



# Summary Report

## Placemaking Fairchild

January 7, 2025

Placemaking Fairchild  
Community Design Charrette

In collaboration with:

Fairchild Area Historical Society  
Area Historical & Veterans Tribute  
Fairchild Fun Days  
Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin  
Village of Fairchild

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Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Community Vitality + Placemaking

*Signature Effort*



### Design Wisconsin Team

A research-based approach to community placemaking

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## Introduction

On October 15th and 16th, 2024, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension facilitated a community placemaking program called “Placemaking Fairchild”. The purpose of the program is to work with local stakeholders to develop a shared vision for improving several specific sites in Fairchild as well as the downtown as a whole. The purpose of this document is to provide details as to the purpose, process, and outputs of that program.

### “Placemaking Fairchild” & “Design Wisconsin”

“Placemaking Fairchild” is the local branding for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension’s program “Design Wisconsin”. Design Wisconsin is a community design program offered by the University of Wisconsin-Extension’s Community Vitality & Placemaking Team—a “Signature Effort” that combines best practices and expertise from applied research in community development, economic development, natural resources, positive youth development, organizational and leadership development, and sustainability. Design Wisconsin helps communities identify and visualize their short-, medium-, and long-range visions. University of Wisconsin educators and specialists work with local stakeholders to facilitate the process. Outputs are used to inspire and guide positive community change. Garret Zastoupil, Community Development Educator, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire County, and Todd Johnson, Land Use & Community Development Specialist, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension will provide the technical support necessary to bring the ideas from this report to life.

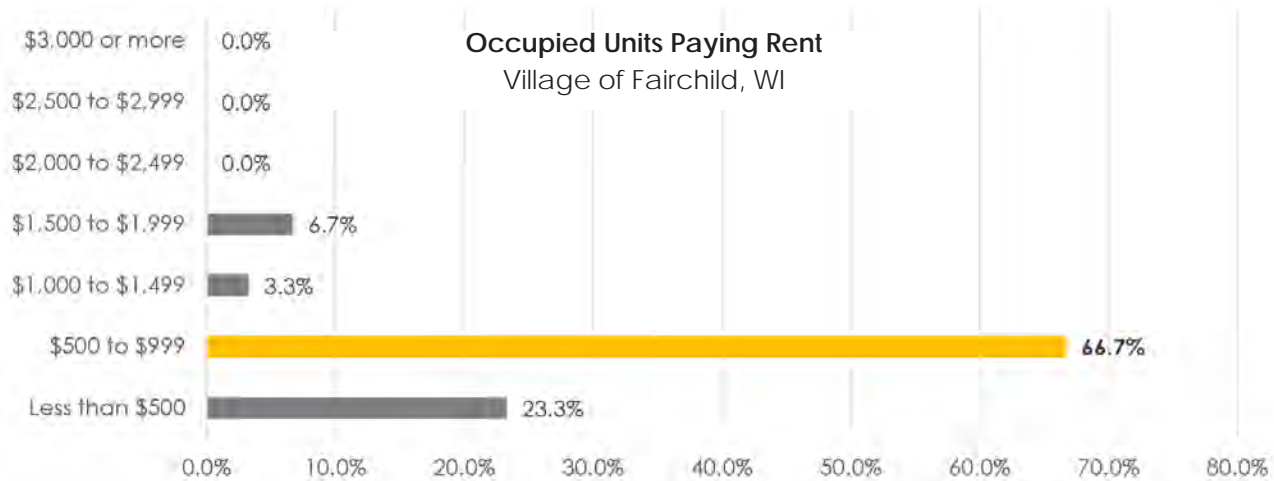


## Demographics

The Village of Fairchild is a community of approximately 451 people located in southeastern Eau Claire County, Wisconsin. The following statistics provide a snapshot of the socio-economic context for this program.

### Housing

According to the most current US Census data estimates, the Village includes 247 total housing units (220 total households). 72.3% of residents own their home compared to 61.2% in Eau Claire County. 203 housing units are occupied with 44 listed as vacant. Most homes have 2 or 3 bedrooms (72.3%) with 23.2% having 4 or more. 81.4% of residents pay \$500 - \$999 for rent (median gross rent of \$713 compared to \$1,041 for Eau Claire County). Most housing units in the Village are valued between \$50,000 - \$99,999 (39.6%) followed by less than \$50,000 (25.8%). See table below



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Education, Health, and Ancestry

7.7% of Village residents have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 34.7% in Eau Claire County. The median age in the Village of Fairchild is 42.9% compared to 35.7% for the County. Within the Village, 10.3% of residents are living without health care coverage compared to 5.3% in the County. 27.9% of residents have some form of a disability compared to 14.6% in the County. The people of Fairchild are largely German (38.4%), Irish (20.8%), Norwegian (17.6%), and Polish (14.3%). It is largely a white not Hispanic or Latino community with only 2 American Indian and Alaska Native, 2 Black or African American, and 11 Hispanic or Latino residents. Within the Village, 19.2% are under the age of 18. This is comparable to the 19.7% for Eau Claire County.



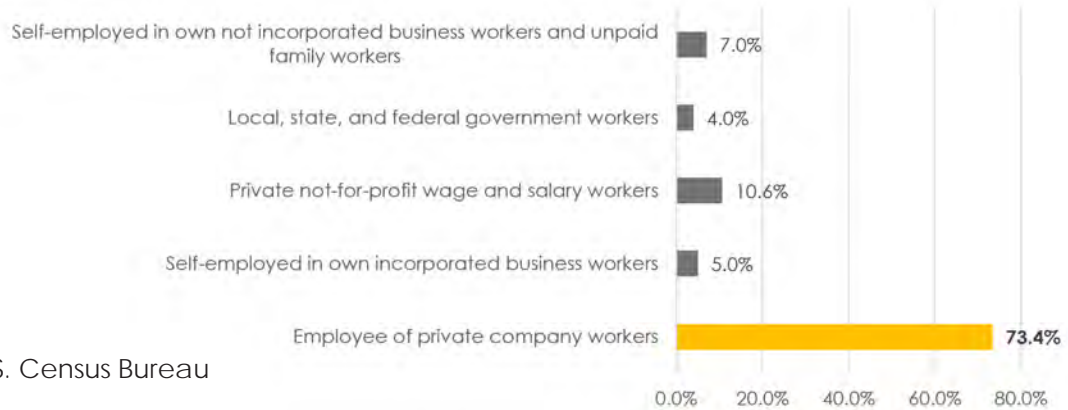


## Employment

The Village has an employment rate of 52.5% (compared to 64.6% for Eau Claire County). 78.2% of workers are classified as employees of private companies. Most of the labor force works in educational services, and health care and social assistance (24.5%) followed by manufacturing (17.3%), arts, entertainment, and recreation, accommodation and food services (14.5%), and retail trade (13.6%). The average travel time to work is 36 minutes compared to the Eau Claire County average of 17.9 minutes. 73.1% of workers drive alone in their personal vehicle to get to work with 12.4% carpooling, and 4.5% walking to work. 10% work from home.

### Class of Worker

Village of Fairchild, WI



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Industry for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over

Village of Fairchild, WI



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## Income & Household Survival Budget

Fairchild residents have a median household income of \$45,000 compared to \$72,563 for Eau Claire County. 23.6% of all residents in the Village of Fairchild meet the Federal poverty level compared to 10.5% for Eau Claire County. When we look at the United Way's "Household Survival Budget" the numbers become much more alarming. For example, 2 adults with 2 children in childcare, the largest monthly expense for families is childcare (\$1,413) followed by food (\$1,289), taxes payments (\$1,086), transportation (\$1,045), miscellaneous (\$534), and housing-rent (\$526).

Within Eau Claire County, 21% of residents cannot live within the "Household Survival Budget" (2024 Update on Financial Hardship in Wisconsin", United Way). The Village of Fairchild ranks first (worst) in Eau Claire County with 51% of its households unable to live within the survival budget (see tables below).

Household Survival Budget, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin, 2022								
Monthly Costs and Credits	Single Adult	One Adult, One Child	One Adult, One In Child Care	Two Adults	Two Adults Two Children	Two Adults, Two In Child Care	Single Adult 65+	Two Adults 65+
Housing - Rent	\$398	\$382	\$382	\$382	\$526	\$526	\$398	\$382
Housing - Utilities	\$163	\$258	\$258	\$258	\$310	\$310	\$163	\$258
Child Care	\$0	\$254	\$677	\$0	\$508	\$1,413	\$0	\$0
Food	\$473	\$802	\$720	\$867	\$1,459	\$1,289	\$436	\$800
Transportation	\$395	\$529	\$529	\$636	\$1,045	\$1,045	\$331	\$507
Health Care	\$182	\$432	\$432	\$432	\$638	\$638	\$532	\$1,064
Technology	\$86	\$86	\$86	\$116	\$116	\$116	\$86	\$116
Miscellaneous	\$170	\$274	\$308	\$269	\$460	\$534	\$195	\$313
Tax Payments	\$263	\$648	\$746	\$363	\$877	\$1,086	\$330	\$658
Tax Credits	\$0	(\$217)	(\$217)	\$0	(\$433)	(\$433)	\$0	\$0
Monthly Total	\$2,130	\$3,448	\$3,921	\$3,323	\$5,506	\$6,524	\$2,471	\$4,098
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$25,560	\$41,376	\$47,052	\$39,876	\$66,072	\$78,288	\$29,652	\$49,176
Hourly Wage	\$12.78	\$20.69	\$23.53	\$19.94	\$33.04	\$39.14	\$14.83	\$24.59

Eau Claire County, WI	Total Households	% Below ALICE Threshold
Altoona city	3,543	34%
Augusta city	511	48%
Bridge Creek town	714	26%
Brunswick town	694	17%
Clear Creek town	360	28%
Drammen town	279	18%
Eau Claire city	28,132	36%
Fairchild town	163	28%
<b>Fairchild village</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>51%</b>
Fall Creek village	477	29%
Lincoln town	408	25%
Ludington town	406	32%
Otter Creek town	139	18%
Pleasant Valley town	1,228	15%
Seymour town	1,172	13%
Union town	966	20%
Washington town	2,917	17%
Wilson town	152	27%

**Sources for Tables Above:** "2024 Update on Financial Hardship in Wisconsin". United Way. ALICE Threshold, 2022; Bureau of Labor Statistics—Occupational Employment Statistics, 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, PUMS, 2019 and 2022

## Program Funding

Funding for this program was made possible through a grant from the Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin, prepared and administered with the assistance of the Fairchild Area Historical Society. The purpose of the grant is to provide the community of Fairchild resources to conduct a community placemaking event to create master site plans and development strategies for key sites located in the community and to strengthen the linkages between these sites.

Todd Schwartz, RANWW President. "This grant will help raise awareness about the importance of improving our small communities to connect their downtown and surrounding areas while promoting downtown revitalization, diverse housing and transportation options, development within existing neighborhoods, enriched quality of life, and community engagement. Through the Smart Growth Grant program, REALTORS® are collaborating with the Fairchild community to help secure, stabilize and strengthen the future of the community."





## The Study Area

For the purpose of this Design Wisconsin program, the study area includes 5 specific locations:

1. Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park
2. Chat-a-While Park
3. Fairchild Area Historical Society properties
4. Trailhead at the Buffalo River State Trail
5. Downtown Fairchild

Sites 1-3 have specific interest groups associated with them whereas the trailhead and downtown are more oriented towards the general population. Because of this as well as the small population, the public participation process for this program is sorted by specific groups and their respective sites.

## The Community Design Charrette

Design Wisconsin is a community design "charrette" that features fast-paced planning and design workshops with intense public participation. (*"Charrette" is a term used by planners and designers to describe a fast-paced and intense process with robust community involvement.*) Each Design Wisconsin charrette is customized to meet the local needs. In some cases, charrette will cast a large net to address multiple community issues and opportunities ranging from physical planning, economics, housing, childcare, transportation, leadership, etc. To address those needs, experts from a variety of fields are required. Some communities limit the focus to a particular site and/or topic. In the case of Fairchild, the emphasis is on physical planning and design and requires expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and community planning.



## The Community Planning Team

For every Design Wisconsin program, a local team of residents is assembled to lead the process prior to the charrette, during the charrette, and implementation afterwards. Dennis Lindell, Area Historical & Veterans Tribute and Chris Straight, Fairchild Area Historical Society have shared this responsibility to provide background information, maps, site tours, and logistics to make the program a success.

## The Design Team

In order to address the specific needs of the program, a small team of planning and design professionals was assembled which included:

- **Garret Zastoupil**, Community Development Educator, UW-Madison, Division of Extension for Chippewa, Dunn, & Eau Claire Counties
- **Madelyn Woodhull**, Advocacy Coordinator for the Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin
- **Melissa Kono**, Professor of Community, Natural Resources, and Economic Development and Community Resource Development Agent for Clark County, UW-Madison, Division of Extension for Clark & Trempealeau Counties
- **Mike Lamb**, Urban Designer & Planner, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- **Todd Johnson**, Land Use & Community Development Specialist & Outreach Program Manager, UW-Madison, Division of Extension







## Process

The Fairchild charrette is a 2-day process. The first day is dedicated to gathering information using a variety of methods. Planning and design alternatives are developed the second day and shared with the community that same evening. The fast-paced nature provides nearly instant results for community participants to assure accuracy and intent while generating interest and energy needed for implementation. The schedule for the 2-day charrette is featured below.

### Schedule

Tuesday, October 15

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Guided site tour
4:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Design Team meeting
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Supper & visioning session

Wednesday, October 16

8:30 AM – 6:00 PM	Studio work session
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Presentation set-up/run-through
7:00 PM – 8:30 PM	Public presentation
9:00 PM	Adjourn

### Walking & Driving Tour

Members from the Community Planning Team and Design Team conducted a walking tour of Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park and the downtown (Chat-a-While Park, Historical Society properties, and surrounding context) as well as a driving tour of the community as a whole. Participants shared concerns and hopes along the way and identified possible planning and design alternatives for the three primary sites as well as the downtown and the trailhead for the Buffalo River State Trail.





## Visioning Workshop

Following the walking tour, Design Team members facilitated a visioning workshop with the Community Planning Team. As mentioned above, the study area is focused on particular locations in which 3 of the 5 sites have interest groups associated with them. To maximize efficiency, interest groups received a personal invitation to attend along with members of the broader community. Each group of participants sat at a designated table and were asked to respond to the following questions.

- What is the purpose of the site?
- Who do we want to use the site?
- When should users use the site?
- How do we ensure the site gets used for future generations?
- What should users do there? (activities/facilities)
- How does the site support the “Fairchild Brand”?
- 10 years from now, what do you want to see there?
- What can we do right now to make the site better?

Each table discussion had a facilitator who recorded the responses onto flip chart paper. After all the responses were recorded, representatives from each group shared their ideas with the rest of the group.





### HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1. PURPOSE: GATHERING SPACE  
 REPAIR, VISIT THE MUSEUM  
 COULD BE EXTENSION OF THE MUSEUM  
 (BEHIND/IN COURTYARD)

HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS THAT  
 COULD MISTRANSFORM THE ELEMENTS

- STAMP WITH AXE
- STAMP WITH TREE BRUSH
- TEACH KIDS ABOUT LOCAL HISTORY USING WHITE PINE TREE BRUSH

6. FAIRCHILD BRAND

STRUCTURE: EXISTING BRUSH BRUSHING  
 WITH TRAIL CARVED INTO BRUSHING  
 BRUSHING AND TRAIL CARVED INTO BRUSHING  
 WITH A WALK-DECK (WOOD) WITH  
 A OTHER AREA

- PARKING
- PAVEMENT

7. 10 YEARS (SEE ABOVE)

### 2. PEOPLE: COMMUNITY PAID & PRESENT TOURISTS

↳ 2 HOUSE CAMPS

WITH THE CAMPSITES, POPULATION  
 INCREASES GREATLY IN THE SUMMER  
 (EST. 1,000 PWP) + 4-WHEEL

- ADVERTISE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AT CAMPGROUNDS
- A LOT OF ACTIVITIES & SOME FUN
- FAMILY-ORIENTED
- A LOT OF TENTERS
- FAMILY REUNIONS
- SELL MERCHANDISE, PHOTO BOOKS IN SETTINGS

### 3. USE: PHOTO OF CUT-OUTS, CROQUET GAME (HISTORIC OUTDOOR HORSESHOE PIT)

- BOILER AREA (EXGRAVED DOWN) PLAZA/PATH (COBBLESTONE) BETWEEN BUILDINGS
- HISTORIC ARTIFACTS - ON CONCRETE PAVED
- PICNIC TABLES
- SHADE
- TIOLA RE STATION CABLES
- ENTER & EXIT OFF OF MAIN

### 4. WHEN: LIGHTING FOR NIGHT

- BENCHES FOR PEOPLE TO SIT
- MORE ACTIVE IN SUMMER (MAY - SEPTEMBER)
- NO WINTER FESTIVAL... YET
- LUMBERJACK & JUNG SHAPER (LAST SATURDAY IN JANUARY)
- TOURIST SEASON (JUNE - AUGUST)
- FALLING LEAVES ART TOUR (HOSTED AT THE LIBRARY)
- ↳ OUTSIDE VENDOR

### 5. FUTURE GENERATION

- PRESERVE THE HISTORY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS
- GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED ↳ SCLAESHIP
- REPAIR: ? BASKET BASKETS RE & RE COARSE SOCIAL, T-SHIRT
- ADVERTISING

### TRIBUTER PARK

PURPOSE OF TRIBUTER PARK

- Veterans Memorial - ERATION HISTORY
- RELAX/PLAN WAYSIDE
- ↳ Understand History of Caboose
- ↳ FAMILY & CASINO
- ↳ RAILROAD SIGNATURES
- REMEMBRANCE

### PICNICS REST AREA/BIOBREAK

HOW USED = VETERANS-REFLECT & REMEMBER

READ EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

STOURS (CABOOSE) INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

SITE HISTORY - HOW TO VISIT

↳ WALKING VIDEO - HOW TO VISIT

PANCAKE FEEDS? - FUN PRESERVE

SIGNAGE

### WHO DO WE WANT TO USE IT?

LOCALS (KAT OF VETERANS) TRAVELERS

↳ KIDS GOING UP HERE

↳ MOTORCYCLISTS ↳ VETERANS TO REPAIR GROUP

↳ GROUPS ↳ VETERAN'S GROUPS

↳ BIKES/BIKES/BIKES/BIKES

↳ ATUS/ATUS/ATUS

↳ GROUPS ↳ VETERAN'S GROUPS

↳ ORIKES/ATUS/ATUS

### WHEN USE?

DAWNLIGHT -> APRIL - OCTOBER

↳ END HEAT (DAMN TO DUSK)

SCHEDULE EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

↳ SCHOOLS

How ensure she used?

Education -> INTERESTING

People POWER? -> MORE? Younger ppl?

o Ppl by AMBITION, Knowledge

o Connections WITH YOUTH GROUPS

↳ OSSEO - FFA, BOY SCOUTS, ADULT LEADERS

o Get info out -> RADIO/TV

o FUN RAIL - PANCAKE - TABLE PAPER

FUNDRAISING - PAPER TRAIN SET

NEED TRAIL SIGNAGE + ORIKES

### SUPPORT ISLAND

Thinking in OUTDOORS - Recreation TO HISTORY

TO DEMONSTRATE WELCOMING/PROFIT FAMILY FRIENDLY

10 YEARS FROM NOW

- o Ppl by AMBITION, Knowledge
- o Connections WITH YOUTH GROUPS
- ↳ OSSEO - FFA, BOY SCOUTS, ADULT LEADERS
- o Get info out -> RADIO/TV
- o FUN RAIL - PANCAKE - TABLE PAPER
- FUNDRAISING - PAPER TRAIN SET
- o Ppl by AMBITION, Knowledge
- o Connections WITH YOUTH GROUPS
- ↳ OSSEO - FFA, BOY SCOUTS, ADULT LEADERS
- o Get info out -> RADIO/TV
- o FUN RAIL - PANCAKE - TABLE PAPER
- FUNDRAISING - PAPER TRAIN SET

### Downtown

o nice to see more biz

o retail or services in 2 empty lots

o target us & highway, but make signs for local

o down rep. as "local community in"

o keep the history

o pull in ATTUERS -> LOCALS

o no welcome center

o family friendly

o Fresh produce

o retail or start-up pop up rental (curtains, Artwork)

\* EAT, Shop, Hist. Center

o maintain/enhance ATTU comment

o picnic tables & playgroup

o sidewalk amenities

o keep Fun Days

o music/instruments

o connect w/ Library

o in fill w/ comm

o in school steps

o fix a hill old garage

o Incentivize infill a market

o Heavy Summer, but 365 days

o Can we attract retail that will be a 4-season destination + pull off of 10/12?

o "winter now local" still need signage

o Sharpen of composites (pancake)

o need some successful anchors

o outdoor sports

o Stormwater management

o in proper setting, is it safe place?

o lack of a safe place downtown @ night

o police post, lot more local

o a bit sterile downtown -> allow local

o lighted arch

o faded track // crosswalk

o light up chat -> welcome

o light up chat -> welcome

o light up chat -> welcome

### Chat-a-while

o Place for families to socialize

o Emphasize an amphitheater for live bands

o space for fun days

o need to preserve memorabilia, possibly add benches

o should maintain an old-fashioned look and have posture ties to the railroad

o (lighting)!!

o Bulletin board with local news

o crosswalk should be visible & railroad, along w/ good hand signaling

o year round park

o possibly, featuring a splash pad or fire pit

The information generated from the visioning process as well as the site tours and other input was used to develop the following planning and design alternatives. The alternatives are a sketch of a vision that ultimately will require more detail and planning to become real.

Landscaping used to screen utility shed and porta-potty.

Pavers used to delineate space and provide ADA accessibility.

## Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park

The Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park is currently home to a Veteran's Memorial and highlights the history of the surrounding area. Through the workshop process, participants expressed interest in making the site more usable through the addition of picnic tables, improved ADA accessibility, and beautification components such as electric signage and landscaping. Participants also expressed interest in further highlighting the historic aspects of the park by expanding the Veterans' Memorial and potentially moving the historic Rabensdorf Schoolhouse to the site. The primary goal is to make the site more welcoming and to increase engagement, i.e. through weekly use of the pavilion.

Delineating different uses within a space increases engagement and guides people from one activity to another. In the concept illustrations above, the park is separated into two distinct areas. The north is dedicated as a Veterans' Memorial, while the south side focuses on education and the area's history. Option A provides some simple "first steps" towards developing the site. Key features include providing visual screening of the porta-potty and utility shed, using pavers to delineate exhibit spaces, developing a singular and well-defined parking lot to better serve visitors while providing a clear entrance to the space. Option B advances the design with new public restrooms and additional exhibits.





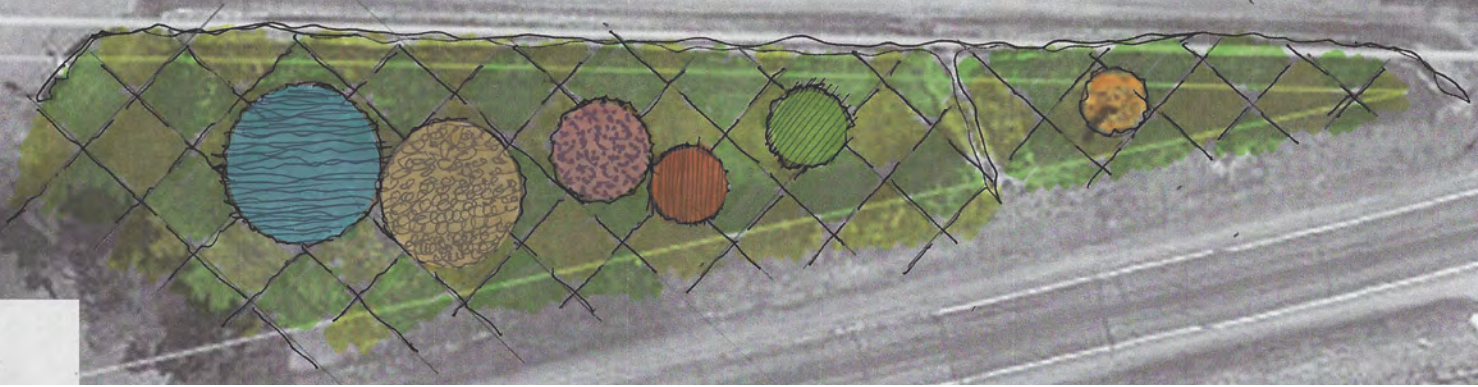
Both options use brick or concrete pavers to guide visitors from one exhibit to the next. Pavers improve accessibility and, if permeable, can mitigate water runoff-allowing the space to be used in a variety of weather conditions.

To improve the reflective experience of the Veteran's Memorial, consider using architectural elements and landscaping to screen the porta-potties and utility shed. This allows the "behind-the-scenes" elements to recede into the background emphasizing the exhibits.

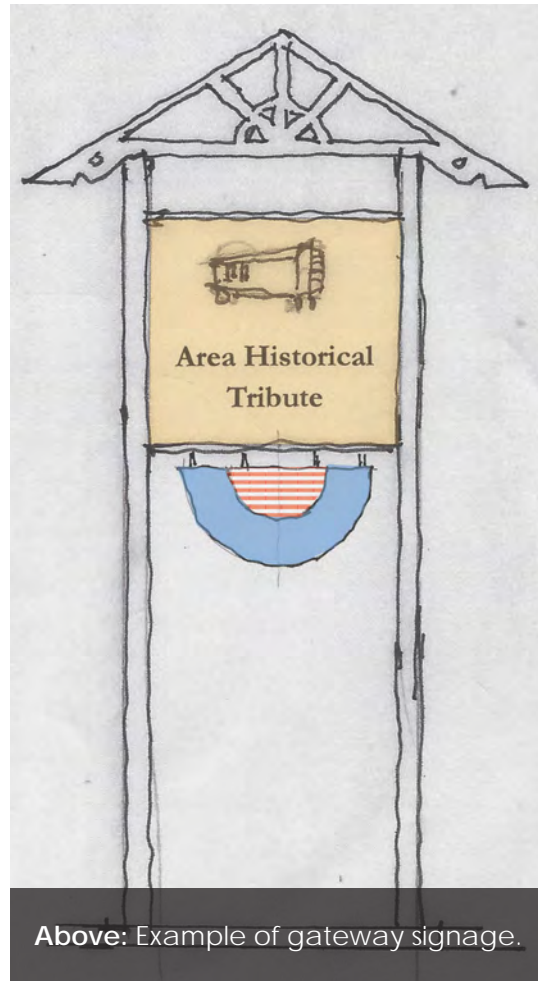
Building a simple structure around the porta-potties could serve as a step towards building more permanent facilities in the future, such as vault toilets or flush bathrooms. The very south end of the site slopes considerably and would need considerable investment to make it suitable for locating structures. Instead, consider developing the area as outdoor sculpture park with landscaped patterns of grasses, flowers, and crops (see images on the following page).



Above: Example of architectural screening.

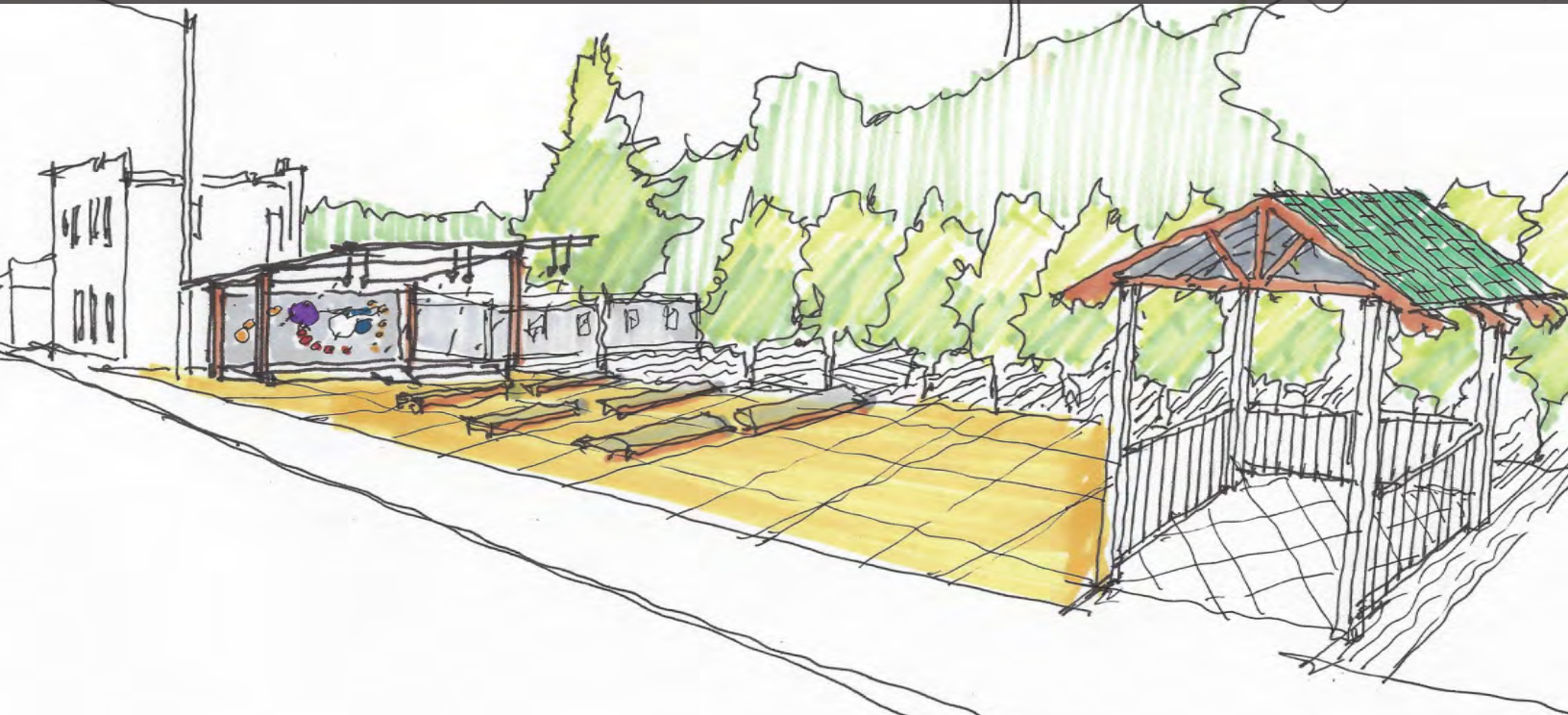


Relocating the Rabendorf Schoolhouse to Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park allows the site to lean further into its historical education aspects. While concept illustrations identify a spot for relocation, but the logistics and legality of such a move need further investigation, as there is currently a deed restriction on the property. Regardless, the images show additional opportunities to embrace the historic and memorial aspects of the park. The Veterans Memorial could be expanded and take on a more enclosed space to allow for a quiet, reflective area, and the caboose could be used for educational programming, especially if the schoolhouse is relocated to the area near it. Standard signage around town with a clearly identifiable motif (such as a gable) would help spark interest in the site and help with wayfinding (image to the right).



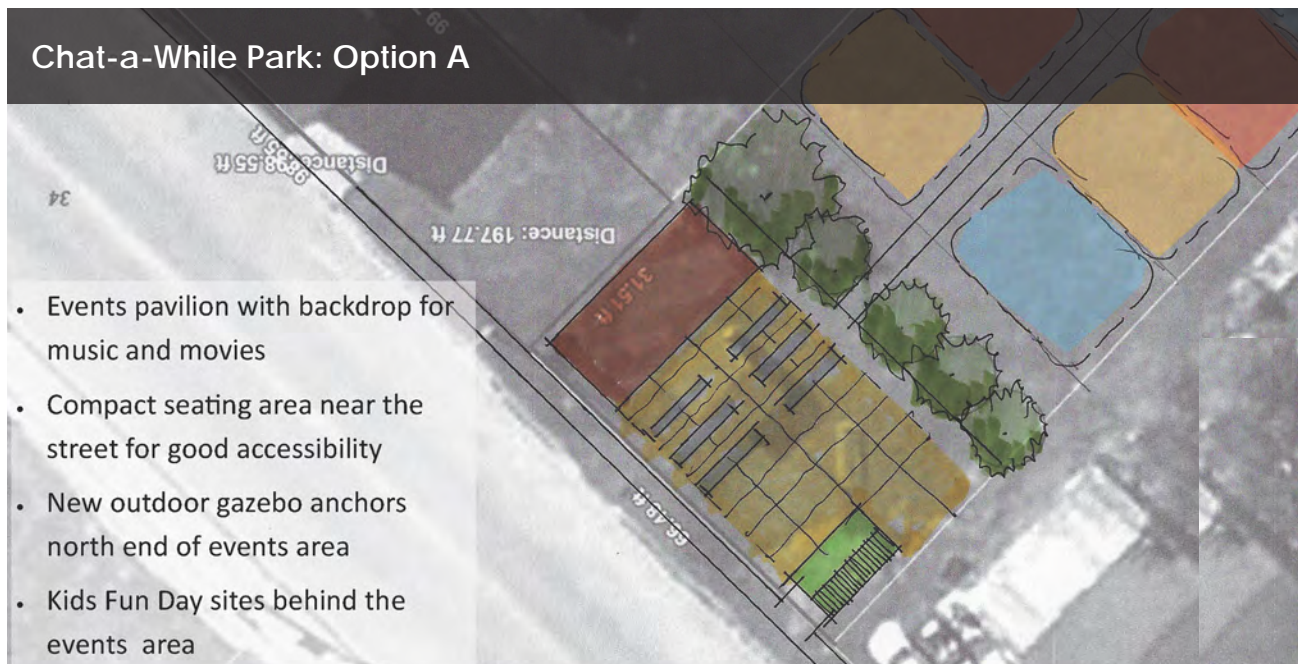
Above: Example of gateway signage.





## Chat-a-While Park

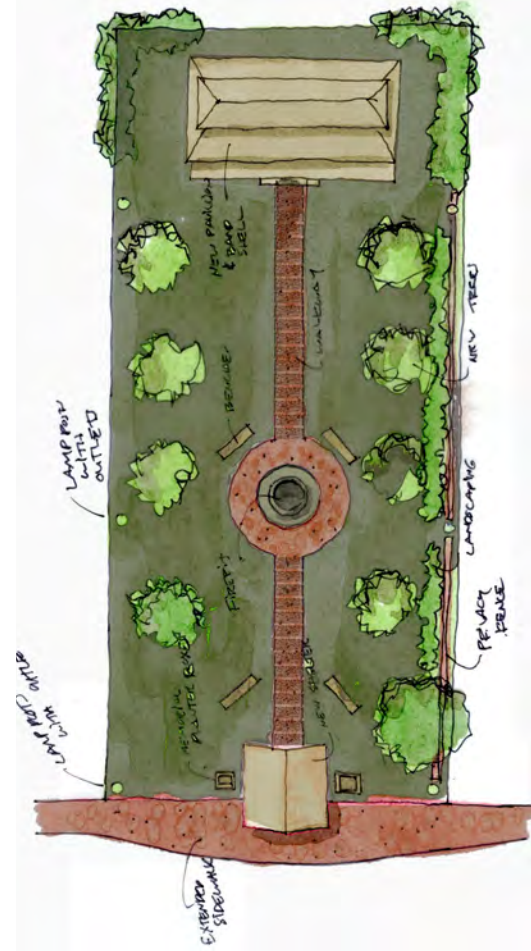
Chat-a-While Park is centrally located in the downtown area and provides green space and a seating area. Participants expressed interest in making the site more ADA accessible, adding more landscaping, and potentially building an amphitheater or stage area. The images below show additional seating options as well as a bandshell area for live music, projected movies, and other events. Behind the event pavilion, there is still space for Kids Fun Day or other programs, and the area would be open for everyday use outside of events.



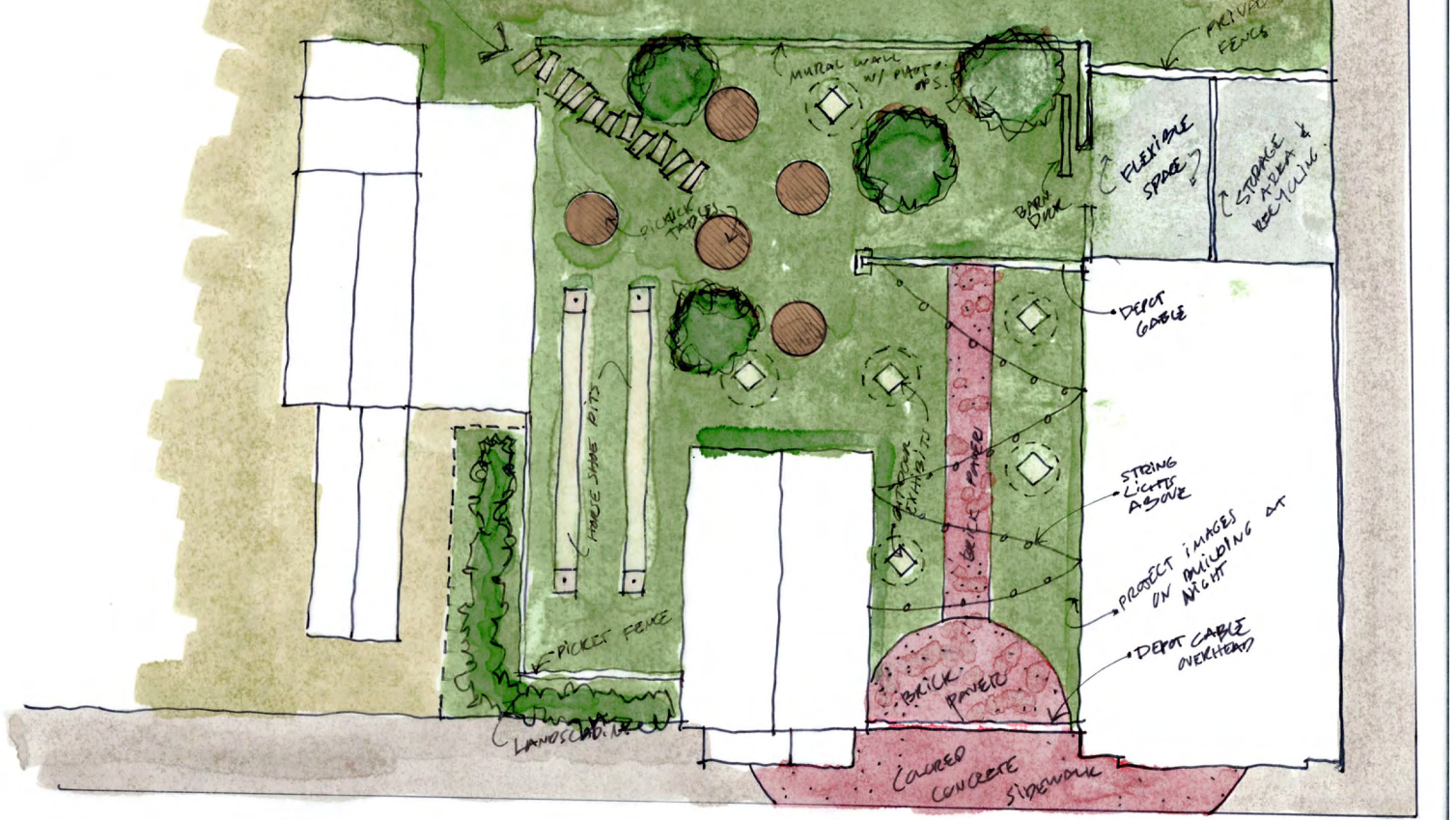


A second option looks at developing a pathway through the whole park connecting Front Street and Huron Street. The east entrance along Front Street features a covered seating area with memorial flower beds flanking it on either side. It invites users to walk through it along a path towards the west end to an outdoor pavilion. The walking path uses concrete pads and textured concrete to resemble railroad tracks. A fire-pit with seating is located halfway to serve as a central focal point.

Additional trees provide shade and demarcate zones for bounce house locations. Since parts of the site run up against private property, consider using landscaping to protect residents' privacy. Decorative lampposts could be installed with electrical outlets, minimizing the number and length of cords for Fun Days while providing light in the evenings. Lampposts could also include wi-fi equipment adding value and opportunities for events.







## Historical Society

The Historical Society property is located downtown and consists of two buildings. Participants expressed a desire to create an outdoor gathering space on the site, create a connection between the two spaces, showcase the area's history, and encourage more activities.

The illustration above is a concept plan for providing additional landscaping and pavement to create a gathering space that invites visitors to explore. Enhancing the existing sidewalk with colored concrete and/or pavers creates a visual connection that guides visitors to entrances.

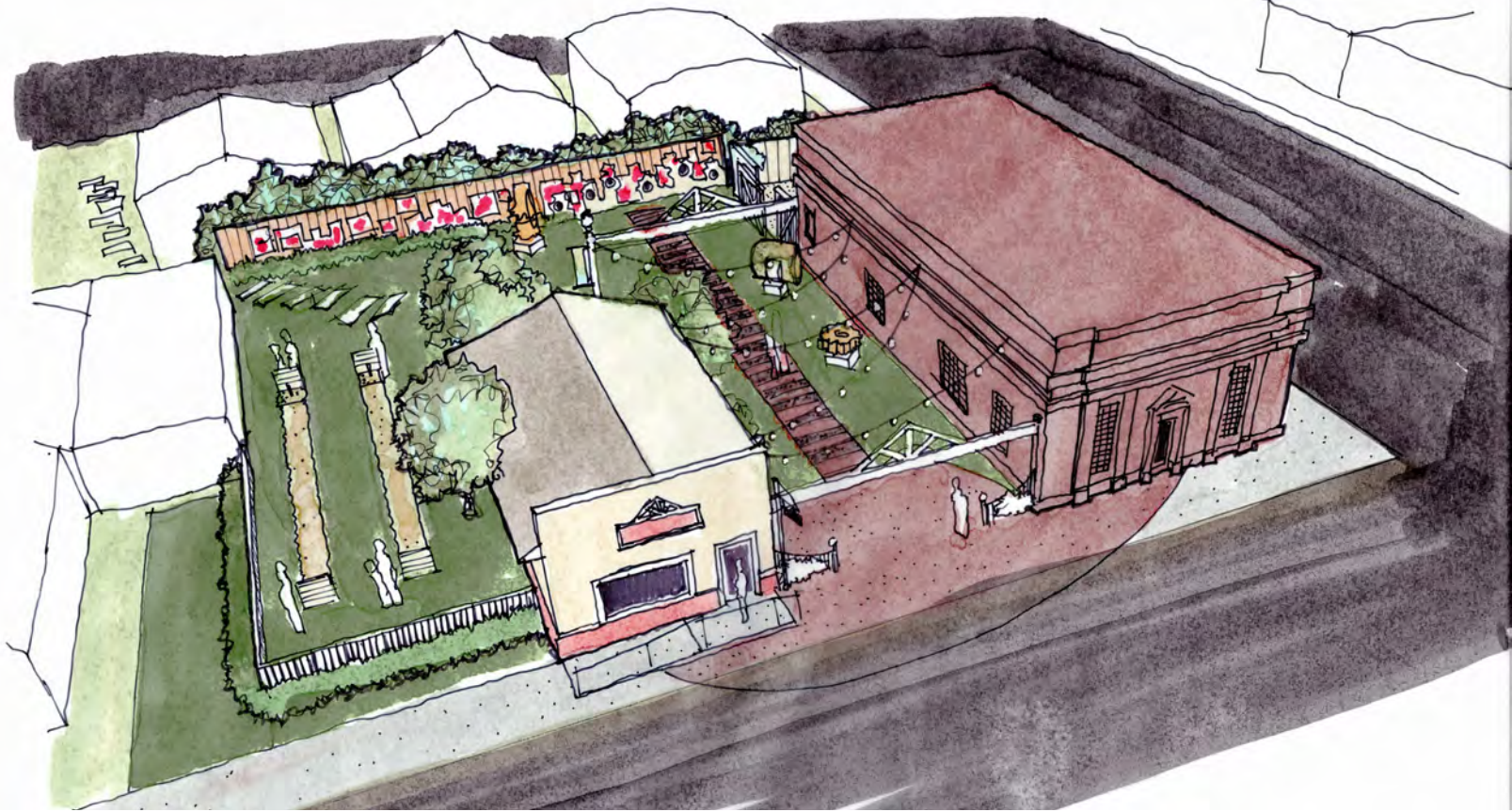
Pavers could be engraved to share local history and could be used as a fundraising opportunity. The salvaged gable from the Depot acts as a truss that celebrates the entrance to the outdoor gallery and gathering spaces while enforcing the connection between the two buildings. Shade trees, benches, and outdoor games encourage people to linger and explore the exhibits. String lights make the space more inviting in the evening-extending the hours of the outdoor space.



Image 1  
Above & Below: Examples of fundraising ideas using engraved pickets and bricks.



Image 2



Above: Concept mural for Historical Society along the back of the property (AI generated).

The outdoor gallery includes concrete podiums to display artifacts and a mural along the back of the property that tells the story of Fairchild (example above). It could include doors that reveal facts and include photo cutouts. For convenience, an informal walking path located at the southwest corner provides access to the library.

The design includes a flexible space behind the future museum that can be used for outdoor storage, trash, and events. A sliding barn door controls access allowing the space to be secured when unattended.



Above: Outdoor exhibit at Dalkeith County Park, Dalkeith, Scotland.



## Buffalo River Trailhead

The Buffalo River Trailhead is an important asset for the community. Currently, the site lacks space for parking and maneuvering trailers and recreational vehicles. Improvements to the parking area would enable more visitors to bring trailers with ATVs, UTVs, bikes, horses, etc., establishing the trail as a strong recreation and economic anchor for the area. Consider working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to develop it into a community and regional asset.

The two AI generated images below illustrate a new trailhead entrance and information kiosk. The details and materials celebrate Fairchild's logging and railroad history-strengthening Fairchild's brand. Consider working with residents and businesses to develop a marketing plan for trail users that includes a wayfinding system unique to Fairchild. The plan should include events and services communicated with kiosks, signage, lighting, murals, public art, and quick response codes (QR).





## Downtown Fairchild

Participants expressed interest in additional downtown development projects to make the area more welcoming. Some ideas discussed include a welcome sign for visitors and signage throughout town that nods to the railroad heritage. In addition, it was suggested that a centralized space in the downtown could host events (Christmas Tree, Christmas Market, Farmers' Market, etc.)

### New Development

Currently, there is a commercial development project planned for the downtown that includes a bar and grill, boutique, and laundromat. The images below illustrate what the development might look like as a single-story structure and another showing apartments above.



Above: Concept illustration of proposed development single-story commercial.



Above: Concept illustration of proposed development two-story commercial and residential.



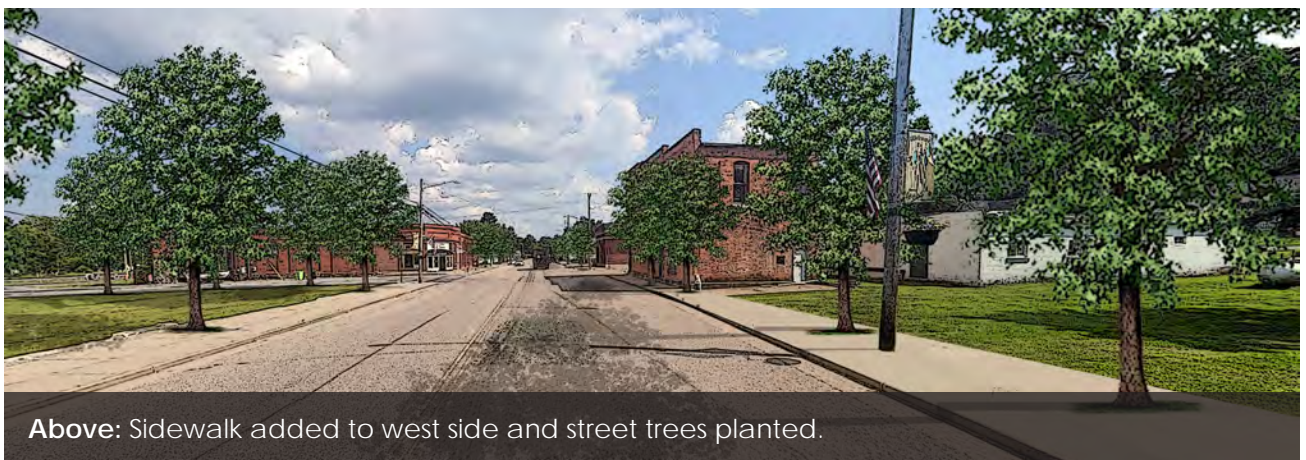


## Street Trees

In addition to new buildings, consider developing a sidewalk along the east side of N. Front Street and add street trees to both sides. This creates a much more inviting downtown for visitors and residents, provides shade, and creates opportunities for decorative lighting. Research shows that the more time visitors spend in a commercial district, the more money they spend. The simulation below provides a snapshot of those improvements.



Above: Existing conditions.



Above: Sidewalk added to west side and street trees planted.



## Lighting

Light enhances visibility which enhances safety. It can also be considered as an artistic element. Light can add color, movement, whimsy and intrigue to a downtown. It can accent and highlight, and help tell a story that welcomes and draws people in. Lit storefronts and store windows after business hours, advertises businesses while indirectly helping to light the sidewalk. Lit store windows allow nighttime strollers to see displayed products and see into the store, further “selling” after hours while improving nighttime security. The simulation above illustrates how the combination of street trees and lighting can provide a more welcoming experience downtown. Consider enhancing the visual quality of the buildings at night using inexpensive LED lighting. The placement, intensity, and color of light can punctuate architectural elements. The overall effect can attract visitors and provide additional visual security at night.



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



## Seating

Choice of seating is important for cost, comfort, aesthetics, and maintenance. Street furniture can also serve as street sculpture and downtown art. The railroad-themed and log benches like the ones above are examples of how Fairchild might create outdoor seating that supports its history and brand. Consider providing seating that is movable as well. This allows for flexibility and encourages groups of people to congregate.

## Multi-Modal Circulation

A vibrant downtown welcomes people from all walks of life with a variety of things to do and with a variety of ways to move about. Downtowns that are safe and easy to navigate by foot and bike are inviting additional users of all ages. Creating a bike-friendly downtown requires bike racks. The design and location of racks requires some planning. Local cyclists and youth can provide valuable insight as to the best locations for new racks. Rack designs can be a form of artistic expression that adds beautification of downtown. Consider working with local artists and schools to design and fabricate unique bike racks that celebrate Fairchild while encouraging cycling.



Above: Bike rack concept (AI generated).

The Buffalo River State Trail and the surrounding natural areas attract visitors who wish to explore the area with a variety of transportation modes including ATVs and UTVs. The popularity of these forms of transportation provides Fairchild with an opportunity to market itself as a ATV and UTV friendly community. ATVs and UTVs can also pose challenges in regards to public safety, parking, and traffic patterns. Consider working with local businesses and organizations, the Village, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to identify strategies that capitalize on this economic benefit without compromising public safety.



Image 7

## Building Facades

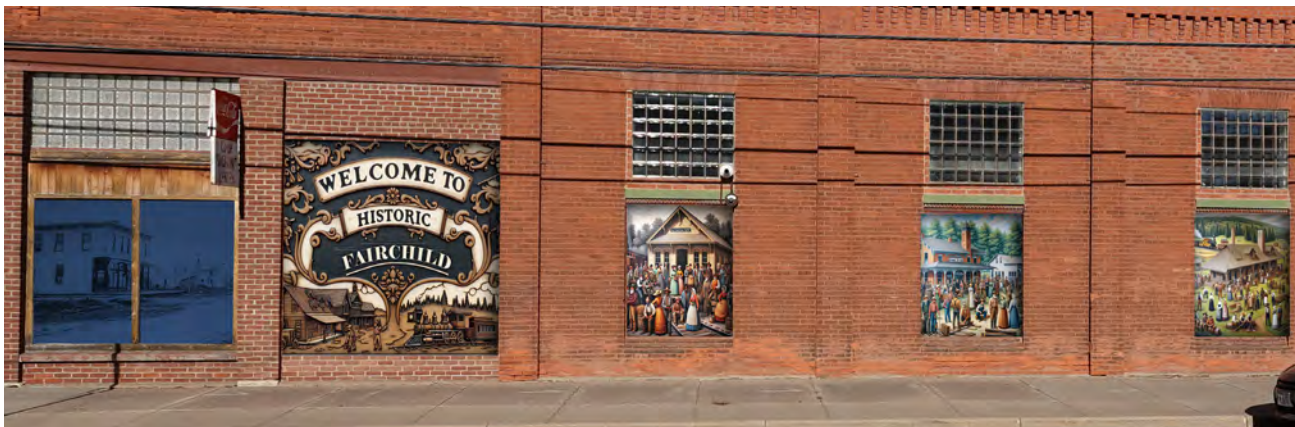
Fairchild has numerous historic buildings in the downtown each with its own character and style. Individual building facades express the history of the building as well as the use of what's inside. Collectively, building facades in a downtown paint a picture of the community's history as well its current vibrancy. Care should be taken to protect the structural and aesthetic integrity of each building. This protects the individual and collective property values of the downtown and the image of the community as a whole.

Some best practices include: historic color palette of paint schemes, using durable and appropriate materials, maintaining original window openings when feasible, maintaining and highlighting unique architectural features, and incorporating awnings and well-designed signage.



**Left:** Simulation of window and door restoration using historic color palette.

**Below:** Simulation of applying murals to missing window openings as temporary or permanent improvements.



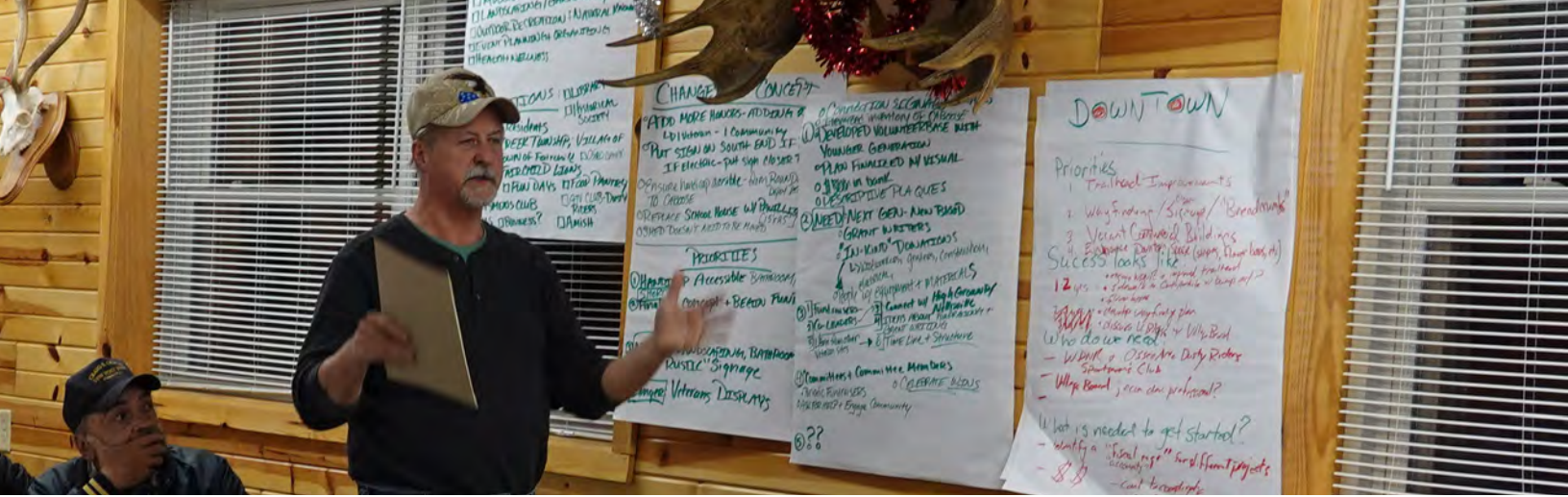




## Building Signage

Well-designed signage expresses the type of the business, its personality, as well as the type of customer it wishes to attract. Thoughtful signs made from durable materials can improve the value of the individual property as well as the downtown. When coordinated with other downtown businesses, signage can project an overall aesthetic, or theme, designed to communicate local culture and values (see examples from Wisconsin and Minnesota below).





## Implementation

Implementation is work, but it doesn't have to be painful. Ideas are realized when a group of people come together to get something done, take deliberate steps to bring folks into the process, provide clear and consistent communication, and celebrate success.

The ideas generated during the charrette provide opportunities for community members to come together to create something that benefits the entire community. Use these ideas to identify common interests and energy. Convene a series of planning meetings to identify why people are interested in the idea, what they can offer, and what's left to figure out. Start with simple "quick wins." Build capacity and confidence to take on larger more complex projects.

### Local Implementation Workshop

On December 3, 2024, Extension worked with the local planning team to facilitate an implementation workshop with key stakeholders. The purpose of the workshop was to review the outputs of the charrette, fine tune desired outcomes, and develop draft action plans to realize those outcomes. Each group was asked to think about what they could achieve as a long-term goal (+4 years) and a short-term goal (2-4 years). Next, they were asked to define what success would look like, what they needed to get started, and who would need to be a part of the effort to start it and to sustain it over time. Key stakeholders worked in teams to develop the following action plans.

#### Area Historical & Veterans Tribute Park

After reviewing the outputs of the charrette, participants suggested the following changes: adding more honors (1 veteran, 1 community); installing a sign on the south end (maybe an electronic messaging sign); ensure ADA accessible route from veteran's memorial area to the caboose; replace the school house with a pavilion; and keeping the storage shed in its current location. Members of this group identified the following goals for the site:

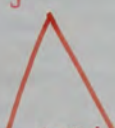
- Long-term: Installing more veterans displays.
- Medium-term: Providing better bathroom facilities, improved landscaping, and "rustic signage".
- Short-term: Providing ADA accessible toilet facilities, finalizing the overall site plan, and developing a fundraising campaign.

The group recognized the need to develop a strong volunteer base for installing new exhibits and maintenance. To get started, a overall site plan with a budget needs to be put together as well as a fundraising (donations and grants) and volunteerism strategy.



Changes:  
 No Fence - Add Landscaping  
 Potential Restrooms - Plumbing present  
 Regular Sidewalk w/ADA Acc.  
 Not So many trees

Priorities:  
 Lighting  
 Update existing Seating  
 Fundraising




### Chat-a-While Park

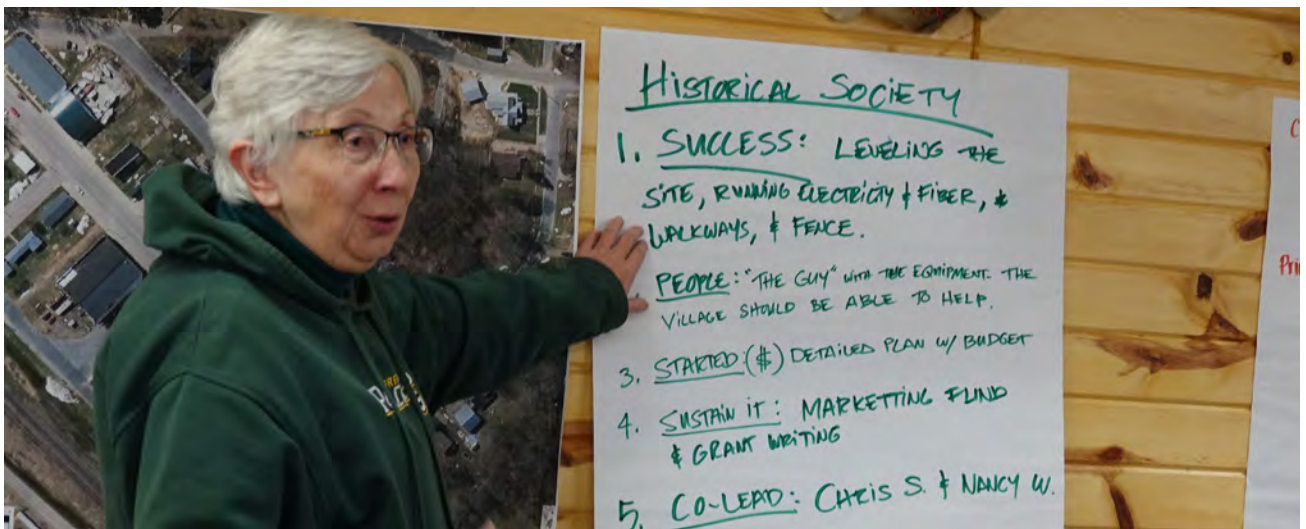
The Fairchild Fun Days group suggested the following changes from the ideas developed from the charrette: eliminating the fence along the west edge of the site; adding restrooms; developing a standard width sidewalk along the street that is ADA accessible; and limiting the number of trees to allow for inflatables at Fun Days to be installed. Members of this group identified the following goals for the site:

- Medium-term: Installing a sidewalk along the street and pathway through the park.
- Short-term: Installing a gas fire pit; getting quotes for installing lighting; improving the existing seating and landscaping; and developing a fundraising campaign.

### Fairchild Area Historical Society

Historical Society members suggested eliminating the horseshoe pits from the original concept plan to mitigate noise from the site. The group appeared to have consensus on the overall long-term concept and focused on the following short-term goals:

- Grading & Landscaping: Hiring a contractor to grade the site to make it level, installing underground conduit for electricity and fiber-optic cable, and installing walkways and a fence.
- Planning: Developing a final plan for the site as well as a budget and timeline.
- Marketing & Fundraising: Developing a marketing and fundraising strategy.





### **Downtown Fairchild & the Trailhead**

Community members discussed ideas generated from the charrette and identified the following priorities:

- Trailhead Improvements: Working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Osseo Area Dusty Riders, and the Sportsman's Club to develop better parking and signage.
- Wayfinding: Developing consistent signage that support the local brand that directs and connects people to key locations in and around the community.
- Vacant Commercial Buildings: Work with the Village Board and economic development professionals to identify opportunities for redevelopment.
- Enhance Downtown Space: Installing streetscape improvements (landscaping, street furniture, lighting, etc.).

### **Workshop Summary/Next Steps**

Each of the planning teams shared their ideas with each other. In doing so, everyone acknowledged a common need for a follow-up meeting to add further detail to their individual plans and to develop a shared mechanism for fundraising, volunteerism, and communication.

### **Positive Community Change**

Creating and sustaining positive community change requires planning. When developing action plans, consider the following elements:

- Recipe for Success: Reflect on past community projects that were successful in: volunteerism, communication, ideation, fundraising, and leadership. As a team, document what aspects of each local example made it successful and what lessons can be learned and applied to future projects.
- Community Change Structures: Document existing community structures/organizations for change and identify resources needed to move forward. Consider the relationship of formal and informal groups, businesses, and individuals who "make things happen". What is the path of least resistance? Who is equipped to support change? What barriers exist that need to be removed, repositioned, or bridged to support change? What new community resources or relationships might be needed to support change?





- Positive Change Workforce Assessment: Identify local community assets and resources that can create and sustain positive community change. Ask community members to provide information needed to assess what types of skills, associations, and interests are available to make change happen. Using a simple form, individuals document what they “bring to table” to help make positive change happen.
- Prioritization: Allow community members to “self-sort” themselves into similar interests and explore ways in which their group can make positive change happen.
- Action Planning: Describe the purpose and character of the desired change and create a basic action plan for executing that change. The action plan should address the following questions:
  - What is the proposed activity/project and what is its purpose?
  - What does success would look like? How would we measure it?
  - Who needs to be involved in the activity for it to be successful?
  - What do we need to get started?
  - What to we need to sustain it?
  - Who will co-lead this effort?
- Celebration & Reflection: Community members should consider how they will evaluate the success of their effort that might double as opportunities for celebration and benchmarking.



Image 8



Image 9

## Leading Change

Dr. John Kotter describes the steps for making change happen in a community in two books, "Leading Change" and "The Heart of Change." He recommends the following steps:

### Step 1: Establish Sense of Urgency

- Examine market and competitive realities
- Identify and discuss crises, potential crises or major opportunities

### Step 2: Form a Powerful Coalition

- Assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort
- Encourage the group to work as a team

### Step 3: Create a Shared Vision

- Create a vision to help direct the change effort
- Develop strategies for achieving that vision

### Step 4: Communicate the Vision

- Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies
- Teach new behaviors by the example of the Guiding Coalition

### Step 5: Empower Others to Act

- Remove obstacles to change
- Change systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision
- Encourage the risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions

### Step 6: Plan for and Create Wins

- Plan for visible performance improvements
- Create those improvements
- Recognize and reward people involved in the improvements

### Step 7: Change Improvement Checkpoints

- Use increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don't fit the vision
- Hire, promote, and develop people who can implement the vision
- Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents





### Step 8: Institutionalize New Approaches

- Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success
- Develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press. Kotter, J. P. and D. S. Cohen (2002). *The heart of change : real-life stories of how people change their organizations*. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.

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**Image 9:** "368029008\_629546019281290\_8901681321379747435\_n.jpeg". Downloaded on January 1, 2025 from "Fun Days" Facebook post August, 18, 2023.



## Acknowledgments

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## UW-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking

### *Signature Effort*

The UW-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking Signature Effort is a group of UW-Extension county educators and state specialists who research, create, and test community placemaking curriculum in response to the challenge set forth by the Wisconsin Idea. Design Wisconsin is one of several community placemaking programs offered by the group. Current members include:

Barry Hottmann, Community Development Educator, Iowa County Extension  
Brandon Hofstedt, CED Program Manager, UW-Madison, Division of Extension  
Brian Gauthier, Community Development Educator, Lac du Flambeau Extension  
Christa Van Treek, Positive Youth Development Educator, Marquette County Extension  
David Timmerman, Editor/Journalist/Photographer, Grant County Herald Independent  
Ed Freer, Landscape Architect & Urban/Waterfront Designer, GRAEF, USA  
Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator, Portage County Extension  
Kellie Pederson, Community Development Educator, Bayfield County Extension  
Kristin Runge, Community Development Specialist, UW-Madison, Division of Extension  
Mariah Goode, Director of Land Use Services Department, Door County  
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Nathan Sandwick, Supervisory Community Liason, USDA Rural Development  
Neil Klemme, Positive Youth Development Educator, Iron County Extension  
Sharon Krause, Positive Youth Development Educator, Oneida & Lac du Flambeau Extension  
Steve Grabow, Professor Emeritus, Jefferson County Extension  
Taylor Seale, Positive Youth Development Educator, Dane County Extension  
Todd Barman, Downtown Development Specialist, UW-Madison, Division of Extension  
Todd Johnson, Land Use + Community Development Specialist, UW-River Falls (Extension)







## Extension

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension provides statewide access to university resources and research so the people of Wisconsin can learn, grow and succeed at all stages of life. UW-Extension carries out this tradition of the Wisconsin Idea – extending the boundaries of the university to the boundaries of the state.

### Who We Are

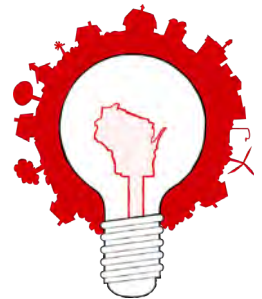
With an office in each Wisconsin county, Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to local needs and based on university knowledge and research. We deliver our expertise to the public, addressing a wide range of needs to people, plants and animals, in both urban and rural areas of the states.

### What We Do

We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

### The Wisconsin Idea

“The University of Wisconsin’s direct contributions to the state: to the government in the forms of serving in office, offering advice about public policy, providing information and exercising technical skill, and to the citizens in the forms of doing research directed at solving problems that are important to the state and conducting outreach activities.”



– Jack Stark, “The Wisconsin Idea: The University’s Service to the State”, p.1

## Contact

For more information about the University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking Signature Effort and the Design Wisconsin program, please contact:

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