

Chapter 3

47

Strategic Planning



People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defenses, or the problems of modern society.

-Vince Lombardi

A REVIEW OF THE GOAL-SETTING PROCESS

This plan's concepts flow from the opinions and perceptions of those who know it best – its residents and people who work or invest in the Downtown. While participation in a downtown planning process typically focuses on business and property owners, every resident of De Pere has a compelling interest in the heart of their city and had the opportunity to participate at some level.

Components of the public participation process included:

- **Public Questionnaire.** The planning process began with an opinion survey, which could be completed either on-line or in hard copy. The survey identified potential issues and goals, which stakeholder group meetings addressed more completely.
- **Kick-off Presentation.** An initial community kick-off event took place May 28, 2009. This event included a public presentation that discussed the planning process and presented strategies that comparable communities have pursued to improve and market their downtown.
- **Focus Group Discussions & Individual Interviews.** Focus groups provided seven days of discussions

about the state of downtown and the overall downtown area, and explored issues and directions for the district. Also, several individual interviews provided in-depth understanding of the community's emerging issues.

- **Community Roundtable.** The public participated in round-table discussions with their peers to identify goals, issues, and aspirations for downtown and the community.
- **Design Workshops.** Two on-site design workshops took place on August 4th and September 14-16, 2009 to engage citizens, residents, business owners, and other stakeholders directly in conceptual planning for downtown. Participants shared their ideas, issues and concerns informally with the design team, and helped define and test concepts for the future of the planning area.
- **Downtown Steering Committee.** The Downtown Steering Committee met at key points during the planning process to review the progress of the plan and make revisions to the draft concepts.
- **Open House.** A public Open House occurred on May 12th, 2010 at the Bemis Center at St. Norbert College. The open house provided the public an opportunity to review and comment on the development plan before further development and adoption.

PUBLIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The process began with an opinion survey, designed to gather opinions and perceptions about Downtown De Pere. Over a seven-week period, 510 people completed the survey on-line or on paper. This section summarizes key results.

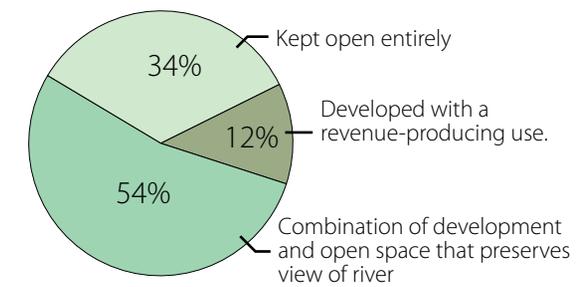
Downtown Features

A community questionnaire asked respondents to rank various features of downtown on 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor) scale. Results are tabulated and reported by the frequency of responses. Categories with the highest scores (most for 5's and 4's) include Streetscape and Public Environment, Quality of New Roundabout, Surround Neighborhood, Overall Appearance of the District, and Adequacy of Parking. Of these categories, about 20% of the respondents ranked the Quality of the Roundabout as excellent.

Categories receiving the lowest scores (most 1's and 2's) include Tourism, Cultural Facilities and Attractions, Amount of Business Attracted from Outside of De Pere, Public Perception of Westside, Music and Entertainment Scene, and Traffic Circulation. Of these categories, about 20% of the total respondents ranked Traffic Circulation as the poorest. Figure 3.1 presents the results of the rankings.



Figure 3.2: Old George Street Bridge Landing



In a follow-up question, the survey asked respondents to consider ideas and actions for improving downtown, again ranking them on a “5” (very important) to “1” (very unimportant) scale. Top-rated actions included:

- Attraction of New Retail Businesses (3.92)
- Preservation of Surrounding Historic Districts (3.86)
- Restoration of Historic Business Facades (3.84)
- Increased use of Voyageur Park (3.69)
- Improved Pedestrian Safety Crossings (3.64)
- Improved Trail Connections (3.62)
- More Restaurants and Entertainment (3.61)
- Special Events and Activities (3.60)
- Street and Traffic Flow Improvements (3.54)
- Better Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities (3.51)
- Design Guidelines for New Development (3.50)
- More Riverfront Development (3.50)

Quality of Corridors

Survey participants rated the health and quality of streets or sub-areas in downtown, again on a “5” to “1” scale. This helps to identify priorities by measuring satisfaction with parts of the district. The highest ranked area is North Broadway Street with 199 combined (4 & 5’s) responses. The lowest ranked area is the Westside Riverfront with 219 combined (1 & 2’s) responses. Table 3.1 presents the complete results.

Old George Street Bridge Landing

The question of what to do with Old George Street Bridge Landing is significant to De Pere. Participants were asked to select among three options to best describe the future of the site. About 54% said that the site should be a combination of development and open space that preserves views of the river. While 34% said that the site should be kept entirely open and 12% said that the site should be developed with a revenue-producing use.

Figure 3.1: Downtown Feature Rankings (ranked by frequency of 5-Excellent and 4-Good)

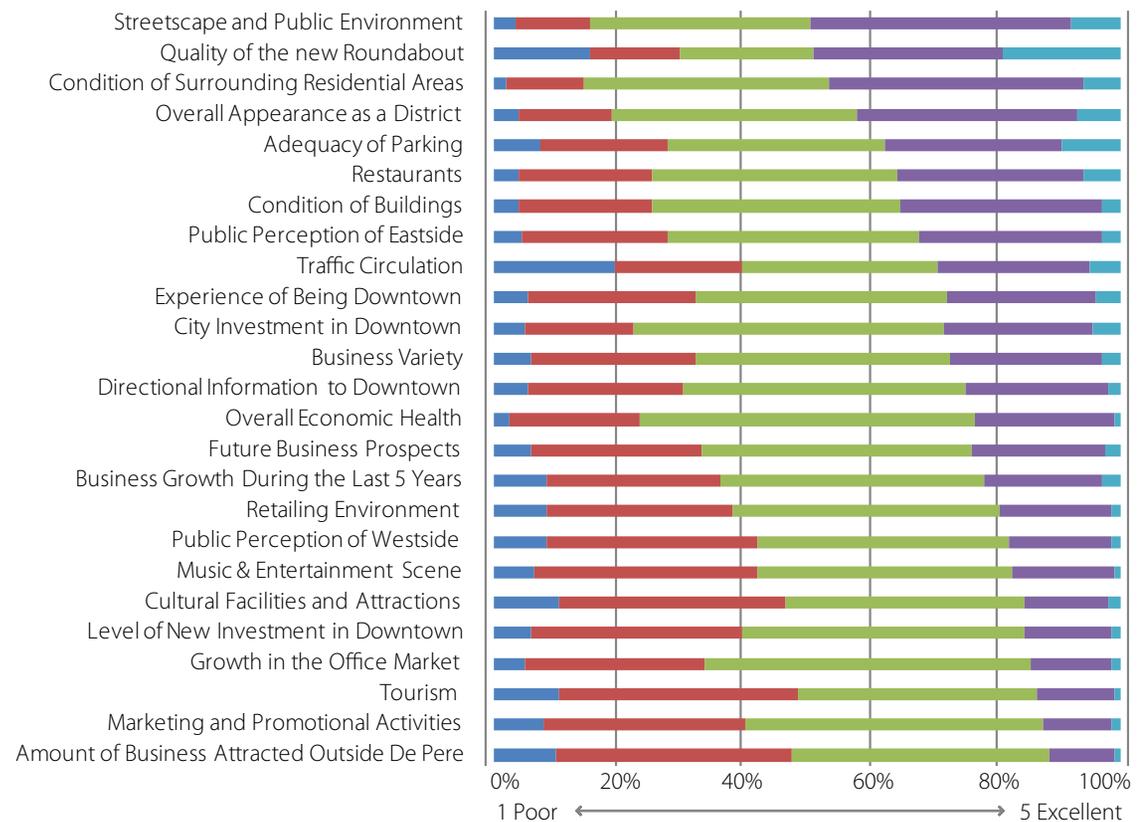


Table 3.1: Quality of Corridor

	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
Westside: Main Ave. to River	36	125	208	64	11
Westside: Reid St. to River	19	84	211	113	16
Westside Riverfront	81	138	140	73	7
Eastside Riverfront	21	76	174	151	20
Eastside: N. Broadway St.	19	61	163	166	33
Eastside: N. Wisconsin St.	19	100	213	95	13
Eastside: George Street, from River to Winnebago St.	17	89	215	108	13

Desired Downtown Businesses

The survey included several open-ended questions, the first asking survey participants to list three businesses that they would like to see in downtown De Pere. Of 855 total responses, the most frequently mentioned business category types were retail (420), restaurants (240), entertainment (114), and services (39). The most frequent response was restaurants (137). Responses by category of use follow.

420 RETAIL

- 71 Grocery (regular or deli)
- 65 General retailing
- 57 Specialty shops
- 55 Clothing, particularly women's apparel
- 21 Book store
- 17 Department store (Target, Wal-Mart, Kmart)
- 15 Art Gallery/Crafts
- 13 Sporting/outdoor goods
- 12 Grocery (health/organic)
- 11 Gift and tourism
- 9 Bakery
- 9 Hardware
- 8 Farmer's market
- 7 Drugstore/pharmacy
- 6 Anchor business
- 6 Antique stores
- 6 Family-oriented
- 5 Convenience store
- 5 Music store
- 5 Pet Shop
- 4 Computer store
- 4 Office supplies
- 2 Discount store
- 2 Florist and gardening
- 2 House decorating
- 1 Donut shop
- 1 Gas station
- 1 Auto parts

240 RESTAURANTS

- 137 Restaurants (general)
- 23 Up-scale dining
- 21 Cafes for breakfast/lunch
- 19 Fast food/chain
- 15 Coffee shop



- 8 Ice Cream Shop
- 7 Ethnic dining
- 6 Wine/cheese
- 3 Bars
- 1 Non-smoking restaurants

114 ENTERTAINMENT

- 34 Waterfront and recreation oriented
- 25 Entertainment
- 19 Cultural/tourism attractions
- 10 Movie Theater
- 9 Concert stage/ Performing arts center
- 6 Museum
- 3 College oriented
- 2 Dance Club
- 2 Conference/ Convention center
- 1 Miniature golf
- 1 Aquarium
- 1 Billiards hall
- 1 Casino

39 SERVICES

- 10 Recreation facility (YMCA)
- 10 Clinic/physicians/medical/dental
- 5 Spas and hair salons
- 4 Rental center (bicycle, skating, kayaking)
- 3 Bank
- 2 Laundromat
- 2 Hotel
- 1 Post office
- 1 Credit Union
- 1 Dry Cleaner

52 OTHER

- 25 Office
- 8 Child-oriented
- 8 Business
- 4 Housing (condos, apartments)
- 2 Parking Facility
- 2 Business Incubator
- 1 Business (green)
- 1 Manufacturing
- 1 Open in evenings

Downtown Assets and Liabilities

Another open-ended question asked respondents to list downtown's three greatest assets and liabilities.

Assets. Of 1,152 short answer responses, the most frequently mentioned assets included the historic character and appearance (279), Fox River and Riverfront (90), Parks and Green Space (85), St. Norbert College, and Fox River Trail (66). Responses by category of feature follow.

351 Recreation & Natural Environment

- 90 Fox River & Riverfront
- 85 Parks & Green Space
- 66 Fox River Trail
- 5 Bikeable
- 3 VFW pool
- 2 Environment



314 PHYSICAL CONDITION

- 279 Historic - character, appearance, buildings
- 13 Safe
- 5 Redevelopment and renovation projects
- 4 Downtown Housing
- 2 Butterfly/Frog/Turtle displays
- 2 Schools
- 2 Lee Building
- 2 Locks
- 3 Old bridge landing
- 1 Churches
- 1 Non-smoking sites

312 BUSINESSES & DEVELOPMENT

- 67 St. Norbert College
- 58 Restaurants
- 40 Businesses
- 40 Retail
- 29 Variety of businesses
- 19 East side
- 10 ShopKo
- 8 Union Hotel
- 8 Potential for growth
- 7 Bars
- 6 Entertainment
- 5 Serogy's Chocolates
- 5 West side
- 4 Business that care about the community
- 3 Office space
- 1 Movie Theater
- 1 Continued improvement in variety of businesses by river
- 1 Tourism potential

133 TRANSPORTATION

- 36 Bridge
- 25 Accessible, location
- 18 Streetscape
- 15 Parking
- 12 Traffic flow
- 11 Proximity to the river, park and trails
- 10 Roundabout
- 5 Pedestrian-friendly
- 1 Orange flags for pedestrian

42 CONNECTIONS

- 20 Community pride, people
- 8 Local government (city hall, police, fire)
- 4 Events and celebrations
- 4 Public library
- 3 Surrounding neighborhood
- 1 Fairgrounds
- 1 Farmers Market
- 1 Separation from the industrial areas

Liabilities. Of 1095 short answer responses, the most frequently mentioned downtown liabilities were the roundabout (119), traffic circulation (112), riverfront (98), parking (61), lack of retail (53), empty buildings (46), and building conditions (40). Responses by category of issue follow.

448 MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

- 119 Roundabout (navigate, appearance and crossing)
- 112 Traffic circulation
- 61 Parking (availability and time)
- 32 Pedestrian safety & mobility (especially children)
- 31 Speeding Traffic
- 14 Bicycling, pedestrian infrastructure (including racks)
- 11 Need a second bridge
- 10 One-way streets
- 9 Access to riverfront and trails
- 8 Accessibility
- 8 Maintenance of streets/projects
- 6 Bridge
- 6 Train (and traffic back-ups)
- 6 Lack of bumpouts and wide streets
- 4 Access to westside of river
- 3 Heavy truck traffic
- 3 Too much parking
- 2 Approach from west
- 2 Lack of foot traffic
- 2 Streetscape
- 2 Taxi service
- 2 Westside chicane (curve)
- 1 Bus service
- 2 Connection to Dickinson Road/Chicago Street
- 1 Corner of 3rd and Main
- 1 Directional signage
- 1 Lighting in parking lots
- 1 Poor snow removal

292 PHYSICAL CONDITION

- 98 Riverfront
- 46 Vacant buildings/storefronts
- 40 Building conditions (commercial and residential)
- 9 Inconsistent building appearance
- 9 Westside look
- 8 No grocery store
- 8 Lack of housing
- 8 Lack of public gathering space
- 6 Old bridge landing
- 8 Development (design)
- 4 Industrial look of the West side of the river
- 3 Demolition of historic buildings
- 3 Garbage cans in alley
- 3 St. Norbert College connection
- 2 Becoming like other cities
- 2 Layout
- 2 Encroaching on neighborhoods
- 2 Front Street Development
- 2 Lack of green space

- 2 Lack of public art and art galleries
- 2 Ledgeview
- 2 Pool
- 1 Fairgrounds
- 1 Gazebo
- 1 Lock House
- 1 Retention/detention ponds
- 1 Poor redevelopment sites

227 BUSINESS CLIMATE

- 53 Lack of retail (variety)
- 44 East vs. West mentality
- 21 Bars (associated conduct)
- 23 Restaurants
- 15 No signature attraction
- 12 Business struggles/turnover
- 10 Eastside restaurants/retail
- 5 Poor operating hours
- 5 Paper mill appearance
- 4 Lack of anchor store
- 4 Lack of district brand/identity
- 4 Limited space for business
- 4 Visibility of businesses
- 3 Few upscale restaurants
- 2 Expensive stores
- 2 Few upscale bars
- 2 Lack of business coordination
- 2 Westside business development
- 2 Presence of auto repair and dealerships
- 2 Highway commercial competition
- 2 No hardware store
- 1 Few clothing stores
- 1 Few neighborhood services
- 1 Inventory at ShopKo
- 1 No coffee shop
- 1 Smoking permitted in restaurants
- 1 Only one Bed & Breakfast
- 1 No YMCA
- 1 Open air seating for restaurants
- 1 Outdated shopping environment
- 1 Too many specialty stores
- 1 Too few national retail stores in the mix

101 PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

- 34 Marketing/tourism
- 31 Lack of events/entertainment
- 12 No plan/vision



- 10 Lack of family activities
- 4 High taxes
- 4 Recruiting business (incentives, compete with cities)
- 1 Funding
- 1 Losing historic structures
- 1 To many safety codes
- 1 Public support for local businesses
- 1 Strict signage ordinance
- 1 Charging admission to festivals

27 OVERALL DOWNTOWN

- 6 Elected and appointed officials
- 3 Apathy
- 2 Concerns about police
- 2 Too many churches
- 1 De Pere Journal
- 1 Gangs
- 1 Interest in history
- 1 Lack of holiday atmosphere during Christmas
- 1 Lack of international travel connections
- 1 Lack of softball and soccer fields
- 1 Perception
- 1 Pollution
- 1 Removal of home services
- 1 Rental properties
- 1 Too many opposing interests
- 1 Too much green space
- 1 Voyageur Park use
- 1 Westside College perception



Actions and Projects

Another open-ended question asked participants to list types of actions that they desired for the district. Of 858 short-answer responses, the most often cited recommendations addressed the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists followed the circulation of traffic. Recommendations generally fall under 5 categories, including Transportation and Mobility, Policy, Business Development, Development Projects, and Recreation. Responses grouped by category follow.

286 TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

- 77 Create safer walking and biking
- 34 Improve circulation at roundabout
- 29 Improve traffic flow
- 25 Build south bridge to reduce traffic flow
- 18 Provide more parking
- 16 Calm traffic flow
- 13 Improve streetscape
- 10 Improve traffic circulation on west side
- 9 Repair street
- 6 Connect to other developments/sports facilities
- 6 Improve mass transit
- 5 Improve gateways
- 4 Enforce traffic violations at roundabout and bridge
- 4 Reduce street reconstruction
- 4 Redirect heavy truck traffic
- 2 Define bicycle lanes
- 2 Improve George Street
- 2 Improve bridge lighting & accents



- 2 Provide more flags at pedestrian crossings
- 2 Install bicycle racks
- 2 Install wayfinding and parking signage
- 2 Move Hwy G traffic via Broadway to Chicago St.
- 1 Install 4-way stop at Grant and 4th St
- 1 Provide angle parking along Main Street
- 1 Improve Chicago Street
- 1 Close traffic north of roundabout
- 1 Improve traffic flow on Main & Ashland corner.
- 1 Coordinate traffic signals
- 1 Improve appearance of parking lots
- 1 Making international transportation connections
- 1 Maintain and upgrade to city-owned lots
- 1 Provide more lanes under railroad bridge
- 1 Require new construction to appear historic
- 1 Provide more library parking

185 POLICY

- 64 Preserve and maintain buildings
- 22 Host more community events (free)
- 14 Update Downtown plan
- 11 Encourage business development
- 8 Improve safety (prevent gangs, transients and graffiti)
- 6 Increase tourism
- 6 Merge school districts
- 6 Lower taxes
- 6 Unify east/west
- 5 Improve architecture (be progressive)
- 4 Creating a unique brand
- 4 Enforce noise and code violations
- 4 Adopt design guidelines
- 3 Educate drivers on roundabout
- 3 Integrate St. Norbert College
- 3 Encourage entrepreneurs



- 2 Require energy saving strategies
- 2 Limit train whistles
- 2 Discourage the use of plastic bags throughout city
- 2 Educate, build on present strengths
- 2 Improve surrounding housing
- 2 Retain small community feeling
- 1 Improve mid-income housing
- 1 Strengthen relationship between City and businesses
- 1 Limit offices
- 1 Grow the Farmers Market

157 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- 26 Rehabilitate storefronts
- 20 Market Downtown De Pere as a destination
- 18 Attract more business
- 17 Business development/rehab on West Side
- 16 Fill unused office/retail space
- 7 Attract anchor business/non-specialty retail
- 7 Provide incentives to small businesses
- 6 Add more family venues/businesses
- 5 Attract restaurants
- 4 Reduce number of bars on the west side
- 3 Develop nightlife
- 3 make it a boutique area
- 3 Build a grocery store on east side
- 2 Broadway business development
- 2 Establish Business Improvement District
- 2 Attract business to relocate
- 2 Improve Shopko area
- 2 Establish space for vendors along Broadway and at Voyageur Park
- 2 Build new theater
- 1 Attract a salon
- 1 Attract Trader Joe's

- 1 Build a casino
- 1 Business development around roundabout
- 1 Attract Hardware Store
- 1 Attract business to Front Street
- 1 Extend operating hours
- 1 Prevent large retailers
- 1 First floor reserved for commercial
- 1 Attract rental store for kayaks and canoes

103 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- 23 Old Bridge Landing - Remain as open space
- 20 Redevelop riverfront
- 16 Old Bridge Landing - Finalize Development decision
- 14 Old Bridge Landing - Build on site
- 6 Build MAC Dental Building
- 4 Old bridge landing - Part building, part open
- 4 Old Bridge Landing - Improve appearance
- 3 Build high-end residential condos
- 3 Renovate lock tenders house
- 2 Build hotel/conference Center
- 1 improve Broadway, south of George street
- 1 Demo Journal building for parking
- 1 Old Bridge Landing-tourist attraction
- 1 Relocate Crevier Commons and redevelop site
- 1 Old Bridge Landing Carousel
- 1 Old Bridge Landing - Create boardwalk
- 1 Old Bridge Landing - Retain access for public
- 1 Build more senior housing

92 RECREATION

- 21 Safe Youth hangout
- 10 Create riverwalk on both sides of the river
- 10 Install pier using the foundation of the Old Bridge
- 8 Preserve green space
- 5 Use riverfront for farmers market, concert, and art shows
- 4 Repaint eastside mural
- 4 Improve Voyageur Park and encourage use
- 4 Establish open spaces for summer entertainment
- 3 Build a marina
- 2 Build pedestrian bridge
- 2 Create a dog park
- 2 Improve riverfront access, trail and amenities
- 2 Keep VFW pool
- 1 Old Bridge Landing - Live entertainment
- 1 Construct pool
- 1 Develop fairgrounds
- 1 Emphasize the changing of fowl, fishing on the river
- 1 Extensive trail connectivity with use for skiing
- 1 Old Bridge Landing - Connect to pier and riverwalk
- 1 YMCA
- 1 Upgrade Nicolet Square

- 1 Build second ice rink at the fairgrounds
- 1 Build public indoor pool and exercise facility
- 1 Build multi-purpose stadium
- 1 Relocate Farmer's market to Old Bridge Landing
- 1 Lower admission fee to swimming pool
- 1 Location for outdoor performances
- 1 Connect trail to businesses

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS & INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Focus group meetings and individual interviews that took place over seven days, May 27, 28, 29; June 29, 30; July 1; and October 27 and 28, 2009, resulting in over 35 hours of discussion. Groups such as business and property owners, financial institutions, public officials, non-profit and arts organizations, development professionals, realtors, students and others participated in roundtable discussions to share their opinion of the district and its future opportunities. The following summarizes the proceedings, ranked generally in order of attention.

ISSUE 1: Traffic Circulation, Parking, and Wayfinding

- Transportation services could be developed to improve access to downtown for visitors and permanent residents. A trolley or small bus could circulate creating loops for users. The design of the system should be simple and cycle frequently.
- Slow down the traffic. Motorists drive past storefronts without knowing what is in them.
- Bicycling is a growing form of transportation and recreation. Riders can choose to ride in the street or sidewalk path. Participants perceive that these paths are not safe enough to allow young children to visit the district.
- Wayfinding or directional signs should be posted to direct both motorists and pedestrians to destinations in the city. Tourist sites, regional destinations and parking



should be identified. The public is aware that wayfinding existing, but can not read or interpret the signs.

- Crossing Main Avenue or N Broadway can be dangerous. Traffic accelerating along the Claude Allooetz Bridge arrives to the either side of the Fox River to a traffic control device, a traffic circle on the east and a chicane on the west. Both slow the motorists; however pedestrians feel threatened by the vehicle despite having the right-of-way.
- Midblock crossings and intersection nodes shorten the distance for people to cross streets.
- Participants perceive that the district does not have enough parking. A new parking garage should be considered to relieve parking demand. Parking spaces should remain free. Parking should not take up space where businesses could be constructed. Two-hour parking is inadequate and may discourage users from eating and shopping. Receiving a ticket then discourages them from returning.
- A pedestrian underpass under North Broadway, south of the traffic circle, could provide trail users to connect from the Fox River trail to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Reduce the visual clutter along the street. Bury poles throughout the district.

- Establish a transit system to circulate in downtown and to western De Pere. The system could be a short bus or trolley that runs during peak times of the day and weekends. The system should consider students at St. Norbert College.

ISSUE 2: Fox River

- Downtown is divided by the Fox River. Both sides of the downtown have unique attributes.
- Riverwalk planned for the east-side of the Fox River may attract up to 200,000 visitors per year, according to some participants. The current design shows the walk extending 300 feet, allowing people to watch wildlife and the locks opening and closing.
- Development along river should be pedestrian-oriented. Restaurants could overlook the river and provide a unique setting for dining.
- The river should develop as a source for recreation and leisure. Fishing, skiing, boating, kayaking and swimming are among some of the activities that could take place on the Fox River. The river has a long-standing perception of being unclean and undesirable for recreational activities. However, recent efforts for removing some of the river's contaminants make it possible for more recreation and leisure activities.



- Create or reserve future opportunities for boaters to dock or launch their boat along both shore fronts and access the downtown area.
- St Norbert College is planning a boardwalk for pedestrians so that students and the public have direct access to the river. The development concept for downtown should consider trail linkages to the boardwalk.

ISSUE 3: Roundabout

- Not all motorists know how to navigate the roundabout, causing the roundabout to not function properly.
- Construction along Highway 172 detours traffic through De Pere, increasing the traffic congestion and stacking at the roundabout. Participants are concerned about the long-term implications of people not wanting to drive through De Pere because of the immediate delays experienced. Participants perceive that a new south bridge may decrease traffic counts at the roundabout.
- Pedestrians feel unsafe crossing near the roundabout, particularly near the Claude Allooeez Bridge.
- Major (life threatening) accidents have declined remarkably. No more T-bone collisions.

ISSUE 4: Business Development

- Downtown has come back from the brink. In the early 1990's the district had a significant amount of vacant buildings/properties but now the district is nearly all occupied. De Pere has accomplished a lot in the past two decades and should celebrate its achievement.
- Participants are satisfied that functions of the east and west halves are different, yet want the character between the areas to have a more unifying theme.
- New development should be pedestrian in scale and consistent with the character of the older buildings in downtown. Buildings along Reid Street exhibit roof details, setback, and material that are similar to each other. The first floor of buildings should have an active use.
- Downtown has a strong environment for restaurant and specialty retailing. Participants are satisfied with the number of restaurants, although indicate a desire to have more upscale dining and fast-food dining. Employees breaking for lunch tend to take 30 minutes.
- De Pere has a good mix of specialty retailing and neighborhood services are an important component for the downtown core. Restaurants and bars are essential for creating activity. Offices and housing provide the area with an ongoing cycle of patrons, however should not

be on the first floor in the district. Downtown should have more outdoor dining.

- Buildings that are being neglected should be preserved. The City should intercede with the property owner before the structure is beyond repair.
- Rehabilitating building space for business development is expensive. Financial mechanisms should be adopted to allow businesses to remodel or expand instead of relocating to areas outside of downtown. Businesses that generate foot-traffic should receive priority.
- Development along Front Street could significantly influence the personality of the river's edge.
- Benches and bicycle racks should be located throughout the district.
- Participants perceive that the proposed Mac Dental near the east landing will raise the standard for future development in De Pere.
- The district should consider becoming a Business Improvement District (BID). By becoming a self taxing district, it will create funds for ongoing maintenance, particularly sweeping and shoveling of sidewalks. Funds could also be used for doing improvement projects.

ISSUE 5: Art and Culture

- Sculptures and public art should be displayed throughout the district, particularly at gathering places and major intersections.
- Interpretative displays could be installed in the downtown area and along the Claude Allooeez Bridge. Installations could communicate De Pere's history, geography, and the story of Fox River's lock system.



ISSUE 6: Residential Uses In and Surrounding Downtown

- Downtown uses along the edge of the historic neighborhoods should not adversely influence a person’s enjoyment of their property. These edges should be thoughtfully planned.
- St. Norbert College is building more on-campus housing and requiring students to remain on campus. Participants are concerned that the off-campus properties being vacated will continue to deteriorate and be neglected.
- Downtown should be accessible to surrounding neighborhoods. Sidewalks should link into downtown, connecting parts of the city to each other. The Fox River trail should be more easily accessible to neighborhoods without having people to cross Broadway.
- The development concept should consider more downtown housing opportunities.

ISSUE 7: Old George Street Bridge Landing

- Several concepts for redevelopment have been prepared for the site by architects, landscape architects and private citizens. Concepts follow one of three paths,



- Remain as public space,
 - New construction,
 - Public space with some development.
- Participants supporting open space suggest that the community should preserve the connection to the water and trail, and use the property for public gathering space. Participants supporting development suggest that adding productive, viable uses in downtown is necessary and despite the view of the river, the Thilmany plant is unappealing.
 - Focus group participants generally prefer that the Old George Street Landing remain as premier outdoor public space that connects downtown to the river, trail and Voyageur Park. Participants also favored allowing some private development.
 - If the site were left open, many participants desire to see outdoor performances (music or theater). However, the focus group on Arts and Culture generally agreed that the ambient traffic noise from North Broadway makes the site an undesirable site for outdoor performances.
 - If the site were developed, some participants suggested that the view of the river be preserved from upper stories.



- Participants discussed the possibility of Crevier Commons redeveloping for private use, allowing the balance of open space to be transferred to the George Street Bridge Landing. Allowing this site to develop will contribute to the city’s tax base and provide for more development opportunity.

ISSUE 8: Development and Redevelopment Opportunities

- Rear facades with significant exposure could be significantly improved, particularly along the east shore and the alleyway. The alleyway between Main Avenue and Reid Street should be enhanced and become a safe place for pedestrians to walk. Currently they are cluttered with trash receptacles. The backside facades could be enhanced to appear as front entrances. The design of the alleyway could be overhauled and branded.
- Downtown should have a set of Architectural Design Guidelines. New construction or redevelopment of property or buildings should be completed with quality craftsmanship and be consistent with the existing architectural patterns of downtown. Use of some materials should be restricted, such as vinyl windows and siding on downtown buildings. Guidelines should encourage design, not tell the owner how to design the



building. Reid Street Crossing reflects the shape and form of the City's architecture.

- Some participants suggested that De Pere needs a major redevelopment project to be a catalyst for additional development.
- Religious institutions occupy prime space in downtown that could otherwise be developed for commercial uses. Preferably, religious institutions would develop on the fringe and not in the inner ring of downtown.
- Reid Street Crossing is considered a quality commercial redevelopment project.
- Downtown has a good base of apartments and condominiums. Additional units should be considered for the development concept.
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) financing is a good mechanism for encouraging development. The City may need provide additional assistance as many banks lending practices have changed.
- De Pere is fortunate to have several sites for redevelopment opportunities. The following were areas discussed.
 - Area near the roundabout.
 - Crevier Commons could become a new develop-



ment site and may be eligible for TIF.

- Old George Street Bridge Landing
- North of Main Avenue
- West and East shorelines
- The Fairgrounds
- 400 Block of Main Avenue
- Lazy Gecko Site

ISSUE 9: Downtown as a Destination

- Planning should focus on developing an experience for families, couples, singles and teenagers that could include an assortment of restaurants, entertainment, theaters, bars, events, attractions, and lodging.
- International students attending St Norbert College contribute to the reputation of De Pere, Wisconsin, and United States.
- Businesses should collaboratively market downtown. Participants perceive that downtown was destination of the past and needs to be marketed to attract patrons. The Main Street program should continue leading these efforts.
- Farmer's Market at Seroogy's parking lot is a popular destination.



ISSUE 10: St Norbert College

- St Norbert College, the business community and the City of De Pere share an excellent partnership.
- Enrollment is anticipated to remain steady around 2,100 students, if not slightly increase. Most of the students will live on campus
- The development concept should consider integrating the downtown, college and surrounding neighborhoods.
- A new boardwalk along the Fox River will potentially allow the trail system to extend through the college, connecting surrounding neighborhoods, to downtown and the river.
- Participants are hopeful that the college will build up rather than spread out into the downtown market. Participants perceive that students, faculty and visitors take up a substantial amount of peripheral parking causing a shortage of parking supply to businesses.
- Traffic along 3rd Street interferes with the safe movement of pedestrians across campus.
- Students need better transportation to and from campus to shopping and activity centers.
- Athletic facilities are developing towards the north, opening up the fields located south of campus and

west of Lost Dauphin Road.

- Campus is adopting green, sustainable initiatives.

ISSUE 11: Marketing, Tourism & Image

- Downtown could be marketed more as a regional destination. Some business, including Saroogy's, does an excellent job of reaching outside of the community to attract business.
- Theming or branding De Pere, downtown help the community's marketability. Several participants cited Cedarburg as a community that left a strong image in their mind and a place that they would return to.
- Downtown should develop memories for growing children, visiting tourists, and residents.
- Residents and tourists should all be able to enjoy downtown. Community events should be held in downtown, possibly at the bridge landing and Voyageur park tied by Front Street and the trail.
- Wayfinding or directional signs should be posted to direct both motorists and pedestrians to destinations in De Pere, particularly from the trail. Existing signs are difficult to follow. Wayfinding should reinforce the appeal of downtown with graphics and color.
- The Green Bay Packers help fill up hotels and lodging during football weekends, but don't significantly contribute to retail sales especially when most close for the game. The nine weekends throughout the year do not sustain the lodging business year around.
- Downtown to host celebrations including Taste of De Pere, Wine and Beer Tasting and Artist Galleries.
- Many businesses do not stay open past 5pm, making it difficult to have a thriving evening atmosphere.
- Participants perceive De Pere as a very clean, pretty city. De Pere should not aspire to be like another place in Wisconsin since that would not be original.
- Entrances into De Pere are reasonably attractive. These



could be further improved along with appearance of the street corridors leading to downtown. People should know when they are in De Pere.

- Recruiting staff to large companies is challenging in the Green Bay area. Popular destinations include areas near Lambeau Field, Casino and De Pere. International visitors prefer De Pere's atmosphere.

ISSUE 12: Recreation Lifestyle

- The trail is a significant regional attraction, as well as, being a recreational resource. Connections to downtown and the water should be developed. The bridge should be perceived as an extension of the trail system to the westside of the river. Wayfinding signs should be posted along the route to inform trail users of amenities available in the City.

- The proposed Riverwak will be an attractive feature for trail users and influence the use of Voyageur Park.
- Voyageur Park could be redesigned for large outdoor events and assembly.
- Open space with opportunities for large crowd assemblies should be identified for community activities, including community festivals, concerts, parades, and other statewide events. The open space should be flexible to provide recreational opportunities for playing children and working professionals, while creating formal space for performances.
- The river should develop as a source for recreation and leisure. Fishing, skiing, boating, kayaking and swimming are among some of the activities that could take place on the Fox River. Creating a water trail for kayaking and canoeing could be another possibility.



- De Pere is well-known for their baseball program. Perhaps this is something to build on.

ISSUE 13: Community Participation and Culture

- City is fortunate to have people committed to making the community a better place.
- Community and economic development services serve the community well – the city, chamber and St. Norbert College share a good relationship.
- People living in De Pere are proud to claim De Pere as their home.
- De Pere was one of the earliest Main Street Programs in the United States, beginning in the 1980's. The program is currently operated under the auspice of the Chamber of Commerce. Finding the right balance for

the Main Street Program's involvement in the community is important.

- Some participants shared that a long-standing stigma exists between the east and west sides of De Pere. This is perpetuated with the physical split by the Fox River, two community school districts and business centers.

ISSUE 14: Sustainable Development and Practices

- Sustainable principles described in The Natural Step for Communities are becoming the philosophy for the management, maintenance and improvement of the city. The City has formerly adopted this approach to communities activities.
- New development (or redevelopment) should be constructed of quality materials and energy efficient.

- On-going maintenance costs should be kept to a minimum. Energy-saving practices should be pursued by the city and encouraged for private building owners.
- Best Management Practices (BMP's) should be used for controlling stormwater runoff.
- De Pere needs more landscape design. Creating native arboretums may help residents understand plant species appropriate to the climate and contribute to the aesthetics of the city.
- Promote the urban forest and continue to be a Tree City U.S.A community.
- District heating may be a possibility between Thilmay and St. Norbert College.

ISSUE 15: Youth Activities and Discussion

- Generally, students do not perceive there is an issue between east and west sides of De Pere, unless competing in a sport.
- Students and adults perceive that the streets are busy and difficult to cross for children.
- Few places cater to high school students to hang out and lounge. Also, most businesses close too early, and need to extend their business hours.
- De Pere needs to consider sustainable approaches to the environment and economy. Actions and policies must consider future generations. One action could be placing recycling bins throughout downtown.
- Connect the trail, park and downtown. The distance of the Claude Allouez Bridge discourages cyclists and walkers from visiting the opposite side. Voyageur Park needs to be activated with programs. De Pere needs additional indoor and outdoor space for children to visit. A carousel, Ferris wheel, or signature attraction needs to be in downtown.
- Public art should be placed throughout the city.

COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

On August 3rd, 2009, about 50 people attended the community roundtable discussion. Participants organized themselves into three small groups to share thoughts about the future direction of downtown with their peers. Afterwards, all of the groups gathered together to discuss the results from each small group. The following summarizes the discussion.

- Make the riverfront De Pere's signature
- Preserve the Old George Street Bridge Landing for open space
- Strengthening the relationship between west and east.
- Strengthen connection between downtown and trail.
- Improve pedestrian safety
- Integrate St. Norbert College
- Improve north side of Main Avenue
- Improve traffic circulation and control speeds
- Retain and attract retail businesses
- Improve alleyways
- Create stronger downtown gathering space
- Improve parking access and availability





DESIGN WORKSHOP

Multi-day public design workshops took place in De Pere during September and October. The plan presented in Chapter Four reflects and refines the work done in these sessions. During the workshops, public discussion defined the following themes and principles:

- **Sustainability and Protection of Valued Environments.** Concepts for redevelopment should incorporate “sustainable” practices, including environmental and economic sustainability.
- **Accessibility and Linkages.** The Downtown Plan should promote linkage and accessibility among its constituent parts, including the riverfront, St. Norbert College, and east and west business areas. The development concept should use continuous paths for pedestrians and cyclists to strengthen the relationships between uses.
- **One-way Streets.** The concept explores converting Main Avenue and Reid Street to two-way circulation. Two-way traffic is typically a preferred arrangement for business in the central district.
- **Alleyways.** Two alleyways were considered, including the alleyway between Main and Reid from 3rd to 5th Street, and the alleyway between Broadway and Wisconsin from Charles to William Street.



- **Fox River, Voyageur Park, Fox River Trail.** Downtown to the riverfront, Fox River Trail and Voyageur Park should be permeable, allowing easy and transparent access between amenities.
- **Parking Adequacy and Aesthetics.** An adequate parking supply for patrons, business operators, students and faculty, and residents is necessary. Parking access should be convenient and clear without inhibiting pedestrian movement. Several sites provide locations for new parking structures.
- **Redevelopment Sites.** Significant redevelopment opportunities on the westside consider the 300 block of Reid Street and 400 block of Main Avenue are candidates for redevelopment. Sites on the eastside consider land along the riverfront, south of the bridge.
- **Old George Street Bridge Landing.** Various scenarios were considered for the future of this site.
- **Streetscape Design.** De Pere’s downtown streetscape is well-designed and compliments the surrounding development. Creating safe pedestrian and bicycle movements is critical and should be incorporated.
- **Community Identity.** Reinforcing the character of De Pere through public and private improvements, while using public art as a unifying concept.

DOWNTOWN STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee met monthly throughout the planning project to provide input, review the progress of the plan, suggest mid-course corrections, and contribute to development concepts. Participants in the committee are acknowledged at the front of this document and were instrumental in the preparation of the plan.

OPEN HOUSE

Taking place at the Bemis Center at St. Norbert College on May 12, 2010, the open house provided the public an opportunity to review and comment on the development plan before formal approval by the City Council. The Open House included a 40-minute presentation and then a break-out to various stations focusing on development areas.

