



Comprehensive Plan Update: Downtown & Riverfront Subcommittee

Summary

The Downtown & Riverfront Subcommittee will examine the existing 2020 Downtown Strategic Plan, explore the desires and needs of the businesses, property owners, visitors, and residents of downtown and the riverfront in Winona, and future downtown and riverfront needs, goals, objectives, and policies/strategies.

Examples of discussion topic/focus areas:

- Downtown Strategic Plan Reassessment
- Desires from the community to see implemented in the downtown
- Winona's historic downtown's role as a livable, commercial, industrial, and recreation regional hub
- Physical improvements in the public realm and in the private realm that can support downtown as a foundation for innovation in Winona
- Downtown and Riverfront Ideas and Issues from Comprehensive Plan Phase 1 Engagement (see following pages)
- Increasing connections between downtown and the riverfront
- Riverfront development- commercial harbor and growing tourism
- Downtown Development and Redevelopment- Opportunity Winona.

Overall Committee Product:

In accordance with Winona's 2045 vision, city values, and Comprehensive Plan Overarching Themes; downtown and riverfront goals, objectives, and policies/strategies identified by the subcommittee are recommended for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.

Timeline:

- April-August 2022
- Two meetings per month – 1-1.5 hours long

Historic downtown and riverfront revitalization

People in Winona love our downtown and riverfront and had lots of ideas for making these areas more vibrant for residents and visitors alike. Respondents also suggested ways to improve the appearance of historic buildings and create pathways for reuse. We received 195 comments about Winona's historic downtown and riverfront in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future.

Connections to values

Historic downtown and riverfront revitalization connects to values of entrepreneurship, small-town feel, natural environment, and access to recreation areas.

Issues and ideas

1. Small business and downtown area development. Many respondents expressed a desire to see more small business activity downtown, and more advocacy to bring customers to businesses. Current efforts, like downtown block parties and Levee Park improvements, were noted as strengths to build on.
 - Downtown needs the most help, and there needs to be a better way to make the community aware of new businesses opening in the area. It can't all be left up to the store owners.
 - I think a grant for the downtown area would go a long way to make this a destination town. I envision all of the fronts of the downtown businesses with facelifts that make them all look like an old river town with so many different shops that Winona becomes a destination town similar to Galena, IL.
 - Clean up downtown. Make storefronts attractive, more flowers, outside seating, inform people. So many are totally unaware of what there is to do, what stores exist etc etc
 - nicer looking buildings as you come down off the bridge into winona
 - -continue (and do more) block party of block off downtown roads for events, restaurant seating, etc
 - Investment in downtown. Streetscaping and improving connections through downtown from the levee and residential neighborhoods. Strategic redevelopment of key properties. Incentives to improve historic structures, etc..
2. Riverfront revitalization.
 - The river front - reclaiming it from the grain elevators eyesore and truck traffic would make our town so much more beautiful
 - 60 Main street project. Getting a hotel in the downtown area
 - building a venue like the La Crosse Center would significantly help Winona in so many ways.
 - Expanding the farmers market and enhancing the levee entrance area to make the market better
 - I am a great believer in conserving our history in our public and private buildings and would like to see even more reuse of many of these fine structures from the past. I would also like to see the riverfront developed more fully as a public entrance point to our city. The Levee project should serve as a beginning.
 - more development i.e. restaurants/entertainment along river (accessible by land and water)

3. Balancing historic standards with building reuse and reinvestment.
 - historic preservation is good but seems to stop development - it's too expensive and there's no ROI - (city needs to) continue to incentivize this and give grants for this
 - -limitations imposed by downtown overly puts crimp on property owners use of buildings
 - There are some entities I didn't know about--history board said I couldn't put a shipping container in the parking lot. I've gotten a cease and desist from the city about something else. I have to wear a lot of hats--for me to try and grow my small business at the same time I'm jumping through hoops, that's kind of difficult. can we have some agility to change some stuff, especially with historical restrictions.
 - Signage- way too strict (historic requirements). in old times- it was this beautiful mess
 - Repurpose historical buildings in new and different ways
 - Making sure that we look at the assets we have in the community, and try to think outside the box and maximize their usefulness. Masonic temple has huge possibilities, happy with the investment so far - we hope that that investment will continue, so it actually can be an asset/bring money in. a building like that is a huge asset to this city
 - (historic building) reuse has some flexibility - that's important to understand. There's lots of examples of reuse where you are allowed to change things in ways that are acceptable. Adding onto properties when needed, and so forth. complex but there's flexibility there.

Additional Issues and Ideas from Phase I Engagement

1. Winona's downtown as an historical center of connection continuing to today
 - Maintaining historic properties which tell Winona's story and continue to serve as the platforms for future growth
 - Historical connections to the community
 - Architecture as an artform
 - The growth of downtown, writing a new chapter in Winona's history
 - Historical and growing downtown area as core to the community and connections to outdoor activities
 - History and beauty of location
 - Historic downtown as a setting for festivals
2. Downtown as a gateway and connection to nature and recreation
 - Outdoor activities, festivals, and downtown are tied together
 - The riverfront and natural beauty are places to gather
 - Seeing and enjoying the river view and Levee Park
 - Access to and enjoyment of the Mississippi River, parks, and trails
 - Connection to the Mississippi
 - Quick access to nature and opportunities to bike and then get food at night
 - Location and access to nature
3. Downtown as a vibrant, regional center
 - An energetic river town
 - Increasing hospitality in downtown
 - Vibrancy in downtown
 - Small businesses in downtown
 - Small town feel with bigger city options
 - Small town with offerings that include retail, healthcare, parks, and activities for all ages

- Access to arts and connections to festivals
- Use of public space (streets) for more than just the movement of vehicles