

# Proposal for the North Community Library Building at 1552 Kane St, La Crosse WI



Respectfully submitted for consideration by:

Tamra Dickinson, Kelly Leibold, Maureen Freedland,  
Dillon Mader, Rosanne Northwood, Joe Kovacevich,  
Wyatt Molling, and Trevor Yeoman

## 1. (#2 from RFEI) Qualification statement highlighting experience with projects of similar size/ complexity

Because the North Library branch is a beloved space in the community, this inspired us to submit the following proposal for the City to potentially pursue: a grocery model. You often hear that small grocery operators cannot compete with big chains, but this is false and misleading. One successful, tangible example are the defense commissaries you find on military bases "providing groceries in a safe and secure shopping environment... the Commissary benefit provides significant savings compared to commercial retailers." Grocery stores fill a local need, boosting economic growth and neighborhood revitalization. More local examples from across the midwest such as Milwaukee's Fresh Food Access Fund are available linked below (reference #1). A municipal grocery model works well in other communities like nearby Winona and Lanesboro MN, too (reference #2). In our community we can also utilize local urban garden producers for this venture.

## 2. (#1 and #6 from RFEI) Expected sources of financing and estimated total cost... proposed purchase price would need to be based on City's evaluation of property (plus modifications and improvements)

We understand the City would ultimately prefer this property become taxable, but with the grocery model options outlined below in section three, this proposal has great potential for long term sustainability. As the Rural Grocery Initiative puts it, "[grocery stores] are a primary source of jobs, contribute to the local tax base, and help attract and retain residents." More information, including a suggested grocery toolkit, is linked below (reference #3). Potential funding sources might include La Crosse County's Economic Development Advisory Committee SEED Grant, similar to support provided to Priya's Spice Bazaar in 2025. We would research to see if the City's Northside Facade Improvement Grant Program could help with ADA upgrades to the entrance and bathrooms. We would research if the USDA's Healthy Food Financing Initiative is an option for support, too. There are also plenty of opportunities for collaboration nearby including sharing excess products with Wafer Food Pantry and sourcing local produce from the Kane Street gardens. This property is currently zoned R1 with commercial lots nearby, so this proposal is very compatible with the neighborhood; it's also close to an MTU bus stop for those without access to other transportation.

3. (#5 from RFEI) **Proposed budget**, cost estimates from contractors based on above property improvements

After its construction in the 1940s, the building received new windows in 1992 to improve efficiency, along with HVAC and electrical upgrades. Before moving forward with this proposal, we would need more information about any structural or mechanical issues that are not currently apparent. To pursue a municipal grocery store, the City can consider three main ownership models when developing a budget.

- First on this spectrum are coops/ nonprofits with board leadership: mission driven but charitable funding can be less predictable.
- Second are public/ private partnerships: local municipality-owned with an independent operator. This gives you the ability to access a range of funding types.
- Third, a purely municipal grocery store puts less pressure on making profit and is extremely viable with community buy-in and strong communication. Local grocery stores serve as anchor businesses in communities. You can learn more about a municipal approach linked below (reference #4). Other success stories are available from the Economic Security Project (reference #5) which includes the first municipally owned grocery store in Madison, WI.

4. (#3 from RFEI) **Proposed use for the property and description of how this will enhance the neighborhood**

We find ourselves in a food desert; the nearest grocery store is over 2 miles away, a 45 minute walk. Transportation is needed to access other grocery stores in the community. Based on an article from UWL last fall (reference #6), in the wider La Crosse community more than 40% of residents do not drive. The USDA estimates about 19 million residents (over 6% of the population) live in low-income, low-access areas and have trouble getting to a grocery store.

Despite these disparities, research indicates that better access to grocery stores contributes to healthier dietary patterns. Fresh, nutritious food sold from grocery stores counters the processed options at convenience stores which increase chances of issues like cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure.

5. (#4 and #8 from RFEI) **contact information** for key staff, description of their role in this project, and qualifications necessary to fulfill this role are detailed below... floor plan detailing the proposed changes and repairs/ schedule of major milestone

Ideally to continue pursuing this idea, we would need to recruit someone with grocery or restaurant experience to further develop and manage this venture. La Crosse has a rich history of multiple neighborhood grocery stores (reference #7). The location of the north library branch was used as a local butcher (reference #8). Our proposal would make the location at 1552 Kane regularly accessible to a

broader segment of the community. \*\*Currently, Wafer is only open to eligible participants five days a week and serves only those who qualify. We understand that Wafer cannot offer groceries for purchase at this site without jeopardizing its status as a food pantry, and therefore is not able to provide both paid grocery options and pantry services in a flexible way.\*\*

Just imagine how a municipal grocery model in the library building would spark economic redevelopment of the whole corner leading up to George Street in our neighborhood! This growth would be ideal, especially considering the nearby elementary and middle schools.

Part of the vision with this proposal is to create a more experiential grocery environment, one that reflects what an increasing number of shoppers are seeking. This includes opportunities for local artists to display their work. Incorporating an in-store dining option or a meeting space would encourage increased foot traffic throughout the northside.

**6. (#7 from RFEI) estimated project timeline to be determined after the proposal is selected for consideration**

Leveraging our extensive network within the community, together we would begin turning this vision into reality. Following selection, we would recruit an individual with a strong restaurant or grocery background to help develop a business plan and explore renovation options.

As locally elected officials and community leaders, we know how important it is to foster communities where folks can thrive, not just survive. A rising tide lifts all boats! Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this proposal. Relatedly, as the vision statement of the County's Strategic Plan says, our "vibrant local economy and strong public services create the foundation for a healthy, safe and inclusive community."

**References/ footnotes:**

1. <https://healthyfoodaccess.org/view-hffi-efforts-by-state/midwest>
2. <https://www.bluff.coop/our-story> and <https://www.lanesboromarket.com>
3. <https://www.ruralgrocery.org/learn/rural-grocery-toolkit>
4. [ruralgrocery.org/learn/webinar-workshops/keeping-groceries-alive/kga-resources/KGABooklet\\_Final.pdf](https://www.ruralgrocery.org/learn/webinar-workshops/keeping-groceries-alive/kga-resources/KGABooklet_Final.pdf)
5. <https://economicsecurityproject.org/resource/opening-the-door-to-public-grocery-stores>
6. <https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/step-up-to-the-challenge>
7. [https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/article\\_f2355f30-1c72-11e0-84e0-001cc4c002e0.html](https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/article_f2355f30-1c72-11e0-84e0-001cc4c002e0.html)
8. <https://www.hearherelacrosse.org/stories/edwin-dohlby-2>

(screenshots below behind Tribune paywall, reference #7)

https://la.crosstribune.com/news/local/article\_22355930-1c72-11e6-844b-001cc022627e.html

## Hometown history: La Crosse was home to 79 grocery stores 50 years ago

Jan 31, 2011



This undated winter scene from circa 1900 shows a barren and nearly treeless Granddod Bluff in La Crosse. On the right of the photo can be seen the old stone quarry railway that ran down the south slope of the bluff. Anyone having additional information about this photo or wishing to donate other pictures of the Coulee Region may contact the La Crosse Public Library Archives at (608) 789-7136. Photo courtesy of La Crosse County Historical Society and La Crosse Public Library Archives. contributed photo

The following list from the 1961 La Crosse City Directory shows the city had 79 grocery stores, most of them small, neighborhood affairs. Of these grocery stores, only Quillin's remains in business today, though not at the 325 West Ave. N. location listed here. Also, though it no longer sells groceries, Consumer's Market still is in business as Consumer's Bakery at 133 Fourth St. S.

- A & P Food Store, 115 Sixth St. S.
- Abicht's Grocery, 1315 Redfield St.
- Abraham Grocery, 513 Copeland Ave.
- Art's Bantam Market, 1516 Market St.
- Avon Street Market, 430 Avon St.
- Balduzzi Grocery, 1516 Farnam St.
- Berry's Food Market, 1316 Fourth St. S.
- Birnbaum's Park & Shop, 1125 Gillette S.
- Bonsack Grocery, 906 15th St. S.
- Boulevard IGA Foods, 921 Losey Blvd. S.
- Bruha Grocery, 911 Adams St.
- Buck's IGA Grocery, 1524 Bainbridge St.
- Burgmaier's Grocery, 1400 Pine St.
- Bush's IGA, 1602 Redfield St.
- Caledonia Street Market, 1453 Caledonia St.
- Campbell Road Market, 1912 Campbell Road
- Chesebro's Corner Grocery, 1924 14th St. S.
- City Food Market, 928 West Ave. S.
- Conrad's Grocery, 1015 Pine St.
- Consumer's Market, 133 Fourth St. S.
- Crandall's Groceries & Confectionery, 1500 Avon St.
- Family Food Market, 1526 10th St. S.
- Ferris Selrite Grocery, 1303 Bainbridge St.
- Forer's Food Market, 1504 Farnam St.
- Freddie's Food Shop, 1107 Liberty St.
- Fredrickson's Food Store, 801 La Crosse St.
- Graf's Food Market, 1601 Loomis St.
- Havlicek's Grocery, 1422 Seventh St. S.
- Heslip's Market, 2003 George St.
- Hickey's Grocery, 2027 21st St. S.
- Hillview Grocery, 707 Losey Blvd. N.
- Home Grocery, 1834 George St.
- Jehlen D. & Sons, 121 Third St. S.
- Jerry's Market, 901 Adams St.
- Jim's Market, 500 Avon St.
- Justinger's Food Store, 700 West Ave. S.
- Kelley's Korner, 2301 East Ave. S.
- Kerr's Grocery, 604 Fifth Ave. S.
- Kopeckey's IGA Store, 2127 George St.
- Kroger Co., 2500 State Road
- La Crosse Street Market, 1610 La Crosse St.
- Lincoln Grocery, 514 Eighth St. S.
- Marcou's Market, 732 Rose St.
- Marking's Food Market, 1400 Liberty St.
- Model Market, 830 Vine St.
- Monsoor's Jackson Street Market, 618 Jackson St.
- Monsoor's Grocery, 2239 George St.
- Monsoor's Superette, 512 Copeland Ave.
- Muehr's Grocery, 1316 Farnam St.
- National Food Stores, 500 Cass St.
- Nelson's IGA Grocery, 3109 State Road
- Neumeister Market, 1226 Caledonia St.
- Osweiler Grocery, 2003 Charles St.
- Parkside Store, 2727 South Ave.
- Prentice Market, 2011 Adams St.
- Prospect Market, 2600 Prospect St.
- Quillin's Market & Bakery, 325 West Ave. N.
- Ralph's IGA, 729 Sixth St. S.
- Real Food Shop, 2001 Johnson St.
- Rich's Super Fair, 2506 South Ave.
- Roller Super Market, 626 Fourth St. S.
- Ross Grocery, 1534 Badger St.
- Rudy's Super Market, 608 Main St.
- Schreier's Market, 815 Rose St.
- Selck's R & S Grocery, 315 23rd St. S.
- Seroogy Grocery, 1553 Liberty St.
- Sheehan's Food Market, 610 Main St.
- Smale's, 533 Cass St.
- Southgate IGA Foodliner, 2701 Losey Blvd. S.
- Super Valu, 65 Copeland Ave.
- Super Valu, 1024 19th St. S.
- Wakeen Grocery, 317 Losey Blvd. S.
- Wakeen's, 1033 Caledonia St.
- Wally's Market, 1001 La Crosse St.
- Weiland's Super Selrite, 2113 Coulee Ave.
- West Avenue Grocery, 1202 West Ave. S.
- Withrow Grocery, 2824 Losey Blvd. S.
- Young's Grocery, 3003 Lake Shore Drive
- Ziebell's IGA Food Liner, 1501 West Ave. S.

### Popular in the Community

How does 1 person rack up 10 OWIs,...	Minnesota's January unemployment rat...	Hegseth asks the Army's top...	Monroe Cou to serve 18...
Richard Yunk	Richard Yunk	Kanner Kanner	Kanne
What we have here is a person who is a...	Minnesota has had a Democrat for govern...	With Trump and Hegseth forcing highl...	Not enough t
Top Comment	Top Comment	Top Comment	Top Comm