



# **TRIBUNE BUILDING**

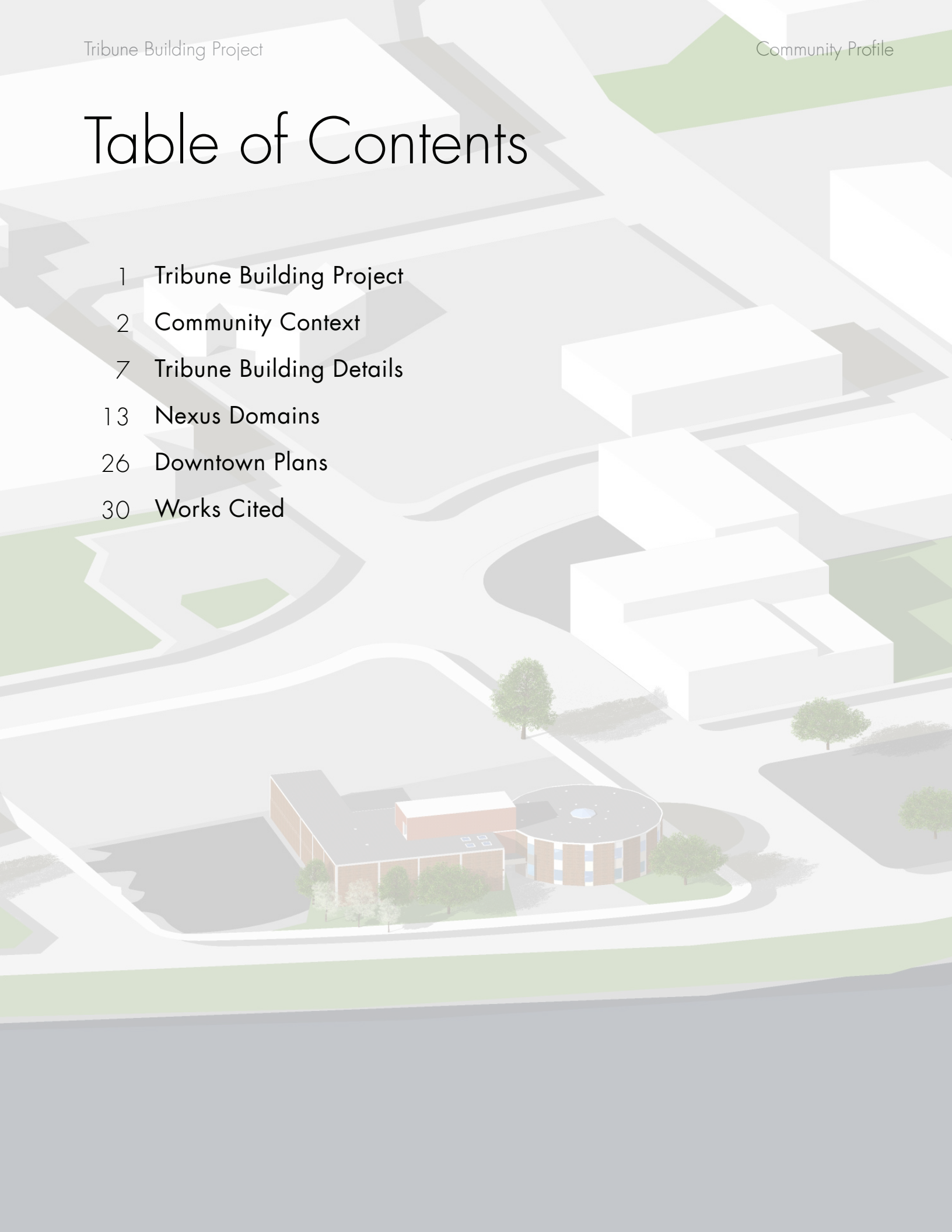
## COMMUNITY PROFILE

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South Wood County Area

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# Tribune Building Project



The Tribune Building Project is a unique opportunity where all residents in south Wood County area (SWCA) are welcome and encouraged to participate in the decision making process for reprogramming and redesigning the Tribune Building.

The project began in 2012, when Incourage Community Foundation purchased the Daily Tribune Building, a large historic property along the Wisconsin River in downtown Wisconsin Rapids. This project is an extension of the organization's long-term commitment to resident engagement efforts guided by the principles of equity, inclusion and opportunity in SWCA.

To help facilitate the process for idea gathering and decision-making, Incourage hired Concordia, a unique design firm from New Orleans, whose work focuses on resident-led, resident-centered design and development.

The Tribune Building Project will utilize the Nexus Model, which focuses on six Domains; physical, economic, organizational, cultural, educational and social. Obtaining knowledge about these Domains in SWCA will give critical insight to create a plan that addresses future revitalization efforts.

A resident-centered, resident-led design process entrusts decision making to the community and invites everyone to participate as stakeholders. It requires more time, effort and resources than unilateral decision making, but results in a democratically designed plan, that the community takes ownership of. This process also encourages partnership with local contractors and use of local resources while respecting history and culture—an important commitment that Incourage and Concordia both share.

This profile provides a snapshot of the history and present conditions of SWCA, Wisconsin Rapids, and the Tribune Building.

# Community Context

## *South Wood County Area*

The Tribune Building Project seeks to celebrate the history, culture, and geographic assets of the entire south Wood County area. We hope this building serves as a resource and gathering space that is welcome to all community members in the region. In order to create the most responsive and appropriate program and design for the space, this profile seeks to share information based on a variety of scales and perspectives. Therefore, the following must all be considered:

**South Wood County Area:** The geographical region can be defined to include municipalities of Biron, Cranmoor, Grand Rapids, Nekoosa, Pittsville, Port Edwards (Town and Village), Rome (Adams County), Rudolph (Town and Village), Saratoga, Seneca, Sigel, Vesper, and Wisconsin Rapids. Each municipality contributes important assets and resources that help define our collective community identity.

**Wisconsin Rapids:** In addition to more broadly understanding the geographic scope of our area, it is important that we consider the Tribune Building site and its immediate surroundings. Understanding this more focused scope can help decision-makers think about this site as a connecting resource to other important assets. The area is defined by its proximity to the Wisconsin River, bike trails and walking paths, local retail shops and businesses, the mall, and a wide range of other local resources.



# Community Context

## *Vital Signs 2013*

Demographic information illuminates the challenges faced by residents of the south Wood County area and underscores the need for thoughtful problem-solving when reprogramming the Tribune Building. There will be many variables to consider when deciding the uses for the building, but we should not lose sight of the challenges faced by the entire region. Here are some at-a-glance data points from Vital Signs 2013:

### Wood County

Includes most recent and best available data as of June 2013  
(COWS 2013, 3, 8, 18)

UNEMPLOYMENT: **6.6%**

BUSINESS STARTS: **257**

TOP INDUSTRY: **20%** of employment is in Manufacturing

WOMEN comprise **52%** of the labor force

SELF-SUFFICIENCY WAGE with benefits for one adult supporting two children:

**\$24.79** per hour, or **\$4,363** per month.

### South Wood County Area

(Source: COWS 2013)

POPULATION: **45,741**

Share of Population OVER 60: **20.1%**

DECLINE in persons UNDER 29: **11%**   
(period from 2000--2010)

K-12 ENROLLMENT: **7,107**  
(2012-2013 school year)

ENROLLMENT DECLINE: **18%**  
(period from 2000--2012)

Student DIVERSITY (non-white): **12%**  
(In 2007--2011)

Workers COMMUTING 25+ miles: **35%**  
(In 2010)

SAFETY: less than **20** violent crimes per year  
(from 2007-2011)

United Way VOLUNTEER HOURS: **193,000** (in 2012)

Voter PARTICIPATION: **78.3%** of SWCA registered to vote in the 2012 presidential election

Please see Vital Signs 2013 for detailed data points that will be helpful to the decision making process. Report can be found at [incouragecf.org](http://incouragecf.org) or requested by calling 715.423.3863.

# Community Context

## *A Brief Regional History*

### Settlement (1830-1900)

Long before the arrival of settlers, the HoChunk people enjoyed hunting, gathering, and cultivating the abundant natural resources surrounding the Wisconsin River. The powerful flow of the river provided convenient access, which attracted fur traders who traveled from as far away as Canada.

In the early 1800's several trading posts were established in SWCA. Pointe Basse, near present day Nekoosa, was the site of a trading post and inn built by the Wakely family who arrived in 1837. Eventually, the incredible resource of the Wisconsin River lured many into starting permanent settlements along its shores.

Due to the intersection of two natural resources: the Wisconsin River and a plentiful timber supply; the towns of Grand Rapids and Centralia flourished. "It was not until 1900 that "Grand Rapids" on the east and "Centralia" on the west banks of the Wisconsin River, consolidated, and not until 1920 that its name became "Wisconsin Rapids."<sup>1</sup>



*General Store of Frank Garrison - 1887  
Photo from the McMillan Memorial Library*

The city developed around sawmills and woodworking plants. The first wood pulp mill on the Wisconsin River, "The Pioneer Pulp Company," was started in Centralia around 1884. The first paper mill on the river, "The Centralia Waterpower and Paper Company," was started three years later, and hence, the birth of the "Wisconsin River Valley" paper industry.<sup>2</sup> In the first decades of the 20th century, Wisconsin Rapids slowly emerged "from a rough lumber town into a

small industrial city of more than average beauty."<sup>3</sup> Downtown transformed from a swamp of wooden structures into a modernized business district made of brick and stone; streets were paved, swamps drained, and a streetcar line to Nekoosa was built. This development provided the region a stable base on which to build a robust industrial economy. Port Edwards and the village of Biron also developed and grew adjacent to the rich resources of the Wisconsin River. The success of the local paper industry strengthened the regional economy throughout most of the 20th century, even during the Great Depression. With the addition of farming and cranberry growing and processing, SWCA enjoyed a very high level of prosperity and stability.

### Recent History

In the late 1990's the regional economy drastically changed. In SWCA, the decline was sudden and steep. The locally owned mill, Consolidated Papers Inc., was sold to a multinational corporation and downsized.

Changes in mill ownership ended a tacit social arrangement where the company provided leadership and philanthropy to the local community. At the same time, a surplus of cranberries drove prices down, and subsequently many farmers went out of business.<sup>4</sup>

Following a century of prosperity, SWCA faced the reality that it was no longer insulated from the global economy.

Within the last 30 years, SWCA experienced a shift in the cultural make-up of the community. "Many Lao Hmong war refugees resettled in the U.S. following the communist takeover of Laos in 1975. Hmong refugees first began settling in Wisconsin in the late 1970s."<sup>5</sup> The Hispanic population in Wisconsin Rapids has grown to nearly 3%.<sup>6</sup> SWCA entered the 21st century with a much more culturally rich and diverse population than in the previous century and the trend toward broader diversity continues.

<sup>1</sup> "A Short History"

<sup>2</sup> City of Wisconsin Rapids Website

<sup>3</sup> "A Short History"

<sup>4</sup> FSG 24

<sup>5</sup> Wisconsin Historical Society

<sup>6</sup> Census Viewer

# Community Context

## *An Adaptive Community*

Incourage Community Foundation believed that the key to economic recovery and community revitalization was to expand and diversify civic leadership, bringing in residents who had never viewed themselves as having social standing or influence. The community foundation envisioned a new program that developed leadership skills among a broader group of residents.

Expanding civic leadership was one of the most important principles underlying the Community Progress Initiative (CPI), 2004-2008. Previous culture had supported closed-door decision making by a small group of elites, CPI invited anyone and everyone in the region to participate in planning and problem-solving forums.

To engage and equip new leaders, the community foundation launched Advanced Leadership Institute (ALI) in 2005 with funding from the Ford Foundation. This effort continues and has become central to Incourage's work. Graduates of ALI have changed not only the face of civic leadership in central Wisconsin, but also the practice and the ethic of community problem solving.

ALI was designed to address this dilemma: diversifying the leadership base results in inefficient problem-solving. There are three keys to overcoming this. First, the people involved in community decision making learn to understand, respect, and trust one another, even when they have diverse perspectives or backgrounds. Second, these players develop the skills to find creative, workable solutions, especially for issues where residents disagree on the nature of the problem or the way forward. And third, they

learn to pay attention to the common interests of all residents as they do to their own personal interests.

ALI also emphasized networking and new connections focusing on the issues that underlie trust and mistrust, especially when people come from different ethnic groups, age cohorts, communities, or social or economic classes. At the same time, participants were trained in how to navigate conflict and build trusting relationships.

This process generated new levels of trust, even among participants who came into the training believing that they had little in common.

In many ways ALI provided a previously unavailable opportunity for people from across the region to have honest, in-depth conversations about the psychological, political and cultural dynamics that were undermining the recovery that everyone wanted.

### Outcomes:

- Speak Your Peace, the Civility Project
- Community Survey which resulted in four priority areas: a strong economy; opportunities for young adults and families; openness to new ideas and change; and nature and recreation
- Workforce Strategies: reskilling workers to fit employers needs
- One-on-One Conversations: building trust and relationships



# Community Context

## *What the Community Says*

### Summary of Key Findings from the Community Vision Survey

*Survey of SWCA residents conducted April 2012 (Edge, 9)*

#### Is this a ghost town?

- Residents feel competing emotions - hopefulness tinged with skepticism.
- Uncertainty looms large, both for the community and their personal lives.
- All signs point to a community ready for change

#### Public Priorities are Clear

- Worry about jobs and unemployment dominate the landscape. Any planning efforts need to address these issues first and foremost.
- Opportunities for young people are a key component, as part of the solution and as an indicator of the community's overall health.
- Community assets and quality of life are values to be protected – into the future.

#### Leadership & Dialogue Needed

- Residents are looking for stronger leadership
- Confidence is lacking all around, and particularly in elected officials and the business community.
- Diversity of voices are needed, and residents want to be part of the solution but can't be expected to drive the process

#### Advice for Engagement

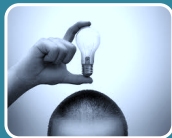
- Collective vision for the future involves a diverse economy, while protecting the way of life people appreciate today
- Tough choices may be required to see more economic activity, without losing the small-town character of this community
- Residents are primed for activation, but need to be inspired as well as engaged. Leaders may have a positive story to tell and need help spreading the word.



### Strong Economy



### Opportunities for Young Adults & Families



### Open to New Ideas & Change



### Nature & Recreation



# Tribune Building Details

## *Immediate Surroundings*

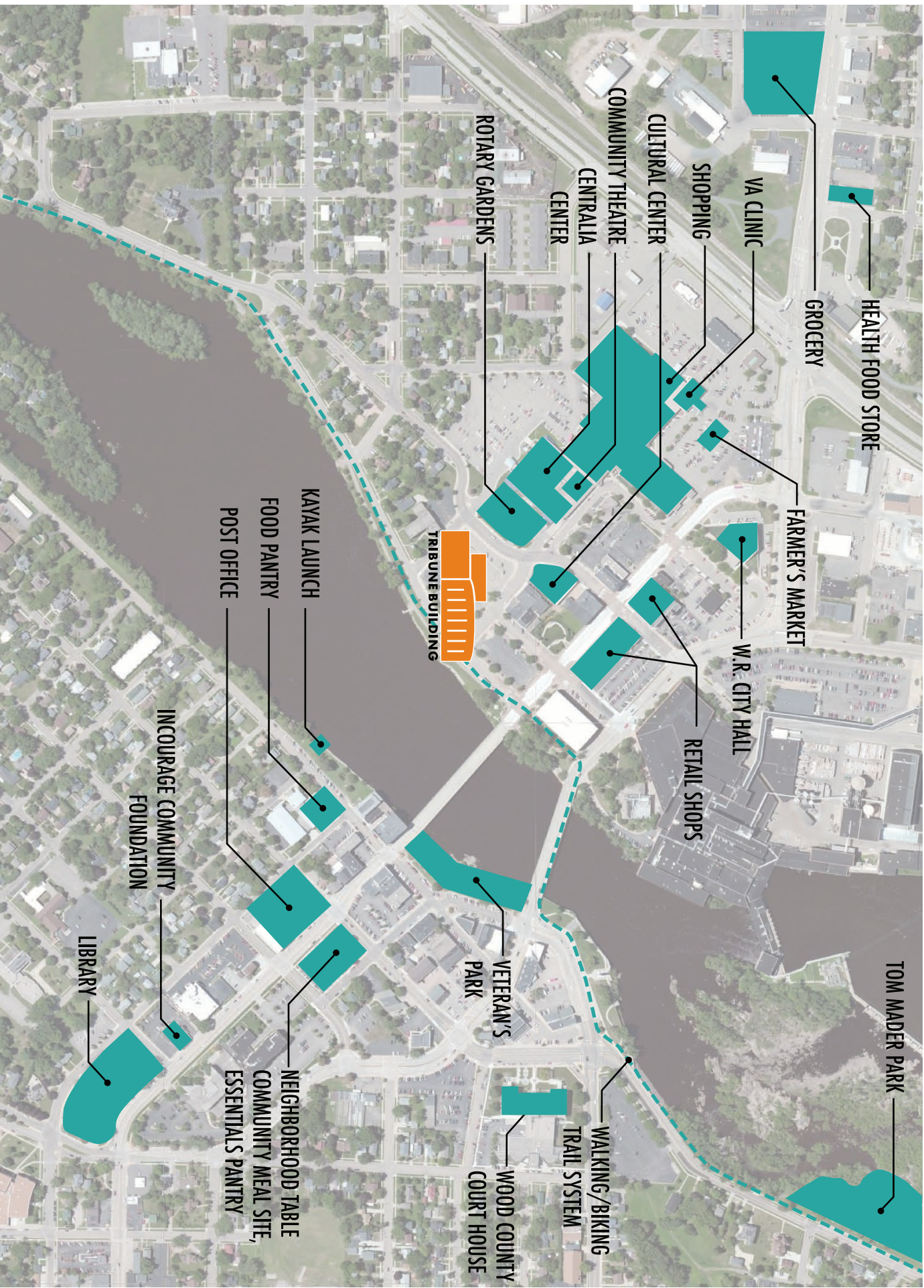
While regional information provides broad context to the Tribune Building Project, knowledge about the history of the Tribune Building itself, as well as its immediate surroundings in downtown Wisconsin Rapids, is also crucial to the engagement process.

The Tribune Building is located along the west bank of the Wisconsin River, in Downtown Wisconsin Rapids. To the northwest of the building site is an empty city-owned parcel that currently has no determined use. Further northwest is the Centralia Center – a senior center and community theater, that was formerly a Walmart – and the Rapids Mall.

The southeast edge of the site is bordered by the western bank of the Wisconsin River, which separates the Tribune Building from the eastern half of downtown. The northeast edge of the site abuts a parking lot that sits adjacent to the river and Grand Avenue. To the southwest of the site, along the river, is First Moravian Church.







HEALTH FOOD STORE

GROCERY

VA CLINIC

SHOPPING

CULTURAL CENTER

COMMUNITY THEATRE

CENTRALIA

CENTER

ROTARY GARDENS

FARMER'S MARKET

W.R. CITY HALL

RETAIL SHOPS

VETERAN'S PARK

WOOD COUNTY COURT HOUSE

TRAIL SYSTEM

WALKING/BIKING

TOM MADER PARK

TRIBUNE BUILDING

KAYAK LAUNCH

FOOD PANTRY

POST OFFICE

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

LIBRARY

NEIGHBORHOOD TABLE COMMUNITY MEAL SITE, ESSENTIALS PANTRY

# Tribune Building Details

## *History*

The *Daily Tribune* newspaper was founded by William F. Huffman Sr. in 1914. The original name of the publication was *Wisconsin Valley Leader* which changed in 1920 to *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*. Mr. Huffman “believed firmly in the role of educated and activist citizens in a democratic government,” and he was immensely generous and civic-minded.<sup>1</sup>

The Tribune Building, designed by Rowland & Associates, opened in May of 1960. At its peak of success, the afternoon daily paper published eight full sections and enjoyed a paid circulation of 14,000 – a high mark for a regional population of about 40,000.

The Tribune Building also housed two radio stations: WFHR and W103. Listeners turned to programs such as Kaffee Klatsch for ideas, community controversies, and public information.<sup>2</sup>

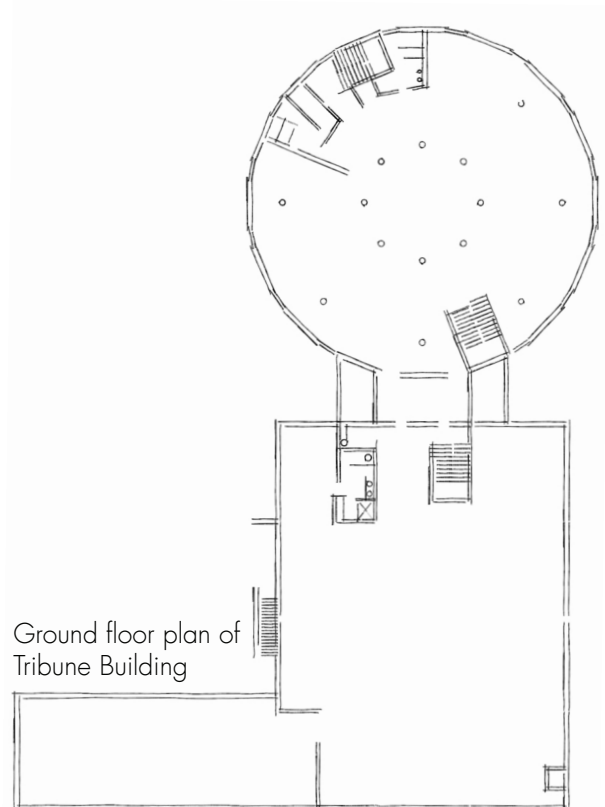
In 2012, Daily Tribune Media decided to move to an office that better suited their needs, and began looking for a buyer. Incourage Community Foundation purchased the building in December of 2012, ready to facilitate a community-led reprogramming process.

# 1960

Building Grand Opening

# 19,868

Square feet of space to be reimagined by residents of south Wood County

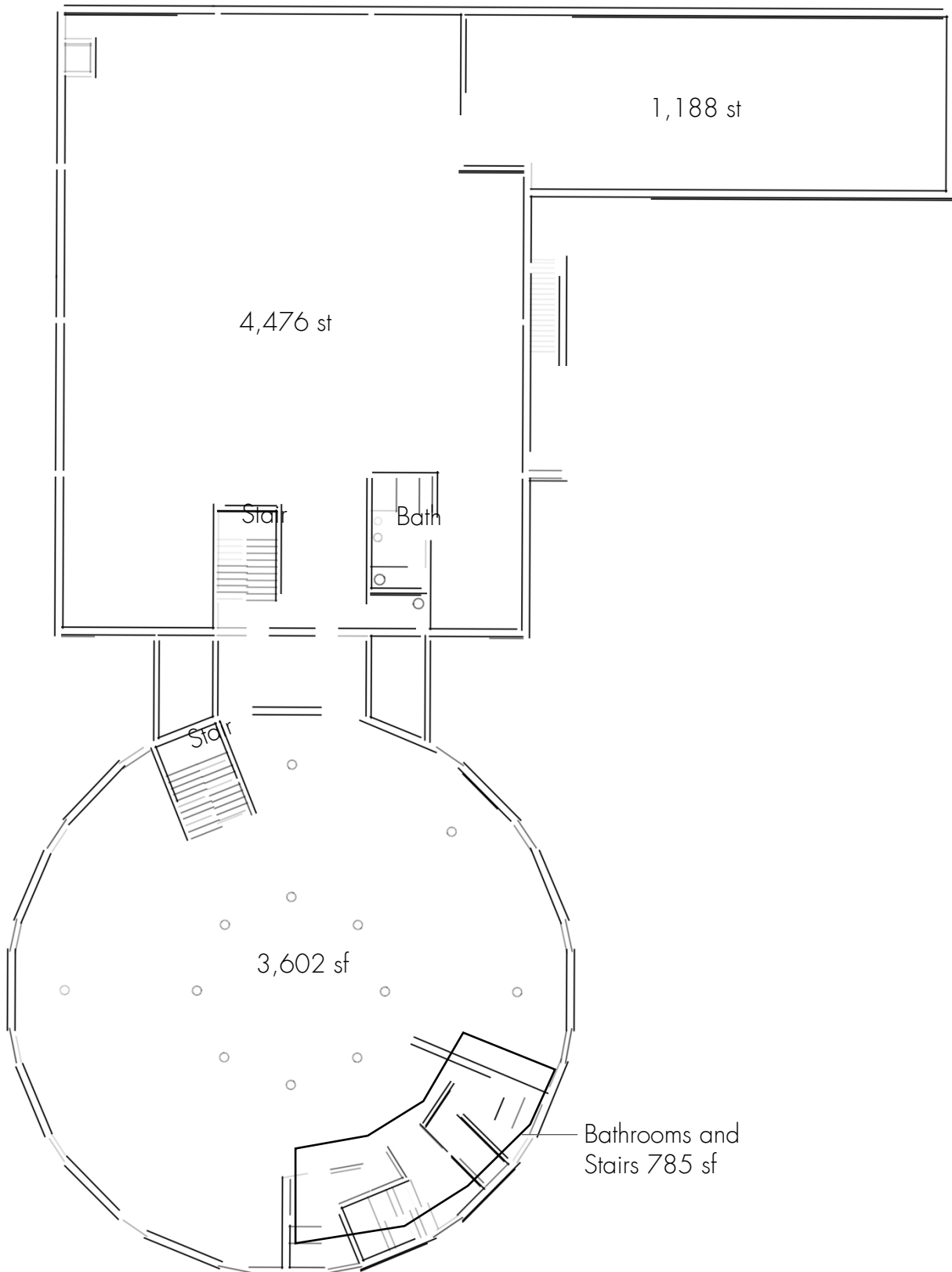


<sup>1</sup> Ryan

<sup>2</sup> Incourage, Tribune Tour 4

# Tribune Building Details

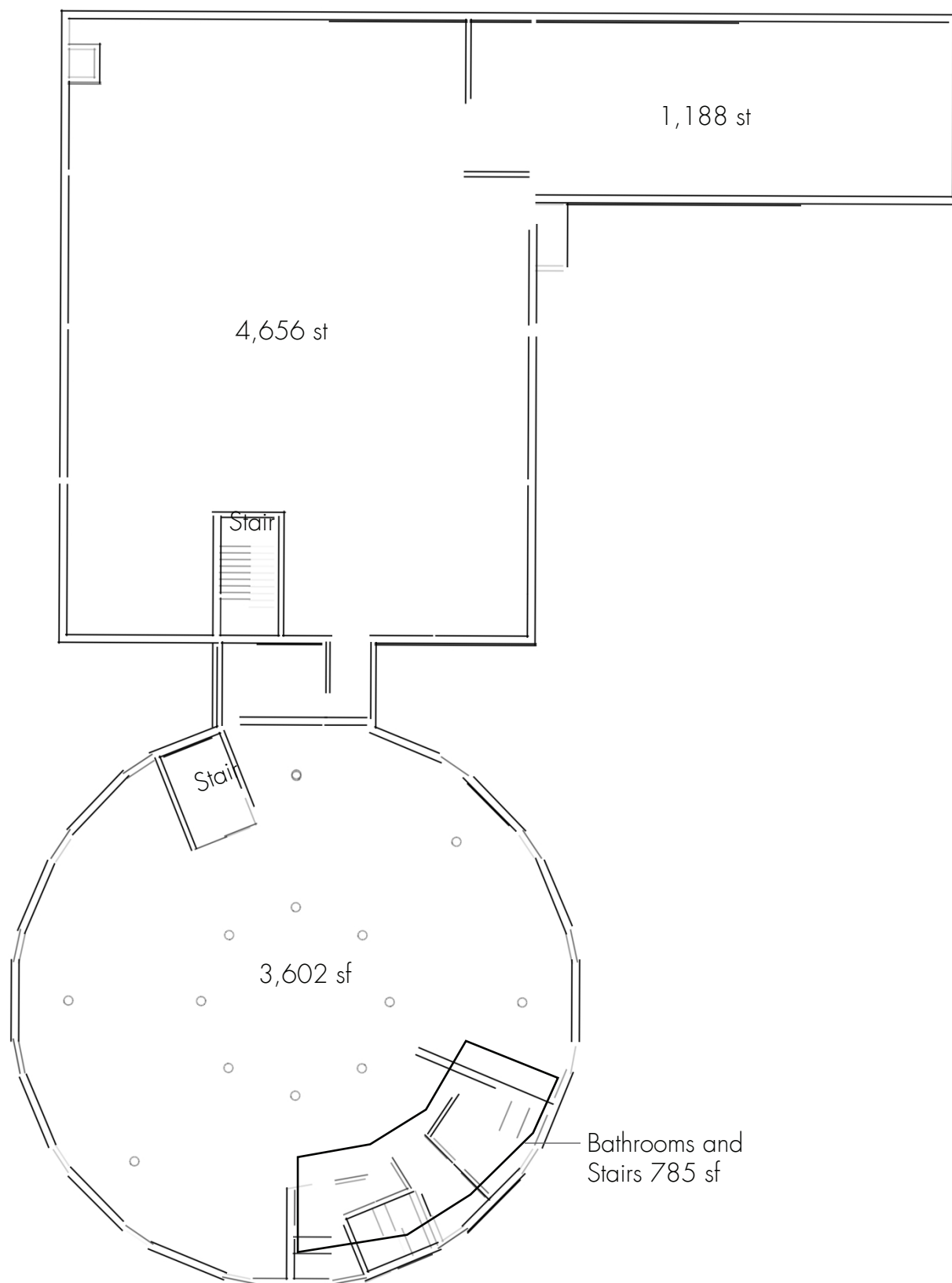
## *First Floor Plan*





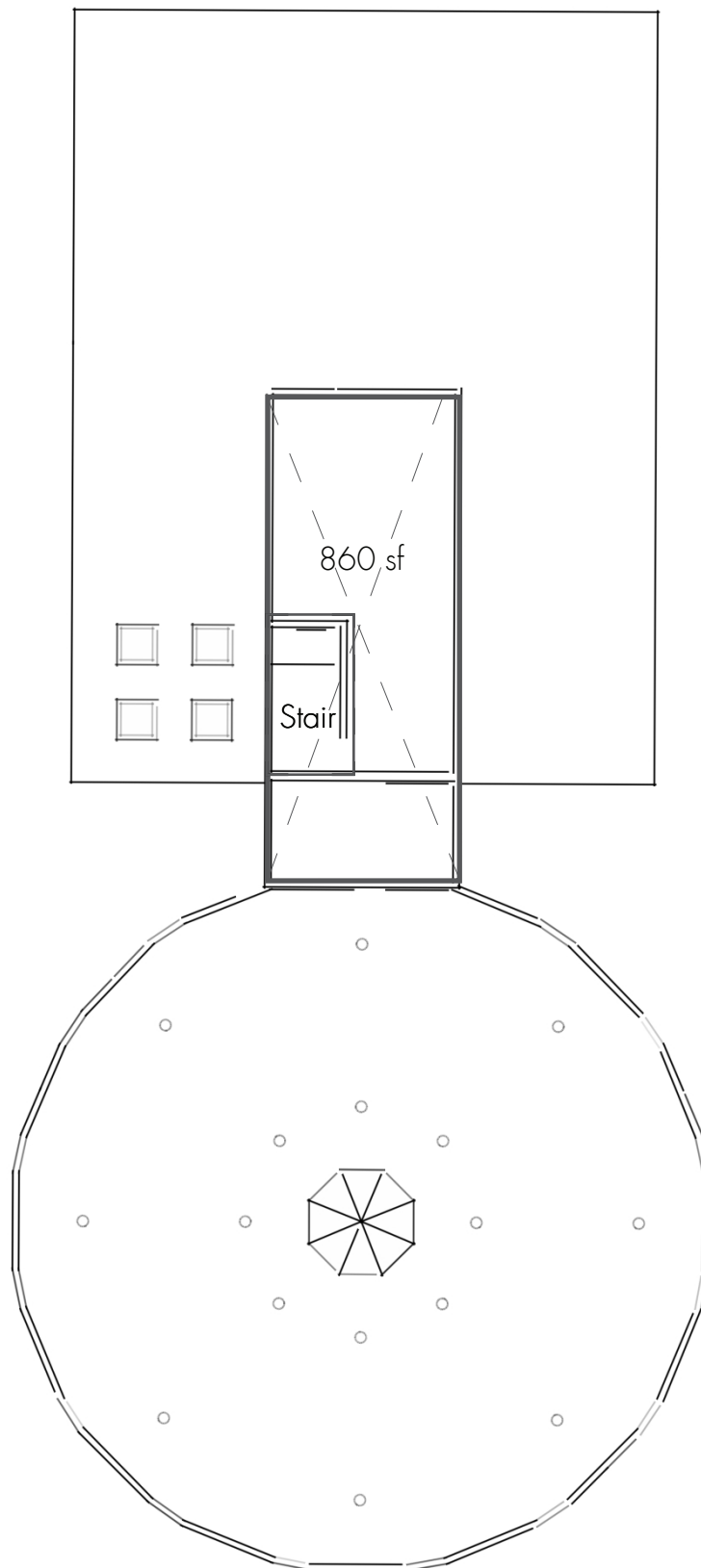
# Tribune Building Details

## *Second Floor Plan*



# Tribune Building Details

## *Third Floor & Roof Plan*



# Nexus Domains

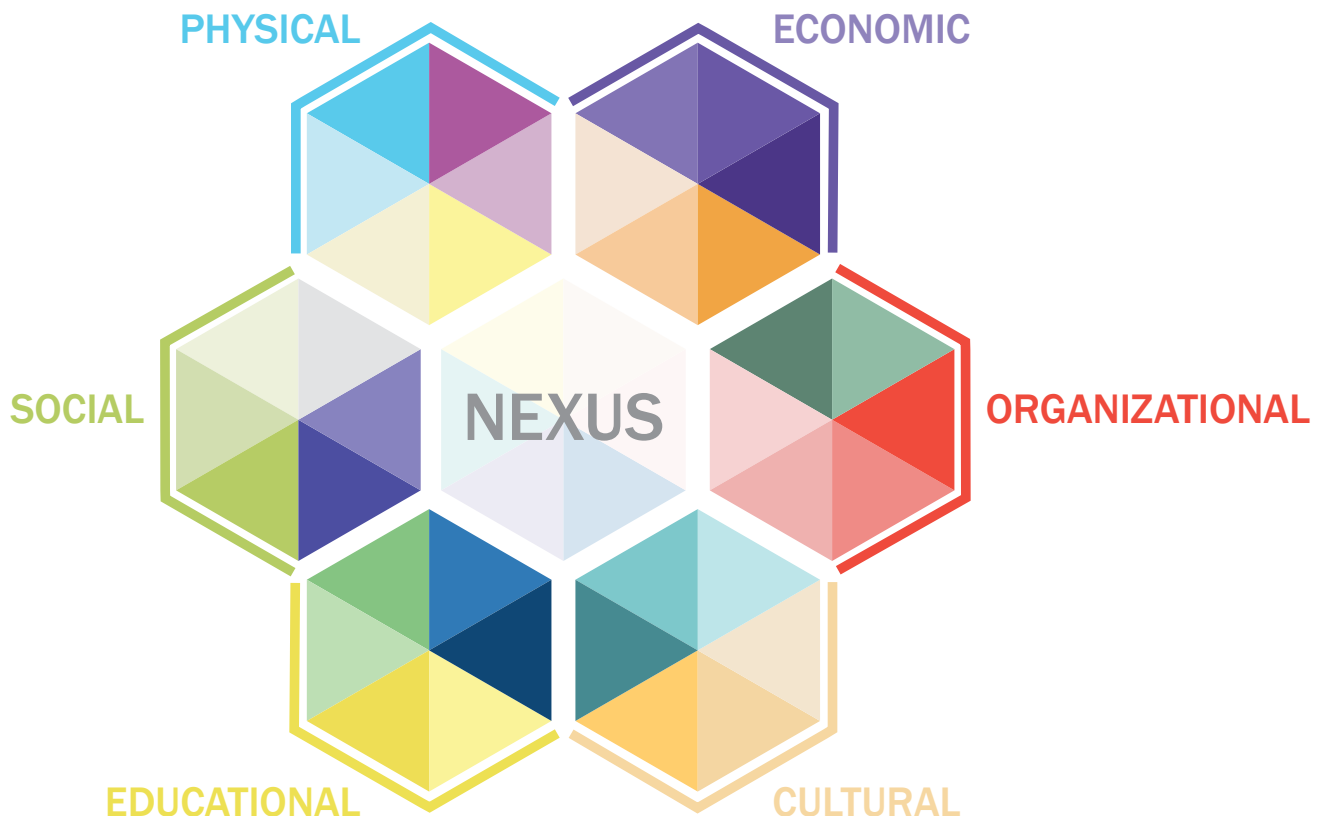
## Community Assets

Over the past 30 years Concordia has focused on the development of an integrated community planning and design strategy called Nexus.

The core principle of Nexus Planning is systemic alignment; it is a formula for envisioning the organs of a city or region through a system of six Nexus Domains. These Domains provide a framework for organizing and understanding a community's most vital assets and needs.

We are using this model to map SWCA's assets in order to understand what community needs are being fulfilled, and what might be missing.

On the following pages are lists of Nexus Assets in SWCA and Wisconsin Rapids. Because Nexus Domains overlap, several of the same institutions or organizations will be listed in more than one category. This list will be augmented and revised during the Tribune Building Project engagement process.



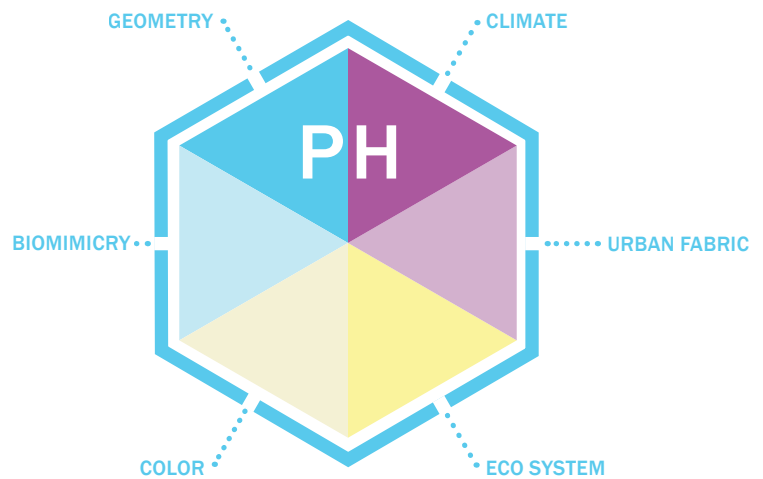


# Nexus: Physical Domain

## Community Assets

The Physical Domain includes the community's built and natural resources, such as structures, highways, electronic communications infrastructure, as well as parks, ecology, and recreation areas.

There are several parks within or near Downtown Wisconsin Rapids. The Ahdawagam bike trails run through Wisconsin Rapids; the Red Trail passes right by the Tribune Building. Of course, the biggest physical asset is the Wisconsin River, which anchors downtown and runs directly adjacent to the Tribune Building.



### SWCA Natural Resources & Parks

Ahdawagam Bike Trails  
 Dexter Co. Park  
 Deer Trail Park Campground  
 Grand Rapids Lions Park  
 Lake Wazeecha  
 NewPage Corp Cera Park  
 Nepco Lake County Park  
 Nepco Lake  
 North Wood County Park  
 Owl Creek Fen Savana State Natural Area  
 Powers Bluff Co. Park  
 Red Oak Bottoms State Natural Area  
 Ripple Creek Park  
 Sandhill State Wildlife Area  
 South Wood County Park  
 Wisconsin River

### SWCA Highways

13, 34, 54, 66, 73, 80, 173, 186

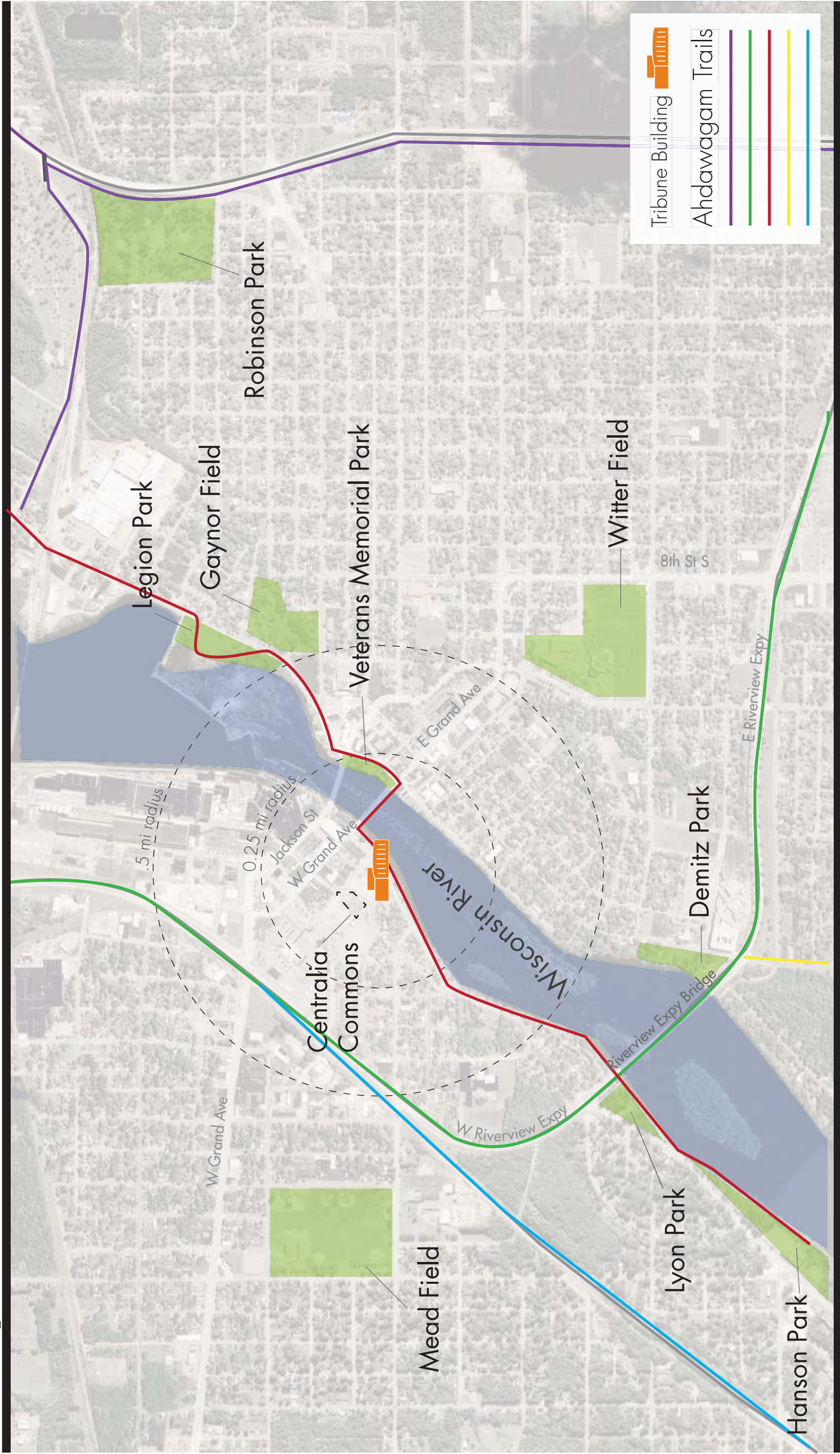
### Wisconsin Rapids Parks

ACT Playground  
 Demitz Park  
 Gaynor Park  
 Hanson Park  
 Legion Park  
 Lyon Park  
 Mead Field  
 Robinson Park  
 Sandlot Park  
 Witter Field  
 Veterans Park

### Downtown Bridges

Riverview Expressway Bridge  
 Grand Ave Bridge  
 Jackson St Bridge

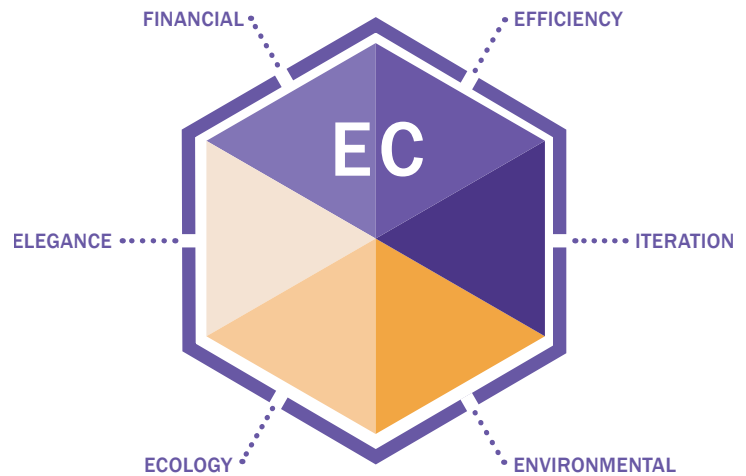
# Physical Domain



# Nexus: Economic Domain

## Community Assets

The Economic Domain encompasses programs that balance all forms of financial, human, and environmental capital, including banks, accountants, shopping areas, public employment services, and regional employment hubs.



### SWCA

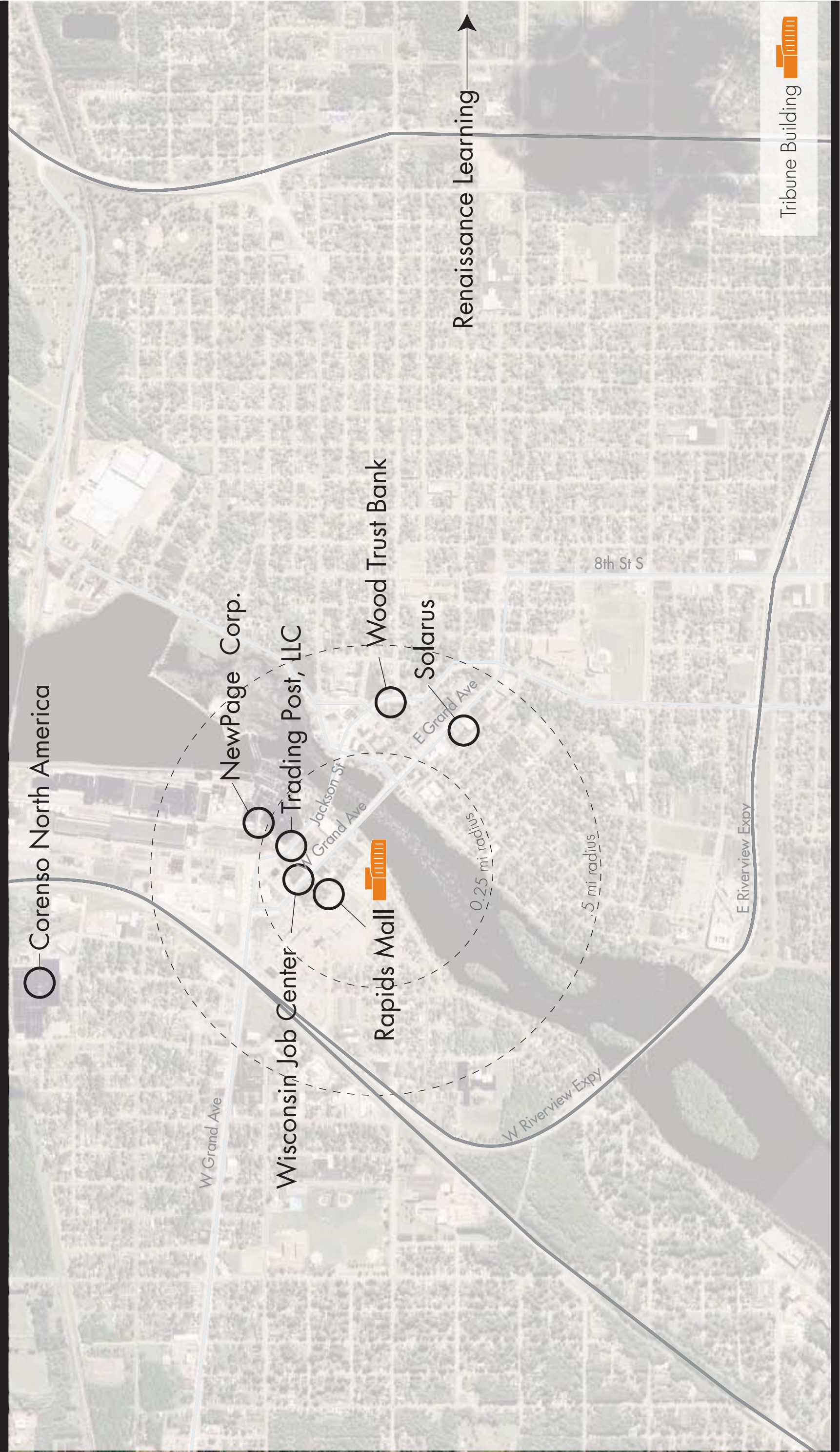
Domtar  
ERCO Worldwide

### Wisconsin Rapids

Accounting Plus  
Corenso North America  
EEC Corrosion  
Fey Printing  
H&R Block  
Key Savings Bank  
Mariani Packing  
Ocean Spray  
Opportunity Development Centers  
NewPage Corporation  
Rapids Mall  
Renaissance Learning, Inc.  
Solarus  
Trading Post, LLC  
Wisconsin Job Center  
WoodTrust Bank



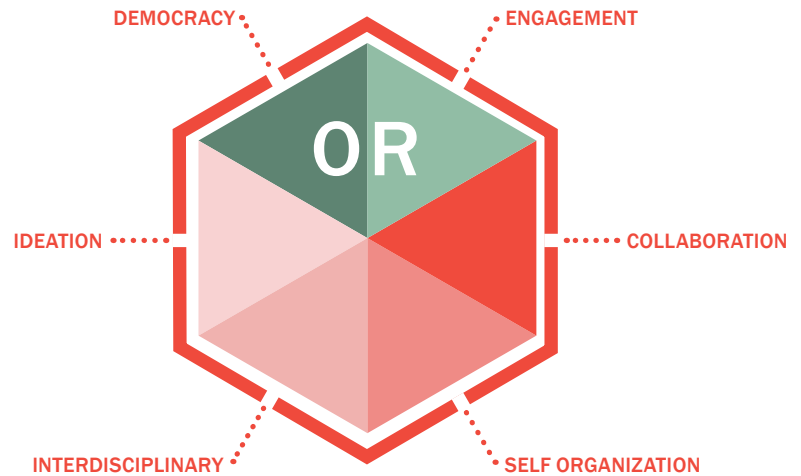
# Economic Domain



# Nexus: Organizational Domain

## Community Assets

The Organizational Domain contains groups of all types, ranging from family units to specialty clubs; city and county school boards, special interest groups, and other private, civic and political entities. These are the mechanisms through which community issues are deliberated and programs are implemented.



### SWCA:

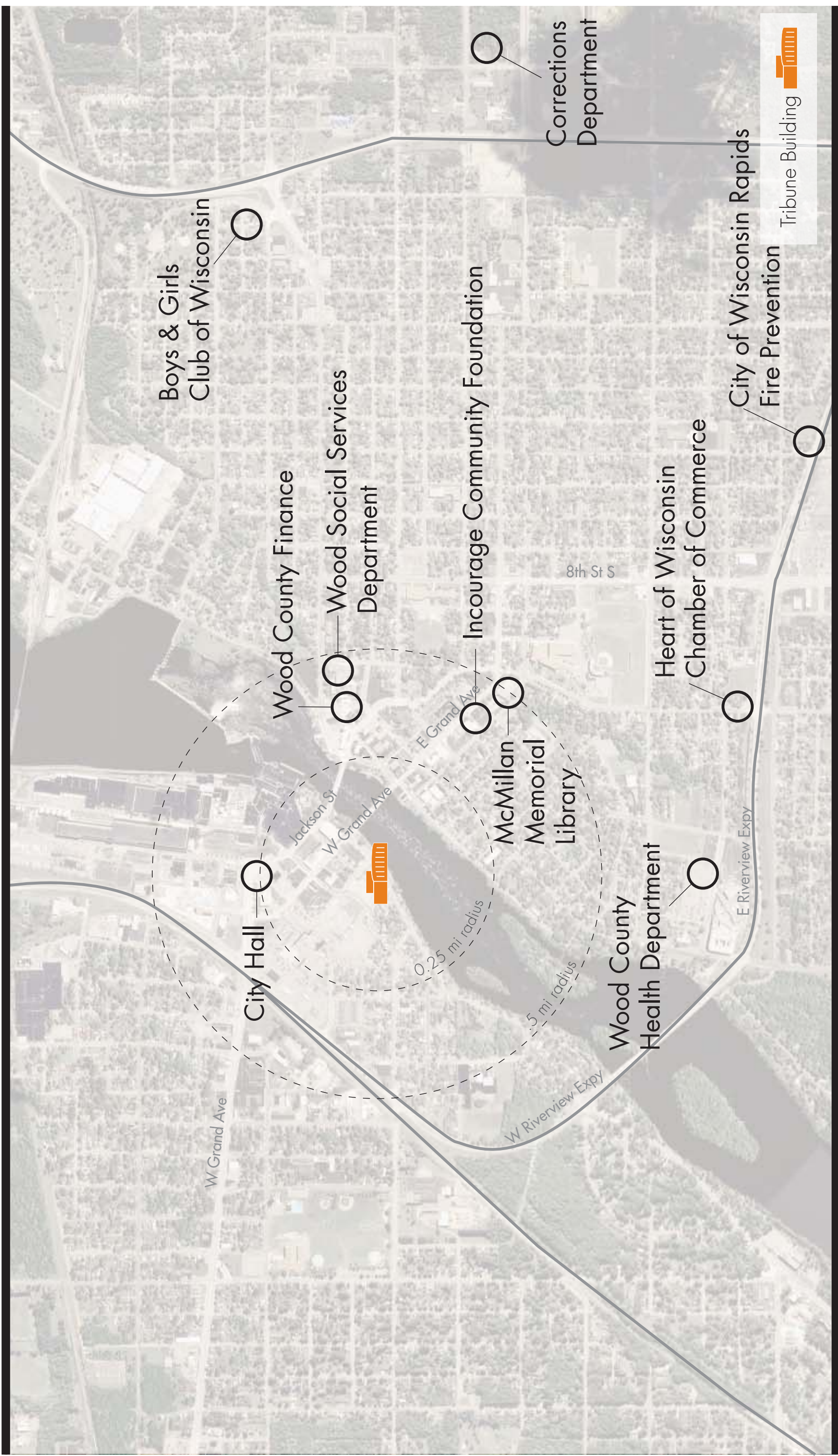
Biron Municipal Building  
 Grand Rapids Municipal Building  
 Nekoosa City Office  
 Nekoosa Police Department  
 Pittsville Community Hall  
 Port Edwards Municipal Building  
 Public Libraries-Nekoosa, Pittsville, Rome, Vesper  
 Rome Municipal Offices  
 Vesper Community Center

### Wisconsin Rapids:

Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin  
 City of Wisconsin Rapids Fire Prevention  
 Corrections Department  
 County Jail  
 Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce  
 Incourage Community Foundation  
 McMillan Memorial Library  
 Wisconsin Rapids City Hall  
 Wood County Extension  
 Wood County Courthouse  
 Wood County Health Department  
 Wood County Sheriff's Department



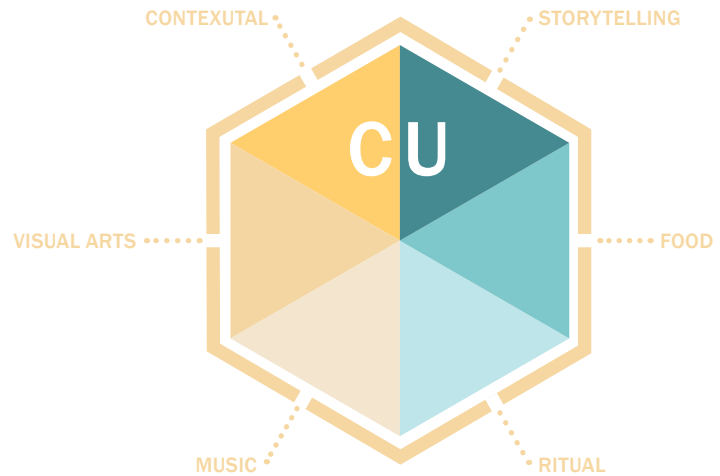
# Organizational Domain



# Nexus: Cultural Domain

## Community Assets

The Cultural Domain consists of programs and artifacts related to individual and collective values, including ethnic, religious, historical, and aesthetic diversity, as well as entertainment and community life.



### SWCA:

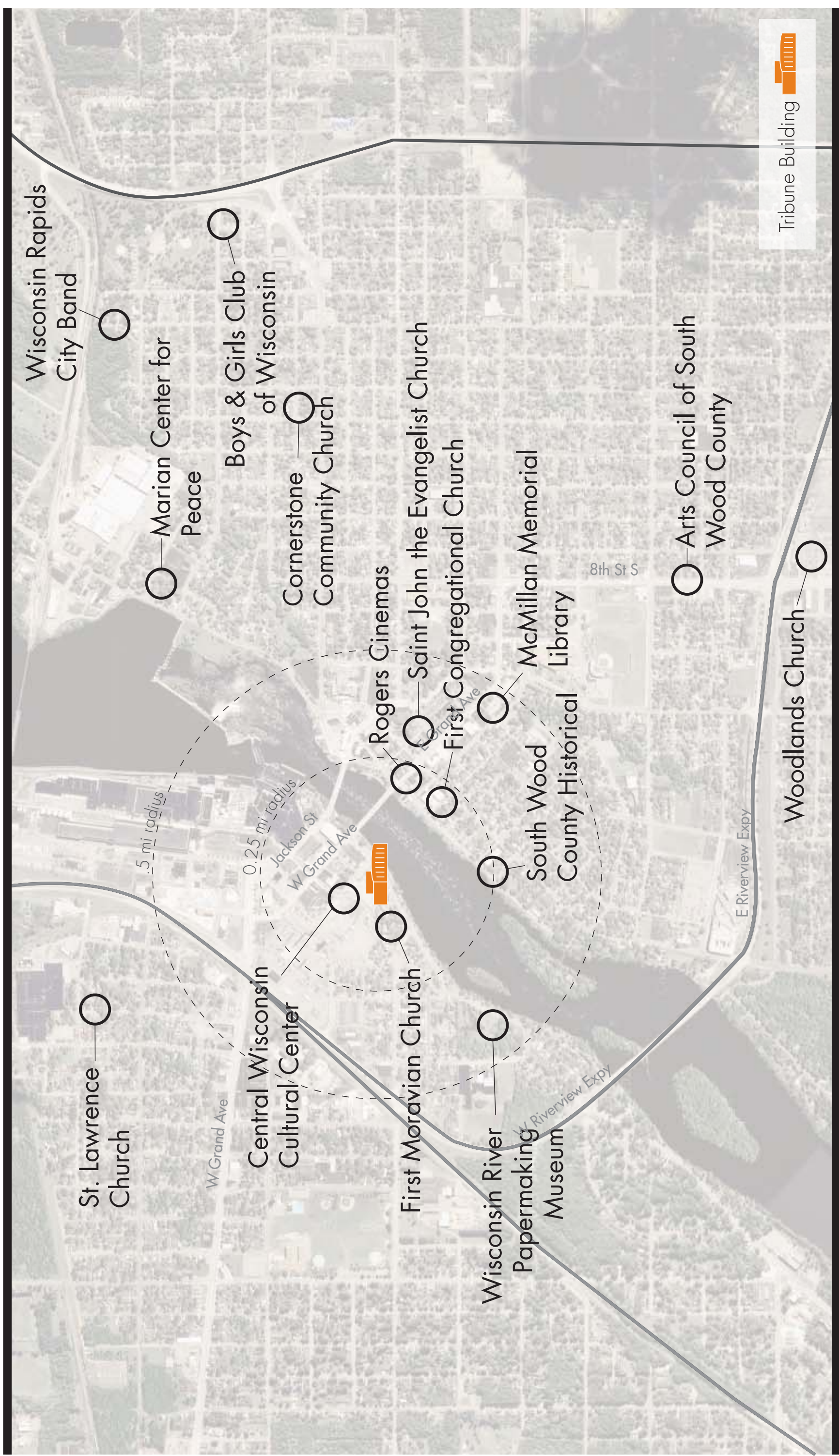
Alexander House  
 Bethany Church  
 Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
 East Nekoosa Church  
 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
 Historic Point Basse  
 Moravian Church-Rudolph  
 Nekoosa United Church Christ  
 New Rome Community Church  
 River Cities Christian Church  
 Sacred Heart of Jesus Church  
 Saint James Catholic Church  
 Saint John's Lutheran Church  
 Saint John's Lutheran Church  
 Saint Philip's Church  
 Trinity Lutheran Church  
 Veedum Moravian Church

### Wisconsin Rapids:

Arts Council  
 Baker Street Community Church  
 Boys and Girls Club of Wisconsin  
 Central Wisconsin Cultural Center  
 Cornerstone Community Church  
 First Congregational Church  
 First Moravian Church  
 Grace Lutheran Church  
 Marian Center for Peace  
 McMillan Memorial Library  
 Performing Arts Center of Wisconsin Rapids  
 Rogers Cinema  
 Saint Lukes Lutheran Church  
 Saint John the Evangelist Church  
 Saint Lawrence Church  
 South Wood County Historical Museum  
 SS Peter and Paul Catholic Church  
 Wisconsin Rapids City Band  
 Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre  
 Wisconsin River Papermaking Museum  
 Woodlands Church



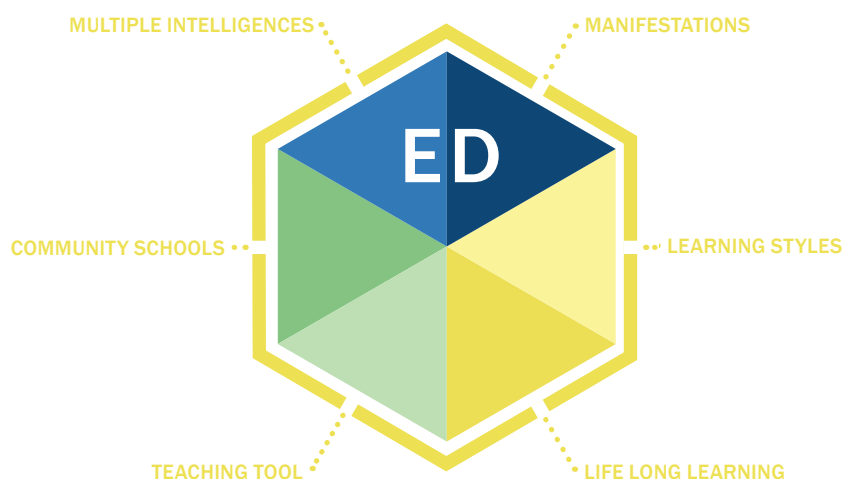
# Cultural Domain



# Nexus: Educational Domain

## Community Assets

The Educational Domain includes all learning assets: prenatal clinics, Pre-K-12 schools, post-secondary schools, workforce training, and lifelong learning.



### SWCA:

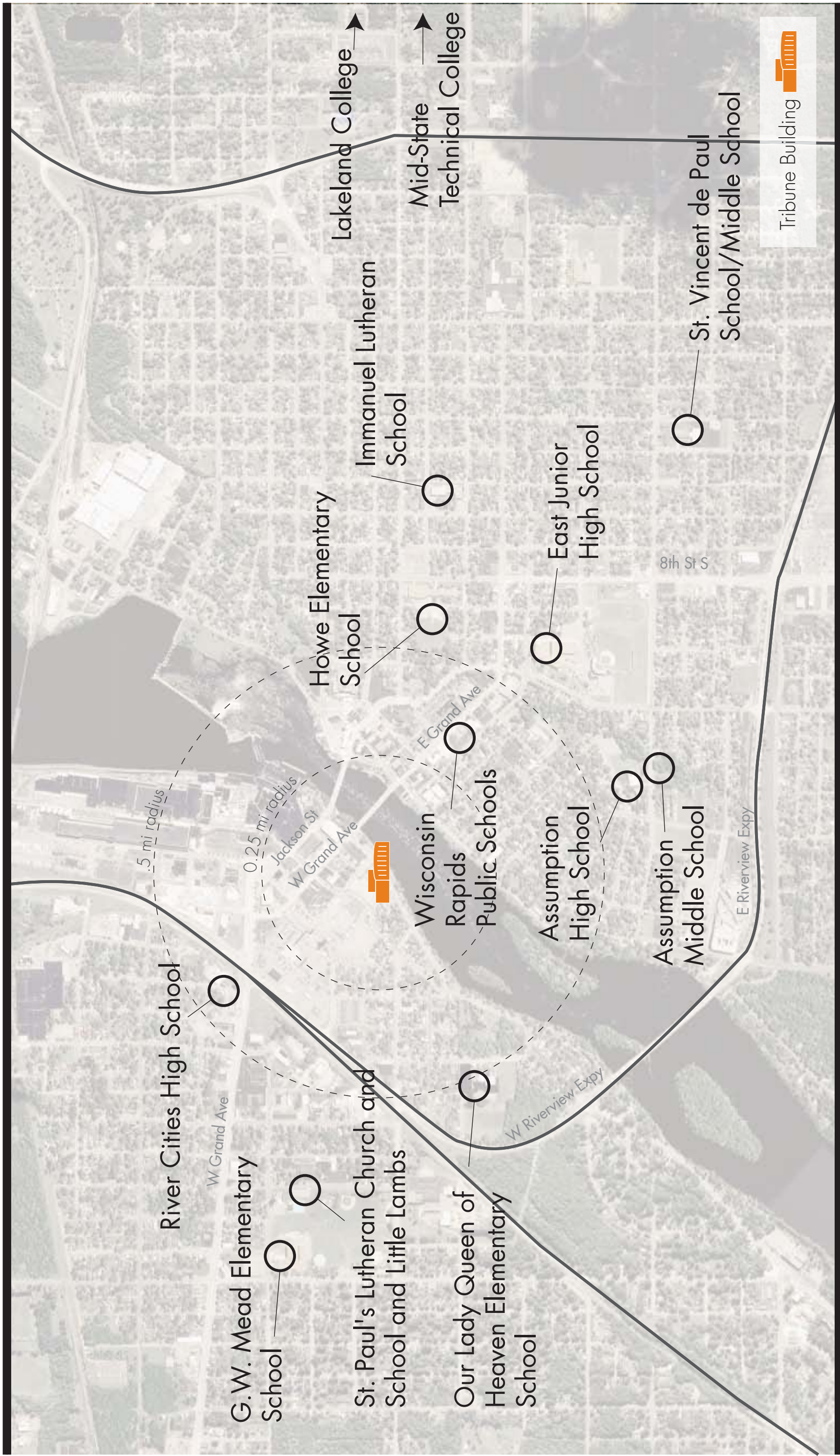
Alexander Middle School  
 Humke Elementary School  
 John Edwards High School/Middle School  
 Nekoosa Academy  
 Nekoosa High School  
 Niikuusra Community School  
 Port Edwards Elementary School  
 THINK Academy  
 Vesper Community Academy

### Wisconsin Rapids:

Assumption High School  
 Assumption Middle School  
 East Junior High School  
 Grant Elementary School  
 Grove Elementary School  
 Howe Elementary School  
 Immanuel Lutheran School  
 Lakeland College  
 Lincoln High School  
 Mead Elementary Charter School  
 Mid-State Technical College  
 Our Lady Queen of Heaven School  
 River Cities High School  
 St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School  
 St. Vincent de Paul Elementary School  
 Washington Elementary School  
 Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools  
 Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School  
 Woodside Elementary School



# Educational Domain



# Nexus: Social Domain

## Community Assets

The Social Domain includes all aspects of well being, such as programs related to health and human services.



### Healthcare:

Advantage Home Care  
 Aspirus Doctors Clinic  
 Innovative Services  
 Marshfield Clinic Wisconsin Rapids  
 Ministry Health Care  
 Rapid Rehab LLC  
 Riverview Hospital  
 Stoiber Healthcare Massage Therapy  
 VA Wisconsin Rapids Clinic  
 Planned Parenthood Health Center  
 Wood County Health Department

### Social Services:

Aging & Disability Resource Center  
 Career Closet  
 Family Center Inc.  
 Habitat for Humanity  
 Lowell Center  
 Lutheran Social Services  
 South Wood County YMCA (Port Edwards)  
 South Wood County YMCA (Wisconsin Rapids)  
 United Way of Inner Wisconsin  
 Wood County Child Support  
 Vocational Rehabilitation Office  
 Wood County Human Services  
 Wood County WIC Program



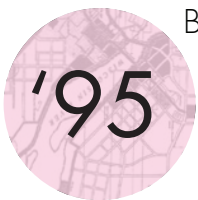
# Social Domain



# Downtown Plans

## Introduction

Understanding the context of the Tribune Building includes understanding the envisioned future for the site as well as downtown as a whole. Over the past two decades, three official plans have largely shared a vision of what Downtown Wisconsin Rapids can become. Although these plans are in no way dictating the future of the Tribune Building, it is beneficial to know what past studies view as important and attainable improvements to the Downtown area, as well as how the Tribune Building and adjacent sites fit into that vision.



Before the regional economic downturn, Downtown Wisconsin Rapids was already in great need of revitalization. The City commissioned the 1995 *Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Revitalization Plan* that recommended a list of improvements for the public and private sectors to bring pedestrians into Downtown and the Riverfront. The plan sought to preserve and emphasize Wisconsin Rapids' history. Some recommendations were adopted, including a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF), which raises funds for Downtown improvement and investment. A technology campus was planned to help diversify the regional economy, and a Downtown wayfinding system was implemented.



In 2007, a new plan, *Ahead of the Current*, was commissioned which built upon and updated the recommendations of the 1995 plan. This plan included strategies for implementation, funding sources, and prioritized projects; it recommended prioritization of the area around the Tribune Building.



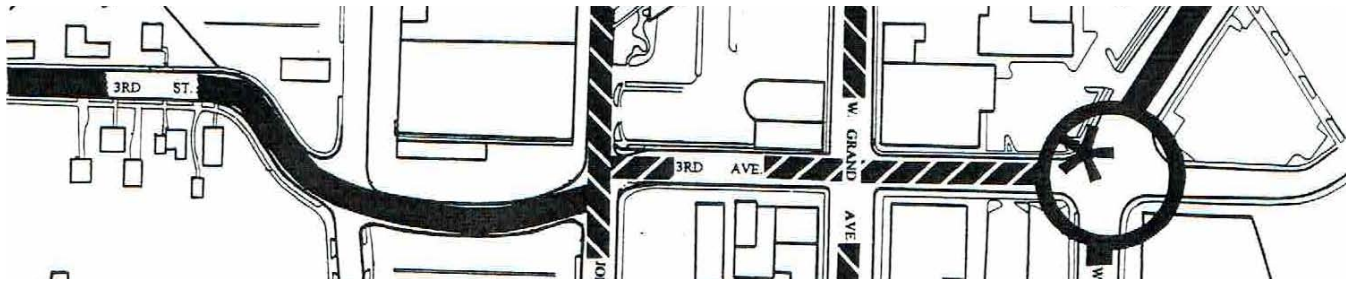
The 2009 *Downtown Waterfront Plan*, focused on architectural and urban design in the core of Downtown closest to the River. It provided detailed graphics envisioning the possible future of Downtown Wisconsin Rapids, and built off the recommendations of both the 1995 and 2007 plans. It also recognized great potential for the Tribune Building and the adjacent parcels as a central gathering space for the city.



# 1995 Plan

## *Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Revitalization Plan*

*Commissioned by City of Wisconsin Rapids and River Cities Development Corporation*



***The Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Revitalization Plan*** laid out a comprehensive strategy for renewing downtown Wisconsin Rapids by stimulating new investment in under-utilized and blighted areas in the Central Business District. The plan was comprised of several public projects that would serve as catalysts for development, including:

- Creation of a Downtown wayfinding system;
- Enhancement of primary and secondary intersections;
- Preservation of riverfront drives;
- Establishment of an historic preservation zoning overlay district; and
- Improvement of bicycle and pedestrian access.

These projects would be tied to incentives for high quality infill development and the revitalization of existing buildings. The plan called for the establishment of an organizational framework to lead the effort.

The plan recognized that the Wisconsin River park system is a tremendous asset for the community due to its historical significance, tourism opportunity, aesthetic beauty, and recreation potential.

For the city to take advantage of this resource, the plan called for enhancements to improve access to the river, making it an exciting focal point of Downtown. Other improvements included lighting, benches, walkways, overlooks, and the establishment of water-oriented activities such as boating, fishing, and waterfront dining.

The plan also contains a parking needs analysis that includes recommendations.

### **Plan Outcomes:**

- Wayfinding system of signs
- In 2005 the TIF was put in place to help finance redevelopment and revitalization downtown.



# 2007 Plan

## *Ahead of the Current*

*Commissioned by City of Wisconsin Rapids*



*Ahead of the Current* responded to the creation of the Tax Incremental District (TID) downtown. The plan outlined 13 broad goals for the Downtown area encompassed in the TID, 35 strategies for achieving these goals, and individual tasks for specific parties. The plan organized these tasks by priority, time frame, and sources of funding.

The plan reiterated much of the vision of the 1995 plan, but included more specifics to help realize that vision. *Ahead of the Current* critiqued the earlier plan for overlooking the importance of private sector cooperation: "It is not the period street lamps, benches, or wayfinding that brings a downtown back, but a unique feel that such public investments lend to a place, combined with private investments that makes a downtown successful."<sup>1</sup>

Because many of the main recommendations were never implemented from the 1995 plan, the 2007 plan summarized this task list:

- Increase and unify signage;
- Create gateway feature that provides pedestrian access to Rapids Mall;
- Rehabilitate storefronts;
- Set buildings closer to sidewalks;
- Develop greenways along the Wisconsin River in a more pedestrian manner while preserving natural amenities.

The goals of the plan are to:

1. Provide institutional support.
2. Identify stable sources of funding.
3. Create appropriate regulatory framework for Downtown Revitalization.
4. Maintain downtown as regional employment center.
5. Offer educational opportunities to fill business knowledge gaps.
6. Provide services that assist in building/site selection.
7. Create peer-to-peer mentoring among businesses.
8. Increase the number of people who live downtown.
9. Emphasize natural and cultural assets of downtown, and the riverfront.
10. Maintain a regular schedule of downtown activities.
11. Enhance existing and develop new green space.
12. Promote Downtown through a variety of media.
13. Strengthen identity as tourist destination.

Concluding, *Ahead of the Current* argues that with TID complete, Wisconsin Rapids needs organizational infrastructure to carry out the overall goal of Downtown revitalization.

# 2009 Plan

## *Downtown Waterfront Plan*

*Commissioned by Downtown Waterfront Plan Steering Committee and City Council*



The ***Downtown Waterfront Plan***, like those preceding it, maintained the purpose to “recommend improvements and enhancements to create a unified downtown area for residents and visitors.” The plan serves as a guide to short-term and long-term improvements to the city’s downtown by building on “Wisconsin Rapid’s many strengths: historic character, diversity of retail and service businesses, industry, strong neighborhoods, the Wisconsin River, and beautiful parks and recreational facilities.”<sup>1</sup>

The plan addressed traffic and circulation, streetscape character, public space, public parking, entrances to Downtown, the Downtown Riverfront, redevelopment opportunities, bicycle and pedestrian systems, architectural character, and wayfinding.

This plan recommended a new bike path adjacent to the Tribune Building on 3rd Avenue and Johnson Street. This path would extend to the east and west sides of the river, and go through a waterfront park that sits at the foot of the Tribune Building.

The plan sought to unify “both sides of the river, and strengthen the Downtown’s position as a focal point and destination for the community and the region.” The goal of the plan focused on “enhancing pedestrian connectivity, walkability, diversity, visual appeal, and other elements that will enable the city to retain existing businesses and attract new ones, provide interesting places to live and visit, and create the activity necessary to allow Downtown Wisconsin Rapids to thrive for many years to come.”<sup>2</sup>

Outcomes:

- Road Improvements
- Public Investment
- Lighting of Grand Ave Bridge

<sup>1</sup> Schreiber Anderson Assoc., 4

<sup>2</sup> Schreiber Anderson Assoc., 4

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