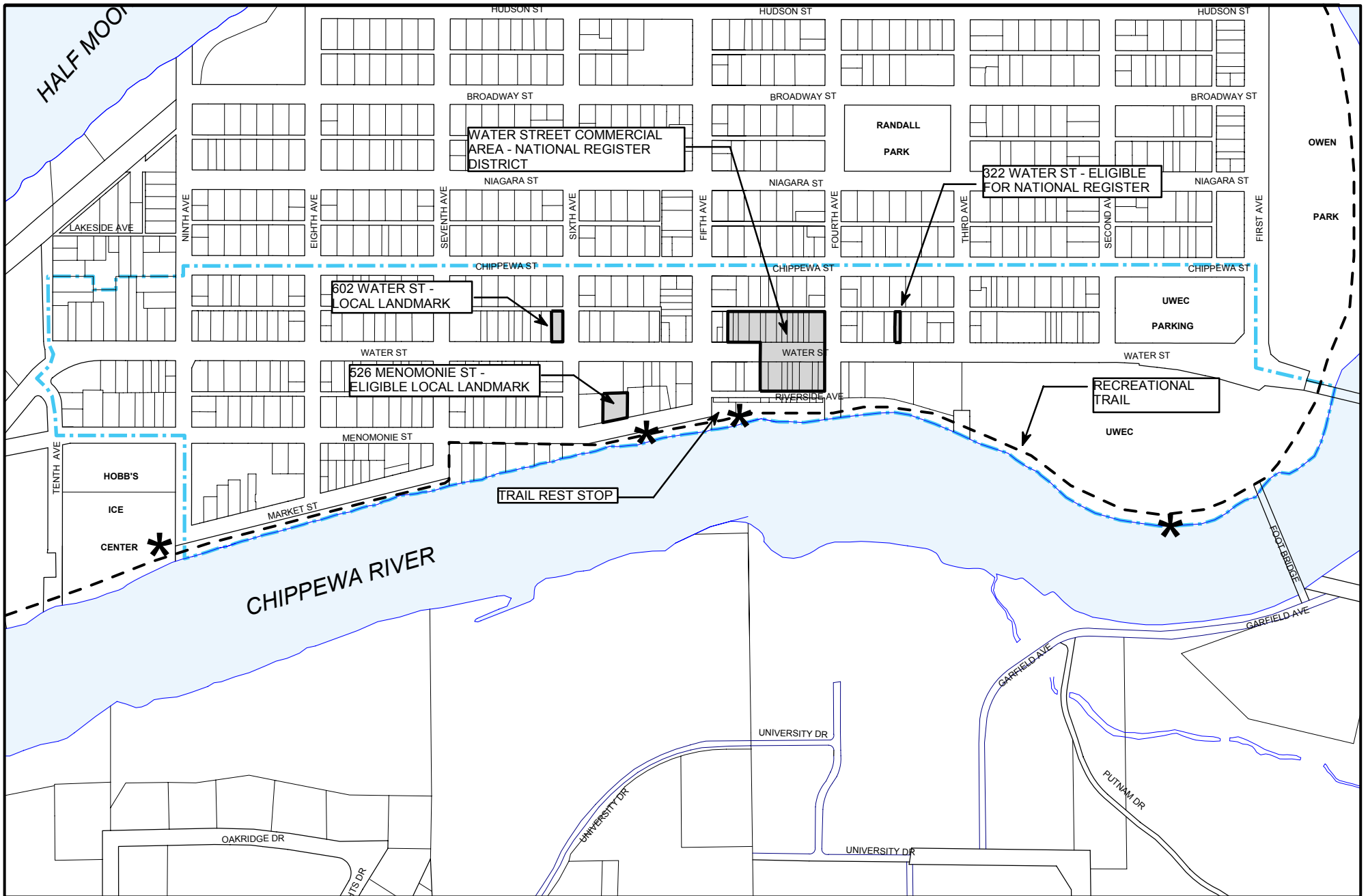
With these recent changes in the floodplain boundary, only three areas remain in the 100-year floodplain within the planning area. This includes a portion of the UWEC parking lot located to the west of the Fine Arts Building, the UWEC parking lot located to the north of Water Street, and property located at the northwest corner of Water Street and Second Avenue.

Parks and Open Space

Map 8 also identifies the park and open space resources within the planning area. As shown, the entire planning area borders the Chippewa River located to the south. Since 1982, the City has completed a number of improvements along the riverfront, most notably the extension of the recreational trail. This trail system is part of the Chippewa River State Trail, which extends south of the City to Durand and also connects with the Red Cedar Trail, which continues to Menomonie. Within the City, this trail system forms a loop around the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood and connects with Downtown.



The extension of the trail has also led to the beautification and clean up of the riverfront to the south of the 400 block of Water Street. As part of the project, a small overlook and trail rest stop were completed to the southeast of Fifth Avenue and Menomonie Street. Four historic plaques providing historical information about Water Street and the Chippewa River have also been erected along the trail within the planning area.



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Parks and Historic Resources

Map 8

* Historic Markers - - - Recreational Trail



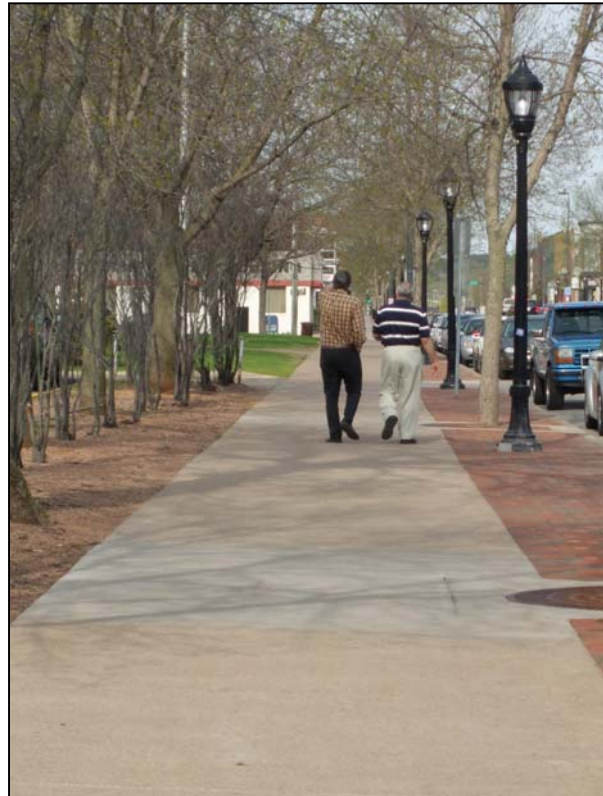
RESOURCES AND ASSETS

Input from Water Street businesses and the community was solicited about the Water Street planning area to assist in the update of this plan. This input came from community and business surveys and many people noted a number of positive assets and features of the area. Many of the resources and assets noted are the very reasons why the Water Street area is so unique.

In addition, it is important to consider these resources in the development of this plan as they may present opportunities for businesses, property owners, residents and the City to be utilized to further enhance the area. Also, recognizing these assets help ensure that they are not inadvertently lost nor diminished as a result of any recommendations included in the plan.

These resources and assets are generally listed in descending order of importance as identified in the surveys and committee discussions.

- Variety of retail shops, restaurants, and coffee shops
- Variety of small and unique businesses
- Central and convenient location to the neighborhood, University, Luther Hospital, Downtown and community in general
- Unique character of the area
- Historic character of the area and its historic buildings
- Location relative to the Chippewa River and recreational trail
- “Small town” environment and experience within a large urban area
- Pedestrian friendly atmosphere



- The nightlife along Water Street
- Overall sense of safety and security
- General cleanliness of the area
- The tradition of the area
- The diversity of the activities to do on Water Street
- Availability of bus service
- Creation of the Water Street Business Improvement District
- An active and enthusiastic group of business owners interested in promoting the district

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

A key component of this plan update is the identification of strategic problems and issues that exist within the planning area. To assist the committee in this process, the following were utilized:

- Findings from the business and community surveys completed as part of the plan update process;
- Review of the analysis of conditions narrative contained in the 1982 plan to assess whether progress has been made pertaining to issues identified at that time;
- Input from representatives of various departments and organizations relative to their perspective of Water Street including: tourism, parks, Luther Hospital, UWEC, code enforcement, planning and zoning, health department, police, public works, transportation, etc.

The following is a listing and brief description of the strategic issues and problems identified. These issues are listed in general importance of those responding to surveys and discussions of the Planning Committee.

1. **Insufficient Off-Street Parking.** This issue was identified in the 1982 plan. While some additional parking has been provided since that time, business and community surveys both indicate that there continues to be a deficiency. These concerns relate to parking needs relative to the current business environment and also the desire to encourage growth of Water Street in the future. Additional parking would also benefit the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood located to the north by reducing “spill-over” parking into the residential areas.

Committee members also noted that parking regulations within the commercial areas are not enforced on a regular basis. This has led to people parking their vehicles for extending periods of time, which in turn has contributed to the problem of insufficient parking.

Areas of particular concern include the public parking lot located at the southwest corner of Chippewa Street and Fourth Avenue and along Fourth Avenue to the south of Water Street.

2. **Poor Appearance Area and Buildings.** While the historic nature of the area and many of the buildings was noted as an asset, survey responses also noted some concerns pertaining to the appearance of the area and some buildings. Some of these comments are

attributable to the former Kerms building, which was vacant at the time the survey was taken and that the video store to the west was in deteriorated condition. (This building was removed shortly after the survey was completed.) However, issues regarding billboards along Water Street and rundown or deteriorated condition of other commercial buildings within the planning area were noted. Some of these buildings could benefit from façade improvements or be considered for redevelopment. The deteriorated and unkept exterior condition of the housing is also an issue in the western portion of the planning area.

In addition, a concern frequently raised in the surveys relates to issues of litter, and garbage. Business owners, and the BID working with the University have made attempts to sponsor clean-ups, but the general perception is that more needs to be done.

3. **No Grocery Store.** Survey responses indicate that the loss of Kerms grocery store was significant loss for the business district and adjacent neighborhood. This grocery store was conveniently located and walkable for many residents of the neighborhood and students living on campus.
4. **Number of Taverns.** As noted in the Plan Profile section, the number taverns, the concentration of taverns was an issue in 1982 because of a number of problems stemming from the taverns. It was such an issue at that time that the plan recommended that no additional Class B licenses be approved within the planning area.

This concern remains relevant today, as the number of taverns has increased since that time. Survey responses from both the community and Water Street businesses and input from the committee expressed concern regarding the concentration and large number of taverns within the planning area. This relates to problems associated with the taverns, including: excessive drinking, perceived safety concerns, vandalism, littering, inappropriate public behavior, noise, and projecting a negative image for the area.

To further assess the issue, the committee met with Police Department officials. The police confirmed that the concentration of taverns continues to be an issue along Water Street and within the adjacent neighborhoods due to the problems noted above.

5. **Pedestrian Safety.** Committee members noted concerns pertaining to pedestrian safety within the planning area, particularly within the 200 through 500 blocks of Water Street. It was noted that the ability to cross the street has improved with the redesign of the

street into a three lane facility, however, safety issues still exist that need to be addressed through education and engineering.

Starting in June of 2008, the BID and Public Works Department placed signs in the center median of Water Street at the intersection of Fourth Avenue in attempt to make motorist more aware of pedestrians and slow vehicle traffic. The Public Works Department is currently evaluating the effectiveness of these signs.

6. **Commercial/Residential Growth and Redevelopment.** After extensive discussion regarding existing zoning in the area and related plans such as the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan, the committee concluded that the existing zoning and policies of the neighborhood plan, applicable to the area west of Sixth Avenue do not provide for or promote a unified commercial theme for redevelopment. Rather, the committee felt that the plan promotes the continued maintenance of the existing structures and somewhat of a piecemeal redevelopment scenario on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

Currently, this portion of Water Street is a mix of commercial and residential zoning and the original plan provides little direction to encourage redevelopment and growth of the area. Comments from survey respondents and the committee indicates that additional commercial development along Water Street of a density and composition (residential and commercial) similar to the commercial district east of Fifth Avenue should be pursued.

7. **Drive-up Facilities.** Committee members expressed frustration with the current zoning standards that prohibit a business from providing any type of drive-up business services (i.e. a drive-up restaurant or bank.) The intent of these regulations is to encourage the pedestrian atmosphere of the area and minimize curb-cuts along the fronts of buildings on Water Street. Committee members noted that these standards should be studied to determine if some compromise could be developed that would enable drive-up business services in certain situations (such as accomplished Downtown), yet not compromise the pedestrian environment of the area.
8. **Promotion and Marketing.** Committee members noted that although the DECI and BID have been active in promoting and marketing the Water Street Commercial District, there is still a need to do more. This includes continued and increased marketing and promotion targeted towards the general community to improve their perception of the area. DECI and BID also need to better market the area to encourage and attract additional businesses to locate on Water Street.

9. **Snow Removal.** Snow removal concerns were also noted in the surveys and by businesses, particularly within the 200-600 blocks of Water Street and along Riverside Avenue. Water Street is on an “Ice Control Route,” which means that it is plowed and salted each time it snows. In addition, snow is hauled from the curb and sidewalk along the portion of Water Street extending from First Avenue to approximately 100 feet west of Sixth Avenue. The City hauls the snow within a few days of plowing, once the Streets Division has had a chance to finish plowing the remainder of the City.

Businesses noted that prior to removal and hauling of the snow, it is difficult for patrons to park along the street and get to the shoveled portion of the sidewalks. In addition, if the snow is not removed quickly, ice begins to accumulate along the curbs also making access to stores difficult and at times hazardous. Business owners also noted that along the portion of Water Street where snow is not removed and hauled (west of Sixth Avenue), access to businesses is even more difficult.

Finally, snow removal along Riverside Avenue is also problematic due to the tight confines of the street with vehicle parking to the south and buildings to the north.

10. **Bicycle Friendliness.** Although the area is promoted for its pedestrian and bicycle environment, comments from the survey and committee noted that improvements should be pursued to make the area more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. This includes issues with circulation within the planning area and the need to provide adequate and thoughtfully placed bicycle parking facilities.



11. **Lack of Design Guidelines.** The historic and unique buildings within the 200, 300 and 400 blocks of Water Street area are an important component of the fabric and tradition of Water Street. However, there are few guidelines or standards in place to encourage and direct building owners to make informed and appropriate decisions regarding façade treatments and

improvements. This has resulted in some inappropriate façade remodeling work, and installation of signage inappropriate to character of the buildings.

In addition, as noted in the profile chapter, a number of buildings within the planning area have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This designation provides some financial incentives, but little protection for these buildings from inappropriate façade treatments in comparison to designating the buildings under the City’s landmarks program.

12. **Need for Additional Variety of Shops and Restaurants.** Although one of the area’s assets identified in the survey was the variety of shops and restaurants, a number of other people also noted that Water Street could benefit from additional shops and restaurants and in having a greater variety of shopping opportunities. These comments indicate that a good base in shops and restaurant exists, but that opportunities should be pursued to encourage and expand upon the variety of shops and restaurants.

13. **Negative Image of the Area in the Evening.** Survey responses noted that a number of people have concerns about the safety and image of the Water Street area in the evening. Issues related to the proximity of the area to the University, concentration of taverns, and excessive alcohol consumption (perceived or actual) contribute to these negative attitudes and perceptions.



14. **Capitalizing on the River.** A number of improvements have been completed along the river since 1982 as noted in the introduction. However, some opportunities have been missed, which would further capitalize on the proximity of the riverfront. Issues that need attention along the riverfront include:

- Poor visibility of the river due to heavy vegetation growth;
- Poor physical access to the river for those wishing to get to the shoreline or into the water;

- Underutilization of the riverfront with a mix of parking, housing and housing that is in substandard condition along Menomonie and Market Streets;
 - A gap in the recreational trail in the 600 block of Menomonie Street.
15. **Lighting.** The adequacy of lighting within the neighborhood area surrounding the commercial district is a concern because of the pedestrian nature of the area and its proximity to the University. Limited lighting along the recreational trail is also a concern.
 16. **Traffic Congestion.** The committee noted that Riverside Avenue has become quite congested with traffic, particularly when delivery trucks park in the right-of-way while making deliveries. The alley north of the 400 block of Water Street is also very congested with the two-way traffic and becomes particularly restricted in the winter when snow reduces its width.
 17. **Poor Alley Condition.** Alleys throughout most of the planning area are in need of reconstruction. Lighting and poor storm drainage are also issues that the committee felt needed attention.
 18. **Wayfinding Signage System.** The City lacks a wayfinding signage system to help guide and direct people to points of interest and destination points (such as Water Street) within a community. As Water Street continues to market itself to visitors and the community, the need for a community wayfinding signage system becomes more important.
 19. **BID Boundaries.** The boundary of the Water Street Business Improvement District currently extends west to Sixth Avenue, which does not include a number of businesses. These businesses could benefit by being included within the district.

WATER STREET GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The original plan included a series of goals and objectives to provide direction for the Water Street area. As part of the process of updating this plan, the committee updated these goals and objectives and also developed an overall vision statement for the planning area. Factors considered in the development of the vision statement and review and update of the goals and objectives, included:

- The recognition that the Water Street Commercial District serves the needs of the surrounding neighborhood and is also a destination location for the community and beyond.
- That the core commercial area including the 200 through 500 blocks of Water street, is doing well and few vacancies exist. When vacancies do occur, they are generally filled quite quickly.
- Water Street is a pedestrian oriented area and should continue to capitalize on this pedestrian environment.
- There continues to be a strong desire to provide a safe and comfortable environment for residents and visitors.
- The historic and unique environment of Water Street is important and needs to be protected and promoted.

VISION STATEMENT

Water Street is an attractive, safe, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, vibrant area, providing services for the adjacent neighborhoods, the community and the region. It is a center for the creative class and provides a compact and diverse mix of retail shops, restaurants, office, entertainment, arts and housing opportunities. The district capitalizes on its tradition, history, strong commitment of business owners, and its proximity to the neighborhoods, the University, Downtown and the Chippewa River.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

Land Use and Urban Design

GOAL: Promote land use and design in the planning area, which is conducive to the needs of the Water Street commercial area, neighborhood and community, and which capitalizes on the history and character of the area.

- Seek a unified and consistent storefront line along Water Street that provides first floor commercial uses and upper floor commercial and/or residential dwellings.
- Develop a high-density, urban scale, pedestrian oriented land use pattern along Water Street throughout the planning area, including the existing core commercial area of the 200 through 400 blocks of Water Street and through redevelopment of the 500 through 900 blocks of Water Street.
- Promote a fairly compact commercial district, which is conducive to pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.
- Encourage through land use and zoning controls; a compatible mix of land uses, the elimination of nonconforming uses and billboards, and diversity in business types that will promote high pedestrian volumes.
- Achieve high quality in the design and appearance of the area and encourage rehabilitation of building facades, which have been subject to inappropriate exterior changes and signage.
- Seek redevelopment of vacant parcels and underutilized properties that will complement the historic and unique character of Water Street to provide for the development of new businesses, the expansion of existing businesses and new housing opportunities.

Parking and Transportation

GOAL: Provide adequate parking and transportation facilities to address the needs of business, residents and neighborhood and provide convenient, safe, and attractive multi-modal circulation to and within the planning area.

- Provide off-street automobile parking that addresses parking needs for the area and which provides safe and convenient pedestrian access to and from businesses.
- Promote shared use of automobile parking facilities and explore unique funding sources to fund off-street parking.
- Allow vehicle parking lots and driveways which blend with adjacent residential or business use and which do not reduce the “walkable” environment of Water Street.
- Provide streets that are maintained in good year-round condition and which are adequately lighted to provide vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Maintain convenient transit access to the area.
- Establish automobile and bicycle parking regulations appropriate for the area patterned after those utilized Downtown.
- Keep a traffic flow along Water Street which strikes a balance between the need to provide thru-traffic and that which encourages “pedestrian-scale” design.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment

GOAL: Promote safety and convenience both for bicyclists and pedestrians.

- Promote a “walkable” and pedestrian friendly environment.
- Continue to provide and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities and amenities within the planning area.
- Identify and correct bicycle and pedestrian safety issues within the planning area.
- Designate bicycle routes to safely and conveniently access the commercial areas and navigate within the planning area.

Open Space, Parks, and Riverfront

GOAL: Seek continued improvement of the physical condition of the open space areas and the riverfront and utilization of these resources to the benefit of both the Water Street area commercial district and the community as a whole.

- Enhance both the visual and physical access of the public to the riverfront.
- Complete the recreational trail that extends along the riverfront within the planning area.
- Promote compact, “high quality” redevelopment along the riverfront that capitalizes on this resource.

Business Environment/Image and Physical Appearance

GOAL: Strive for a vibrant and healthy business district serving the needs of the neighborhood while providing a unique retail, restaurant and entertainment experience for the community and beyond; that provides a high quality physical and visual environment that incorporates elements of the history and tradition of the district, a unique identity, complementary design and environmental aesthetics.

- Seek a complementary mix of businesses that provides a broad range of products and services to address the varied needs of the neighborhood and community.
- Promote a positive image of Water Street, which will attract diversity in customers and a balance of retailers.
- Provide entertainment and activity options for a neighborhood, family and community.
- Create a proactive organizational structure to promote business growth and improvements.
- Provide a safe, clean and well-lighted environment for residents and visitors.
- Preserve and rehabilitate the historic facades of buildings on Water Street.
- Provide “streetscape” elements (such as benches, trees, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, public art) to enhance the appearance of the district.
- Remove litter, trash and other eyesores from streets, sidewalks, alleys, and riverfront and parking areas.

- Require the screening and landscaping of all off-street parking areas in the Water Street commercial district.
- Achieve high quality design with appropriate design guidelines for exterior alterations and for the design of new structures.

WATER STREET RECOMMENDATIONS

The following improvement strategies seek to realize the vision, goals and objectives of this plan and address the issues and concerns identified in the business and community surveys and further discussed by the Planning Committee. The strategies are listed under one of the five categories set forth in the preceding section relating to the vision, goals and objectives for the plan. It is important to realize that many of these strategies are interrelated and implementation will require the coordination of multiple agencies and organizations.

The plan emphasizes the importance of maintaining or enhancing the unique character and environment of Water Street noting that this character should not be diminished in any fashion. In fact, the “vision” for Water Street is to build upon the existing character of the area and promote a high density/compact land use pattern along Water Street to the west of the established commercial core area, which would also include a mix of first floor retail and service businesses with upper floor housing.

Land Use and Urban Design

1. **Zoning and Land Use Along Water Street.** The Commercial District Profile section of the plan provides an analysis of the existing zoning within the planning area. As noted, special zoning provisions were adopted in the early 1980s for the eastern portion of the planning area because of the unique mix of businesses, historic buildings and environment along Water Street. These regulations primarily affect the 200, 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Water Street and additional provisions pertaining specifically to the 400 block of Water Street were also adopted. These regulations along with other background information for the planning area and the vision for Water Street have guided the formulation of a series of recommendations regarding land use and zoning provisions for the entire planning area.

The following is a summary of recommendations pertaining to land use, zoning, urban design that seek to attain the vision, goals, and objectives of this plan.

- a) 400 Block of Water Street. This is the core block of the commercial district, which is unique not only along Water Street, but also within the City and region. This block is a highly concentrated commercial area, with uninterrupted storefronts built at the sidewalk. It is a highly pedestrian area, with no curb-cuts or drive-ups. Current zoning standards for this block state that new construction must occupy the full width of a parcel, no new curb-cuts are permitted, parking lots must have at least a 60' setback, maximum building height is 35 feet, be reviewed by the BID or some related



committee, etc. It is recommended that the current zoning provisions relating to the 400 block of Water Street should be retained with one modification. This one modification would require that any new construction within this block be at least two stories in height.

- b) 200, 300 and 500 Blocks of Water Street. To promote the “vision” of Water Street, any new development of within the 200, 300, and 500 blocks should be constructed at the front property line and be two or three stories in height. Any new development would provide a mix of first floor retail, office and service uses, with either commercial or residential occupying the upper floors. Buildings more than 3 floors in height would require a conditional use permit, where factors such as scale of the building, compatibility with adjacent development, parking availability, impact on the neighborhood, etc. would be considered.
- c) 600 Through 900 Blocks of Water Street. Consider an amendment to the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan that would support and encourage commercial development along Water Street to the west of Sixth Avenue. The current Comprehensive Plan shows medium to high density residential land uses as the recommended use within this area.

Existing land use along this portion of Water Street consists of a mix of service and retail businesses and housing. As noted in the issues section of the plan, the original Water Street Plan allows for only the expansion of commercial development in this area if a lot is abutting commercial zoning. In their review of the issue, the committee concluded that this current policy of the Comprehensive Plan promotes the continued existence of a piecemeal mix of land uses, small-scale development and the continued minimal maintenance of a number of structures which are in fair to marginal condition.

This plan proposes a fairly compact/high density development along this corridor similar to the 200 and 300 blocks of Water Street, which includes primarily retail, personal service and office type uses, with storefronts at the front property line. In addition, this plan stresses that this development be two or



three stories in height with either commercial or residential units occupying these upper floors. Development proposals would also be of a generally large scale, not just involving one or two parcels, but rather the

assembly of multiple parcels encompassing significant portions of each block fronting on Water Street.

The residential component of this development is an important element of this plan. It will provide an additional market base for the first floor commercial businesses and also provide housing opportunities within proximity to centers such as the Luther Hospital campus, and University campus.

Structures greater than three stories may be appropriate for certain applications and would be considered by the Plan Commission and City Council as part of the rezoning proposal, which would allow for public input from the neighborhood, BID, and community. Criteria for review of such taller buildings would be based on factors such as; design of the building, scale of the project in relation to adjacent

development, parking availability, impact on views of the river and impact of such structures on the surrounding neighborhood.

It is envisioned that this development should be highly “walkable” and pedestrian oriented with streetscape amenities similar to the Water Street corridor to the east of Fifth Avenue. In order to promote a pedestrian scale for such development, the City should consider development incentives to minimize the placement of curb cuts on Water Street. Such incentives may include allowances for approving non-accessory parking, and a reduction in required parking standards if the applicant can demonstrate a reduced parking demand.

In addition, to further minimize the number of curb cuts along Water Street, the City shall establish a standard whereas side yard parking not occupy more than 50 percent of the width of a given development parcel. The Plan Commission and City Council may consider a waiver to this standard if in their review of the rezoning proposal they find: the proposed parking lot would be compatible with adjacent land uses, curb cuts are provided on side streets in lieu of curb cuts along Water Street, substantial landscaping of the lot is proposed to break up large expanses of pavement, the compact high density character of the area is not diminished, the property owner can demonstrate that other remedies have been considered to minimize the parking frontage on Water Street, etc.

Finally, current zoning provisions allow non-accessory parking upon approval of a conditional use permit. If the Plan Commission considers such requests, approval of such parking lots should be conditioned on substantial landscape screening along all sides adjacent to residential properties. In addition, the City should work to encourage larger, unified, parking lots in these areas as opposed to the construction of “piece meal” parking lots scattered along either the south side of Chippewa Street or north side of Menomonic Street.

- d) Commercial Uses. Uses allowed should be those permitted uses and conditional uses as allowed Downtown in the CBD District, with the exceptions and special provisions set forth below.
 - i. Vehicle Service Type Businesses. The current standards permit vehicle service type businesses by conditional use

permit in the 200 through 500 blocks of Water Street. It is recommended that this type business should not be allowed in the 200, 300 and 400 blocks of Water Street, but would be considered by conditional use permit to the west of Fifth Avenue. Criteria for review of such requests would include such factors as: compatibility of the proposed use with other uses within the area, neighborhood compatibility, character of the building and site in relation to other buildings in the area, impact on the pedestrian environment, etc.

- ii. Vehicle Drive-up Windows. Current standards do not permit vehicle drive-up windows or services within the 200, 300, 400 and 500 blocks of Water Street. This standard was put into place in the early 1980s to promote the pedestrian and bicycle environment along Water Street and limit curb cuts along the street as the Water Street Commercial District has long been recognized as a pedestrian friendly area.

The Planning Committee had considerable discussion regarding the appropriateness of vehicle drive-ups (i.e. drive-up windows for businesses such as restaurants and banks) on Water Street. They recognize that the unique nature of Water Street is in part due to the pedestrian “walkable” environment of the area. However, it was also felt that some businesses could benefit from the use of drive-ups without compromising the pedestrian environment of the area.

Therefore, the following is recommended to provide a balance between the goal of preserving the pedestrian environment along Water Street yet provide limited opportunities for some businesses to utilize vehicle drive-ups:

Continue to prohibit drive-ups within the 400 Block of Water Street. Within the remainder of Water Street area, allow vehicle drive-ups in limited situations by conditional use permit utilizing specific review standards.

Within the 200, 300 and 500 blocks, businesses with existing curb cuts on Water Street could request a conditional use permit to install a drive-up to the side or rear of a building, provided the location and design of the drive-up would not create the potential for vehicle stacking

onto Water Street, not adversely affect the pedestrian environment of the area and would not adversely affect traffic circulation in the area. No new curb cuts would be permitted along Water Street within these blocks.

Within the 600 through 900 blocks of Water Street, drive-ups could be permitted to the side or rear of a building where access to such drive-up is provided from an alley or side street and where exiting is not onto Water Street. Such drive-ups would be considered as a conditional use permit or at the time the property is rezoned and in either case, utilizing the standards discussed above.

- iii. Restaurants. Restaurants that do not serve any form of liquor should be a permitted use and not require a conditional use permit. This is a change from the current regulations that require a conditional use for all restaurants.



A conditional use permit would be required for restaurants serving alcohol. This would allow the BID, Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association, and Plan Commission an opportunity to review a proposed restaurant to ensure that its hours of operation, parking demand, and general operation are consistent with the vision, goals, and objectives of this plan and related plans, and not negatively impact the planning area or neighborhood to the north.

- iv. Taverns. As discussed in the profile section, the concentration and large number of taverns along Water Street was an issue in the early 1980s, and remains so today as their number has increased. An analysis of the issue finds that businesses, the community, the University, and police department all have concerns regarding the concentration and large number of taverns within the planning area because of resultant problems including: excessive drinking, perceived safety concerns, vandalism,

littering, inappropriate public behavior, noise, and creating and perpetuating a negative image for the commercial district.

Based on this background and documentation from the original plan, it is recognized that the City must continue to attempt to limit the addition of future taverns within the planning area. Therefore, it is recommended that zoning provisions and liquor license standards be considered that would prohibit any new licenses where concentrations presently exist in the 200, 300 and 400 blocks of Water Street.

New taverns proposed for the commercial areas located to the west of Fifth Avenue would be considered by conditional use permit. Review of any new tavern would include such factors as: neighborhood compatibility, parking availability, parking location, proximity to other taverns, size (occupancy) of the tavern, ability to schedule live bands and performances, hours of operation, etc.

Responsibility: City Plan Commission, Water Street BID

Timeframe: Immediate, on-going, long-term

- 2. Residential Redevelopment.** Consider an amendment to the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Plan that would support and encourage redevelopment of the existing housing located within the area bounded by Fifth Avenue, the Chippewa River, Ninth Avenue, and the alley south of Water Street. As noted in the issues section of the plan, this is an area in close proximity to the Chippewa River, yet is underutilized with a mix of housing, much of which is in substandard condition.

The City should take a lead role, possibly through the City's Redevelopment Authority in guiding redevelopment efforts of this area to provide new housing opportunities, which capitalizes on the proximity and views of the river. This redevelopment should accommodate a higher population density than provided under the current RM zoning, therefore consideration for zoning change to a R-3P or R-4P designation should be considered for a large-scale, multi-story, development similar in nature to residential buildings that were approved in the North Barstow Redevelopment District.

This redevelopment could involve closing of streets along the river to provide additional public open space and amenities for this new development.

It should be noted that one historic building (Adin Randall House) is located within the 500 block of Menomonie Street and efforts to preserve this historic house should be a priority.

Responsibility: City Plan Commission, Redevelopment Authority

Timeframe: Long-term

3. **Design Review Standards.** Develop design guidelines to assist building owners in making building façade and signage improvements that are appropriate to the design and character of the buildings and the area as a whole. These guidelines should also provide direction of appropriate design for new commercial construction within the planning area. City staff would work with the BID or an appointed subcommittee to develop these guides, which would be similar in content to the guidelines developed for the North Barstow Redevelopment District.

The Plan Commission would utilize these guidelines as part of the zoning and site plan review process for new construction or development requiring site plan review. In addition, the BID would encourage owners to consider these design guidelines prior to undertaking projects that would involve façade changes or improvements.

Responsibility: Dept. of Community Development, BID

Timeframe: Short-term

4. **Nonconforming Provisions.** Seek the removal or elimination of those uses, structures, signs, and billboards that are nonconforming within the planning area through means such as site plan review, redevelopment opportunities, façade loan and improvement programs and enforcement of zoning provisions.

Responsibility: Dept. of Community Development

Timeframe: On-going

5. **Historic Landmark Designation.** Designate the Water Street National Register Historic District (majority of the 400 block of Water Street) as a local landmark district. This would provide added protection for these buildings, which have been identified as historically and architecturally significant by the Wisconsin Historical Society and National Parks Service. In addition, the Landmarks Commission should periodically review other buildings within the planning area for possible local and national landmark designation.

Responsibility: Eau Claire Landmarks Commission
Timeframe: Immediate

6. **Non-Accessory Parking In Vicinity of River.** Prohibit non-accessory parking lots in the area west of Sixth Avenue and south of Menomonie Street, which is in the vicinity of the Chippewa River. This area should be redeveloped as outlined above to capitalize on its proximity and views of the river. Non-accessory parking lots along the river are not appropriate.

Responsibility: Dept. of Community Development
Timeframe: On-going

Parking and Transportation

1. **Off-Street Parking.** An analysis of building square footage, land use and input from businesses and customers indicate that there is a shortage of off-street parking within the 200, 300, and 400 blocks of Water Street. To address this shortage, the following should be initiated:
 - a) Fifth Avenue. Study the feasibility of closing Fifth Avenue between Water Street and Menomonie Street. Menomonie Street would become a cul-de-sac and the existing City parking lot expanded to the west. At some point in the future, if the north side of the 500 block of Menomonie Street were redeveloped, closing that portion of Menomonie Street would provide additional open space along the Chippewa River.

An alternative would be to maintain traffic on Fifth Avenue but redesign this section of the street by eliminating the boulevards, and narrowing the traveled portion of the street to accommodate additional parking.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works, Dept. of Community Development
Timeframe: Short-term

- b) Chippewa Street. Continue to expand the existing parking lot located at the southwest corner of Chippewa Street and Fourth Avenue within the 400 block of Chippewa Street. Long-term, the entire block (with the exception of the lots fronting on Fifth Avenue) should be acquired and parking developed. Short-term, by 2013, at least one parcel should be acquired to provide approximately 24 additional parking

spaces in this block. Acquisition and construction costs would be an eligible expense for the BID, to assist the City for this project.

The addition of parking within this half block will provide additional benefits for the Water Street. A larger and unified parking lot would encourage businesses backing onto this lot to open up the rear of their buildings and make façade improvements. This would be similar to the improvements made to the rear of the buildings within this block located on the south side of Water Street along Riverside Avenue. This parking lot should be extensively landscaped along Chippewa Street to make the area attractive both for the commercial district and to transition into the residential neighborhood to the north.

Responsibility: Dept. of public works, Dept. of Community Development, BID

Timeframe: Short and Long-term

2. **Parking Enforcement.** Increase enforcement of the two-hour parking regulations for the City parking lot located at the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Chippewa Street. Survey responses and committee input noted that enforcement of these regulations for this lot is infrequent. This has encouraged people to park their vehicles in this lot for extended periods of time. In addition, on-street parking enforcement within the commercial areas and in proximity to the University should be increased. An area of particular concern is along Fourth Avenue south of Water Street.

Responsibility: Police Department

Timeframe: On-going

3. **One Way Street Designation.** Study the feasibility of designating Riverside Avenue as a one-way street. This study would include an analysis of which direction of travel would be most appropriate. This narrow right-of-way is regularly congested with the current two-way traffic when deliveries are being made and when snow narrows its width.

The alley to the north of the 400 block of Water Street should also be studied for the possibility of conversion to one-way traffic. This alley also becomes very congested with traffic, particularly when delivery trucks park in the alley to make deliveries.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works, BID

Timeframe: Short-term

4. **Traffic Speed Enforcement.** The BID should request that the Police Department work with the business district on increased speeding enforcement. Excessive vehicle speed was noted on Water Street and on Riverside Avenue. The Public Works Department should also review the feasibility of a design solution to reduce vehicle speeds on Riverside Avenue. The Police Department should also periodically employ the use of the portable vehicle speed trailer and the movable speed warning signs.



Responsibility:
Police

Department

Timeframe: On-going

5. **Traffic Signal Timing.** Study the timing of the traffic signals located along Water Street at the intersection of First Avenue and the intersection of Fifth Avenue to determine whether the timing of these two signals can be better coordinated.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works

Timeframe: Immediate

6. **Coordination With UWEC on Parking.** The BID, University, and City should study the usage of the two University parking lots located within the planning area and determine the feasibility of any options that would:

- Increase day-time student use of the parking lot located north of Water Street;
- Encourage greater use of the general public when University classes are not in session.

Responsibility: BID, University, Dept. of Public Works

Timeframe: Short-term

7. **Private Parking Lots.** The BID should work with owners of private parking lots to encourage agreements that would enable joint use of off-street parking facilities when these facilities are not in use.

Responsibility: BID

Timeframe: Long-term

8. **Transit.** Periodically evaluate transit needs within the planning area. As noted in the background section of the plan, three bus routes currently



serve the area providing excellent bus transit options for the residents of the area and for people to access the commercial district from other parts of the City. One amenity that should be considered is the need for bus shelters at selected locations along

Water Street or Fifth Avenue to better serve the needs of transit users.

Responsibility: BID, Transit Commission

Timeframe: On-going

9. **Off-street Parking Standards.** Continue to provide flexibility to prospective businesses in the administration of standards for required off-street parking in the review of site plans. Location relative to the City's transit routes should continue to provide for reductions in required spaces and the City and BID should encourage the inclusion of bicycle parking facilities as a component in all developments.

In addition, study the feasibility of creating a parking fund where building owners would contribute a fee to the City for parking space reductions granted by the Plan Commission as part of the site plan review process. Funds collected would be utilized to acquire parcels and develop the public parking lots discussed above.

Responsibility: City Plan Commission

Timeframe: On-going

10. **Alley Condition.** Reconstruct the alleys within the planning area that are in deteriorated condition. This should include drainage improvements, new pavement, and improved lighting. Where possible, the width of the pavement should be increased. Funding through special assessments and the CDBG program should be considered.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works

Timeframe: Short-term

11. **Snow Removal.** The Public Works Department and BID should work together to develop a plan to address snow removal concerns of the Water Street businesses. Areas of specific concern include Riverside Avenue and along the 200 through 600 blocks of Water Street. In addition, snow plowing and snow removal policies should be periodically evaluated to address the changing needs of abutting businesses and property owners located to the west of Sixth Avenue.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works, BID

Timeframe: On-going

Bicycle and Pedestrian Environment

1. **Center Median Signs.** Continue to utilize the “Yield to Pedestrian” signs placed in the center median of Water Street at the intersection of Fourth Avenue. Also, study the feasibility of placing these signs at other intersections, particularly at Third Avenue.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works, BID

Timeframe: On-going and short-term

2. **Pedestrian Crosswalks.** The City should paint the crosswalks at the intersections of Third Avenue and Water Street, Fourth Avenue and Water Street and Fifth Avenue and Water Street to better denote their location and visibility for motorists.



Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works

Timeframe: Short-term

3. **Lighting.** Study lighting levels along the recreational trail and streets extending north from Water Street into the Historic Randall Park Neighborhood to determine whether additional lighting should be installed due to the highly pedestrian nature of the planning area and adjoining neighborhood. These areas may need lighting that exceeds standards generally utilized the City.

Responsibility: Dept. of Public Works, BID, Randall Park and Third Ward Neighborhood Associations

Timeframe: Long-term

4. **Bicycle Circulation.** The BID should coordinate efforts with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission to encourage bicycle commuting traffic that is traveling east or west through the planning area to utilize the riverfront trail system or Chippewa Street. Installation of bike lanes between First Avenue and Fifth Avenue is not recommended.

Responsibility: BID, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, Dept. of Public Works,

Timeframe: Short-term

5. **Bicycle Parking.** The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, BID and Public Works Department should coordinate the installation of additional bicycle racks within the planning area. This should include selected locations along the recreational trail and on Water Street.

Responsibility: BPAC, BID, Dept. of Public Works

Timeframe: Short-term

Open Space, Parks and Riverfront

1. **Access to Riverfront.** Develop an improved access to the Chippewa River at the “Historic Water Street Landing” located at the intersection of Menomonie Street and Fifth Avenue. This improvement would provide a location for people using the river for such recreational uses as tubing, rafting and fishing to have access to or out of the river. Picnic tables, terracing, decks, stairway, exercise equipment, and an overlook should also be provided.

Responsibility: Parks, Recreation and Forestry Dept., BID

Timeframe: Immediate

2. **Visual Access to River.** On a periodic basis, the City Parks Division should trim trees and vegetative growth along the

recreational trail and Menomonie Street that blocks views of the river.

Responsibility: Parks, Recreation and Forestry Dept.

Timeframe: Immediate

3. **Riverfront Trail.** Complete the gap in the riverfront trail system that exists in the 600 block of Menomonie Street. The City should work with property owners, the neighborhood association, and BID to determine the most feasible alternative to complete this one block section of the trail.

Responsibility: Parks, Recreation and Forestry Dept., BID, Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Association

Timeframe: Long-term



4. **First Avenue Open Space.** Develop a plan for the utilization of the City open space area located to the northwest of Chippewa Street and First Avenue. This open space is west of Owen Park and was purchased through floodplain mitigation efforts of the City. Potential improvements to this parcel are limited due to restrictions placed on the property upon acquisition, but opportunities to improve its utilization and enhance its appearance should be studied by the City Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.

Responsibility: Parks, Recreation and Forestry Dept., BID, Randall Park Neighborhood Association, University

Timeframe: Long-term

5. **Hobbs Ice Arena Facility.** Support efforts of the City to provide additional off-street parking for Hobbs Ice Center. One option discussed is to study the feasibility of acquiring properties to the north of the ice center for off-street parking.

Responsibility: Parks, Recreation and Forestry Dept.

Timeframe: Long-term

Business Environment/Image & Physical Appearance

1. **DECI Membership.** Continue membership with Downtown Eau Claire, Inc. (DECI). Membership with DECI allows the Water Street BID and businesses to enhance its business marketing and the promotion of events and activities held within the Water Street area. In addition, DECI staff resources are available to provide assistance to businesses pertaining to their promotional questions and needs.



Finally, business and activity information is available to the public through the DECI website, which can be a valuable resource.

Responsibility: BID
Timeframe: On-going

2. **Assistance Programs.** Encourage and promote the utilization of business assistance programs provided through the City, DECI, or other agencies. These programs can assist existing businesses and be utilized by the Water Street BID to recruit and attract additional

business to the planning area. Business assistance programs include such programs as: business consulting services (such as SCORE, Wisconsin Entrepreneurs Network, etc.), Clearwater Development Corp. Loan Pool, Downtown Eau Claire Loan Pool, Downtown Eau Claire Façade Loan Program, UW Small Business Development Center, State of Wisconsin Historic Tax Credits, and the Downtown Eau Claire Loft Matching Grant Program.

Responsibility: BID, DECI
Timeframe: On-going

- BID Boundary.** The BID should initiate the process to extend the boundary of the Business Improvement District from the current western boundary of Sixth Avenue west to Tenth Avenue. This would enable all the businesses within the planning area to benefit from programs, marketing and activities provided by DECI and the Water Street Business Improvement District.

Responsibility: BID
Timeframe: Immediate

- Marketing and Promotions.** Continue to market Water Street in an effort to broaden the district's appeal within the neighborhood, community, and region. This should be accomplished by such activities as:

- Publicizing the number and variety businesses in the district;
- Presenting a unified image for the commercial area and emphasizing the diversity of business types through joint advertising;
- Developing a unified marketing strategy utilized by all of the businesses;
- Continuing to sponsor and promote activities and special events in an effort to market or "brand" Water Street as a destination for persons of all ages, families and visitors from outside the community. Events currently promoted include the Doll and Pet Parade, Halloween, Holiday Stroll, and the Water Street Mile;
- Creating new events, promotions, and partnerships with organizations such as the University, Luther Hospital, YMCA and Downtown;



- Studying the feasibility of creating a separate website sponsored by the Water Street BID.

Responsibility: BID

Timeframe: On-going

5. **Coordination with Convention and Tourism Bureau.** Seek improved coordination for promotions and events through the Chippewa Valley Convention and Tourism Bureau. In addition, the BID should seek grant funds from the Convention and Tourism Bureau to market special events.



Responsibility: BID

Timeframe: On-going

6. **Wayfinding Signing.** Support efforts of the City, Chippewa Valley Convention and Tourism Bureau and other organizations in the development and implementation of a city-wide wayfinding signage program that includes Water Street as an identified destination.

Responsibility: BID

Timeframe: Short-term

7. **Community Arts and Entertainment.** Support efforts of the Chippewa Valley arts and theatre groups and University in development of a community performing arts center. A location along Water Street in the vicinity of the existing UWEC Haas Fine Arts Center may be one alternative.

Responsibility: Community arts and theatre groups, University, BID

Timeframe: Long-term

8. **Grocery Store.** The closing of Kerm’s Grocery Store was a significant loss for the business district and neighborhood. Its location on Water Street was convenient for neighborhood residents and was accessible by bicycle and those walking. The BID should work through the City, DECI and other organizations to actively market the area for a new grocery store, which would be “walkable” for neighborhood residents. The addition of more residents to the area as discussed in the land use section, may increase the marketability of such a store.

Responsibility: BID, DECI, City Economic Development Division
Timeframe: Long-term

9. **Streetscape Improvements/Entryways.** The BID should consider additional streetscape improvements to further enhance the appearance of the area and instill a heightened sense of arrival to the area. Monument style entrance signs have already been installed at the east and west ends of Water Street, as well as boulevard trees, benches and decorative sidewalks. Additional enhancements to consider:

- Decorative banners, hanging flower baskets, and planted flowers pots as well benches and decorative sidewalks to the west of Fifth Avenue.
- Working with the City and Luther Hospital to study enhancements along Fifth Avenue to create a visual connection between the Luther Hospital campus and Water Street area.
- Working with the City on designs for the eventual replacement of the bridge deck of the Water Street Bridge to include decorative railings, lighting and additional bicycle and pedestrian amenities.
- Unique concepts such as artwork or sculptures, design competitions for murals, the construction of overhead archways, etc.
- Adopting restrictions on the placement of vending machines.
- Enhancements along the recreational trail should also be explored. Such as signage indicating arrival to the business district, business directories, banners, decorative tree lights along the recreational trail and street, etc.



Responsibility: BID, Dept. of Community Development
Timeframe: Short-term and long-term

10. **Police Presence.** The Police Department should continue to maintain a very visible presence in the Water Street commercial areas and within the planning area. The Department’s policy of having officers walk the area in the evening, use bicycle patrols, and scheduling increased patrols during certain events adds to this visibility. Assistance from the University Police and student patrols is also encouraged.

The Police Department should also periodically attend BID meetings to respond to business and neighborhood questions and concerns. This will enable the Police Department to better disseminate information about issues regarding personal safety, perceived threats and provide information regarding actual conditions.

Finally, the feasibility of the installation of a surveillance camera system by the Police Department in high activity areas should be considered.

Responsibility: Police Department

Timeframe: On-going

11. **Bridge Coalition.** The BID should continue to work with the Bridge Coalition to address issues relating to excessive alcohol consumption and “binge drinking” within the community, but particularly within the neighborhoods surrounding the University campus and along Water Street. Community awareness events sponsored by the Bridge Coalition have included neighborhood walks and bar walks.

Responsibility: BID, Bridge Coalition

Timeframe: On-going

12. **Property Upkeep and Code Enforcement.** Target intensified code enforcement within commercial and residential sections of the planning area. The City Inspections Division and City/County Health Department must regularly inspect the residential properties, as issues with deteriorated housing condition and poor property upkeep have been chronic problems. Commercial areas also need regular and sustained code enforcement to address issues of property upkeep, accumulation of garbage, illegal signage, etc.

Responsibility: City/County Health Dept., City Division of Inspection Services

Timeframe: On-going

Appendix A

Plan Update Committee

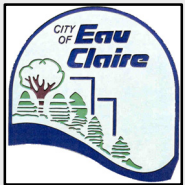
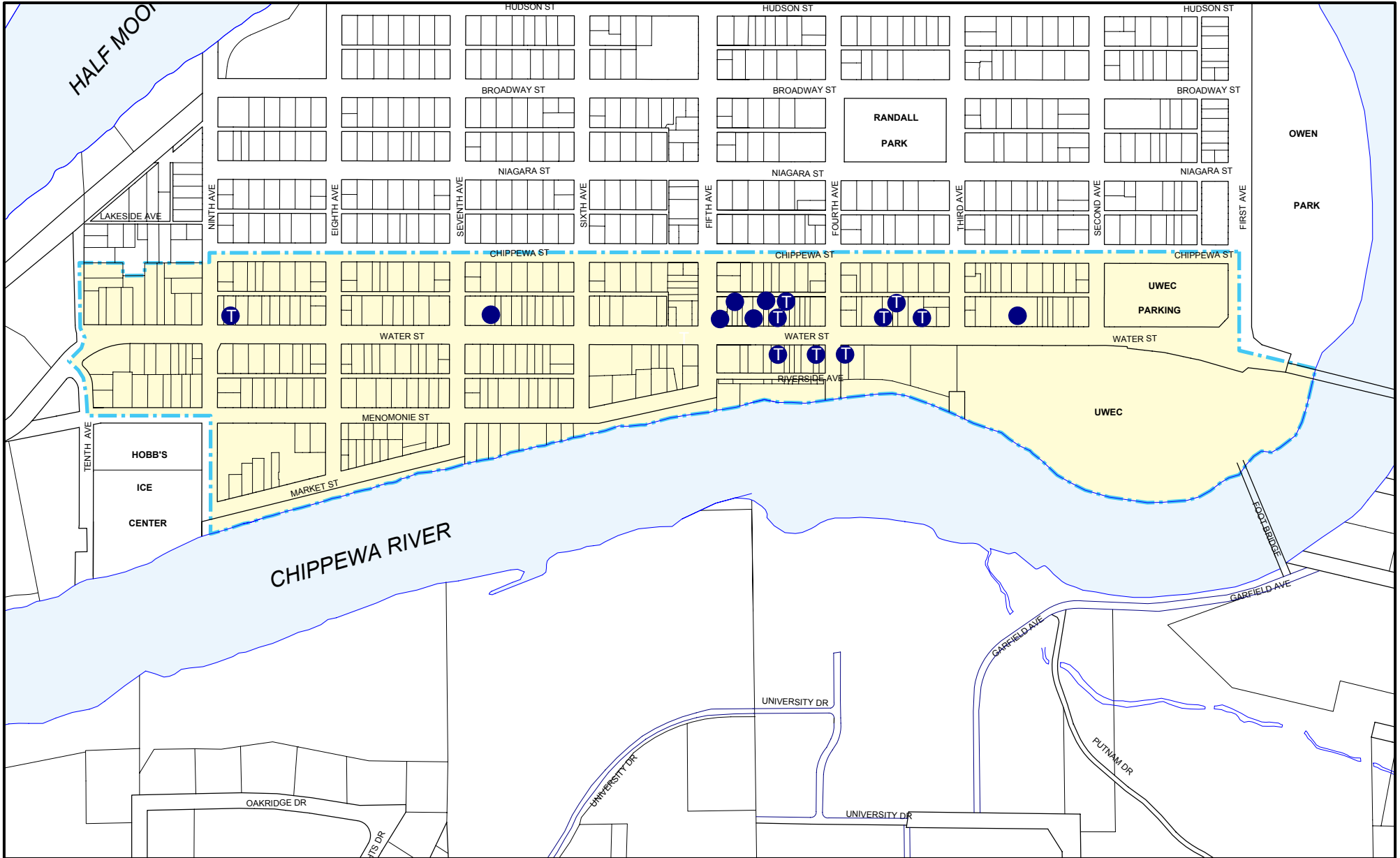
WATER STREET PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

Committee Membership

- Jeremy Kachmar Nucleus Café
- Steve Reuter Trucker's Union
- Sara Baer Avalon Flower Shop
- John Mogenson Investment Real Estate
- Lisa Aspenson Mona Lisa's
- Mary Beth Siakpere M & I Bank
- Cheri Oman Studio 9A Salon and Spa
- Alejandro Castro El Patio
- Jennifer Dooley Dooley's Pub
- Mike Rindo UWEC
- Ken Ziehr Historic Randall Park Neighborhood Assoc.
- Stan Carpenter Third Ward Neigh. Assoc./UWEC Bridge Committee
- John Schepcke Residential Property Owner
- Ray French UWEC Student
- Aaron Brewster UWEC Student

Appendix B

Class B Liquor Licenses



WATER STREET COMMERCIAL DISTRICT PLAN

Class B Liquor Licenses

Map 9



Tavern

Water Street Class B Liquor Licenses

EntityName	AgentName	BusinessName	Street Address	
			Address	Street
DOOLEY'S PUB, INC	DOOLEY, MICHAEL J	DOOLEY'S PUB	442	WATER ST
WATER STREET CO. 436 LLC	DONNELLY, DAVID	MOGIE'S PUB	436	WATER ST
WATER STREET 428 CORPORATION	ASPENSON, LISA	MONA LISA'S	428	WATER ST
EAST ROOM LLC	ASPENSON, LISA	EAST ROOM, THE	424	WATER ST
WATER STREET CLUB, INC. (THE)	GEITZ, STEPHEN E.	EAU CLAIRE HOUSE OF ROCK	422	WATER ST
TGI OF EAU CLAIRE INC.	GEITZ, STEPHEN H.	GRAND ILLUSION, THE	418	WATER ST
BROTHERS OF WISCONSIN INC	FORTNEY, MARC R	BROTHERS	324	WATER ST
322 CLUB, INC.	NOLTE, WILLIAM W. II	JOYNT, THE	322	WATER ST
314 WATER, INC.	GEITZ, STEPHEN	BRAT KABIN	314	WATER ST
CASTRO CORPORATION	CASTRO, ALEJANDRO	EL PATIO	228	WATER ST
J & L CORPORATION OF EAU CLAIRE INC	REICHERT-HART JARED J	PICKLE, THE	341	WATER ST
PIONEER ASSOCIATES INC.	DEL TORTO, PAUL	PIONEER TAVERN	401	WATER ST
WANTA ENT INC	WANTA, CLINT A	SHE-NANNIGANS	415	WATER ST
JOHNSON-NICHOLS-KUHLMAN-OLSON-POST	ROBARGE, HAROLD	AMERICAN LEGION POST 53	634	WATER ST
PIETERICK, DAVID J.		RAY'S PLACE	838	WATER ST