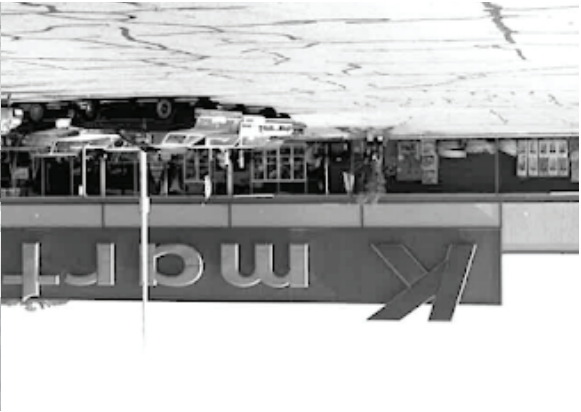


Figure 1: Image courtesy of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Murphy Library Special Collections/Area Research Center, La Crosse, WI



The old K-mart property is located on State Road (Highway 33) in La Crosse, WI. It is a complete eyesore featuring dilapidated concrete walls, faded paint, holes, cracked pavement, and broken glass. It feels like a ghost town, eerie and strangely quiet. The noise coming from Losey Blvd. and State Road creates a faint buzzing that is disorienting. This space, which used to be public and thriving, is now private and dead. There's no life except the weeds that grow in the cracks of concrete.

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Assigned. Through a treaty with the United States government, the land was taken at a price of \$0.18/acre.¹ This marked the beginning of a continuous white wealth landslide across La Crosse County. By 1848, it was on the market for \$1.25/acre. Three years later, the 40 acres that would later house K-mart sold for \$50 (\$1,273.19 today) to Joseph Miller (the K-mart lot was originally acquired for less than \$10). In 1854, a parcel of that 40 acres, including the future K-mart lot, was sold to Sylvester Smith for \$575.² In just three years, this land accumulated \$21,202 of white wealth. Fast forward 171 years, and the estimated value for this property is \$3.04 million.³

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2415 State Road

Dreamt by
Chloe Malinowski & Kylie Lemke

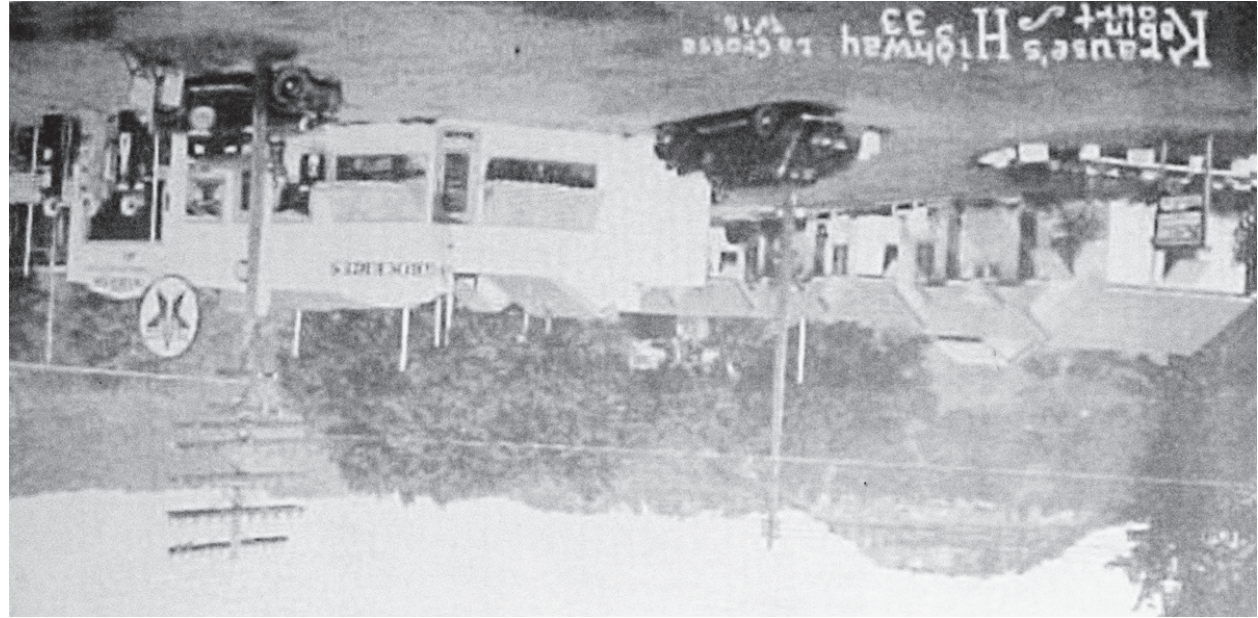
References can be found online at ope.pub/wishes

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More housing is needed, but how will it impact the families already living in the area? This high-density development seems to be a major concern for community members today, and it's viewed as a negative addition to the neighborhood. We believe the redevelopment will be a positive addition, potentially providing a strong community for new and current residents. La Crosse's South Side will also benefit from the proposed commercial spaces on the first level of the apartment buildings. We believe these businesses will need to benefit the people already living in the K-mart neighborhood, as they will be within walking distance. The combination of townhomes and apartment buildings will bring over 200 rentable housing spaces to La Crosse's South Side. To accomplish ethnic and age diversity in this area, there must be more affordable, accessible housing. The current housing and rental market is inaccessible to young people and marginalized groups, and the possible gentrification of the space is a valid concern.

Creating a dense, urban space out of the old K-mart lot will inherently make it more accessible for pedestrians. To encourage more walkability, including a green space such as a park or a garden on the property would be a positive addition that supports quality of life, recreation, and connection. Green space also contributes to environmental sustainability, offering a refreshing contrast to the concrete jungle many of us live in. This space could be shared by new and current residents who are just a short walk away. We want the South Side community to benefit both economically and socially from this project. This can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of developers, the La Crosse City Council, and the current neighborhood residents. Through collaboration, this site will once again become a place many people can call home, while also contributing to the betterment of the whole La Crosse community.

Figure 2: Image courtesy of the La Crosse Public Library Archives



Up until the early 1950s, the K-mart land wasn't a part of La Crosse—it belonged to the town of Shelby. By 1946, a motel and trailer park called Krause's Kabin Court occupied this lot. The dual purpose of the facility drew in guests of all types, from family vacationers to longtime residents. Krause's Kabin Court was also home to a small grocery store and filling station, making it a sort of "pocket community."⁴ The people living there in 1964 were evicted when the Krause's Kabin Court property was purchased to become K-mart. As reported in the 1950 U.S. Census, 45% of the people who lived there were families.⁵ From generations of Indigenous communities to the families who lived at Krause's Kabin Court, this land has been home to many, making the efforts to restore it both meaningful and reflective of its layered history.



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Figure 3: Image courtesy of the La Crosse Public Library Archives

