

The Community's Vision for Downtown Waterford

Visioning Workshop Summary

Prepared For:

Absolutely Waterford Waterford, Wisconsin

A Service Provided By

WISCONSIN



MAIN STREET

Prepared By



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A Service Provided by the Wisconsin Main Street Program

Introduction

Wisconsin Main Street, a Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation program, retained Jay Schlinsog from Downtown Professionals Network (DPN) to facilitate a downtown visioning workshop for the community of Waterford, a new Wisconsin Main Street community. The workshop and this accompanying summary report are furnished by the Wisconsin Main Street Program as part of an ongoing series of technical assistance and services that will be provided to the community and the Absolutely Waterford organization.

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Acknowledgements

The community’s vision for downtown Waterford, and related concepts and strategies outlined in this summary report, are rooted in ideas and insight shared by downtown Waterford’ stakeholders and community advocates that participated in the process. DPN appreciates the community’s enthusiastic participation and is especially grateful for the efforts of Wisconsin Main Street Program staff members and Absolutely Waterford officials and staff members that helped to facilitate the process.

The Importance of Vision

"If you don't much care where you're going, it doesn't matter which way you go. You're sure to get somewhere if you keep at it long enough."

- The Cheshire Cat in [Alice's Adventure in Wonderland](#) by Lewis Carroll.

"You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there."

- Yogi Bera

Vision at the Core

Strategic visioning has a power that is grounded in its ability to move us toward the future in a profound way. It is a deep sense of purpose for what your downtown stands for and what your organization is striving to create. Vision provides meaning by describing who we are and what we want to become – a portrayal of our desired future. A purpose-driven vision can effectively shape the “Agenda” for the organization and serves to:

- ▶ Inspire action
- ▶ Align individuals to the purpose
- ▶ Motivate individuals to work together in efforts to leap over present constraints to a desired future
- ▶ Identify special features and unique attributes that distinguish the downtown today and in the future
- ▶ Bring focus on priorities and “first steps” toward the community’s vision for downtown

The community’s vision for downtown Waterford will provide motivation to move forward, serving as a basis and providing direction to shape, support or refine Absolutely Waterford’s:

- ▶ Mission
- ▶ Values and purpose
- ▶ Overall direction and structure
- ▶ Work plans

A Snapshot – A Direction

The community’s vision for downtown Waterford provides a brief narrative description and "snapshot" for the downtown as the organization and community desire it to be in the future. The vision statement provides direction for projects and actions that, ultimately, will help the community achieve its vision. Used effectively, the vision statement can be a powerful tool for motivating the community, to maintain focus on downtown revitalization goals and objectives, and to plan and act in a highly strategic fashion. Examples of how the vision statement can be applied to provide direction for both short and long-term downtown revitalization efforts include:

- **Motivating**
 - A reminder of the ultimate goal
 - A reason for “doing what we do”
 - A reason for others to participate
 - A way to frame “small successes” and progress
- **Planning**
 - A basis for the organization’s purpose and mission
 - A basis for principles that guide important decision-making processes
 - A basis for development, redevelopment and revitalization strategies
 - A basis for a long-term, incremental approach to downtown revitalization
 - A litmus test for every proposed project and activity -- Ask, “Does it fit?”

Vision-based Strategic Planning

The strategic planning flow chart illustrates how the community's vision for downtown Waterford can be applied as a core element to guide important decision-making and strategic planning processes.

It Begins With Vision...

Strategic Planning Flow Chart



Defining the Community's Vision for Downtown Waterford Downtown Visioning Workshop Summary

Absolutely Waterford and downtown stakeholders representing a diverse cross-section of the Waterford community attended and participated in the visioning workshop conducted October 13, 2011. Following is a summary of workshop activities highlighting ideas and input provided by participants.

Workshop Activity One: Front Page News

Working in groups, workshop participants completed a visioning exercise, creating the front page for *The Waterford Daily Planet's* Special Downtown Waterford Progress Edition for October 13, 2021. Results of each group's work are summarized below.

Group A

Headline: NEW YORK ART HEADED FOR WATERFORD CARAN CENTER

Headline Photo: Photo of Jackie and Rebecca Strehlow enjoying a beer with Rebecca Ewald enjoying a Reuben sandwich with caption, "Residents enjoy black & tans at the opening of the Irish Pub in Waterford. In the old bowling alley lot the first pub and outdoor beer garden host the Riverdance troupe at their opening night."

Lead Paragraph: The success of the Caran Center has drawn international attention by garnering the highest bid amount for a non-profit in the amount of \$1.1 million. Proceeds from the sale will be used to renovate the historical St. Thomas Church to a world-class state of the art performing arts center.

Late News: Hotel Waterford, formerly the Foley Building, will host the 10th Anniversary Gala celebrating Absolutely Waterford's success in revitalizing the downtown area. Keynote speaker will be President Ryan. Dress code is blue tie dye only.

Turning Point: *First visioning session was catalyst for Downtown Waterford of today.* (Photo from October 13, 2011 visioning session).

Free Play: Seventh Annual Canoe-palooza sponsored by Subway. Event started by Dennis G., long-time Waterford and canoe advocate, draws 20,000 canoeists, kayakers and bikers to the Waterford area. The only nature meets Harley event!



Group B

Headline: **DANCING IN THE STREETS!**

Headline Photo: Photo of people dancing in streets, downtown streetscape and boater in river with caption, "Danny's Canoe & Kayak Rental sponsors the Wacky Paddle."

Lead Paragraph: Chamber of Commerce and Absolutely Waterford celebrate 10th anniversary with Leap Frog Oktoberfest. People break out in spontaneous dance around the page hoppers.

Late News: Abbot Laboratories breaks ground in Westewa Business District, bringing over 5,000 jobs.
Bistro Mi Amor celebrates third year of success.
Riverwalk celebrates 5th year.

Turning Point: Opening of Caran Art Studio *was catalyst for Downtown Waterford of today.* What began as one woman's dream has become a pillar of the Waterford community. Over one hundred thousand attended Caran Art Studio's annual art auction. (Photo of art from Caran Art Studio)

Free Play: Waterford population hits 10,000! High school gets new additions: pool and auditorium.

Group C

Headline: **HOT AIR BALLOON ASSOCIATION TO MOVE INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS TO WATERFORD**

Headline Photo: Photo of beautiful building that will house Hot Air Balloon Association with caption, "Building to be in Potterville Industrial Park."

Lead Paragraph: Association announced construction of 100,000 square foot headquarters building in annexed Waterford Square.

Late News: Riverwalk completed
Highways 20 & 83 huge success
Expansion of 10 Club Park and riverwalk more than expected
Pedestrian bridge from Safety Building to Village Park completed
Island show announced – Disney small world attraction; \$1 million grant

Turning Point: *Home run by Absolutely Waterford was catalyst for Downtown Waterford of today.* 2020 Census reveals Waterford population doubled due to commercial growth tripling. State officials to look at Waterford's model.

Free Play: Kazoo band returns from Rose Bowl and was unanimously voted to perform at Super Bowl.
Boat regatta scheduled at Dock Kelley's.



Group D

- Headline:** **LOCAL BUSINESS INCREASED 500%**
- Headline Photo:** Chart showing increase in business.
- Lead Paragraph:** Over the last 10 years, the number of businesses has increased 500%. Waterford has become a destination. The number of visitors to Waterford has increased with local businesses reaping the benefits. The mix of businesses has drawn thousands of visitors each year from throughout the Midwest.
- Late News:** Gallery Night: This Friday. Join the Fun! Walk in the village and peruse the studios and galleries of local artists and businesses. Performances by local musicians will be offered riverside at the newly renovated 10 Club Park and other green spaces.
Milwaukee Art Museum will have their mobile van downtown and will offer “free” art experiences for kids.
- Turning Point:** *Formation of Absolutely Waterford was catalyst for Downtown Waterford of today.* Ten years ago, a group of residents and business owners began an effort to revitalize Downtown Waterford.
- Free Play:** A key factor in Waterford’s growth is the implementation of DOT’s redesigned traffic flow, which eliminates bottlenecks, increased parking, and improves pedestrian walkways.

Group E

- Headline:** **DOWNTOWN WATERFORD NEEDS LONGER MAIN STREET**
- Headline Photo:** Photo of Fox River hotel building in downtown with caption, “Ribbon-cutting for Fox River Hotel & Convention Center; Opens today in preparation for the International Kazoo Band Conference.”
- Lead Paragraph:** Demand for retail space is the highest it’s ever been. Downtown is so full of businesses that people are waiting in line to get into stores. New developments have been built and are at full occupancy. Walkable streets invite the visitors using the river as recreation.
- Late News:** Downtown area once again looking for additional parking; parking ramp locations being considered.
Lions Club at their newly dedicated and expanded Whitford Park sells record number of breasts – 20,000! Broke G.B.W.W longest tractor parade record – 400!
Two hotels filled to capacity months in advance of balloon fest!
- Turning Point:** *Visioning Session was catalyst for Downtown Waterford of today.* Thirty-some people gathered at 7 a.m. to create the vision of Waterford that now exists today. Waterford is now considered the best place to live in Southeast Wisconsin – for the past five years. (Photo from October 13, 2011 visioning session)
- Free Play:** Venture Capital Fund created for new businesses to locate in the brand new incubation building.



Workshop Activity Two: Downtown Waterford Vision Quiz Exercise

Following are compiled responses to a series of questions designed to identify community values and various features that could be part of, and instrumental to achieving, the community's vision for downtown Waterford. The format for the exercise and responses offered by work groups provides a basis for the draft vision statement prepared as part of this planning effort; builds on the draft Absolutely Waterford mission statement and committee goals previously developed by the Absolutely Waterford board of directors; and could lend direction for initial and future Absolutely Waterford committees' projects and initiatives.

(+) Denotes "popular choice" response

1. ***What are some of downtown Waterford's best opportunities for the future? Or, what are you most excited about?***

- Riverwalk +++
- Niche market – perhaps thrift stores/quilting? ++
- Aesthetics – streetscape/curb appeal +
- Canoe/kayak rental +
- Improved traffic flow +
- Job base/mix of businesses – light industrial and retail +
- Local artists expanding their business, making Waterford a destination for visitors +
- Redevelopment or new development opportunities +
- Rooftop gardens +
- Specialty businesses +
- Widespread community pride and growing energy and involvement +
- Youth Center +
- Connecting bike and walking trails to downtown
- Education opportunities from our school system
- Gathering places – indoor/outdoor
- Keeping it local and sustainable
- Professional Building

2. ***What are some things about downtown Waterford that should never change?***

- Historic buildings (renovate – yes; no tear-downs) ++++
- Small town atmosphere ++
- Community Pride +
- Friendly business community +
- Green spaces that exist +
- Supporting each other
- That we have and keep a historic district
- Value and appeal of natural resources – bike trails, etc.
- Vested in maintaining value

3. List some features that will help “define” Downtown Waterford in 2021 – things that make it different than most other places.

- Design a riverwalk with canoe/kayak launch ++++
- Streetscape +++
- Bringing out best features of our historic buildings ++
- Large party rentals on lake (pontoon boats) +
- River events +
- Rooftop gardens +
- Bike share program
- Electric car plug-in
- Frog statues
- Gateway signage
- Off-street parking
- Outdoor entertainment
- Pedestrian-friendly
- Public art displays
- Sidewalk cafes and bistros
- Signature restaurants

4. It’s 2021 and everything has gone right. You’re in a hot air balloon looking down at Downtown Waterford. What do you see?

- Great park system – with family-friendly areas ++
- Tree coverage ++
- Limited truck traffic +
- Outdoor arbor seating riverside +
- Restaurant spans across river with access from either side +
- River with pedestrians enjoying the walk +
- Rooftop gardens +
- “A Dickens’ Christmas” – use community resources, singers, dressed-up people in costumes
- Good traffic flow
- Green space
- Improved storefronts
- New seasonal decorations, piped music
- Pedestrian bridge from safety building
- Pedestrians in the amphitheatre/Ten Club Park
- People gathering on foot, bikes, waterways
- People paddling the Fox
- Public promenade
- Scattered frog statues
- Village-wide network of bike paths connecting to main bike path

5. Describe the downtown Waterford business mix and/or business climate in 2021.

- Supported niche businesses +++
- People come to eat, play and work ++
- Family recreation businesses +
- Light industrial +
- Retail/service +
- Culinary and cultural diversity
- Implementing the arts
- Mix of complementary businesses that create a synergy

6. List some of Downtown Waterford's business anchors, attractions, business clusters and/or niches in 2021.

- Art galleries ++
- Craft stores (i.e., quilting) ++
- Boutique +
- Businesses promoting river (rental bikes, canoes, fishing equipment) +
- Coffee shop/teaching studio/store +
- Restaurants +
- Service businesses +
- Chamber office/visitor center
- Frog sculptures
- Little indoor mall area
- Music store with lessons/guitar
- Outdoor promenade with outdoor seating, dining and music
- Performing arts center
- Retique – for resale/consignments/used sporting goods and recreational items
- Riverwalk
- Rooftop gardens
- Specialty taverns/bistros
- Upstairs office space
- Walgreen's/Flueges

7. Describe the Downtown Waterford “Experience.” People want to come back because they enjoy...

- A quieter, low traffic environment +
- Cultural destination +
- Natural beauty of the river and riverwalk +
- Culinary diversity
- Eclectic, inviting mix of businesses
- Enjoy great window displays, street art
- Fresh unified “look” of the downtown
- Friendliness of residents and business people
- High pedestrian traffic (during people hours, low truck traffic)
- Inviting parks; pocket parks
- River rhythms
- Rooftop gardens
- Special events such as Hot Air Balloon, 4th parade, etc.
- Spending the day – shop, eat, attend cultural events, walking, kayaking
- Whimsical family experience – frog statues, public art and walks, river, etc.

8. List single words that describe downtown Waterford in 2021.

- Friendly +++
- Historic +++
- Inviting +++
- Quaint +++
- Cultural ++
- Eclectic (feel) +
- Fun +
- Accessible
- Comfortable
- Diverse
- Energized
- Friendliness
- Organized/organization
- Safe
- Sustainable/viable
- Vibrant
- Whimsical/unique
- Wow factor

- 9. Describe, in one short sentence, what Downtown Waterford will be known for in 2021.**
- Enriching the cultural experience for residents and visitors through outdoor recreation and the arts (culinary, performing, visual) ++++
 - Midwest hot air balloon festivals +
 - A small town that you don't want to miss
 - Downtown Waterford provides yearly activities that people return to each season
 - Historically and pleasant place for families to visit
- 10. List some practical "first steps" to achieve the mission and to make Downtown Waterford a more attractive, beautiful, inviting, profitable and fun place to be.**
- Develop long and short term implementation plans +
 - Façade and streetscape improvements +
 - Open Caran Art Studio and install public art +
 - Outdoor dining +
 - Secure and maintain a high degree of commitment from businesses and residents +
 - Create the right synergy amongst the groups of the four core areas – D.O.P.E.
 - Encourage business owners to spruce-up the areas between and in front of buildings – perhaps a community clean-up
 - High School art-stained glass, pottery, paintings
 - Open poetry/prose performances
- 11. Describe, in one short sentence, what Absolutely Waterford (or the Main Street program) will be "known for" in 2021.**
- Absolutely Waterford has a full-time staff of three and a volunteer force of 128 ++
 - The Main Street program has helped make Waterford a wonderful family destination that provides activities and opportunities for people of all ages ++
 - Improve park systems +
 - The catalyst for continued sustainability +
 - Absolutely Waterford's energy has provided the impetus for a friendly business community and activities for all ages
 - Guest "shopping experience" – souvenirs, t-shirts, etc.
 - Revitalizing downtown
 - The energizing force behind the group everyone wants to be a part of
- 12. What is the one thing you want kids to remember about Downtown Waterford?**
- Having fun and making memories with their families and the frog statues +
 - One-stop shop for fun; interactive kids' stuff +
 - County park camping (Wadewitz)
 - Dog park
 - Frogs
 - Fun experiences for kids (swimming, canoeing, fishing, bike rental)
 - Fun outdoor and safe recreation for kids such as canoeing, fishing, concerts
 - It created an exciting, safe place to spend their free time
 - Library, parades, swans, river, bike trail

The Community's Vision for Downtown Waterford

(Draft • October 21, 2011)

Downtown Waterford of the future enriches the cultural experience for residents and visitors through outdoor recreation, the arts, and a dynamic mix of businesses that provide a friendly welcome to people who come to eat, play and work.

Downtown Waterford is a place that dazzles the senses. Small town atmosphere is the backdrop to a metropolitan-esque arts, culture & entertainment experience that has made this quaint and historic Fox River village a Southeast Wisconsin attraction and destination. Abundant activities flow like the river, throughout the day and into the night, inviting and welcoming the thousands who visit each year to sample the sights, sounds, tastes and smells of the Downtown Waterford visual, performing and culinary arts scene.

Downtown is at the center of a well-connected transportation system that brings people who walk, run, drive, ride, pedal and paddle to experience the historic and natural beauty of this place. Buildings have been restored and preserved to house an eclectic, synergistic mix of galleries, boutiques, specialty shops, service providers and eating establishments. The beautiful downtown streetscape and riverwalk, and surrounding parks, rooftop gardens, public art and green spaces, provide an air of fun and adventure. Recreation is multi-faceted and has been both redefined and refined in Downtown Watertown: from shopping; to canoeing and kayaking; to strolling, running and biking; to fishing; to enjoying a quiet and peaceful moment; to hands-on fun and entertainment at traditional and new downtown venues, festivals and events.

Downtown Waterford is a true reflection of community pride and teamwork. Absolutely Waterford has provided vision, energy and opportunities for people of all ages who have worked together to create Downtown Waterford of today – a fun, wonderful and whimsical family destination that delights the senses and creates long-lasting memories. This same energizing force continues to move forward as a caretaker and catalyst for sustainability.

Unleashing the Power of Vision: Next Steps

▪ Test, Refine and Finalize the Vision Statement

- Share the draft vision statement with Absolutely Waterford (AW) leaders, workshop participants, and other key community representatives, as appropriate, and solicit suggestions for editing.
- Solicit additional input and commentary from the community. For example, questions from the visioning exercise might be posted to a Facebook page and/or used to poll downtown visitors, community civic groups and clubs, etc.
- Compile additional input, perform editing and prepare a final version of the vision statement to be formally adopted by the AW board of directors

▪ Communicate the Vision

- Prepare newsletter, newspaper, blog, Facebook, website, etc. features and columns that present and discuss the vision statement – and steps being taken by AW to achieve the vision.
- Create and capture images to illustrate the vision, and to promote positive changes occurring in the downtown that depict elements of the vision “coming to life.”
- Use the vision statement along with related images, graphics and illustrations as a regular newsletter feature and in appropriate AW informational materials and brochures.

▪ Use the Vision to Define the Role and Value of the Absolutely Waterford organization

- Review the draft Absolutely Waterford mission statement relative to the vision statement to best ensure that it appropriately and effectively describes:
 - ▶ **Who** Absolutely Waterford is
 - ▶ **What** Absolutely Waterford does
 - ▶ **How** Absolutely Waterford does it

▪ Plan to Achieve the Vision

- Use the Vision Statement as a basis for important decision-making and planning processes. Identify core elements and values expressed in the vision statement and consider how those elements can be addressed, maintained or enhanced as part of the Absolutely Waterford program of work and annual work plans. For example:

Core Element: *Buildings have been restored and preserved to house an eclectic, synergistic mix of galleries, boutiques, specialty shops, service providers and eating establishments.*

- ▶ Promote a strong historic preservation ethic.
- ▶ Promote Wisconsin Main Street design and small business consulting services.
- ▶ Work with the Village of Waterford and area economic development partners to identify, promote and market downtown development and investment opportunities.
- ▶ Package and promote building improvement and business development technical assistance and incentives.

Core Element: *Downtown is at the center of a well-connected transportation system that brings people who walk, run, drive, ride, pedal and paddle to experience the historic and natural beauty of this place.*

- ▶ Work closely with the Village of Waterford, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies to plan and implement improvements that accommodate and promote a variety of transportation modes.
- ▶ Identify and pursue opportunities to improve the downtown streetscape and to extend enhancements, connections, trails, etc. to create more cohesive connections to the waterfront, parks, neighborhoods and surrounding attractions.