

Building Bridges: Eau Claire Public Market Feasibility Study

Project
Newsletter
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Progress

Since the last update, the project steering committee met three times to review the findings of the public online survey, market analysis and development concepts. Survey respondents represented about 9,000 area households and revealed strong interest for a public market. Meetings with local farmers and producers were fruitful but only slight interest was shown in renting vendor stalls. Supply and demand analyses using local census, USDA and sales data further concluded a traditional-styled public market, as found in larger cities, would be a difficult endeavor.

Indoor Market

Instead what might be more feasible, drawing upon our assets and opportunities, is a smaller-scaled privately-driven project. It could have an anchor grocer (focused on local food) along with a few vendor spaces. Together they could center on community space where perhaps cooking classes, winter farmer markets, and health and wellness events could take place. A restaurant, café or other retail could be involved as well. The floorplan below contemplates this all in a mixed use project with apartments above. After reviewing ten locations, the

preferred site was identified as Block 7, which is located one block east from the outdoor farmers market and owned by the City's Redevelopment Authority. The RDA was supportive of the concept but did not rule out other projects on the parking lot.

Market District

If an indoor market occurs then there is reason to consider a branding and marketing strategy around an everyday food experience. Some cities have formed a market district to further tourism and economic development. The recommendation here is to have the district evolve organically by what co-locates. It could be managed by an entity that targets and recruits restaurants, supporting businesses, and events like: pop-up food/vintage/makers' markets, food truck/music lunch days, etc.



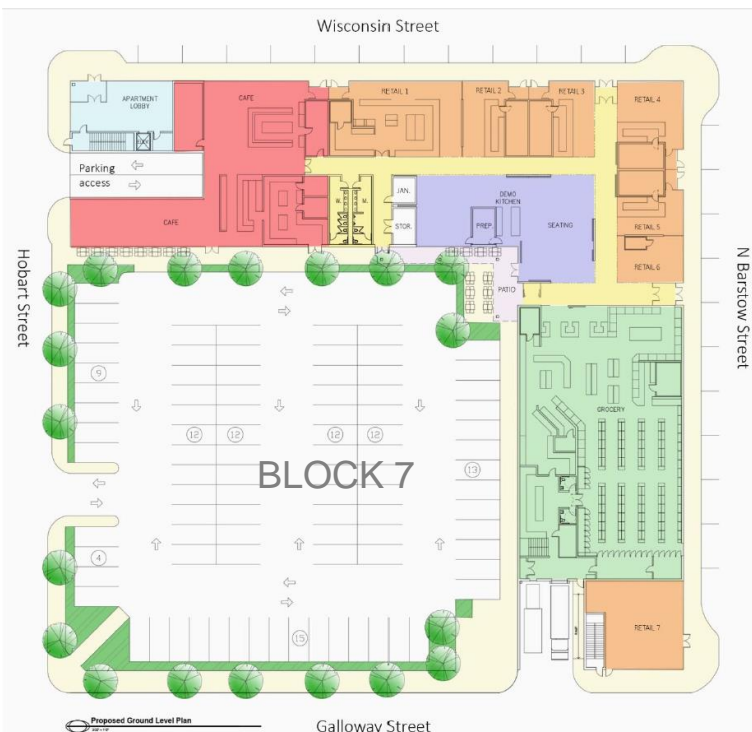
Project Goals

While a public market is not feasible, the study's two recommendations still support the five original goals:

1. Support the Northwest WI regional food system
2. Provide entrepreneurial opportunities and jobs
3. Help revitalize Downtown
4. Contribute to community health and wellness
5. Become an asset to attract and retain talent

Next Steps

The Eau Claire City Council will hear from the public market consultant and review the final study at their September 12th 7 p.m. meeting. A public input opportunity will be available. Council will provide direction then at their September 13th meeting. The study can be found electronically by [clicking here](#).



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