



Long Range Planning Committee

Wednesday, November 29, 2023 @ 2:30 PM

415 Main Street, Onalaska WI 54650

Meeting in person in Room 112 & remotely on Zoom

Members of the public wishing to attend remotely and provide public input:

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82651589984?pwd=b1NvjuZmZ0x9gXy9MwPvbeG8qqLkTF.1>

Phone Number: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 826 5158 9984 Password: 54650

1. Call to Order and roll call.
2. Consideration and action on minutes from the previous meeting.
3. Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual).

Consideration and possible action on the following item:

4. 2040 Comprehensive Plan Meeting #2:
 - A. State of the City Report. [State of the City Report.](#)
 - B. Next Steps & Meetings.
5. Adjournment.

Notice is hereby given that members of and possibly a quorum of the Common Council of the City of Onalaska who do not serve on the Committee and members of and possibly a quorum of members of other governmental bodies may attend this meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision making responsibility. No action will be taken by any governmental body at the above stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice

Notices provided to: Long Range Planning Committee (Mayor Kim Smith, City Administrator Rick Niemeier, Ald. Steven Nott, Erik Archer, Kristin Odegaard, Kevin Schubert, Dan Wick), Common Council (Ald. Leanne Stokes, Ald. Shawn McAlister, Ald. Dan Stevens, Ald. Diane Wulf, Ald. Steven Nott, Ald. Larry Jiracek), Department Heads, City Administrator Rick Niemeier, City Attorney Amanda Jackson, Media & Applicants

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the City of Onalaska will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability to ensure equal access to public meetings provided notification is given to the City Clerk within seventy-two (72) hours prior to the public meeting and that the requested accommodation does not create an undue hardship for the City.

Statutory Notice Posted: 11/21/2023

**Long Range Planning Committee
of the City of Onalaska**

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

1

1 The Meeting of the Long Range Planning Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order
2 at 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, November 29, 2023. It was noted that the meeting had been
3 announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

4

5 Roll call was taken, with the following members present (either in person or remotely): City
6 Administrator Rick Niemeier, Mayor Kim Smith, Ald. Steven Nott, City Engineer Kevin
7 Schubert, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, Kristen Odegaard, Erik Archer.

8

9 Also Present (either in person or remotely): Planning Director Katie Aspenson, Ald. Diane
10 Wulf, Ald. Leanne Stokes. Lakota Group was represented by Senior Planner Andy Cross,
11 Project Manager Hannah Bader, and Senior Economic Development Strategist Josh Bloom.
12 Kimley-Horn was represented by Justin Opitz.

13

14 A quorum of the Board of Public Works & Utilities, Common Council and Finance & Personnel
15 Committee were present at this meeting.

16

17 **Item 2 – Consideration and action on minutes from the previous meeting**

18

19 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by City Administrator Niemeier, to approve the minutes from the
20 previous meeting as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

21

22 On voice vote, motion carried.

23

24 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual)**

25

26 Mayor Smith called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

27

28 **Diane Wulf, Second District Alderperson**

29 **910 Orchid Place**

30 **Onalaska**

31

32 Ald. Wulf noted both she and First District Alderperson Leanne Stokes are attending this
33 afternoon’s meeting.

34

35 Mayor Smith called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that
36 portion of the meeting.

37

38 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

39

40 **Item 4 – 2040 Comprehensive Plan Meeting #2:**

41

42 A. State of the City Report

Reviewed 12/5/2023 by Katie Aspenson

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2

43

44 Andy, Hannah, Josh, and Justin all introduced themselves to the committee, with Justin noting
45 that Kimley-Horn is working with the Lakota Group on transportation and infrastructure.

46

47 Andy noted another community open house is planned for early 2024, and he said the goal of
48 today’s meeting is to review the State of the City Report, which is the culmination of Phase 1 of
49 the Comprehensive Plan Project. Andy said the report is meant to document the existing
50 conditions in the community that establish a starting point for the next phases of the
51 Comprehensive Plan. Andy said that at its most basic, a Comprehensive Planning process is
52 comprised of three questions:

53

- 54 • Where are we?
- 55 • Where do we want to go?
- 56 • How do we get there?

57

58 Andy said the aforementioned questions are reflected in the phases of the Comprehensive Plan,
59 and he told committee members he, Hannah, Josh, and Justin will address the following topics in
60 the report:

61

- 62 1. Project Overview
- 63 2. Community Engagement Summary
- 64 3. Community Profile
- 65 4. Local Economy
- 66 5. Land Use and Development Framework
- 67 6. Community Heritage and Placemaking
- 68 7. Mobility and Connectivity
- 69 8. Community Infrastructure and Services
- 70 9. Observations and Recommendations

71

72 **Project Overview**

73

74 Andy said Wisconsin’s Smart Growth legislation establishes a standard list of information that
75 comprehensive plans must cover. Andy said several plans he has read that were created by
76 Wisconsin communities, including the City of Onalaska’s 2015 Comprehensive Plan, followed
77 the regulations as if they were a checklist, assigning chapters to each required element. Andy
78 said the Lakota Group envisions the Comprehensive Plan taking a more holistic approach by
79 examining elements such as housing, land use, and cultural resources and considering them to be
80 connected systems that may be reviewed and analyzed, and also may grow together to achieve
81 the goal outlined in the plan. Andy said that while the Live Ona 2040 Comprehensive Plan must
82 meet the State of Wisconsin’s minimum standards, he also said he does not envision the plan
83 addressing those issues in “siloes, independent fashions.”

84

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3

85 Andy said Phase 1 (“State of the City”) is coming to an end, and he said Phase 2 (“Community
86 Visioning”) is an enjoyable process that involves narrowing themes that arose during Phase 1,
87 establishing goals of the plan, and exploring strategies to achieve those goals. Andy noted both
88 the Long Range Planning Committee and the general public will be active participants in Phase
89 2. Input will be gathered at the second community open house in early 2024 to gather input on
90 early ideas concepts. Phase 3 will involve distilling all the feedback and the visioning from
91 Phase 2 and creating a Draft Plan. Andy said Phase 3 also involves creating the framework for
92 implementing the plan.

93
94 Andy said the Lakota Group had built off the city’s existing plans (i.e., 2015 City of Onalaska
95 Comprehensive Plan, 2019 Downtown Redevelopment Study, 2019 State Road 16 Corridor
96 Study, 2022 Housing Survey, 2022 Community Survey, 2023 City of Onalaska Comprehensive
97 Outdoor Recreation Plan), and he said there will be a review of the previous Comprehensive
98 Plan, evaluate what has changed, and if any of its goals or recommendations still are relevant for
99 the next 10- to 15-year timeframe, they will be noted. Andy noted the Downtown and State
100 Road 16 studies identify several crucial issues and provide approaches to address them. Andy
101 said the Lakota Group will ensure that the new Comprehensive Plan is consistent with these
102 approved plans and complements the already-completed work. Andy described both the housing
103 and community surveys as being “really impressive tools” that provide information that
104 supplements the data gathered during Phase 1. Andy said those tools will be essential as the
105 visioning process begins in Phase 2.

106

107 **Community Engagement Summary**

108

109 Hannah said community engagement is an essential component of the planning process, and that
110 it will be an integral component in every phase of the process. Hannah said it ensures that every
111 voice within the community is heard, and that the final plan is shaped both by and for the
112 citizens. Hannah noted there have been both traditional and nontraditional engagement
113 opportunities, and she shared the following information:

114

- 115 • Approximately 700 community members had been engaged during Phase 1. The Lakota
116 Group built a project website and brand that became a platform that could be updated to
117 share information with the community.
- 118 • Ten stakeholder interviews were conducted over a two-day period, and an open house
119 provided the opportunity to speak with more than 100 key stakeholders.
- 120 • An online survey was posted following the open house.
- 121 • The members of the Long Range Planning Committee are a crucial component in the
122 process of ensuring that the ideas being proposed align with the community’s
123 expectations for the city’s future.

124

125 Hannah said the following are the key themes that were heard during stakeholder interviews and
126 the workshop:

Reviewed 12/5/2023 by Katie Aspenson

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4

- 127
- 128 • **Holistic Growth:** Preserving Onalaska’s close-knit community feel as the city grows
- 129 will be crucial as many structural improvements such as safer mobility and targeted
- 130 residential development.
- 131 • **Defining Downtown Onalaska:** The momentum generated by the Great River Landing
- 132 and Dash-Park needs to be sustained and expanded.
- 133 • **Onalaska’s Identity:** Embracing its past, celebrating its present, and looking forward to
- 134 its future can help the city break out and shine in its own right.
- 135 • **Enhanced Mobility:** Onalaska’s streets need to serve as more than just routes for
- 136 vehicular traffic. They should mirror the community’s vibrancy, energy, and aspirations.
- 137 • **Harmonizing with Nature:** There is interest in expanding and better integrating
- 138 recreational and environmental offerings.
- 139 • **Expanding Onalaska’s Housing Paradigm:** There is growing interest among residents
- 140 for more housing opportunities and attainable living spaces.
- 141 • **Arts, Culture, and Community in Onalaska:** Residents want to celebrate community
- 142 spirit and shared experiences in the community, whether it’s local celebrations or more
- 143 arts and cultural programming.
- 144 • **Unlocking Onalaska’s Development Potential:** With limited space available for
- 145 expansion, the emphasis for Onalaska should be optimizing redevelopment opportunities.
- 146

147 **Community Profile**

148

149 Hannah noted Onalaska is positioned in the Driftless Area, which significantly contributes to the

150 city’s character and its way of life. The city, located in La Crosse County, is recognized for its

151 position on the riverfront, bluffs, and recreational amenities. The city is surrounded by several

152 major thoroughfares that provide ease and accessibility to neighboring cities and states. This

153 access not only benefits residents, but it also benefits the local economy. Hannah said the City

154 of Onalaska began as “a bustling lumber hub,” and she noted some of that history still is apparent

155 in the character and way of life today in the community. The city’s economy began to diversity

156 in the early 1900s, and new residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and public

157 infrastructure projects were created. Hannah said the city still continues to experience growth

158 and development, noting it is represented by a strong economy, a strong school system, and a

159 high quality of life.

160

161 Josh addressed the community’s demographics and shared the following information:

162

- 163 • Onalaska’s population has grown by 23 percent since the 2000 Census. By comparison,
- 164 the City of La Crosse only grew 2 percent during the same period.
- 165 • While the city has several families with children and “empty nesters,” there are few
- 166 young adults (i.e., 19 years old to mid-20s) residing here. By comparison, the City of La
- 167 Crosse has several residents who fall into that age bracket due to the presence of UW-La

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168 Crosse, Viterbo University, and Western Technical College.

169

170 **Local Economy**

171

172 Josh noted there are approximately 795 businesses operating in Onalaska, more than 200 of
173 which are concentrated in four commercial centers: Downtown Core, 2nd Avenue South/State
174 Trunk Highway 35 Corridor, State Trunk Highway 16 Corridor, and Crossing Meadows
175 Shopping Center. Josh noted many of the establishments are small businesses, with the “big
176 box” businesses being located in the shopping centers. Josh described Onalaska, La Crosse, and
177 the surrounding municipalities as being “an isolated economy” in that employment opportunities
178 and spending potential are contained within that geography. Josh addressed the interrelationship
179 between La Crosse and Onalaska, noting that 45 percent of Onalaska residents’ primary jobs are
180 located in La Crosse, and 18 percent of Onalaska’s residents work in Onalaska proper.

181

182 Josh returned to the four commercial centers and shared the following information:

183

- 184 • **Downtown Core:** This core is crucial as a center of community despite the fact there
185 only are 29 businesses or institutions. A crucial part of the plan will be to strengthen this
186 core.
- 187 • **2nd Avenue South/State Trunk Highway 35 Corridor:** A crucial part of the plan will
188 be to strengthen this core.
- 189 • **State Trunk Highway 16 Corridor:** This is an automobile-oriented corridor that has a
190 number of strip shopping centers and the majority of the city’s “big box” retailers.
- 191 • **Crossing Meadows Mall:** Sam’s Club and Festival Foods are its anchors.

192

193 Josh told committee members a crucial topic to think about as the city moves to the next phase is
194 the relationship of the automobile-oriented corridors to downtown, and also how the two affect
195 each other in a finite market. Josh said what occurs on the strip also could potentially affect
196 what happens downtown, and vice-versa.

197

198 Josh next addressed the city’s housing profile and shared the following:

199

- 200 • Onalaska’s owner occupancy rate is 65 percent. The United States’ home ownership rate
201 is 66 percent.
- 202 • Onalaska’s median home value is \$266,565. By comparison, La Crosse’s median home
203 value is \$194,514.
- 204 • Onalaska’s residential development remains very active. Multifamily development varies
205 more widely from year to year than single-family development.
- 206 • Although Onalaska’s housing values are greater than La Crosse’s, they also are
207 considered relatively within the means of individuals who reside in Onalaska.
208 Specifically, the home values are closely aligned with median incomes in Onalaska.

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209 Theoretically, that means the housing stock is relatively affordable, but there also is a
210 spectrum of affordability and income brackets within the city.

211

212 **Land Use and Development Framework**

213

214 Andy noted 25 percent of the land in Onalaska is in residential use, and he said a study of the
215 land use within a community can reveal interesting patterns. Andy said that when it is paired
216 with the analysis and the input from community, one begins to see where changes and transitions
217 in land use might be appropriate to investigate. Andy said future land use planning is an integral
218 part of the Comprehensive Plan.

219

220 Andy said it is important to remember the difference between zoning and land use. Andy
221 described land use as being “a snapshot of how properties in Onalaska are actually being used.”
222 By comparison, Andy said zoning is policy, meaning it is how the governing body has decided,
223 pursuant to the community’s vision and the Comprehensive Plan, how the land should be best
224 put to use. Andy noted the city’s newer Mixed-Use zoning districts appear in some key
225 corridors, and he said this is a positive step for the community. Andy referred to the city’s R-3
226 Zoning District and said it “fills a really important gap.”

227

228 Andy next addressed Onalaska’s key commercial corridors and opportunity sites, which are
229 identified as the following:

230

- 231 • Omni Center Hospitality
- 232 • Mayo Clinic Property
- 233 • Center 90 Shopping Mall
- 234 • Waterfront
- 235 • Nicolai Properties

236

237 Andy noted each site is unique, and he described the diversity as being “wonderful, and not
238 something one sees everywhere.” Andy noted Main Street serves as a key linkage throughout
239 Onalaska, and he said he believes it can play a crucial role in being a commercial corridor in
240 some parts, but not in the same way as STH 16 or Sand Lake Road. Andy said he believes the
241 Sand Lake Road corridor also possesses tremendous potential, noting it is located within the MU
242 District, which provides an opportunity for future impactful growth. Andy further stated he
243 believes Center 90 has the potential to play a crucial role on the Main Street corridor. Andy told
244 committee members a significant amount of thought has gone into each site, and he said, “We’ll
245 be working closely with previous efforts and recognizing and remaining cognizant of a lot of the
246 obstacles.”

247

248 **Community Heritage and Placemaking**

249

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250 Hannah described Onalaska as being “a dynamic community with a rich fabric of assets” that
251 include its neighborhoods, preserved open spaces and parks, commercial corridors, and light
252 industrial. Hannah also noted the city’s character is known for its smalltown feel, and she said a
253 significant part of the Comprehensive Plan not only will be attempting to maintain that, but also
254 attempting to find different ways within the fabric of the community to strengthen that identity.
255 Hannah next addressed community character and design and said the following components
256 strengthen and define Onalaska’s character:

257

- 258 • **Neighborhoods:** The central piece of the community. They support the quality of life,
259 provide community services (parks, schools, connections of sidewalks), and create
260 connections.
- 261 • **Natural Beauty and Local Identity:** The river and bluffs contribute to the identity of
262 Onalaska, and they also provide a recreational resource for the community.
- 263 • **Downtown Onalaska:** The downtown district and the waterfront present an opportunity
264 to create a special place.

265

266 Hannah said that while the city is well-served for recreation with 25 parks, there are
267 opportunities to better connect these recreational assets, and also to encourage additional open
268 space and parks within any new development or new projects.

269

270 Andy addressed historic and agricultural resources and noted he has a background in local
271 historic preservation. Andy noted Onalaska is a certified local government within Wisconsin,
272 and he said this presents several opportunities that communities that are not CLGs do not have.
273 Andy noted there are three buildings within the city that are locally landmarked, and he said this
274 is something to explore to raise awareness. Andy said he believes history contributes to a sense
275 of place, and that most individuals enjoy learning about history. Andy said, “I think the more
276 people know and can relate to local history, the more connected they feel to the community. As
277 we build off of this sense of place and sense of community ... I think this is a great thing to
278 explore as a way to build off that and capitalize on that.”

279

280 **Mobility and Connectivity**

281

282 Justin said the networks supporting the various forms of transportation in Onalaska (i.e.,
283 automobiles, trucks, bicycles, pedestrians, rail, water, air) are all very strong, and he told
284 committee members they are helping to facilitate the economic, recreational, and cultural
285 interactions that give Onalaska its unique identity. There is a sidewalk network on both sides of
286 a majority of streets, there are bicycle trails such as the Great River State Trail, the La Crosse
287 River State Trail, bicycle lanes along Sand Lake Road, and bicycle-accessible routes within the
288 city’s historic grid street network. Justin said those bicycle accommodations are crucial in
289 helping children go to and from school, and they also are important to individuals who might not
290 own an automobile. Justin acknowledged the presence of the Mississippi and Black rivers and
291 Lake Onalaska, noting they support a significant amount of recreational and commercial water

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292 travel. Justin also noted the La Crosse Regional Airport is located on French Island, the
293 Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad runs along the river, and the Canadian Pacific
294 Railroad runs along the La Crosse River to the south of the city.

295
296 Justin said he and the Lakota Group representatives had heard the railroads experience a
297 significant amount of freight traffic, which he said can be disruptive. Justin said, “One big thing
298 we heard is that if we’re going to start thinking about connecting downtown to the river, that
299 BNSF Railroad runs right along the river. That’s going to be a challenge moving forward, and
300 it’s something that we’re definitely going to be keeping our eye on.” Justin noted there are
301 several truck routes established, both by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the
302 City of Onalaska. Justin noted the city both funds and utilizes Shared Ride Transit, and he noted
303 La Crosse MTU has an Onalaska line that comes up along Main Street.

304
305 Justin said, “What we get here with mobility and connectivity and existing conditions is that all
306 these combined together are really painting a strong picture of people easily being able to get
307 around from one side of town to the other. They can walk if they need to. They can bike if they
308 need to. They can take transit if they need to. We’re really in a strong position moving forward.
309 I’m excited to see where this plan leads us.”

310
311 Justin next addressed the city’s roadway network and said he considers it to be one of Onalaska’s
312 strongest assets as it is the means by which most individuals are interacting with the city on a
313 daily basis. Justin noted the historic grid network is located near the downtown district and west
314 of US Highway 53, while a more suburban style design can be found in the neighborhoods
315 located to the east and north. Justin noted Interstate 90 runs from east to west in the southern
316 portion of the city, and he said the grid network west of US Highway 53 near the downtown
317 district provides an opportunity for multimodal connectivity even if the routes are not signed as
318 such. Justin said it is much easier for individuals to move around and comprehend in that grid
319 network as opposed to someone who is south or east of STH 16, where the streets are larger and
320 more difficult to cross.

321
322 Justin next addressed bicycle accommodations and noted many of the routes located in the
323 western portion of the city are bicycle-friendly and connect to several major destinations. Justin
324 said he and the Lakota Group team had noticed that while some of the routes are signed as
325 bicycle-friendly or are viewed as such, they might not have the accommodation that they could
326 have. Some of those routes are on Main Street, Theater Road, and Braund Street, and Justin said
327 he and the Lakota Group team will begin formulating strategies on how that experience for
328 cyclists can be improved.

329
330 Justin next addressed pedestrian accommodations and said Onalaska has a very strong sidewalk
331 network throughout the entire community. However, there are notable gaps in the following
332 locations:

333

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- 334 • North of Wilson Street, south of Well Street, west of 12th Avenue South, east of 9th
335 Avenue South.
- 336 • North of Quincy Street, south of Troy Street, east of STH 35, west of East Avenue North.
- 337 • Neighborhood east of East Avenue North, south of Sand Lake Road.

338
339 Justin noted most intersections with collector and arterial streets provide pedestrian
340 accommodations, and he said mobility within the city already is strong. Thus, the goal will be to
341 enhance and improve what the city already has done.

342
343 **Community Infrastructure and Services**

344
345 Andy said the city’s infrastructure and facilities are solid, and he noted there is a dispersion of
346 elementary schools throughout the residential western side of the city. Andy said he and the
347 Lakota Group team were told that neighborhoods have become identified by the elementary
348 school that serves them. Andy returned to the city’s infrastructure and said the city is projected
349 to have the capacity needed to serve the community into the future.

350
351 **Observations and Recommendations**

352
353 Andy shared the following observations and recommendations:

354
355 **Community Character**

- 356
357 • **2nd Avenue:** Facilitate growth, development, and activation along this extension of
358 downtown. Review the land use mix, built form, and effectiveness of the B-Zoning
359 Districts to achieve the community vision. Strategies in 2019 study are still relevant.
- 360 • **Expand R-3 Zoning District:** This new zoning district represents a key opportunity to
361 provide “missing middle”-scale housing that fills a gap between single family/duplexes
362 and large multifamily development. Andy said this recommendation resonates with the
363 findings from the city’s housing study, which noted there will be a growing demand for
364 alternatives to single-family detached housing.
- 365 • **Outdoor Activation:** Coordinate and facilitate outdoor community events, including in
366 the winter, that celebrate the beauty of Onalaska’s setting along the river and among the
367 bluffs. Andy said the city can utilize its position as a governing authority to facilitate and
368 coordinate with partner groups.
- 369 • **Gateway Signs:** Enhance gateway signs at key entrance points to the community. These
370 contribute to a sense of place, announcing to visitors that Onalaska is a special
371 community. Andy said a “minimum/middle/maximum” approach can be taken with
372 placemaking, and he cited Dash-Park as an example of maximum effort, while gateway
373 signs require minimum effort. Andy said banners and gateway signs lend instant identity
374 at a city’s entryway.

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- 375 • **Design Review:** Incorporate a formal design review process for new development,
376 create established design standards and guidelines. Development standards for MU
377 Zoning Districts in the UDC are a great starting point.
378

379 **Mobility and Recreation**

- 380
- 381 • **Connectivity:** Improve multimodal access and connectivity to and through the
382 downtown. Design and infrastructure can improve the pedestrian experience and remove
383 barriers to waterfront access.
- 384 • **Park Maintenance and Improvements:** Staffing and resources are key issues identified
385 in the 2023 CORP. While long-term strategies like grants and partnering are valuable,
386 seeking “low-hanging fruit” solutions will be important.
- 387 • **Great River State Trail:** The on-street portion of this trail in Onalaska is a great
388 opportunity to show off the city’s commitment to cycling. Through small investments, it
389 can be made safer and more attractive for cyclists.
- 390 • **Complete Streets Policy:** Several street reconstruction projects are on the horizon in
391 Onalaska. Now is the perfect time to revisit and refine the city’s Complete Streets Policy
392 to make the streets safer for non-motorized users.
393

394 B. Next Steps & Meetings

395

396 Hannah told committee members Phase 1 is ending, and she said this is the time to discuss edits
397 and revisions to the report. The goal is to finalize the report and post it on the project website by
398 mid-December. Hannah said Phase 2 (“Community Visioning”) includes the following
399 components:

- 400
- 401 • Key Recommendations
 - 402 • Future Land Use Strategy
 - 403 • Planning Scenarios
 - 404 • Visit and Workshop No. 2 (January/February)
- 405

406 Andy welcomed questions and ideas from committee members and told them the Lakota Group
407 team would be happy to make any changes they might suggest.
408

409 Mayor Smith said she believes the report was “excellent” overall in its presentation and
410 organization. Mayor Smith addressed the historical section of the report and told the Lakota
411 Group team that Onalaska always has been an important and great place to live. Mayor Smith
412 said, “It didn’t suddenly start with the lumber industry. We have a lot of remnants of indigenous
413 people here. Every time we do a project by the waterfront and along Main Street, we have had to
414 deal with the remnants of that society. While it doesn’t need to be a major focus, I do think it
415 needs to be recognized that that was not the beginning of Onalaska. This has always been a

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416 desirable place to live, and [I would ask that you] present it more in that context.”

417

418 Ald. Nott complimented the report, and he then addressed the transportation section, asking if
419 there had been a reason for excluding Rochester and Madison as being air hubs. Ald. Nott noted
420 Rochester is the next closest air hub to La Crosse, with Madison being the next closest after that,
421 followed by Minneapolis and Milwaukee. Ald. Nott pointed out there are additional ways to
422 enter and exit Onalaska than the three airports that were mentioned, and he said he did not know
423 if there were certain criteria regarding why they were not included.

424

425 Justin said he believes the reason the La Crosse Regional Airport had been the focus was due to
426 the zoning overlay district that impacts some of the land use regulations in Onalaska. Justin said
427 the team can add certain pieces of information regarding the fact Onalaska citizens have access
428 to multiple airports and include the air hubs Ald. Nott had mentioned.

429

430 Ald. Nott asked if there is a plan regarding how to inform the public when this plan is posted,
431 and he said it might be best to answer this question at the end of the meeting.

432

433 Kristen addressed Hannah’s presentation regarding community themes and asked if they had
434 been listed in order of importance/priority, or if the order was random.

435

436 Hannah said they were not in order of priority, noting they had been the top eight themes that
437 had come across during conversations.

438

439 Mayor Smith said it had been her impression that they were ranked in order.

440

441 Kristen suggested utilizing bullet points instead of numbers, and she next addressed R-3 Zoning,
442 stating she is not entirely clear what it is.

443

444 Andy said the team will add information regarding R-3 Zoning.

445

446 Katie told committee individuals within the Onalaska School District released information
447 related to race and ethnicity of students and their families, and she said that information is
448 different than what was shown on the screen this afternoon. Katie told the Lakota Group team
449 this is information she can share with them. Katie next addressed the “R” zoning districts and
450 provided committee members with the following definitions:

451

- 452 • **R-1:** Only single-family dwellings.
- 453 • **R-2:** Single- and two-family dwellings.
- 454 • **R-3:** Three to eight units are allowed on a single parcel. R-3 allows higher density to be
455 melded into a lower density area. The R-3 design standards require that what is being
456 constructed takes the neighborhood’s characteristics into account.
- 457 • **R-4:** Apartments

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458

459 Katie told the Lakota Group team that the city will be reviewing its existing land use to ensure
460 that it still is consistent with what is included in the report.

461

462 Dan complimented the report and said he believes the senior center piece of the upcoming
463 Community Center Project should be identified as part of on the facility standpoint.

464

465 Kevin also complimented the report and said he will further scrutinize some of the information.

466

467 Erik addressed the “Key Community Themes” section and noted he sees “harmonizing with
468 nature,” which was mentioned as an important objective during one of the first meetings. Erik
469 noted the existing land use and the correct ratio between recreation and public and semi-public
470 had been discussed, and he asked Andy if “harmonizing with nature” means the city needs to
471 look at rebalancing the amount of land allocated and zoned toward parks and open spaces toward
472 something else.

473

474 Andy told Erik no and said, “The level of service is stellar. ... The Comprehensive Outdoor
475 Recreation Plan analyzed the level of service, and that’s the amount of open space per resident.
476 ... Onalaska scores very well, so no, there’s not a need to pull more open space to add to it or
477 anything like that.”

478

479 City Administrator Niemeier noted he had entered the process at the completion of Phase 1 and
480 said he believes the report had been done very well. City Administrator Niemeier said he looks
481 forward to engaging in conversations entering Phase 2.

482

483 Mayor Smith inquired about the next steps.

484

485 Andy said the Lakota Group team will begin revising the plan, and he asked Kevin to examine
486 the sections of the report he indicated he wants to within the next four to five working days.

487

488 Kevin indicated he will do so.

489

490 Andy stated he and the Lakota Group team are eager to share the report with the public, and he
491 told Kevin he does not object if he needs two weeks. Andy said he will work with Katie to
492 ensure everyone is on the same page, and he told Mayor Smith he will send Katie a revised State
493 of the City Report once the revisions have been made so that there can be a formal approval
494 either at the staff or committee level.

495

496 Josh asked Katie to send the Lakota Group team a copy of the Onalaska School District census
497 data so that the team may incorporate it into the report.

498

**Long Range Planning Committee
of the City of Onalaska**

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

13

499 Ald. Nott asked if perhaps the city could contact local media – specifically, television stations –
500 once the report is ready to be posted on the city’s website.

501
502 Mayor Smith said perhaps the report could come before the Common Council for approval, but
503 she added she is not certain that the timing would work out. Mayor Smith said sending the
504 report to Council for approval would mean perhaps the city could do a press release to inform the
505 local media.

506
507 Katie noted the Common Council’s next meeting is scheduled for December 12, and she said the
508 committee could approve the State of the City Report if it chooses to do so. Katie said she can
509 work with everyone’s schedules to accommodate a meeting and noted the report likely would be
510 the only item on the meeting agenda.

511
512 Andy told Katie he believes that suggestion will work, noting the edits the Lakota Group team
513 has to make are graphical.

514
515 Katie noted she had sent both Andy and Hannah the Onalaska School District information, and
516 she said she will ensure that the existing Land Use Map is edited and potentially a little tighter to
517 what it is today.

518
519 For clarification, Mayor Smith asked if the goal is to take the report to the December 12
520 Common Council meeting, and she noted the committee simply needs a quorum if its members
521 want to bring the report before them for final approval.

522
523 Katie said the Long Range Planning Committee could tentatively meet either December 8 or
524 December 11.

525
526 **Adjournment**

527
528 Motion by Ald. Nott, second by Kristen, to adjourn at 3:32 p.m.

529
530 On voice vote, motion carried.

531
532
533 Recorded by:

534
535 Kirk Bey



CITY OF ONALASKA

STAFF REPORT

Long Range Planning Committee – November 29, 2023

Agenda Item:

4

Agenda Item: State of the City Report

Background:

Phase 1 of the Live Ona 2040 Comprehensive Plan process is nearly complete with a draft of the State of the City Report available for the LRPC's review. The goal of Phase 1 was to engage the community and a range of stakeholders to create a detailed base of information and an understanding of existing conditions. The information gathered during this phase determines project constraints, weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities, and informs the basis for developing the Comprehensive Plan. When approved by the Long Range Planning Committee, the State of the City Report will be posted on the project website. It represents a shared understanding of a starting point for the Plan.

Next Steps:

The Live Ona 2040 Comprehensive Plan process will enter Phase 2: Community Visioning. The Lakota Group team, together with City leaders and stakeholders, will generate a vision for the plan, a land use strategy, and a range of planning ideas and concepts addressing issues identified during Phase 1.

A series of strategies and scenarios will be mapped out over the coming month. A Community Open House will be conducted early next year to share the vision of the Comprehensive Plan, and educate the public about the land use strategy, goals, and objectives. The LRPC will play an active role in this initial review of these plan elements.

After review and input on the Draft Planning Goals and Strategies, a Preferred Land Use Strategy will be drafted, including a land-use policy framework with specific planning strategies and recommendations. A third official LRPC Meeting will be scheduled to review these documents in detail. Finalizing the Plan's Vision Statement, Planning Goals, and Strategies will conclude Phase 2 of the Comp Plan process.