City of WHITEWATER
Community Development Department

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strategy & Marketing Plan

2026 – 2028

Presented to the Community Development Authority and the Common Council

Community Development Department | November 2026

Why we need a plan

Whitewater is growing, but much of the value it creates is captured somewhere else.

Fastest

population growth among peer communities since 2020

$830M

total annual economic output from the Business Park

82%

of employed residents commute out of the City for work

< 900

residents who both live and work in Whitewater

The goal: shift Whitewater from a labor-exporting community toward a self-sustaining employment center with a diversified, growing tax base.

Four pillars guide our work

PILLAR 1

Business Retention & Expansion

Support the employers we already have and help them grow here.

PILLAR 2

Industrial Recruitment

Attract new industry that fills gaps in our existing Business Park.

PILLAR 3

Downtown Vitality

Bring housing, shops, and activity to downtown and the eastern corridor.

PILLAR 4

Housing Development

Close the gap between the homes we need and the homes being built.

The pillars are integrated: new jobs, downtown amenities, and housing reinforce one another.

Pillar 1: Business Retention & Expansion

Our existing employers are the foundation of the local economy. Supporting them is our most reliable, lowest-cost tool.

Structured employer visits

A regular visitation schedule with Business Park and downtown employers, tracked in our pipeline system.

Sector roundtables

Bring employers together by industry to discuss workforce, supply chain, and expansion barriers.

CDA business tools

Connect businesses with the CDA's loan and grant programs to support growth and reinvestment.

WHAT TO EXPECT

2026

Visit schedule set up and tracking system in place

2027

About 20 employer visits and 2 roundtables

2028

Expanded visits and at least one local expansion

Pillar 2: Industrial Recruitment

We are recruiting industries that strengthen our Business Park and keep supply chains local.

Targeted recruitment

Focus on industries that fill documented supply-chain gaps for the manufacturers already here.

Ready-to-build sites

Market our shovel-ready Business Park lots and evaluate future land for long-term growth.

An active prospect pipeline

Move identified prospects from a target list into active conversations and site visits.

WHAT TO EXPECT

2026

Three recruitment wins secured; outreach under way

2027

More active prospects, site visits, and lot marketing

2028

Goal of at least one new industrial tenant

Pillar 3: Downtown Vitality

Downtown and compact mixed-use areas produce the highest property value per acre in the City.



Jefferson Street redevelopment

CDA-led mixed-use project with 40+ homes above ground-floor commercial space.



Grocery and child care on the east side

A proposed mixed-use grocery and early childhood education project at Bluff and Elkhorn.



Downtown activation

Events, storefront tracking, and code enforcement that build confidence in downtown.

WHAT TO EXPECT

2026

Agreements advanced; vacancy baseline set

2027

Design finalized; construction under way

2028

New homes and storefronts opening

Pillar 4: Housing Development

Housing supports workforce retention and is one of our strongest fiscal opportunities.

Close the gap

Market studies show more demand each year than we are currently approving, especially for owner-occupied homes.

Find development-ready land

Work with private property owners to bring new residential sites forward.

Keep the pipeline full

Track every project, from concept to occupancy, and update the housing market study.

WHAT TO EXPECT

2026

Current pipeline maintained; baselines set

2027

Approvals rise; updated market study

2028

Continued climb toward annual housing demand

A three-year roadmap

1 — 2 — 3

2026

Set Up

Stand up programs, establish baselines, and build the recruitment pipeline.

2027

Execute

First full year. Programs reach their regular pace and major projects advance.

2028

Accelerate

Step up results: new industry, downtown projects delivering, more housing.

Targets build on each other year to year. Later-year targets are directional and will be refined as results come in.

Following the plan, and adjusting as needed

Monthly

Pipeline updates to the City Manager

Quarterly

Economic development reports on all four pillars

Each December

Annual scorecard to Common Council with recommended adjustments

Mid-2027

Strategy refresh using new survey and demographic data

A LIVING DOCUMENT

- The plan sets direction. It does not authorize spending or land purchases.
- Any TIF, CDA assistance, or acquisition returns to the CDA and Common Council for action.
- Targets will be revisited as markets, data, and community priorities change.

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We have a plan.

We'll follow it.

We'll adjust as needed.

Questions and discussion