

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brown County Research and Business Park Feasibility Study



Conceptual development of the Brown County Research and Business Park, looking northeast from St. Anthony Drive

Full Feasibility Study Approved by:
Brown County Planning Commission Board of Directors
Brown County Planning, Development, and Transportation Committee
Brown County Board of Supervisors
Brown County Executive
September, 2013



Prepared for Brown County
By the Brown County Planning Commission Staff
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Introduction

The Wisconsin Technology Council, in its 2012 white paper, “The Future Is Now: Four Strategies for Wisconsin’s High-Growth Economy” states the following:

“Wisconsin’s economy and its job creation goals will be best served in the near future by a balanced approach to supporting the state’s major and emerging industry sectors. While sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture will continue to fuel the Wisconsin economy in many ways, they will not necessarily lead the charge when it comes to creating net new jobs.

Policy decisions in Wisconsin have been driven over time by the assumption that manufacturing and agriculture are responsible for most employment growth in Wisconsin. That’s no longer true. As the economy continues to transform itself nationally, globally, and at home in Wisconsin, other sectors more in line with changing conditions are producing comparable if not greater numbers of jobs. Quite often, those emerging sectors are yielding the best-paying jobs as well. Wisconsin must recognize truly seismic changes in the national and global economies and understand how to make those changes work for Wisconsin.”¹

In order for those businesses in the “high-growth economy” to locate in Brown County, it is necessary to have a location with the technological infrastructure, opportunities for collaboration, and sustainable development patterns for these new economy businesses to develop, grow, and thrive.

Although there appear to be significant growth opportunities in the technology-related employment sectors, it is also important to remember Wisconsin’s and Northeastern Wisconsin’s historic advantages in manufacturing. In addition to the findings of the Wisconsin Technology Council, the Wisconsin Economic Future Study² that was published in June of 2013 by the MPI Group for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation identified 37 current “drivers” of Wisconsin’s economy based on a set of 12 variables used to measure the industry’s competitiveness and measures of export orientation and regional centrality. According to the report, of the 37 current economic drivers in Wisconsin, 36 of them are manufacturing in nature, which reflects the importance of manufacturing to our state’s economy. Manufacturing today requires increasingly technological knowledge, capacity for entrepreneurship, and ongoing efforts for continuous improvement through research and development. It is just as critical for the traditional manufacturing businesses in Brown County to have the capacity and locations for continued research and development in order to continue to be competitive in an increasingly global marketplace.

To thrive, our entrepreneurs in all sectors of the economy must have opportunities for interaction, socializing, and personal growth. The proposed Brown County Research and Business Park within the Greater Green Bay Area will provide these opportunities.

¹ The Future Is Now: Four Strategies for Wisconsin’s High-Growth Economy p. 28, Wisconsin Technology Council, November 11, 2012. http://www.wisconsin technologycouncil.com/publications/white_papers/

² Wisconsin Economic Future Study, MPI Group, Inc., 2013. <http://inwisconsin.com/economicfuturestudy/>

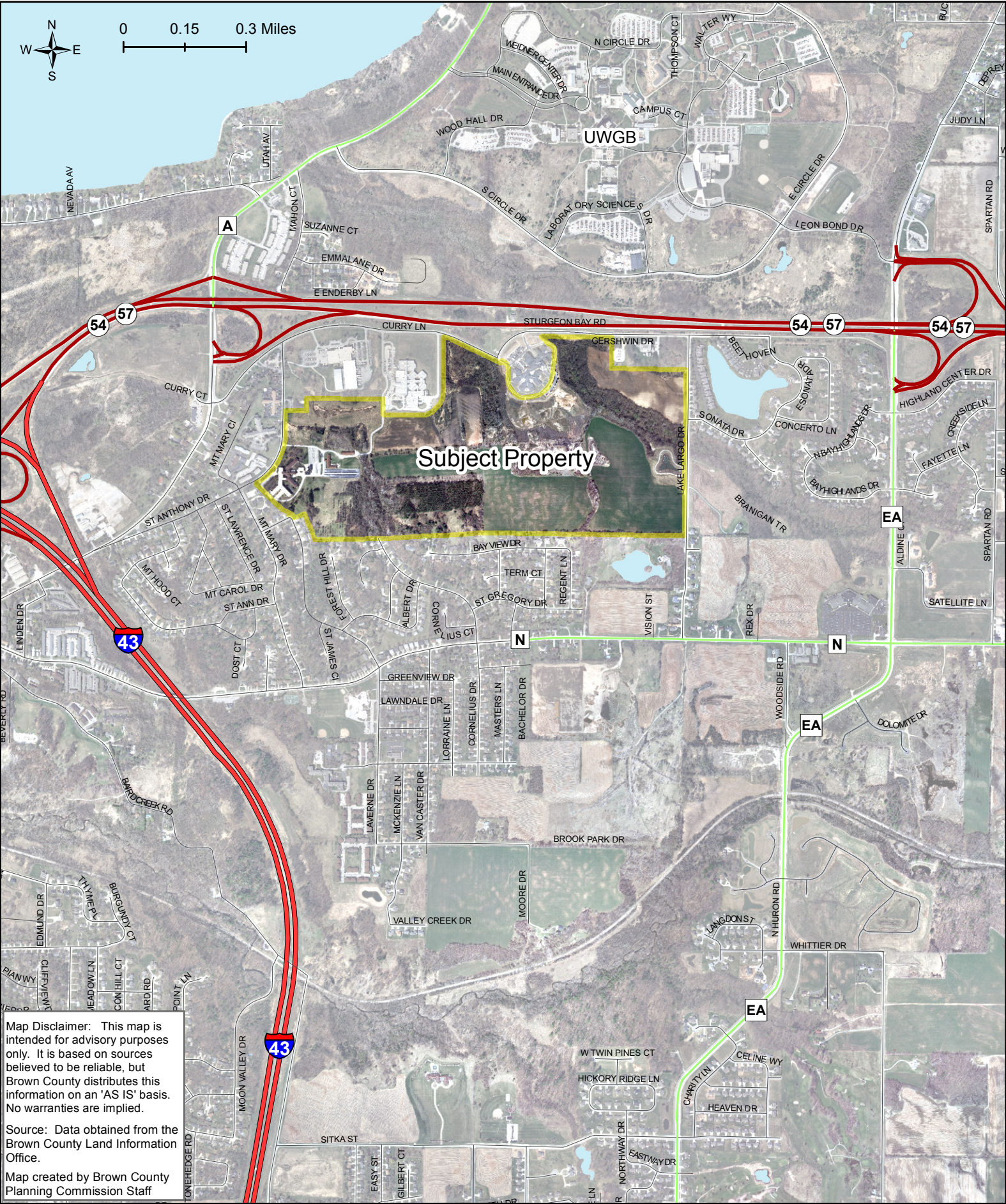
Brown County Research and Business Park Concept

The proposed Brown County Research and Business Park is to be located on 238 acres of undeveloped Brown County-owned lands located to the south of STH 54/57 and the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay campus. The intent of the proposed Brown County Research and Business Park is to encourage business investment and job creation by providing an opportunity for higher education institutions to expand the economic development reach of their campuses through research and development within the community and all of Northeastern Wisconsin. Public-private partnerships would support an entrepreneurial center to service vital business needs by engaging students and leveraging faculty/staff expertise and local higher educational resources such as University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC), Bellin College of Nursing, St. Norbert College, and the Medical College of Wisconsin's Green Bay area program.

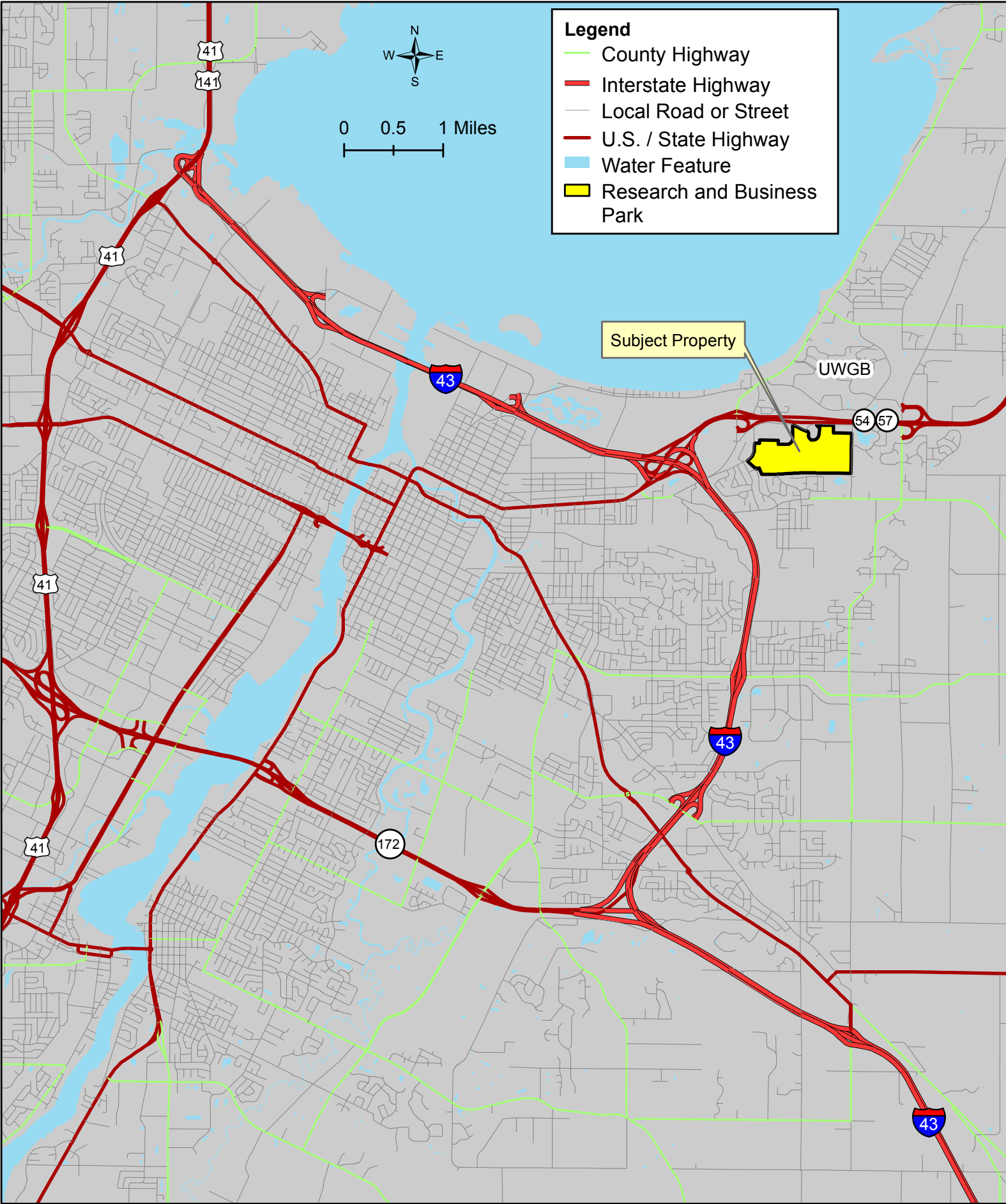
It is anticipated that the proposed Brown County Research and Business Park will:

- Promote business expansion and recruitment and result in the creation of new jobs and additional tax base.
- Create economic development partnership opportunities between the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Brown County, the City of Green Bay, and ADVANCE, which is the economic development branch of the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Create an opportunity to recruit additional medical support development and promote collaborative efforts for an emerging medical complex due to the park's proximity to the new VA Clinic as well as the existing Brown County Community Treatment Center and N.E.W. Curative Rehabilitation facility.
- Provide an opportunity for a coordinated and collaborative economic development approach to create a high-quality economic development center.
- Enable Brown County to work with the City of Green Bay to create a Tax Increment District to design and build necessary infrastructure.
- Be a beautiful park-like setting surrounded by trees and nature with preserved environmental areas connected by walking trails to providing a pleasant setting for employees and the creative class of entrepreneurs.
- Have excellent transportation access adjacent to the University Avenue interchange with STH 54/57, which is less than one mile from the freeway beltline around Green Bay.

Figure 1 - Site Location



Brown County Research and Business Park Feasibility Study



Report Purpose

Brown County Planning Commission staff prepared the study in response to the Brown County Executive's initiative to promote economic development and continue to build the local supply of sustainable jobs. The purpose of the study is to summarize the preliminary evaluation of whether sufficient demand exists for a research/business park in Brown County and if it is feasible to offer these services at the subject county-owned property.

One of the primary goals of this effort is to foster collaboration between Brown County, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay, the City of Green Bay, and the business community in Brown County. The staffs of the Brown County Planning Commission, UW-Extension, and GRAEF Consulting have evaluated the feasibility of a Brown County-developed and university-affiliated research and business park, and the study addresses the findings of this evaluation.

General Research and Business Park Background

A research and business park is a development that supports the start-up and expansion of a variety of technology-based and other high-end firms that are created through cooperative efforts between university and private researchers. According to Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center President Joe Meredith, a research and business park is first and foremost a community, and, as such, exhibits joint values and a willingness to collaborate. It is also a physical place that connects people, technology, and money in the refinement of ideas and successful business development, and it features a concentration of intellectual power and a culture that naturally leads to *innovation* – the foundation of “new economy” opportunities.

The potential benefits of a research and business park to Brown County, Green Bay, and Northeastern Wisconsin include:

- A greater number of higher-paying science and technology (knowledge) jobs.
- An increased tax base, particularly in nearby areas of high-end housing and commercial development, spurred by the park's presence.
- Assistance to existing firms that require innovative solutions to production problems and other business processes.
- The development of firms that “graduate” from the park and expand in other parts of the region.
- Higher regional retention and attraction rates of area college graduates – a “brain gain” within Northeast Wisconsin.
- The civic working relationships created by a successful public-private venture.

Potential benefits to the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay and other area post-secondary educational institutions include:

- Opportunities for faculty and student research projects that are real world and cutting edge.
- Enhanced ability to attract faculty and students to work and enroll here – especially entrepreneurial faculty and graduate students.

- Long-term sources of university funding through federal innovation research grants and through private contributions from research-dependent companies.
- A positive influence helping the academic environment become more entrepreneurial, including more business starts by faculty and students at higher education institutions across the region.
- A stronger “town-gown” relationship between the university and surrounding communities.

Overall Assessment of Research and Business Park Feasibility/Conclusions

Brown County has an underutilized resource with 238 acres of undeveloped land (commonly referred to as the Brown County Farm) located on the northeast side of the City of Green Bay, adjacent to the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay and the new VA Clinic.

- The former Brown County Farm property includes several characteristics that are supportive of development as a research and business park including:
 - Good access to the area’s transportation network, including freeway interchanges, transit, and an international airport.
 - Proximity to the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay and the new VA clinic.
 - Easily extended utilities, including fiber optics.
 - Beautiful terrain with interesting environmental features and panoramic views.
- Brown County recognizes that in order for businesses in the “high-growth economy” to locate in Brown County, it is necessary to offer a location with the technological infrastructure, opportunities for collaboration, and sustainable development patterns so that these new economy businesses can develop, grow, and thrive. It is also recognized that it is just as critical that more traditional manufacturing businesses in Brown County have the capacity for continued research and development in order to continue to be competitive in a global market.
- Brown County is seeking public-private partnerships that will support an entrepreneurial center to service vital business needs by engaging students and leveraging faculty/staff expertise and local higher education resources such as the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC), Bellin College of Nursing, St. Norbert College, and the Medical College of Wisconsin’s Green Bay area program.
- Brown County wishes to create economic development partnership opportunities between the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Brown County, the City of Green Bay, and Advance, which is the economic development branch of the Green Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.
- Brown County has historically experienced steady population growth and a strong local economy. Additionally, Brown County has a higher percentage of residents who have earned Associates and Bachelor’s Degrees than the State of Wisconsin or the United States, but it has a slightly lower percentage of persons who have earned graduate and professional degrees. It is recognized that retaining and attracting individuals with higher education degrees is essential to continued reinvestment in local businesses and a strong local economy.
- Wisconsin presently has five successful research/business parks at various levels of maturity, but none of these parks are located in Northeast Wisconsin.

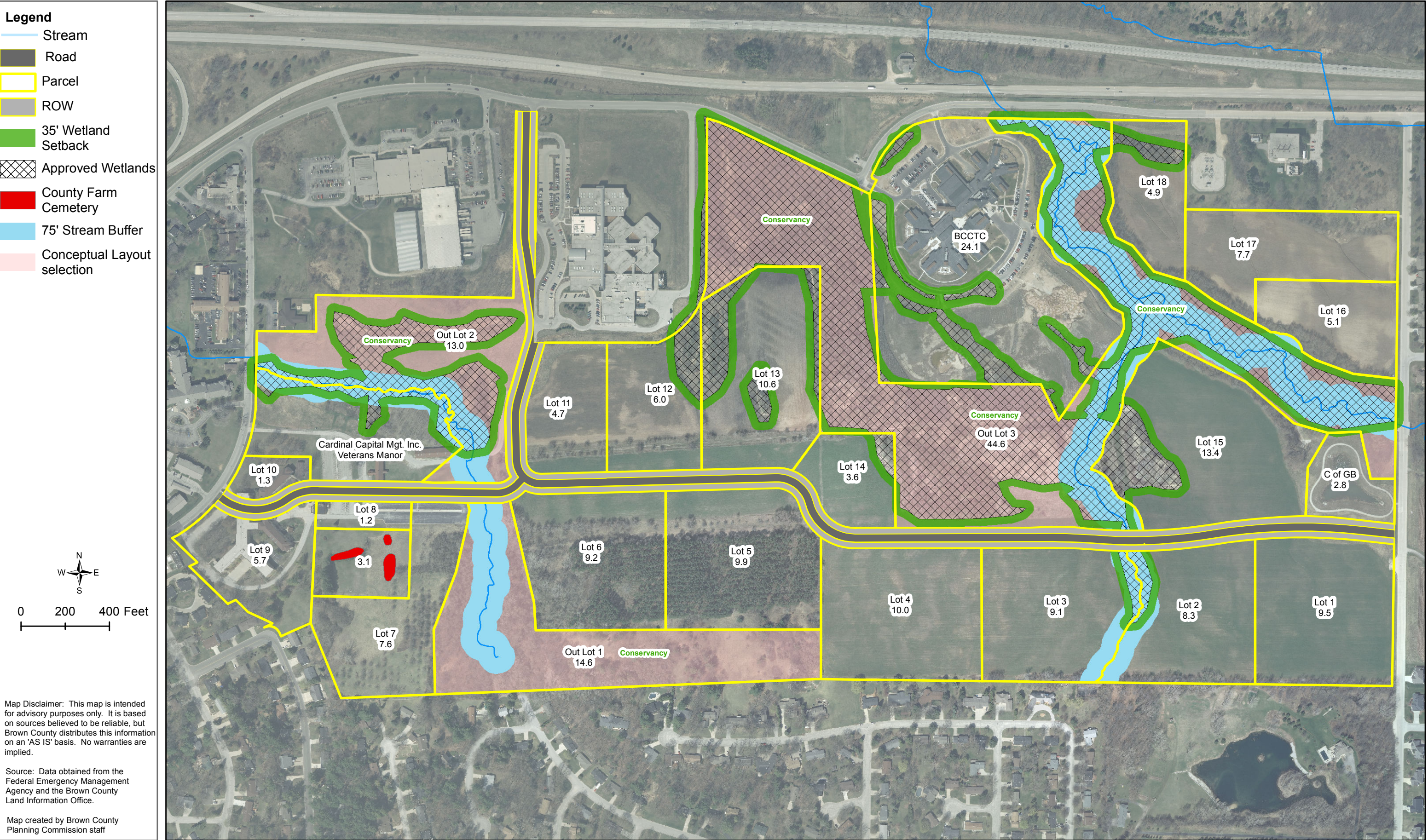
- Brown County Planning Commission staff determined that an average of 52.7 acres of land were sold or developed in business/industrial parks throughout Brown County each year between 2005 and 2011, and these sales continued to occur even as the state and country were experiencing a serious economic recession.
- A GRAEF Consulting evaluation of business development in Northeast Wisconsin that studied businesses that would have been good prospects for the proposed Brown County Research and Business Park concluded that the median sale price was \$79,850 per acre and resulted in a median valuation of \$421,450 per acre.
- Brown County Planning Commission staff analyzed 19 businesses located in three established business parks that most closely reflect the types of businesses expected to locate in the proposed Brown County Research and Business Park, and staff found that the median 2012 valuation per acre was \$488,470 and that the median property tax revenue per acre was \$10,250 for the 19 businesses.
- Significant partnership opportunities exist for:
 - The development and financing of the Brown County Research and Business Park.
 - Access to programming and assets of the adjacent University of Wisconsin – Green Bay campus and other higher education institutions in Brown County.
- Tax Increment Financing through the City of Green Bay is anticipated to be the primary mechanism for financing improvements for the Brown County Research and Business Park. It is anticipated that a Municipal Revenue Sharing Agreement between Brown County and the City of Green Bay would be used to secure the TIF revenue stream for repayment of Brown County bonds.
- Additional grant resources may be available from WEDC, U.S. Economic Development Administration, and Wisconsin Department of Transportation.
- Brown County Planning Commission staff developed a design concept plan for the Brown County Research and Business Park that includes the necessary utility infrastructure, roads, pedestrian facilities, landscaping, streetscaping, monument signage, conservancy areas with trails, and other features.
- The design concept plan also identified 141.6 acres of developable property with 16 parcels ranging in size from 3.6 to 21.2 acres and an average parcel size of 8.85 acres. Additionally, 72.6 acres will be dedicated as conservancy areas, while another 2.8 acres are dedicated as storm water management areas. The site also identifies approximately 11.1 acres of land to be dedicated as right-of-way.
- Brown County sold approximately 8 acres of land to Cardinal Capital Management, Inc., for a veterans' housing project at \$50,000 per acre for a total sale value of \$400,000. This project is important in that it creates an important lead sale that generates early land sale revenue that can be counted on for the balance of the development project.
- For the Brown County Research and Business Park to succeed, it must have an effective organization for governance. The governance board's leadership needs to include park champions who care deeply about the park's mission, have succeeded in management and/or business, are well-connected within the business community, and have ties to the university. It

is very important to enable the research and business park's governance board to move at the speed of business when negotiating and approving land sales on behalf of Brown County.

- Brown County should pursue the development of a Brown County Industrial Development Corporation under Wisconsin's Non-stock Corporation law (Sec. 181, Wisconsin Statutes) and Wisconsin's Economic and Industrial Development law (Sec. 59.57, Wisconsin Statutes). Specific bylaws for the corporation will need to be developed to support an adopted mission statement and strategic plan.
- The Brown County Research and Business Park should have a written marketing plan that involves numerous players in the implementation of marketing strategies and tactics. A marketing budget and the designation of a lead marketing person or agency will be needed to develop and implement the plan.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, it is recommended that Brown County pursue the development of the Brown County Research and Business Park by following the Recommended Action Plan.

Figure 20 - Design Concept Plan



Recommended Action Plan

- Brown County action on the Brown County Research and Business Park Feasibility Study.
- Brown County and Green Bay action on the establishment of a revenue sharing agreement between the county and city.
- Brown County and Green Bay action on the establishment of a TIF district that includes the Research and Business Park site.
- Green Bay action on amending the Green Bay Comprehensive Plan to reflect the land uses shown in the Research and Business Park's Design Concept Plan.
- Green Bay action on rezoning the site to allow the development of the land uses shown in the Research and Business Park's Design Concept Plan.
- Development of detailed engineering specifications for streets, storm water management facilities, and other infrastructure.
- Green Bay action on the plat for the Research and Business Park.
- Brown County action on the inclusion of infrastructure projects in the county's Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
- Brown County action on the establishment of the Research and Business Park's governing structure, members, and bylaws.
- Brown County action on the establishment of a land sale approval process for the Research and Business Park.
- Brown County action on the marketing plan for the Research and Business Park.
- Raze MHC campus buildings and complete the veterans' housing project.

The full Brown County Research and Business Park feasibility study may be found at <http://tinyurl.com/BCResearchParkStudy>.

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