THE CITY OF WATERTOWN

Office of the Mayor

Robert Stocks

MEMO

To: Watertown Housing Authority
From: Mayor Robert Stocks
Date: November 2026
Re: Creation of Community Development Authority (CDA)

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the potential creation of a Community Development Authority (CDA) and to explain why I believe this transition, with your support, is the right step for our community.

Today the City's Housing Authority and Redevelopment Authority each play vital roles. Yet the challenges we face, such as housing, redevelopment, neighborhood vitality, and equitable growth are increasingly interconnected. Under Wisconsin law (Wis. Stat. § 66.1335), there is another option, a Community Development Authority, which brings housing and economic development functions together under one organizational structure.

By consolidating the Housing Authority and Redevelopment Authority into a CDA, we can create a unified voice and a shared vision for the future. This model allows us to align priorities, streamline workflows, and coordinate expertise across disciplines. The result is greater accountability, smarter use of resources, and the ability to approach complex issues holistically rather than through separate lenses. A single entity can more effectively identify opportunities, address challenges, and strengthen partnerships that benefit the residents we serve.

It is important to underscore that all existing commitments of both the Housing Authority and Redevelopment Authority will be honored under this new structure, as required by Wisconsin law. Nothing will be lost. In fact, more tools and a wider scope of authority will become available to the CDA Board, empowering it to pursue solutions and investments that are currently restricted by organizational boundaries. With a CDA, we will no longer need to determine whether a grant or financing tool fits exclusively under housing or redevelopment. Our approaches can be comprehensive, coordinated, and mutually reinforcing.

As public servants, we all understand how limited time and capacity can be. We are each stretched thin because we care deeply about the communities we serve. A CDA enables us to bring together subject-matter experts, community representatives, and staff under a single entity that is better positioned to tackle the complex issues before us and to learn from one another along the way.

While structural changes would occur, many core elements would remain the same. The Common Council would still set priorities and provide oversight as established in Wisconsin law. Any items requiring Council approval today would continue to require approval in the future. In short, this transition strengthens our capacity without diminishing accountability.

For all these reasons, I respectfully ask for your support in creating a CDA. This transition represents a thoughtful, strategic step forward. It will position us to meet our community's needs more effectively today and well into the future.