

MEETING MINUTES

Project Name: Legacy EC | Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan

Meeting Date: September 21, 2026 | 12:00pm

Legacy EC Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meeting #2

Meeting Attendees

True Vue, Advisory Committee Member

Megan Grinde Weber, Advisory Committee Member

Eric Anderson, Advisory Committee Member

Aaron Brewster, Advisory Committee Member

Cody Filipczak, Advisory Committee Member

Jeff Halloin, Advisory Committee Member

Jim Phillips, Advisory Committee Member

Scott Rogers, Advisory Committee Member

Jessica Schoen, Advisory Committee Member

Bob Schraufnagel, Advisory Committee Member

Christina Thrun, Advisory Committee Member

Josh Zeug, Advisory Committee Member

Peter Hable, Advisory Committee Member Alternate

Jenni Sterling, Advisory Committee Member Alternate

Terry Weld, Advisory Committee Member (Not present)

Susan Wolfram, Advisory Committee Member (Not present)

Olivia Coughlin, Advisory Committee Member (Not present)

Efren Martinez, Advisory Committee Member Alternate (Not present)

Ned Noel, City of Eau Claire

Ryan Petrie, City of Eau Claire

Peter Baumgartner, City of Eau Claire

Katrina Running, City of Eau Claire

Tyler Fadness, City of Eau Claire

Leah Ness, City of Eau Claire

Matt Prosser, EPS

Charlie Cowell, RDG Planning & Design

Cory Scott, RDG Planning & Design

Discussion

This memorandum summarizes the items discussed during the meeting referenced above.

1. Introductions and project overview recap
2. Schedule and engagement plan
3. Existing conditions data review
4. Goals workshop
5. Next steps

Introductions and Project Overview Recap

- Legacy EC is the public brand for the Eau Claire Comprehensive Plan update. The project website is live and already generating significant activity.
- This is an update, not a full rewrite. substantial prior work remains valid and will be built upon rather than replaced.

- The plan was last adopted in 2013 and is currently in its seventh generation of planning.
- Key process goals: expand community engagement to capture shifts in priorities since 2013, incorporate deeper fiscal/land use analysis (led by EPS), and produce a more concise and consolidated final document.
- Chapters 14 and 15 (Sustainability and Health), along with equity considerations, will be folded into all chapters rather than treated as standalone sections.
- The plan is organized around 13 active update chapters: Land Use & Growth Management, Transportation, Public Utilities, Parks/Greenways/Trails, Natural Resources, Economic Development, Urban Design, Neighborhoods & Districts, Housing Assistance/Diversity/Design, Historic & Cultural Resources, Downtown, Community Facilities, and Governmental Cooperation.
- State statute requires certain chapters (e.g., transportation) but does not mandate specific naming conventions; other chapters are discretionary additions reflecting Eau Claire's priorities. Some consolidation of chapters may be expected.

Schedule and Community Engagement Plan

- November 9th – 11th will be the second visit for additional focus groups targeting groups not reached in September, plus deeper report-out on issues and opportunities.
- Into 2027 (new year and spring) will shift from listening mode to feedback mode, presenting draft ideas on land use, transportation, and other topics for committee and public input.
- Website has nearly 700 unique visitors and over 400 contributions already received prior to any major in-person events.
- Committee members asked to refer additional contacts, groups or individuals RDG should meet with as outreach continues to expand.
- Collateral is available for staff or committee members to take to their own meetings.

Existing Conditions Data Review

Population:

- The 2013 plan forecast Eau Claire reaching ~72,000 people by 2020. Actual figures from the Wisconsin Department of Administration came in slightly below but showed accelerated growth between 2020 and 2025, nearly catching up to the original forecast.
- Growth since 2020 has been notably faster than in prior periods, which will influence future projections.

Households and People Per Household:

- Forecasted number of households stayed close to actual, slightly below the 2013 forecast for 2020, nearly on track by 2024.
- People per household declined significantly more than forecasted. The 2013 plan projected ~2.4 by 2030, but actual Census figures are considerably lower. Possible explanations include accelerated trend toward smaller households, student population undercounting in 2020 census, and pandemic-related disruptions.
- Even if population growth is modest, more housing units may be needed because fewer people occupy each unit.

Age Distribution:

- Growth concentrated in older age cohorts (55+), consistent with national aging trends.
- Under-5 population slightly declined, possibly reflecting lower birth rates.
- College-age population (18–24) slightly declined which may reflect lower enrollment or 2020 census undercounting of students not on campus.
- Working-age middle categories showed stronger growth than typically seen in comparable Midwest communities.

Race and Diversity:

- Eau Claire is becoming more diverse with growth recorded across all non-white population categories.

- Trend consistent with university cities attracting a wider range of residents; no dramatic single-category shifts, but consistent incremental increases.

Housing Units:

- 2013 plan forecast was ~31,000 units by 2020. Actual 2020 count was approximately 29,700, slightly below forecast but within reasonable range.
- Trend line through 2024 remains close but slightly below the original forecast.
- Age of housing stock is increasing as homes built since 2000 (especially since 2010) represent a small share of total stock, consistent with other Midwest river communities.
- Owner/renter split is approximately 45% owner, 55% renter. A question was raised about whether this ratio will shift if enrollment declines.

Economic Snapshot:

- Population growth: 4.5%, Employment growth: 9.4% suggests in-commuting, with workers living outside city limits (e.g., Altoona or surrounding counties).
- Low unemployment at time of data collection; positive benchmarks across population, employment, and income growth.
- A Committee member noted the employment-population gap is also partially explained by faster household growth than population growth and demographic shifts (fewer college-age, more workforce-age residents).
- Interest in understanding single-person household prevalence, noting that a majority of coordinated entry housing list participants are single adults, which has direct implications for unit type needs.

Spatial Growth Patterns:

- Maps of the past 8 years of residential development activity shows growth spread across multiple directions.
- Central areas show less new development due to being largely built out. Infill/redevelopment required for central growth.

- River and environmental features constrain some growth directions, while west, north, and south appear to have fewer physical barriers.

Goals Workshop

Committee members wrote goals/opportunities on sticky notes for each of the 13 chapters. RDG conducted a live read-out and synthesis.

- **Land Use & Growth Management:** Strong themes around density, infill development, compact growth, reducing sprawl, preserving green space, industrial park growth, and being more selective about where and how growth occurs. A Committee member noted the city currently feels obligated to approve most development to generate tax revenue, limiting ability to be judicious.
- **Transportation:** Many responses focused on multimodal options such as transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure, not just road connectivity. RDG noted this is more pronounced than in comparable college town plans.
- **Public Utilities:** Fewer responses, as expected when services are functioning well. Themes include maintaining service levels, managing rising costs, planning for future capacity, coordinating with utility partners.
- **Parks, Greenways & Trails:** Strong focus on access and connectivity to parks and trail system expansion. A Committee member raised concern that park creation essentially stopped in the 1990s with newer neighborhoods (especially west and south) lack neighborhood parks, while older downtown areas have more. There was discussion of selling underutilized park land to fund housing while acquiring land in growth areas for new parks.
- **Natural Resources:** Two dominant themes were water quality/clean waterways/downstream impact regulations and green design/tree canopy. Multiple comments referenced the recent tree ordinance and need to evaluate its fit. There is interest in a canopy inventory and best practices review.
- **Economic Development:** Themes around creating conditions for new investment, simplifying zoning processes, supporting childcare and services that attract relocating

workers, and ensuring well-paying jobs. Specific gap identified for entrepreneurs and small business owners don't know where to go for resources or mentorship.

- **Urban Design:** Fewer responses but focused on walkable neighborhoods, dynamic places, strong towns/smart development models, and family/neighborhood-centered design. Some downtown-specific comments.
- **Neighborhoods & Districts:** Emphasis on neighborhood associations, mixed-use development, preserving neighborhood character, and increasing homeownership opportunities.
- **Housing Diversity & Design:** Wide range of responses from rental reuse, ownership options, intergenerational housing, co-housing, starter homes, affordable housing expansion, partnerships with regional municipalities, planning for incoming residents with varying income levels.
- **Historic & Cultural Resources:** Fewer responses but a consistent theme of leveraging history as an economic development tool and continuing to prioritize preservation.
- **Downtown:** Focus on walkability, retail/dining options, public plazas and spaces. Mixed views on parking. Some members called for more, others supported road diets and reduced car dependence.
- **Community Facilities:** Strong investment called for in library, pool, public parks. Convention Center mentioned. General sentiment is that current facilities are strong, and continue to make them better.
- **Governmental Cooperation:** Standard themes around boundary agreements, shared services, coordination with surrounding jurisdictions, county, utility partners, and the university.

Strategic Vision Discussion

- A committee member raised a concern that the exercise jumped too quickly into category-level specifics without first establishing a shared community vision, and suggested framing such as "What does a day in the life of an Eau Claire resident look like in 2035?" before drilling into goals.

- Another member argued that the listed chapters represent means, not goals. The real question is: what is Eau Claire trying to achieve for its residents?
- Reference made to a Resonance Consultancy study ranking Eau Claire in the top 25% of smaller metros (under 500,000) across three dimensions: prosperity (income/opportunity), livability (housing, trails, parks), and lovability (cultural assets).
- Climate migration raised as a future factor. Eau Claire's geography and climate may become increasingly attractive as southern cities become less livable. Need to plan for incoming residents with fewer financial assets than historical norms.
- Strong call to treat this not just as a statutory comp plan update but as a community strategic plan that is aspirational, vision-led, and focused on measurable human outcomes rather than only traditional planning metrics.
- RDG acknowledged the feedback and committed to incorporating vision and mission framing into the document before the next distribution.

Next Meeting

- **Date & Time:** November 9th at Noon
- **Location:** City Hall, Eau Claire, WI (in-person)
- **Agenda Preview:** Deeper report-out on issues and opportunities, preliminary findings on existing conditions, early forecasting and analysis, additional focus groups with previously unreached stakeholder groups

The below notes were written by Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee members at the September 21, 2026 Committee Meeting.

Notes written under Land Use and Growth Management:

- Industrial Park District
- High density, infill development promoted
- Promote/incentivize mixed-use development in neighborhoods
- Preserve green space as city expands south/west, set aside preserves
- We should put more focus on what locations EC should grow. Land annexations 1 mile out of city limits should not happen.
- Eau Claire is one of the fastest growing urban areas in the state. How do we manage that and continue to afford.
- Focus on infill opportunities. Land development on ...
- Even populations, don't concentrate areas
- Reduce and reverse sprawl while preserving green space.
- Try to forecast what types of housing will be needed over the next 10 years.
- Identifying specific areas for future developments and growth.
- Small scale, homestead level food production, livestock, garden, crop, etc. Encourage these.
- More density in neighborhood surrounding downtown. Less outward expansion.
- Re-look at ordinances to adjust items that hinder or could hinder future development (i.e.: tree preservation)
- Used with purpose, keep our agricultural land and support farmers, continue to keep our community/housing growing.
- Develop vs. build

Notes written under Transportation and Mobility:

- Is it possible to get more public transportation? Is the need large enough?
- Accommodate for new growth areas.

- Promote diverse transportation options and make living in EC without a car viable for the average person.
- Eliminate all parking minimums as a best practice and better use of land.
- Transit bus system is good and connections to Chippewa. Intercity rail to Twin Cities?
- Create a low-cost reliable system that is easy for residents to use, promote walkability/pedestrian friendly infrastructure!
- Anticipate a station for intercity passenger rail with commercial and residential development around it.
- Determine if we want ridership or coverage as its primary purpose
- Increase opportunities for bike/ped. Reduce focus on ...
- Connect city with bus, train, and air transportation.
- Improve usefulness and frequency including 7 day a week service.

Notes written under Public Utilities:

- Maintain a efficient utility grid
- Maintain our current high quality of city utility services and plan for future growth
- Utilities that sustain future growth adequately – enough energy, water, etc. to meeting demand without shortages
- The City should coordinate future growth needs with utility companies like Xcel to make sure there is capacity and minimal extra costs
- Better oversight of rising costs
- As birth rates drop, what are the implications for schools and education

Notes written under Parks, Greenways, and Trails:

- With Carson Park and NW park, it seems like EC has a lot, enough?? Parkland
- Expand trail system to improve connections between trails, for example along Old Wells Road
- Reduce smaller centralized parks and move to newer areas of growth
- Connectivity – also better pavement on paved trails for skating
- Preserve and/or expand access to natural areas, waterways

- Increase trails. Make parks more dynamic
- Encourage a ¼ acre or above per acre of land
- Increase use of this infrastructure through clear signage and better maps
- All future development should connect nearby trail if possible
- Expand trail network to provide alternatives to car based transportation
- Continue to be accessible to our disability community
- Promote wellness for all ages
- Ensure that all parks are connected by a trail or safe street design

Notes written under Natural Resources:

- Maintain clear waterways and regulations to keep these current
- Community development is managed with climate resiliency in mind
- Groundwater source area protection prioritized
- Focus on groundwater quality
- Add capacity to reduce impact on climate change
- Urban farms
- The new tree preservation ordinance should be re-examined
- Create a barrier to limit pollution coming downstream to the confluence
- Incorporated more green design into everything we do. More trees. More wildlife diversity. More micro green spaces.
- Water runoff mitigation plans
- Do an in-depth study of the tree canopy and best practices to inform the tree ordinance, etc.

Notes written under Economic Development:

- Use grants to encourage students to stay after graduation
- Develop areas that attract larger companies to grow higher paying job positions
- Growth in well paying jobs (businesses that provide them), but ones that want to be community partners, not just
- Help local businesses form and prosper

- Economic Development that forms an value added rather than extractive industry, combined with decent wages and good worker amenities
- In the gig economy, where people can work remotely, how do we provide community assets that make this an attractive place to live
- Foster neighborhood childcare centers
- Flexible zoning to allow small shops in residential neighborhoods
- Page of resources that links what people need
- Create a clear standard for the types of industries to be pursued for growth
- Add more businesses with good paying jobs (not just manufacturing)
- Set aside land for industrial purposes that is served by public transit

Notes written under Urban Design:

- Growth in affordable single-family homes and start-up variety
- Not so downtown focused if not providing basic essentials
- Make downtown more dynamic and desired location to shop, eat, recreate, tourism, arts, and more outdoor dining walk-friendly
- Family-centered make every public place easier for single-parents w/ small children to be. Public nursing facilities, fenced in play areas
- Walkable design, pedestrian throughfares, lots of greenspace
- Break up the asphalt and concrete
- Create local neighborhood street signage to show street numbers
- Utilize Strong Towns and smart development models to make places worth caring about
- Create neighborhood association hubs w/signage

Notes written under Neighborhoods and Districts:

- Reverse trend of homeownership to move
- Encourage neighborhoods association border fluidity
- Preserve and enhance the character of our neighborhoods, especially the historic core neighborhoods

- Invest in neighborhood associations as an investment in connected neighbors/safeguard against coming economic uncertainty
- Have strong neighborhood associations that facilitate a sense of community
- Ensure high quality customer service by city staff working with community organizations and businesses
- Help create unique incentives for neighborhoods
- Encourage additional mixed use areas

Notes written under Housing Assistance, Diversity, and Design:

- Conversion of retail space to housing i.e. mall, strip malls
- Prepare for influx of climate refugees and plan for their needs
- Subsidies for housing development to serve low income households
- Encourage sale of rentals as condos
- Partner with regional municipalities to create affordable public housing opportunities
- Create district/focus area where tiny homes or cottage courts are supported and subsidized
- Intergenerational housing – accessory dwelling units, tiny homes, mobile homes allowed in backyards, etc.
- Expand the affordable housing fund and support projects to reach lowest income levels
- Encourage cooperatively run housing – co-housing communities
- Work to create starter home communities (2 bed/1 bath)

Notes written under Historic and Cultural Resources:

- Increase number of existing properties on the list
- Create a self or guided tour
- Promote and enhance our cultural resources
- This is really strong in EC – Continue to support arts organizations and bring great performances to EC
- Find different ways for our history and different cultural resources to be highlighted

Notes written under Downtown:

- Assess the productivity of each sector: Taxes paid per acre vs cost of city services; to determine priorities
- Add s 15/30/45 minute option to all parking
- Create car-free block year round, pedestrian plaza, public third-spaces, beer-garden
- Repurpose empty spaces
- Free 2-hour parking to encourage shopping
- Need to do more. We think it is a vibrant great place. Its good, but can do so much more with design, ped, outside dining, art, and more
- Farwell and Madison St Road diets to improve pedestrian experience
- Appropriate balance between walkability and auto access; prioritize pedestrian experience

Notes written under Community Facilities:

- Ensure facilities match population needs – do we have enough for seniors, schools, etc.
- Adopt the UWEC master plan and include in EC comp plan
- Community gardens, food scapes, in each school, parks, neighborhood
- Work with Visit Eau Claire on a convention center in line with Master Plan being created
- Strong investment into resources that serve community – library, pool, public parks

Notes written under Governmental Cooperation:

- Prioritize boundary agreements with neighboring municipalities to achieve common goals
- More shared services with county and surrounding townships
- Maintain and build on relationships with the county and surrounding municipalities
- Need ongoing meeting to build and encourage relationships, together: Stronger