

Watertown
Redevelopment
Authority

A photograph of a three-story brick building with arched windows and a sign for 'The Chic Boutique'. The building is dark red brick with white window frames and decorative elements. The sign is white with a red border and features the text 'The Chic Boutique' in a cursive font, with 'CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES & GIFTS' in a smaller font below it. A clock is visible on the right side of the building.

Impact Report

2024 |

Executive Board



CHAIR
Ryan Wagner
ryanwagner0381@gmail.com



VICE-CHAIR
Ryan Nowatka
ryan@pn-fh.com



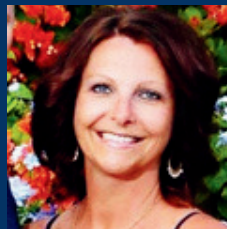
Steve Board
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City Council



Jonathan Lampe
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City Council



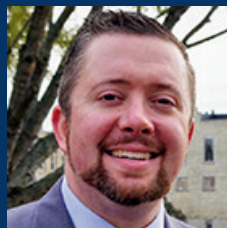
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Turning Opportunity Into Results

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." — Margaret J. Wheatley

As we reflect on 2024, the Redevelopment Authority (RDA) is proud to celebrate the progress we've made together in strengthening our community. This year has been one of growth, collaboration, and laying the foundation for a thriving future.

One of our most exciting accomplishments was the beginning of what we had originally called the Downtown River Corridor Opportunity Analysis and Strategic Development Plan (yes, it was rather wordy!), which is now known as the Rock River District Vision, which is laying the foundations for a future riverwalk and the revitalization of key properties in the downtown riverfront district, breathing new life into spaces that have long been underutilized. This project is building on past successes, including the expansion and renovation of the Watertown Public Library and the completion of the Bentzin Family Town Square. We also partnered with local businesses, supporting both new ventures and long-standing establishments. Through these efforts, we've helped make Watertown a more vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

In addition, the RDA continues to invest in housing initiatives, ensuring more residents have access to safe, quality homes. The Housing Rehab Grant Program has already helped repair and improve multiple properties throughout the City. Through fostering partnerships and leveraging available resources, we've been able to assist projects that meet the needs of residents throughout our community.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited to build on this momentum. In 2024, Alder Dan Bartz circulated off the board, and Steve Board was appointed as one of the alders on the board, to serve as one of the council representatives along with Jonathan Lampe. Recently, the board elected Ryan Nowatka as vice-chair, while Karrisa Hurtgen will continue to serve on our board as a member.

We also rolled out a new social media messaging calendar for 2025...if you're not already following the RDA on Facebook, we invite you to give us a follow and keep up with our updates throughout the year. You can also keep up with us at watertownredevelopment.org.

Our focus will include expanding redevelopment opportunities, supporting small businesses, and enhancing public spaces that bring people together. We're also committed to engaging with residents to ensure our work reflects the community's needs and aspirations. In 2025, we plan to continue working on the Rock River District project.

We want to thank everyone who has contributed to this year's success—from local business owners, partner organizations, and community leaders to residents who support and believe in our shared vision. Together, we're shaping a stronger, more vibrant Watertown. We look forward to what we can all accomplish by working together in the year ahead.



Our Mission

Turning Opportunity into Results

The Watertown Redevelopment Authority (RDA) was established in December 2016 to:

- Develop urban renewal projects
- Encourage private/public reinvestment in under-utilized areas resulting in:
 - New infill housing and commercial developments
 - Job creation
 - Expanded tax base
 - Improved quality of life for the citizens of Watertown

The City of Watertown's Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives is a City employee, paid by the City, and serves as the Executive Director of the RDA.

The RDA Board, appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Watertown Common Council, is made up of seven members from the Watertown community who are involved in enhancing the economic vitality of the City through their professional and/or civic affiliations.

The Board is the governing body that meets on a regular basis to provide guidance by contributing to the organization's strategic purpose and advocating on behalf of the RDA's redevelopment efforts. Meetings are held once per month at City Hall, usually on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM, and are open to the public both in-person and online via Zoom.



Letter To The Community From Mason Becker

Dear Watertown Community,

As we reflect on the progress made throughout 2024, I am proud to share the accomplishments of the City of Watertown Redevelopment Authority (RDA) and the positive impact our initiatives have had on the community. The RDA's mission is to foster sustainable growth, revitalize neighborhoods, and create opportunities for businesses and residents alike. This year, we've taken significant steps toward achieving those goals.

One of our key achievements in 2024 was the initiation of the Rock River District Vision plan, which began the planning for a long-anticipated riverwalk and other revitalization efforts along our City's downtown riverfront. The Rock River historically, like in many Wisconsin communities, once served as a "back door" to the community, primarily serving as an industrial waterway for businesses located along the river. As the community has continued to grow and change, it is time for Watertown to reembrace the Rock River and the legacy it has been part of here in Watertown. We hope that the Rock River District plan will be the start of many great new things that will strengthen and grow our community's downtown.

Additionally, the RDA has continued its focus on housing development through the Housing Rehab Grant Program, which is funded by an allocation of \$100,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money, designated by the City's Common Council. This program is designed to help preserve and sustain existing housing stock in our community.

Another highlight of 2024 was the continuation of the Beltz Foundation Downtown Watertown Grant Program, an initiative conceived of and supported by the generosity of the Dr. John Beltz Charitable Foundation. This program was designed to support business openings and expansions in the downtown area, as well as fund events open to the public in our downtown area. We are grateful to be part of administering this unique and innovative program. In 2024, this grant program funded five different community events, and three business expansions. We're looking forward to spreading more positive growth around the downtown in 2025 with the Beltz Grant Program.

We are also looking to placing a "capstone" so to speak, on the Bentzin Family Town Square, which the RDA helped bring forward with the assistance of the City and many private individuals and organizations who donated to make the Town Square a reality. The final piece will be the installation of a Historic Art Wall, which should be put in place later this spring. We can't wait for residents and visitors to see it. This public art display will celebrate the history of Watertown and serve as a reminder of what is possible when we work together towards common goals and a shared vision. The art wall is a gift from Barton Bentzin, and we are grateful for his generosity.

These accomplishments would not be possible without the collaboration and support of our residents, businesses, and community partners. Together, we are shaping a future where Watertown continues to thrive as a place to live, work, and invest. On behalf of the RDA, thank you for your ongoing commitment to our shared vision.

Sincerely,

Mason T. Becker



RDA Executive Director

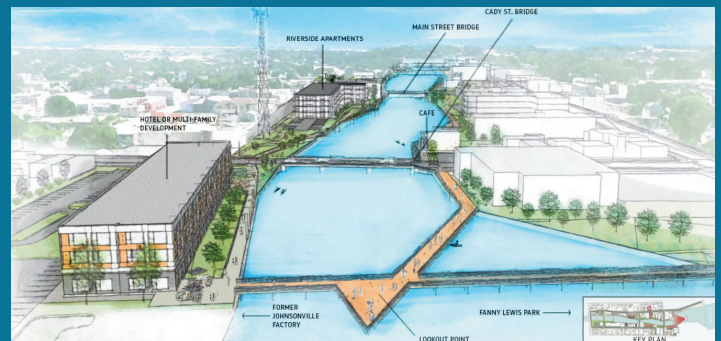
Rock River District Vision



After the completion of the Bentzin Family Town Square, the Watertown Redevelopment Authority saw the Downtown River Corridor plan as the logical next step in our mission and our vision for a continually evolving and lively downtown. In January 2024, we put out a request for proposals for this planning work. Eight submissions were received from qualified firms. After evaluation, the RDA selected two high-quality firms to work with, RINKA and Kapur, who have done planning projects similar to this one through the State of Wisconsin and beyond.

This plan aims to strategically position the community for sustained investment and revitalization in the downtown area and beyond by leveraging its unique identity and existing public amenities. Our goal is to catalyze growth and cultivate a dynamic, community-oriented future. Work on this long-term project will continue throughout 2025.

The plan is already working: The City recently entered into a pre-development agreement with Intrepid Investments to potentially develop two downtown sites, and North Town Partners is considering a housing development on the former Johnsonville site.



RDA Revolving Loan Program

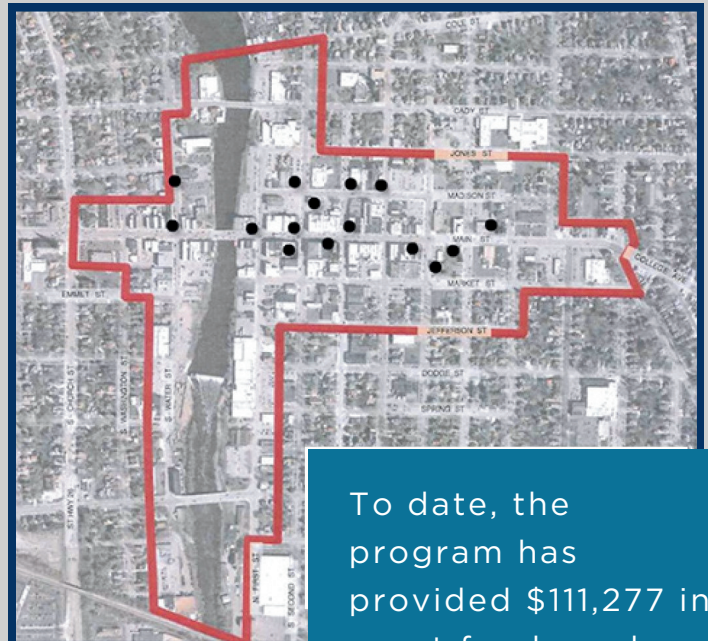
Established in December 2017, the Commercial Rehabilitative Revolving Loan Program is designed to:

- Foster business growth and expansion
- Facilitate the development of high-quality upper-level residential units
- Update and preserve historic structures
- Increase the overall economic vitality of downtown Watertown

The purpose of this Program is to attract private investment, which in turn increases property values, attracts more businesses, and provides a destination where people can live, shop, dine, and enjoy.

The Program had seed funding from a portion of the City's surplus TIF dollars. In addition, three community-focused institutions – Bank First, Ixonia Bank and Bank of Lake Mills, provide funding for projects. To date, the program has provided \$111,277 in grant funds and nearly \$1.2M in low interest loans for 15 downtown properties, a total of 18 projects.

Approximately \$120,000.00 in loans are currently available through this program, as of 3-1-25. Information and application are available here: <https://www.watertownredevelopment.org/programs>



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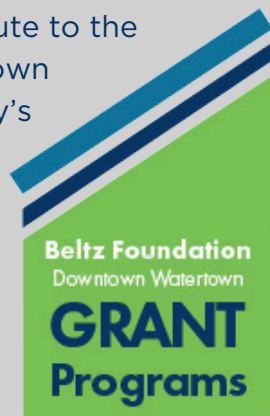
Beltz Foundation

Downtown Watertown Grants Program

Dr. John Beltz, through the Dr. John Beltz Charitable Foundation, funds a total of \$50,000 per year for three years to facilitate two new RDA Grant Programs.

The Beltz Foundation Downtown Watertown Business Grant Program offers funding to encourage unique businesses to relocate or expand into the RDA’s Target Area. Funds can be used towards eligible expenses such as capital improvements, renovations, and signage. Preference will be given to businesses that fall in categories that align with the program: entertainment and family and full service, fine dining, grab-and-go lunch stops, and craft beer. In addition, organic and gourmet food stores, retail establishments offering quality merchandise, and non-chain/non-franchised businesses.

The Beltz Foundation Downtown Watertown Special Events Grant Program provides grants up to \$10,000 per event to public events that attract more than 150 attendees, meet economic development goals of the area, contribute to the unique identity of downtown Watertown, make the City’s core a compelling destination, provide economic impact, and promote business and community involvement.



“Opportunities come when people see value in what’s happening... forward thinking entrepreneurs see beyond the current state and invest in what something can become.”
 – Dr. John Beltz, 2023



Grants Completed and Paid out in 2024

Town Square	\$10,000.00
Jingle Bell on the Rock	\$6,177.00
Sassy Sweets	\$5,000.00
Watertown Parade Committee	\$5,000.00
Drafty Cellar	\$10,713.66
Town Square	\$10,000.00

Housing Rehab Grant Program

The Watertown RDA's Housing Rehab Grant Program is a new one-time grant program, introduced in January 2024.

The program provides a one-time grant determined on a sliding scale based on income. All housing units located within the City of Watertown are eligible to apply. A maximum of \$10,000 will be awarded per grant. Funds are to be used for physical repairs to an existing home including roofs, porches, exterior paint, windows, doors, and power service upgrades to panels (with a correlating plan for upgrading in wiring). Property owners are required to contribute a minimum of 10% of cash, based on the total project costs.

This new program is funded with \$100,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, designated by the Common Council of the City of Watertown. The RDA has been designated to facilitate this program and review all applications. Applications are evaluated in conjunction with Thrive ED.



408 Baxter St.	Replacement of windows, and enclosure of porch structure. \$3,000.
915 N Second St	Exterior pressure wash and painting, gutter replacement. \$9,345.
802 S Tenth St	Porch and stairway repair, roof and railing repair. \$8,500 (with \$1,500 more pending completion).
218 S Montgomery St	Drainage upgrades, interior and exterior repairs. \$10,000.
208 S Eighth St	Air conditioner replacement, chimney rehab. \$1,817.70.

Tax Incremental Financing (TIF)

When a Tax Incremental District (TID) is created, the property tax base is “frozen” at its current value, with all taxes continuing to be paid as usual by property owners.

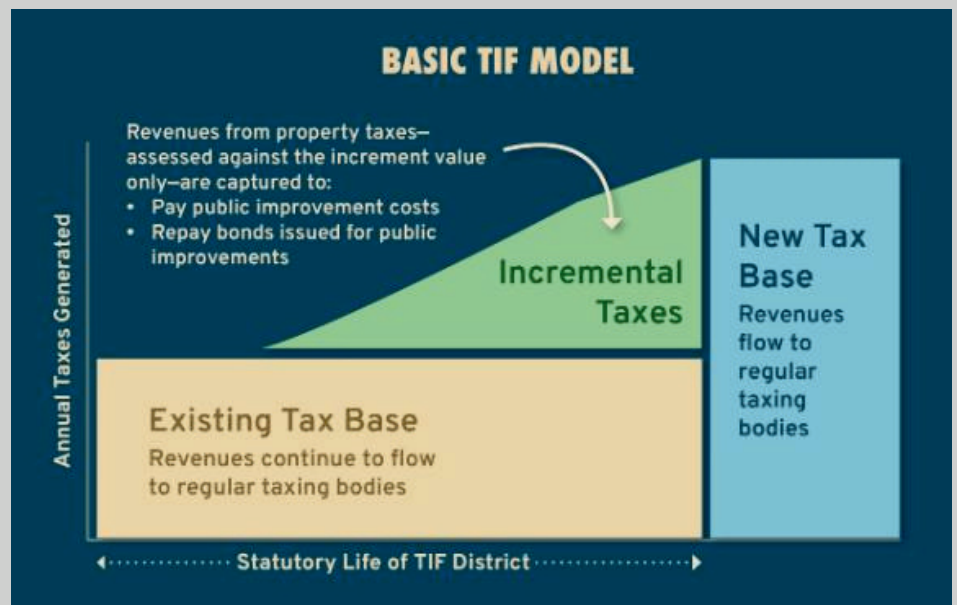
As improvements are made within the TID, property values rise, generating extra tax revenue (the incremental increase over time). This additional revenue is reinvested to fund projects within the TID boundaries. At the end of the TID’s term, all taxing bodies benefit from the increased property values!

The City of Watertown, along with the other taxing jurisdictions, recently approved and created TID #9, which was designed to support a new apartment building development being built by Horizon Development Group (Lumin Terrace, LLC) on the former Bethesda property.

TIDs need to pass a “but for” test: “but for the use of TIF, this project would not occur here”. Given recent increases in construction costs and interest rates, TIF is a valuable tool in ensuring economic development continues to move forward in Watertown.

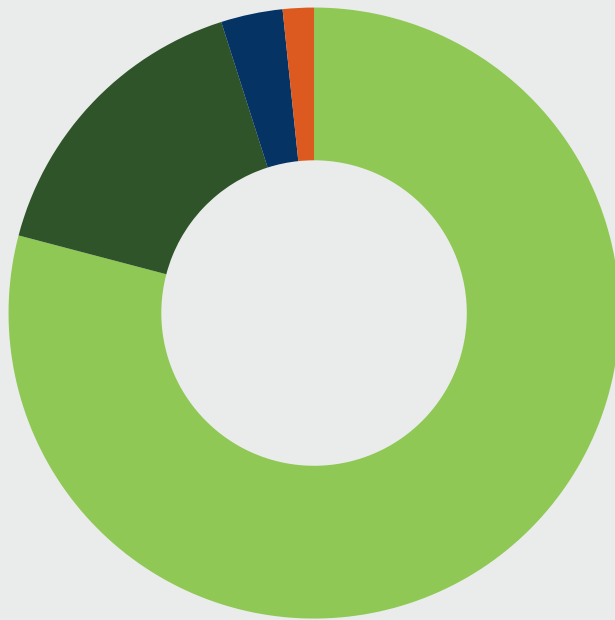
TIF is one of the few tools that Wisconsin communities are allowed to use to drive economic development. Without TIF, communities like Watertown would likely struggle to grow and attract investment.

While the RDA does not directly administer TIF, the RDA Executive Director works with developers and advisers at Vandewalle & Associates to help negotiate TIF deals and bring projects forward.

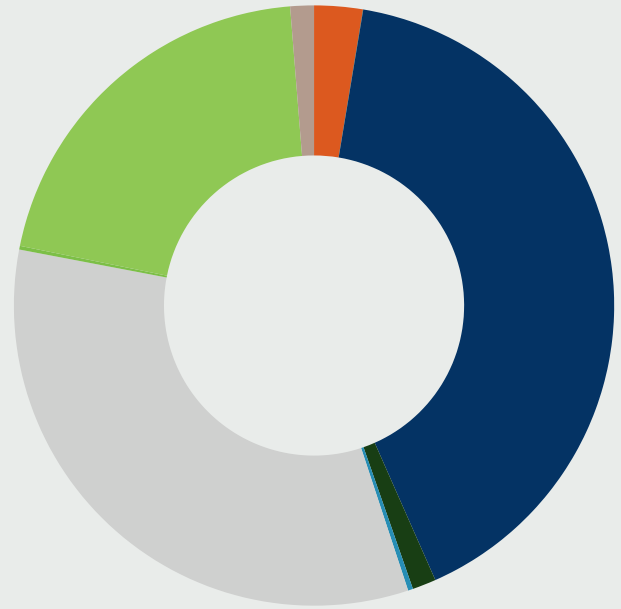


Financial Report

The Redevelopment Authority does not receive ongoing funding. Income comes from interest earned on investment accounts and a small amount of administrative fees for loans and grants. Grants are funded through various transfers to the RDA. The summary below is a condensed recap of the RDA's financial picture for 2024.



● Grants Received	\$247,177.33
● Donations to Town Square Future Fund	\$50,000.00
● Revolving Loan Fund Interest	\$10,212.18
● Bank Account Interest	\$5,143.09
Total Revenues	\$307,532.60



● Interest Paid	\$6,349.18
● Banking Fees	\$36.00
● Grants	\$99,207.24
● Audit Costs	\$3,114.00
● Marketing	\$652.69
● Rock River District Vision Consulting Costs	\$80,486.43
● Insurance:	\$482.00
● Town Square Future Fund Contribution	\$50,000.00
● Town Square Construction Costs	\$3,097.40
Total Expenditures	\$243,469.94

Grand Total: \$64,062.66



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