Stoughton's Redevelopment Authority:

BRINGING OUT OUR *Community's Best*

Cities, whether big or small, seek to enhance their business, residential, and cultural environments by undertaking improvement projects. Some examples of such work include waterfront improvements, trail system upgrades, and business park development.

In Wisconsin, State Statutes allow cities to undertake improvement projects through redevelopment authorities, housing authorities, and business improvement districts. Stoughton created a Redevelopment Authority (RDA) in accordance with Section 66.1333, Wisconsin Statutes in 2007.

STOUGHTON
Redevelopment Authority

Stoughton RDA
Summer 2021

Dale Reeves, *Chair*
Roger Springman, *Vice-Chair*
Lukas Trow
Regina Hirsch
Leonard "Ozzie" Doom
Denise Duranczyk
Peter Manley

Jamin Friedl, *Executive Director*
Gary Becker, *Consultant*

Organization: What is the RDA?

Following State Statutes, the Stoughton RDA is a 7-member commission comprised of 1 – 2 City Council members and 5 - 6 city residents with such redevelopment qualifications or skills as real estate, banking, planning, or construction. A current list of commission members is found at https://www.stoughtonrda.org/board. Non-council positions are nominated by the Mayor as terms end or as vacancies occur and approved by the City Council.

The RDA annually elects a chair and vice-chair at its May organizational meeting. Members serve for 5-year, rotating terms. Of special importance in Stoughton is the role of the City Finance Director. The Finance Director serves as RDA Executive Director and also provides essential financial management information and coordination with the City.

By-laws of the RDA can be found at https://www.stoughtonrda.org/rules-regulations. Stoughton's ordinance governing the foundation and basic operation of the RDA can be found in the Stoughton Municipal Code, Division 13, Section 2, 533-540. Regular meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month and agendas and packet materials are provided several days in advance at http://stoughtoncitydocs.com/redevelopment-authority.

Operation and Duties: What does an RDA do?

Redevelopment authorities are independent public bodies formed for the broad purpose of increasing the taxable and community value of parcels and/or buildings that have fallen into disrepair or abandoned for any number of reasons. However, RDAs can only conduct property improvement activities in officially designated areas called "redevelopment districts" which have city-approved "redevelopment plans."

Redevelopment Districts

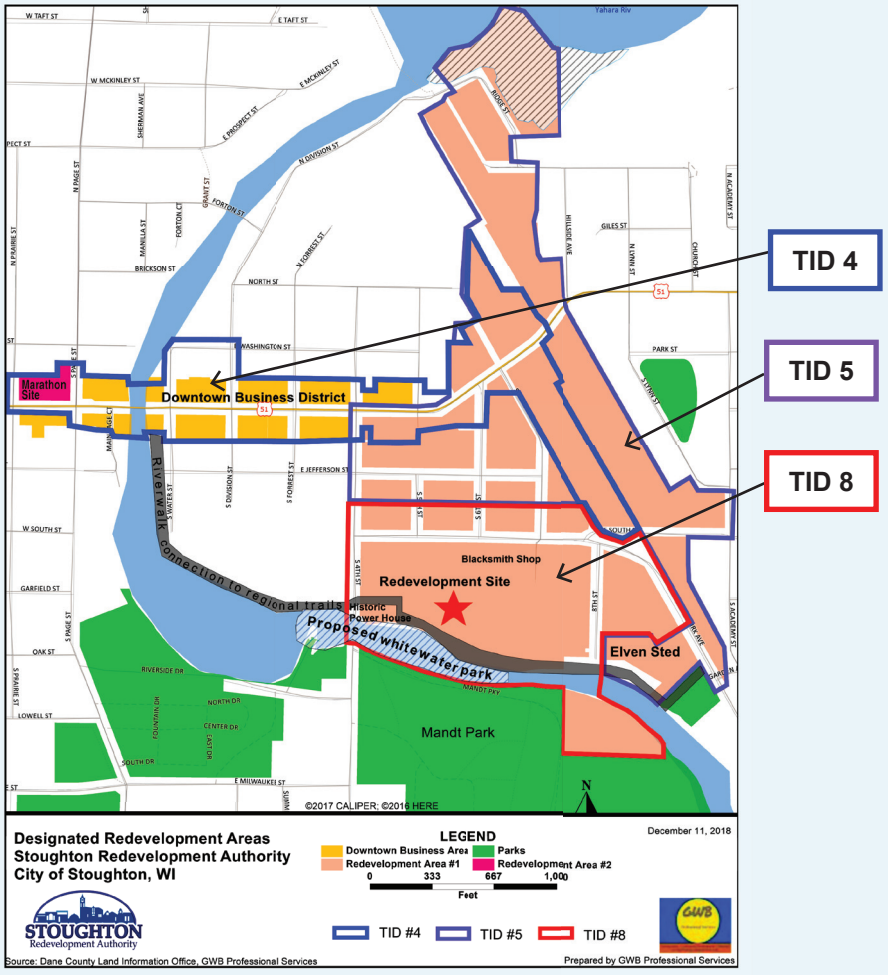
Stoughton currently has two redevelopment districts: District 1 which is generically called the “Railroad Corridor” and District 2 which broadly encompasses the downtown area from the Opera House area to the 400 block of West Main. Redevelopment districts can be formed in any part of the city to help improve parcel value or development potential.

TIDs and TIFs

RDAs can use a wide range of tools to undertake improvement projects and one of them is Tax Incremental Districts (TIDs) and within the TID, Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) can be used to offset some of costs associated with building demolition, environmental clean-up, public improvements (streets, sewer, water, electricity), etc. The RDA created **TID 5** in 2010 for the development of Elven Sted along the Yahara River.

In 2018, the RDA took advantage of this opportunity again to create **TID 8** which forms the boundaries for what is now known as the Riverfront Project.

Another parcel, the Marathon Site, is located in **TID 4**.



Improvement Actions

Improvement actions that RDAs can take in redevelopment districts include:

- Building demolition
- Creating Tax Incremental Districts (TIDs)
- Purchasing, selling
- Leasing or subdividing parcels
- Contracting with developers; Applying for grants

Sometimes RDAs need to acquire privately-held properties to undertake projects and Sec. 66.1333 outlines very specific steps that must be followed. These steps often include current property status and condition studies, property valuations, public infrastructure condition and needs analysis, potential re-use plans, etc. During this stage, individual property owners would be contacted by RDA commissioners or City staff to explain results and potential next steps.

The Stoughton RDA, like all RDAs, has no separate taxing authority and all of its financial expenditures, including annual operating budget plus development projects, are approved by the City Council. The Finance Director plays a critical role in working with the Mayor and City Council in all financial transactions.

Accomplishments and Projects in Progress

1) Elven Sted, 623 Eighth Street

The RDA acquired a 2.5 acre parcel along the Yahara River in 2010. Recognizing the need for lower-cost housing, the RDA partnered with a developer, Moving Out, Inc., for the construction of a 33-unit, independent living residential complex. 25% of the units were reserved for workforce housing. To assist with financing, development, and public improvement needs, including a river trail, the RDA and City created TID 5. From its completion in the fall 2011, Elven Sted had strong acceptance and appeal, and remains in high demand when vacancies occur.

2) Revolving Loan Fund

The Revolving Loan Fund was created in 2015 to assist businesses and commercial property owners with building rehabilitation (interior and exterior) , building construction, furniture/fixtures/equipment and working capital. It is funded by TID 4 which means only businesses and mixed-use properties within the TID 4 boundary area are eligible for loans of up to $50,000. Owing to several administrative changes in 2019, the program has become increasingly known and utilized. Additional program information can be found at https://www.stoughtonrda.org/revolving-loan-fund.

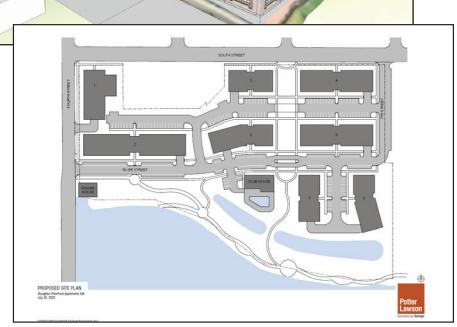
3) Marathon Site, 314 West Main Street

Throughout the early 2000s, an abandoned Marathon gas station was located along West Main near Page Street. Because abandoned gas stations are often difficult to develop owing to environmental concerns and costs, the RDA acquired the 0.4 acre site in spring 2010. The RDA received an environmental remediation grant from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to remove underground tanks and the cinderblock gas station. Initially the property was marketed for commercial uses. In 2018, a local developer became interested in the site for a residential complex. Working with the City for rezoning, two, four-unit single bedroom apartments were approved for the site. It is expected that construction will commence in later 2021.

Marathon Site Concept

4) Riverfront Project

The 11-acre Riverfront Project area encompasses Stoughton's historic industrial area from the late 1800s through the 1990s. Starting with acquisition of the Highway Trailer Building and Blacksmith Shop on South Street in, the RDA, working with the City, strategically added to its holdings as MillFab (Holley Mouldings), the Carpet Warehouse, and the Public Works Building became available. With vision for a planned residential community, the RDA sought a master developer for the entire area. After a developer search, in 2019, Curt Brink LLC stepped forward with the vision to create an active-living neighborhood of nearly 300 residential units along a renovated Yahara River waterfront. Phase 1 of this project is expected to be approved in fall 2021 with subsequent phases being developed through 2024-2025.



Riverfront Project Concept

5) **Downtown Revitalization Study**

Recognizing the importance of a vibrant and healthy downtown with its streetscape connecting to local gathering places, the RDA undertook a special project in 2019. This effort, called the Downtown Revitalization Study, was developed to: a) solicit feedback from downtown stakeholders, b) identify opportunities to advance downtown economic development, and c) update planning for the eastern end of Main Street. Ayres Consulting was hired to conduct listening sessions, gather essential information, and prepare a final report. The report, found at https://www.stoughtonrda.org, was released during the 2020 pandemic, so limited implementation of the report occurred at that time. One early outcome of the effort was recognition that numerous downtown business owners were seeking ways of becoming active for improved City and community communication.

Looking to the Future

The Stoughton RDA will continue its tradition of finding ways to improve the health, economy, and social fabric of the community.

East Main Street

Aside from those projects identified above which remain in active development phases, the RDA is directing early consideration to seeing what can be done to improve the area broadly called “East Main Street”. This area includes the area east of the Opera House to Coffee Street and the Railroad Corridor thereby encompassing Redevelopment Areas 1 and 2. The value of the Railroad Corridor as a connecting link from Elven Sted and the Riverfront Project to the hospital, downtown commerce, Opera House, and nearby trails is without exception. It has the potential to anchor east side growth and development.

Downtown Merchants Association

Another emerging project of great excitement and interest is the implementation phase of the Downtown Revitalization Study mentioned above. In late 2020 and early 2021, business owners working with passionate citizen leaders, began the creation of the Stoughton Downtown Merchants Association (SDMA). This fledgling independent organization is taking initial steps to form a permanent organization with a mission statement, leadership, and website. This organization will not only give natural “voice” to the needs of the downtown, but will allow for steady and sustained communication with City officials and the RDA as we help each other achieve common goals.