



**Community Design and Planning Services
2023 – 2024 Capstone Project Application**
University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Uptown Fitchburg
Capstone Project**

Date of Request:

August 10, 2023

Location of Project:

Directly west of the U.S. Highway 14 and Lacy Road Interchange See **Exhibit 1**

Name of Organization/Community Making the Request:

City of Fitchburg, WI

Organization Website:

[Fitchburg, WI - Official Website | Official Website \(fitchburgwi.gov\)](http://Fitchburg, WI - Official Website | Official Website (fitchburgwi.gov))

Name of Contact Person:

Deanna Schmidt

City Planner / Zoning Administrator

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608-270-4255

Preliminary Steering Committee:

1. Representative from Avante (Property Owner)
2. Representative from UW-Health / Meriter (Property Owner)
3. Representative from Shine (Tech Company / Property Owner)
4. Potential Development Partner (Raymond Group/Frostwood Farms)
5. Fitchburg Chamber Representative
6. Local Developer
7. Alder
8. Plan Commissioner
9. MGE Representative
10. Fitchburg Resident

Preliminary Scope of Project:

Context

The City of Fitchburg is situated south of Madison, a dynamic and unique community that sets it apart from many other cities in the United States. Its distinctive feature lies in its incorporation in 1983, which was done based on the pre-existing township boundaries. This historical aspect of its formation has had a lasting impact on the city's development and character. Fitchburg developed as a bedroom community to the City of Madison and continues its evolution to a full-service city. Fitchburg has commercial corridors but to date no traditional downtown.

Today, Fitchburg comprises a blend of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes, with over one-half of its territory dedicated to farmland, woodlands, and natural open spaces. Its planning approach to preserving green spaces amidst urbanization not only enhances the city's economic dynamism but also fosters a connection to nature for its residents.

Central to Fitchburg's growth and prosperity is its adherence to its [Comprehensive Plan](#) that strategically outlines its vision for the future. This vision preserves open space and agricultural land as it creates equitable and sustainable neighborhoods. First, the city remains dedicated to [preserving land for agricultural production](#) and committed to supporting local farmers ensuring the sustainability of food sources. Second, Fitchburg actively facilitates creating and maintaining healthy neighborhoods. Fitchburg's [Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative](#) is a collaboration with community partners and residents to address equity, diversity and access to opportunities in four priority urban neighborhoods. The Uptown/Nine Springs Neighborhood is part of the larger Fitchburg Technology Neighborhood which dedicates over 2000 acres anchored by mixed-use science/technology employment centers connected by residential housing subdivisions, parks, bike paths and walking trails. Forward Fitchburg's City in Motion Economic Development Strategic Plan envisions "Building Places & Spaces" including along the U.S. Hwy 14 corridor. (See **Exhibit 2**) Finally, Fitchburg's [SmartCode](#) implements its development strategy creating compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use nodes. This approach aims to protect farmland, promote high density transit-friendly development, and encourage a vibrant urban lifestyle. Fitchburg's Comprehensive Plan supported by SmartCode, envisions several mixed-use zone, one of these, Uptown/Nine Springs Village, is the focus of this Capstone.

Problem Statement

Around 25 years ago, Fitchburg completed the [Nine Springs Neighborhood Plan](#), which outlined the future development strategy for lands north of Lacy Road and west of U.S. Highway 14. One of the key principles guiding this plan was the preservation and protection of the unique environmental characteristics of the nearby Nine Springs Creek E-Way Corridor (See **Exhibit 3**). The objective was to establish a network of open spaces that would seamlessly connected mixed-use neighborhoods to the [E-Way](#),¹ creating a continuous and accessible link.

In 2002, a more detailed [Nine Springs Neighborhood Plan](#) was proposed, envisioning a regional bio-technology mixed-use transit-oriented village. At that time, the Nine Springs neighborhood represented the largest undeveloped site approximately 5 miles from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Wisconsin State Capital. Today, approximately 70% of the Madison Metro population is within a 10-mile radius of the U.S. Highway 14 and Lacy Road interchange. As Fitchburg lacked a traditional downtown, the Nine Springs neighborhood was intended to serve as a central hub for the surrounding area.

¹ [Nine Springs Neighborhood Plan](#), p. 1.

To facilitate the development of high-quality transit-oriented projects, the city adopted [SmartCode zoning](#) in 2011 for the Nine Springs project area. The SmartCode zoning organized the neighborhood into different transects, ranging from T1 Natural Zone to T5 Urban Center Zone. The primary aim of the T1 Natural zone is conservation and to establish corridors that would benefit both flora and fauna, while offering pathways for people to access the E-Way and enjoy the natural surroundings. The T zones become increasingly urban from T1 to T5. The T5 zone provides for higher density mixed-use development to accommodate transit and pedestrians. (See **Exhibit 4**)

In 2012, when the U.S. Hwy. 14 / Lacy Road interchange was completed and Smart Code zoning in place, Nine Springs was rebranded as Uptown Fitchburg (See **Exhibit 5**) which envisioned a high-density mixed use urban business district and major employment center with science/tech companies, retail/commercial including grocery, beverage/hospitality, entertainment/sports recreation, and significant residential units. Despite these planning tools and the \$19 million U.S. Hwy 14 / Lacy Road interchange, much of the 2002 Nine Springs neighborhood planning area remains undeveloped. Of the original 450-acres, approximately 200 acres continued to be farmed. Recently, with the first corporate science /technology anchor SHINE/Phoenix, continued multi-family development, and the residential growth on the east side of the U.S. Highway 14, the trade ring² is starting to form. Today, the City of Fitchburg has TID #13 (Tax Increment District) in place to incentivize implementation of a reinvigorated vision. One identified project cost in TID #13 is a development incentive for construction of a parking structure to facilitate the density of the neighborhood. Multiple major stakeholders are waiting for a catalytic project before they commit to new investment. The timing may finally align for accelerated development.

The goal of collaborating with the UW-Madison BLA Capstone is to inspire a reinvigorated vision for Uptown to spur our partners and stakeholders to move forward. The Capstone could be the critical catalyst that will create a unique and vibrant downtown for Fitchburg from the ground up.

Key Needs:

1. Vision: Create an exciting new vision for Fitchburg's Uptown/Nine Springs Village to:
 - a. Energize interest in new development and the stakeholders, and
 - b. Align the new vision to post-COVID socioeconomics and market data.
 - c. Create a unique Fitchburg downtown as part of this master planned neighborhood with significant available acreage centered on a shared town square as a community gathering space.
2. Connectivity:
 - a. Encourage connectivity to the E-Way and nearby environmental corridors.
 - b. Incorporate multi-modal transportation.
3. Equity: Focus on equity in housing, jobs and retail to provide rich opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.
4. Tools for Implementation:
 - a. Evaluate the current planning and zoning requirements. Peer communities in the region, such as Sun Prairie and Middleton, are redeveloping and enhancing their traditional downtowns. How does Fitchburg develop a downtown from the ground up on a greenfield site? Is SmartCode inhibiting development? How can Fitchburg best promote mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development?
 - b. Develop recommendations for placemaking enhancements.

² A geographic area in which businesses generate a majority of their customers.

Preliminary Project Goals:

1. Solidify partnerships around a shared vision
2. Integrate the natural environment with urban development
3. Activate new development in the Uptown/Nine Springs area.
4. Create a 'downtown' for Fitchburg with a community gathering space
5. Enhance equity through diversity of housing and jobs
6. Improve connectivity

Sources of Funding:

Fitchburg's Planning Department has funds to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

Exhibit 1

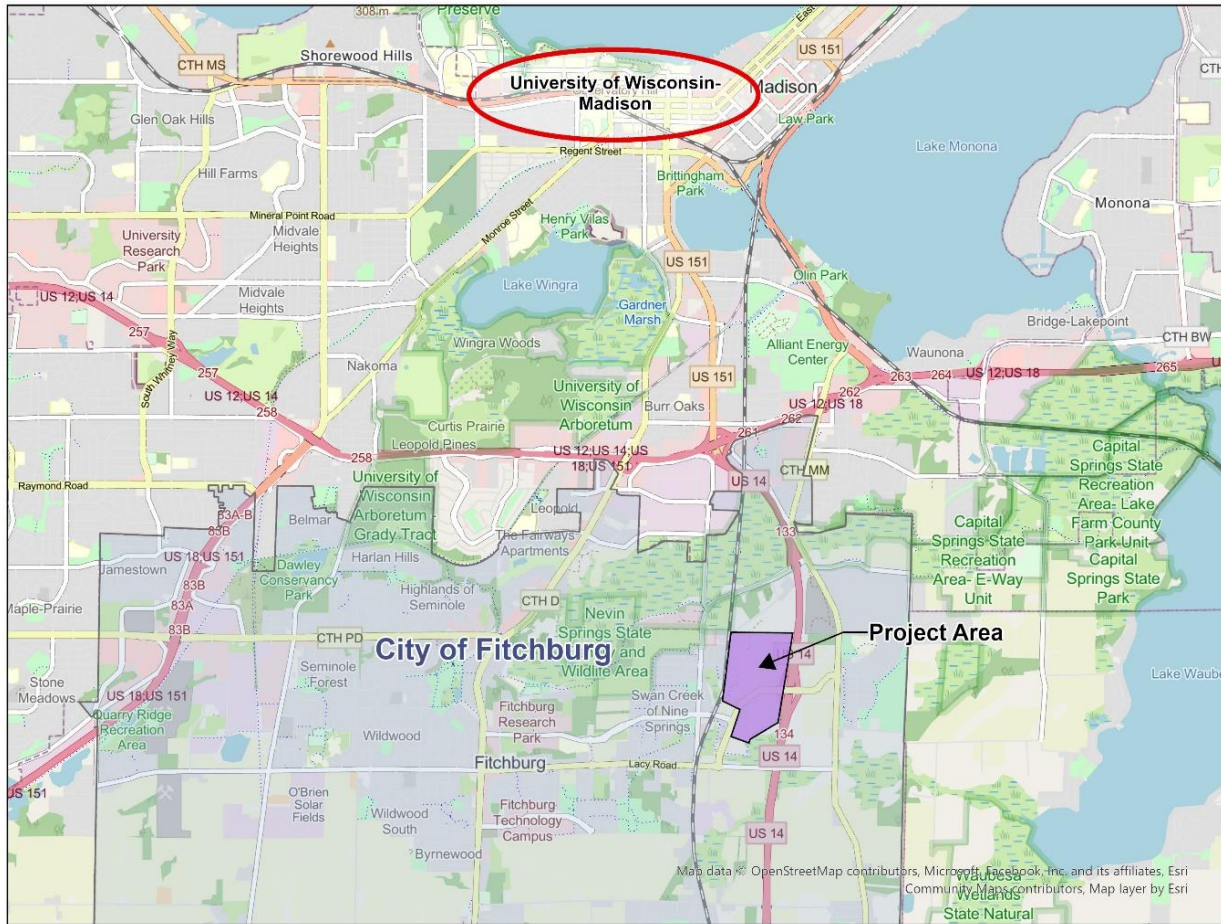
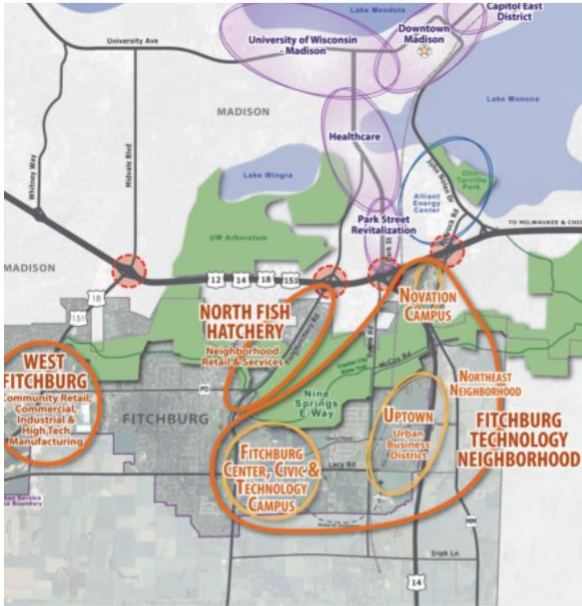


Exhibit 2



The Initiatives and detailed recommendations that fall under the Strategic Directions have been adjusted since the 2012 plan to respond to new challenges, while honoring the original intent of having an overarching set of goals and directions that will guide the City's economic decision making in the coming years. The City, Fitchburg Chamber Visitor & Business Bureau, and partners should continue to sequence and prioritize these items on a rolling basis, as well as identify the proper entities and roles to achieve each as efficiently as possible.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS:

1. Enhance Economic Centers, Build Places, and Strengthen Neighborhoods

Build the engaging places that attract talent and business, and empower neighborhoods in need with targeted investment

2. Build on Fitchburg's Identity, Brand, and Sense of Community

Explore new cultural opportunities and market niches that build on the City's ongoing branding efforts, to create a stronger, more unified sense of community

3. Cultivate Inclusive Culture and Improve Access & Opportunities

Create a welcoming atmosphere for current residents and visitors, as well as equitable access to City and regional workforce, transportation, and governmental resources

4. Leverage Location, Innovate, and Collaborate

Utilize Fitchburg's strategic location as an asset, and collaborate with regional partners and neighboring communities for efficient implementation

Exhibit 3

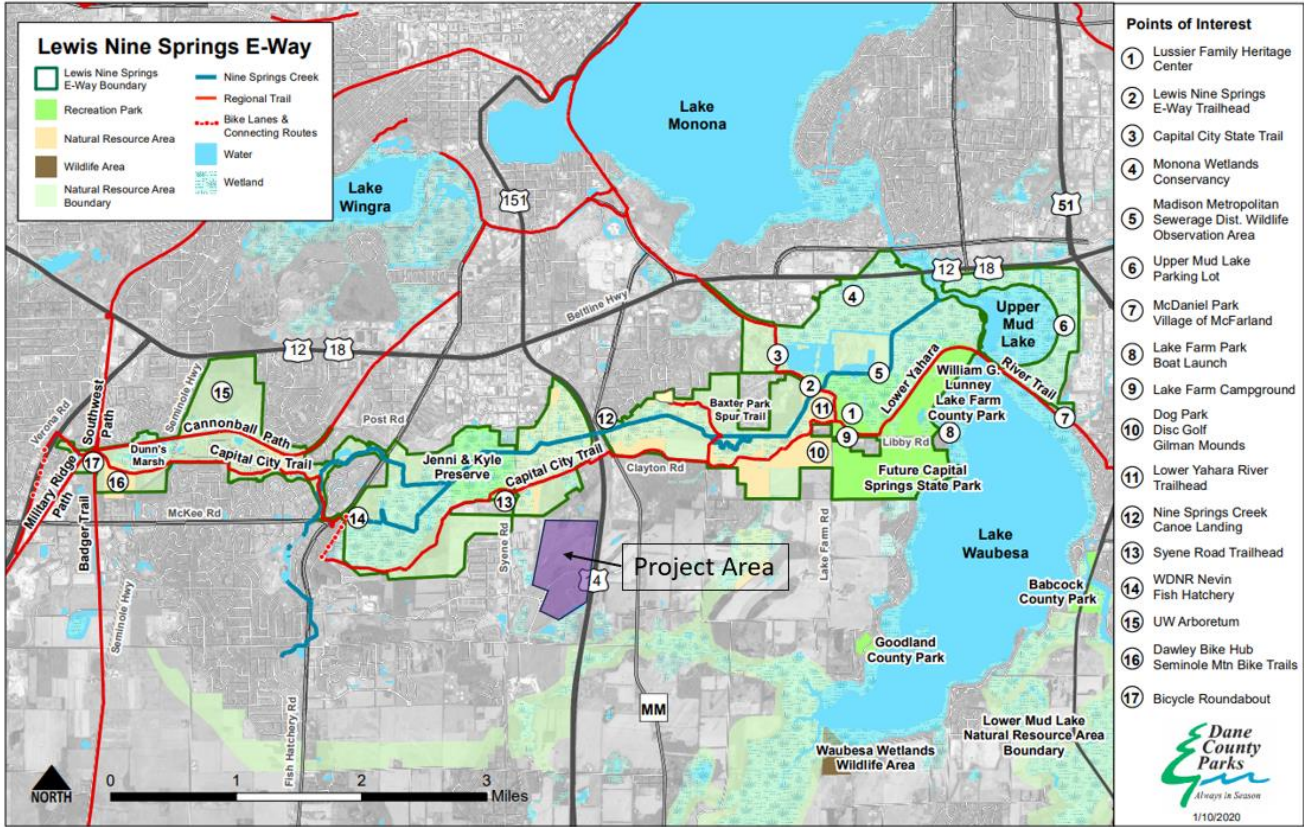


Exhibit 4

SMARTCODE DISTRICT

ARTICLE 1. GENERAL TO ALL PLANS

Fitchburg, Wisconsin

TABLE 1. TRANSECT ZONE DESCRIPTIONS.†

This advisory table provides descriptions of the character of each T-zone.





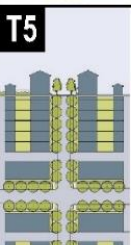
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|--|---|--|
| T1  | <p>T-1 NATURAL T-1 Natural Zone consists of lands approximating or reverting to a wilderness condition, including lands unsuitable for settlement due to topography, hydrology or vegetation.</p> | <p>General Character: Natural landscape with some agricultural use Building Placement: Not applicable Frontage Types: Not applicable Typical Building Height: Not applicable Type of Civic Space: Conservancies, including environmental corridors and large naturalistic open spaces</p> |
| T2  | <p>T-2 RURAL T-2 Rural Zone consists of sparsely settled lands in open or cultivated states. These include woodland, agricultural land, and grassland. Typical buildings are farmhouses and agricultural buildings.</p> | <p>General Character: Primarily agricultural with woodland & wetland and scattered buildings Building Placement: Variable Setbacks Frontage Types: Not applicable Typical Building Height: 1- to 2-Story for houses Type of Civic Space: Conservancies and large naturalistic open spaces</p> |
| T3  | <p>T-3 SUB-URBAN T-3 Sub-Urban Zone consists of low-density residential areas, adjacent to higher zones that have some mixed use. Home occupations and outbuildings are allowed. Planting is naturalistic and setbacks are relatively deep. Blocks may be large and the roads irregular to accommodate natural conditions.</p> | <p>General Character: Lawns, and landscaped yards surrounding detached single-family houses; pedestrians occasionally Building Placement: Large and variable front and side yard Setbacks Frontage Types: Common lawn, porch & fence, naturalistic tree planting Typical Building Height: 1- to 2-Story Type of Civic Space: Conservancies, and medium open spaces both naturalistic and more urban in character</p> |
| T4  | <p>T-4 GENERAL URBAN T-4 General Urban Zone consists of a mixed use but primarily residential urban fabric. It may have a wide range of building types: single, Sideyard, and Rowhouses. Setbacks and landscaping are variable. Streets with curbs and side-walks define medium-sized Blocks.</p> | <p>General Character: Mix of Houses, Townhouses and small Multi-family buildings with scattered Commercial activity; balance between landscape and buildings; presence of pedestrians Building Placement: Shallow to medium front and side yard Setbacks Frontage Types: Porches, fences, Dooryards and Shopfronts Typical Building Height: 1- to 3-Story with a few Mixed Use buildings Type of Civic Space: Medium and small scale open spaces, either naturalistic or urban in character</p> |
| T5  | <p>T-5 URBAN CENTER T-5 Urban Center Zone consists of higher density mixed use building that accommodate Retail, Offices, Row- houses and Multi-family buildings. It has a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting and buildings set close to the sidewalks.</p> | <p>General Character: Shops mixed with Townhouses, larger Multi-family buildings, Offices, work place and Civic buildings; predominantly attached buildings; trees within the public right-of-way; substantial pedestrian activity Building Placement: Shallow Setbacks or none; buildings oriented to street defining a street wall Frontage Types: Stoops, Shopfronts, Galleries Typical Building Height: 2- to 6-Story with some variation Type of Civic Space: Medium and small scale open spaces that are urban in character</p> |

Exhibit 5

