WISCONSIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEDC Program:	Community Development Investment (CDI)
Target Start Date:	Q4 2026
Applicant Entity:	Whipple Contractors LLC
Project Address:	183-187 W. Main Street, Whitewater, WI 53190

Redevelopment Narratives

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.a. Describe the redevelopment project. Details to include:

i. New construction and building renovation activities occurring on both the interior and exterior of the building
ii. Lot/site improvements including sewer/water, sidewalks, parking or patios, pedestrian or public space improvements
iii. Business(es) anticipated to occupy the space
iv. Describe the project/business(es) significance to the community (e.g. project contains childcare services, housing or fills a missing business type needed in the community)
v. Is the building historic? Does it qualify for Historic Tax Credits?
vi. Explain the location in relation to the downtown district, a main arterial road, or a prominent commercial district
vii. Highlight the extent to which the project supports best practices for smart growth and downtown development

The project involves the substantial interior and exterior renovation of the historic three-story building at 183-187 W. Main Street in downtown Whitewater, long known locally as Bower's House (originally Bower's Hotel, built c. 1880) and, more recently, as "the White Elephant." The building has sat vacant for an extended period of several years. The redevelopment will fully rehabilitate the structure, including new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems (HVAC approximately $168,675; plumbing approximately $190,000; electrical approximately $147,800), new insulation and drywall throughout, restored windows and exterior doors, and interior build-out of both the ground floor and upper floors, per the attached construction cost breakdown.

Because the project is a full interior rehabilitation of an existing downtown building on an established urban lot, lot/site improvements are limited. The City of Whitewater has already made complementary public infrastructure investments at the property, including replacement of the lead water service lateral in August 2024. No additional sewer/water, sidewalk, or public space improvements beyond work already completed by the City are anticipated as part of this scope.

The ground floor will be built out for one to two commercial tenant spaces; specific businesses have not yet been identified. Proposed uses could include retail or food and beverage establishments. The upper floors will be converted into 10 rental apartment units, with one unit being ADA accessible on the ground floor.

The project is significant to the community because it returns one of downtown Whitewater's most visible and long-vacant historic buildings to full productive use, addresses a documented downtown storefront vacancy rate of just over15% (11 of 72 ground-floor spaces, per the City's August 2026 downtown status update), and adds 10 new housing units in the downtown core at a time of tight rental housing supply. The building was constructed by Joseph Bower, one of the principal developers of Whitewater's historic downtown commercial district. Its age (c. 1880) and architectural character make it a prime candidate for preservation and rehabilitation work.

The property is located directly on West Main Street in the heart of downtown Whitewater, within Tax Incremental District #12, and is consistent with smart growth and downtown development best practices: it reuses an existing building rather than developing greenfield land, adds housing density within walking distance of Main Street businesses, UW-Whitewater, recreational amenities including Cravath Lakefront Park, and existing municipal infrastructure, and creates a mixed-use building that supports a walkable, activated downtown.

1.b. Describe any public/private partnerships developed and to what extent the applicant can ensure WEDC that all the activities outlined in 1.a. will be undertaken.

- Highlight capacity of the applicant and partners
- If applicable, highlight the status of the development agreement

The City of Whitewater is directly partnering with the developer on this project. The City previously provided a $75,000 façade improvement loan for the property (2022), which is anticipated to be paid off when the developer closes on the property. The City also funded infrastructure work to replace the property's lead water service lateral (August 2024). The City is now assisting the developer with this CDI application and is coordinating use of the approximately $213,000 in remaining funds from the property's previously awarded FY2022 WEDC CDI grant, which WEDC returned to available balance in 2025 after the redevelopment stalled under the prior building ownership.

The developer currently owns and operates a contracting company with a successful track record of completing development projects within the Walworth County area. He has confirmed he will be utilizing local subcontractors to complete the work on this project, in compliance with grant requirements. The full obligations of both the developer and the City will be spelled out in a full Development Agreement which will require Common Council approval.

1.c. Which eligible activities does the project fit under?

X	Building renovation		New construction
X	Historic Preservation		Infrastructure reinvestment
	Demolition		Building Relocation of CDI Project Property

1.d. Describe the potential of the project to act as a catalyst for additional development/investment in the district.

- State and explain if the project site located in an Opportunity Zone, a Rural Community (population under 5,000) or an Economically Distressed County defined by WEDC (see the budget cover page for the list or ask your WEDC Regional Director)?
- For secured, private developments, is a key component of the project to provide childcare services or expand housing availability (explain)?
- Has the area seen limited investments or disinvestments?
- Describe the potential economic impact on the area and any other factors of significant impact such as: projected employment, workforce attraction, and/or the involvement of diverse businesses.
- Explain any potential of the project to increase traffic to support nearby businesses.

Whitewater is not defined by WEDC as a Rural Community (its population is well above the 5,000-person threshold). The site is located in a current Opportunity Zone tract, and the City has already applied for recertification under OZ 2.0. Housing is a key component of this project: the creation of 10 new rental units directly expands the availability of downtown housing in a market with limited rental supply. The downtown area has seen measurable disinvestment; the subject building itself has sat vacant, and several other vacant buildings also await reactivation in the City's downtown.

The project is expected to generate significant construction-period employment (an approximately $2.5 million rehabilitation) and permanent economic impact through 10 new downtown households and one to two new ground-floor businesses, expanding downtown's customer base and tax base within TID #12. The addition of 10 resident households and the customers of new ground-floor businesses is expected to meaningfully increase foot traffic on Main Street, directly supporting neighboring downtown merchants and restaurants.

1.e. Demonstrate involvement of diverse and minority business interests; which may including planning and development, construction and end user(s).

The ground-floor commercial space(s) have not yet been leased, and end users have not been identified. The developer and City will prioritize outreach to local businesses and groups interested in being part of the redevelopment of the City's downtown. The City has a close working relationship with a local commercial brokerage, Anderson Commercial Group, who could be utilized to assist in business recruitment.

1.f. Describe any clean energy technology investments included in the project (e.g. solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations, use of state energy audit and/or energy rebate programs, etc.). *If you would like a referral to discuss energy efficient options with a Focus on Energy advisor, please click on the link or contact your Regional Economic Development Director.*

No clean energy technology investments (e.g., solar panels, EV charging) are currently budgeted in the attached construction cost breakdown. The comprehensive HVAC replacement (approximately $168,675) budgeted for the project presents a practical opportunity to specify high-efficiency mechanical systems.

FINANCIAL JUSTIFICATION

2.a. Describe the funding methods identified as "sources" in the Project Budget Worksheet. Include the status and timeline of receiving financing commitments.

The attached Bower's House cost breakdown worksheet documents a total construction ("hard cost") budget of $2,536,809.50, itemized by trade and payee. This represents substantially all of the developer's approximately $2.5 million total project cost. The worksheet reflects project uses (a contractor draw schedule); a complete sources-and-uses summary has not yet been finalized.

The CDI grant request draws on the approximately $213,000 balance remaining from the property's previously awarded FY2022 WEDC CDI grant, which was returned to WEDC in 2025 after the prior redevelopment attempt stalled. The developer and City confirm that this project will move forward only with CDI grant participation.

2.b. Describe the financial need for CDI grant funding that cannot be met through the private sector or the public sector.

The redevelopment of a circa-1880, long-vacant downtown building carries costs — full mechanical, electrical, and plumbing replacement, extensive drywall and insulation work, and general contracting oversight — that are disproportionate to the rents achievable from 10 modest downtown apartments and one to two small ground-floor commercial tenants in the Whitewater market.

This gap between total development cost (approximately $2.5 million) and the value the project can support through conventional debt and market-rate rents is precisely why the property remained vacant for years and why the prior redevelopment attempt under the previous building owner stalled after receiving, but not completing use of, a WEDC CDI grant award.

CDI grant funding using the approximately $213,000 balance already committed to this property but not yet expended closes that financing gap without requiring the developer to rely solely on higher-cost debt or a reduced-scope renovation that would compromise the building's historic character or the quality of the new housing units.

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

3.a. Highlight the extent to which this project is included in adopted regional, municipal or downtown planning documents. Site the section and page numbers of the plan(s). If the site is not part of a plan, summarize the dates and meetings when municipal conversations have occurred about the project (or project location/site) in a public venue and describe the extent to which the project has community-wide support.

The property is located within Tax Incremental District #12 (established 2021), which the City of Whitewater created to support reinvestment in the downtown district, and the redevelopment of Bower's House is identified as a priority project in the City's downtown status reporting to the Common Council (January 2026 update). Earlier this year, during a "Visioning Session", the Common Council collectively identified reactivation and enhanced forus on the dowtnwon area as a priority. Further, the City's current Comprehensive Plan Update "Whitewater Forward" (expected to be approved in Q4 2026) identifies promoting reinvestment and business expansion in the City's downtown as an area of focus, supported by public and stakeholder feedback.

The City has already demonstrated its commitment to this specific property through prior public investment — a $75,000 façade loan (2022) and lead water lateral replacement (2024) — and by assisting the developer with this WEDC CDI application.

3.b. Explain if the project generally aligns with the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) / Economic Development District (EDD) plan for the region? *(Check with the municipality, Regional Planning Commission or Regional Economic Development Director if you're unable to locate the plan.)*

[City staff will reach out to WCEDA to confirm this section].

READINESS TO PROCEED

4.a. Outline the anticipated timeline of the project, status of obtaining permits and status of architectural or site plan approvals.

Based on the attached construction cost breakdown and included interest-carry allowance, the developer anticipates a construction period of approximately 12 months from closing to completion, consistent with a full gut rehabilitation of this scope.

ATTACHMENTS FOR APPLICATION

5.a. Include up to four (4) photos of the current building/project site (one photo of each side of the building). Include renderings of the proposed exterior and interior improvements (if available).

Photos will be attached prior to submittal to WEDC.