

City of Winona Downtown Revitalization Plan

August 2007

City of Winona
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Acknowledgements

City Council

Mayor Jerry Miller
Allyn Thurley (1st Ward)
Gerry Krage (2nd Ward)
Deb Salyards (3rd Ward)
George Borzyskowski (4th Ward)
Thomas G. (Tim) Breza (At-Large)
Debbie White (At-Large)

Planning Commission

Dale Boettcher
Steve Briggs
Pamela Eyden
Games Gromek
Richard Jarvinen
LaVerne Olson
Craig Porter
Arlene Prosen
Brian Russell

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Chris Baudhuin
Tim Breza (City Council)
Steve Briggs
Sean Burke
Mike Cichanowski
Larry Laber
Bernadette Mahfood
Gabriel Manrique
Mary Malloy
Cindy Marek
Stacey Mounce-Arnold
Rachelle Schultz
Jeff Van Fossen

Downtown Revitalization Committee

Joe Barbeau (Staff)
Sean Burke (Steering)
Rusty Cunningham
Linda Dennis
Mark Hauck
Peg Ivanyo
Paul Kintzle
Tess Kruger
Virginia Laken
Bernadette Mahfood (Steering)
Pat Mutter
Blake Pickart
Cheri Peterson
Mark Peterson
Mary Polus
Deb Salyards (City Council)
Della Schmidt
Jim Stetina
Allyn Thurley (City Council)
Tony Wasinger
Debbie White (City Council)
Vicki Wicka

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Consultants

URS Corporation
Alta Planning and Design
CR Planning

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1. Introduction

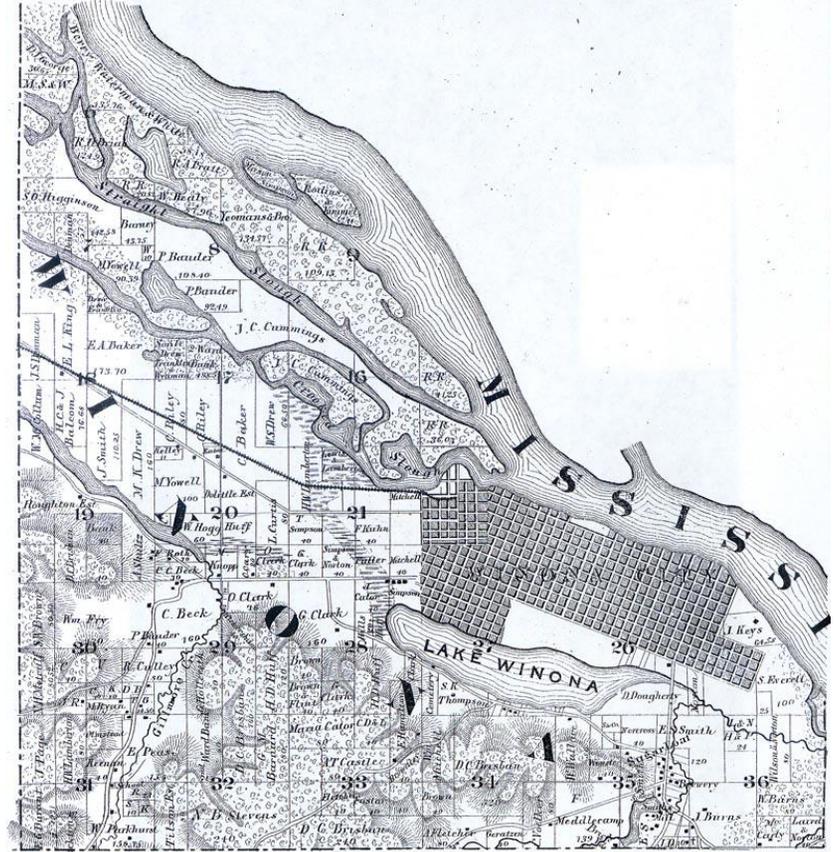
The downtown revitalization plan was developed concurrently with the City's Comprehensive Plan. (A summary of the downtown plan is also included as one chapter in the Comprehensive Plan document.) The purpose of the plan is to establish a framework for actions that will strengthen and revitalize downtown as a highly visible, attractive and functional center for the city and the broader community.

Overview

Winona's downtown was the first part of the city settled by Europeans in 1851. Fueled by lumber from Wisconsin and grain from the farms of southeastern Minnesota, the city grew quickly as a river port, becoming the state's third largest city by 1857, with a population of 3,000. The "original plat" laid out in 1852 organized the city into a grid of short square blocks (300 feet square) oriented roughly east-west parallel to the riverfront. The first cluster of commercial buildings was located along Front and Second streets and was primarily of one-story wood construction. Most were destroyed in a fire in 1862, and were rebuilt with brick. As the city grew, commercial development moved south to Third Street, largely consisting of multi-story Italianate brick buildings. Eventually, Third Street became the primary retail center, while Second and Front streets attracted riverfront industry that could be well-served by barge, rail and truck routes.

One notable break in the grid is Levee Park, between Johnson and Walnut Streets. The park was designated as public property in 1896 and was designed in 1903 by City Attorney William Finkelberg in a formal style typical of the period. With its broad traditional embarcadero, pedestrian promenade, shaded arbor, and large formally-landscaped green space, the park was a refined counterpoint to the heavily industry- and commerce-oriented downtown.

For most of Winona's history, downtown was truly the city's central business district, as well as the County seat, and the focus of civic, office, entertainment and cultural activities. However, in recent decades, Winona (like many other American cities) has seen much of its retail activity move outward from the downtown core to the Highway 61 corridor, where large tracts of land offered opportunities for mall and big box retail development with convenient auto access and ample off-street parking. This trend began in Winona in the 1960s, and has continued to the present, with newer and larger





retail centers now replacing the older mall stores along the highway corridor. The highly visible signs and traffic patterns oriented to the highway commercial district made it more difficult for visitors to “find their way” into downtown.

Another major change for downtown was the construction of the earthen levee system that now extends the length of the city’s riverfront. A temporary levee was constructed in 1965 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers following a major flood, and the permanent levee was completed by the early 1980s. Although it finally offered long-term protection from flooding for residents and businesses, the interaction of the levee, rail alignments, and industrial land uses effectively cut off physical and visual access to the riverfront from downtown. Levee Park was extensively altered by the construction process, losing much of its formal landscape quality as well as its visibility from downtown.



In spite of these changes, downtown has retained a varied complement of government and private offices, medical and dental clinics, and entertainment venues. It has retained many businesses and attracted new ones, including home furnishings, specialty retail gift and craft stores, personal services, coffee shops, restaurants and bars. The city’s college and university student population has helped support many of these venues, which are within easy walking or biking distance from the Winona State University campus. The extensive restoration of the 1889 Winona County Courthouse (the first Minnesota courthouse to be listed on the National Register) has preserved a strong visual anchor on the west side of downtown, as well as a major employment center.



Other positive initiatives have included renovation of historic buildings and creation of second-story residential units through City loan and grant programs, and establishment of two National Register districts, the East Second Street and Third Street Commercial Historic Districts.

The Planning Process

In late 2005 the City undertook a three-part planning effort, to update its comprehensive plan (last updated in 1995) and to prepare revitalization plans for downtown and the riverfront. A consultant was retained, and about 100 citizens volunteered to participate on a Steering Committee and nine subcommittees to guide the various elements of the plan.

A Downtown Revitalization Committee had already been established in 2004 and held meetings for over a year prior to the start of the planning process. The Committee developed a vision statement for downtown (see page 7), drafted goals and objectives for the plan, and identified the major issues that the plan should resolve. The

Committee has continued to hold monthly meetings throughout the planning process. Other partners and participants have included the Chamber of Commerce, Visit Winona, and the Historic Downtown Business Group, a volunteer organization that works to organize downtown events and promotions.

A Visioning Workshop, including a visual preference survey, was held in May 2006, with approximately 60 participants. A two-day Design Workshop was held June 14-15, 2006, as an opportunity for citizens to participate in an in-depth examination of issues and opportunities in the Downtown and Riverfront areas. Results of the workshop have been used to inform both this plan and the Riverfront Revitalization Plan.

In April 2007 a workshop was conducted by Hometown Minnesota (a nonprofit organization that serves downtowns in the state through educational programs and information exchange) on the topic of Downtown Organization, with a particular focus on special service districts, providing additional guidance on implementation strategies for the downtown plan.

Related Planning Efforts

A number of specific studies completed in the last few decades are relevant to the downtown planning effort.

- *Traffic Circulation and Parking Plan (1997)*. This study was prepared for the City by Bonestroo Rosene Anderlik & Associates. It examined the City's transportation system, and recommended potential improvements to intersections, truck routes and trails. The parking analysis identified parking supply and utilization within the CBD, and recommended improvements to parking management, enforcement, and additional public parking. Parking at WSU was also analyzed.
- *Historic Resource Survey (1993)*. A three-part study prepared by Hess, Roise and Company of East, Central and West Winona. Study areas were 1) the "East End," 180 city blocks between Liberty Street and the eastern city limits; also including the east part of Lake Winona and areas south of Highway 61. 2) the central portion, east of Olmsted and west of Liberty, extending to the rail lines closest to the river; 3) the west portion, extending from Huff/Olmsted west and south to the city boundary. The survey offers excellent background on the city's historical development patterns.
- *East Second Street Historic District Design Guidelines (1999)*. Design guidelines were prepared for this district as an educational resource describing the district's significance and providing guidance on restoration or rehabilitation of

historic buildings. The guidelines are voluntary for property owners. (Similar guidelines for the Third Street district were being prepared in 2007.)

As of spring 2007, Winona County was engaged in developing a campus plan for its downtown facilities, which currently include offices, public safety and parking facilities on several blocks between Main Street and Winona Street. The concepts of the County's draft plan are discussed and incorporated into Section 3.1, Land Use and Economic Development.

Summary of Issues and Themes

Major issues identified by the Downtown Revitalization Committee and through public outreach activities include the following:

- **Riverfront Wayfinding and Access:** How can access and visibility of the riverfront from downtown be improved, especially given the presence of the railroad storage tracks?
- **Historic Preservation:** Historic buildings within the National Register historic districts have no protection against demolition or alteration. During the planning period, eight contributing buildings within the Third Street Historic District were demolished to provide parking for Merchants Bank. Establishing a local historic district is a priority of the Committee.
- **Parking:** There is a strong perception of inadequate or poorly located parking. How can existing problems be addressed? Will the lack of off-street parking act as a barrier to desirable downtown development?
- **Business Mix:** What is an appropriate mix of businesses for downtown? Can desired uses, such as higher-end restaurants, be successful? Can certain uses be limited in number?
- **Housing:** Is new housing in the downtown desirable and economically feasible? What type of housing (configuration, income, target population, rental or ownership) is most feasible from a market standpoint?
- **Livability:** Winona's large college-age population brings activity to the downtown, but the concentration of activity around downtown bars can create livability problems and discourage both residential and higher-end commercial uses.
- **Zoning:** Much of the downtown is zoned for industrial use, which does not reflect its existing character or desired mix of uses. The mismatch between zoning and

land use creates obstacles for reuse of historic industrial buildings for uses such as housing.

- Status of the Julius C. Wilkie: The future of the steamboat replica (closed in 2006) has been under discussion for some time. There has been considerable debate as to whether the Wilkie contributes to the existing or desired character of the downtown riverfront, and whether it should be removed, restored or relocated.

The Downtown and Riverfront Design Workshop held in June 2006 resulted in the identification of primary themes and recommendations that have been carried forward into the downtown and riverfront plans:

1. Preserve the historic character of Downtown
2. Open Downtown up to the river
3. Increase the economic vitality of Downtown – arts, entertainment, visitor attractions
4. Link Downtown to the broader community

The workshop identified several broad areas of opportunity:

- Creation of a visual and functional pedestrian linkage between the County Courthouse complex, the Winona State University campus, downtown and the riverfront.
- An opportunity site for a proposed conference/performing arts center, at the riverfront north of Second Street between Winona and Johnson streets, with related opportunities for structured parking and a conference hotel.
- Initial concepts for the redesign of Levee Park.
- An opportunity for an 'Arts District' just south of the downtown core, between Fifth, Broadway, Main and Winona streets, centered on the vacant Middle School with its large auditorium, and the existing Theatre du Mississippi (located within the Masonic Lodge).
- Opportunities to screen and landscape surface parking lots, better integrating them into the downtown streetscape.



Existing Land Use and Development Patterns

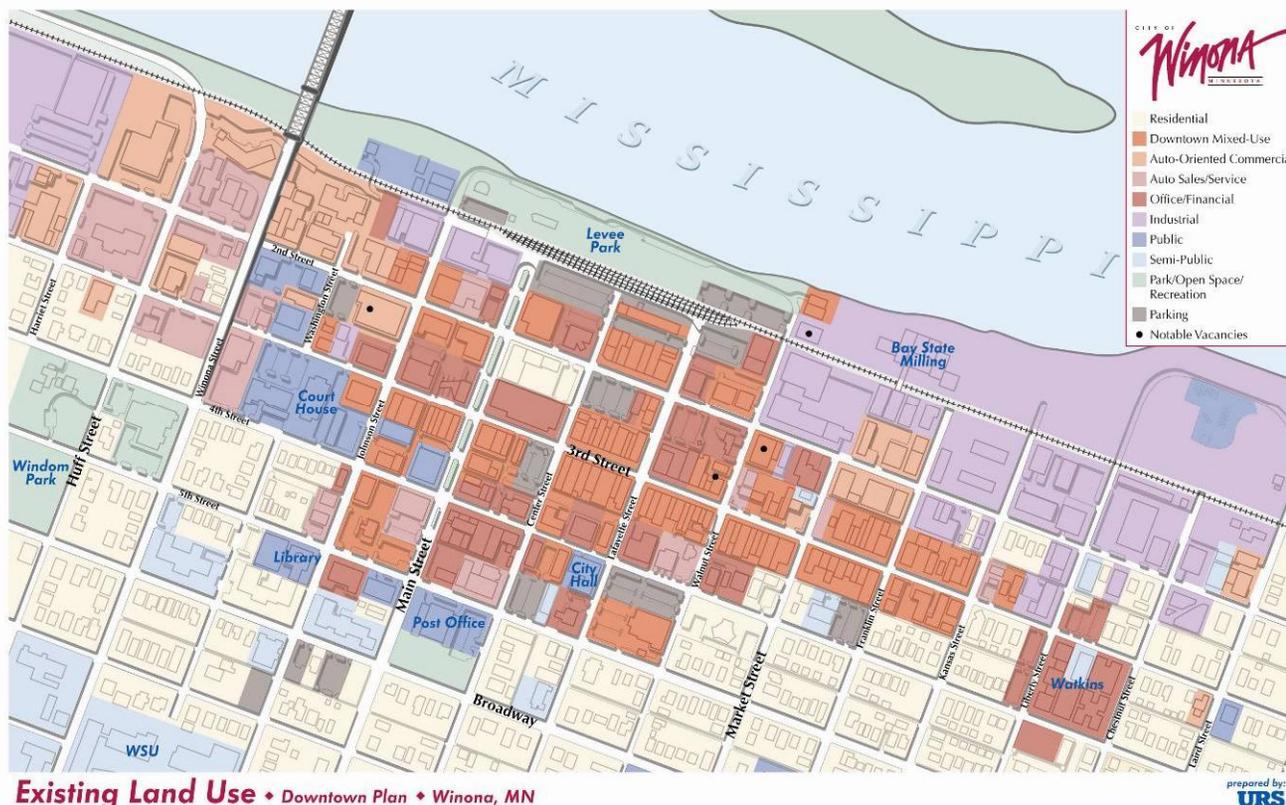
As shown in Figure 1 below, the downtown core has its own distinct mix of uses. The historic central business district, centered on Third Street, combines commercial, service and office uses and housing, in storefront buildings of two to four or five stories, often with parking in the rear, accessed from the alley. Downtown is also a center for cultural and entertainment facilities, (including a multi-screen movie theater and the Winona County Historical Society museum), and for local, county and some state or federal government facilities.

Much of the downtown riverfront remains in industrial and utility use, anchored on the east by the large Bay State Milling complex. West of Levee Park, Riverview Drive serves several industrial port terminals extending west to Prairie Island Road and the City boundary. To the east, the large Watkins office complex and the Polish Museum are prominent landmarks and visitor attractions.

The County Courthouse anchors the west side of downtown, surrounded by county offices and public safety facilities spread across a number of publicly and privately-owned buildings. (The Campus Plan noted above envisions consolidating those facilities in a more efficient and cost-effective way within the blocks bounded by Second and Fourth Streets and centered on Washington Street.)

Downtown parking is located on the street and in surface lots, which are designated for long- or short-term periods. Parking is free, but time limits are enforced.

Streetscape improvements have been completed on approximately four blocks of Second and Third streets, and include street trees, decorative light standards with hanging baskets and banners, and



Existing Land Use ♦ Downtown Plan ♦ Winona, MN

Figure 1: Downtown Land Use, 2006

contrasting paving. The use of these elements varies by the block; some blocks have standard light poles, others have street trees but no banners or baskets.

2. Vision, Goals and Objectives

Vision Statement: Historic Downtown Winona – Rich Heritage. Wealth of Opportunity

The Downtown Revitalization Committee is committed to Historic Downtown Winona being the heart of our community and region, a vibrant hub of commerce, entertainment, recreation and residential life.

Historic Downtown Winona will link the Mississippi River to the rest of our beautiful community by serving as an inviting place where residents and visitors can experience our diverse culture, celebrate the arts and preserve our architectural heritage.

Through partnerships with private and public landowners, our historic downtown will:

Be the Heart of the Community and Region... by promoting residential living, celebrating the arts, encouraging entrepreneurial endeavors, and promoting hospitality and recreational activities.

Strategic goals will create and maintain an aesthetically pleasing and welcoming downtown environment – one that is accessible, orderly, safe and easy to use. Use of streetscaping, signage, and other methods will visibly enhance and delineate the location.

Be River Focused... by focusing on and capturing the natural allure of the river and appreciation for its history through appropriate land use.

Strategic goals will include enhanced visual and physical access for both land- and water-based visitors, preservation and interpretation.

Be Committed to Historic Preservation... by developing ways to educate, celebrate, promote and create awareness of our cultural and architectural heritage.

Strategic goals will establish local historic districts and provide ongoing education and incentives to ensure that future generations share our commitment to historic preservation.

Be Inclusive and Connected... by being proactive in the larger community and recognizing the importance of connections with the greater Winona area, while maintaining and enhancing the social and economic advantages of living in a small city.



Downtown streetscape elements.

Strategic goals will focus on the infrastructure, citizen and visitor support systems that link the diversified assets of the downtown to the community as a whole.

Goals and Objectives

1. Historic Preservation. Preserve and enhance the historic character of Downtown Winona, as expressed through the Historic Preservation goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan. Maintain and improve upon the condition of historic downtown buildings.

2. Downtown-Riverfront Connections. Enhance the accessibility and view of the Mississippi River from within the Downtown Winona district.

Objectives:

1. Create a seamless transition between downtown and the riverfront.
2. Create a presence of residential, retail, restaurant, entertainment and professional office use along the river near downtown.
3. Make the downtown area of the riverfront accessible to recreational boating traffic.
4. Establish Levee Park as a recreational destination for residents and tourists.

3. Economic Development. Promote and enhance economic development in the downtown area.

Objective:

Through public, private and non-profit implementation of multi-use planning, creative financing and encouragement of entrepreneurial endeavors, create an area of economic vitality in Downtown Winona that will by its activity establish it as the heart of the community.

4. Connectivity. Develop clear and obvious transportation connectivity for various modes of travel to and throughout the downtown area, in order to address safety and support commerce for residents and tourists alike.

Objectives:

1. Establish easily identified routes that will get people from highways, the airport and the passenger rail depot into downtown.
2. Better define safe truck routes via clear signage and minimize the presence of trucks on downtown streets.
3. Assure an adequate and visible supply of short- and long-term downtown parking, serving visitors, employees and downtown residents.

4. Provide a safe pedestrian and non-motorized transportation network downtown, including sidewalks, paths, bike lanes and trails.

5. Enhanced Streetscape. To create a downtown streetscape that is attractive and inviting to visitors, current and prospective residents, downtown workers and business owners.

Objectives:

Implement streetscape improvements, including lighting, street furniture and vegetation, designed at a pedestrian scale that fosters comfort and safety and encourages both daytime and evening activity.

3. Framework Plan

The remainder of the plan is organized by topic, and generally parallels the Four-Point Approach™ to commercial district revitalization developed by the National Trust Main Street Center. The four points are:

- Design – improving the physical appearance of both public and private properties, including preservation of historic buildings
- Promotion – marketing and managing downtown’s assets and attractions in the same unified way that shopping malls and centers are promoted.
- Organization – creating a sustainable organizational structure that can carry out Main Street improvements
- Economic Restructuring – strengthens the community’s existing economic assets while diversifying its economic base, including redevelopment and other land use transitions.

In the broadest sense, the downtown plan identifies changes in the use of land – both private property and public spaces. The design of buildings, streets, parks and parking is equally important in strengthening the downtown economy. Therefore, the topics of Land Use/Economics and Design are discussed before the more implementation-oriented topics of Promotion and Organization. Of course, many topics overlap – the topic of parking, for example, includes design, land use and economics, promotion and organization.

The primary sections of the framework plan are organized as follows:

- Land Use and Economic Strategies
 - Redevelopment
 - Mixed Use
 - Business Mix
- Design Strategies
 - Riverfront Access
 - Levee Park Redesign
 - Streetscape Improvements
 - Wayfinding Signage
 - Parking Improvements
 - Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse
- Promotional Strategies
 - Coordinated Hours and Promotions

- River-Oriented Recreational Opportunities
- Integrate Public Art into Downtown
- Organizational Strategies and Implementation Efforts
 - Support New and Existing Businesses
 - Downtown Historic District
 - Permanent Downtown Organization
 - Funding Strategies

Design Guidelines and a discussion of Special Service Districts are included as Appendices 1 and 2.

3.1 Land Use and Economic Strategies

Land Use Change and Redevelopment. As shown in Figure 2, Framework Plan, most of the existing land uses within the downtown are expected to remain in their current configurations for the immediate future. However, the downtown is already in the process of evolving toward a broader mix of uses, most notably toward addition of residential uses that can take advantage of riverfront amenities and help support the commercial core. The plan identifies locations where residential uses can be introduced. It also identifies opportunities to add new complementary uses, and to intensify existing ones. The dashed lines on the plan indicate potential for reuse or, in other cases, expansion. Opportunities include:

- A new Conference/Performing Arts center site in a riverfront location north of Second Street.
- County Campus area between Second and Fourth streets and Johnson and Winona streets – consolidation of offices and services, with structured employee and visitor parking.
- Redevelopment of the Plaza Square one-story office building (a 1970s infill structure) with more contemporary retail, office and/or residential uses.
- Expansion of the HBC headquarters with improved landscaping, parking, and screening or relocation of the ‘antennae farm’ to a less visible location.
- Focus of eating and drinking establishments along a “Restaurant Row” on Center Street, leading to Levee Park.
- Potential mixed commercial and office use, with integrated parking, on the “Hardees” block between Third and Fourth streets and Main and Johnson streets.

Opportunity Sites and Areas

Figure 3 provides a more detailed view of many of the opportunities for redevelopment on the west side of downtown.

The Conference/ Performing Arts Center is shown as a grouping of buildings totaling about 150,000 square feet in area, designed to bridge the railroad tracks and provide direct riverfront access and a link to the Waterfront Trail. Parking for this facility and for the County Campus and downtown employees can be developed close to the Interstate Bridge overpass, an area that would otherwise be difficult to utilize. Figure 4 shows a cross-section through the conference center site, indicating how grade changes and walkways bridge the tracks and provide riverfront access.

The County Buildings and Promenade represents one concept as to how the County Campus might evolve (the area is still being studied and considered by the County). It provides a green promenade linking the existing courthouse and future conference center, on an axis with the WSU campus and the riverfront.

To the east, the Riverfront District is an area with great potential for mixed-use development that combines lower-level parking and retail with upper-story housing. Building heights that enable views over the levee and across Levee Park to the river would be highly desirable locations for new condominium or higher-end rental units.

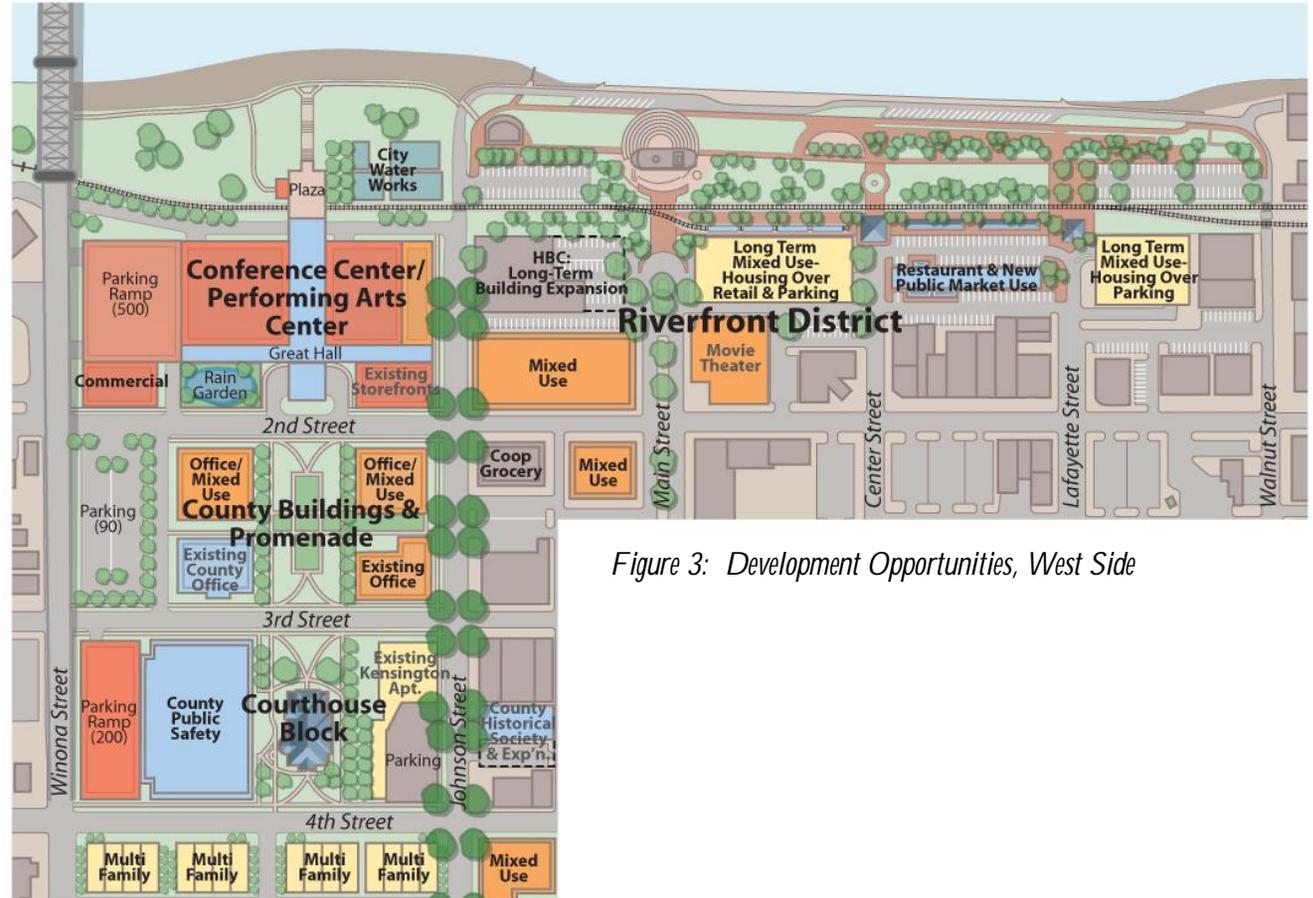


Figure 3: Development Opportunities, West Side

Figure 4: Cross-Section, Proposed Conference/Performing Arts Center

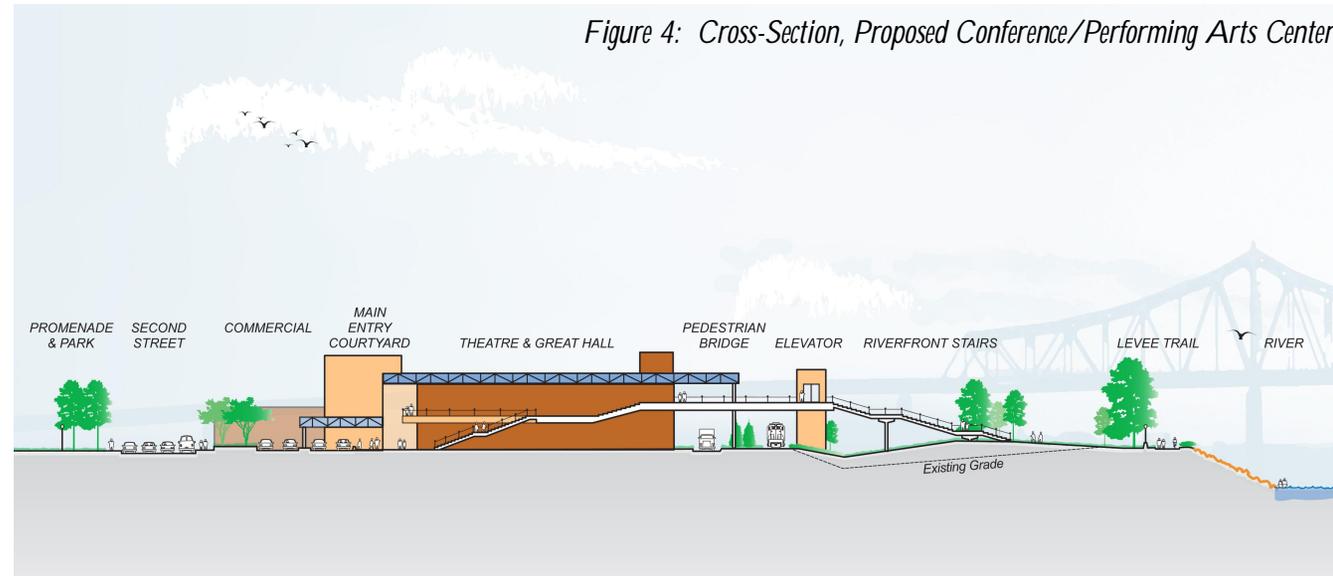


Figure 5: Development Opportunities, Arts District



The existing municipal parking lot in this area could be converted to this type of mixed-use development; parking would be replaced in the new structures and the conference center ramp. This area is also ideal for a public market, possibly with a permanent shelter or other structure.

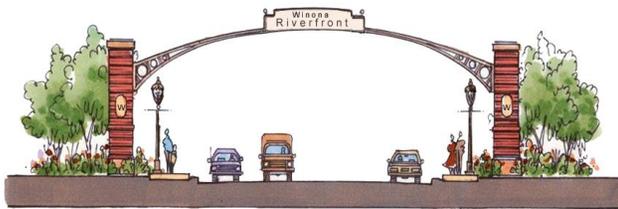
Figure 5 provides a close-up of development opportunities in a potential “Arts District” south of Fourth Street. The area already includes the ornate and well-preserved Masonic Lodge (Theatre du Mississippi and ground floor Senior Friendship Center). The recently vacated Chrysler Building and surrounding block offer opportunities for office or studio and residential uses. The vacant former Middle and High School auditorium offers many opportunities for performing arts, studios, offices and housing. Adjacent blocks along Fourth Street would also be well-suited to townhouse development.

Figure 6 shows additional development opportunities on the east side of downtown. Fewer properties in this area are likely to become available for redevelopment, with the exception of the Michael’s Lighting/USFS Sign Shop properties, which would be well-suited for riverfront housing. However, there are many opportunities for commercial infill and small-scale redevelopment.

current downtown business mix is oriented towards community needs, there is a need for additional visitor-oriented retail and services. Examples of desirable complementary businesses include:

- Specialty retail oriented towards particular clusters of activities, such as crafts, gifts, home supplies, antiques, furnishings and décor, that can draw customers from a larger area;
- Art galleries and artists’ studios, providing opportunities for visitors to interact with artists and craftspeople;
- River-oriented recreational equipment and visitor services, such as canoeing, kayaking, biking and fishing equipment and tours.
- Restaurants – there is a strong desire for more upscale “fine dining” restaurants, but these have proved difficult to attract and retain. However, as downtown residents increase in number, the potential for such businesses will also increase.

Figure 7: Gateway Concepts & Character Examples



Downtown Housing. Create additional living space in the downtown area that will enhance the vitality of the business community. In this case, Winona can draw upon housing prototypes from the Twin Cities and other riverfront communities such as La Crosse. Loft-type multifamily buildings of 4 to 6 stories in height, sometimes with retail /office uses at ground floor level, have proved popular both as condominiums and rental units. While the condo market may have peaked in larger cities, its potential in Winona remains untapped. Potential market segments include university faculty, staff and graduate students, empty-nesters, retirees and young professionals. Live-work combinations such as artists’ studios should also be explored. The Framework Plan above, and Figures 3, 5 and 6 identify several suitable locations for conversions or new construction, both overlooking the river and in the “Arts District” area south of the downtown core. Of course, detailed market studies would likely be part of any large-scale development proposal.

3.2 Design Strategies

Downtown-Riverfront Connections. Develop improved public access to and use of the riverfront while preserving the mixed use heritage of the “working” river. This policy includes recommendations for street connections and relates closely to the following policy on the redesign of Levee Park.

- Relocate the rail storage area to the east and utilize the reclaimed area to link downtown to Levee Park & the riverfront. Install perimeter fencing and landscaping along one active track with safety signals and signage. Program this space for active use with features such as market & entertainment pavilions. Repave area with material such as red brick to contribute to the character of the district. Incorporate prominent gateway & focal point features that are visible from multiple points in order to link the function of the riverfront to downtown. (See Figure 4 and Figure 7 for an illustration of this approach)
- Main Street should be redesigned as the “gateway” to Levee Park. This action depends on relocating the railroad switching yard along Levee Park, which may not occur for some time. Interim actions include:
 - Create a comfortable and safe access to Levee Park over the railroad tracks at Main Street. Access to the river by way of Main Street should be as wide as Main Street itself.
 - Until the railroad switching yard is relocated, create comfortable and safe access to Levee Park over the railroad tracks at all feasible access points.
 - Develop signage and landscaping for all alternative street accesses to the River (as well as Main Street) that clearly designates, invites, and draws one to Levee Park from the Downtown area.

Levee Park Redesign. Levee Park should be redesigned according to the following general criteria. (However, it is understood that the actual redesign will be a separate process with additional public input, and that the final design will reflect this process.)

- Levee Park is intended to remain as permanent open space, including only those structures that contribute to its attractiveness and usability as a park. It should not be considered as a location for buildings or other non-recreational purposes.
- Reference and draw upon the original Levee Park design plan, while recognizing and accommodating the levee structure and other contemporary needs;
- Minimize the visual impact of fencing and landscaping which block views and access to the riverfront;
- Increase the docking facilities on the riverfront and include a means of easy identification (directions and attractions) and access routes from the docking area to the downtown area;



Figures 8 and 9: Landscape and Path Concepts, Levee Park



- Balance vehicular and pedestrian access. In general, maintain vehicular access to overlook areas, but consider limiting vehicular access along the length of the riverfront to transit and emergency vehicles.
- Maximize and enhance views of the river from throughout the park, through terracing or other changes in elevation.
- Create covered and uncovered picnic and seating areas throughout the park. Improve lighting in order to make the area functional, inviting, and safe for both day and evening entertainment venues and gatherings.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee, the Historic Downtown Business Group and other downtown interests and organizations should be involved in the redesign process.

The Wilkie site. The status of the Julius C. Wilkie Steamboat Center has been a topic of much debate during the development of this plan. The structure is a life size replica of a former paddlewheel tugboat, the James P. Pearson, acquired by the Winona County Historical Society in 1956, which burned down in 1981. The steamboat replica showed artifacts of the river history, Victorian furniture and steamboat models, and was open for tours and events. However, it closed in 2006 due to safety issues and operating challenges. As of July 2007, the question of whether the structure should be removed, restored at its current location, relocated to another site, or replaced by a new structure has yet to be resolved.

Whether the existing structure is removed or remains at its current location, the Wilkie's site, including the concrete drainage structure on the city side, should be considered as part of the overall park redesign. The site could be reconfigured to include sculptures and other public art features, water features, staircases, and pavilions or seating areas with generous landscaping, arbors or shade trees.

Figures 8 and 9 illustrate some potential treatments of the park's landscape and path system, as viewed from the downtown side and from the river side. Colored and textured pavement materials add depth and interest to the park.

Design Guidelines. Implement design guidelines for the greater downtown area. The primary purpose of design guidelines is to foster high-quality development and redevelopment that is compatible with downtown's historic buildings and streetscapes. Design guidelines can also complement public investment in streetscape or parking improvements, while reducing uncertainty in the development review process. Guidelines typically apply to new construction, major exterior additions, or site improvements such as new parking. They can be linked to updated zoning standards

(see above) or incorporated into a site plan review process. Design guidelines are included as an Appendix to this report.

Streetscape Improvements. Continue to implement streetscape improvements throughout the downtown, with priority given to those blocks that provide connections to the riverfront and support the greatest concentration of pedestrian-oriented uses. Streetscape improvements will require more detailed design, but should include:

- Wayfinding signage with a consistent historic appearance that leads pedestrians and motorists to downtown landmarks (discussed in more detail below).
- Street trees and other landscaped green space that will attract future downtown residents and provide gathering spaces.
- Decorative lighting and a coordinated palette of street furniture – benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, etc. – with consistent design, materials and colors.
- Decorative brick paving in the “boulevard” area of downtown sidewalks and within crosswalks. Preservation of existing brick streets.
- Treatment of alleys as pedestrian ways, with decorative paving and gateway elements.
- Screening of surface parking with decorative fencing or walls and landscape material. Both public and privately-owned parking lots should be screened. Figure 10 illustrates this approach as applied to an existing surface parking lot and the adjacent street.

Streetscape improvements should be consistent, and should be linked to the character and function of each street. That is, treatments of a wide arterial street such as Broadway will differ from treatment of the shorter north-south streets that lead to the riverfront. Figure 11 illustrates a proposed hierarchy of streetscape improvements and other landscape and design treatment, in combination with the major development opportunity sites. Streets are defined as:

- Primary streets, receiving the highest level of pedestrian improvements: Third Street and Washington Street, which is shown continuing as a pedestrian route through the Courthouse complex and extending to the WSU campus.

Figure 10: Parking Lot Landscaping and Streetscape Concept



Examples of streetscaping and alley treatment, Milwaukee.



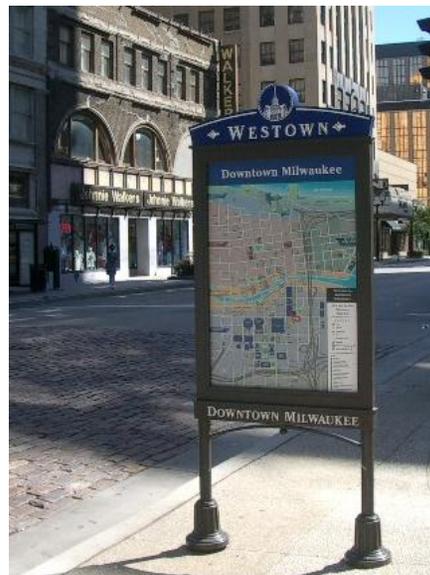
Typical 'family' of wayfinding signs and banners.

- Secondary streets, receiving a somewhat simpler treatment: the north-south streets from Johnson to Walnut, as well as Liberty Street and the segment of Third Street east of the primary retail core. The north-south streets should be signed to indicate river access.

The graphic also shows existing truck routes (Second Street and the Highway 43 alignment of Main, Fourth and Winona streets); these should be designated for special treatment.

In addition to the design of streetscape improvements, creation of sign standards and façade improvement guidelines for downtown businesses, both within and outside of local historic districts, will complement and strengthen the public streetscape investment. (See Design Guidelines in Appendix.)

Wayfinding Signage. "Wayfinding" is a term used to describe how people use spatial and environmental information to find their way through the built environment. It includes not only signage but spatial cues from the arrangement of buildings, defined pathways, views, and other environmental cues. In terms of signage, wayfinding signs can be described as a 'family' or 'palette' of signs that lead visitors to and through districts or particular attractions. In Winona's case, some signs already point to downtown and other attractions, but are not designed to enhance the city's image. Once within the downtown or along the riverfront trail, signs should also be used to identify particular civic, cultural or recreational attractions and facilities, including parking lots, parks, buildings and river access points. The system also extends to the design of banners used within the streetscape. Figure 11 indicates potential locations of wayfinding signs.



Pedestrian-scale signs in Milwaukee identify points of interest and districts.

Parking Management and Improvements. As with many downtowns, Winona suffers from somewhat exaggerated perceptions of inadequate parking supply because of peak hour shortages of visible parking.

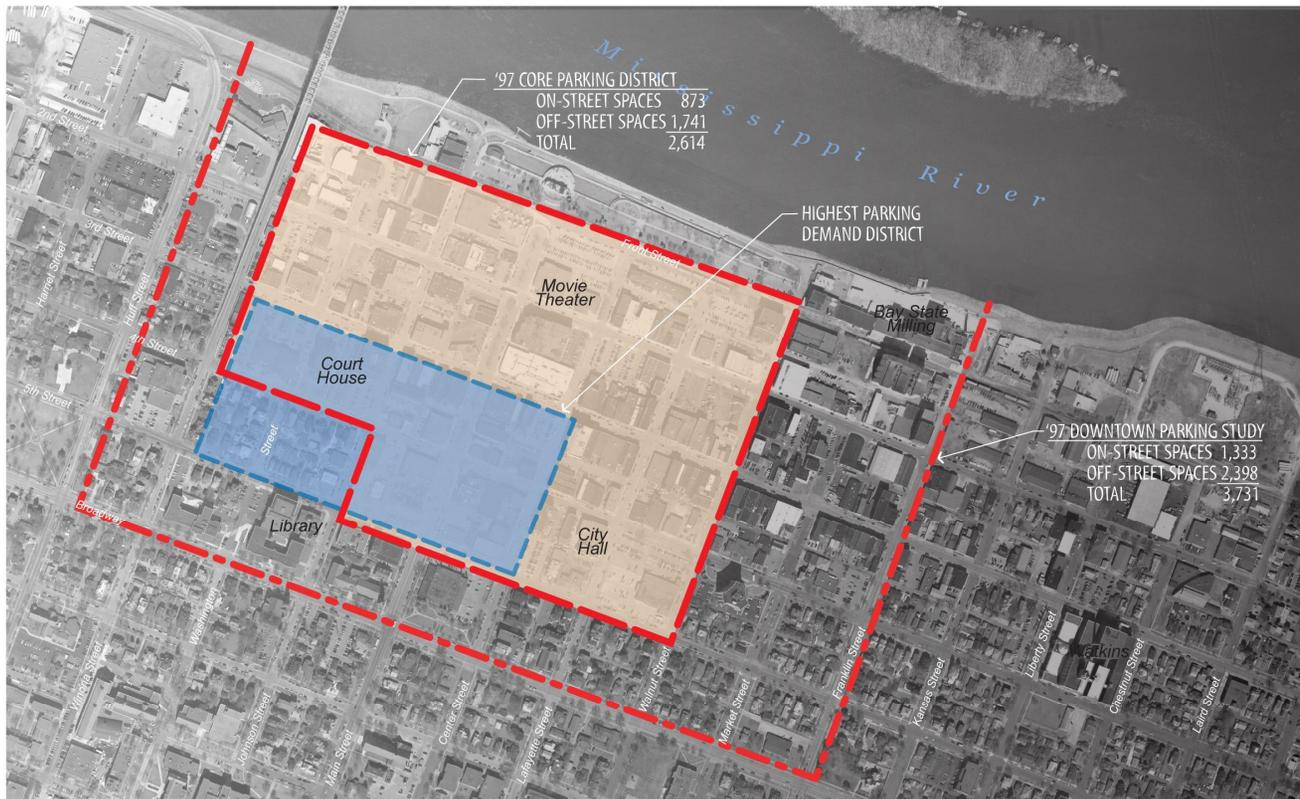


Figure 12: 1997 Parking Study Inventory

The 1997 Parking Study identified a core parking district and an area within it that experienced the highest demand for parking, as shown in Figure 12. The study's recommendations were used to create longer-term parking in city lots further away from the high-demand area.

Current parking restrictions are shown in Figure 13, including both on-street and off-street restrictions. Problems with the current system include a lack of resources committed to enforcement, employee use of on-street spaces that should be reserved for customers, and a lack of dedicated parking for residents.



Figure 13: Current Parking Restrictions

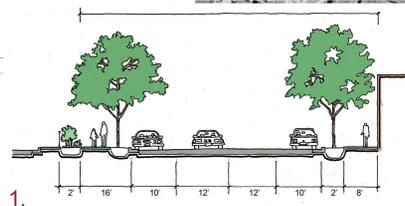
As new uses such as housing are introduced into downtown, parking demands may increase. To better manage the parking supply, it is important to distinguish between different populations and their needs:

1. Visitors and customers: should receive highest priority for visible and convenient on- or off-street parking;

2. Employees: should be guided to long-term, off-street parking, with incentives for its use and disincentives for on-street parking;
3. Downtown residents: need dedicated off-street parking, although at lower ratios than typical single-family housing.

Figure 14 indicates locations where the parking supply could be increased through conversion of parallel to diagonal parking on one side of several two-way streets. The north-south streets north of Third Street lend themselves to the introduction of diagonal parking in several locations, as shown in the accompanying details (Figure 15). Main Street is shown with diagonal parking on both sides, while Walnut Street is shown with diagonal parking along one side.

Figure 15: On-Street Parking Details
1. Third Street (existing parallel parking)



14: Expanded On-Street Parking Opportunities

There are also a number of locations in downtown where structured parking could be provided, as shown in Figure 16, including the proposed Conference/ Performing Arts Center site at Second and Washington streets, parts of the municipal surface lot at the foot of Main and Center streets, and the block between Third, Fourth, Main and Center streets. In each case, structured parking should ideally be combined vertically or horizontally with complementary retail, office or residential uses.

Another option currently being explored is the use of a trolley or shuttle service to serve downtown employees who could be encouraged to park outside the downtown core.

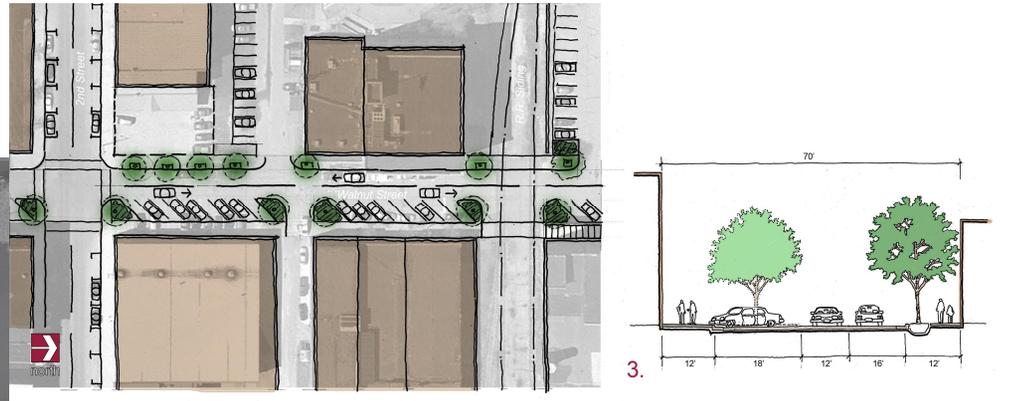
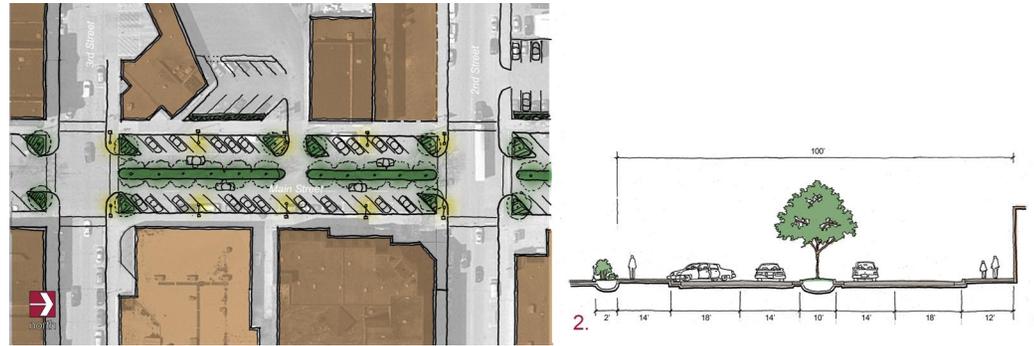


Figure 15: On-Street Parking Details
 2. Main Street with diagonal parking both sides
 3. Walnut Street between Second and Front with diagonal parking one side

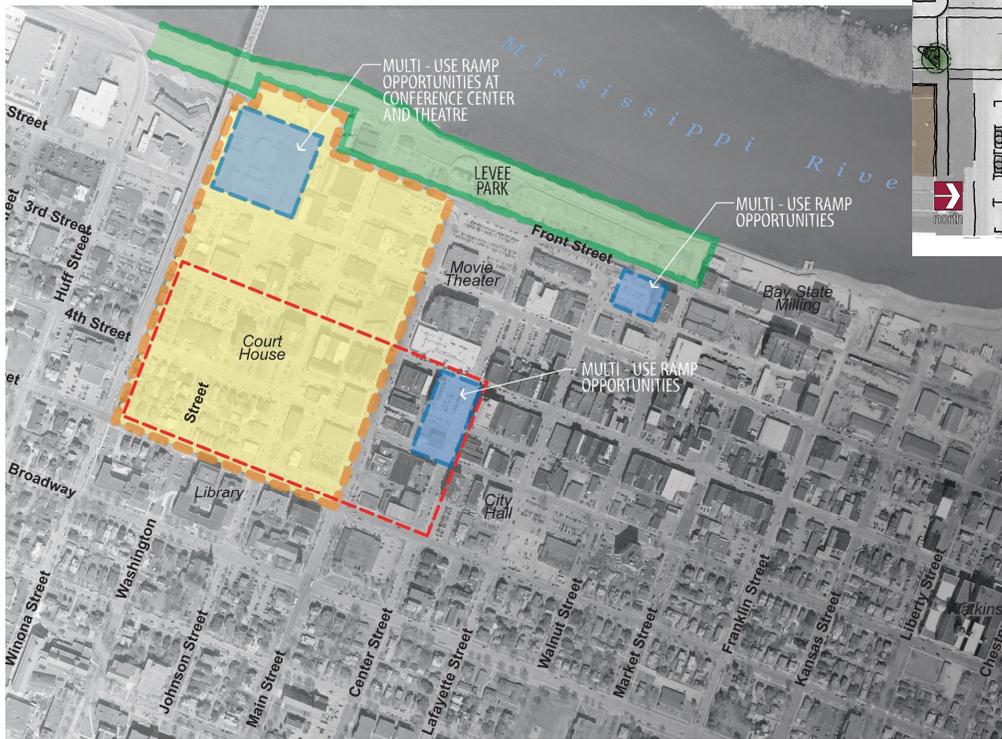


Figure 16: Expanded Off-Street Parking Opportunities



Before and after restoration: the Choate Building (top and center) and Woolworth Building (above and right).



A downtown/riverfront trolley service could also link satellite parking areas to downtown businesses and recreational, cultural and entertainment venues, including the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, the Winona County Historical Society museum, the Watkins and Polish museums, Levee and Aghaming parks, and other sites as they become accessible.

Another component of parking management should be improved enforcement of parking time limits, since this would create a disincentive for employees or business owners to use close-in on-street parking spaces.

Parking management should also include requiring off-street parking for residential units downtown (no off-street parking is currently required for any downtown uses). Such reserved parking spaces could be provided on other locations within the same block or within a short distance, to allow some flexibility in site planning.

The City may also wish to consider long-term options for gaining parking revenues, including charging fees for off-street and on-street parking. New metering systems are easier to use and install (i.e., one machine can serve a block). Parking revenues could be an important source of funding for downtown improvements, and should be dedicated to that purpose.

Historic Preservation and Adaptive Reuse. Beginning in the 1980s, the City has used Small Cities Development funds and created a revolving loan fund to support the rehabilitation of historic downtown buildings. These included buildings such as the Choate and Woolworth buildings, shown at left. A total of 38 commercial buildings have been rehabbed to date, and 69 mainly upper-story rental units have been created.

The City should continue to provide financial incentives and resources for historic building rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Additions to the program could include design assistance for buildings eligible for rehab funds, as a way to encourage property owners to meet the guidelines for both the historic districts and the greater downtown (see Appendix). Other preservation actions should include establishment of a local historic district and updating zoning regulations to provide incentives for building restoration (see below under Organization and Implementation).

3.3 Promotional Strategies

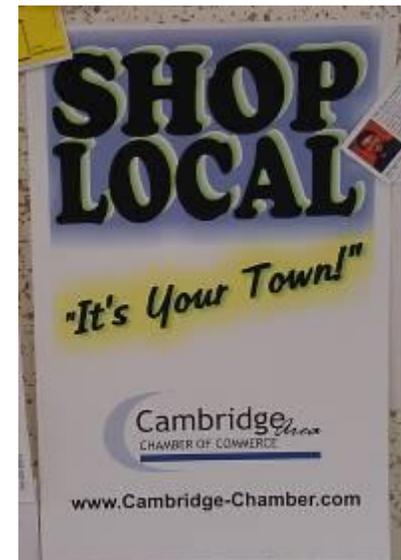
Winona already employs effective promotion and marketing strategies coordinated by the Visit Winona organization and its partners. The City's recent membership in Mississippi Valley Partners (a coalition of community and business organizations promoting tourism and economic development along a 100-mile stretch of the Mississippi River) has expanded its promotional efforts. Visit Winona, the Historic Downtown Business Group, and other downtown interests and volunteers have successfully created events such as Steamboat Days, the Heritage Fair, a weekly farmers' market, concerts, garden tours and a variety of outdoor sales events. The strategies suggested below supplement and build on those efforts.

Coordinated Hours and Promotions. A key point of the Main Street Approach is that downtown businesses can benefit from borrowing some of the management and promotional strategies of the shopping mall. Encouraging consistent business hours can help create an environment that welcomes visitors. Joint advertising and promotions such as sidewalk sales, exhibits and events all enhance the image and visibility of downtown as a single district.

Enhance River-Oriented Recreational Opportunities. Create recreational opportunities that take full advantage of the river and riverfront (boating, biking, fishing, etc.) as well as the City's extensive upland trail and park resources. Recruitment of businesses that sell or rent recreational supplies, and equipment and provide shuttles to riverfront sites would make it easier for visitors to explore new activities. Boating tours, birding tours, and similar events would create synergies with businesses of this type. Development of the Waterfront Trail, planned to extend the full length of the riverfront, would 'pave the way' for bike and walking tours, and would link many riverfront attractions.

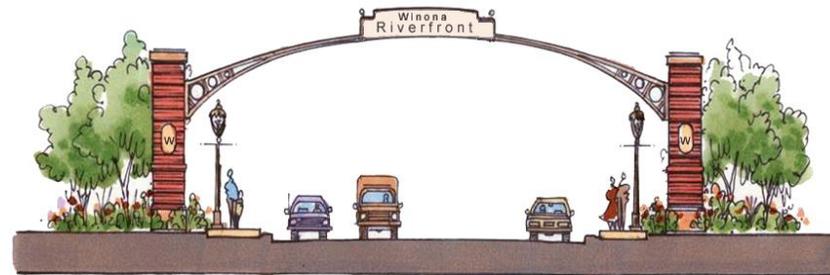
Integrate Public Art into Downtown. The Winona Fine Arts Commission took the lead in this area in 2007 through its Blue Heron Project. This effort involves sponsorship, decoration and display of a flock of sculptures of Great Blue Herons at locations around the city. The Blue Heron Project is modeled after similar projects in Red Wing (boots), Madison (cows), Saint Paul (Peanuts characters) and many other communities. These community sculpture events can be highly successful in attracting visitors while also engaging the local community.

The heron sculptures were planned to be auctioned off at the conclusion of the project as a fundraiser for the Fine Arts Commission, to assist in development and promotion of arts projects.



Images from Hometown Minnesota, Inc.

Other strategies for integrating public art into downtown are linked to the design strategies discussed in the previous section. Elements of the streetscape such as fences, walls, signs and gateway treatments of entrances to downtown all provide opportunities for permanent public art.



Blue Heron project images. Red Wing boots at left are an example of a similar public sculpture project.

3.4 Organizational Strategies and Implementation Efforts

The following strategies are part of the implementation of this plan and the ongoing revitalization of downtown. The table at the end of this section indicates a general order of priority for all implementation actions and primary responsibility for following through on each one.

Support New and Existing Businesses. Explore offering new business incentive programs, incubator concepts and business start up resources. The Chamber of Commerce already provides assistance to its business members, but lacks a downtown-specific focus. It will be important to target the types of businesses that would best complement the existing downtown mix (see discussion in Section 3.1 under “Preferred Business Mix”), while also assisting existing businesses with marketing, training, and employee recruitment.

Establish a Local Downtown Historic District. Districts and properties on the National Register of Historic Places, while eligible for federal tax incentives, are not protected against demolition or unsympathetic alteration. A local historic district, by contrast, when combined with a design review process, can protect the character-defining elements of a property, and can provide for review and approval or denial of demolitions.

A downtown historic district would be located along Third Street from Johnson Street to Franklin Street and along Second Street from Center Street to Lafayette Street, matching the boundaries of the existing National Register East Second Street and Third Street districts. An attempt to establish such a district in the mid-1990s failed due to the opposition of some property owners. However, since that time, there has been increasing awareness of the fragile nature of downtown’s historic buildings. A renewed effort should build on this awareness of and commitment to downtown revitalization, focus on educating property owners, and offer incentives for renovation of historic buildings. For example, grants or loans could be targeted toward buildings within the district, whether those are historic or “non-contributing.” The downtown organization discussed below should play an important role in publicizing the potential benefits of a local district and the risks of inaction. The City’s Heritage Preservation Commission will play an equally important role in this effort.



Building elements that contribute to downtown’s historic character include storefronts, architectural details and small-scale elements such as signs.

A Permanent Downtown Organization. The most critical question regarding the implementation of this plan is whether a permanent downtown organization will be established to advocate for and promote downtown interests. The existing Downtown Revitalization Committee and the Historic Downtown Business Group are both volunteer organizations working on complementary activities, and relying on a similar pool of volunteers. The two groups should combine their efforts, and create a permanent structured downtown organization that will oversee the implementation of this plan and lead the City's downtown revitalization efforts.

A permanent organization could take several forms. As presented in a Hometown Minnesota workshop in April 2007, downtown organizations can be categorized as follows:

- "Unorganized" or Ad Hoc Association: A group such as the existing Downtown Revitalization Committee, comprised of active volunteers but lacking a formal structure. A committee of this type often evolves into a more formal organization.
- Stand-alone Nonprofit Corporation: A federally recognized 501(c)(3) corporation with a Board of Directors, a nonprofit can offer memberships and accept tax-deductible contributions from individuals and grants from government and other sources.
- Program of an Existing Organization: Some downtown organizations are run as programs of other organizations, typically a Chamber of Commerce, with shared staff. This approach provides efficiencies of scale, but the goals of the parent organization may be different from those of the downtown organization.
- Part of Local Government: Typically a program of a Community Development Department or an Economic Development Authority, if local government provides the majority of support.

Workshop attendees favored the Stand-Alone Nonprofit model, since it seemed to provide the greatest capability for receiving funds and fundraising and the highest degree of independence. However, this option also requires a substantial commitment of time from Board members, and typically requires dedicated staff.

The assumption throughout this plan is that some type of downtown organization will be created to carry on the revitalization process. The organization is assigned various primary and supporting roles in implementing the plan, as shown in the table at the end of this section. However, the form that the organization will take, and the manner in

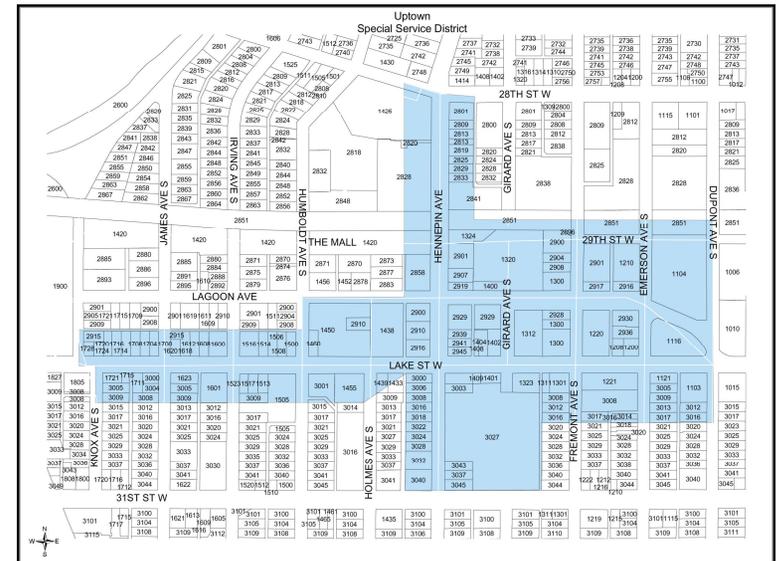
which it is funded, will depend on the level of interest and support among business and property owners.

The existing Downtown Revitalization Committee has already established a strong set of priorities. Additional activities could include:

- Organization of seasonal events and festivals.
- Encouragement of consistent business hours and shared promotions.
- Recruitment of complementary businesses.
- Management or oversight of a grant or revolving loan program providing funds to downtown property owners for building rehabilitation and upgrading.
- Oversight of specific projects such as the Levee Park redesign or streetscape improvements.
- Participation in other projects and initiatives, including public art projects, parking improvement projects, or establishment of a local historic district (see discussion below).

Funding Strategies. How might a downtown organization be funded? Three primary avenues to explore are:

- Memberships: Downtown business, and property owners, including cultural and educational institutions, banks and government agencies, would pay a fee to fund program activities and events. Fees can be calculated on a sliding scale based on size of business or level of membership. This system is already used by Winona’s Historic Downtown Business Group, but contributions from members have not been consistent.
- Grants: A downtown organization can seek grants from government agencies and private foundations. However, grants typically fund particular projects or programs, not day-to-day staff and operating expenses.
- Special Service District (SSD): SSDs (known in some states as Business Improvement Districts or Special Improvement Areas) are a popular tool for improving, managing, and maintaining a commercial district. Businesses pay for these services through service charges, which may be collected as part of property tax collection or other means. Since 1996, Minnesota cities have been authorized to establish SSDs (this authority is set to expire in 2009, but has been extended several times since 2001). Several dozen such districts have been established, although no comprehensive survey of results is available.



Map of Uptown Special Services District, Minneapolis. Image from Hometown Minnesota, Inc.

The Special Service District approach is discussed in more detail in Appendix 2. The pros and cons of this approach can be summarized as:

Advantages:

- Steady revenue stream for a variety of downtown improvements, revenue should also be sufficient to provide dedicated staff support.
- Flexibility in use of funds, including for operating expenses.
- Organizing process can build support for downtown improvements.

Disadvantages:

- Organizing process requires gaining support of property owners, not business tenants, and this group may be more difficult to reach.
- Organizing process can result in opposition from some property owners who view the district service charge as a 'tax.'
- Establishment process requires time and effort, as well as a strong City commitment to establish and help manage the district.

3.5 Summary of Implementation Actions

The following table summarizes the major actions proposed in this plan. It briefly describes each action, indicates its phasing (short, medium or long-term) and identifies primary and secondary responsibilities for implementation. For a more extensive summary of implementation actions in many related areas, such as transportation or economic development, see the Comprehensive Plan.

Phasing	Actions	Lead and Coordinating Agencies
Short-term	Downtown Organization: Combine and restructure Downtown Revitalization Committee and Historic Downtown Business Group to form a permanent downtown organization	Downtown Revitalization Committee Historic Downtown Business Group
Short-term	Special Services District: Investigate feasibility of a Special Services District or other permanent funding source for downtown improvements	Downtown Organization Community Development Department City Council
Short to medium-term	Levee Park: Initiate redesign of Levee Park. Steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking funding • Obtaining public input and professional assistance • Preliminary design • Construction 	Community Development Department Downtown Organization Public Works Department Parks and Rec. Department Winona County Historical Society
Medium	Riverfront Access: Improve public access to the riverfront: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access points at Main Street • Continue to pursue switching yard relocation (ongoing) 	Community Development Department Public Works Department
Medium	Housing: Encourage development of downtown housing opportunities	Community Development Department Private or Nonprofit Developers Winona State University Downtown Organization
Ongoing	Business Mix: Define and pursue a desirable and complementary mix of year-round and seasonal businesses	Downtown Organization Chamber of Commerce Community Development Department Port Authority
Ongoing	Business Support: Support new and existing businesses with training, coordination and promotions	Downtown Organization Chamber of Commerce Visit Winona

General building guidelines	Image Examples	
<p>Building height and placement: Maximum building height is determined by zoning requirements, but typically should not exceed six stories without a detailed review process.</p> <p>Care should be taken to avoid blocking views toward the river and bluffs from nearby streets and properties. The longest dimension of a building should be oriented perpendicular to the riverfront, rather than parallel.</p>		
<p>Façade articulation: Long façades should be divided into smaller increments by architectural elements, variation in materials, etc.</p> <p>Buildings should have a defined base, middle and top. The base or ground floor should include elements that relate to the human scale and appeal to the pedestrian, such as awnings, windows and arcades.</p> <p>Building tops should be articulated with cornices or parapets.</p>		
<p>Transparency: a minimum percentage of building façades should be composed of windows and doors.</p> <p>Commercial and office uses: 30% of ground floor front façade.</p> <p>Residential: 15-20% of front façade.</p>		

Building materials: masonry and other durable materials are encouraged. Pre-fab metal and concrete block are discouraged. Glass and metal should be used as accents.



Building colors: Limit bright primary colors to a small percentage of façade and roof (i.e. 15%).



Building entries: Should be clearly visible and accessible from the street. Street-facing entrances should be architecturally prominent.



Backs of buildings: Rear facades should be well-maintained and welcoming in appearance. A well-defined rear entrance is encouraged where there is rear yard parking. Pedestrian connections between rear yard parking and front entrances are encouraged.

Service areas should be screened from view, preferably by walls or fences of materials that are compatible with the principal building.



Building Types

Image Examples

Residential: Attached and Multi-Family

- Building heights 2 - 6 stories, with careful placement of taller buildings.
- Buildings 'step down' to neighborhood scale.
- Front setbacks of 10-20 feet.
- Variety of roof types.



Mixed Use: Live-Work, Commercial/Residential, Industrial Residential

- Building heights 2 - 6 stories, with careful placement of taller buildings.
- Percentage of active retail at ground floor.
- No front setback for storefront-type buildings.
- Flat roofs typical.



Nonresidential - Free-standing Commercial, Office, Industrial

- No front setback for storefront-type buildings.
- Height: minimum 1.5 stories.

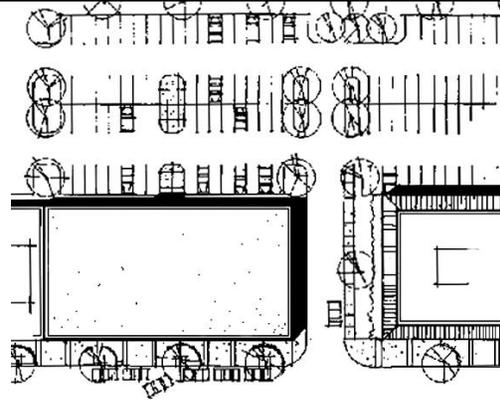


Site Design, Circulation and Parking

Image Examples

Driveways and Surface Parking: Locate surface parking to side and rear of buildings where feasible.

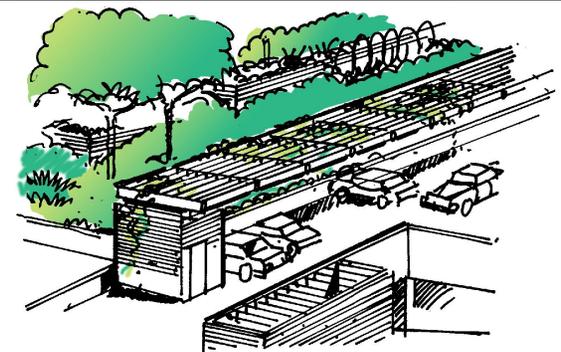
Encourage or require shared parking between complementary land uses.



Structured Parking: Encourage or require a specified percentage of 'liner' storefronts along street frontages.

Encourage trellis or other green features on roofs/sides of structures.

Place entrances to parking structures on side streets, not primary street, where possible.



Screening: Surface parking and service / loading areas should be screened where visible from street. Screening may consist of hedges, low walls or decorative fencing high enough to screen parked cars but low enough to allow visibility (3 - 3½ feet). A berm with low plantings and canopy trees may also be effective.



Internal Circulation: Encourage or require interconnected circulation within the block. The use of alleys for pedestrian circulation, rear entrances, and shared parking can all provide a high degree of connectivity.



Signage: Encourage wall signs and monument signs that are well-integrated with building's design. Pylon signs are discouraged. Signs inside windows, including temporary signs, should not block more than 40% of the total window area. Sign colors and materials should echo or complement those of the building. Backlit signs are inappropriate.



Appendix 2: Overview of Special Service Districts

Special Service Districts (SSDs), also known as Business Improvement Districts and Special Improvement Areas, are a critical tool for improving, managing, and maintaining a commercial district. An SSD is essentially a special taxing district within a municipality, established for the purpose of making improvements or providing services within that district. SSDs are used in downtowns and other business districts, and occasionally in industrial or other areas, to provide funding for infrastructure, maintenance, programs, and other business-related activities. Businesses pay for these services through service charges, which may be collected as part of property tax collection or other means. Districts must be approved by a minimum number of businesses within the district, and taxes cannot be levied if a minimum number of businesses object.

Establishing an SSD. In Minnesota, cities are authorized by Chapter 428A, Minnesota Statutes to create Special Service Districts.¹ The process of establishing an SSD includes the following steps:

- Property owners petition – Owners of 25% or more of the land area and owners of 25% or more of the net tax capacity within the SSD must file a petition calling for a public hearing.
- Prepare ordinance – Within 6 month of the hearing, the city's governing body may adopt an ordinance establishing the SSD with a majority vote. The ordinance must describe the nature of the proposed services, estimated costs of improvement, and the amount of the proposed service charges.
- Public hearing – The city must hold a public hearing on the proposed ordinance. Potentially affected property owners may testify at the hearing.
- Objections – Business owners may petition to be omitted from the SSD. If owners of 35% or more of the land area or 35% or more of the net tax capacity within the SSD file an objection, the ordinance is vetoed.
- Advisory board – The city council may create an advisory board to advise the city on the improvements to be undertaken and the services to be provided.

¹ "City Special Service Districts." Information Brief, Minnesota House of Representatives, September 2005. See www.house.mn/hrd/issinfo/gv_local.htm

- Contract administration – SSD funds can be administered, under contract to the city, by a downtown development association or other formal organization.

Use of Funds. Funds from an SSD can be used for the following types of activities:

- Maintenance and beautification; streetscape improvements;
- Security services, including, but not limited to, the development of safety programs;
- Recruitment and promotion of new businesses and retention and promotion of existing businesses within the District;
- Coordinated marketing and promotional activities;
- Strategic planning for the general development of the District, or to implement a comprehensive or downtown plan;
- Financing of storefront façade improvements through loans or grants or design assistance;
- Parking management studies, parking and/or transit facilities;
- Other technical assistance activities to promote commercial and economic development, such as development of design standards, event planning and coordination, or additional market research.

Examples of SSDs. Several dozen Minnesota cities have established SSDs. Examples include:

- Rochester. The Rochester Downtown Alliance (a 501(c)6 nonprofit) was the major force in creating the SSD, and now administers the SSD funds through a service agreement with the city. Funds must be used towards goals outlined in the RDA's operating plan. Funds have been used for marketing, wayfinding signage, and "creating a vibrant downtown atmosphere"
- Mankato. The downtown district SSD provides free parking for business customers.
- Little Falls. Downtown businesses led the effort to create the SSD. It currently raises \$10,000 per year, but the city hopes to increase this amount. It plans to use funds to build a shelter building in a downtown park to provide for a farmers' market and other events.

- Minneapolis. Twelve special service districts currently exist in the city's downtown and neighborhood business districts. Each district has its own advisory board made up of 5 -12 residents or property owners. The advisory boards advise the City Council in connection with the construction, maintenance and operation of improvements and the furnishing of special services in the district. Services vary by district, but include decorative lighting, banners, security, cleaning, snow and ice removal, and landscaping.
- Duluth. An SSD was established in 2004 to provide a higher level of safety, amenity and cleanliness in the downtown waterfront district. With over 500 properties in the program, the district offers hospitality, security, landscaping, cleaning, parking coupons for business patrons, and streetscape improvements. Forty percent of the budget is dedicated to marketing and special events.