



## DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW



### Deb Sybell discusses housing, perception

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**W**ATERTOWN — Downtown parking and riverwalk talks were featured heavily Wednesday during a City of Watertown Redevelopment Authority meeting, and on top of this, Manager

of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives Deb Sybell also provided an overview of current housing developments.

Two final plats were approved by the City last year: **The Enclave of Hunter Oaks Subdivision** (40 single-family lots) and the **Edge Field Subdivision** (55 lots with a

mixture of single-family and twin-home lots). The City is working on finalizing a development agreement for The Enclave and Bielinski Homes Inc. anticipates construction to start in May or June.

**The Oxbow** is a planned 68-unit development from North Town Partners on the former Johnsonville Sausage factory site, 100 and 104

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E. Division St., that will be composed of two residential buildings. Originally, the primary building was a four-story, 65-unit building with a smaller three-story, three-unit townhome building along the front of 2nd Street, with an attached garage on the lower level.

"It's a very unique development given that it straddles two counties and figuring out all the nuances in dealing with that," Sybell said.

However, the designs received a slight tweak at a Plan Commission meeting last week.

"There aren't as many townhomes," she said. "They were having the town homes in a unique design, almost like the end cap of the apartments. Because of some design issues, they made a change from six three-bedroom town homes to four three-bedroom town homes. And they added four studio apartments just because of the limitations of the configuration.

"These are market rate units. And as you might be aware, the building is four stories with a smaller three-story building. They were asked if they planned or needed further changes, since they had been approved under one design and now have come back for this change. They felt pretty confident that there will be no changes moving forward, that this would be the last request for a change."

Horizon's Lumin Terrace complex sits on 9.3

acre site along Johnson Street, with over 90 residential units in four new apartment buildings.

"We talk about momentum a lot, and this is momentum with The Rock River Ridge neighborhood," Sybell said. "It's a 2026 date for completion, but the units are going to be listed as completed starting in March 2027. They've begun pre-leasing. They have four buildings with 92 apartments, including one, two and three bedroom layouts."

Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha-Jefferson-Rock Counties broke ground on the College Park project in November. The project is located on Votch Drive in Watertown across the street from Madison Area Technical College Watertown Campus. The development includes six twin homes, providing affordable housing for 12 families.

"A team of us from the City are going to volunteer for a day to help with that project, so we'll get to see it firsthand," Sybell said. "We're finalizing the grant agreement with Dodge County for the \$100,000, that will be awarded for the extension of Wilbur Street."

College Park also received \$500,000 in federal funding to support the development. This funding was secured through a Congressionally Directed Spending request supported by Senator Tammy Baldwin.

Speaking of affordable housing, there is another development in the works on Gateway Drive.

"The Greater Watertown Community Health Foundation and Hoffman Matz, LLC, are calling it Lot Zero Gateway Drive," Sybell said. "They're planning seven single-family homes on a lot that's 1.1 acre across from Tractor Supply. It's a little bit smaller lot size, so they had asked for an exception to have that smaller lot area of 7,000 square feet. The homes are designed to meet the needs of the workforce and first time buyers, hopefully offering them at reduced costs. It's a way of saving money, because you can take advantage of existing public infrastructure."

Right down the street, there's another development in its preliminary stages at 1911 Gateway Drive from Free Heel Capital.

"This will be 250 to 290 multi-family units that's on 33 acres, with 22 of the acres being buildable," Sybell said. "It's envisioned to have attached indoor parking, one to three bedroom floor plans, and walking trails and springs; a neighborhood feel. A couple of the individuals from Free Heel Capital did a presentation on TIF and TID before the Committee of the Whole and introduced themselves to the Common Council. They closed on the property in December."

After Sybell's development overview, the floor was opened to RDA members.

"That's a long list," said Chair Ryan Wagner. "Oconomowoc has done a great job of having a map on their website that shows all the current or potential developments coming up and highlighted areas...It's a great resource and a great advertising opportunity for the community."

The RDA agreed, and on top of the map idea, Wagner also spoke about Watertown's development perception.

"Is there anything the RDA should be actively doing to help facilitate these

to go from step one to step 10? Outside of just saying we support it," Wagner said. "Are there any boxes we can check prior to Council...I think one of the things that, at least in my experience, has been a hindrance for the community is we do seem like we put up more walls than other communities. Sometimes those walls aren't necessary."

"Other developers have told me that they've had challenges. They looked at Watertown and come talk to people, and it seems harder to get the ball rolling. Sometimes it's a good reason, and sometimes it seems like it's not. I'm wondering if this group needs to be looking at that pathway that tries to help facilitate going from step one to step 10."

District 7 Alder Tony

Arnett welcomed a conversation to truly get to the bottom of the City's perception with developers.

"If this group can help collect actual, specific information in that regard, I would love to hear it," Arnett said. "I'm all about hearing that topic, but only if it's specifics that we can then truly pick apart and figure out something we can do about it. It's really hard to deal with the amorphous, that (Watertown) is just difficult to work with."

"I want to get to that perception. But the way we can get there is with specifics... Get a conversation with them to find out exactly what happened, then we can figure it out. Can we fix that or not?"

Fellow RDA members agreed with Arnett's approach.



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