

Craig, Sondra

From: City of La Crosse Notices - No Reply
Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2026 8:03 AM
To: Craig, Sondra; Elsen, Nikki; Janssen, Barb; Kahlow, Chris; Slezniak, Larry; Trost, Jennifer; Mindel, Mackenzie; Dickinson, Tamra; Goggin, Erin; Steele, Annette; Washington-Spivey, Shaundel; Weston, Lisa; Newberry, Aron; Bedford, Crystal; Padesky, Gary; Stine, Olivia; Northwood, Rosanne
Subject: City Council Contact Form: Follow-Up - Fiscal Analysis of Proposed Zoning Changes

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Submitted on: 9/10/2026
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Municipality: City of La Crosse
Is this related to a legislative agenda item: Yes
Agenda item number:

Subject: Follow-Up - Fiscal Analysis of Proposed Zoning Changes

Dear Council Members,

Thank you again for the opportunity to attend Wednesday evening's zoning workshop and to ask several questions. I appreciated the openness of the Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and consultants throughout a lengthy and detailed discussion.

After reflecting on the meeting, I wanted to clarify the intent behind my final question regarding the potential financial impact of the proposed zoning changes.

I am not suggesting that La Crosse should do nothing or that the existing zoning code should remain unchanged. I understand that important purposes of this project are to modernize and streamline an outdated code while also creating opportunities for additional housing.

My question is more fundamental:

What do we reasonably expect these changes to accomplish financially for the City of La Crosse?

At the meeting, I asked how many additional housing units the proposed zoning changes are expected to produce. When that could not be estimated, I followed by asking what effect the changes could have on the City's taxable property base and long-term fiscal health.

After the meeting, I researched how other communities have approached major zoning and land-use changes and found that fiscal-impact analysis has been incorporated into the planning process elsewhere.

For example:

Belmont, Massachusetts developed a buildout and fiscal-impact model for proposed zoning changes. Its

Planning and Finance departments worked together to evaluate different development scenarios and their effects on municipal revenues and expenses.

San Marcos, Texas, went considerably further, calculating the estimated net fiscal impact per acre of different development patterns and comparing its preferred growth scenario with continuation of existing development trends.

Barstow, California, as part of its recent General Plan and zoning update, included fiscal-impact analyses alongside its proposed land-use and zoning changes.

These communities are obviously different from La Crosse, and I am not suggesting that we adopt their zoning policies. What I find valuable is their process: significant land-use decisions were accompanied by an effort to understand their potential financial consequences.

That leads to my question:

Would it be appropriate to involve the City's Finance Department in developing a fiscal-impact analysis of the proposed zoning changes before final adoption?

Working with Planning, the Finance Department could help develop several reasonable scenarios estimating additional development, changes in taxable property value, resulting property-tax revenue, infrastructure and municipal service costs, and ultimately the potential net fiscal effect on the City over time.

No one can predict future development precisely. That isn't the purpose.

Establishing reasonable estimates creates expectations. Expectations create benchmarks. And benchmarks give future Councils and residents a way to determine whether the policy accomplished what we expected it to accomplish.

If increasing housing opportunities is one of the objectives of the zoning rewrite, we should have some reasonable expectation of how many additional units might result. If strengthening La Crosse's tax base is an expected benefit, we should attempt to quantify that as well.

La Crosse is making decisions that could shape development patterns for decades. Combining the expertise of Planning with the financial perspective of the Finance Department would, in my view, give the Council and the public another valuable tool for evaluating those decisions.

Thank you again for your time, your service, and the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Respectfully,

Robin Roberts
La Crosse Resident