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## WISCONSIN DOWNTOWN ACTION COUNCIL DOWNTOWN PROJECT CASE STUDY PROFILE

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**Date:** March 19, 2010

**Project Name**  
**Our Town Tomah-Citizen Advocacy Organization**

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**Project Location:** Tomah, Wisconsin

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**Project Type** (check all that apply)

- Residential
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Adaptive Reuse
  - Redevelopment
  - Signage
  - Creative Partnership
  - Financing
  - Mixed Use
  - Historic Preservation
  - Transportation
  - Open Space
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
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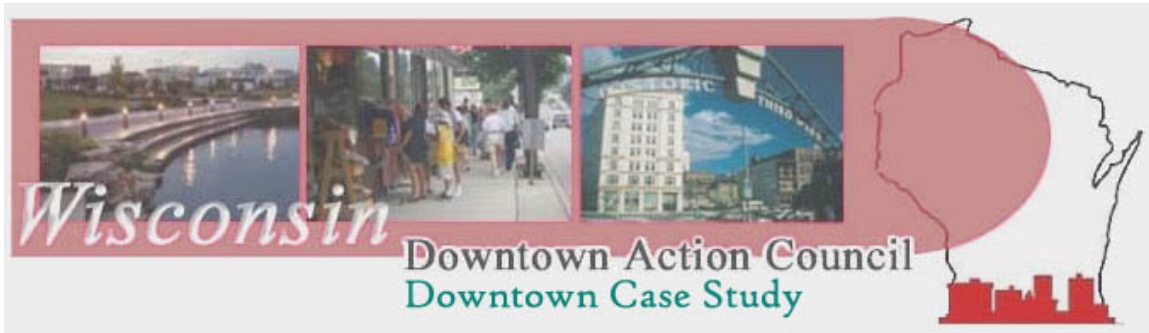
**Project Completion Date/Schedule**

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### **Brief Project Description**

Our Town Tomah is an example of a group of interested citizens organizing to improve their community and take on volunteer projects positively affecting downtown Tomah. Our Town Tomah was created in 2006 after the local Chamber of Commerce started an effort to focus on improving Tomah's downtown area. Their first meeting entertained a large representation of interested citizens. Some of the focus or interest areas included downtown parking, a local telephone company that had been purchased by the Technical College and beautification of the downtown area as well as interest in redeveloping a largely vacant railroad yard that encompassed 60 acres on the north end of the downtown area.

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**Project Location-Tomah, Wisconsin**

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**Site Size**

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**Land Uses**

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**Key Words, Special Features**

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**Project Address**

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**Contacts: Joann Westphal, 608-372-4621, Susan Holmes, 608-372-2311**

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**General Description (Use, Density, Partners, Strategy, Details...)**

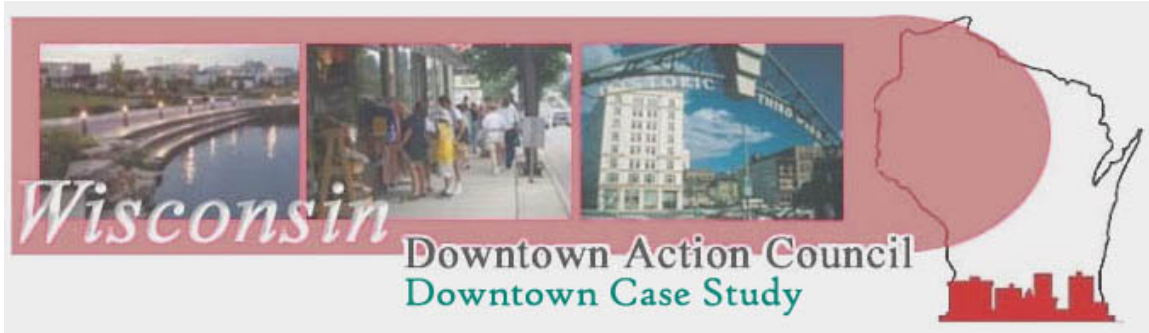
Our Town Tomah formed a beautification committee and raised funding to purchase planters for the downtown area. By July of that year, planters had been placed on Superior Avenue (Tomah's Main Street) and an agreement to have the local Parks Department care for the plants was struck. Their first year membership fluctuated and only had about 8 members who struggled to find ways to fund raise. Watering the flowers was a problem they had to overcome. The City offered a \$10,000 challenge grant which was to be matched by raised funds and used for the effort. Our Town Tomah raised the funds and by summer of 2009, the planters totaled 38. The local Fire Department agreed to assist in the watering of the plants.

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**Development Process (Explain, in detail, the development story)**

Our Town Tomah got the City to buy a cart that could be used for the watering and the Park and Rec Department donated an old vehicle that was taken out of service to assist in pulling the water tank cart. Our Town Tomah is planning on hiring a person to take care of the flowers long term.

**Planning and Design (Partners, Challenges, Tools Used, Innovation...)**



**Financing (Partners, Level of Participation, Equity, Grants, Loans, Revenue...)**

Our Town Tomah has had a good partner in the City with numerous partnerships, but also considers matching grant programs with local business contributions and has set up a unique employee donation program whereby local businesses donate an employee for a half a day to help with the planters or other beautification tasks.

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**Marketing and Management (Keys to success, Promotion, Target audiences...)**

Our Town Tomah also started a memorial planter program to raise funds and has partnered with the City to receive donations for the organization so they are tax deductible. In addition, they have received small grants from Alliant Energy and have partnered with the local Police to improve certain issues on Main Street and help improve the image of the downtown. They also organize a spring and fall clean-up program which has helped local businesses get rid of unwanted materials, junk, etc. The participation has grown steadily in this program.

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**Experience Gained (Key Issues, Difficulties, Challenges overcome, Solutions..)**

1. Set monthly meetings-same time same day. 2. Have patience-ask nicely for things, but be persistent, 3. Look for allies everywhere and look for synergies between partner organizations, 4. Pick something you can succeed at, 5. Count and celebrate successes through the process, 6. Thank city government for any assistance.

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