



COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PLAN

September 9, 2014

Village of Suring



Prepared For: Village of Suring, Wisconsin

Community Development Authority

- Mark Hanson
- Jeff Whiting
- Loise Brazeau
- Dora Behling
- James Kohlwey
- Jay Tousey

Village Board

- Jay Tousey, President
- Harvey Miller
- James Kohlwey
- Larry Gipp
- Randall Schuettepelz
- Rachel Otradovec
- Cynthia Zahn

Village Staff

- Carol Heise

Special Thanks: Katie School, Business Association of Suring Area Inc,
for Marketing recommendations

Prepared By: Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH)



CONTENTS

<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>RELEVANT TRENDS</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>SURING'S ASSETS & LIABILITIES</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>TOURISM</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>SURING HISTORY</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>PARKS AND TRAILS</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>DOWNTOWN SURING</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>MARKETING THE SURING AREA</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>COST ESTIMATES AND POTENTIAL FUNDING</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</i>	<i>76</i>



***P**urpose: The purpose of this study is to develop strategies to leverage Suring's unique historical and cultural assets to support community development.*



INTRODUCTION

The Village of Suring issued a Request for Proposals for a Community Revitalization Plan for Suring, WI, with a focus on developing strategies to leverage Suring's historical and natural assets to support community economic development. The project area includes the Main Street corridor through downtown Suring as well as Riverside and Veterans Memorial Park.

This Plan is intended to build upon previous successful planning and redevelopment efforts by the Village. For example, in 1999 Village of Suring authored a successful \$125,000 grant, and in partnership with the WI DOT relocated the historic STH 32 iron bridge rather than lose a unique part of Suring's history. As part of the project, the Village made a commitment to the WI DOT to preserve the historic bridge and provide historical interpretation. This Plan identifies strategies to re-use the bridge to interpret the history of Suring and promote tourism.

Suring has also been successful in maintaining its downtown. A significant number of historic buildings remain in tact, and a diverse mix of businesses call Suring home. A newly constructed Village Hall and library help contribute to the vitality of the community. This Plan identifies place-making strategies to strengthen downtown as the "central social district" through development of a Village Square.

Finally, Suring has also been successful in terms of developing its natural assets, including Riverside and Veterans Memorial Parks. Suring's location along the Peshtigo Brook, Oconto Rivers, and the Nicolet State Trail provide additional opportunities to promote recreational and outdoor-based tourism. This Plan identifies opportunities to strengthen Suring's parks and its downtown, by creating stronger linkages between them.

Methodology

SEH staff worked with the Suring CDA over a period of 8 months to develop this Plan. Business Association of Suring Area Inc., Suring Area Historical Society, and several other community-based organizations contributed their ideas as well. SEH's multi-disciplinary team included transportation planners, downtown revitalization specialists, architects, landscape architects, lighting, and community economic development specialists. The project team:

Reviewed several prior studies and plans. The team reviewed the 2003 capstone project paper prepared by Eva Rose Anne Boehm titled "The Village of Suring: Revitalizing A Rural Village Community By Revealing The People of That Place." Additional studies and plans reviewed include but were not limited to: the 2011 Suring Supermarket Market Study (John Dean & Associates); the 2007 Hotel Market Study (Hospitality Marketers International, Inc.); Village of Suring TID No. 1 Project Plan (Ehlers & Associates, OCEDC); Village of Suring 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

Utilized computer modeling. Modeling was conducted for the proposed Veterans Memorial Park food stand to help visualize what the proposed facility would look like. Auto CAD, GIS, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Indesign

were also used to develop maps, diagrams, and illustrations to support the Plan.

Conducted two public hearings. Two public hearings were held in preparation of this plan to allow residents and local non-profit groups an opportunity to express their opinions regarding park development and the downtown.

Conducted three fieldwork trips that totaled twelve man-days. Site visits included downtown revitalization specialists, a branding consultant, architects, planners, and landscape architects.

Toured Suring and Oconto County. The project team visited several destinations within Suring including the golf course, industrial zones, schools, and residential areas. The team also visited Oconto, Oconto Falls, Gillett, and Mountain.

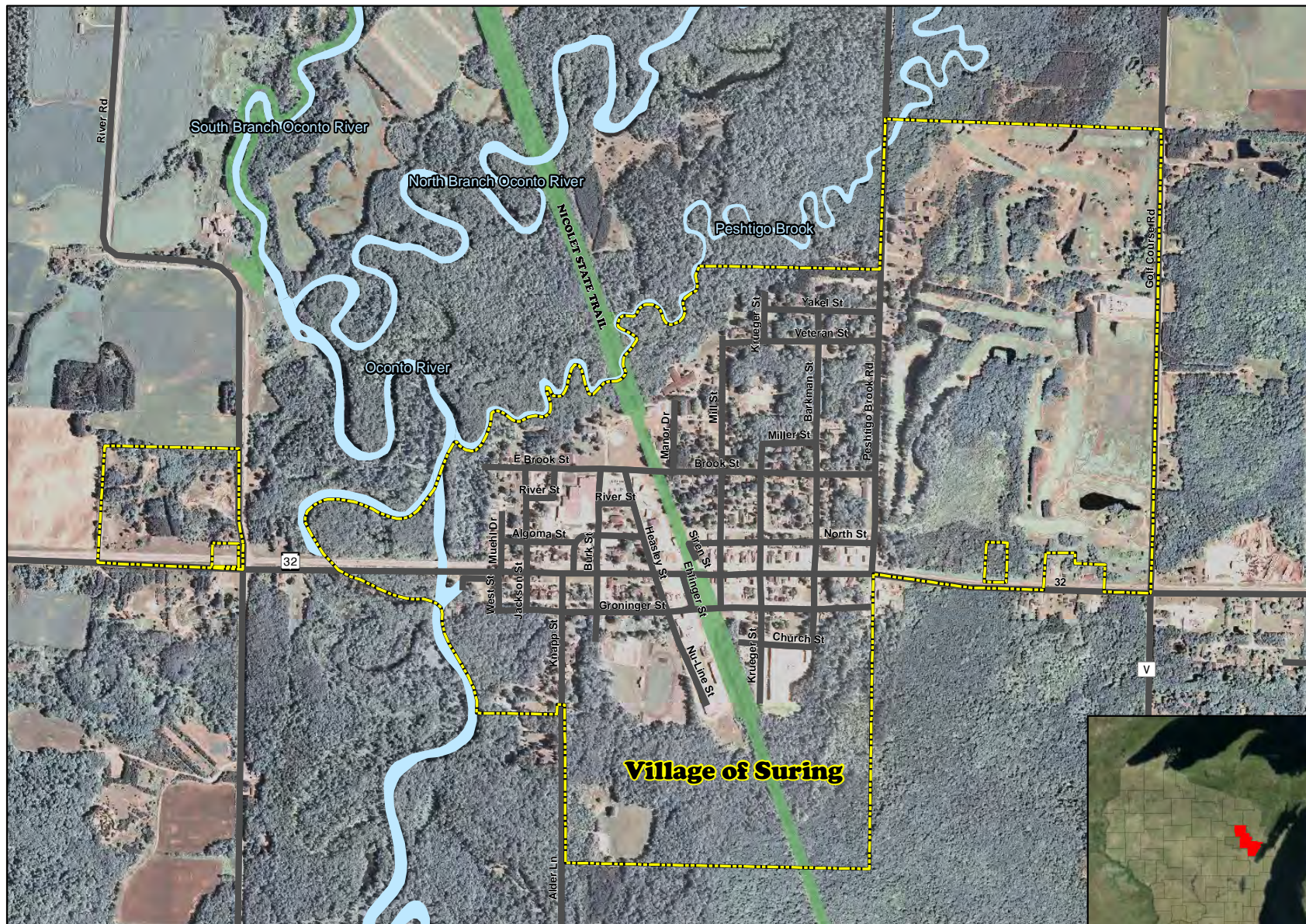
Met with community and business leaders. The team met with Village officials, the Village Board, the Community Development Authority (CDA), the Business Association of Suring Area Inc., and the participants of two focus groups and public input sessions including representatives from the Suring Area Historical Society and several service clubs. The project team met eight times with Village staff over the course of the project.

Conducted interviews with key organizations. The team spoke with and interviewed the director of the Oconto County Economic Development Corporation, the Oconto County Community, Natural Resource, and Economic Development

Educator, and met with representatives from several area service clubs.

Analyzed a variety of data sources. The team analyzed data from the US Bureau of the Census, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Village of Suring and Suring Library, Oconto County Economic Development, Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, Wisconsin Department of Administration, and other sources.

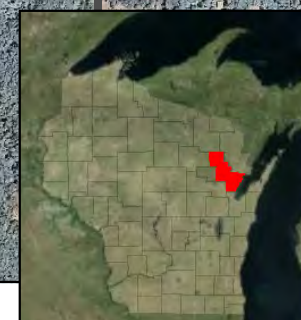
Applied our 60+ years of collective experience . The project team consulted its network of professional contacts to gain insight into local conditions and trends; and applied its experience working on economic development and community planning issues.



0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Legend

- Suring
- Roads
- Water
- WDNR Managed Land



**Village of Suring
Oconto County, WI**



RELEVANT TRENDS

Wisconsinites Enjoy Outdoor Recreation

According to the 2011-2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, over 87% of Wisconsinites enjoy some form of outdoors recreation. The top 5 outdoor activities by participation rate (16 and over) are:

- Walk for Pleasure (88%)
- Gardening or landscaping (65%)
- View/photograph natural scenery (65%)
- Attend outdoor sports events (65%)
- Family gathering (64%)

According to the same study, the highest growth in recreational activities over the period 1994 to 2009 for ages 16 and over included:

- Handball or racquetball outdoors (993% increase)
- Soccer outdoors (715% increase)
- Kayaking (605% increase)
- Surfing (332% increase)
- Football (201% increase)
- Horseback riding (180% increase)
- Rock climbing (131% increase)
- Use personal watercraft (123% increase)
- Golf (112% increase)
- Snowboarding (112% increase)

Consolidation of Retail Trade

Over the past 25 years retailing in small and rural communities has suffered. Big box retail stores have consolidated in larger “small” towns between 5,000 and 25,000 population, causing a sharp decline in retail commerce in smaller towns such as Suring. This trend is especially acute when the smaller town is within commuting distance of a larger regional center (as is the case with Suring). This and related trends are having profound effects on the retail industry resulting in significantly reduced demand for retail space. For example:

- Retail chains have closed many stores (e.g., 4,500 just in “post-recession” 2012) and now look for fewer locations that average about 25% less space than their existing stores
- Nationally, the amount of retail space decreased by 259 million SF between 2001 and 2011 and is expected to drop by another 210 million SF by 2016. The number of real estate experts who recognize that the nation has far too much retail space has grown substantially.

Overall, downtowns consequently face a future in which having a robust retail sector is certainly possible, but it has become much more challenging to achieve and maintain

than it was in the 15 years prior to the Great Recession. Most downtowns that want their retail to be strong will have to work harder and more proactively than they have in decades to get it.

Many downtowns continue to report that when storefront vacancies are filled, the likely new tenants are personal and professional service operations, not retailers. Downtown food related operations (e.g. groceries and restaurants) and personal services have been comparatively strong from 2007 through 2012. In many downtowns, they provide the spine for the district’s revitalization. Nevertheless, their importance is too often underestimated and far too little attention is paid by retailers to leveraging the customer traffic they draw to the district.

Downtowns As The Central Social District (CSD)

For decades, the terms Central Business District, CBD and downtown were used almost interchangeably because, functionally, downtowns were dominated by retail stores, office based businesses, professionals and government agencies, along with some hotels and maybe entertainment venues. Today, in downtowns large and small, the CBD functions are being rivaled or even surpassed by their CSD functions. That includes housing, restaurants and watering holes, and vibrant entertainment niches that include not only venues for formal entertainments such cinemas, theaters, museums and concert halls, but also lively parks, plazas, and other gathering areas. In particular, public squares and urban parks, not expensive subsidized projects, are increasingly seen as a smart investment to make downtowns more livable. Public squares can yield economic rewards by offering a place for informal commerce to occur (farmer’s markets, flea markets, etc....). However, they also offer people a comfortable spot to gather for a variety of social and recreational activities. They often become destinations within a community and a place where visitors as well as residents often congregate.

The Aging of America

In Oconto County, the Retirement Age population (65 and over) is expected to increase 110% between 2010 and 2040, compared with an overall increase in population of 19.5%. The population of working age adults (20-64) is projected to increase just 1.2 %, while the population of youth (0 to 19) is projected to increase by 4.7% (Source: Wisconsin Taxpayer's Alliance). Meanwhile, the share of the population age 65 or older is expected to increase from 15.6% in Oconto County (2010) to 27% by the year 2035.

The rapid aging of the population will create additional opportunities for housing, health care, and other services in communities such as Suring where there is access to health care. In addition, many seniors over 50 are looking to reboot their careers and lives. Smaller communities with access to good healthcare, as well as natural amenities such as parks and trails, can be attractive locations for older people looking to start a new career, work part-time, or become active in local organizations.

The Evolving Wood Product Industry

There currently exists a cluster of private companies, which contribute to the wood products industry in the region. Dimension Lumber Company (just outside Village limits), Diversified Woodcrafts, Inc., North American Finishing and Tousey Manufacturing are all located in Suring. Retaining and expanding the wood product industry is a priority for the Village and Oconto County, which is actively involved in efforts to promote greater harvesting levels

within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest to support existing industry.

Growing Suring's wood products industries is important to the economic health of the Village as it represents a base industry, which brings new dollars into the local economy.

There is growing interest in markets throughout the world for hardwood lumber and value-added products from the Lake States region. The State recently hired new regional DNR Forest Product Services Specialists to assist with networking, sharing of best practices, identification of joint marketing opportunities, funding awareness, technical assistance, and communication with DNR, local development organizations, and other wood product stakeholders.



Before



After

Several Suring businesses have recently taken steps to beautify their exteriors. These types of improvements are important for a community's image and often feed off of one another. They create a positive sense of direction for the community while encouraging other businesses and homeowners to take similar actions.



Before



After



SURING'S ASSETS & LIABILITIES

Active Local Non-Profit Organizations

Several service clubs and non-profits are active in the Suring area and they often include representatives from beyond the Village limits. Smaller communities often rely on a network of volunteers to help achieve community goals through fundraising and volunteer efforts. Having these organizations in Suring is an asset, however, their membership is also aging, which could be an issue if not addressed.

Many Residents Work Outside the County

55% of Oconto County residents work outside the County. This statistic underscores a key economic development challenge facing Suring: how to grow existing businesses when a majority of residents commute out of the area for work and shopping?

Historical Landmarks & Strong Recreational Assets

Suring still contains several historical buildings as well as a historical bridge. For a community its size the Village has a good mix of historical structures. In addition, its location adjacent three rivers and a state trail, and the nearby golf course provide

many opportunities for outdoor recreation.

A Diverse Business Mix

Suring has a diverse mix of businesses including a new health care facility, several restaurants, interesting retail shops, a successful ice cream stand, supper club and several bars. Many communities of Suring's size have fewer commercially viable businesses. The fact that most of Suring's businesses are located along Main Street, and several of them are still located in older historic buildings, bodes well for the future of downtown Suring.

A Regional Hub for Education, Eating, and Entertainment

Downtown Suring has a number of assets that draw in a significant daytime population and serve the greater region beyond the Village limits. These assets include:

- Health care facilities – Bellin Health Family Medical Center, Woodland Village Nursing Center, and Woodlands Village Home Health, and CMH Primary Care Clinic
- Elementary, Middle, and High Schools
- Tourist attractions that bring people in or through the downtown – Nicolet State Trail
- Village Hall, Post Office and Library
- Banks and Professional Offices
- Parks and Trails
- Restaurants, Convenience Stores, and Gas Stations

The library alone regularly serves patrons from Suring and the surrounding communities of Bagley, Breed, How, and Maple Valley. In 2013 the library counted 16,513 checkouts and renewals from patrons from those five communities.

A Strong Manufacturing Base

Oconto County continues to employ a high percentage of the workforce in manufacturing jobs (22.5% versus a statewide average of 16.9%). Despite the loss of a major employer, and an

overall decline in manufacturing employment statewide and nationally, Suring itself is still home to several manufacturers. Recent reports suggest that wood product manufacturing may be rebounding. If such a trend persists, Suring could be well positioned to capitalize on it. The recent announcement of an expansion to Main Street of an existing small business that specializes in engine repair and related services is a good sign for the downtown.

Urban Design Challenges

Riverside Park to Village Hall is more residentially oriented. Key observations include:

- There are poor visual cues for motorists approaching Suring from the west. The lack of wayfinding signage makes it difficult to pull eastbound motorists off Main Street and direct them into Riverside Park for example.
- Land use is more oriented toward residential properties, with a church, post office and café mixed in as well.
- Because there is such a diffuse presence of commercial uses this section of downtown lacks the ability to share customer traffic among different businesses.
- This stretch of downtown also includes a few properties in need of maintenance or repair.
- There are two primary redevelopment opportunity sites. One is located across from Village Hall. The other is located on the south side of Main Street between Knapp and Burk Streets.
- Village Hall to just east of North Krueger Street is more pedestrian oriented. Key observations include:
 - This portion of Main Street includes most of the historic buildings in the downtown.
 - The ability to park once and visit several stores, bars, and restaurants make this part of Main Street feel more like a traditional downtown compared with other parts of Main Street.

- Solid blockfaces provide a good sense of enclosure and create a more comfortable and interesting pedestrian environment.
- Some facades need improvement, however many are in relatively good shape.
- Portions of the downtown lack charm and activated public spaces.
- There are few trees and places for people to sit.
- This section of downtown is not currently defined visually in any manner, making it unclear to visitors that “they have arrived” somewhere and should stop, park, and stroll around the downtown.
- Just east of North Kruger Street to Peshtigo Brook Road is more auto-oriented. Key observation of the northern downtown node include:
- Designed and operates for car-oriented retail, i.e., non-attached stores, with parking in front, and customers drive to each store and then drive away, with few shoppers walking to other stores
- Several successful businesses create travel demand, including two gas stations, CMH Primary Care Clinic, and C-Us-4 Wireless
- Little street furniture or welcoming public spaces where people can sit and chat or eat lunch
- Nevertheless, this appears to be the stronger part of the downtown based on who is there, number of vacancies, traffic counts, etc...

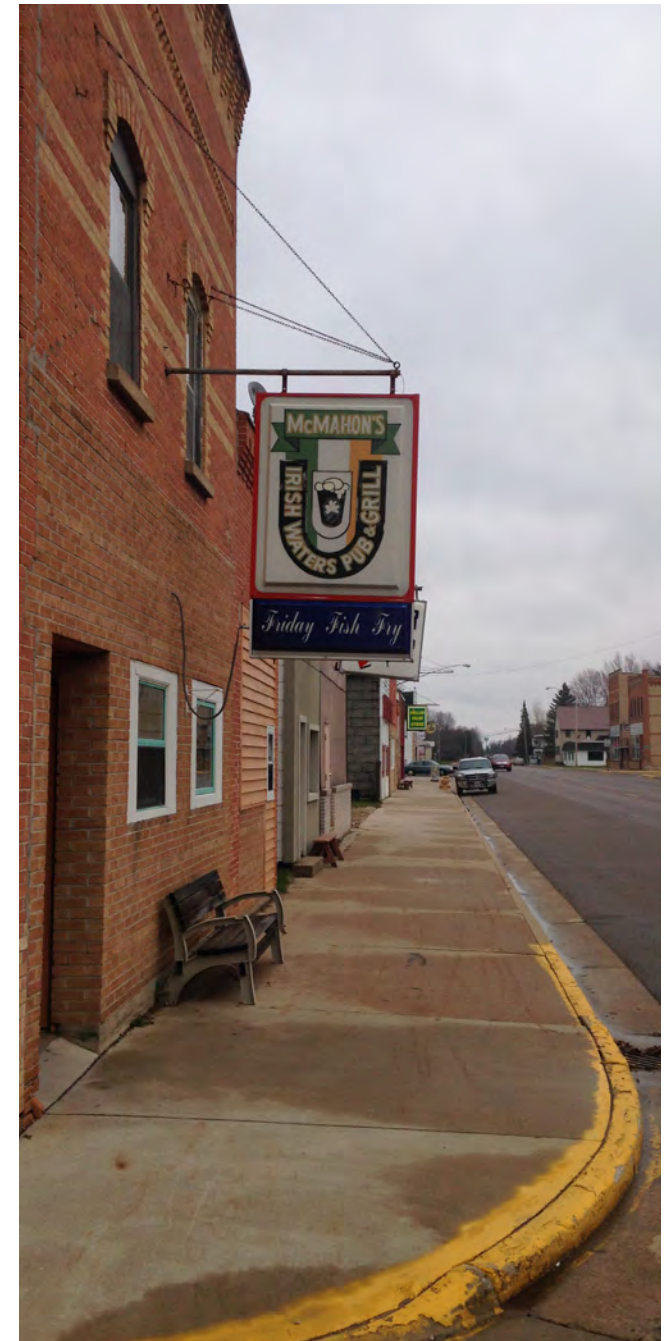
A “Can Do” Attitude

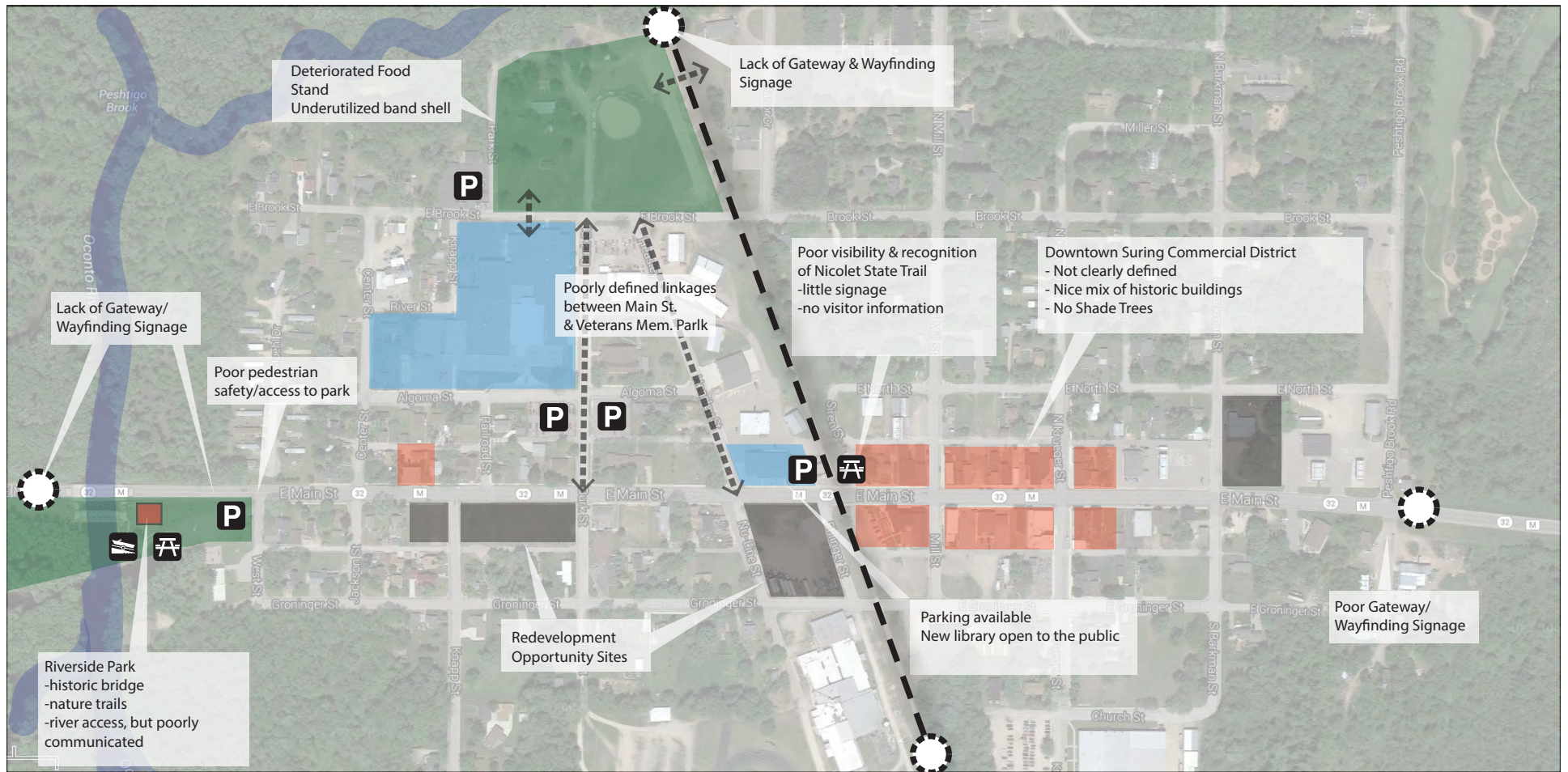
The Village has successfully completed

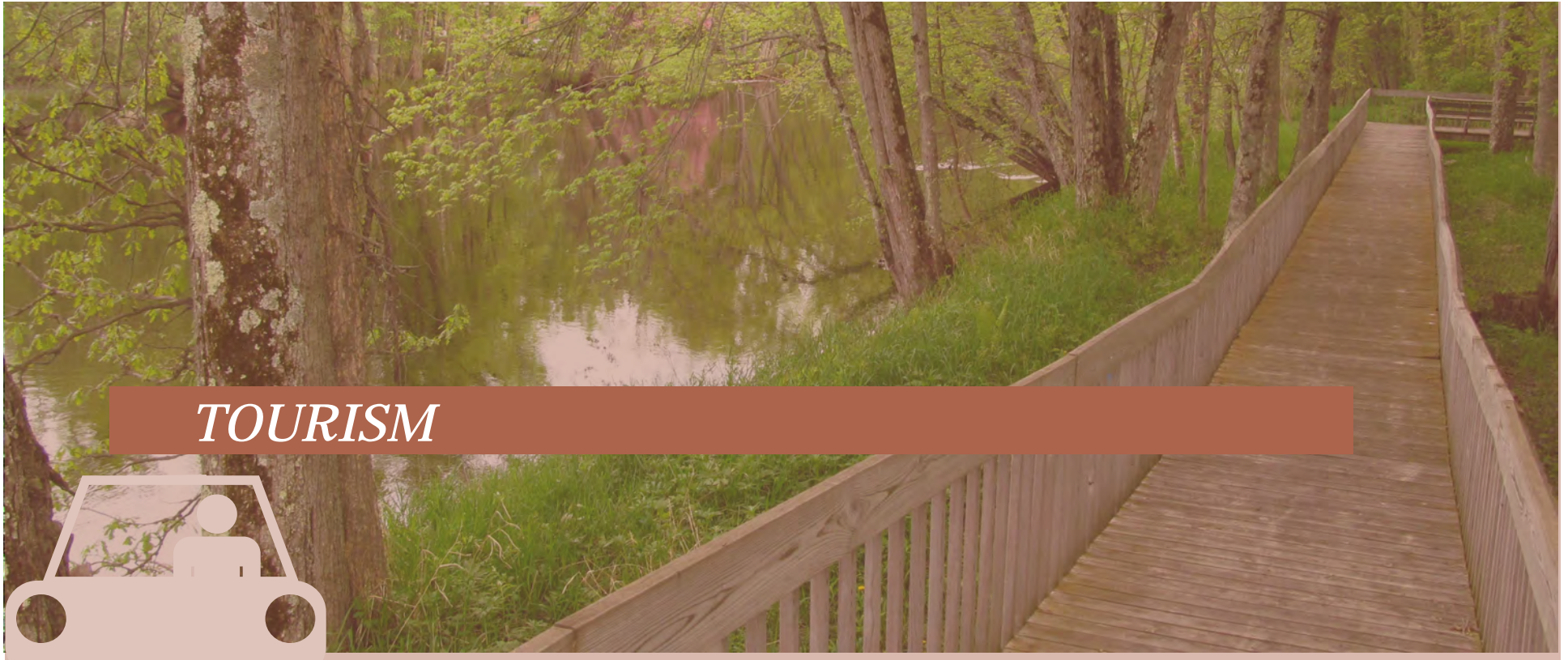
construction of the new Village Hall and Library, re-purposed the historic bridge and created and maintained an excellent park system. The Village has also actively supported business start-ups and expansions despite the loss of a major employer. Downtown business owners have largely maintained their historic properties, despite the challenges of doing so. Churches, civic clubs, and business organizations have all contributed to the community. This same focus and commitment to success, applied to downtown Suring, would likely result in successful revitalization of the area.

Downtown Forces and Issues Diagram

The Forces and Issues map on the following page summarizes several of Suring’s assets and liabilities described in the previous chapter. It provides a basis for developing strategies to strengthen downtown Suring.







TOURISM



Outdoor recreation is a primary focus of tourism in Oconto County. In 2013 Oconto County ranked as one of the top performing tourist counties in northern Wisconsin in all but one of five categories. According to the Wisconsin Department of Tourism Oconto County achieved a rank of second in total business sales (\$106.99 Million) third in employment (861), fourth in direct visitor spending (\$77.38 Million), and fifth in state and local sales tax (\$7.8 Million).

Major Market Segments

Tourism in Suring has three major market segments. These segments include visitors to the Nicolet State Trail, visitors to northern Oconto County and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, and visitors to the Red Maple Country Club Golf course. The Red Maple Golf Course is known as one of the toughest courses in Wisconsin. The facility also provides space for weddings and meetings.

Better understanding the segmentation between Nicolet State Trail, Red Maple golf course and visitors to northern Oconto County and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is critical for local business operators because it can affect their marketing, merchandising and operating hours. These segments differ substantially in how much time they spend in the Suring

area, when they are available during the day to shop.

Key characteristics of the Visitors to the Nicolet State Trail tourist segment include:

- The vast majority of Nicolet State Trail visitors travel across downtown Suring in a minute or less on ATV or Snowmobile.
- They are unlikely to travel along the length of Main Street. This means the window of opportunity for catching their attention and arousing their interest in stopping is rather slim.
- These visitors may be inclined to stop for fuel, a bathroom break, a quick bite to eat, or an ice cream cone.
- ATV/Snowmobile users are very seasonal, with peak periods during the warm riding months and colder, snowier months with pronounced dips in usage during early, wet spring time months.
- Merchants not in the field of vision of the trail visitors crossing Main Street are unlikely to lure them into their shops. Downtown merchants only have a chance at winning sales from trail visitors if they can be enticed to stop and look around.

Key characteristics of the Visitors to Northern Oconto and Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest tourist segment include:

- The vast majority of visitors to northern Oconto County and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest travel across downtown Suring along Main Street in a car.
- They are likely to travel along the length of Main Street. Their most likely need to stop is at either of the gas stations or for a quick bite to eat or an ice cream cone.
- These visitors may be inclined to also stop for a quick stroll or picnic, let the kids or pets out to run around before getting back in the car and heading north.
- Visitors are not staying overnight in Suring. Most are

probably stopping in Suring on their way up north to a cabin, resort, or camping.

- Many of these visitors may feel time pressured since they are only in the area to pass through or pick up provisions on their way to somewhere else. Many may want a snack or quick bite to eat.

Making a stickier tourist destination

The “stickier” a tourist area is the more time people will stay there and the more money they will spend there. Having lots of vibrant and attractive activity venues also is what makes a downtown and/or a tourist destination sticky. The tourist pleasing activity venues can include such things as a scenic locations, historical sites, museums, art galleries, stadiums, arenas, and attractive public spaces, but also restaurants, bars, ice cream parlors, interesting retail shops, bike paths, trails, golf courses, shooting ranges, etc. Sticky tourist destinations also generate lots of positive word-of-mouth and return visits. Downtown tourist related businesses can be sorted into three categories:

1. Need Based: motels, hotels, eateries, drugstores, groceries, gasoline stations, etc.

2. Local authenticity and uniqueness: these shops feature local arts and crafts, including cooking; merchandise made locally; local farm products; locally made or designed furniture and wood products; antiques with local significance; books and maps on local history and culture, etc.

3. Entertainment shopping venues: includes any downtown retail shop that can catch tourists’ attention and patronage. They strengthen their downtowns and create real destination shopping areas when clustered, as in historic Galena IL, youthful Fort Collins CO, the affluent college town of Wellesley MA, and the outlet malls in Manchester VT.

Based on field observations, data analysis and discussions with local business operators, the Project Team believes that downtown Suring seems now more slippery than sticky for

its tourists. There are few downtown retail shops, and many fewer still, that could fit in the entertainment-shopping category. Few merchants feature unique and authentic local products and it is hard to tell from their exteriors those that do.

Strong food services -- full-service restaurants, limited-service eating places, special food services, drinking places /alcoholic beverages – can meet an essential tourist need and get them to stop and browse around a downtown. They also can offer authentic local and regional foods.

A restaurant niche cluster centered around the Village Square/Nicolet State Trail Crossing that can combine significant penetration of local residential, daytime, and tourist market segments would be a strong addition to downtown Suring and enhance its ability to capture tourist dollars. The Boarding House, Dairy Delite Depot, and the Eagle's Nest are now doing this, though each does best with different tourist market segments. They provide a core to build upon.

The types of retail that tourists are prone to frequent (Tourist Prone Retail) include: gift shops, home furnishings stores, used merchandise stores, sporting goods, hobby, book & music stores, and clothing & clothing accessories stores. Looking at these shops in downtown Suring, Bayer Furniture fits into the entertainment-shopping category.

Growing Retail and Restaurant Sales to Tourists

It is critical to keep in mind that the tourists analyzed in the above discussion are already

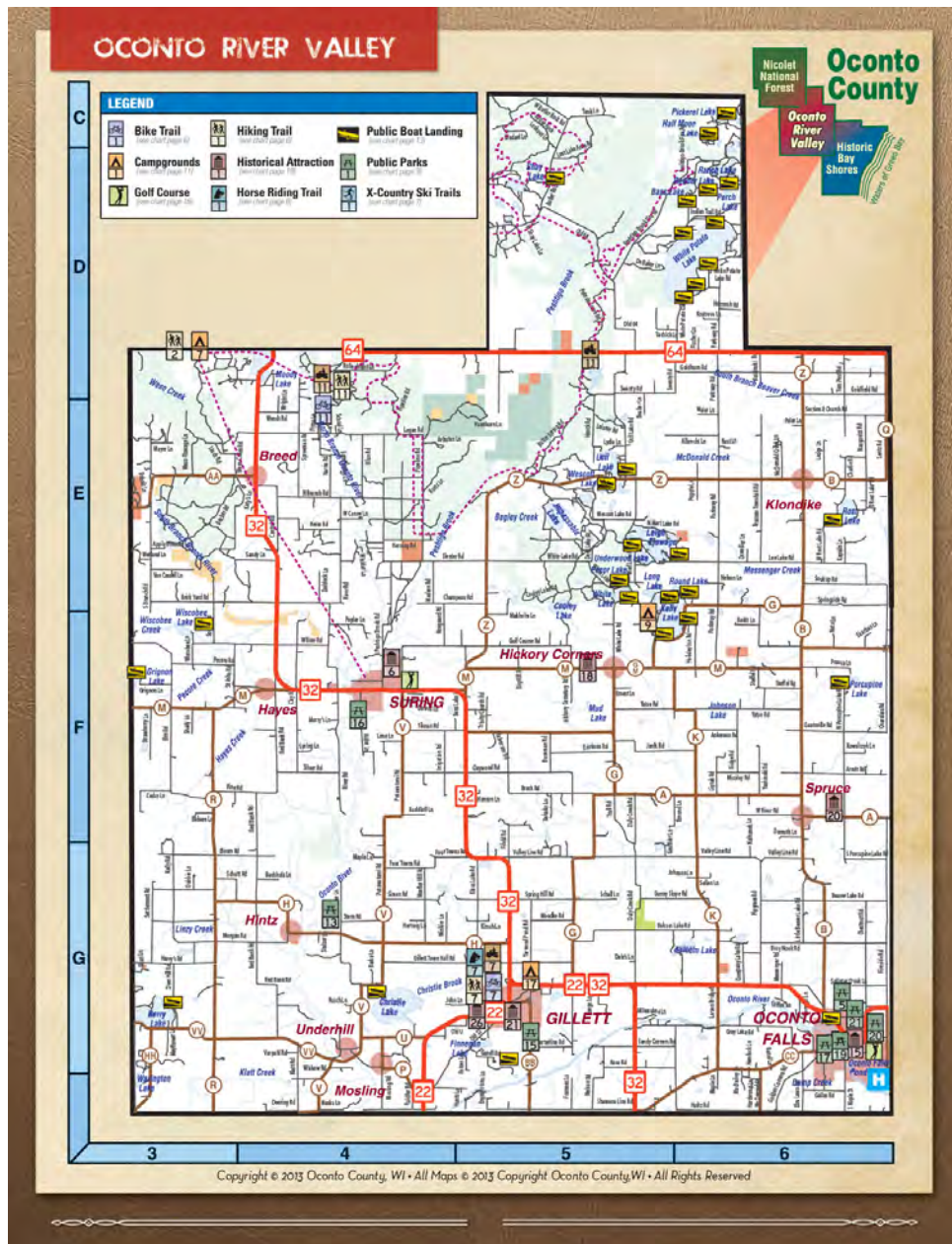
being attracted to Suring and spending time there. Local merchants have the competitive advantages of proximity, but they still need to bring the tourists through their doors and make the sales. The tourists probably are spending a significant amount of money in the county on food services and retail, so they are not transaction adverse if they can find what they need or want.

The most strategically important challenge for capturing more tourist sales dollars is to get many more visitors to stop and walk around downtown Suring. They have the most potential sales dollars that downtown Suring merchants can try to capture. Given their proclivity to be in a “stopping by” on their way to another destination mode, they are unlikely to be in a “let’s explore this area” mindset. They are most likely to stop if they can see, while in their cars or other modes of travel, shops that meet immediate needs – e.g., to get food, gas, diapers, etc.

They also may stop if they see an interesting and charming shop, historical marker, block face or public space, but they are unlikely to go searching for those they cannot see, even if they are listed in area guidebooks. However, once stopped, they may be enticed to explore. The charm factor is important and it is often interwoven with public amenities, historical sites and preserved buildings. Improvements in the Village Square/Nicolet Trail Crossing area may be particularly important. See the Downtown Suring section of this report for a more in-depth discussion of proposed public improvements at the Village Square/Nicolet Trail crossing.



OCONTO RIVER VALLEY TOURISM



Diversifying the County Trail Network

Oconto County possesses approximately 450 miles of ATV/UTV trails and 475 miles of snowmobile trails. The Nicolet State Trail through Suring is part of the Oconto County ATV/UTV trail and route system, which connects to systems in Forest County, Marinette County, Florence County, and the upper peninsula of Michigan. This same corridor is used for snowmobiling during the winter. Suring is an important fuel stop and access point between Breed and Gillett. Several Suring businesses benefit from ATV and snowmobile traffic, in particular the bars, restaurants, and convenience stores. However, developing additional ATV support infrastructure is not seen as a top priority, given Suring's relative proximity to Gillett. Gillett, the self-proclaimed "ATV capital of the world," already provides several ATV amenities including loading ramp, grill and picnic areas, truck and tractor parking. Recognizing that nearby Gillett is branding itself around the ATV market, Suring may wish to consider a different strategy – one that doesn't forego the ATV market but which seeks to differentiate itself through other means.

Diversifying the County trail network may be another opportunity for Suring to capitalize on tourism. This could include a renewed focus on developing and promoting boating and fishing on the Oconto River. However, there are several barriers, which would need to be addressed if such a strategy were to be pursued, including:

- Lack of marked boat landings. The lack of available boat landings and access points in the region is seen as an impediment to attracting more boaters. Upstream from Suring the nearest marked boat landing is located at Chute Pond County Park just downstream of the Chute Pond Dam, approximately 12 miles from Suring Village limits. Downstream from Suring the nearest marked boat landing is located near Underhill, just north of County Highway V, approximately 15 miles from Suring. The lack of boat landings and access points upstream and downstream from Suring limit the Village's ability to promote the Oconto River as a tourist destination. Developing additional boat landings and access points closer to Suring could make the Riverside Park an excellent departure or end point for boaters looking for a day trip on the north branch of the Oconto River. Making existing access points more visible and promoting them through tourism and outdoor recreation websites would also be beneficial.

- Overgrown vegetation. According to local residents the Oconto River has become overgrown with vegetation making it very difficult to navigate a boat on. In the past, volunteers have organized to open up stretches of the river by removing downed branches and vegetation. This is no longer occurring, but this type of activity could resume in the future, possibly in partnership with the WI DNR and private landowners.
- Lack of awareness. Canoeing and kayaking trips on the Oconto River are featured in Paddling Northern Wisconsin, a guidebook detailing 82 great trips in northern Wisconsin. Each trip contains a description of the river, including access points, mile markers, rapids (if applicable), campsites, and nearby communities. The Tar Dam Road to Bagley Rapids trip (9.5 miles), north of Suring, is billed as “Definitely not for beginners, this stretch offers a joyous succession of Class II boulder gardens.” The guidebook then skips the section of the Oconto River which passes through Suring, and instead provides information on the Underhill to Oconto Falls stretch of the river (16.8 miles), describing it as “An excellent stretch for novices and quietwater paddlers, with many convenient access points. Unfortunately, there is no write up for the section of the Oconto River immediately upstream and downstream of Suring. Likewise, the 2014 Oconto County Discovery Guide lists kayaking and canoe trips both upstream and downstream of Suring. Neither publication highlights the Oconto river sections immediately north or south of Suring.

- The Riverside Park boat landing does appear on the Northern Wisconsin All Outdoors Atlas and Field Guide. However, it does NOT appear on the Delorme Atlas & Gazetteer for Wisconsin.

A SWOT analysis performed by a member of the Suring Area Business Association identified an opportunity to create another community wide event to raise the profile of Suring and support local organizations and businesses. If the Village decides to actively promote boating and fishing on the river, it may make sense to create a new event that showcases Suring’s outdoor assets including boating on the Oconto River. This could be done at Riverside Park earlier in the tourist season and used as an opportunity to educate visitors and residents about the outdoor recreation opportunities in and around Suring.

There are other opportunities to leverage existing trails to support Suring. The Oconto County Economic Development Corporation hosted a summit on April 28, 2014 to identify and prioritize issues and opportunities related to improving the existing trail network. Over 50 attendees representing snowmobile and ATV clubs, equestrian and other silent sports representatives, County and local units of government, regional and State organizations participated in the meeting. Based upon the discussion, the following key issues were identified as priorities:

- Use of County/Town Roads – Seeking approval for limited use of roadways by different user groups.
- Seasonal/User Group Transitions – Promoting positive interactions between motorized and non-motorized uses.
- Communication & Cooperation – More coordination and communication between units of government,



and between local government and business associations working with local clubs.

- Trail Signage – Improved signage and GPS locations on trails. Coordinated signage between ATV, Snowmobile, County, and United States Forest Service trails.

Participating in the County-led effort to strengthen the regional trails system could be an opportunity for the Village to raise its profile, develop new infrastructure to support more boating and fishing, and better market the area to visitors seeking a wide variety of outdoor recreation experiences including both motorized and non-motorized opportunities.

Creating a “must stop” destination

Suring’s vision statement, as defined in its August 2008 Comprehensive Plan, includes the following sentence:

“An attractive and inviting Main Street has become a ‘Must Stop and Shop’ for both residents and travelers.”

The historic iron bridge across the Oconto river is a unique feature in the area. It is already used as a backdrop for wedding and graduation photography, as well as for fishing and as a gateway to the nature trail. Lighting up the historic bridge with LED lights provides an opportunity to create a “must stop” location along Main Street. The LED lighting can be programmed to change throughout a single evening and throughout the year. Different pallettes of color can be used to reflect the changing seasons.

There are several options in terms of applying LED lighting to the bridge. Any of the options will need to be designed in such a manner as to avoid any glare or flashing, which could distract drivers. One option would be to provide outline lighting with different colors that would run along the main support beams of the bridge, similar to the strings of LED lights that are used to decorate the outside of a home during the holidays. A second option is to illuminate the bridge with external lighting that shines up at the bridge from down below. A third option is to use both internal and external lighting on the bridge. In either case it is recommended that all of the lighting controls be consolidated on a stand alone panel off the bridge. Lighting controls can also be set up for remote control, through the use of wi-fi or a sensor chip.

Colorful LED lighting could also be incorporated into Suring’s gateway signage and at key points downtown, including on the east face of the Village library or as a means to light up historic signage or murals in the historic downtown district. The consistent use of similar lighting and color schemes could help define downtown Suring. At the opposite end of the Village the water tower could incorporate limited LED lighting to highlight the Village’s new logo.





SURING HISTORY

Suring's modern history began when a couple moved to the area to build a small shanty dwelling which served as their home as well as a store and trading post, according to Russel M. Wicke's "Early History and Legend of the Village of Suring". Mr. Wicke's relatives ("Grandma and Grandpa Suring") found that most of their customers in the early days were Native Americans who paid for their purchases in "wild ginseng, hides, furs, skins, feathers, and berries." In 1882 Mr. Suring sold his business in Hayes and moved his family into what is now Suring to build a sawmill.

In 1880, the present day State Highway 32 was laid out under the direction of "Grandpa Suring." A wooden bridge spanned the Oconto River. Suring's economy grew due to its location along the Oconto River, a primary waterway for driving logs from the forests, down south and east to the sawmills in Oconto. Annual log drives occurred in the spring when the ice began to thaw, and were an exciting, yet dangerous time of year.

Not until 1896 did the Chicago and North Western Railroad arrive in Suring. The following year, the Groninger Hotel and bar room was constructed next to the rail depot. Herman Groninger became the first Village barber when he set up a chair in the bar room. In 1909 Mike Groninger and his son expanded the building to house an opera house.

Suring's economy continued to diversify with the addition of a grist mill (1903), modern doctor's office (1904), milliner shop (1904), drug store (1905), and post office (1905). Other key dates in Suring history include:

1895 – The Methodist Congregation is organized

1906 – the St. Michael's Catholic Parish is incorporated

1903 – Suring opened its first school.

1908 - a large fire wiped out much of the Village south of Main Street.

2015 - Suring was incorporated as a Village.

1920 – Suring High School holds its first graduation

1923 – Mount Olive Lutheran Congregation organized

Historic Downtown Suring

Fortunately, several historic buildings remain in downtown Suring. Suring's historical buildings in the downtown include a variety of building types, with many distinctive features. The varieties of building types contribute to the charm of the downtown and help create a good pedestrian environment.

The solid block faces in the heart of downtown also provide a pleasurable pedestrian environment for visitors to downtown. While interrupted by a few vacant lots and parking, the downtown has a few solid stretches of historic buildings fronting Main Street between the Nicolet State Trail east just past the intersection of Krueger Street and Main.

Several historic buildings in downtown Suring also contain interesting architectural details that showcase the craftsmanship of Suring's forefathers. Suring's history provides an opportunity to support downtown businesses and raise the profile of Suring as a tourist destination or stopover point. The Village should support local businesses that invest in maintaining and improving their historic downtown properties in order to preserve the architecture that helps make Suring unique, compared with many other



smaller communities in the region that have lost most of their historic buildings.

The two primary strategies to encourage historic rehabilitation are regulations and incentives. Regulations may include sign ordinances, or mandatory design guidelines that are written into the municipal code. However, a regulatory approach may not be appropriate for Suring because of the costs and the required staffing needed.

For a community like Suring, a better approach might be to encourage historic preservation/rehabilitation through education and incentives.

Incentives can be structured however the community chooses. Often times a community will offer a 50-50 matching grant to property owners that commit to making improvements in a manner that is consistent with the architectural history of the downtown. Another common tool is to provide small grants to incentivize appropriate signage for the downtown.

Design Issues and Opportunities

Traditional Façade. Commercial storefronts are often the most critically important aspect of maintaining the historical integrity of a downtown. The majority of historic Suring's buildings date back to the late 1800's or early 1900's. These types of buildings were constructed with similar design elements that create a unified visual look and feel. The basic façade is made up of three parts: 1) the storefront with an entrance and large display windows, 2) an upper masonry façade with evenly spaced windows, and a decorative cornice along the top of the building.

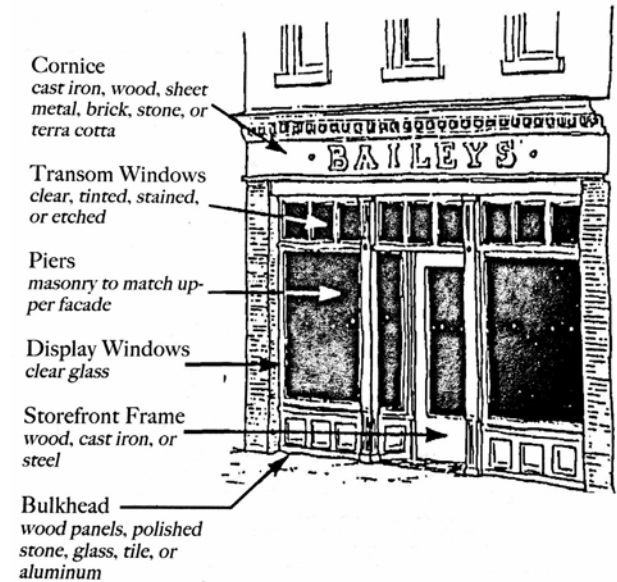
Historic building facades have well defined openings that the original storefront filled. Most historic storefronts were made up almost entirely of windows to display goods and allow light inside the building.

Identifying, retaining, and preserving storefronts are important for reinforcing the overall historical character of the building. Improvements should be in keeping with the time period within which the buildings were constructed. Key recommendations include:

- Storefronts should retain large window displays if possible.
- Entryways should be maintained or restored to their original configurations.
- Transom windows that are covered should be reopened and restored.
- Storefront bulkheads should be restored or renovated
- Unique elements including storefront cornices, entry doors, and lighting fixtures should be restored

- Signage, lighting, and awnings (if applicable) should be integrated into the storefront design
- Color schemes should reflect the time period during which the building was built
- Appropriate storefront materials should be used when doing building repair

COMMON STOREFRONT MATERIALS





Historic Interpretation Precedents

The Suring Area Historical Society has expressed an interest in developing a historic interpretation walking tour for Suring. This section of the report provides some examples of signage types used in other Midwestern communities. The exact locations of the historic walking tour and the types of signage that might be used will need to be determined in greater detail if the project moves forward.

River Falls, Wisconsin has an extensive system of building placards throughout their historic downtown. The placards appear to be made of etched metal covered with a plastic protective barrier. The signs are located on individual buildings and the focus of interpretation is the building itself.

La Crosse, Wisconsin has an extensive historic walking tour in its downtown. A historic walking tour map keys significant buildings and is available as a handout and also made public in one of several informational kiosks in the downtown. The historic signage itself appears to be wrought iron posts with small oval signage placards on top.

Houghton, Michigan recently installed a historic walking tour in its downtown. Unlike other historic signs, Houghton chose to focus its interpretation on key events and stories from the past rather than simply describing the history of a particular building. The signs are freestanding, with color photographs and text displayed on weather resistant plastic sheeting.

Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin has an extensive downtown walking tour comprising several dozen small metal signs, which sit atop a wooden pole. The signs are covered with a simple awning to protect them from the elements.



Historic Interpretation Walking Tour

There are several potential sites that could make up a walking tour in downtown Suring. The historic bridge, a historic cabin (located outside of town but which could possibly be moved into town), and several downtown buildings have been identified as candidates.

Regarding the bridge, the history of iron bridges in the US is pretty interesting. Iron bridges were a pretty broad based innovation in the US that arose from advances in steel manufacturing technology. The early iron bridges changed rural areas substantially because they enabled (along with the development of roads) reliable vehicular transport. Bridges are a good starting point to discussions about technology, transportation, economic development, engineering, local industry, manufacturing, etc.

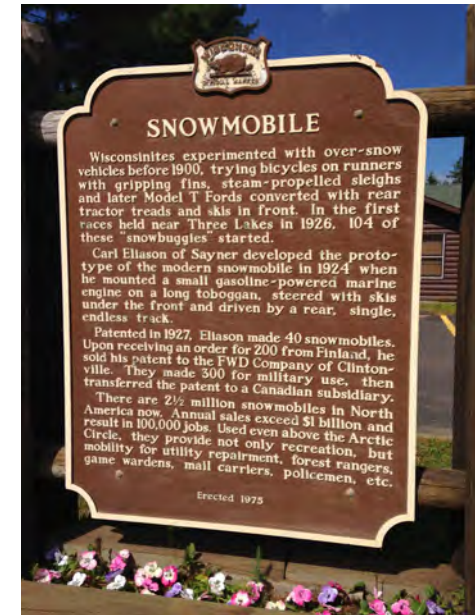
The bridge in Suring was built in 1936 and possibly manufactured in Wausau. It was preserved to make way for a new bridge and placed beside it on new abutments. Iron truss bridges were being invented and put in place in the US as early as the 1840s, but those were wrought iron and cast iron bridges. This bridge is structural steel and has more in common with skyscrapers. It's pretty late, but still a link to that general historical thread.

Regarding the log cabin, there are conservation protocols of all kinds for conserving log cabins. However, based on the condition of the bridge and the cost of restoring it and transporting it into the Village is may be a lower priority candidate for interpretation.

The map on the following page indicates several potential historic sites for interpreting Suring's historic downtown. A walking tour in the downtown could be combined complimented with interpretation of the historic iron bridge or other significant landmarks in the broader community.

The list of 8 historic sites the Historical Society would target for a walking tour are: the bridge; the Methodist Church; The Boarding House; the Union Hardware, which is now Beyer Furniture; the Dr. Conard office & hospital, now Lois Brazeau's sporting goods store; the Bank, which is now First Merit; the Athearn Hotel, now Legends; and the Groniger Buildings, which are now partly vacant & The Eagles Nest

The Wisconsin State Historical Society and the National Trust for Historic Preservation are both good resources to tap into as the Village and the Suring Area Historic Society move forward with a historic interpretation program. The Preservation Nation Blog features stories, news, and notes related to local preservation efforts as well as links to dozens of other related sites. It may be a good resource to continue researching other case studies.





- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Historic Bridge | 4 Gröninger Brothers Opera House & Hotel | 7 Dr. Canard Office & Hospital | ? Information Kiosk |
| 2 Railroad & Depot | 5 Methodist Church | 8 Athearn Hotel | 1 Historic Walking Tour Interpretation Sites |
| 3 Suring Boarding House | 6 Union Hardware | 9 The Bank |  Potential Historic Mural Sites |

**Village of Suring
Community Revitalization Plan**

Historic Interpretation



SURING PARKS & TRAILS

A primary focus of this report was the examination of Suring's existing parks to determine how they could be improved to support the revitalization of the community. Two public hearings were held and a survey was conducted to gather resident's preferences regarding future park improvements. 250 surveys were distributed with the utility bills in July 2014. Of those, 22 were returned for a response rate of 8.8%. Results of the survey are summarized in the bar chart below. Playground, bike and pedestrian trails, and picnic facilities received the highest number of "high priority" ratings by respondents.

Respondent's recommendations for improving Veterans Memorial Park included:

- Food Stand should be remodeled and improved
- Food Stand improvement and blacktop roadway
- Add better playground equipment (2)
- Music in the park nights – country, polka, bluegrass, gospel...
- Soccer for school aged kids

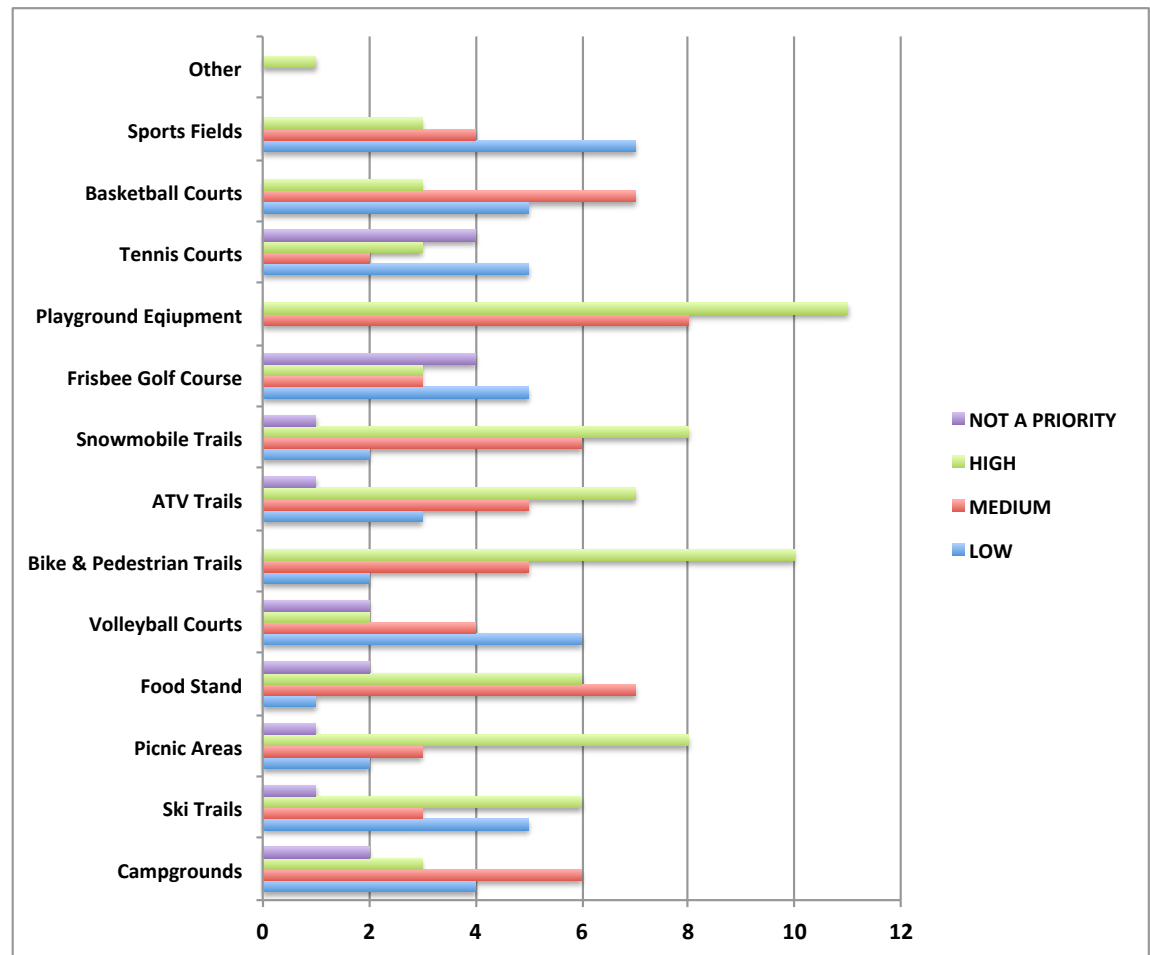
- Better marketing (awareness) for the park off the main road
- Frisbee golf in Algoma – our 18-21 year old grandsons love it. Some woods are part of it. It's reasonable (free) and challenging. Cheap to maintain.
- Road through park resurfaced
- Toilets
- Put some decent playground equipment for the kids

Recommendations for improving Riverside Park

- Bring back the deer
- Kiosk with information
- More playground equipment (2)
- Garbage receptacles
- Bathrooms
- More picnic tables
- More playground equipment – satisfied
- Benches
- Anything to get people to stop and have a pleasant experience
- Paint boundary lines on the tennis courts
- Picnic areas with real bathrooms – not porta-potties

General comments included:

- Plantings in the public and private areas to enhance the general setting of the Village
- Skateboard park so kids don't have to get hurt jumping off the back dock of the post office and bank's curbs
- Ski trails would be great! I have to go outside of town for that



A SWOT Analysis also suggested several park and trail related opportunities including:

- Recreational activities on the river and parks year round
- Cleaning up the waterfront areas

Veterans Memorial Park

Veterans Memorial park provides a wide array of activities for different user groups in and around Suring. However, the amount of space is limited given the large number of activities which occur there including: a children's playground, sports fields, baseball diamond, band shell, tractor pull area, a food stand, and the VFW building. In addition the park hosts the annual Labor Day festival, which brings in carnival rides and other activities. The park is a strong asset for the community and with better marketing regionally, and stronger linkages to the downtown, could play a greater role in stimulating more visitors to Suring, which in turn could support tourism development and local businesses.

A primary concern among residents and local non-profit organizations is the current condition of the food stand in Veterans Memorial Park. The food stand is an important source of income for several local service clubs and non-profit organizations, which serve food and beverages at the food stand during major events such as the Labor Day festival.

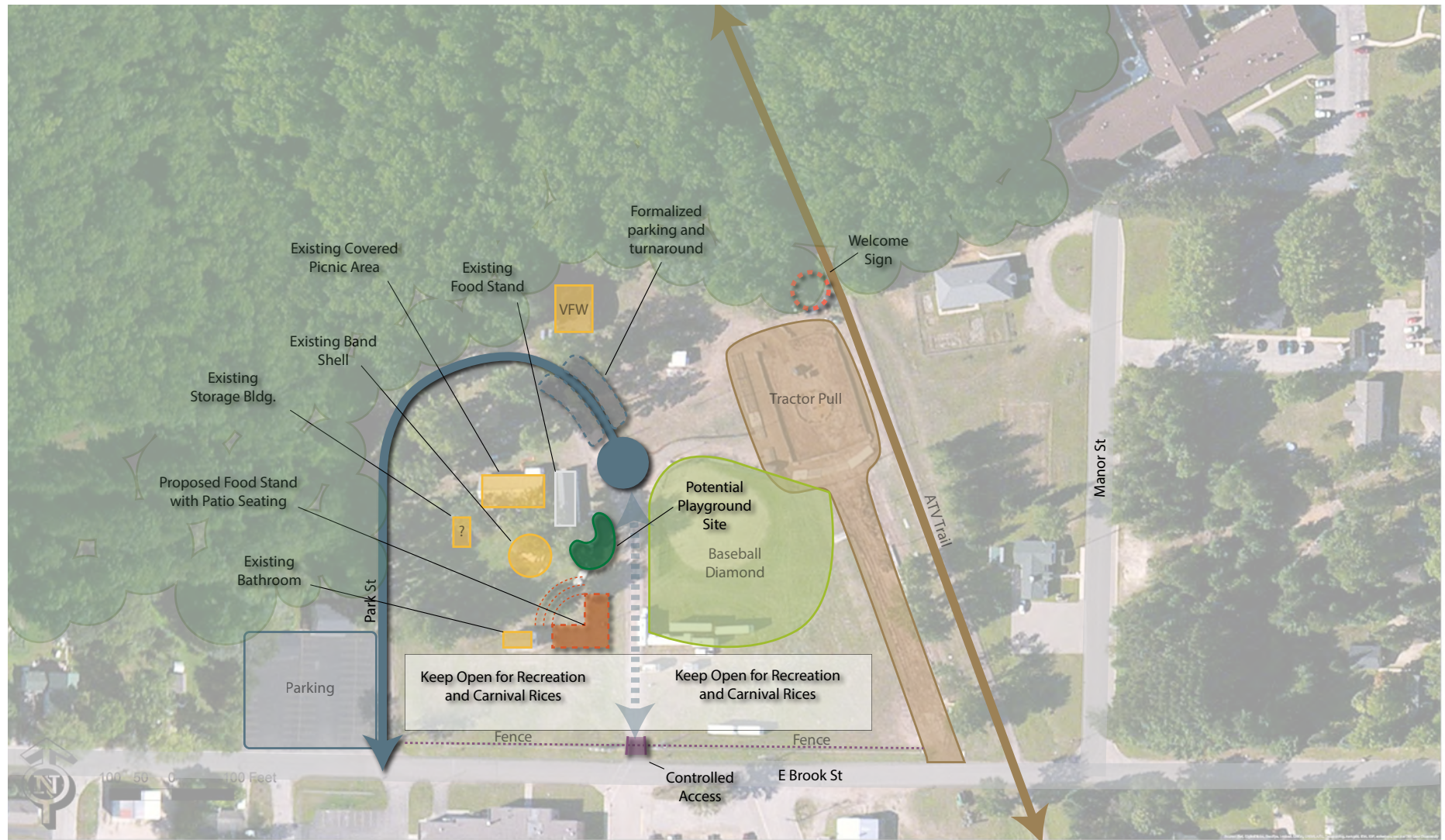
An evaluation of the existing Veterans Park layout and its uses was conducted to assist the Village with planning for future changes that would enhance the park. Several meetings were held with the Village and stakeholders to better understand the parks current uses, what worked and what needed improvements. A summary of public input is bulleted below:

- Baseball diamond used by little league and general public (no changes required at this time)
- Bathrooms – The Village would like to keep

or incorporate into new shelter. Note: the current bathrooms do not meet ADA accessibility requirements

- Band Shell – The Village would like to keep
- Pie shed – The Village would like to have it removed as it is in very poor condition
- Concession stand – Residents and Village leaders would like it removed as it is in very poor condition. Picnic areas should be made available in conjunction with a new facility.
- Open / covered park structure – This works well but is in low area that is often wet
- Tractor pull area – It works well in current location
- Existing VFW Post and Shelter, to the north, are not part of the Village's park and require no changes, however their location and functionality need to be considered in the overall park layout.
- Other public comments (including comments related to overall park system) – Butterfly garden, more benches for sitting, better children's playground equipment, lighting, blacktop driveways and better defined parking, better picnic facilities, electronic marquee signage directing visitors to parks and other locations in town, fencing along ATV trail, more bleacher seating, bring back the deer park, ATV trail from River Road to Village of Suring across the historic bridge, electrical upgrades at Veterans Memorial Park, handicap accessible parking, placement of historic log cabin at Riverside Park, garbage containers, painting of historic bridge, better restrooms, sewer service to the American Legion's building, remove the chain link fence





along Brook Street, strengthen trail connections.

The park topography of the park is very low toward the back or north side of the park, where most of the existing facilities are located. The grade raises 3 to 4 feet at about the mid-point of the park toward the south, where the restrooms are currently located. The lower area at the back of the park is subject to frequent flooding or damp conditions, especially in the spring when the adjacent river is high. The open area of the upper park is typically where carnival rides are set up. See the figure on the following page for an illustrated summary of existing park infrastructure and proposed improvements.

In response to the Village of Suring's request for a new park concession stand several initial options for shelters with varying layouts from a single concession stand to multiple station concession stand with various interior and exterior seating capacities were developed. In addition, the CDA also reviewed a few existing park pavilion images to get a better understanding of the preferred pavilion look (See images on the following pages).

It was determined that the Village would like to have a pavilion with the following attributes:

- Indoor seating area for 100 -125 persons with attached warming kitchen
- Exterior / covered seating area for 100 – 125 persons
- Concession stands with at least 3 service windows and adequate prep space for preparing and selling
- The food stand should be attached to existing restrooms or create new restrooms within the new facility
- The food stand should be located on the upper end of the park – where grade is higher
- The food stand should support tourism development efforts by serving as a picnic area, providing restrooms, and helping link Suring's community trails

CDA and community meetings were held to review additional

options and locations. It was decided that the best location for the pavilion would be near the south side of the park where it is higher, and to the east of the existing restrooms. This, near the middle of the park location, was selected as it maintains proximity to activities taking place throughout the park. The pavilion will also be located adjacent to an existing North/South service road for easy access by both caterers and those less abled persons.

An 'L-Shaped' plan layout was chosen with one arm extending to the north and another to the west. This focused direction of the pavilion on the existing band shell, so that a natural amphitheater affect could be created down the grade to the band shell.

Three alternative food stand designs were generated and evaluated based on feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. The primary difference between each of the options is the size and layout of the facility. Option #3 was seen as the preferred layout in part because it can be oriented to take advantage of the existing band shell located in the park. The two wings of the building will form an enclosure oriented toward the band shell. The linear layout of the kitchen was designed to facilitate efficient serving of food from multiple bays.

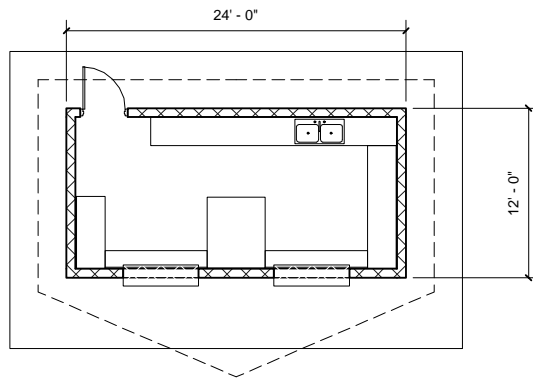
The proposed pavilion will have seating for approximately 125 persons inside and 125 under the shelter. The Kitchen area for the indoor dining area will double as the concession stand support area and will have 3 service windows all under cover of the overall roof. Also located within the pavilion will be new toilet facilities. Depending on the final location of the new pavilion, the existing toilet rooms may remain or be demolished.

It is anticipated that the shelter will be constructed on a concrete slab over footings and foundations – at structural walls and columns. It is recommended that all walls be constructed of decorative concrete block for durability, however a more economical alternative for exterior sheathing could be: metal panels, vinyl siding, or painted/stained

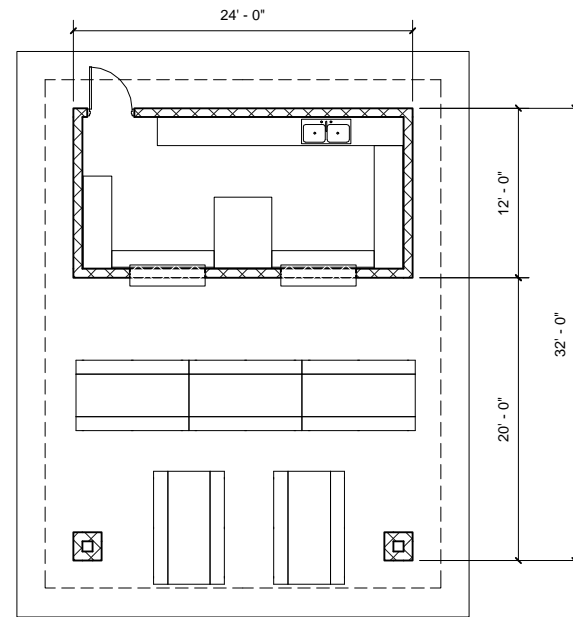
textured plywood sheathing over a wooden post / frame construction. The roofing would likely be asphalt shingles, but could also be a metal standing seam roof. It is our understanding that this facility would be used for only 3 seasons and be shut down and winterized during the off-season.

Precedent images of other community food stands (Right)





CONCESSION STAND ONLY
288 S.F. INTERIOR



CONCESSION STAND W/ COVERED
OUTDOOR SEATING (50)
288 S.F. INTERIOR
480 S.F. EXTERIOR

SEH
1000 N. 1st Street
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85001
PH: 602.381.1000
FAX: 602.381.1001
www.seh.com



SEH FILE NO.
ISSUE DATE
DESIGNED BY
DRAWN BY

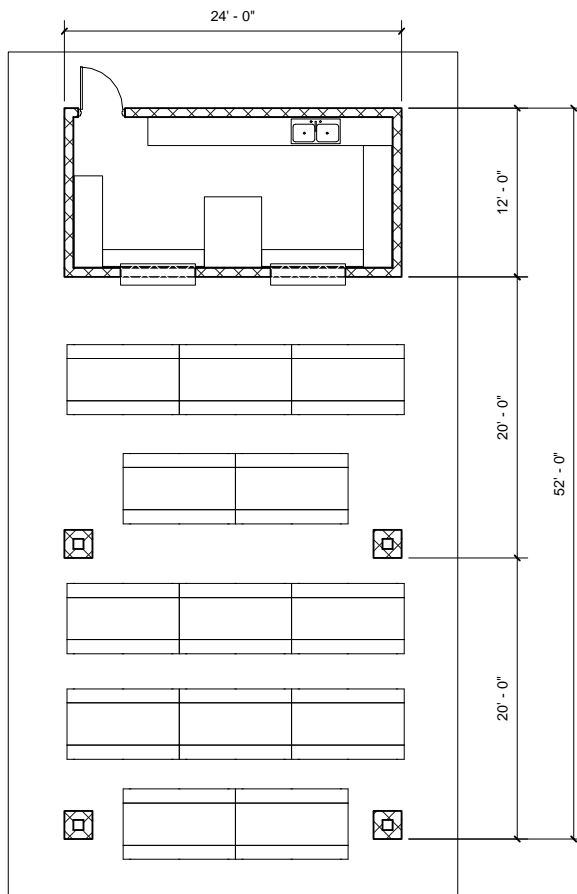
Project Number
Owner
Author
Designer

Owner
SURING

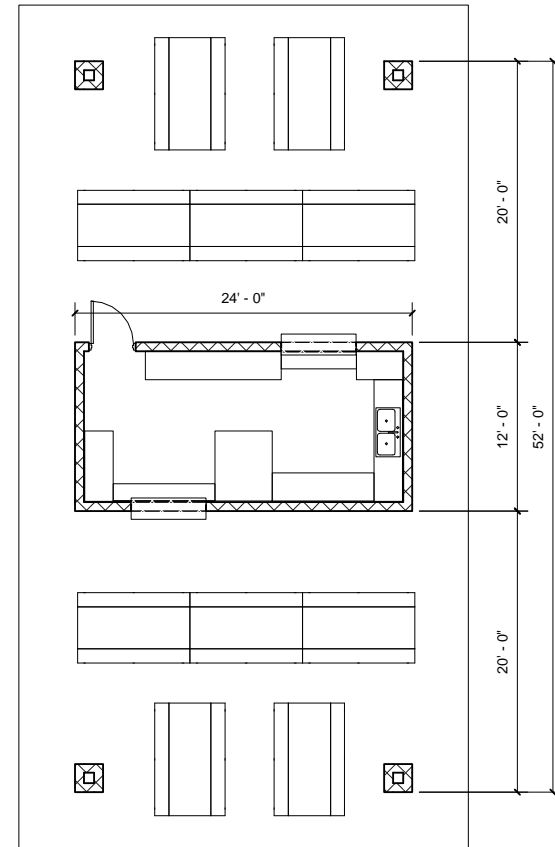
Enter address here

SHEET TITLE
CONCESSION STAND
OPTIONS

FIGURE NO.
DRAWING NO.
100

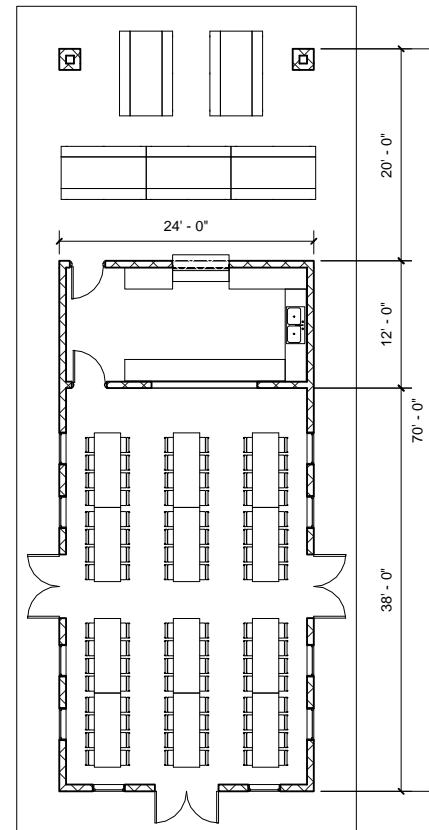
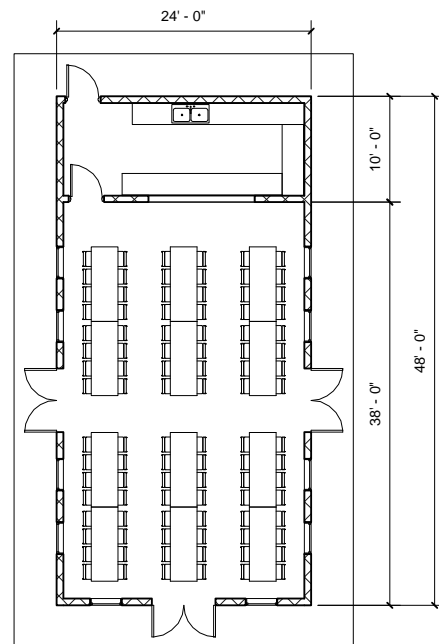


CONCESSION STAND W/ COVERED
OUTDOOR SEATING (100)
288 S.F. INTERIOR
960 S.F. EXTERIOR

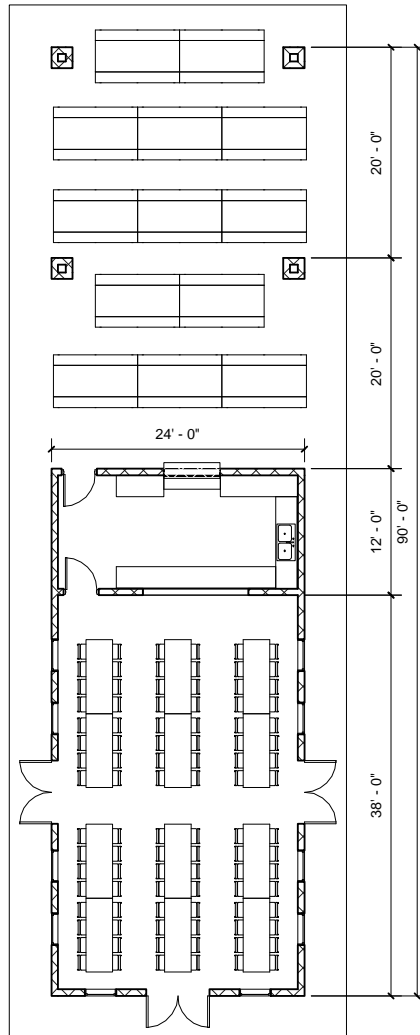


CONCESSION STAND W/
COVERED OUTDOOR SEATING ON
2 SIDES
50 EACH SIDE
288 S.F. INTERIOR
960 S.F. EXTERIOR

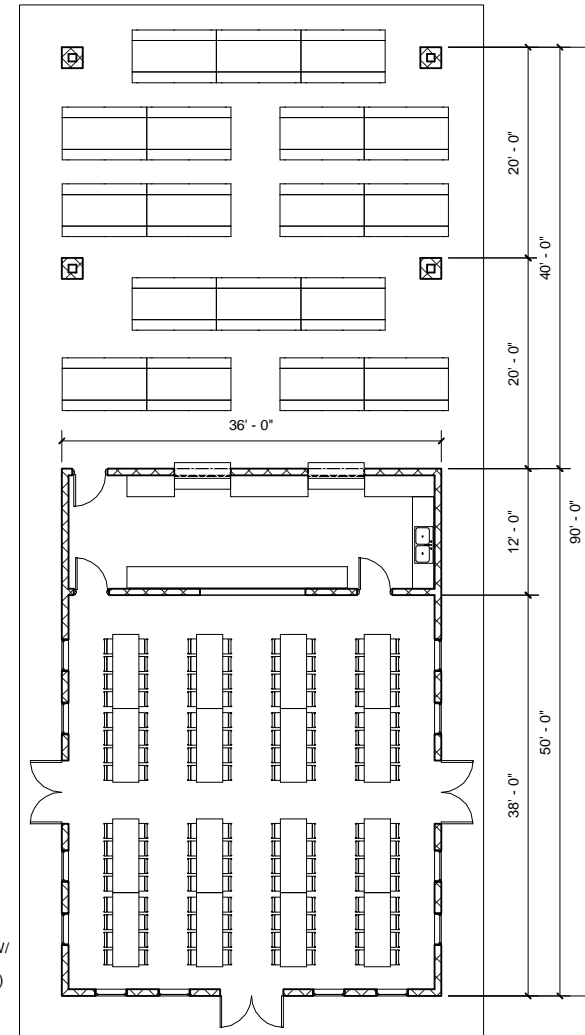
 <small> 1400 West 10th Street Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Phone: 907.562.3800 Fax: 907.562.3801 www.seh.com </small>	SEH FILE NO. ISSUE DATE DESIGNED BY DRAWN BY	Project Number 081914 Author Designer	Owner SURING Enter address here	SHEET TITLE SURING PARK SHELTER OPTIONS	FIGURE NO. DRAWING NO. 101



SHELTER / CONCESSION STAND W/
INDOOR SEATING (100) AND
OUTDOOR COVERED SEATING (100)
1200 S.F. INTERIOR
960 S.F. EXTERIOR



SHELTER / CONCESSION STANDS W/
INDOOR SEATING (130) AND
OUTDOOR COVERED SEATING (150)
1800 S.F. INTERIOR
1440 S.F. EXTERIOR



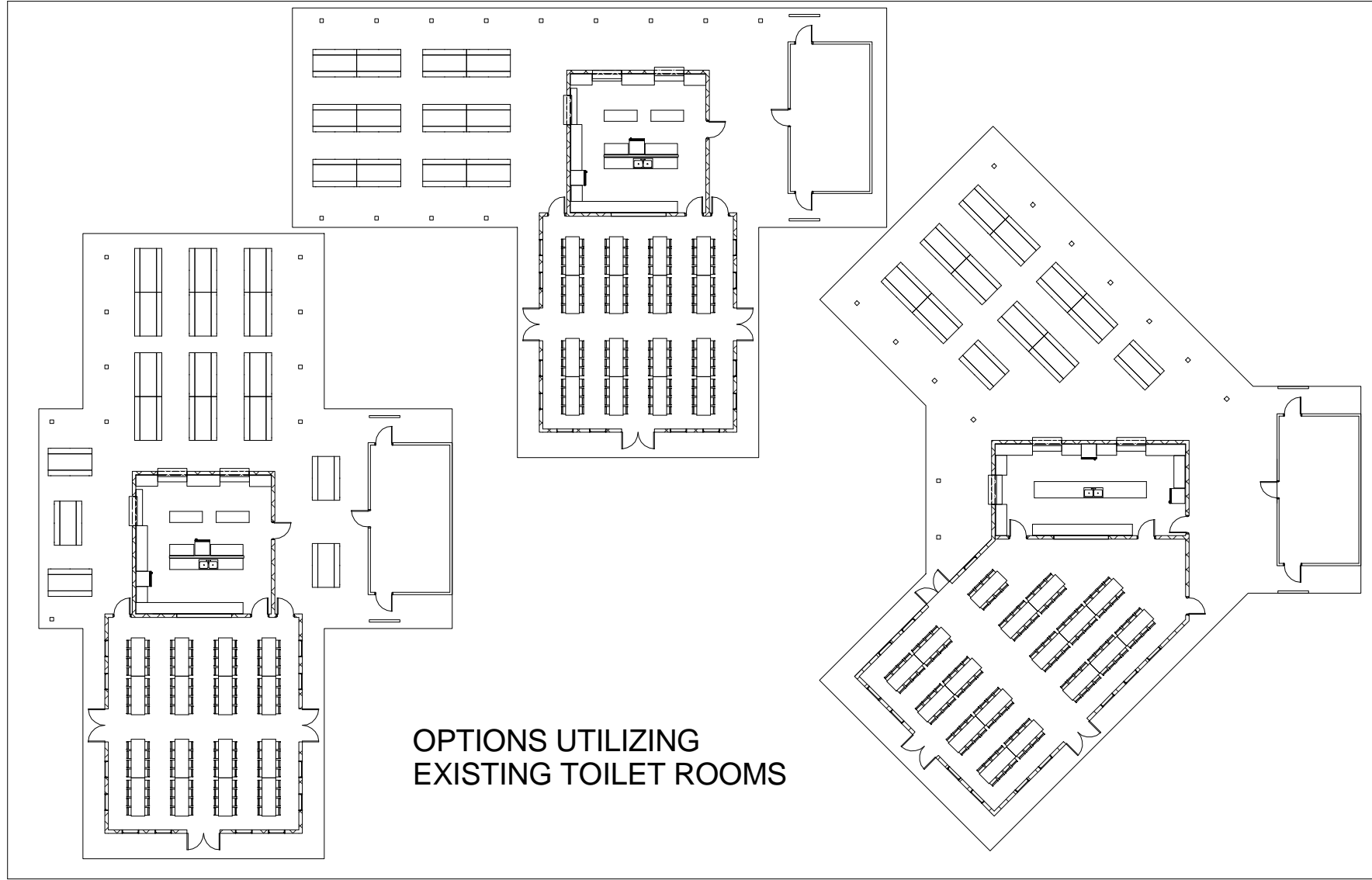
SEH
Suring Engineering & Architects
1000 N. 1st St., Suite 100
Suring, WI 54983
PH: 920.293.2001
www.sehinc.com

SEH FILE NO. 081914
ISSUE DATE 08/19/14
DESIGNED BY Author
DRAWN BY Designer

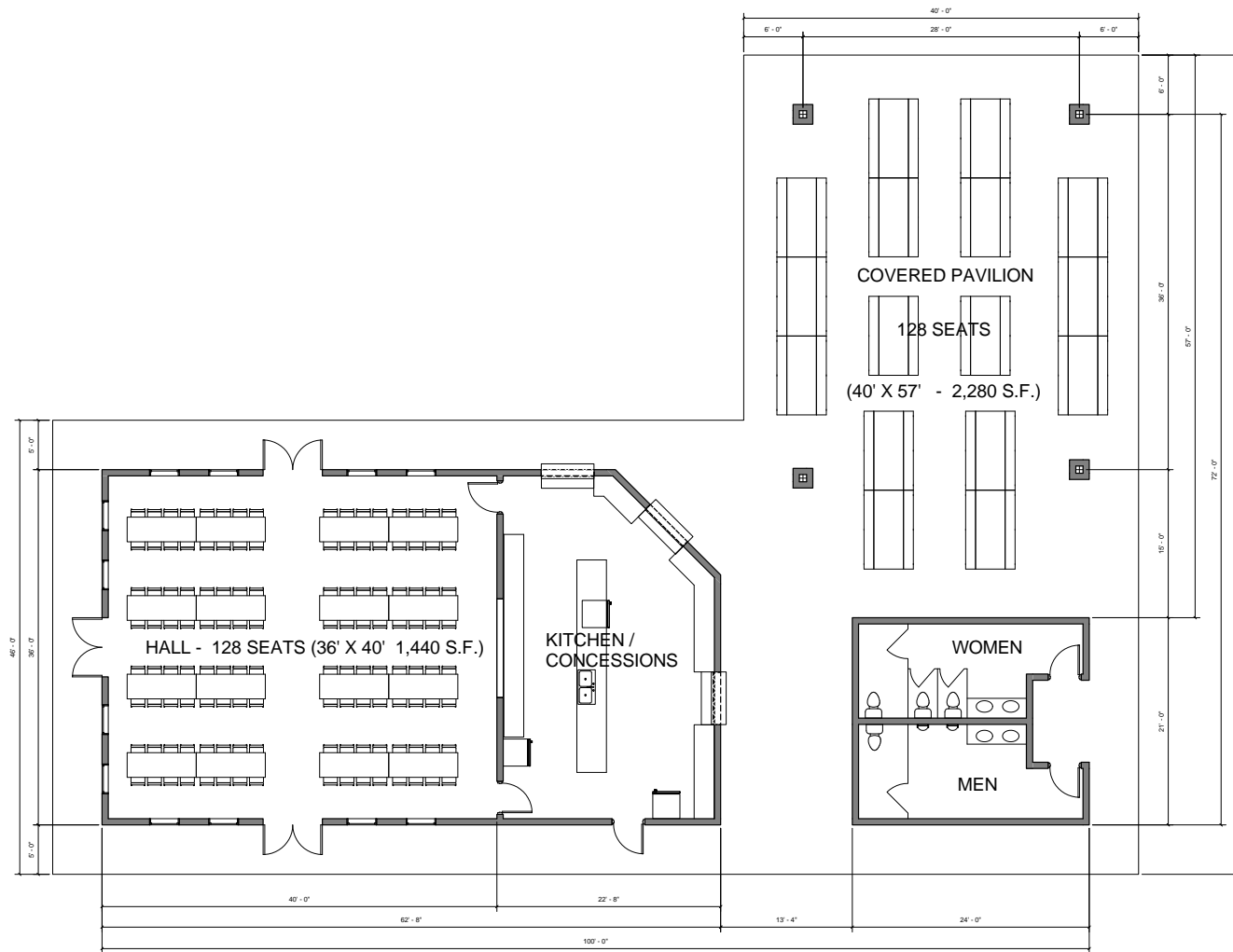
Owner
SURING
Enter address here

SHEET TITLE
**SURING PARK SHELTER
OPTIONS**

FIGURE NO.
DRAWING NO.
103

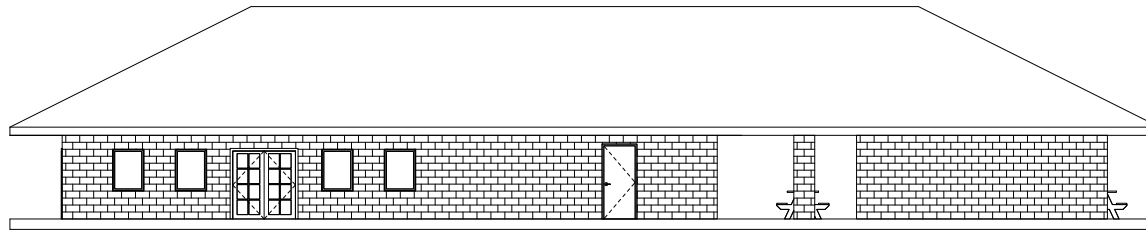


 <small>SEH</small> <small>1425 North 11th Street, Suite 300 Phoenix, AZ 85003-3000 (602) 944-3333 www.sehaz.com</small>	SEH FILE NO. ISSUE DATE DESIGNED BY DRAWN BY	Project Number 0811814 Author Designer	Owner SURING Enter address here	SHEET TITLE SURING PARK SHELTER OPTIONS	FIGURE NO. DRAWING NO. 104

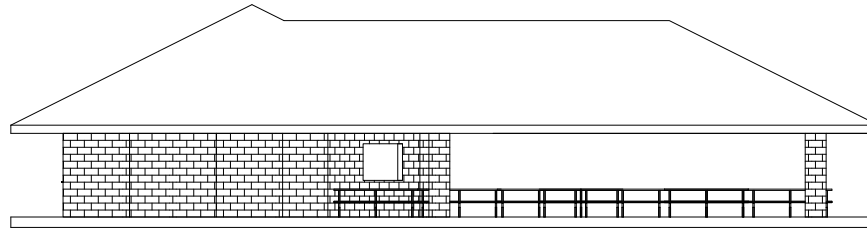


PAVILION FLOOR PLAN

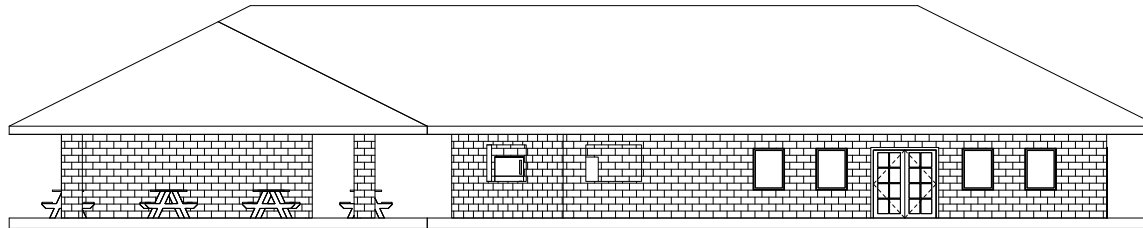




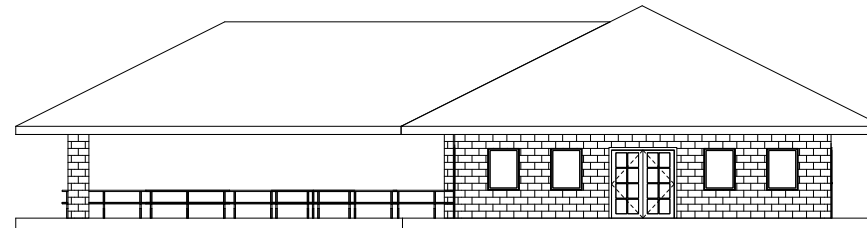
① SOUTH ELEVATION
3/16" = 1'-0"



② EAST ELEVATION
3/16" = 1'-0"



③ NORTH ELEVATION
3/16" = 1'-0"



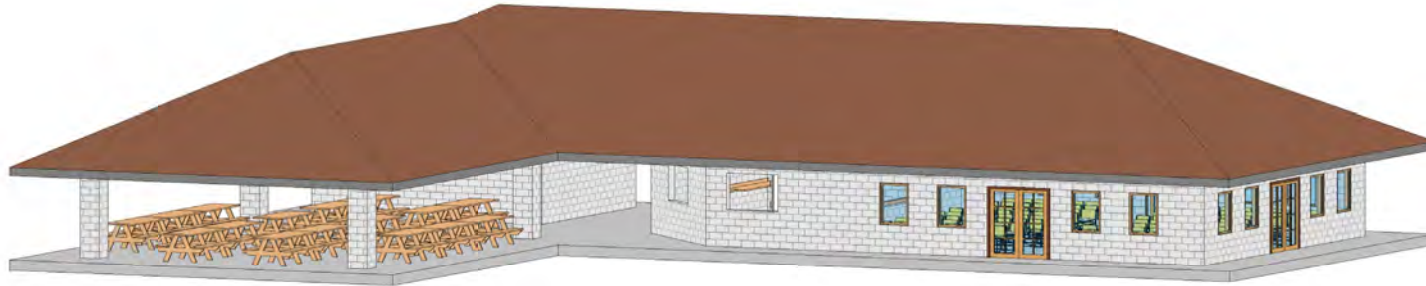
④ WEST ELEVATION
3/16" = 1'-0"



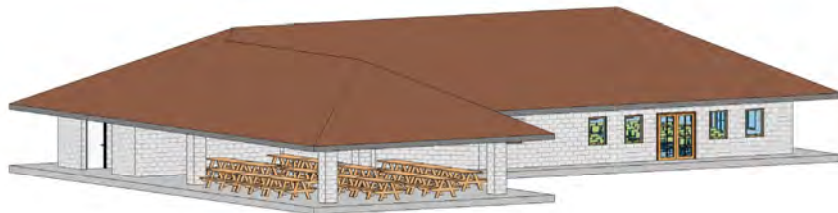
SURING REVITALIZATION PLAN

| 920.360.2800 main | 888.968.8166 fax | 425 West Water Street, Suite 710C | Appleton, WI 54911 | www.sehinc.com | © 2013 |

SURING, WISCONSIN 05.1514



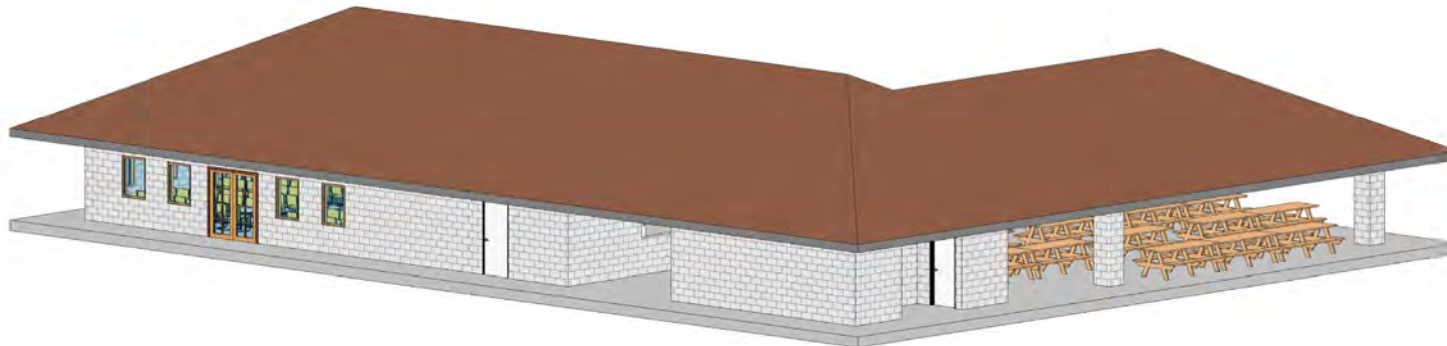
VIEW FROM BAND SHELL



VIEW FROM BALL DIAMOND



VIEW FROM SOUTH



VIEW FROM SOUTH EAST

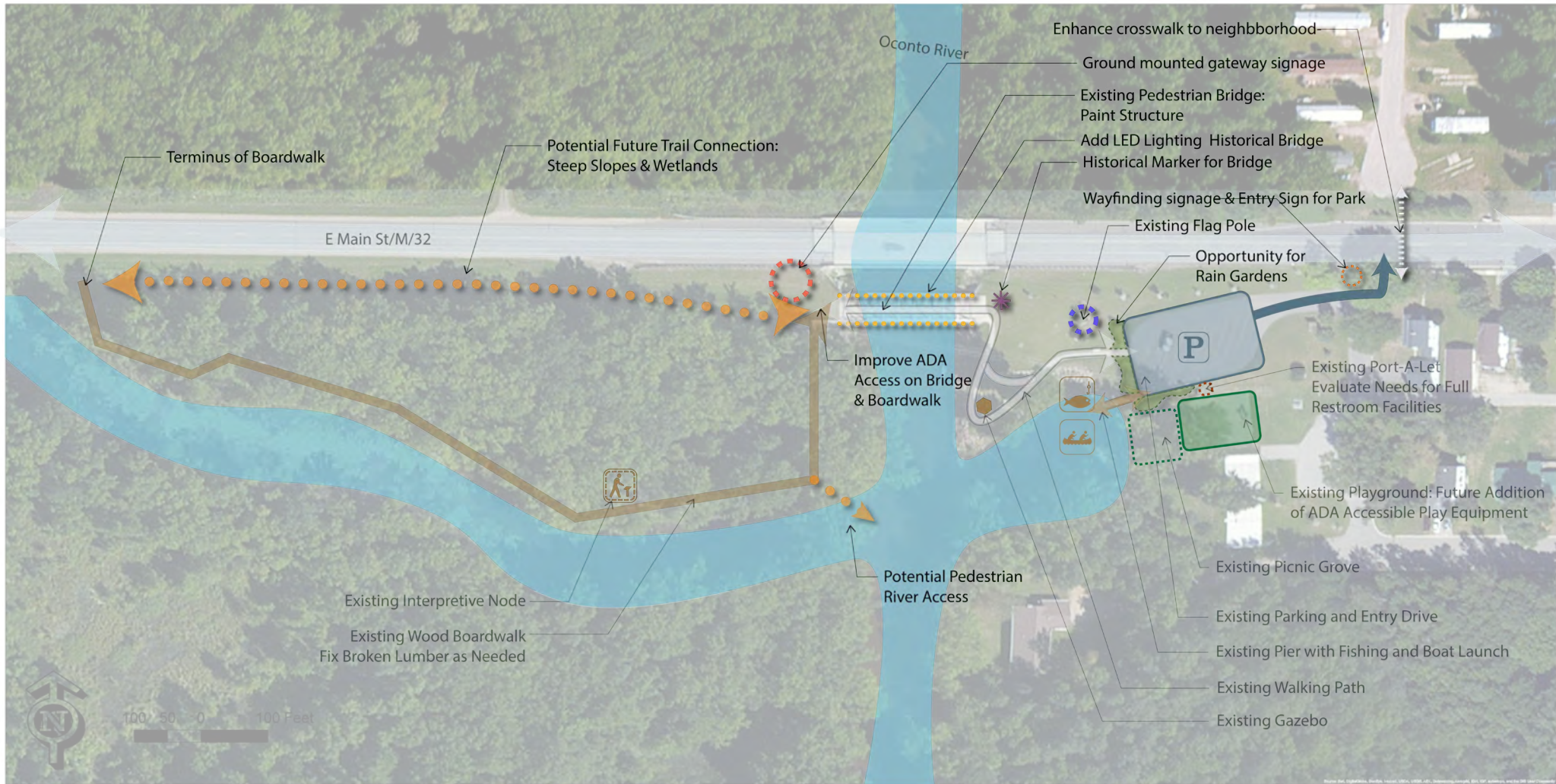
Riverside Park

Riverside Park is in excellent condition. It serves as the gateway to Suring from the west and creates a strong image of Suring when one enters from that direction. The park is heavily utilized for fishing and walking, and is a popular spot for taking high school graduation and prom pictures.

The park contains a playground, gazebo, nature trail, historic bridge, flag pole, picnic area, and boat launch.

As a gateway, the Riverside Park area provides an opportunity to welcome and orient visitors as they come into town. The current signage, however, is not properly oriented toward vehicles passing by on Main Street. Gateway signage should be located just west of the bridge, perhaps using an attractive ground mounted sign with the Village's new logo. Wayfinding signage oriented to vehicle traffic at the intersection of E. Main Street and West St. is also recommended. See the 'Downtown Suring' chapter of this report for more discussion on wayfinding at Riverside Park.





Riverside Park

The following additional opportunities were identified for Riverside Park:

LED lighting

As part of the planning process the Village reviewed alternatives to light the bridge using LED technology. Several precedent images from similar bridges using LED lighting were reviewed. LED lighting will allow the Village to create seasonal (or even daily) changes to the look and feel of the lighting through the use of different colors.

Trail extension

Extending the existing nature trail to complete a loop would create a stronger destination for those seeking a walk, bird watching, or nature observation activities. Right of way and wetland constraints may make this challenging, however.

ADA accessibility

Future improvements to the park should bring facilities into compliance with ADA accessibility requirements.

Rain gardens

Placement of rain gardens to capture runoff from the parking area could be grant eligible and provide an environmental educational opportunity.

Information kiosk

Additional signage to make visitors aware of what the park has to offer (nature trail, boat launch, etc..) could be located in the park. Regional maps showing upstream and downstream boat access, as well as other tourist

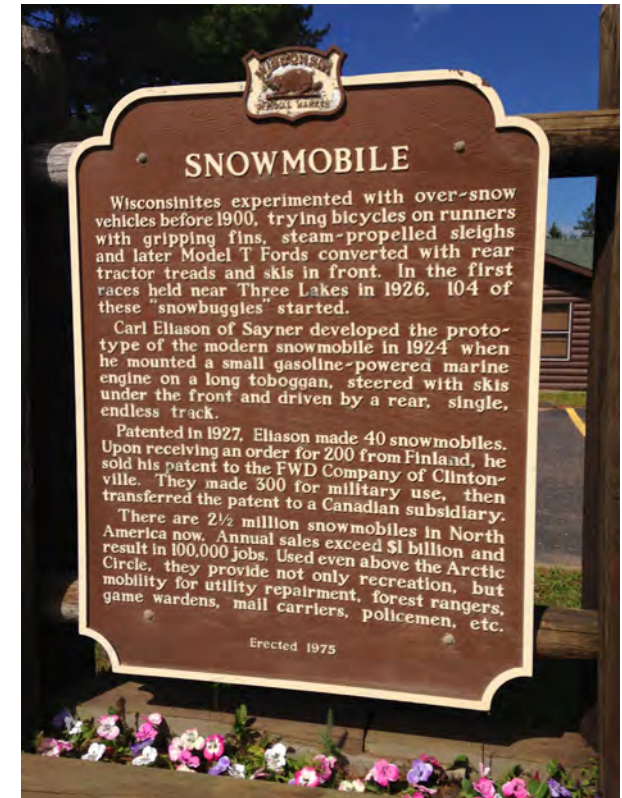
information (downtown businesses, area trails, etc...) at this location are also recommended.

Historical marker

A larger, State affiliated historical marker for the bridge would make sense at this site (See history section of report for more information). Due to the deteriorated condition of the log cabin shown in the photo above, it is recommended that the historical interpretation at Riverside Park focus on the existing iron bridge rather than attempting to move the log cabin to the park.

Improved pedestrian access

Crosswalk markings linking the park to the adjacent neighborhood north of Main Street would also help slow traffic down. Access to the river from the nature trail is also recommended.







DOWNTOWN SURING



As previously discussed in this report, Suring contains a number of interesting and relatively well preserved historical buildings that contribute to the pedestrian experience in downtown. The downtown also possesses several interesting landscape details. Examples include benches outside several businesses inviting pedestrians to sit, a community mural, and the 45th parallel monument outside the library.

Making the downtown more welcoming, accommodating, and comfortable can be achieved through investments in public art, pedestrian scale lighting, banners, murals, plantings, and pocket parks. However, these items can be costly and do not guarantee success. Too many communities have invested large sums of money beautifying their downtowns in hopes of revitalizing them, only to end up with “decorated coffins” comprised of struggling or empty businesses.

This Plan recommends a more thoughtful and targeted approach to enhancing the downtown area, based on the following set of guiding principles:

Target investments in a small area

Often times communities will design downtown improvements throughout what was once the entire historic downtown. As shopping has migrated from downtowns to suburbs and the malls, most downtowns occupy too large of a geographic area. Concentrating improvements in a smaller geographic area is less costly and provides the best opportunity to strengthen a truly walkable, pedestrian oriented downtown.

Leverage Suring's unique history

Suring still possesses a concentration of historic buildings in its downtown. Preserving them and leveraging them to create a stronger downtown should be a priority. While lighting, banners and other improvements are also important, Suring's concentration of historic buildings sets it apart from many other communities its size.

Focus on place making

Place making is a strategy for improving public spaces, neighborhoods, and downtowns. It focuses on capitalizing on the community's own unique assets, and providing an opportunity for those in the community to share their inspirations through active participation in creating better public spaces. The Project for Public Spaces diagram illustrates the four key attributes of successful public spaces: Sociability, Uses & Activities, Access & Linkages, and Comfort & Image.

What Makes a Successful Place? Great spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. What makes some places succeed while others fail? In evaluating thousands of spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) found that successful places have four key qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit. PPS developed The

Place Diagram as a tool to help people develop great spaces in their communities.

The Village has embraced this approach through previous efforts such as saving the historic bridge and the enhancements at Riverside Park. The proposed pavilion at Veterans Memorial Park is another good example of the Village embracing a place-based approach to community development.



Downtown Framework Plan

The Downtown Framework Plan provides a summary of the priority projects identified for Suring. This Plan recommends the Village concentrate the majority of public improvements within a well-defined historic downtown area. General suggestions for defining and improving the area include:

Pedestrian scale lighting & banners

Pedestrian scale lighting with banners can be used to define the historic core of downtown Suring. Applying the new Village logo to banners would be a highly visible way of helping communicate the Village's brand. As mentioned above, this Plan recommends the Village introduce pedestrian scale lighting and banners in a very limited geographic area in order to concentrate the visual impact. The Village should consider targeting roughly a two-block area from Village Hall to the east along Main Street. This could be done in phases, as funding is available. It is recommended that the Village invest in high quality, long-lasting lighting with banners, rather than placing less expensive banner only poles in the downtown.

Street trees and landscaping improvements

Successful downtowns thrive in part because people park their cars and visit multiple businesses or destinations by foot. A comfortable walking environment will encourage visitors to do so. Downtown Suring has some flower boxes but lacks shade trees. This Plan recommends the Village install a limited number of trees along Main Street to create a more pedestrian friendly environment. While this strategy may be challenging east of the Nicolet State Trail, until future road reconstruction is undertaken, the Village owned property west of the trail should be a priority. In particular, a couple of shade trees adjacent Village Hall and the library would make a strong impact.

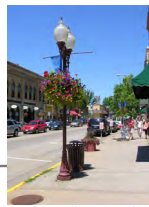




Historic Bridge with Colored LED Lighting



Historic Bridge Interpretive Signage



Pedestrian Scale LED Lighting



Pocket Park with Info Kiosk



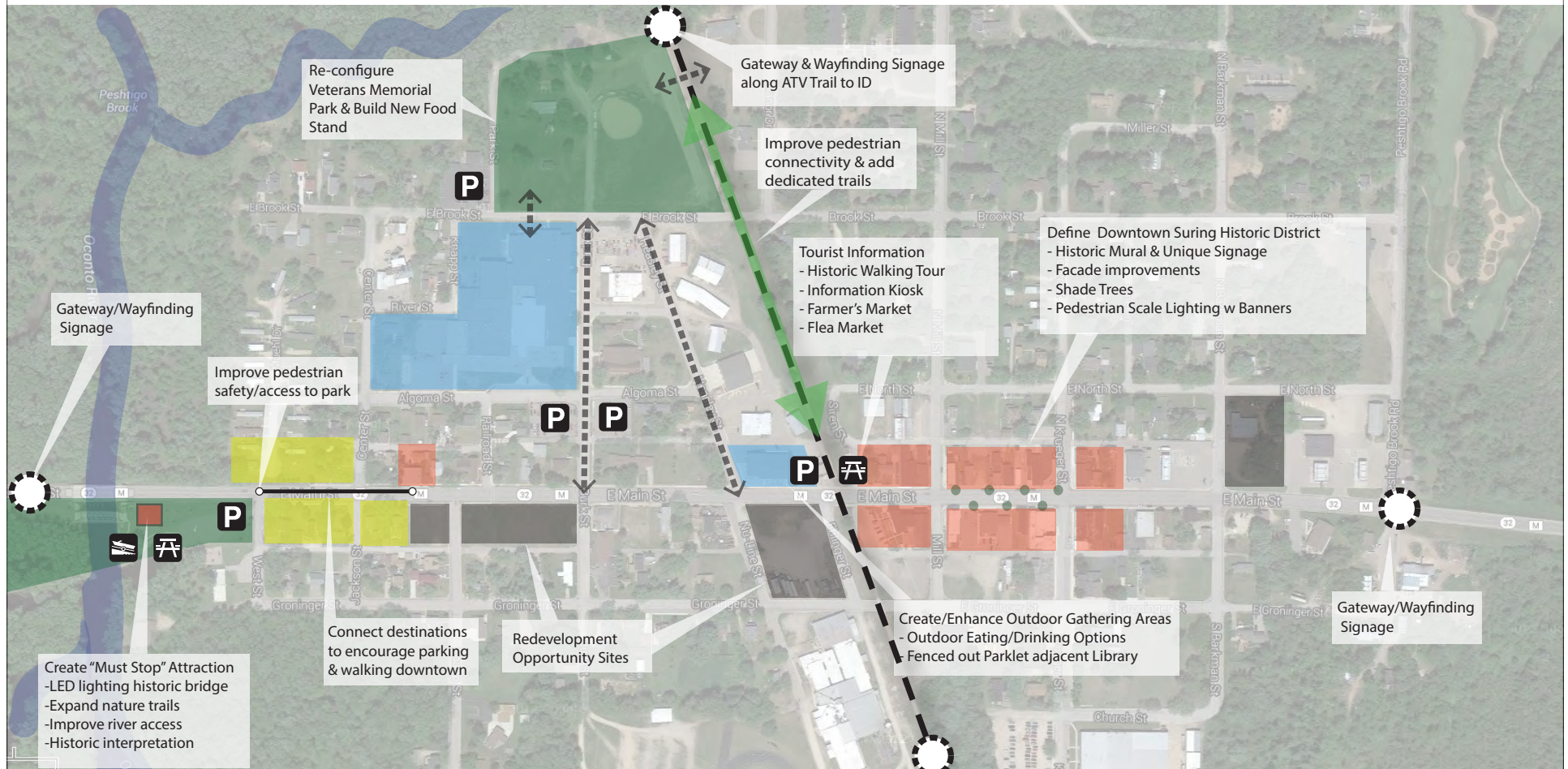
Wayfinding Signage



Historic Tour Marker



Outdoor Eating/Drinking in Park



Mural celebrating Lake Michigan & local History



Mural celebrating Trout stream



Historic Murals, Signage, & Lighting



Historic Walking Tour Marker



Wayfinding Signage



Farmer's Market/Flea Stand



Historic Facades & Pocket Park

Village of Suring Community Revitalization Plan

Downton Framework Plan and Features

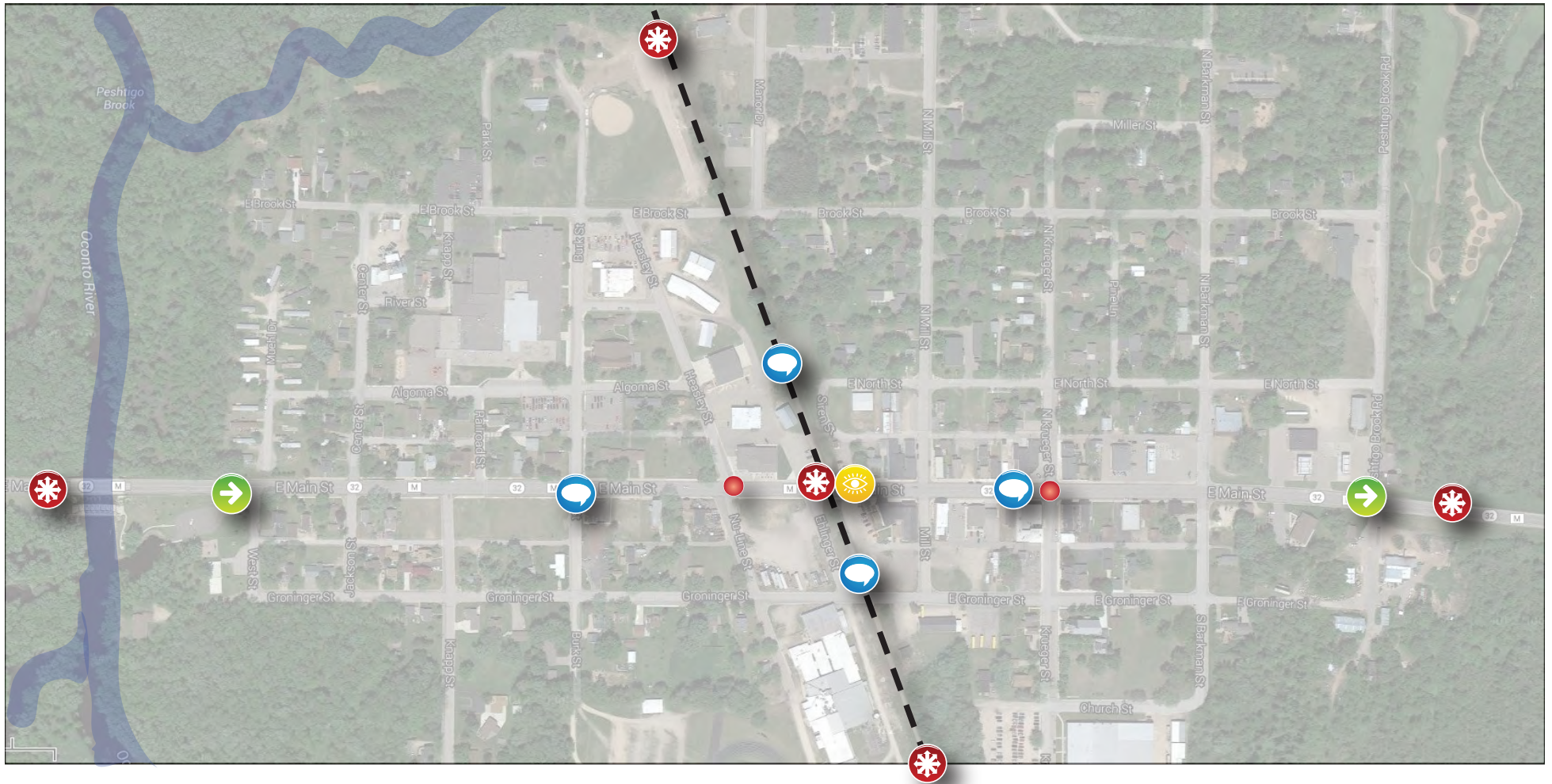


Wayfinding

Wayfinding was identified as a key issue for Suring, in particular for users of the Nicolet State Trail. This Plan recommends that signage be developed that helps trail users and other visitors orient themselves and easily find their destinations. New signage should also be designed and implemented to reinforce Suring's unique history and sense of place. Signage should be deployed near the entrance to the Village, but not necessarily at the exact physical edge of the Village. Rather, it should be located where the Village would like to signal to visitors that "they have arrived" someplace.

Welcome signage and way-finding signage should be used strategically to promote Suring businesses and strengthen the Village's image. As with the pedestrian lighting, signage should be used sparingly and located at the appropriate locations. There are two signage/monument types that should be implemented: Gateway and Way-finding (Historic interpretive signage is discussed separately in this report).

The wayfinding map illustrates recommended locations for placing future gateway and wayfinding signage.



LEGEND



GATEWAYS: PRIMARY POINT OF ARRIVAL IDENTIFICATION



GATEWAYS: SECONDARY POINT OF ARRIVAL



INFO KIOSK:
ORIENTATION MAPPING
DESTINATIONS,
SERVICES, ETC.



WAYFINDING: PRIMARY DIRECTIONALS
AT DECISION POINTS



WAYFINDING:
SECONDARY
DIRECTIONALS
AT DECISION POINTS



Village of Suring
Community Revitalization Plan

Downtown Wayfinding Plan

Gateways

Gateways can be marked using signage, monuments, or public art. They are used to denote an entrance to a particular part of the community, and are often artistic and visually appealing. Opportunities for strengthening Suring's key gateway areas include:

1. The area along STH 32 just west of the historic bridge, which serves as an entry point into the community. Ground mounted signage incorporating the Village's logo and using local materials would fit nicely here. This gateway should be kept very low to the ground as to not visually detract from the view of the bridge as you enter the Village from the west.

2. The area just east of the intersection of Peshtigo Brook Road and Main Street, which serves as an entry point into the community. There is already gateway signage at this location. It should eventually be replaced with a simpler, more visually attractive monument style sign with a similar look and feel to what is developed for the western gateway location. Wayfinding messages should be moved to another location (discussed below).

3. The intersection of the Nicolet State Trail and Main Street, which serves as an entrance to historic downtown Suring and also as a transition from a trail riding environment to a downtown environment.

4. The area just east of North Krueger and Main Street, which serves as an entry point into historic downtown Suring and as a transition point from an auto-oriented landscape to a pedestrian oriented landscape. This gateway to historic downtown could be emphasized by incorporating one or more large murals on the side of buildings located near this intersection. The mural(s) could be designed to celebrate the logging history of Suring. Alternatively, they could recreate historic signage referencing Suring's older businesses or buildings.





Examples of Gateways - Signage, Sculpture, Murals

Wayfinding

Wayfinding signs are used to provide key information for visitors. Text and/or mapping can be used to provide information about the area including the name of the area and key destinations such as health facilities, schools, shopping, and recreational facilities. As with gateway signage they should be designed with attention to local history, culture, and the image the community wishes to portray to the outside world. In the case of Suring, the new logo provides an excellent opportunity to apply those visual elements at strategic locations in the community. Exact locations and signage elements should be finalized after additional discussion with community leaders and businesses. Key locations for locating wayfinding signage in Suring include:

1. Along the Nicolet State Trail between E North St. and E Brooke St. (Or further north if the Village wants to encourage trail users to visit Veterans Memorial Park). Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to downtown businesses.

2. Along the Nicolet State Trail just north of Groninger Street. Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to downtown businesses.

3. The intersection of West and East Main Streets. Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to Riverside Park, Suring Historic Bridge, the Library, and the historic downtown business district.

4. The intersection of South Barkman and Main Streets. Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to Riverside Park, Veterans Memorial Park, Library Nicolet State Trail, and the historic downtown business district.

5. The intersection of the Nicolet State Trail and Main Street.

Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to Riverside Park, Veterans Memorial Park, and the Library.

6. The intersection of Main St. and Burke St. Wayfinding signage at this location could direct visitors to the school, Post Office, Veterans Memorial Park, and the historic downtown business district.

The use of the Village's new logo and the use of local materials (where appropriate) that reflect Suring's history should be priorities for deploying new signage. For example, Indiana Dunes State Park uses wood construction that reinforces the natural environment of the area.

It should be noted that the golf course is located outside the study area of this project. However, appropriate way-finding signage should be used to help visitors to the area easily find the golf course and link that area of the community to downtown.



Examples of Wayfinding Signage & Informational Kiosk

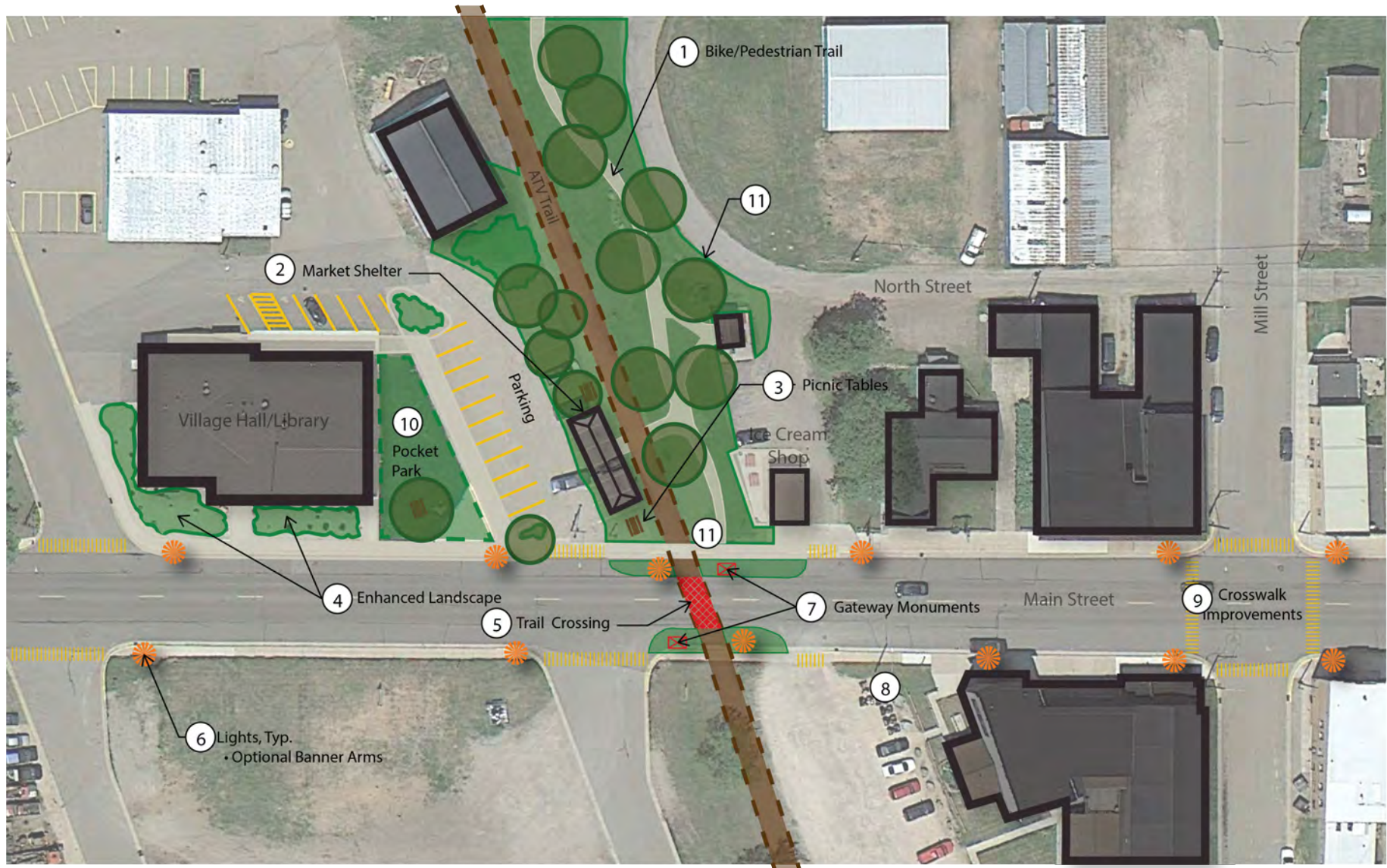
“The Crossing” or “Village Square”

The Downtown Framework Plan also identifies a node at the intersection of Main Street and the Nicolet State Trail where several improvements could work together to create a central gathering place, or central “social district” feature for Suring residents and tourists alike. This area of downtown is important because it currently serves as a focal point for pedestrians and trail users. It also marks a gateway into the historic downtown as you approach from the west.

Eva Boehm’s 2003 capstone thesis paper proposed a similar concept for this site.

The “Crossing” currently serves as a focal point for pedestrian activity in downtown Suring. Often times people can be seen eating or gathering nearby the ice cream stand, or walking to and from their cars to one of the restaurants and bars in the immediate vicinity. The presence of the library and Village Hall also generates both vehicular and foot traffic to the area. In addition, the Nicolet State Trail is a regionally significant trail that crosses through the area bringing a wide variety of users to the downtown. Many park in the Village lot just east of the library. In previous years a road side farm market stand was also attempted at this location. However, the farm market stand was discontinued after one year, perhaps due to construction, which made the Suring location less profitable for the operator.





Village Square/"The Crossing"



There are multiple opportunities to strengthen this part of downtown and turn it into a more activated social gathering area that would attract both residents and visitors to downtown Suring. Several opportunities to develop this area are noted below, with numbers keyed to the accompanying map.

1. Bike and Pedestrian Trail

The community identified additional local biking and pedestrian trails as priorities. Safety was cited as a concern. A paved, handicap accessible trail running parallel to the Nicolet State Trail could serve as a link between downtown, Veterans Memorial Park, Woodlands Nursing Home, and the Peshtigo Brook bridge. The trail could serve as an amenity for senior housing development, support local residents recreational needs, and provide an outlet for tourists looking to walk their pets or let their children stretch their legs.

2. Market Shelter

A farm market pavilion or shelter that doubles as a picnic area and flea market would create a venue for hosting events and getting more traffic to stop downtown. Historically, Suring served as a key market for area farms. The region still has a strong agricultural economy and potential vendors could be identified through 4-H or FFA programs. The local school or retirement home might also consider growing produce to market in downtown Suring. The same farm market pavilion/flea market could double as an outdoor music venue for local musicians to showcase their talents on warm summer evenings. Library patrons, trail users and others drawn to this location for its convenience and good access to parking, trails, restaurants, and the library could also use the facility.

3. Picnic Benches

A few wooden picnic benches would provide additional outdoor seating for visitors to downtown.

4. Enhanced Landscaping

A modest amount of landscaping would improve the overall look and feel of the front entrance to the Village Hall and library. A small butterfly garden or perennial bed could replace some of the rock bedding for example.

5. Trail Crossing

The Nicolet State Trail crossing is a significant and unique recreational asset that bisects the middle of downtown. Currently, the Nicolet State Trail crossing is poorly defined, however adding a couple small bump outs and striping the actual trail crossing across Main Street would create a strong visual cue to motorists that they are approaching “the downtown.” These improvements, in conjunction with wayfinding signage and additional outdoor activities (dining, flea market, etc...) would encourage traffic to slow down and provide a better opportunity for marketing key downtown destinations at this important gateway.

6. Pedestrian Scale Lighting

Pedestrian scale lighting with banners. Decorative and pedestrian scale lighting (with banners) would help define historic downtown Suring. As mentioned earlier, any new lighting or banner posts should be concentrated in a two or three block area of downtown rather than extending along the length of Main Street.

7. Gateway Monuments

Adding one or two monuments where the Nicolet State Trail intersects with Main Street would create a unique



gateway into historic downtown Suring. The monument(s) could reflect a historical theme and serve as another strong cue for visitors that they have arrived at a destination (historic walking tour, restaurants & bars, walking trail, flea market, etc...)

8. Outdoor Dining/Beer Garden.

Currently, the ice cream stand generates most of the visible outdoor pedestrian activity downtown. If other businesses in the downtown, such as the Eagle's Nest, were to add a modest amount of outdoor seating the amount and frequency of outdoor pedestrian activity would increase. The presence of people on the street, eating an ice cream cone, drinking a beer or eating a burger, attracts other people.

9. Improved Crosswalks

Rather than adding bumpouts to Main Street, the area could be made more pedestrian friendly by adding more visible crosswalk striping. The Village should consider doing something unique in this regard. Rather than simply striping crosswalks with horizontal bars, the historic bridge theme could be used as inspiration for doing something different.

10. Pocket Park

The Suring library is a strong asset for downtown and should be better leveraged to support downtown revitalization. For example, Visitors to the library should be encouraged to utilize existing green space just east of the library. Getting more people outside will encourage vehicles passing through downtown Suring to stop and get out of their cars. Other activities that would draw more people to this area include a raised bed gardening area, shade trees and picnic area. The availability of public restrooms and internet access is also a strong incentive for visitors to stop and utilize this location for a picnic or to park and patronize downtown

businesses.

Wayfinding signage should be strategically located that directs visitors to the library and 45th parallel monument. The monument, in turn, needs to be upgraded to provide a better hook for visitors to stop, linger, and take a picture. The improvements mentioned above will help in this regard (trees, picnic table, garden boxes) but will likely not be sufficient. What else could be done?

An over-sized, locally crafted chair, larger vertical carved wooden monument, or large log could be placed in this location. Such a strategy has been used successfully in other small downtowns around Wisconsin. A chair or vertical wooden sculpture could also be located near a tourist destination such as in front of a historic building, or near the Nicolet State Trail crossing.

Taking advantage of the large, highly visible east facing wall of the library provides another opportunity for the Village. A well designed sign incorporating Suring's new logo could be located at this location. Because this site has electrical service, LED lighting could be used to light the sign or mural at night. The same type of color changing, LED lighting used at the historic bridge could be incorporated into the sign as well for consistency.

11. Information Kiosk

An information kiosk in this general location would provide an opportunity to market Suring's businesses as well as other local and regional attractions in the area. It could also serve as the starting point for a historic walking tour. The exact location of an information kiosk should be determined based on additional discussion, with factors such as parking, the trail crossing, and existing pedestrian traffic flows all taken into consideration.



Example strategies to strengthen downtown Suring as the Central Social District



MARKETING THE SURING AREA

SWOT Analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis was completed by a member of the Suring Area Business Association in order to begin to develop a strategy to market the Suring area to benefit residents, businesses, and organizations. A summary of the results is presented below.

Key strengths identified:

- Located on the river
- Located on the recreational trail (tourist attraction)
- Many local non-profit organizations hold community events
- Array of businesses that want to succeed

- Located on one of the routes from Green Bay to the “North”
- Golf course is a tourist attraction
- Quality school with resources the Village could tap into for support
- Generous business owners who donate to many causes

Key weaknesses identified:

- Off of the main highway from Valley to the “North”
- Low community involvement and engagement among the younger/middle aged generation
- Business owners are busy managing their own businesses and families, leaving little time for community service and engagement
- Many community members need to drive 30+ miles to work each day, leaving less leisure time. They often then do their “shopping” in these cities
- Many of the local non-profit organizations comprise an older generation, which could lead to stalled growth in the future if not addressed
- Mosquitoes outdoors

Key opportunities identified:

- Recreational activities on the river and parks year round
- Clean up the waterfront areas
- More partnerships and stronger relationships with the Schools in the area
- Use of technology to better communicate with community members
- More communication with residents outside of the Village

(through technology, print, etc...)

- Sponsor two more wide-spread community events – support the Labor Day festivities even more by assisting with marketing of the event and revitalization of it. It really does benefit the entire town. Design a second community event that involves benefitting multiple businesses and organizations
- Beautify Main Street and beyond to clean up the area. Offer a select number of grants each year that businesses can apply for to paint or improve building exterior, add foliage, hire someone to remove old signage, invest in a new, modern business sign, etc...

Key threats identified:

- Low community involvement and engagement
- Business owners are busy managing their own businesses and families, leaving little time for community service and engagement
- Many community members need to drive 30+ miles to work each day, leaving less leisure time. They often do their “shopping” in these cities
- Lack of tourist attractions
- Aging generation due to economic opportunities – leaders

Marketing Action Plan

In addition to the SWOT analysis several task items were identified including:

1) Provide a Resource to Effectively Help Businesses and Organizations Market to Local Residents.

- a. Website – Create an area on the website for businesses to submit upcoming events and special offers
- b. Weekly email newsletter
- c. Suring Area Facebook Page – Create a page with financial backing for promotions and events.
- d. Website – Create individual business and organization pages.
- e. Provide a color laser printer at Village Hall for businesses to affordably print posters
- f. Create a partnership with 1 to 3 Local Radio Stations to market upcoming events and promotions
- g. Create a Partnership with local newspapers for a “Suring Section.”

2) Marketing to Bring New Visitors, Residents, and Businesses to Suring Area

- a. Following completion of the previous set of tasks, expand the same concept out to a larger geographic area.
- b. Create an event board on the recreational trail, with a covered area for displaying promotional materials.
- c. Partner with Red Maple Golf Course to provide “welcome packets” to out of town golfers

3) Community Involvement and Engagement

- a. Identify opportunities to strengthen relationships with the schools and the younger generation
- b. Engage younger audiences in the growth of local organizations to create community involvement opportunities for residents

4) Banners, Signage, Beautification, and Clean Up of the Area

- a. Provide incentives to local businesses and home owners to clean up or beautify their yards, storefronts, and homes

Logo & Branding

Rural branding is a process of concisely communicating your town’s promise to resident’s and visitors. Because of the focus on tourism, this Plan included development of a new logo for the Village of Suring. Logo development is only one small component of building a community’s brand however. A “brand” is really the perceived community image as a whole. The “logo” identifies the community with a simple, timeless image/graphic.

The consultant team met with the CDA and Suring Area Business Association to discuss the current and visionary culture of Suring, what makes the town interesting, inviting and livable, and to identify the ideal “customer.” The team also researched and learned about the history of the area and how it relates to the present and future.

The central theme, which emerged from the community, is that Suring is a safe, warm, and inviting place. Several tag lines were developed including “Friendly Frontier” and “Serene Safe Suring,” however none of the tag lines was fully embraced by the community so it was not included in the final logo design. The community may choose to develop its own tag line, use its existing tag line (“Fun on the 45th parallel”) or get by without one. A good tag line should differentiate the community, tell a story, have personality, and share what makes the community special.

Each of the logo alternatives focuses on a different aspect of Suring that stood out: Nature, History and the Rivers/Bridge. All of them encompass the basic idea of Suring being a small, accessible, serene and beautiful place.

In preparing the new logo and trying to develop a tag line there was considerable discussion regarding the fact that Suring is on the 45th parallel. Some residents felt this was important and unique. However the designer felt it doesn’t necessarily describe the essence of the town, which she felt should be something more unique to the town, something that describes who Suring is and what Suring has to offer, versus simply a statement of where Suring is. As was noted above the final logo design did not include a tag line.



Applying the Logo

In terms of utilizing the new logo, several opportunities were discussed. For example the Village has an upcoming opportunity to incorporate the new logo when the water tower is repainted sometime in the next few years.

Likewise, there is an opportunity to incorporate the new logo on the east side of the library building, where the electrical wiring is in place which would allow for lighting a nice sign in that location. Attractive gateway and wayfinding signage provide another opportunity to begin utilizing the new logo.







COST ESTIMATES & FUNDING

This section of the report provides approximate costs and potential funding sources for the major capital improvements discussed earlier in the Plan, including:

- Veterans Memorial Park/Pavilion (\$150,000-\$250,000)
- LED Lighting of the STH 32 Historic Bridge/Riverside Park (\$40,000)
- Downtown Improvements (\$420,00-\$475,000)
- Historic Interpretive Signage (\$5,000-\$10,000)
- Tourism/Marketing (No cost identified)

Veterans Memorial Park/Pavilion

The estimated cost of the new pavilion should be between \$150,000 and \$250,000, depending on the materials used and donated construction services. This cost is based on per square foot construction benchmarks and will obviously vary depending on the final chosen design. The following are potential sources of funding for the food stand:

Private Fundraising.

Due to the nature of the project, private fundraising will likely be required. Multiple organizations will benefit from the proposed project and therefore should be expected to contribute financially. Furthermore, the food stand serves many organizations and individuals that do not reside within the Village limits. Therefore, it is only reasonable to expect that the Village taxpayers should not have to pay a disproportionate share of the costs for new construction. To date, the Village has incurred all costs associated with planning a new facility. Furthermore, the Village will provide the land for the new facility. On the other hand, because the facility will be located within the Village it is reasonable to expect that Village residents will have a greater opportunity to utilize the facility on a regular basis compared with non Village residents. Ultimately, the Village and the various non-profits and area service clubs will need to determine a fair and reasonable allocation of total project costs.

One concept to explore for private fundraising for this project would be Kickstarter. This website provides a mechanism for multiple donors to contribute to the project. If promoted well it has the potential for tapping into a broad network of potential donors, such as people who were born in Suring but now live elsewhere. See the following link for an example of a park project funded in part through Kickstarter:

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/777690743/splash-house?ref=nav_search

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). This grant includes several sub programs. It is eligible for projects that acquire or develop recreational lands for outdoor, nature-based recreation. According to the WI DNR “Nature based outdoor recreation” means hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing and other activities where the primary focus or purpose is the appreciation or enjoyment of nature. These other activities may include, but are not limited to, hiking, bicycling, wildlife or nature observation, camping, nature study, fishing, hunting, picnicking, cross-country skiing, canoeing and multi-use trail activities (Emphasis added).

Support facilities for these activities may include, but are not limited to, access roads, parking areas, camping facilities, support facilities for swimming in a natural water body, habitat restoration, utility and sanitation systems, sanitary and shelter buildings, signs, interpretive items, fencing and lighting for the protection of users and other features that enhance nature-based outdoor recreation and/or improve disabled accessibility (Emphasis added).

Grants are available for up to 50% of eligible project costs. The Village will need to have a DNR accepted comprehensive outdoor recreation plan or master plan which has been approved by resolution by the local governing unit in order to be eligible. A county outdoor recreation plan that has been adopted by the town, village or city and that contains sufficient detail related to the grant project may also satisfy the plan requirement. Local governments with qualifying plans receive eligibility to apply for grants for up to five years.

The Village could potentially use the program to help offset a portion of the costs of the proposed food stand. The Village will need to show how the new facility supports nature based outdoor recreation in order to utilize this grant source.

Webpage:<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/ApplyLUG.html>

The cost for implementing the LED lighting of the historic bridge is shown below:

In addition, if improved boating and fishing facilities are seen as a priority at Riverside Park there are other grant opportunities available. A bulleted description is provided below:

Funds can be used to construct fishing piers, boat ramps, motorboat access including parking lots, paths, lighting, restroom facilities. Up to 75% grant eligible, however likely 40%-50%. Last year there was 1.4M in projects but only 315,000 available for funding. Applicants can match with RBF grant funds but can't start project until both grants awarded

Funding can be used to construct docks, ramps, boat wash, simple bathroom, parking lot, access paths, fencing, security, ADA accessibility improvements. Funds can also be used for feasibility studies related to potential improvements. This program could be a good resource to explore options for improving Oconto River as a kayaking/canoeing resource.

They are a possible funding source for boardwalk, fishing piers. Funds are administered through County Forest Administrators. Village would need to work with County. These funds are discretionary and usually on the small side.

The cost estimate for the proposed improvements for the downtown area discussed earlier in the report ranged from \$420,000 to \$475,000. A list of potential funding sources is provided below the cost breakdown.

- 72 Village of Suring Community Revitalization Plan

- Trees = \$3,000
- Parking lot improvements = \$8,000
- Gateway signage (4) = \$4,000-\$12,000 (\$1,000-\$3,000 each)

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) - Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WiDOT). Grants are available for up to 80% of eligible costs for non-motorized improvements, including projects eligible for past programs including Safe Routes to School (SRTS), Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (BFPF) and Transportation Enhancements (TE). This program could potentially fund trail connections between downtown Suring and Veterans Memorial Park or Riverside Park.

Webpage: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/tap.htm>

Community Development Infrastructure Grant (CDIG), Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). This program can fund a wide variety of Downtown related projects, including slum and blight remediation or infrastructure improvements to spur additional private investments in downtown areas are eligible for up to 25% project financing, subject to limits of \$50,000, \$250,000 or \$500,000 depending on project types.

Webpage: <http://inwisconsin.com/community-development/programs/>

United States Department of Agriculture—Rural Development (USDA-RD). Community Facilities Programs provide loans, grant and loan guarantees for essential community facilities in rural areas. Priority is given to health care, education and public safety projects. Typical projects are hospitals, health clinics, schools, fire houses, community centers and many other community based initiatives. Rural Development will fund a portion of community facility projects, however they have significantly more loan funding than grant funding on an annual basis. Grants can cover up to 75 percent of project

costs, however the ratio of grant to loan on a per project basis is often very low. The Village is eligible for grant dollars through RD due to having a population under 20,000, and having a relatively low median household income. Housing and business assistance programs are also available.

Webpage: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/WI_RDHome.html

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

This program could also potentially be used to support development of a pocket park in downtown Suring, and trail connections between downtown and the parks.

Webpage: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/stewardship/grants/ApplyLUG.htm>

ATV Trail Aids, Wisconsin DNR

Local municipalities can apply for funds to acquire, insure, develop and maintain ATV trails, areas and routes. Depending upon the final design of the Village Square/Trail Crossing area, this program could help fund infrastructure related to ATV use, such as parking, bathrooms, and shelter facilities. Many costs are 100% grant eligible.

Webpage: <http://dnr.wi.gov/Aid/atvTrails.html>

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA)

CDBG can fund street projects with a demonstrated health and safety need in communities where there is a:

- Low to Moderate Income Population (either community wide or targeted income survey)
- Urgent Local Need (natural disaster)
- Slum and Blight (that will be alleviated by the project)

The maximum grant is \$500,000, and the program requires

a 50% match. The Village has used this program successfully in the past. It could be investigated for a potential downtown improvement project.

Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA), Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT)

The Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program provides 50% state grants to governing bodies, private businesses, and consortiums for road, rail, harbor and airport projects that help attract employers to Wisconsin, or encourage business and industry to remain and expand in the state. The goal of the TEA program is to attract and retain business firms in Wisconsin and thus create or retain jobs. The businesses cannot be speculative and local communities must assure that the number of jobs anticipated from the proposed project will materialize within three years from the date of the project agreement and remain after another four years.

Grants of up to \$1 million are available for transportation improvements that are essential for an economic development project. It must begin within three years, have the local government's endorsement, and benefit the public. The program is designed to implement an improvement more quickly than normal state programming processes allow. The 50% local match can come from any combination of local, federal, or private funds or in-kind services. This program would be most relevant if one of the existing manufacturing businesses in town were to expand.

Webpage: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/aid/tea.htm>

Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP), Wisconsin Department of Transportation

LRIP contains three programs:

- CHID (County Highway Discretionary Improvement Program)
- MSID (Municipal Street Discretionary Improvement Program)

- TRID (Town Road Discretionary Improvement Program)

The LRIP program assists local governments in improving seriously deteriorating county highways, town roads, and city and village streets. LRIP is a reimbursement program, which pays up to 50% of total eligible costs with local governments providing the balance. Eligible projects include the following categories: Reconstruction, Pavement Replacement, Resurfacing, Reconditioning and Structure projects.

Webpage: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/docs/lrip.pdf>

There are two local options for funding:

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Up to 12% of a community's equalized value may be in a TIF. Projects can be completed and then revenue collected off of the increased values in the District from private development. The Village's TIF district is a potential source of revenue for downtown infrastructure.

Impact Fees

Impact Fees are cash contributions, contributions of land or interests in land or any other items of value that are imposed on a developer by a municipality under 66.0617 Wis Stats., when land development occurs creating residential or nonresidential uses that create a need for new, expanded or improved public facilities within a municipality. Impact Fees may be used for a variety of municipal infrastructure. This type of funding mechanism could be put in place to help pay a portion of desired downtown infrastructure improvements.

Historic Interpretive Signage

Cost estimates were obtained from the City of River Falls, WI and Houghton, MI. The estimated cost for the type of signage used in River Falls and illustrated earlier in this report is \$500-\$600 per sign (building mounted). The cost estimate for the pole mounted signage used in Houghton, MI is approximately

\$1,000 per sign. Assuming 10 markers for the historic interpretive trail the total cost estimate is between \$5,000 and \$10,000 depending up on the type of signage used.

National Endowment for the Humanities

The NEH provides both planning and implementation grants for historic interpretation activities. Among other activities, grants can support the interpretations of historic places, sites, or regions. NEH encourages projects that explore humanities ideas through multiple formats. Proposed projects might include complementary components that deepen an audience's understanding of a subject: for example, a museum exhibition might be accompanied by a website, mobile app, or discussion programs.

Planning grants support the early stages of project development, including consultation with scholars, refinement of humanities themes, preliminary design, testing, and audience evaluation. Implementation grants support final scholarly research and consultation, design development, production, and installation of a project for presentation to the public.

Webpage:<http://www.neh.gov/grants/public/museums-libraries-and-cultural-organizations-planning-grants>. <http://www.neh.gov/grants/public/museums-libraries-and-cultural-organizations-implementation-grants>

Our Town Program, The National Endowment for the Arts

Through Our Town, subject to the availability of funding, the National Endowment for the Arts will provide a limited number of grants, ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000, for creative place-making projects that contribute toward the livability of communities and help transform them into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core.

Our Town will invest in creative and innovative projects in which communities, together with their arts and design organizations and artists, seek to: Improve their quality of life. Encourage greater creative activity. Foster stronger

community identity and a sense of place. Revitalize economic development.

This program could be used to help fund public monument art at the Nicolet Trail crossing or support development of the downtown historic interpretation program.

Webpage:<http://arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations/our-town/our-town-grant-program-description>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation also offers grants, however recipients must be affiliated with the State Main Street Program.

Tourism/Marketing

Joint Effort Marketing (JEM) Grant Program, Wisconsin Department of Tourism

This program is designed to help non-profit Wisconsin organizations promote tourism in their area. The Department of Tourism will reimburse up to 75% of a project's first year promotional costs (but no more than 50% of the total budget). Eligible JEM projects are reimbursed up to 50% of the promotional costs for the second year and 25% of the promotional costs for third year recipients. To be funded, projects must show that they will generate an increase in visitors and make a positive economic impact in the local area.

JEM provides a variety of options to assist in the development of marketing initiatives: Destination Marketing, New Event, Sales Promotion, Existing Event, and One-Time, One-of-a-Kind. Eligible JEM promotional expenses include: e-mail marketing campaigns, magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, internet, direct mail, PR/media kits, and billboards. Examples of expenses JEM will not reimburse: operational costs (staff salaries, travel costs, facility rental, insurance, etc.), local advertising, posters and flyers that are not direct-mailed or street banners.

This program could be used by the Suring Area Business Association to market a new or existing event.

Webpage: <http://industry.travelwisconsin.com/grants/joint-effort-marketing-jem-grant-program>



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation plan includes a set of core strategies, described below, and followed by a list of more specific recommendations.

1. Provide Dedicated Funding & Resources for Downtown Revitalization

This strategy must be aggressively implemented in order for downtown revitalization to be successful. Without dedicated resources and staffing it is highly unlikely that the downtown will revitalize itself to the level that both citizens and community leaders desire. Keys to implementing this strategy include:

- Hire or appoint someone to be responsible for these activities being carried out and
- Supply adequate funding.
- See the marketing section of this report for more details

2. Make Downtown Suring Your Central Social District

Strong Central Social District functions are the key to getting more people downtown and keeping them there longer – therefore, it's the key to retail growth. Keys to implementing this strategy include:

- Bring more activities and programs downtown, e.g., housing, restaurants, retail, public spaces
- Create a more pedestrian friendly environment
- Support Retail Downtown
- Focus on the overlaps between the local residential, daytime (library, education, office, factory worker) and tourist market segments
- Try to make more sales to the existing tourist flows rather than getting still more tourists
- Develop a stronger restaurant niche cluster centered around the Nicolet Trail Crossing/Village Square that can combine significant penetrations of local residential, daytime, and tourist market segments

3. Improve Signage & Wayfinding

To leverage tourist activity, including Northern Oconto County/National Forest visitors, Nicolet State Trail visitors, and Red Maple Golf Course visitors and others, it is important they know where the historic downtown is and what they can find there (furniture, bars, restaurants, library, parks). Keys to implementing this strategy include:

- Putting in attractive gateway to downtown signs
- Make tourism information more readily available/visible at Riverside Park and the Nicolet State Trail Crossing/Village Square.



Recommendations

Recommendations are organized into the following categories:

Short Term: These recommendations can be completed relatively quickly and do not require as large a capital investment as the medium and longer term recommendations. They should set the stage for future progress and send a signal to the community that progress is being made.

Medium Term: These recommendations require further analysis, additional fundraising, or more coordination in order to implement. The Village should consider prioritizing these recommendations and putting them into a capital improvement plan.

Longer Term: These recommendations tie into other redevelopment or reconstruction projects underway or planned for the future. Opportunities for coordination and efficiency should be maximized. The Village should consider prioritizing these recommendations and putting them into a capital improvement plan.

Short Term:

1. Discuss and finalize preferred improvements to Main Street.

As part of this planning effort several potential improvements were identified for Main Street Suring. These potential projects include lighting, very limited use of bump outs at the intersection of Nicolet State Trail and Main Street, crosswalk painting, lighting of the historic bridge, extension of the existing walking trail along STH 32 west of the bridge. Future road resurfacing or reconstruction projects provide an excellent opportunity to implement these types of projects,

with potential for grant funding or cost share to lower the Village's required investment. The Village Board should therefore discuss these projects in an open meeting, allow residents to comment on the proposed improvements, and then meet with the WI DOT to discuss them. Following that meeting the Village should go on record supporting (or not supporting) a set of physical improvements it would like to see along the STH 32 route through the Village. This statement (and any supporting documentation such as this report) should then be shared with the appropriate DOT planning staff.

2. Make targeted investments to improve the image of the historic downtown area

Successfully redeveloping the historic downtown area will likely take several years. In the meantime it is important that the Village (at the request and with the involvement of local businesses and other key downtown stakeholders such as Churches and area residents) take short-term steps to enhance the downtown area such as fixing up dilapidated buildings and cleaning up empty parcels. Conveying to business prospects (and existing businesses) that Suring is a viable business location is important. The Village has recently had success with this tactic and should continue to do so on a regular basis.

3. Fundraise to develop a new food stand at Veterans Memorial Park.

Developing a new food stand is seen as critically important for the community. However many of the food stand users are not Village taxpayers. Therefore, a coalition of groups should take the lead on fundraising to support a new facility. The Village should clarify what level of leadership (both financial and organizational) it is willing to provide the coalition before moving forward with a comprehensive fundraising plan.

4. Build capacity to support downtown redevelopment efforts

Seek knowledgeable and interested businesses, residents, and community leaders to provide leadership for long-term downtown place-making and redevelopment efforts. The CDA should continue to seek out interested individuals to serve on its committee, possibly targeting and grooming younger or other non-traditional residents for leadership positions. Funding a part-time economic development staff person or consultant to support downtown and community-wide development efforts should be considered giving the Village's staffing constraints. Other options include forming a consortium with neighboring communities to help fund a joint position.

5. Provide resources that effectively help businesses and organizations market to local residents

Local businesses and organizations need assistance with advertising and branding their business and events affordably. The Village recently completed a website overhaul and now offers an area on the site for businesses and organizations. Businesses should be encouraged to submit upcoming events and special offers each week and continue to utilize new forms of media. Some of these tasks could be accomplished through a dedicated Village resource (see prior recommendation), volunteers, or through partnerships with organizations such as UW-Extension, the Oconto County Economic Development Corporation, or a local SCORE/SBDC chapter.

6. Create a new tourist attraction by illuminating the historic bridge with LED lighting

This investment has the potential to become a destination attraction and a strong symbol for Suring. It should be done in conjunction with related private sector investments such as placement of historic signage or an information kiosk, both of

which would help strengthen Riverside Park as a "must stop" destination at the entrance to the Village.

7. Paint the new logo on the Village water tower

In conjunction with the upcoming water tower maintenance, the Village should consider adding the new logo to the water tower. The marginal cost of doing so would likely be around \$10,000 to \$15,000 depending on the size, lettering, number of sides (one or both) and graphic detail.

8. Create a program to encourage building owners/tenants to make their facades more charming

This action sends a message that downtown is on the upswing and should build the downtown brand by emphasizing local uniqueness and authenticity. New shoppers treat a shop's windows and signage as indications of what is likely to be found inside! The Oconto County Economic Development Corporation has been exploring financing options for assisting small businesses and may be a good partner for establishing or strengthening a façade incentive program.

9. Incentivize development of a historic Suring walking tour

The Suring Area Historical Society is a recognized historic association that has expressed interest in developing a historic tour of the area. The Village should consider setting aside money in its general fund to serve as a match for implementing a program that includes a focus on downtown Suring. These funds could be used to hire a designer to work with the Association to finalize an interpretive plan. They could also be used as matching funds to solicit private donations and grant funding for construction. In the meantime, the Suring Area Historical Society can begin fundraising and grant writing to support the project.

10. Design gateway and way-finding signage to enhance connectivity between commercial nodes, Village gateways, parks and trails

The Village should take the time to refine and design attractive gateway and wayfinding signage before spending money on construction. Applying the new logo and utilizing appropriate signage materials should be priorities.

11. Conduct a Visitor Profile and Economic Impact Study of the Nicolet State Trail

Developing a better understanding of trail visitors will provide useful information on how to better tap into this market segment. Characterizing the types of visitors to the trail, their spending habits, their origins, and destinations (among other factors) will generate useful information for retailers, restaurants, and those responsible for marketing downtown Suring. The Oconto County UW-Extension office and the Oconto County Economic Development Corporation could be good resource for this type of study.

Medium Term:

12. Construct gateway and way-finding signage to enhance connectivity between commercial nodes, Village gateways, parks and trails

Short term improvements such as painting the water tower with the new logo and utilizing LED lighting at the historic bridge should take priority over implementing the signage program because those enhancements will likely have a greater impact. In terms of signage, priority should be given to developing quality gateway monument signage first and then implementing wayfinding recommendations second.

13. Phase in downtown public improvements, with a focus on the historic core

Rather than trying to enhance the entire downtown corridor, investments should be targeted to a much smaller geographic area in order to concentrate the impact and clearly let visitors know when they have arrived and should stop and get out of their car. The framework plan in this report recommends these improvements extend from in front of Village Hall east just past the intersection of Krueger and Main Streets.

14. Create a new event that showcases Suring's outdoor recreation assets

Potential ideas include a rugged mountain bike race along the Nicolet State Trail modeled off of events like the Dirty Kanza in Kansas (<http://www.dirtykanza200.com/dirty-kanza-info/>). Another idea would be an organized float down the Oconto River from Chute Pond.

Longer Term:

15. Gradually develop the Village Square/Nicolet State Trail Crossing into a great place that serves as the heart of the community

This recommendation could be timed with a future business expansion in the downtown core. Components of the recommendation may also be phased in the short or medium term as funding allows. Key aspects include: Renovate the Nicolet State Trail/Village Crossing to serve as a more visible and intentional gathering spot for residents and tourist alike; Make space available or build a covered stand to promote a farm stand/farmer's market/flea market featuring agricultural and other products from the region; Construct a simple walking trail alongside the ATV trail that links to Veterans Memorial Park.

16. Consider housing development along Main Street.

Developing more housing units along Main Street would support downtown businesses by putting more potential customers downtown and helping create a stronger image for Suring by reducing the number of vacant or underutilized lots. Suring could leverage its health care assets to strengthen the local tax base by encouraging more residential development, in particular downtown. The Low Income Housing Tax Credit program and the New Markets Tax Credit program (currently suspended) are both good programs which could help support quality residential development in downtown Suring.

It should be noted that Main Street is currently over zoned for commercial uses. Therefore, the Village should consider re-zoning (short term) a portion of this stretch to residential use. The Village could then focus on concentrating future commercial development uses in a smaller geographic area in the heart of downtown.

