



OVERVIEW

PLAN FOCUS

This Plan is intended to coalesce and communicate a vision, guide public investment and influence private investment in downtown Forest Lake. Communities that do this, best position themselves to strive for the future state of being they seek.

Downtowns are districts with an interdependence between public and private spaces, amenities, infrastructure and activities. Planning for the future of downtown as a district rather than just individual properties or projects over time has an inherent power that is simply good business.

Forest Lake recognizes the power of envisioning the future of its downtown district. Community leaders prepared for a planning process for months and launched the creation of a downtown plan in 2021. The plan has taken roughly a year to prepare and with ongoing attention, it will serve as a guide to investments and actions for ten to fifteen years.

By engaging the community, understanding the district and its context, and suggesting creative and targeted solutions, the plan will be a vital tool in accomplishing the community's vision.

Of course, the plan is only step one. Implementation is the real work and will demand continued attention to public investment and encouragement of others to also invest appropriately, inching ever closer to that vision.

The directives established in the plan will take time to accomplish. Across its lifespan, it will be easy to ask "why are we doing this?" Although it is recognized that circumstances will no doubt change, the adopted vision statement and the directives described in the plan will provide as ongoing reminders and touchpoints to decision-making.

Although the Plan has many graphic sketches and depictions that are used to express a notion of urban patterns and character, the intent of the plan is not to suggest the actual architectural design of improvements. Imagery is intended to express architectural and urban design parameters that promote plan directives and character rather than suggest actual building or site design.

The Plan for Downtown Forest Lake is focused on preparing for opportunities, directing public investments, and ensuring that property reinvestments are



Historic images of Downtown



Historic images of Downtown

accomplished in ways that not only benefit the investor but contribute to the urban fabric and vitality of the district.

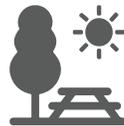
The goal of the plan is to arrange the building blocks of urban place in inspired and innovative ways that guide downtown Forest Lake to a dynamic and vital future. The three fundamental building blocks present in any urban place and around which the plan is built are development patterns, urban systems and design character.

In addition to these three, it is important to think of downtown's physical attributes as a stage upon which downtown life happens. The stage needs to be functional and safe and inspiring but people are the actors that bring downtown to life. The better we design and build the stage, the more dynamic the performance. In the plan, we call this ACTIVATION.



Development Patterns

represent broad patterns of land use and density. Suggestions in regard to development patterns are expressed in the Plan in the form of a modified land use plan and modifications to the zoning regulations



Urban Systems

are the infrastructure, public facilities, superstructure, and ecology that make a place function and allow an urban environment to sustain itself. Suggestions in regard to urban systems are expressed in the Plan in the form of a composite master plan and series of initiatives



Design Character

is the site design, architectural character, and relationship between public and private space expressed in the Plan by a series of site concept drawings and design guidelines

DOWNTOWN ACTIVATION



STUDY AREA

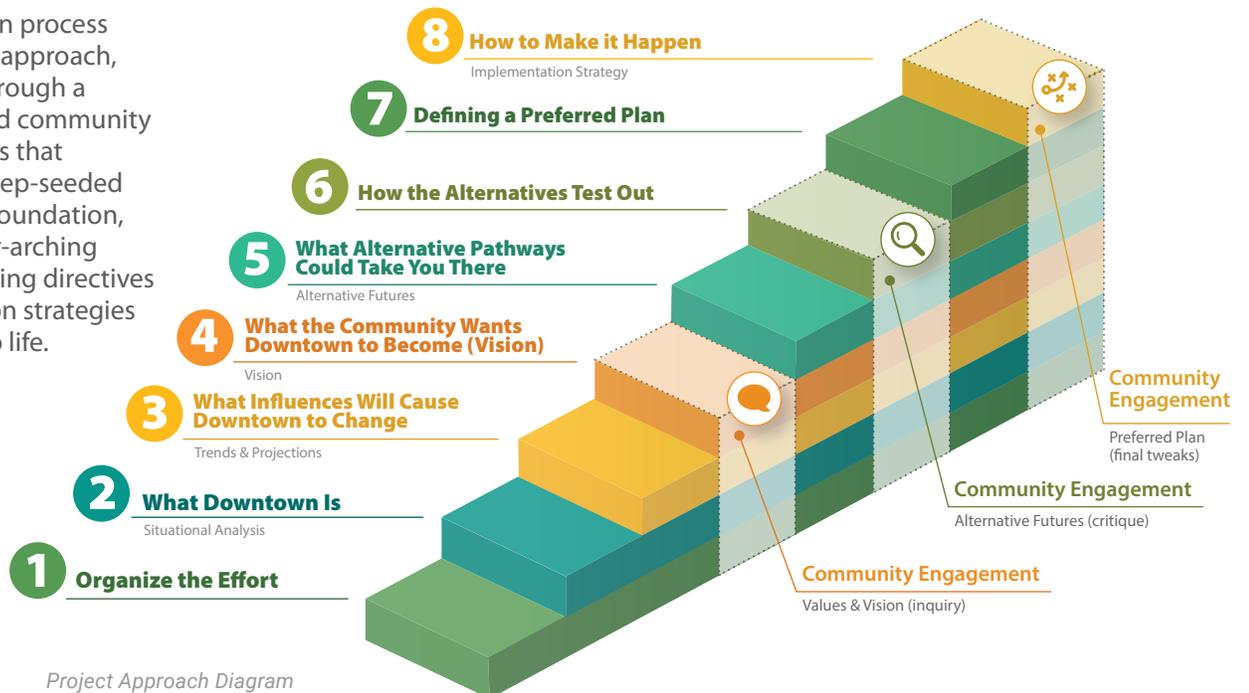
The plan is focused on roughly 72 acres centered on the Lake Street and Broadway Avenue intersection. The study area extends between 3rd Avenue SW and 4th Avenue NW and between 3rd Street SW and the Forest Lake, Lake 1 shoreline. The study area generally represents the historic downtown core of Forest Lake. The primary gateways into the district are either end of Lake Street, Broadway Avenue and, more recently, either end of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail.

The study area includes a broad mix of development patterns, architectural character, building age and other factors. The unifying features, however, are (or can be) the draw of the Lake, the street network, the urban forest and the common interests of the community.



PLAN PROCESS

The Downtown Plan process follows a stair-step approach, guiding the City through a series of phases and community engagement efforts that investigate the deep-seeded questions, set the foundation, and lead to an over-arching vision with correlating directives and implementation strategies to bring the Plan to life.



Project Approach Diagram

TIMELINE FOR CREATING THE PLAN

The planning process spanned 14 months, beginning in March 2021 and included a number of Downtown Committee, City Council, and Stakeholder meetings. Three community workshops were held (both in person and online) to gather feedback from the community on the Plan's vision, alternative directives, and preferred approach.

STEP 1	ORGANIZE THE EFFORT March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Committee Meeting
STEP 2	WHAT DOWNTOWN IS (SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS) March - April 2021	
STEP 3	STEP 3 - WHAT INFLUENCES WILL CAUSE DOWNTOWN TO CHANGE (TRENDS & PROJECTIONS) April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Committee Meeting
STEP 4	WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS DOWNTOWN TO BECOME (VISION) May - June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Workshop • Downtown Committee Meeting • City Council Meeting
STEP 5	WHAT ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS COULD TAKE YOU THERE (ALTERNATIVE FUTURES) June - August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Committee Meeting
STEP 6	HOW THE ALTERNATIVES TEST OUT September - December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Committee Meeting • Community Workshop
STEP 7	DEFINING A PREFERRED PLAN January - April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Committee Meeting
STEP 8	HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN (IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY) April - May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Workshop • Downtown Committee Meeting • City Council Meeting





ANALYSIS

WHAT DOWNTOWN IS

Understanding what downtown is today offers a basis for achieving what is desired tomorrow. In the following pages we will explore the existing conditions of the downtown district in four layers of analysis:

- **Land Use:** The framework of residential, office, commercial, institutional, and parkland parcels that comprise downtown.
- **Public Realm:** Shared spaces accessible to all, including street and trail corridors, parks, and privately owned public spaces.
- **Private Properties:** If a property is not a part of the dedicated public realm, it falls under the category of private property. This includes commercial, residential, and office spaces.
- **Downtown Activation:** Community events and adequate parking to support local happenings and businesses.

In examining these categories, we will take a closer look at the features that make up each layer:

 Land Use	 Public Realm	 Private Properties	 Downtown Activation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential • Office • Commercial • Institutional • Parkland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Space and Nature • Sidewalks and Trails • Pedestrian Amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real Estate • Business • Visitor Base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractions • Parking



Lakeside Memorial Park



Commercial and office frontage along Lake Street



Commercial frontage along Lake Street



Offices near the Lake

LAND USE

The Land Use and Frontage diagram on the following page illustrates the mix of usage types present within the downtown boundary. A variety of land uses is important to a vibrant downtown district, as the presence of residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors helps to ensure activity throughout the day.

RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL

Downtown Forest Lake holds the city's retail core, as seen in the red parcels and buildings fronting Lake Street. The east side of Lake Street displays an unbroken frontage of retail and commercial offerings between Broadway and 2nd Avenue, with parking in the rear of the buildings. Its west side is less strong, however, as surface parking lots create large gaps between buildings.

OFFICE

Office land uses provide additional energy along downtown's spine, bringing workers to the district on weekdays, and ensuring a population present to take advantage of purveyors of daily goods and services, like drycleaning, daycare, coffee, lunch, and pharmacy businesses. Office land uses tend to want a reliable amount of parking for their workers, which has resulted in less frontage taken up by active buildings, and more by parking lots, in absence of a district parking strategy for downtown.

RESIDENTIAL

Pockets of medium-density and low-density residential are present within downtown, which is beneficial for the overall land use mix. Increasing the density of residents within the district, or transitioning single-family residences to live-work spaces or retail shops is a strategy often seen in successful downtown realms.

INSTITUTIONAL

Forest Lake's downtown has one institutional building on its northern edge- Water Treatment Plant No. 1, seen in blue on Figure 2.1.

PARKLAND

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail forms a buffer between the neighborhoods on the west and the lakefront, although it is significantly more permeable than Lake Street itself. It has the potential to bring regional visitors to downtown, should trail users be encouraged to see Forest Lake as a welcoming and legible destination. Lakeside Memorial Park provides space for events, impromptu gathering, and recreational activities within downtown, which is of benefit to the district. Downtown has a few parcels of yet-to-be-developed open space along Lake Street that, once developed, will help to stitch together the fabric of downtown by providing a more active street frontage.





FIGURE 2.1 LAND USE AND FRONTAGE DIAGRAM

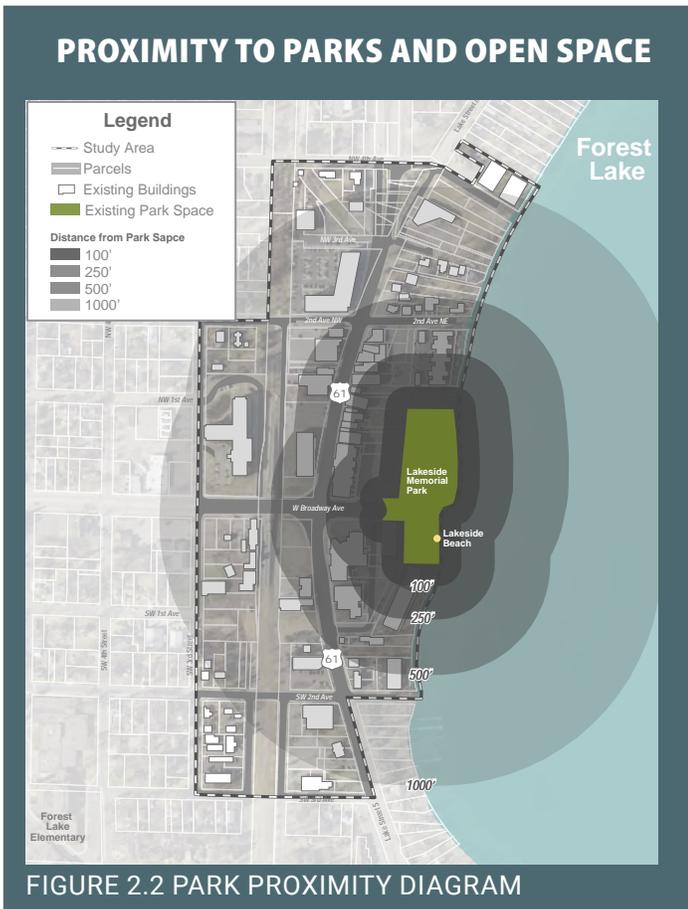




Play features at Lakeside Memorial Park



Forest Lake shoreline and boat slips at Lakeside Memorial Park



GREEN SPACE & NATURE

An adequate amount of well-located, well-connected, and well-cared for parks and green spaces are important within a thriving city and public realm.

LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK

Lakeside Memorial Park is a 4-acre park in the core of downtown along the shore of Forest Lake. It is the most prominent downtown green space, beloved by the community, and a primary downtown recreational destination. Park features include:

- Open lawn
- Gazebo
- Beach
- Playground
- Benches/seating
- Beachhouse w/restrooms
- Private boat club dock
- Public-use transient boat dock
- Picnic facilities
- Walking paths

Located at the termination of W Broadway Ave, the park can be reached by vehicles via Broadway Avenue, 1st Street SE or 2nd Avenue NE. Numerous concrete sidewalks and alleyways in the retail district lead and connect to paved trails within the park, and many crossings throughout the parking area are marked for pedestrian access. Lastly, both public and private boat slips are available for lake users, and a sandy swimming beach can be used for paddboarders and other watercrafts to access the water. Unfortunately, a lack of clear wayfinding signage is a barrier to visitors attempting to locate entrances, safe crossing points, parking for both boats and vehicles, and even the park itself, given its obscured location behind local shops and restaurants and the large expanse of parking.

“BORROWED” OPEN SPACES

Formal parks provide the clearest example of greenspace in a district, but vegetation such as tree cover and permeable ground allow for “borrowed” greenspace even though it may exist on private land. Examples of this in the study area today are the numerous vacant parcels along Highway 61, open landscaped areas surrounding local businesses, alleyways between buildings that offer glimpses of the park and lake, and the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail corridor lined with trees and lawn. Trees and vegetated ground cover are not only great contributions to a welcoming public realm, but play an important role in combatting urban heat island effects and helping to manage runoff.



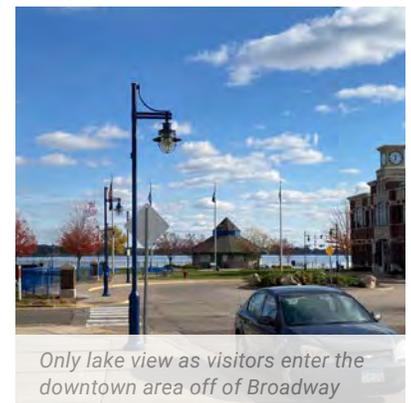
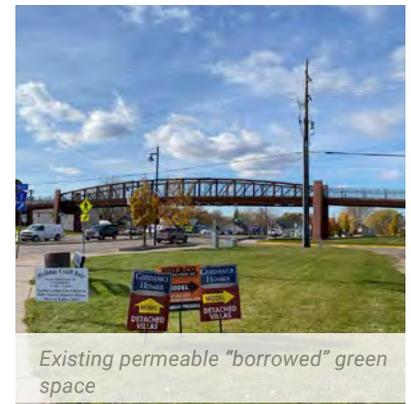
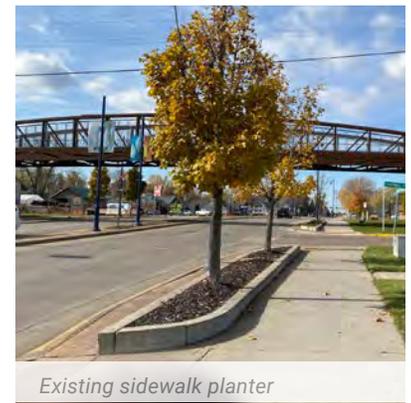


FIGURE 2.3 GREEN SPACE AND NATURE DIAGRAM

SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK CONDITIONS

A robust sidewalk network into and within the district is important. As it sits today, Forest Lake is a predominantly car-dependent city with a Walk Score of 18/100. Numerous gaps in the sidewalk network from surrounding neighborhoods, a missing connection along 1st Street SE to the highway, unmarked pedestrian crossings, and fast road speeds make it challenging for residents and visitors to safely reach destinations on foot. There are only six access points into the study area for pedestrians, most along large roadway corridors without any amenities or clear wayfinding to guide users to local retail shops or services. While most of the existing 10,600 linear feet (2 miles) of concrete sidewalks fall within ADA standards, issues with ramp elevations do exist in the southern portion of the study area, and vastly varying sidewalk widths can make travel for those with disabilities difficult.



Hardwood Creek Regional Trail overpass

BIKE NETWORK CONDITIONS

A robust bike network within a community can be a major boon for businesses. Currently, only three entrance points within the defined study area cater to cyclists. Once in, bikers are forced to maneuver around significant gaps in the network, which lacks any dedicated bike infrastructure (i.e. bike parking, wayfinding, or bike lanes/trails). A half-mile segment of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail runs directly through the downtown and remains the area's largest resource for bikes. The regional trail connects to another 35.5 miles of regional trails and a number of local trails. The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail crosses local roads at three intersections within the study area, all of which are unmarked and unsignaled, with a large overpass crossing West Broadway Ave that acts as a visual gateway into downtown and offers outstanding views of the downtown retail district, Lakeside Memorial Park, and Forest Lake. Aside from the regional trail, an existing 325 LF of bituminous, grade-separated shared-use trail (connected to 9,000 LF of additional trail that extends to the freeway interchange) exists along W Broadway Ave on the south side of the road. Badly marked with little to no amenities or clear wayfinding, the trail crosses numerous driveways and business entrances without crosswalks, ending with a dangerous and busy roundabout that keeps users from feeling they can safely reach the park or beach.

ACCESS TO DESTINATIONS

Lakeside Memorial Park and beach is one of Downtown Forest Lake's most popular destinations. Today, it can be reached by a bituminous shared-use trail along W Broadway Ave, the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail, and multiple existing concrete sidewalks. But gaps in the bike and pedestrian network, unmarked or unsignaled crossings, fast road speeds, unwelcoming alleyways between buildings, inadequate parking (both vehicular and bike), lack of public transportation options, and missing amenities deter guests from attempting to reach the park. The same can be said for the retail shops and restaurants along Highway 61, where busy traffic, inconsistent sidewalk widths, unsafe or minimal crossing points, and a lack of bike or pedestrian amenities (i.e. benches, trash receptacles, bike parking, etc.) make for an unwelcoming environment that does not lend itself to a bustling public realm.

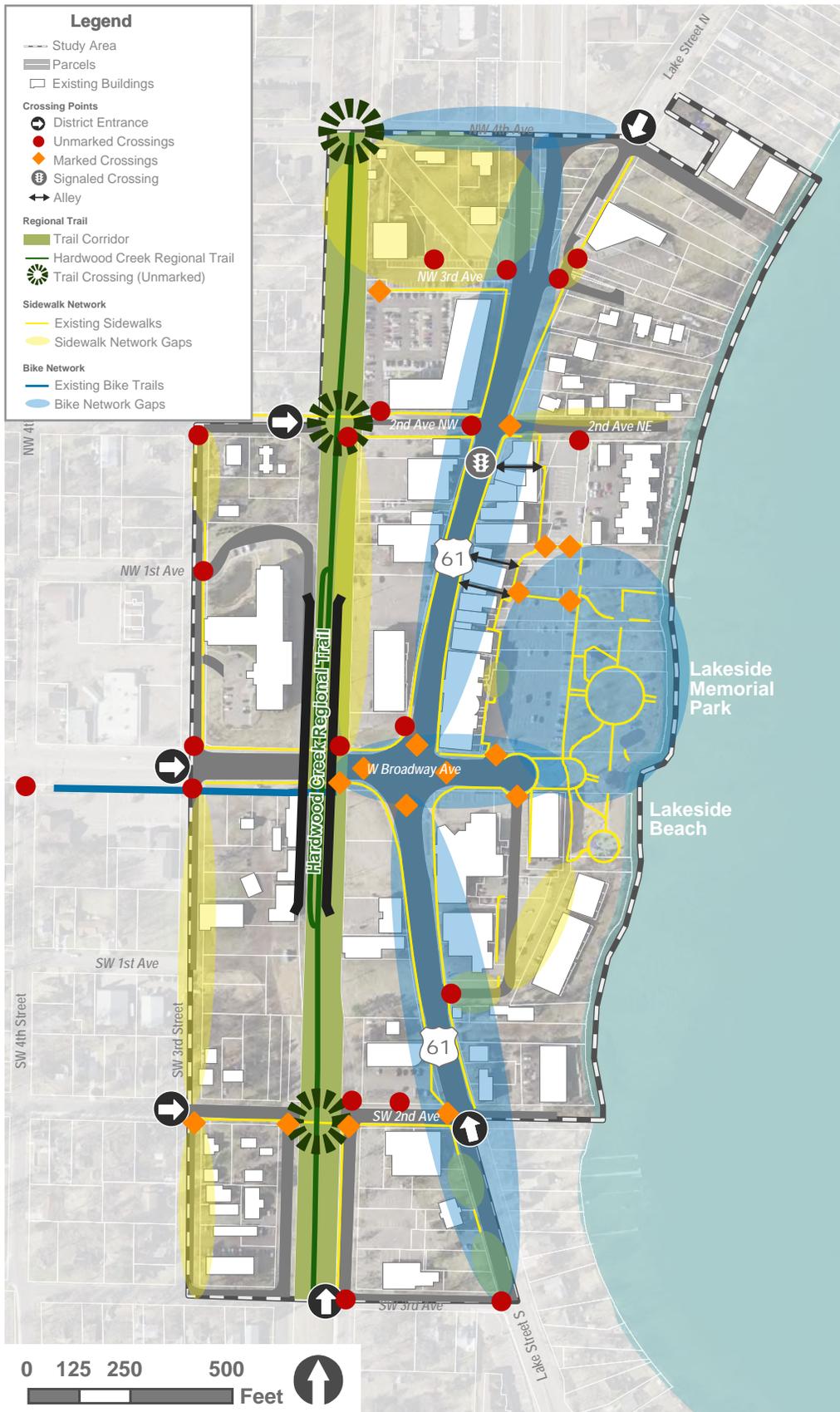
SOCIAL SIDEWALKS

Sidewalks over the 5' foot "magic minimum" measurement with ADA compliant design contribute to a social sidewalk network. Sidewalks narrower than 5 feet are better than nothing but lose the social value of walking side-by-side; a critical aspect of robust use. 95% of the sidewalks in the study area today meet the minimum width requirement to contribute to the social sidewalk network.



FIGURE 2.4 SOCIAL SIDEWALK NETWORK





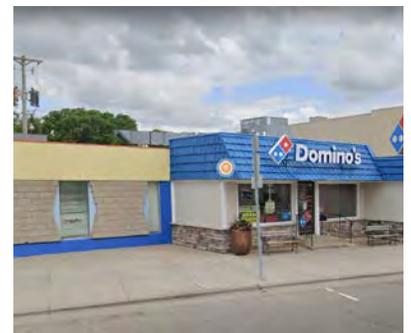
Alleyway between local businesses with lake and park views



Existing bituminous trail along the south edge of W Broadway Ave



Unmarked Hardwood Creek Trail crossing on local road



Wide sidewalk outside Domino's

FIGURE 2.5 SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS DIAGRAM



Vehicle oriented lighting along Highway 61



Marked pedestrian crossing at the busy roundabout intersection



Only signaled crossing within the study area



Trash and recycling receptacles

PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Pedestrian comfort and security are important to creating and maintaining a bustling public realm. Along busy roads and corridors, pedestrian-scale features such as lighting, seating, vegetative or other physical barriers, traffic calming measures, safe marked or signaled crossing points, and ample wayfinding make spaces more comfortable and inviting.

BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

As can be seen in Figure 2.6, bike and pedestrian users face numerous crossing barriers throughout the study area. Major destinations such as Lakeside Memorial Park, Lakeside beach, and local shops and restaurants exist on the other side of a bustling highway. While a handful of marked crossings exist at the Highway 61 roundabout, in and around public parking areas, or to and from surrounding neighborhoods, the frequency of unmarked/unsigned crossing points prevents users from having clear, continuous routes of travel into and around the retail district. The lack of defined routes and wayfinding signage makes non-motorized access to destinations inconvenient and unpleasant. Busy roads without conveniently located, safe crossing points detracts from the safety and comfort of what should be a welcoming realm for pedestrians and cyclists.

HIGHWAY 61 AND W BROADWAY AVE ROUNDABOUT

The existing roundabout located at the intersection of Highway 61 and W Broadway Ave facilitates efficient traffic flow, but without signalized stops, makes crossing challenging for those who may need more time to cross and gives vehicles less incentive to stop and look for pedestrians. Measures can be taken to improve upon the current situation by installing further traffic calming measures, high-visibility crossing elements, and pedestrian islands that offer a reprieve and help crossers deal with only one direction of traffic at a time.

SIGNALLED CROSSING AT THE TOWERS BUILDING

Only one signaled crossing exists within the retail district. Located at the Towers building, it provides safe pedestrian passage across the busy highway and assists in calming traffic.

LIGHTING

Downtown features many light fixtures along Highway 61, local roads, and surface parking areas. With the exception of lights within Memorial Lakeside Park and along building facades, existing streetlights are vehicular-scale and do not cater well to pedestrians. If the goal is to create a downtown retail district with social sidewalks and a lively pedestrian atmosphere that can support businesses during all operating hours, pedestrian-scale lighting will need to be introduced within the highway corridor and along pedestrian routes.

COMFORT AMENITIES

Today, most of downtown's comfort amenities like restrooms, benches, drinking water, and waste receptacles exist within Memorial Lakeside Park and Lakeside Beach (see figure 2.7 for more detail). These types of amenities exist sparingly along the sides of local shops or restaurants, and the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail Corridor leaves a lot to be desired. Wide sidewalks, historic building facades, and spacious alleyways offer great opportunities for future pedestrian enhancements that offer convenience and enable visitors to comfortably extend their stay downtown.

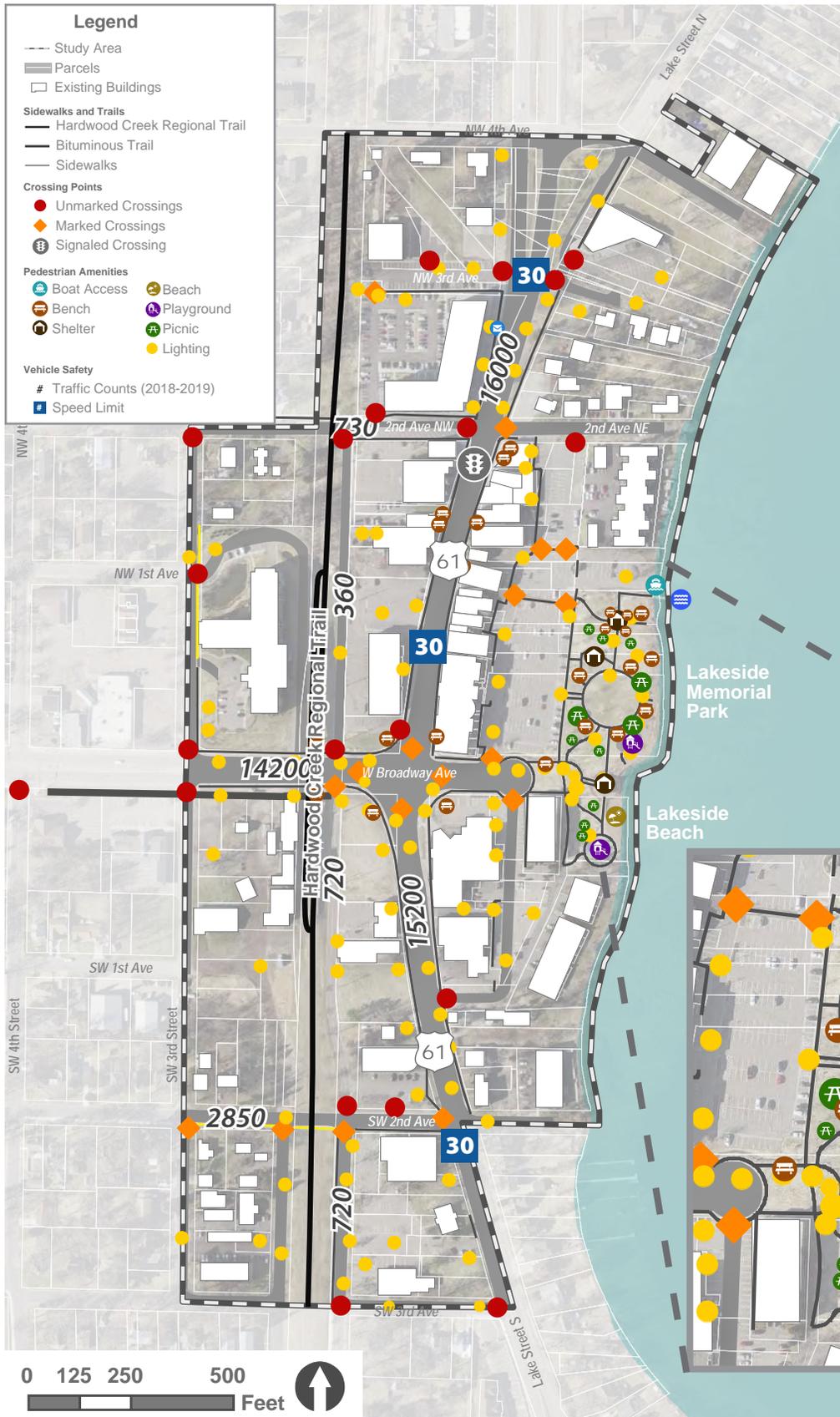


FIGURE 2.6 PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES DIAGRAM - FULL STUDY AREA



FIGURE 2.7 LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK ZOOM VIEW



PRIVATE PROPERTIES



A wide gap between buildings is temporarily used as space to advertis

REAL ESTATE

Real estate in the downtown area of Forest Lake should be seen by potential future developers as being a good investment.

LAND VALUES

The availability of small parcels in downtown opens up access to ownership for more people, but may also make redevelopment more challenging for those looking to develop on a larger scale. The need for multiple acquisitions can be prohibitive.

BUILDING VALUES

Assessed values for buildings along Hwy 61 are reasonable for redevelopment, but may also indicate a lack of current investment. The availability of affordable structures is a welcome environment for potential small business owners, so long as they have the wherewithal to do some renovation or rehabilitation.

VACANT PARCELS

The vacant parcels shown in figure 2.10 consist of those without structures present. East of Hwy 61, most vacant parcels are public land, surface parking, or associated with a business or housing development, and are unlikely to be redeveloped. Vacant parcels in the southwest quadrant of downtown are high visibility, and (other than the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail) lend themselves well to development or redevelopment.



Business for sale



Vacant parcel along Highway 61

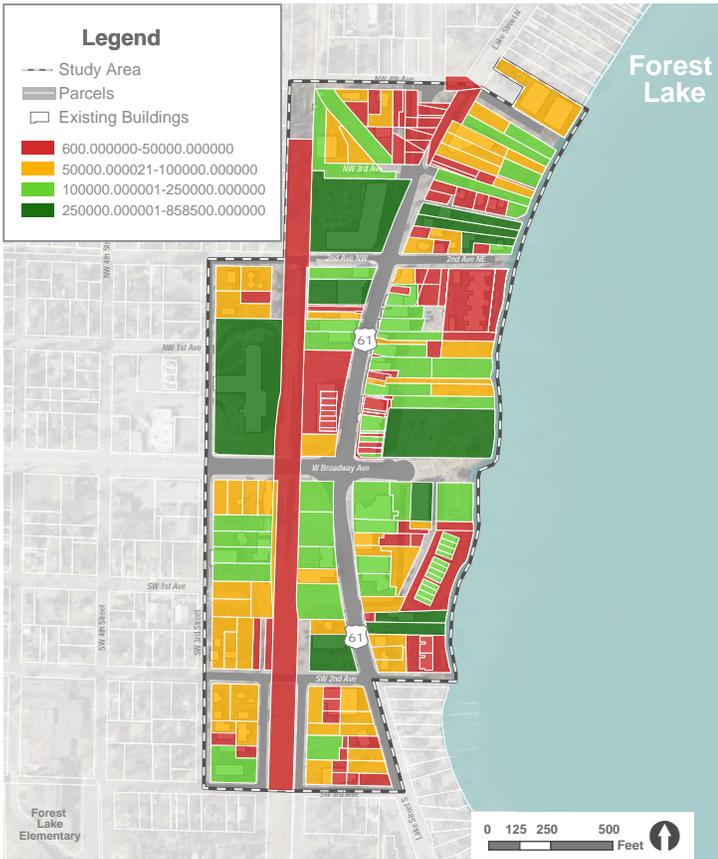


FIGURE 2.8 LAND VALUES DIAGRAM

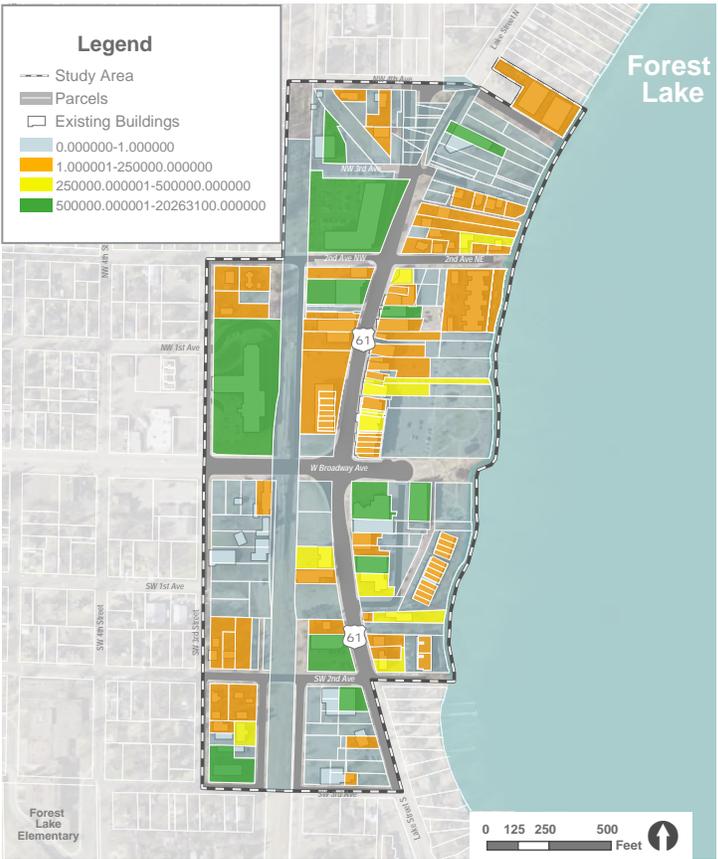


FIGURE 2.9 BUILDING VALUES DIAGRAM

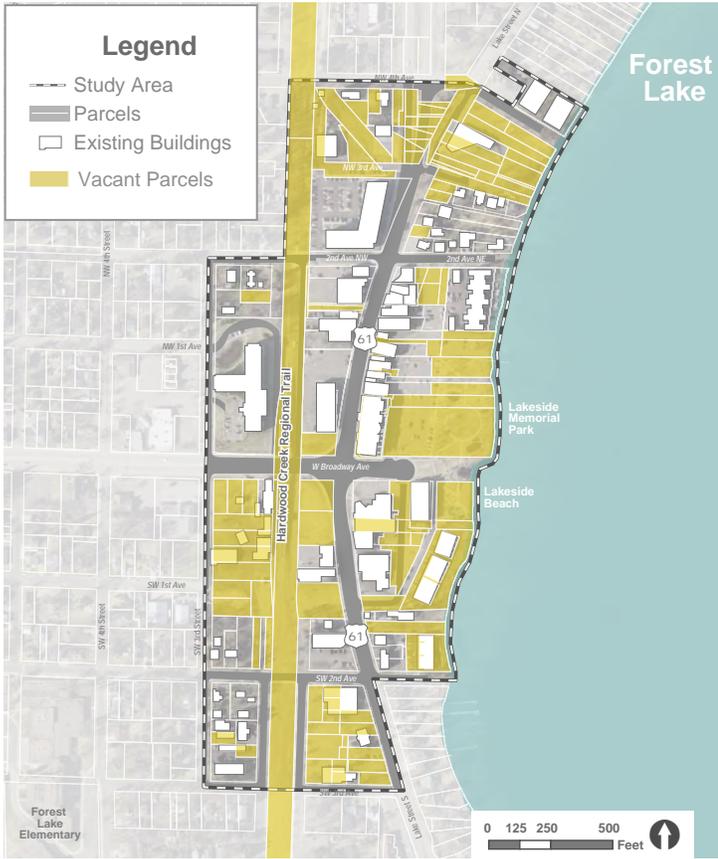


FIGURE 2.10 VACANT PARCELS DIAGRAM



Vacant parcel



Vacant parcel



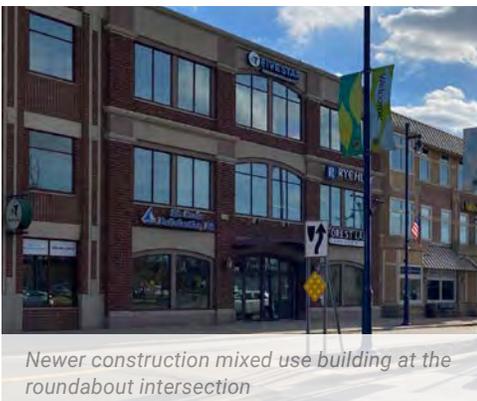
Local business with small patio space out front



Fireside Getaway outdoor seating at the back of the building with park and lake views across the busy parking lot



Vacant theater building



Newer construction mixed use building at the roundabout intersection

BUSINESS

The Highway 61 corridor as a whole should read as a bustling commercial district, with each unique business, retailer, or restaurant contributing to the diversity of offerings and the overall experience.

BUILDINGS IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Forest Lake’s main street is Lake Street, or Highway 61, between Broadway Ave and 2nd Ave NE. The buildings, many of which are historic, retain much of the outward appearance and craftsmanship of an earlier time. With eye-level shop windows, entries that meet the street, and pedestrian-scaled one and two-story structures, these buildings hold a lot of potential to contribute to a busy and exciting public realm. However, today a number of the buildings on the east side of the Downtown retail loop appear tired, are vacant, or are unable to keep tenants and businesses around for long. Busy road traffic, a lack of parking, and an unwelcoming public realm make it hard for businesses to be sustained and supported. An inventory of existing businesses (as of the writing of this document) can be seen in Figure 2.11.

BUILDING FRONTAGE EXPERIENCE

Figure 2.11 also shows the building frontage for each structure along Lake Street, and highlights whether the lakefront has public or private access. Active uses, such as retail, contribute to the vibrancy of the public realm by bringing people to the district, while office space and public services located on second or third stories of buildings contribute to the livability of the area without taking over valuable ground-level real estate. When office spaces or public services with daytime only operating hours exist on the garden-level, they can take away from the “eyes on the street” that help visitors feel secure in an area in the evening, especially near open alleyways or large surface parking lots. The sidewalks lining Lake Street today lack many basic pedestrian amenities such as appropriately-scaled lighting, seating, landscaping, wayfinding, or bike parking that might make the downtown environment a comfortable and desirable place to spend time in.

Many of the buildings have both a front and back entrance, with the front or main entryway facing the Lake Street corridor, and the back allowing access from the large surface parking lot to the east. Many of these rear building entrances consist of only of a door and few windows, and only some have a shop sign to let guests know what’s inside. Utilities are not well hidden, and alleyways or large sidewalk spaces lie empty. With access to Lakeside Memorial Park and lake views located behind buildings on the east side of Lake Street, and close proximity to the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail corridor for buildings on the West, these structures are missing out on vital opportunities to make clear connections to these assets and drive potential customer traffic to their shops or eateries.

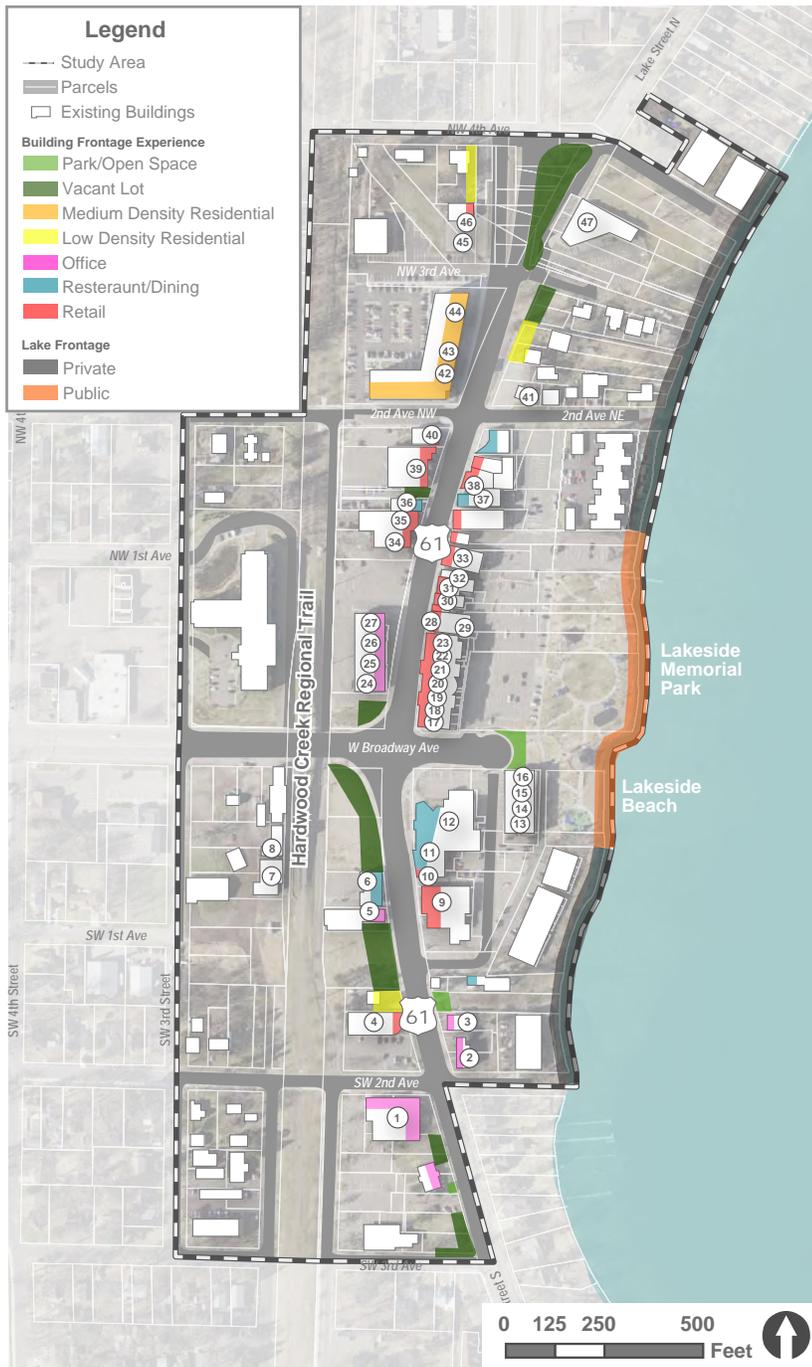


FIGURE 2.11 BUSINESS INVENTORY

Retail

- ② The Lash Lounge
- ④ Liquor Works
- ⑧ Diamond Find
- ⑨ Trade Wins Sports
- ⑩ LiQuiVape
- ⑭ La Grande Beauty Spa and Boutique
- ⑰ Verizon
- ⑳ iLash Beauty Bar
- ㉑ North Woods Optics
- ㉒ Downtown Barbers
- ㉓ Sienna Cole Bridal
- ㉔ Remodeled Relics
- ㉕ Rolseth Drug
- ㉖ Parrot Adoption Education Program
- ㉗ Forest Lake Pets
- ㉘ Salon EnV
- ㉙ Dick's Tattoo
- ㉚ TitleSmart, Inc.
- ㉛ Snap Fitness
- ㉜ Reub's Tire Shop, Inc.

Restaurant/Dining

- ⑥ Kodiak Coffee
- ⑪ New Bangkok Thai
- ⑫ Vannelli's by The Lake
- ⑱ Rancho Loco Grill & Bar
- ㉑ Domino's Pizza
- ㉒ Fireside Getaway Restaurant & Bar
- ㉓ Mallards Restaurant

Office

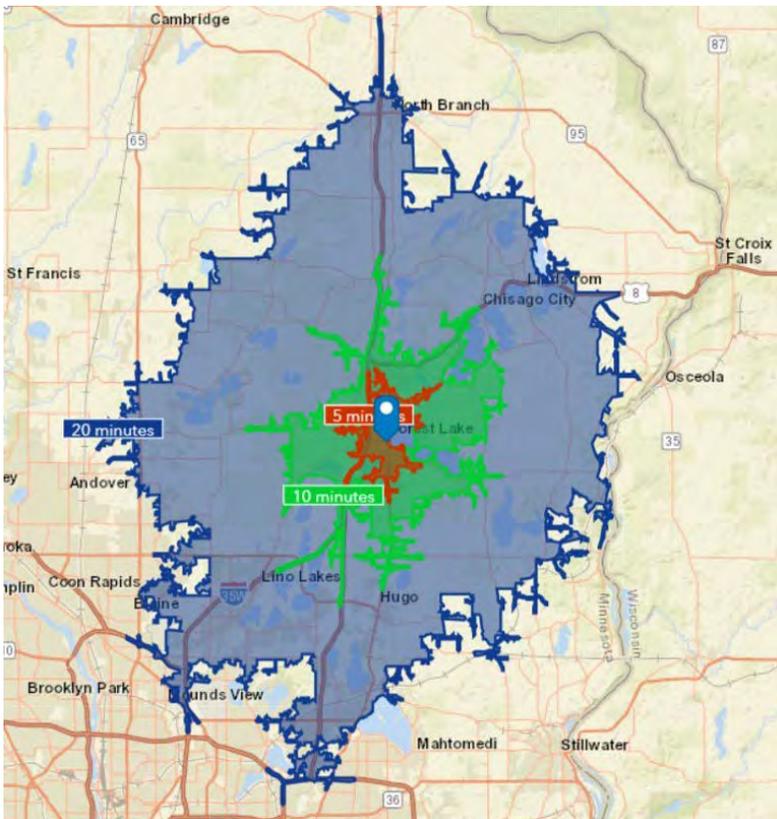
- ① Wells Fargo Bank
- ③ Butts, Schneider & Butts, LLP
- ⑤ Miller & Stevens Law
- ⑦ E J Houle Inc
- ⑬ Brian Leneweaver Coldwell Banker Realty
- ⑮ Johnson / Turner Legal
- ⑯ Timothy Garry, Coldwell Banker Burnet
- ⑰ VerBout Services
- ⑱ Five Star Financial Resources
- ⑳ St Croix Endodontics
- ㉑ Fry & Associates
- ㉒ iSmile Orthodontics
- ㉔ Fairview Health Services
- ㉖ American Family Insurance
- ㉘ Sewing and Fitting Mentor
- ⑳ LaBelle Real Estate Group
- ㉑ St. Croix Valley Peach
- ㉒ Aaron M Peterson: Allstate Insurance
- ㉔ Chad Smoley, White Oaks Real Estate, LLC
- ㉖ Mattson Funeral Home

VISITOR BASE

The visitor base is the population that is most likely to patronize businesses within the downtown. A larger visitor base means more potential activity and revenue for the district. Having potential customers nearby supports local business and generates regular visits into downtown.

While contemporary travel patterns tend to favor retail districts adjacent to highway interchanges for their convenience, downtown main streets offer a slower, more pleasant experience, and can see major success when they strategically lean into this aesthetic. The study area's population is not large enough to support the market alone, so attracting visitors from outside the downtown boundary is essential. Marketing downtown Forest Lake as a unique destination, limiting barriers to knowledge and access, and investing in the public realm can help to position the district to capture more of the visitor base's potential spending.

Study Area restaurants only capture 14% of the restaurant spending within a 5 minute drive time and 3% of the restaurant spending within a 10 minute drive time. There is significant spending capacity to be captured by attracting nearby residents to downtown.



POPULATION WITHIN DRIVING TIMES OF THE DEFINED STUDY AREA:

Drive Time	Population
Study Area	383
5 Minutes	8,869
10 Minutes	31,228
20 Minutes	191,777

SPENDING BY PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN DRIVING TIME OF THE DEFINED THE STUDY AREA:

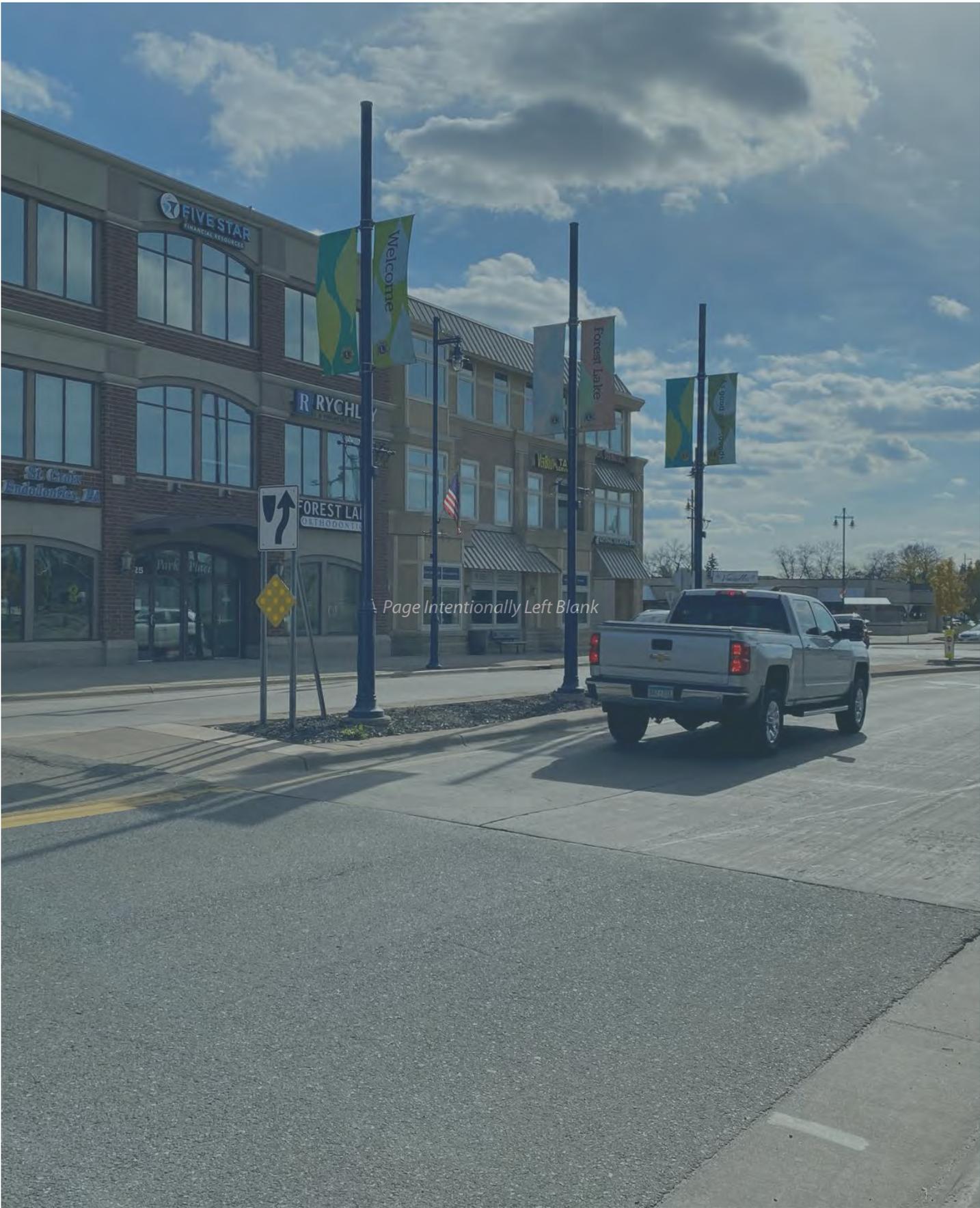
Drive Time	Retail	Food/Drink
Study Area	\$3,480,028	\$376,160
5 Min	\$108,368,308	\$11,628,585
10 Min	\$438,1571,379	\$47,172,001
20 Min	\$2,859,340,261	\$309,845,616

HOW DO SALES NUMBERS IN THE STUDY AREA RELATE TO SPENDING BY PEOPLE LIVING NEAR THE STUDY AREA?

Study Area Sales	
Study Area	\$28,744,855
	\$2,990,014

Drive Time	Retail	Food/Drink
Study Area	826%	795%
5 Min	27%	26%
10 Min	7%	6%
20 Min	1%	1%







DOWNTOWN ACTIVATION

DOWNTOWN ACTIVATION



Arts in the Park

ATTRACTIONS

Downtown Forest Lake holds several well-attended events throughout the year that attract people to the district and help to support local businesses, including:

- 4th of July
- Flake Festival
- Hometown Holiday
- Arts in the Park

These large events are major undertakings and provide memorable experiences for attendees, but do little for the day-to-day perception of downtown. In order to encourage a more consistently vibrant atmosphere, the city should incorporate small-scale activation on a weekly basis, so that visitors feel downtown always has something interesting going on. If there are events or attractions that happen elsewhere in the community, consider relocating or inviting them to take place in downtown, in order to draw energy to the district and position it as an activity hub.



Flake festival



Arts in the Park



4th of July festivities



PARKING

Parking is an essential part of a successful retail corridor and should be convenient and easy to use.

LAND USE ISOLATION

Currently, large surface parking lots for local businesses along Highway 61 are oriented towards the rear, which isolates shops and services from assets such as Lakeside Memorial Park and the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail. These parking lots also prevent restaurants and eateries from taking advantage of park or lake views, make bike and pedestrian connections difficult to establish, and affect businesses' ability to draw in customers from all sides. With a busy highway corridor down the center, visitors who park on the east side of Highway 61 may find it hard to cross over to reach retail on the west side, deterring potential business.

BOAT/TRAILER PARKING

Insufficient boat and trailer parking near the public lake access causes chaos and confusion for those trying to launch their crafts and store their trailers and vehicles nearby. The connected commercial lot results in unofficial boat parking during the warmer seasons when boating is at its peak.

SEASONAL USE

Like any city, Forest Lake faces the obstacles of seasonal parking shortages. Finding the balance between having too much parking in the colder months, and too little in the summer months when festivals and events are being held, the beach is in use, and the park is a popular destination, can be a challenge. Lack of vehicular wayfinding causes confusion and makes pedestrians feel uncomfortable crossing surface lots to reach their destinations.

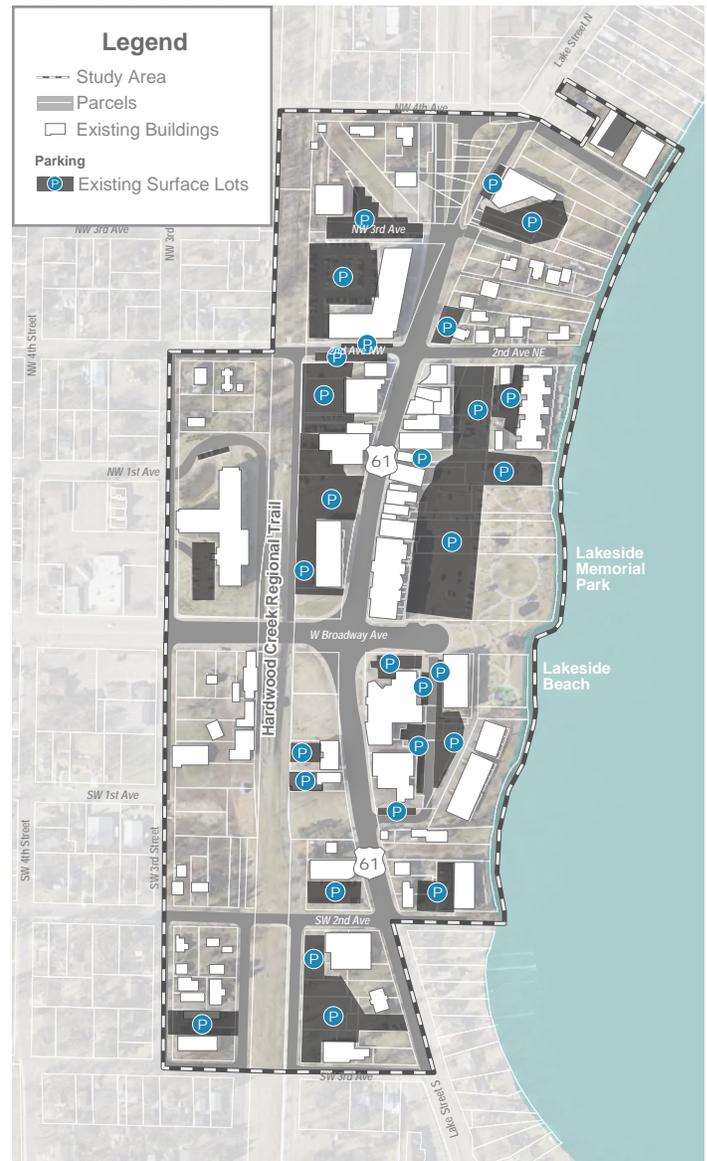


FIGURE 2.12 PARKING DIAGRAM



Existing boat parking



Parking between Lakeside Memorial Park and local businesses



Parking along Highway 61



Parking spaces being utilized by vendors at the Arts in the Park Event

DOWNTOWN PARKING ANALYSIS

Understanding where parking is and how much of it exists is only one aspect of determining whether or not there is “enough.” The definition of “enough” parking has evolved over time, and is influenced by several factors. The following analysis uses existing development and parking quantities to assess parking surplus or shortfall under three different scenarios.

SCENARIO 1:

This scenario uses Forest Lake’s current zoning standard of 5 stalls per 1,000 sf of retail/office, and 1 visitor stall per residential unit as the definition of “enough” parking. This was a fairly normal downtown parking standard in years past, but across the past decade, most communities have reduced downtown parking requirements to be similar to Scenario 2 below.

	NW Quadrant	NE Quadrant	SW Quadrant	SE Quadrant
Retail / Office (in gross square feet)	82,000	82,000	9,000	57,000
Parking Demand	410	410	45	285
Residential Units	-	12	-	-
Parking Demand		12		
Total Parking Demand	410	422	45	285
Current Parking Count	239	274	48	133
<i>Surplus / Shortfall</i> by Quadrant	171	148	3	152
District-wide Shortfall	468			

SCENARIO 2:

This scenario considers today’s standard for a primarily auto-oriented downtown setting, utilizing a metric of 4 stalls per 1,000 sf of retail/office, and 0.3 visitor stall per residential unit.

	NW Quadrant	NE Quadrant	SW Quadrant	SE Quadrant
Retail / Office (in gross square feet)	82,000	82,000	9,000	57,000
Parking Demand	328	328	36	228
Residential Units	-	12	-	-
Parking Demand		4		
Total Parking Demand	328	332	36	228
Current Parking Count	239	274	48	133
<i>Surplus / Shortfall</i> by Quadrant	89	58	12	95
District-wide Shortfall	230			

SCENARIO 3:

This scenario illustrates typical metrics for downtown parking in a transit-oriented district: 2.5 stalls per 1,000 sf of retail/office, and 0.15 visitor stall per residential unit. Downtown Forest Lake does not fit the transit scenario, but it is interesting to see that there would be more than enough existing parking under this scenario.

	NW Quadrant	NE Quadrant	SW Quadrant	SE Quadrant
Retail / Office (in gross square feet)	82,000	82,000	9,000	57,000
Parking Demand	205	205	23	143
Residential Units	-	12	-	-
Parking Demand		2		
Total Parking Demand	205	207	23	143
Current Parking Count	239	274	48	133
<i>Surplus / Shortfall</i> by Quadrant	34	67	26	10
<i>District-wide Surplus</i>	117			





FIGURE 2.13 EXISTING PARKING QUANTITIES BY QUADRANT



Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park are isolated from one another



Poor connections from the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail



Busy roundabout is an intimidating pedestrian crossing



Lake Street is an uninviting pedestrian corridor

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Forest Lake's Downtown faces a number of challenging design factors that inhibit its ability to be the thriving downtown center it has the potential to become. Figure 2.14 pinpoints specific locations where improvements could be made.

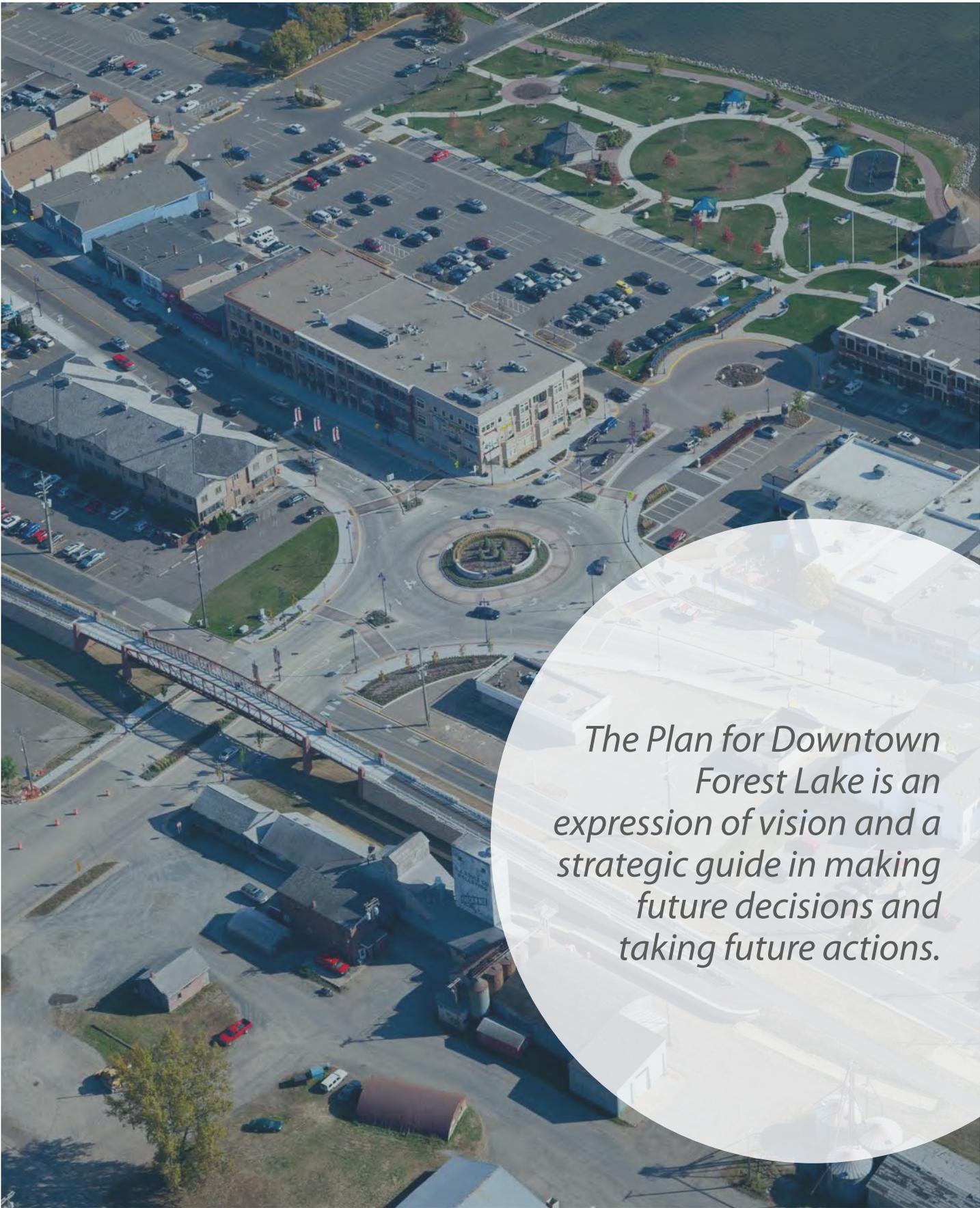
- 1 *LAKE STREET COMMERCIAL SPINE AND LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK ARE ISOLATED FROM ONE ANOTHER*
Large expanses of surface parking lots separate the retail corridor from Lakeside Memorial Park and its many amenities.
- 2 *LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK DOES NOT "FLOW" BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY*
Currently, the only buildings located within close proximity of the park are medium-density residential and office retail uses.
- 3 *PEOPLE LIKE WALKING AND STROLLING CIRCUITS - DOWNTOWN LACKS PLEASANT/INTERESTING WALKING LOOPS*
There are many existing gaps in the bike and pedestrian network within downtown that make loops and circuits difficult to use or establish.
- 4 *POOR CONNECTIONS FROM THE HARDWOOD CREEK REGIONAL TRAIL INTO DOWNTOWN LIMITS "BIKE-INS"*
Lack of well marked or signaled crossings, busy traffic, vacant parcels, and expansive parking lots isolate the trail from the rest of the downtown core.
- 5 *THE LAKE IS A BIG RECREATIONAL DRAW*
Forest Lake is popular with local residents and visitors, especially in the summer months. More could be done to make it a winter destination.
- 6 *BOAT TRAILER PARKING CONFLICTS WITH OTHER PARKING DEMANDS*
Seasonal use challenges between boat users, park users, and retail or other services has parking in short supply during the warm weather months.
- 7 *PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY ALONG LAKE STREET IS NEARLY NON-EXISTENT - CUSTOMERS USE REAR BUILDING ENTRANCES MOST OF THE TIME*
The busy highway and lack of available parking along Lake Street pushes most visitors to use the large surface lots behind buildings.
- 8 *MOST STOREFRONTS HAVE TRANSITIONED RETAIL MERCHANDISE TO SERVICE RETAIL AND OFFICE*
Many small local shops and eateries have been short-lived in downtown, and buildings have transitioned to offices and other services.
- 9 *ROUNDAABOUT IS AN INTIMIDATING PEDESTRIAN CROSSING*
Lack of signaled crossings and the need to cross two lanes of moving traffic makes the roundabout feel chaotic and dangerous for pedestrians.
- 10 *LACK OF SIDEWALKS AND PLEASANT WALKING CORRIDORS FROM SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS LIMIT "WALK-INS"*
Many of the sidewalks from downtown end at the entrance of surrounding neighborhoods and don't continue onto local streets.
- 11 *SOME PARKING IS NOT WELL-CONNECTED TO SPECIFIC DEMANDS AND WAYFINDING IS LACKING*
Despite the number of large surface lots in the downtown area, the overall ratio of stalls to businesses and other destinations causes a shortage.





FIGURE 2.14 DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS DIAGRAM

- 12** LAKE STREET IS AN UNINVITING PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR
 Lack of bike and pedestrian amenities, wayfinding, human-scale lighting, and busy vehicular traffic make Lake Street an uninviting space for visitors to spend time.
- 13** MANY DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS HAVE ARCHITECTURAL POTENTIAL BUT ARE NOT WELCOMING
 Many of the buildings along Lake Street are historic and retain some of their traditional charm and character, but are in varying states of disinvestment or vacancy.
- 14** CONTINUOUS HIGHWAY TRAFFIC IS A MAJOR IMPACT ON THE DOWNTOWN EXPERIENCE
 Lack of signals, crossings, or other traffic calming measures along the corridor give vehicles the right of way, forcing pedestrians to take a back seat.



The Plan for Downtown Forest Lake is an expression of vision and a strategic guide in making future decisions and taking future actions.





ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

The public input process for the Forest Lake Downtown Plan was designed to gather feedback from the general public and important stakeholders through both formal and informal community engagement events.

THREE STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was organized around three stages of the planning process: 1) expression of vision/values, 2) critique of concept alternatives, and 3) draft plan review. Each stage employed in-person and online tools and tactics that provided the community multiple ways of staying informed about progress and providing meaningful input.

- 1** STEP 1: VISION AND VALUES
- 2** STEP 2: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES
- 3** STEP 3: CONVERGING ON A PREFERRED PLAN

STEP 1: VISION & VALUES

To start off community engagement, the consulting team attended one of Downtown Forest Lake's most popular events, Arts in the Park, to speak with locals and visitors and gather input on existing conditions. Guests were directed via handouts to an online project portal where they could participate in surveys and leave geographically relevant markers on an interactive map to discuss issues and opportunities within the downtown study area.

JULY 2021 | ARTS IN THE PARK

The local Arts in the Park celebration is an annual summer event held in Forest Lake's Lakeside Memorial Park. Popular with locals and visitors alike, the live music, local artisan market, and food trucks always yields a great turnout of attendees. In late July of 2021, the consulting team set-up a booth alongside City Staff to meet with locals and discuss their thoughts and concerns regarding the existing conditions of the study area and introduce the project to the public. Within the booth was a map for collecting comments, some fun props for social media, and fliers that were handed out to passersby directing them to the project website, online survey, mapping tool, and ideas wall.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
Community Engagement for the Forest Lake Downtown Plan is underway! Visit the online site to leave your feedback!

**FOREST LAKE DOWNTOWN PLAN
JUNE-AUGUST
ONLINE ENGAGEMENT**

The Mapping Tool
Use the interactive mapping tool to drag and drop pins on or near the location of your comment!

The Word Wall
What word would you use to describe Downtown? Use the word wall to leave your feedback!

Visit the Project Website: <https://www.investinforestlake.com/downtown-planning>

Participants at Arts in the Park 2021

ONLINE SURVEY, IDEAS WALL, AND INTERACTIVE MAPPING TOOL

The consulting team used a public engagement platform to set up an online survey, ideas wall, and interactive map to collect public input through a variety of questions, conversational prompts, and drag-and-drop map elements. These tools all launched at similar times and were interconnected to make navigation easy from one exercise to the next. They were featured on the project website created by the City to keep residents updated on project opportunities, and the City of Forest Lake Facebook page. Each tool received thousands of site visits from hundreds of unique users who actively engaged with the site in some manner, and a variety of helpful comments on how users view the downtown study area as it sits today.

ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

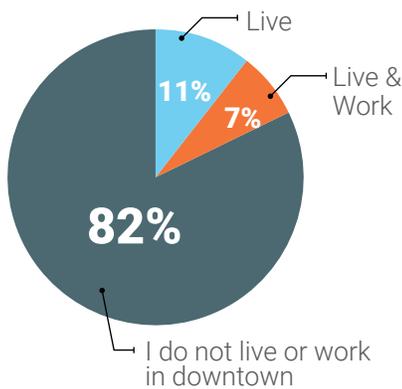
The online survey, located in a tab alongside the interactive mapping tool, consisted of four multiple choice and open-ended questions that asked participants to describe the way they currently interact with the study area. Do they live nearby? How frequently do they visit and why or why not? The survey received 28 responses from unique stakeholders, many of whom also left comments on the mapping tool. A summary of the survey results can be seen in the graphics below.

PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The numbers below capture different analytics measured to show the total activity on both sites:

	Word Wall	Map Tool
Total Visits (Total number of visits to the site)	1516	2233
Unique Users (Number of individual IP addresses to visit the site)	530	697
Comments (Number of unique individuals to engage with the site)	81	252

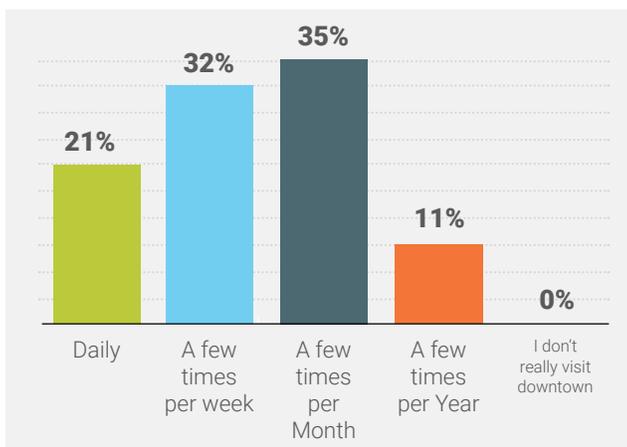
Do you live or work Downtown?



Why do you go Downtown?



How frequently do you visit Downtown?



If you don't visit Downtown often, why?





Screenshot of online word wall results

IDEAS WALL

The online Idea Wall tool functions as a digital post-it board where participants can leave their own responses as well as agree/disagree with comments left by other users. Visitors to the site were asked to use one word to describe Downtown as it sits today. An enthusiastic 81 comments were left by 75 unique stakeholders, often going far beyond the one-word description to give in-depth and detailed answers as to why they view, use, or do not use the downtown. A pattern began to develop among these responses, splitting the input into two defined categories of **how the user views the area today**, and **what they believe it has the potential to be in the future**.

A summary of the words or phrases used in the overall comments appears below. *The full-length comments can be found in the document appendix.*



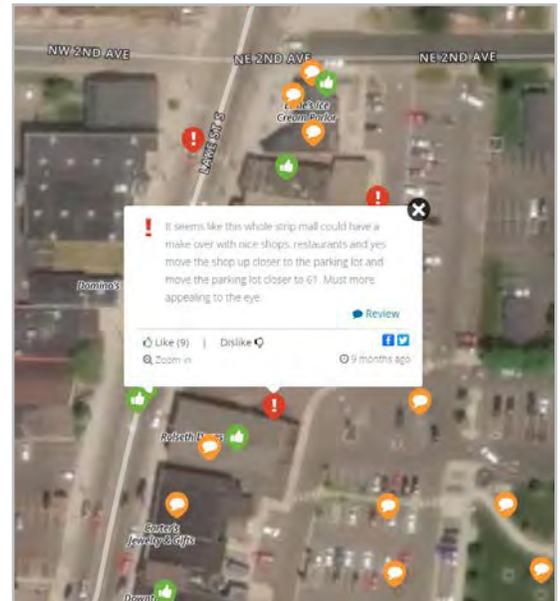
INTERACTIVE MAP SUMMARY

The interactive mapping tool features a drag-and-drop function that prompts users to select a category that best aligns to the comments they wish to make, and then drops a digital pin at the desired location to leave feedback. Users may also use a like/dislike function on comment boxes to agree or disagree with comments made by other users. The pins were split into four separate categories to be used on a plain aerial map of the existing site with the study area outlined. The map received over 250 comments left by 96 unique stakeholders.

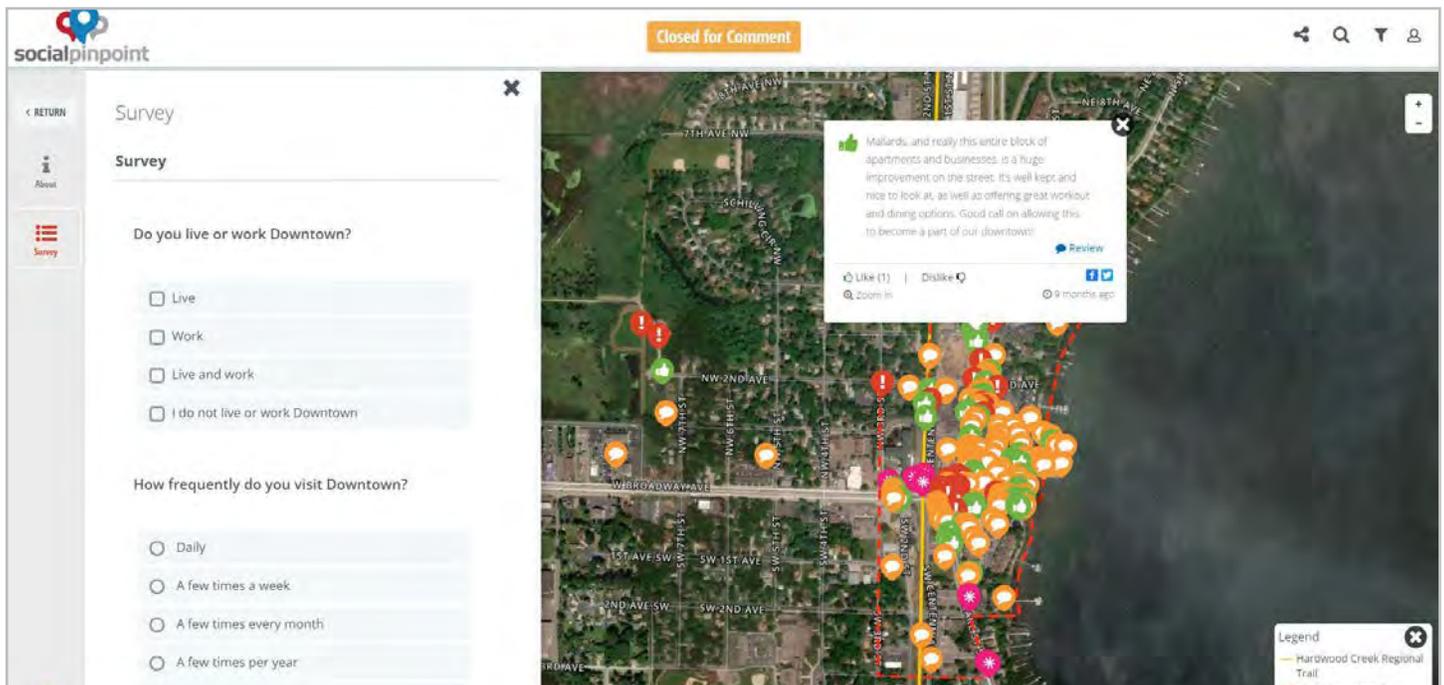
A summary of the comments received can be seen on the following pages. *A table with all comments organized by marker/category can be found in the document appendix.*

COMMENTS ABOUT THE DOWNTOWN RETAIL CORE:

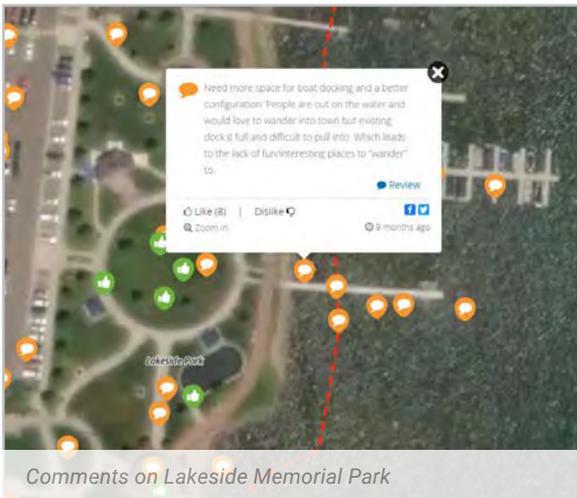
- Locals visitors have seen many great restaurants and shops come and go over the years. What do we need to change or do to keep them around? Residents don't want to see chain shops end up in this area; they love locally-owned and unique retail in this setting.
- Too much prime real estate has been taken over by office uses and services. Would like to see more boutique retail and eateries on the ground floor and facing the park and lake.
- Many who engaged in the mapping exercise agree that downtown holds huge potential to be a great lakefront attraction with the right changes.
- Participants think many of the old buildings have charm and architectural promise if they were fixed up and invested in, and the fronts would be more inviting with pedestrian amenities along the sidewalks. Shops like Daniella's and Kodiak Coffee are a point of pride within the community.
- People would like to visit and support downtown more often, but confusing parking, busy traffic, and a lack of destinations often result in the decision to find a nearby lakefront experience elsewhere.



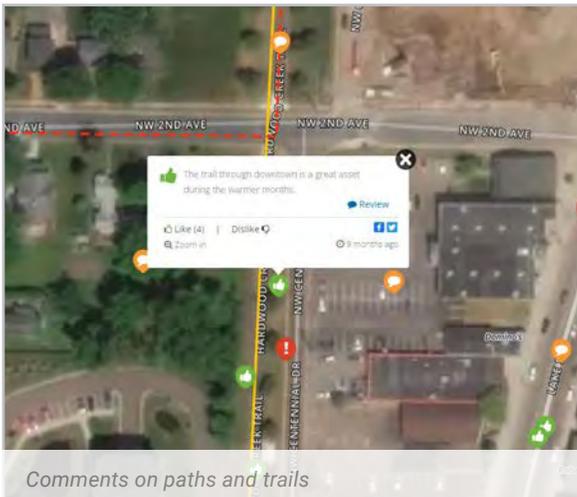
Comments about the downtown retail core



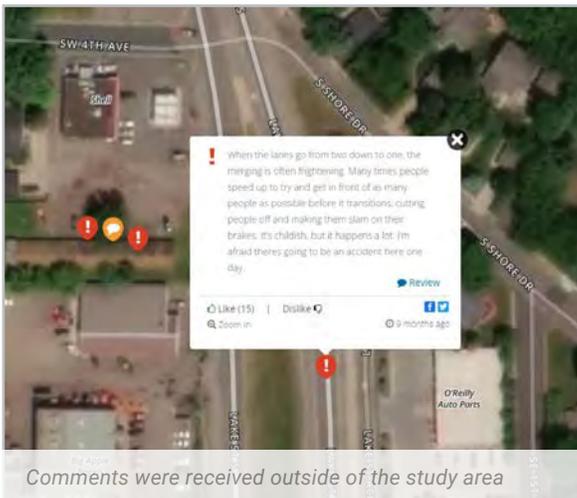
The interactive mapping tool and corresponding online survey



Comments on Lakeside Memorial Park



Comments on paths and trails



Comments were received outside of the study area

- The street is very uninviting and scary to pedestrians, lacks signage and wayfinding, bike racks, benches, and other comfort amenities. Crossings feel unsafe and are sparse. Many avoid the noise and bustle of the fast traffic and use the backside of businesses instead, leaving the street without life or a pedestrian presence.
- There needs to be more of a focus on accessibility (for wheelchairs, strollers, walkers, etc.)
- The roundabout is a huge safety concern for motorists and pedestrians.
- Participants want more branded, visual gateways into the downtown area that would give it a unique identity.

COMMENTS ABOUT LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK:

- The park updates made years ago have been seen as a huge improvement to the space, but people would like to see more programming that appeals to all age groups.
- Visitors love the playgrounds and beach area, many wish both were a larger portion of the park.
- Participants are definitely interested to see more events in the park, and all-season programming/activation/events.
- Having public boat docks is great in the summers, people like the idea of arriving by lake to grab a bite to eat downtown. They want a roll-up and roll-out atmosphere and connection with lake recreation/traffic. However, "Your boat Club" was controversial in the comments, and boat parking needs a better configuration and or/separate location to resolve parking conflicts.
- People want to see more walking and biking opportunities. They find the downtown retail district so scary to cross, it's a barrier to visiting the park.
- The park is small with limited paths, a path around the lake would be desired by many.
- The park is the only green space along main street, but there are plenty of vacant parcels that could be used for dog parks, pocket parks, etc.

COMMENTS ABOUT PATHS AND TRAILS:

- People view the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail adjacent to the downtown as a huge asset all year long.
- People would love to see more amenities along the trail and wayfinding that highlights the downtown area.
- Many areas of downtown need to be cleaner. This segment of the trail received many comments about trash and animal waste.



Favorite Places/Primary Destinations



Safety Concerns



Where Do You Enter Downtown?



Ideas/Suggestions for Downtown

This area is constantly full of canine feces. It's disgraceful and doesn't look good for anyone passing through. It's also not sanitary and dogs can carry diseases and it can get into the ground and infect many other dogs and even humans.

I'd love to see the store here connected to the bike path. It'd open the opportunity for the city or the business to operate bike rentals!

The Fireside and Glazing Memories businesses have done a fantastic job of breathing new life into this building! Our town is capable of having such a fantastic downtown area.

Personally wish there was a safe way (paved) to go for bike rides or walks around the lake!

Trying to leave North Shore Trail by taking a left on 61 is frustrating on a busy day or in the evenings.

The noise from vehicles and motorcycles exiting the roundabout really takes away from enjoying outdoor seating at the establishments near the roundabout.

Unfortunately the ice cream/sandwich shop did not survive but this area could be so cute updated with bistro tables out for people to gather. Ice cream? Wine bar? You'd have my business!

For this to be the center of the city, it is too dangerous for walkers, bikers. There is no where to walk or bike that is away from fast cars in this area except the path. We should have something along the lake and going into the downtown area as well where it would bring a lot more business.

Your Boat Club has brought many people to try out our beautiful lake and get to know our shops and restaurants which is good for our economy. The members and staff are required to clean up and all is tidy. I agree perhaps a new contract to help pay for additional parking may be something to consider when time to renegotiate.

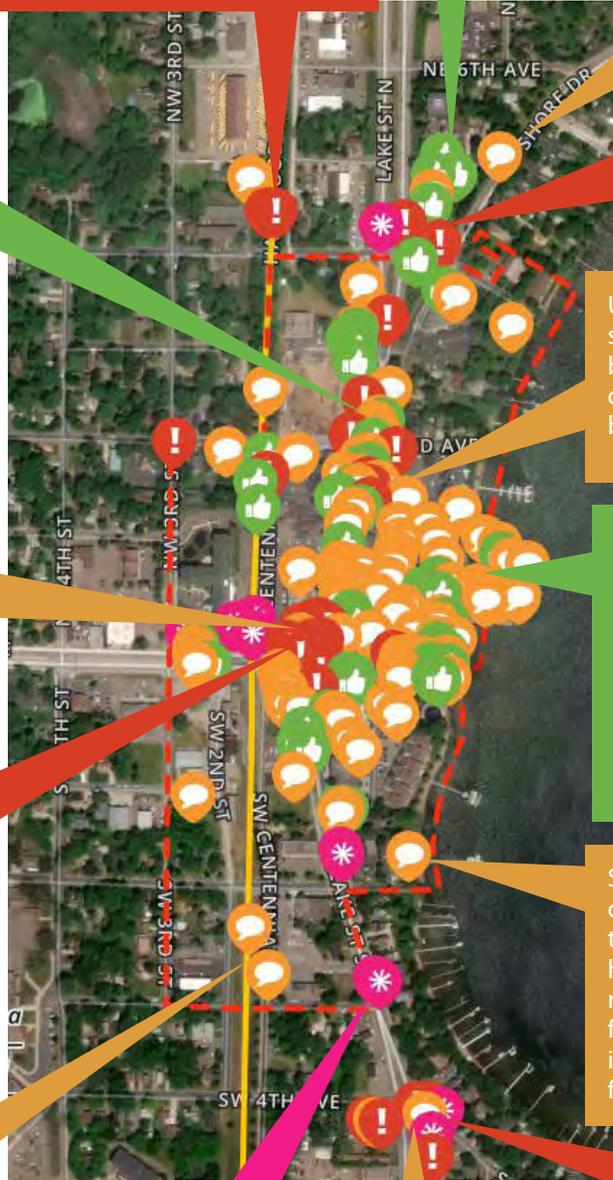
Love the decorative trees however, I think we should consider some edible fruit bearing trees.

I think many people from town enter from the south. The approach from this direction is pleasant until the roundabout, but north of that it leaves much to be desired.

Snowmobiles. There is a missed opportunity that there is not a dedicated trail providing access to the lake. We have an amazing major dedicated trail running through town bringing people from hundreds of miles, but it is almost impossible for anyone to stop and frequent dining establishments.

This should be considered the entrance area despite it not being in your dotted line area. Also, this is a dangerous spot.

While this specific area is outside the corridor presented, it is certainly a major entrance point to the downtown district and one could argue that the corridor in this direction should be considered and constructed similar to downtown.





Slides from the workshop's results presentation

IN-PERSON AND ONLINE VISION WORKSHOP

An in-person workshop was held at Forest Lake City Hall at the end of September, 2021. The event was attended by 36 in-person participants and 6 online attendees. After a brief project introduction and presentation, participants were asked to form groups and discuss current and hoped-for motivators that attract locals and visitors to visit Downtown Forest Lake, and determine the audience that future investment in the downtown should strive to attract.

The audience and motivators exercises prompted dozens of in-depth conversations that helped identify who is currently visiting the downtown area, who and what is missing, and narrowed the groups' selections down to the top five most important among all attendees.

The information gathered was then used to produce a vision statement and guiding principles that will act as a guide for future investments and changes within the study area, giving the City a community-founded direction for the future of Downtown Forest Lake.



Sharing ideas at the September 2021 Vision Workshop



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

A series of focus groups and stakeholder interviews were held throughout the length of the project, creating a space where owners of small local local and franchise businesses, property owners, chamber members, and Forest Lake Association representatives could meet with City staff and the consulting team to discuss current issues and concerns surrounding the identified study area. These events were attended by 27 downtown stakeholders, 16 downtown business owners, and 5 downtown property owners.

A summary of the main topic areas discussed in these sessions are located below. *See the report appendix for full meeting minutes.*

COMMENTS ABOUT PARKING:

- Parking is downtown's greatest challenge.
- Some perceive there isn't enough.
- Some believe the parking lot next to Memorial Park should be converted to expanded parkland.
- If you look at an aerial photo of downtown, most of it is parking lot.
- Customers sometimes can't find place to park.
- Structured parking could be an option – look to Edina 50th & France as model.
- No one can find place to park on Tuesday nights (Arts in the Park).
- Signage about the other two boat launches might reduce parking conflicts at downtown launch.
- The City should consider purchase of land elsewhere to reduce traffic at downtown boat launch.

COMMENTS ABOUT PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY:

- The shopping circuit (reason/ability to stroll through downtown) is broken.
- Downtown is not pedestrian-friendly and that fact is a major barrier to downtown success.
- Crossing Hwy 61 within the downtown district is a hazardous venture.
- Roundabout doesn't work as a pedestrian-friendly crossing location.
- Roundabout at the high school has good pedestrian safety measures, could be a model.

COMMENTS ABOUT AREA CHARACTER:

- Downtown looks like a mess – a hodgepodge of building styles and not well invested/cared for.
- The City doing a downtown plan signals positive change because the city is trying to establish a vision.
- There used to be more of a small-town atmosphere.
- 61 has gotten way worse – more traffic, less downtown character.
- Landscape care is lacking, especially on vacant properties.

COMMENTS ABOUT BUSINESS CLIMATE:

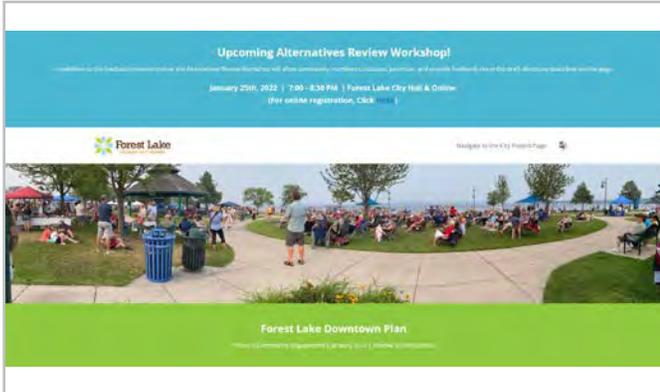
- Businesses facing the lake are not well supported by pedestrian amenities and public realm improvements.
- There is very little reason for shoppers to come downtown.
- Highway 61 is not a business-friendly street.
- Forest Lake has not been a business-friendly local government.
 - More transparency needed
 - More communication needed
 - More participation of city leadership in the business community needed
 - People worry about repercussions of voicing concerns about local government

COMMENTS ABOUT ACTIVATION:

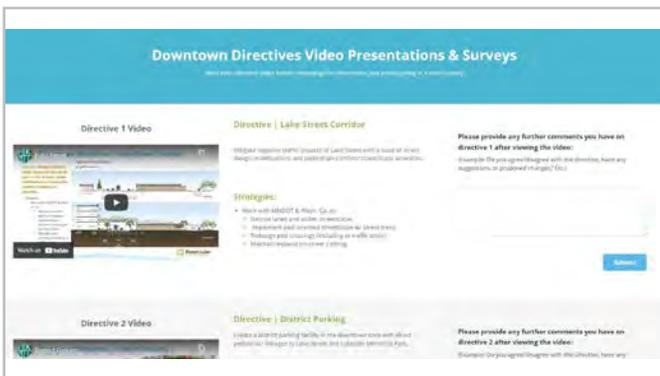
- Downtown businesses are told they cannot participate in Arts in the Park because they are not arts & crafts makers/retailers.
- As a way to engage, downtown businesses may be willing to sponsor Arts in the Park.
- More winter events are needed.
- Downtown businesses are unsure how snowmobiling fits into the retailing picture in Forest Lake.
- Skating rink would be a hit – maybe it could be groomed on the lake for space consideration.
- Need added attractions to draw people downtown in winter.
- Downtown access to/from Heartland Trail needs to be greatly improved.

STEP 2: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES

Phase 2 community engagement efforts focused on collecting feedback on eleven directives for Downtown by identifying issues and opportunities based on the existing conditions analysis. These findings were then used to develop and study alternative scenarios that might provide solutions to big concerns. Draft Downtown Framework and Downtown Plan diagrams were presented as a part of the workshop to illustrate how each of the directives could be applied to the Downtown District and form the basis for a successful Downtown Plan.



Participants were notified of and able to register for the upcoming in-person workshop via the online website.



Visitors to the site could be walked through each directive with a voiced-over video from the design team.

JANUARY 2022 | ALTERNATIVES REVIEW, PROJECT DIRECTIVES

Both an online discussion and in-person workshop at City Hall were held to gather feedback from the community on the directives and draft diagrams. The in-person event was attended by (x) individuals, and (x) more joined the online discussion. Both were led through a detailed presentation with intermittent Q&A, and a large group discussion at the end to address any further concerns. A Social Pinpoint project landing page was launched shortly before the alternatives review workshop to give those who were planning to attend a chance to review content beforehand, as well as to provide a resource for those who were unable to attend either meeting.

Short videos voiced-over by the design team were uploaded to the site to walk visitors through the details of each directive, and the draft plan diagrams were uploaded to the site as downloadable links for at home printing. Each of the directives was accompanied by an open survey for comments, and a larger general comments box was provided for additional or non-specific thoughts. A summary of these comments, as well as the feedback collected from the public and online workshops, can be viewed on the following pages. To see all comments collected, please visit the appendix.

PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The numbers below capture total activity on the Phase II Social Pinpoint site:

Total Visits
(Total number of visits to the site)

517

Unique Users
(Number of individual IP addresses to visit the site)

215

Survey Responses
(Number of unique individuals to engage with the site surveys)

66

GENERAL COMMENTS SUMMARY

- The roundabout seems to cause more problems than it solves for Lake Street. Need better traffic calming measures.
- Need to find a balance between bringing more people to the area and causing congestion during peak times
- The Downtown Framework and Plan are big steps in the right direction.
- The downtown needs to be attractive to all generations and age groups.
- Concerns about adding more parking
- Concerns about adding more housing
- More assistance and support to keep local businesses thriving and afloat



DOWNTOWN DIRECTIVES COMMENTS SUMMARY:

Below is a list of comments received from the online project portal for each of the directive video presentations.



LAKE STREET CORRIDOR

- I like what I hear and see. This is definitely going in the right direction.
- Will trees slow down the commuting traffic? There are studies that imply that trees close to the road slow down residential traffic, but I don't see anything on commercial traffic being slowed due to trees.
- I would agree with making the area pedestrian-friendly. As one who lives right in this zone, I find the current setting uncomfortable and unfriendly. The shade from trees will go along way to help that. I would also suggest slower traffic speeds which will help with safety and noise.
- I think this is a good idea. I have crossed at the walkway at the traffic circle and not everyone stops.
- The pedestrian crossings at the roundabout are DANGEROUS! As you are coming around the circle you can't see anyone crossing there.

P

DISTRICT PARKING

- I assume this means a parking structure, and if so, it must be attractive and be buffered by green space to soften the impact on the area. Also, a strong downtown core must be a blend of commercial and residential facilities. Strong downtowns must have a strong residential component. More places like Lighthouse Lofts are imperative. I love being able to walk to restaurants and shopping. Office space may be a thing of the past with remote working. Shared offices, mixed with residential and commercial may be what is needed. Also, auto charging stations must be a part of this plan.
- I'd want to know more about how much parking might be needed under different scenarios. Things like: summer vs. winter, weekends vs. weekdays, and parking needed under different commercial build-out scenarios.
- No skyway!! Waste of funds.
- Will the skyway be locked after a certain time at night? If you reduce the parking requirement for the zoning code, you adjust it for the entire city of Forest Lake located in that Commercial Zone. Does this have a negative impact on future growth with limited parking being built for businesses? Or do you plan to create a new zoning code and have to reconstruct or update every code for the city?
- Yes. Absolutely vital for the downtown.



CENTENNIAL DRIVE

- I drive Centennial every day. It is boring. It is not welcoming. I support this directive. Realistically I don't see how it can be narrowed any further. I don't support parallel parking on the trail side. That green space is important. I do support both green space and sidewalk and lighting on the business side. Wayfinding signage is an excellent idea. Also, more benches on both sides in the green spaces. Pedestrians want to be able to stroll and sit and right now the area has only one bench over on the trail.
- That street is too narrow to begin with! Especially right off of Broadway.
- This seems like it has potential. In some ways it is suggesting turning Centennial Drive into a secondary "main street." Are businesses willing to embrace this concept and create attractive entrances facing Centennial Drive? Have you also considered doing something similar with traffic to what Lindstrom has done, splitting Highway 61 as it passes through this corridor?
- Will this street continue to be utilized as a 'short cut' to avoid the roundabout on Lake Street and Broadway? Will it increase thru traffic? What is the purpose? Is it to pull into new parking lots? Or is it to circumvent the cluster at the roundabout?



RETAIL LOOP

- Excellent! However, retailing is best served on the first floor of a residential building. This model is used extensively in Europe and is now also being pushed in Minneapolis. You need people living in a downtown area to give it viability. And, again you need to add more benches.
- Fully agree and support this idea. Stillwater is a prime example of what to strive for. At the same time, DT Stillwater has been dramatically changed (improved) with traffic volume shifted to the new bridge across the St. Croix river. What if Centennial Drive became Highway 61 as it passes through DT Forest Lake? That would allow what is now Lake Street to be completely transformed into a pedestrian and retail oasis.
- I agree with the strategy of Directive 4. This aspect of Forest Lake needs to be reclaimed. As a Forest Lake resident and small business owner I would welcome the opportunity to move my business closer to home. I have hesitated to do so and have even started looking at downtown White Bear Lake as a new location once my lease is up. The condos, apartments and generic office buildings have done more to separate the community then bring it together.
- I think much of downtown needs to be services such as accountants, law firms etc. I don't think it can be exclusive retail any more.
- Nothing is mentioned of the buildings that have these store front gaps being demolished, or if the owners will be responsible for the new unanimous/continuous store fronts. I believe a lot of people would like to see the intended plans to envision the sight-line and feel of downtown. Is there a rendering available to view?
- Parking is a concern. Narrowing the street would only make things more dangerous to those getting out of vehicles.



DOWNTOWN GREENWAY LOOP

- I feel Directive 5 emphasizes a core problem/issue - Highway 61 is and will continue to be the barrier to so many possibilities. I think about what could be done if Lake Street was "gone" in this corridor. Shifting the highway 61 traffic to the west.... Expensive and wild idea - elevate highway 61 traffic as it passes through DT. That opens up tons of possibilities for development.
- Prioritize fixing some roads around the city that are not downtown first. North Shore Trail might wash into the lake before you figure out how to fund this.
- Wonderful idea, but not enough. The park is too small to begin with and needs to incorporate coffee shops or gathering space along the lake. The residential units between the current park and the funeral home need to be removed and the park should be further developed. The lake is the selling point for Forest Lake but is totally not being utilized. Yes, there will be screams. But for the good of the whole, it needs to happen. Bikers coming down the trail could be encouraged to stop and take a break, have lunch, or just sit and look at the lake. Note some of the developments on the Greenway Trail.



LAKE RECREATION

- A dedicated snowmobile access would be welcome.
- Love the idea of having winter recreation available here!
- Love this idea!! Year round activities is a must for community engagement.
- This directive is essential and the proposals excite me a lot. These types of things are imperative but also point out that the park shoreline MUST be expanded. This directive is exciting.
- Yes! More transient boat slips are necessary if you want boaters to come into the area to dine or shop. Thank you for thinking of this component. Again, consider the cost of bio-engineering as well.





TRAIL INVITATION

- Another park for our parks and rec to maintain. Will the cost of this upkeep be supported by eliminating another park in Forest Lake? Who monitors the building? Will bikers really stop to play games and bring a large amount of revenue to downtown? I have difficulty understanding the feasibility and likelihood of this directive to generate enough revenue to pay for itself.
- Excellent! Excellent! Excellent! I live in the Light House Apartments and my windows overlook the trail. Many users already use the 2ndAve/Trail green space to stop and rest because there is a table there with benches. This proposal is excellent!
- Good - I think about how the towns along the Root River Trail connect to and connect to the bike trail.
- Splash pad possible?
- Yes, the trail needs a reasonable connection to the park plus signage to encourage its use.



SOCIAL SIDEWALK NETWORK

- 100% agree with Directive 8.
- A waste of funds. The sidewalks are already adequate.
- I have noticed worn areas in the grass where pedestrians walk in this area, so yes, the sidewalks are warranted. Remember to add this into the cost of snow removal budget calculations.
- Wonderful idea. The trail is wonderful but it is also a visual and psychological barrier that keeps people from thinking about crossing it. In addition, there are no neighborhood sidewalks. If I want to walk to Grillium on a sidewalk, I have to go up to Broadway and then over. To go through the neighborhood I have to walk in the street. Also, beating this drum again, put benches for resting.



VIEWSHED TO THE LAKE

- I have little doubt that lots of people traveling through DT Forest Lake on Lake St. can hardly see or even notice the lake.
- Not sure how it would be done, but an excellent idea.
- We have a lot of issues with drivers at this roundabout already, so another distraction (oh look! the lake!) is a good thought on paper, but reality is that drivers will be distracted and they all pretty much can't figure out how round-a-bouts work now.



WAYFINDING

- Absolutely. Plus it will not cost so much.
- Great idea! This can be a low cost, efficient way to direct people to our local businesses.
- This is great stuff. Create a brand, and help visitors and users find and explore what they want- need. Also incorporate historical displays with information - tell the story of Forest Lake.
- Wonderful!



ACTIVATION

- Absolutely essential! Again, though, increasing the population density becomes important. But events will do a great deal to increase pedestrian traffic. Great ideas!
- Beautiful ideas! I can even see yoga in the park, or meditation in the park. The art and music ideas are wonderful and I always enjoy any craft events, so keep those coming. Great ideas, Forest Lake.
- The right idea - ongoing activities and events to draw people to the area. A thought - is there a way to incorporate a dog park into this overall project? Having one would draw people year-round.

Facilitator All changes saved!

3 Share

PLACE STICKERS	DIRECTIVE	DESCRIPTION	STRATEGIES	COMMENTS
	DIRECTIVE: LAKE STREET CORRIDOR	Mitigate negative traffic impacts of Lake Street with a suite of street design modifications and pedestrian comfort streetscape amenities.	-Work with MNEDT & local CO to improve safety and reduce streetscape requirements and consider alternative street treatments. -Design and coverage including all traffic codes. -Maintain reserved on-street parking.	
	DIRECTIVE: DISTRICT PARKING	Create a district parking facility in the downtown core with direct pedestrian linkages to Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park.	-As part of broader redevelopment, construct structured, district parking in rear yard of downtown core with lots of public green space. -Consider parking for delivery areas (use to be NE quad). -Consider parking for delivery areas (use to be NE quad). -Adjust zoning code to reduce parking requirement.	
	DIRECTIVE: CENTENNIAL DRIVE	Redesign Centennial Drive as a strategically important access route to parking and businesses.	-Narrow the street to create livable while maintaining two-way traffic. -Implement streetscape improvements including lighting and a network on the business side. -Add on-street, parallel parking on full Lake to create local business. -Add landscaping along all north side strip.	
	DIRECTIVE: RETAIL LOOP (BROADWAY - 2ND NW)	Tighten the land use pattern between Broadway Avenue and 2nd Avenue NW to establish continuous retail storefronts on both sides of Lake Street.	-Make minor adjustments to zoning code to support flexibility at this project. -Encourage financial incentives to establish continuous retail storefronts.	
	DIRECTIVE: DOWNTOWN GREENWAY LOOP	Integrate Lakeside Memorial Park into the downtown greenway pedestrian circuit.	-Establish amenity-rich pedestrian greenway corridor on west end of Lakeside Memorial Park that loops back to Lake Street. -Make any other pedestrian improvements to the pedestrian throughway within the park.	
	DIRECTIVE: LAKE RECREATION (Visiting Spider)	Expand recreational programming in all spaces at the Lake 1 downtown shoreline.	-Increase the number and enhance the quality of transient boat slips. -Establish shore launch/park area for canoe/kayak launch and water programming such as tramadol, park, hockey, line dance, aerial stunts, coal, temporary pop ups and theater or community lake events on 2nd Ave SW. -Enhance shoreline aesthetics and improve assistance to be action through best engineering strategies.	
	DIRECTIVE: TRAIL INVITATION	Establish an inviting gateway experience into downtown from the Hardwood Creek Trail.	-Create a trail way-side park on the 3rd Avenue SW alignment between Lake Street and Centennial Drive (could include bike racks, water, service station, trash, bicycle repair, etc.) -Improve signage. -Create a trail way-side park on the 3rd Avenue SW alignment between Lake Street and Centennial Drive (could include bike racks, water, service station, trash, bicycle repair, etc.) -Improve signage. -Wayfinding & information links.	
	DIRECTIVE: SOCIAL SIDEWALK NETWORK	Establish a door-to-door sidewalk network designed as "local" sidewalks through the surrounding neighborhood with direct connections into downtown.	-Establish sidewalk along the lake-to-lake and local sidewalk connections. -Coordinate sidewalk improvements within the existing walking loop of downtown.	
	DIRECTIVE: VIEWSHED TO THE LAKE	Open the viewshed to Lake 1 from the Broadway Avenue / Lake Street intersection.	-Consider alternative design solutions such as set back lighting for Broadway Avenue viewsheds that allow view to see beyond it to Lake 1. -Consider view shed markers in a place that does not obscure the view to Lake 1 from Broadway Avenue. -Analyze viewshed impacts in future landscaping decisions.	
	DIRECTIVE: WAYFINDING	Establish district wayfinding to direct visitors to popular attractions and district parking.	-Conduct a downtown branding process. -Implement a district-wide wayfinding signage strategy that incorporates branding strategy.	
	DIRECTIVE: ACTIVATION	In addition to larger and more prominent events, expand routine / regular downtown happenings.	-Collaborate with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to develop every day/regular downtown events, events and happenings. -Art -Festivals -Crafts -Shows -Recreation	

Framework

Online participants used an interactive tool called Mural to vote on their top 5 priority directives from the complete list, and leave comments on the Framework Diagram and Downtown Plan.



STEP 3: CONVERGING ON A PREFERRED PLAN

The final stage of community engagement is being conducted along with distribution of this draft plan. At the conclusion of the draft plan public comment period, feedback will be tallied and included with the final plan presented to the City Council for adoption.



The information gathered was used to produce a vision statement and guiding principles that will act as a guide for future investments within the study area, resulting in a community-founded direction for the future of Downtown Forest Lake.





OVERVIEW

The vision for Downtown Forest Lake was built on an engagement process that involved nearly 700 participants. Truly a community-grounded endeavor, people came together to examine who Downtown aims to serve, and how various audiences want to experience it.

VISION

The Vision Statement for Downtown Forest Lake is:

“TO CREATE A DISTRICT WELCOMING TO A BROAD AUDIENCE OF BUSINESSES, VISITORS, AND NEIGHBORS, AND A VIBRANT PLACE WITH DISTINCTIVE AND MEMORABLE WAYS TO EXPERIENCE IT, INCLUDING DINING, SOCIALIZING, RECREATING, SHOPPING, AND LIVING LIFE.”

The vision statement was adopted by Forest Lake City Council on 10/11/2021.

AUDIENCES

Care was taken to identify the variety of audiences that Downtown serves and to categorize them in such a way as to determine their needs. The audience profiles detailed on the following pages were developed as part of the visioning exercise, in which participants selected their top five. Ultimately, businesses, visitors, and neighbors were broadly incorporated into the final vision. Together, they provide a fascinating look into the variety of audiences who utilize Downtown.



Participants in the vision workshop



Participants in the vision workshop

CUSTOMER

Description:

A customer visits downtown to fulfil a need for goods or services. Customers are the lifeline of a downtown and tell others about their experience. Customers take in a broad and complex set of inputs to determine whether what they buy in addition to what they experience in the process of buying aligns with their value judgement. Customers visiting a shopping “district” tend to place more value on the experience outside the store than other types of destinations.

DINER

Description:

A diner seeks food and drink. With that desire, they carry a broad range of connected interests in speed, socialization, quality, uniqueness, and experience. Parking convenience and/or sidewalk connectedness are usually paramount values. Options within a district is usually important to the diner, especially for return visits.

BOATER

Description:

One of the Downtown Forest Lake’s greatest asset is its lake front. Boaters may be permanent or seasonal lakeside dwellers, seasonal fisherman, recreation-seekers, or even nature enthusiasts, but they all have the potential to turn into other subcategories of visitors if the downtown area has enough to offer.

FOODIE

Description:

A foodie is an individual who will travel far and wide for a delicacy and the experience and atmosphere that is attached to food or drink. These visitors mostly come to an area with the intention of supporting restaurants, breweries, bakeries, distilleries, ice cream parlours, etc. for a taste of local flavor. Often influenced by or influencers of social media, these guests can have a powerful impact on the local economy and the well-being of locally owned or travelling businesses (i.e. food trucks).

SHORT-TERM RENTER

Description:

Short-term renters are individuals who may be passing through an area for means of short-term employment or renting as a way to vacation and explore an area (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO). These visitors have selected an area for a short time can provide economic benefits to a downtown area, they can be future return visitors, and influence the visits of others based on their experience.

FAMILY GUEST

Description:

A family guest in a visitor who may be long-term or short-term, often staying with a permanent resident in the area but may use hospitality services. If an area has great spaces for hosting family reunions, baby showers, birthday parties, etc., it is more prone to attracting these types of guests. Depending on how many positive experiences this type of guest has, having family in the area may influence their decision to stay.

PROSPECTIVE RESIDENT

Description:

A prospective resident may use local real estate services to attain a permanent or seasonal property within the area. They may have already used short-term rental services in the past to experience the downtown, frequent retailers and restaurants, or attend events. Prospective residents are often a good sign that an area or downtown has a draw, enough balance of employment and character to attract a desire to live in the area. Any of the other subcategories may eventually fall into this one.

Intentional Visitor

AUDIENCE SUB-CATEGORIES:

SHOPPER

Description:

A shopper visits the downtown with the purpose of supporting a retailer. Whether they are running daily errands or an out-of-town guest antiquing, they are vital to supporting a small-town economy. Not all shoppers leave with the intended purchase, and some may find more than they were looking for, prompting a future visit.

RECREATION-SEEKER

Description:

A recreation-seeker is an individual or group who values uniqueness and visits an area for purpose of experiencing an often specific feature. From beach-goers, to regional trail cyclists, boaters, fisherman, and even photographers, a downtown that offers a variety of options or rentals and uses its natural resource assets to attract tourism does well in this category. These visitors often turn into customers of other means and help support the local economy and retailers around the downtown area. They are often looking to make an experience and memory out of their visit.



BRICK & MORTAR RETAILER

Description:

A brick and mortar retailer has a shop in downtown. They value the things their customers value – convenient parking, safety and security and inviting atmosphere. They want to be part of a robust business district because their business success is, to some degree, dependent on the district's climate. Positive working relationships and mutual values with City government reduce their stress.

OFFICE BUSINESS

Description:

An office business operates a non-retail company in downtown. Customers or clients may periodically visit their office but customer traffic is not a large part of their location decision. They want their location to reflect their values, to be convenient to both their homes and their client universe and for their property expenses to be affordable. They value convenient parking, a safe environment and access to goods and services important to their lifestyles and businesses.

EMPLOYEE

Description:

An employee works downtown. Working in a district with walkable convenience or gift shopping as well as dining options are all bonuses to their day. They would like some peaceful green space to visit on breaks and over lunch. As surrounding and in-district pedestrian and bike facilities improve, they may have the opportunity to ditch the car for their commute but usually, safe, secure and convenient parking is very important.

HOSPITALITY BUSINESS

Description:

The hospitality business serves dining, meeting events and overnight stay. Quality of the district's environment and fun close-by activities are paramount to location. Venues will cause peak parking demands that, if not well strategized, may cause conflicts with district retailers. Venues may bring visitors to the district that would otherwise not experience downtown so good impressions will lead to return visits. With dining, return visits are critical. They often employ significant numbers making safe, convenient employee parking strategies important.



MAKER/ARTIST

Description:

A maker or artist may also fall into a category of retailer and/or neighbor but in this case, they are actually creating and making their wares in downtown. They may have special space and equipment needs for manufacture, assembly and display. The activity of things being made in public view can contribute to the excitement of the downtown district (think of the North House Folk School in Grand Marais).

Business Interest

AUDIENCE SUB-CATEGORIES:

POP-UP RETAILER

Description:

The pop-up retailer takes short-term advantage of an unused building or vacant lot to merchandise and sell retail wares. They often rely on their retail activity itself along with social media rather than traditional advertising to draw customers. Pop-up retailers can contribute to district excitement by revolving in new retail energy and they sometimes have a following that will find them wherever they "pop up". Flexible and fast permit procedures are important to them.

EVENT ORGANIZER

Description:

An event organizer coordinates activities or events in downtown. They sometimes have intense permit needs with city government. Their events will cause peak parking demands that, if not well strategized, may cause conflicts with district retailers. They may bring visitors to the district that would otherwise not experience downtown so good impressions will lead to return visits.

INVESTOR

Description:

An investor believes financial returns of the money they put in will outweigh the costs + risks of a capital investment in real estate or business. They have a vested interest in district success. As a result, investors are often attracted and emboldened by surrounding investments being made in private or public properties.

LIVE-IN

Description:

A live-in neighbor lives within the downtown district. This group values places to socialize, exercise, and grab good food. They demand secure, proximate parking for themselves and convenient parking for their guests. They want quietude through the evenings. They love showing off their downtown to guests and bumping into friends. The lake made them consider living in downtown but the quality of the public realm and walking-distance businesses that meet their daily needs will keep them there.



BIKE-IN

Description:

A bike-in neighbor lives within a ten-minute casual ride of the downtown district. They share value and needs with walk-in neighbors with the primary additions of an accommodating street network (inherently quiet traffic or dedicated lanes/trails) all the way to the downtown core and bike services (repair, secure storage) in multiple, strategic locations throughout downtown.

WALK-IN

Description:

A walk-in neighbor lives within a convenient, ten-minute walk of the downtown district. They must have continuous, social sidewalks from their front door to the downtown core in order to become and remain a loyal constituent. This is especially important to child and elderly caregivers. Downtown is part of their routine walking network for exercise, socialization, recreation, dining and shopping. Downtown needs regular happenings and seasonal surprise to keep their walks interesting. Walkers beget walkers so if they have the infrastructure they need, numbers will grow, social bonds will strengthen and, over time, walking-distance neighborhoods will care for downtown as their own.

Neighbor AUDIENCE SUB-CATEGORIES:

DRIVE-IN

Description:

A drive-in neighbor lives outside of a ten minute casual bike ride or walk, and outside of the downtown district. This group places value on convenience, easy parking, and clear wayfinding. They moved outside of the downtown area for proximity to major highways, larger lots, or larger homes, but love to visit the downtown when events are happening, to get a bite to eat, or take a stroll in the park near the lake. Downtown needs regular events, ample parking, and clear signage to make their trips enjoyable.

DAILY COMMUTER

Description:

The daily commuter passes through downtown by auto or bike but needs compelling reasons to stop. Unless downtown is convenient, interesting, dynamic and “peopled” it is only an inconvenience to their commute – something to get through as quickly as possible. If downtown provides convenience retail, they may stop for essentials. If downtown intrigues them, they will come for a visit with friends and family to explore more. If they like downtown enough, they may start envisioning themselves living or working here.



PERIODIC DRIVE-THRU

Description:

The periodic drive-through visitor might use downtown as a route to the cabin or to visit relatives. They have more time-flexibility than the commuter but similar needs and interests. Like the commuter, if downtown offers convenience retail, they may make a quick stop for essentials. If downtown intrigues them, they will come for a visit with friends and family to explore more. If they like downtown enough, they may start envisioning themselves living or working here.

RECREATIONAL TRAIL USER

Description:

The recreational trail user is on Hardwood Creek Regional Trail and needs compelling reasons and inviting infrastructure to be drawn into downtown. They will be in search of food or service or may just want to explore a new place. They need wayfinding, inviting routes into downtown from the trail and secure lockup facilities once they arrive. If they like what they experience, they'll be back with friends and family.

Pass-through Visitor

AUDIENCE SUB-CATEGORIES:

REGIONAL EXPLORER

Description:

The regional explorer is intentional about finding and visiting places that are unique, cool, or quirky. They want to know the region in which they live and will spend their free time visiting new places. They will return to their favorites over and over but making it to this category means a places is both interesting and accommodating of visitor needs. If they like downtown enough, they may start envisioning themselves living, working or starting a business here.





DIRECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter puts pen to paper to show what the vision for Downtown Forest Lake might look like in plan, and details a series of directives identifying future projects that will help achieve the over-arching goals for the downtown district. Each directive is grounded in findings from the community engagement and analysis, and includes strategies that can be applied to existing conditions to accomplish the desired end result.

DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Downtown Plan graphic on the following page illustrates the suggested elements that work to transform and activate downtown Forest Lake. Key features include:

- Enhanced streetscape along Lake Street
- Implementation of a district parking approach
- An improved pedestrian route between Lake Street and Forest Lake
- A branded retail loop along Lake Street between Broadway and 2nd
- Coherent wayfinding throughout the downtown district
- A social sidewalk network to support pedestrians
- A new trail wayside for the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail
- Improved views to the lake and relocation of the beach house
- Expanded opportunities for lake recreation: more transient docks, a new bandshell to replace the boat ramp, and an ice oval and rinks on the lake
- A new Lakeside Parkway to unify circulation along Lakeside Memorial Park
- Streetscape improvements to Centennial Drive
- Enhanced gateway features at the Broadway and Lake roundabout
- Improved neighborhood connections
- A new Veteran's Memorial at Lakeside Memorial Park
- Shoreline enhancements along Forest Lake
- Better snowmobile access between the Hardwood Creek Trail and the lake



Speed skating on Forest Lake's proposed oval



Street-oriented dining with views of the lake



- Downtown Loop Trail**
- Lake Street Skyway**
- Linear Retail on Lake Street**
- Downtown Loop Trail**
- District Parking Structure**
-Additional options 1, 2, and 3
-100-200 stalls for the district
- Centennial Drive Streetscape Improvements**
- Gateway Landscaping**
- Relocated Beach House/ Warming House Options**
- Redevelopment Opportunity**
- Neighborhood Trail Connector**
-Establish sidewalk network on both sides of streets leading to/from downtown
- Trail Wayside**

- Lakeside Parkway**
-Boulevard trees
-Angled parking
-Sidewalks
- Paseo**
- Performance Space**
- Bandshell**
- Transient Boat Slips**
- Boat Club Docks**
- Fishing Pier / Overlook**
- Alt. Playground Location**
- Veteran's Memorial Canoe / Kayak Launch and Secure Tie-Up**
- Beach**
- Winter Recreation**
- Downtown Loop Trail**
- Pedestrian Activated Crossing**
- Lake Street Streetscape**

FIGURE 1.1 FOREST LAKE DOWNTOWN PLAN



DOWNTOWN DIRECTIVES

The following pages detail the directives that have been identified for the Forest Lake Downtown Plan.

LAKE STREET CORRIDOR

FINDING:

Because traffic noise, volume, and speed on Lake Street are not mitigated with pedestrian comforts and amenities, pedestrians avoid the corridor and over time, so have the types of retailers that seek pedestrian districts in which to locate.

DIRECTIVE:

Mitigate negative traffic impacts of Lake Street with a suite of street design modifications and pedestrian comfort/ streetscape amenities.

STRATEGIES:

Work with MNDOT and Washington County to:

- Narrow lanes and widen streetscape.
- Implement a ped-oriented streetscape w/ street trees.
- Redesign ped crossings (including at traffic circle).
- Maintain/expand on-street parking.

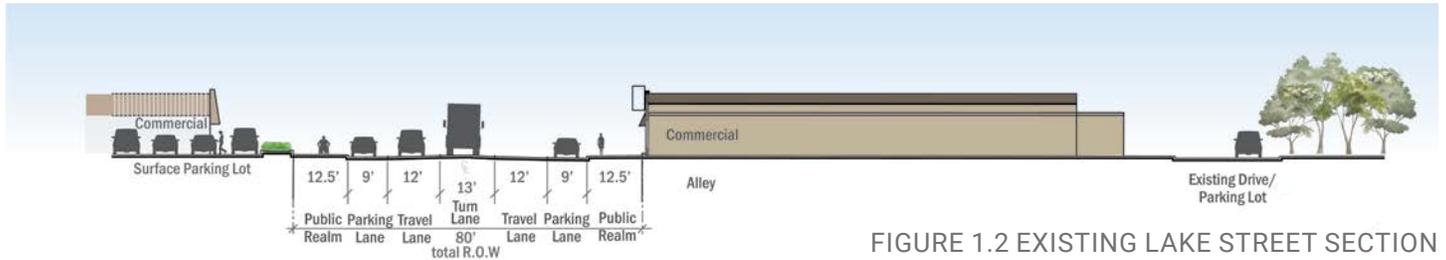


FIGURE 1.2 EXISTING LAKE STREET SECTION

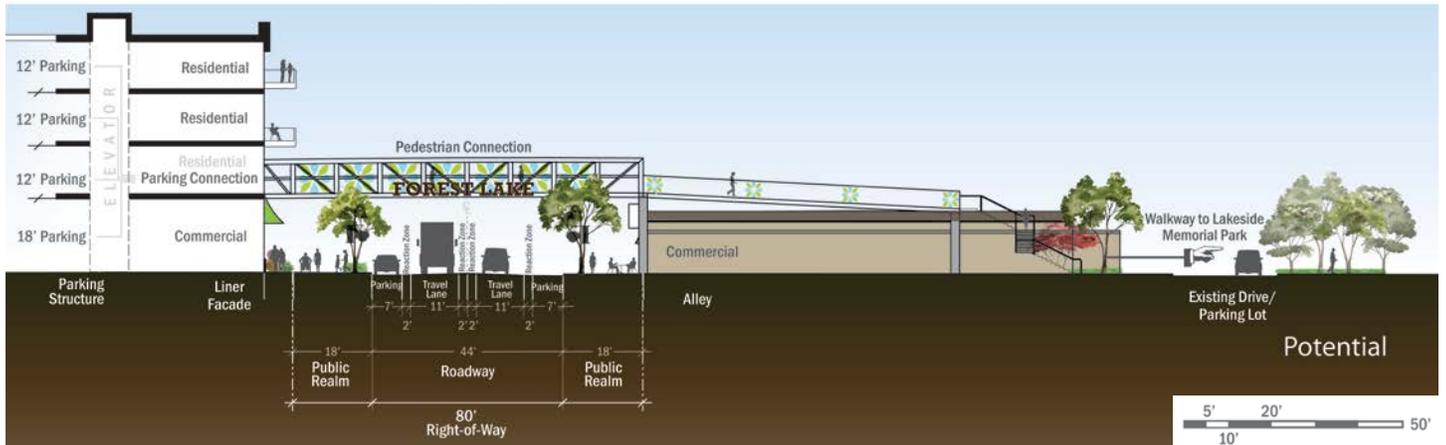


FIGURE 1.3 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION, OPTION 1 (SHOWING IMPROVED LAKE STREET STREETScape)

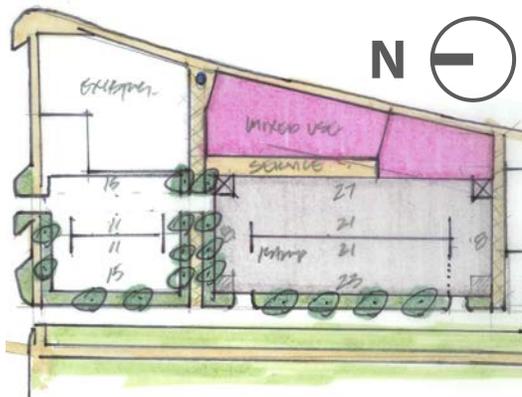


FIGURE 1.4 DISTRICT PARKING PLAN, OPTION 1

DISTRICT PARKING

FINDING:

Three of the four downtown quadrants are at least slightly shy of adequate parking volume. Because pedestrians avoid crossing Lake Street and because Lakeside Memorial Park combined with surrounding retail and food destinations create the largest peak demand, parking in that quadrant is at a premium and a limiting factor in downtown carrying capacity; however, additional parking in that quadrant is not feasible.

DIRECTIVE:

Create a district parking facility in the downtown core with direct pedestrian linkages to Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park.

STRATEGIES:

- As part of broader redevelopment, construct structured, district parking in the NW quad of the downtown core with a liner of retail/commercial/housing along Lake Street.
- Connect parking via skyway across Lake St. to the NE quadrant of downtown
- Conduct a parking study (preliminarily finding of additional 200–300 stalls needed).
- Adjust zoning code to reduce parking requirements.

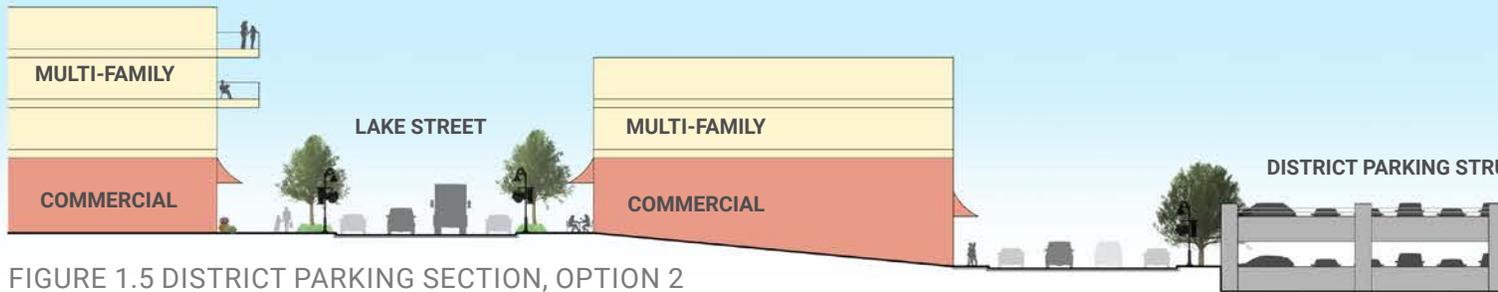


FIGURE 1.5 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION, OPTION 2

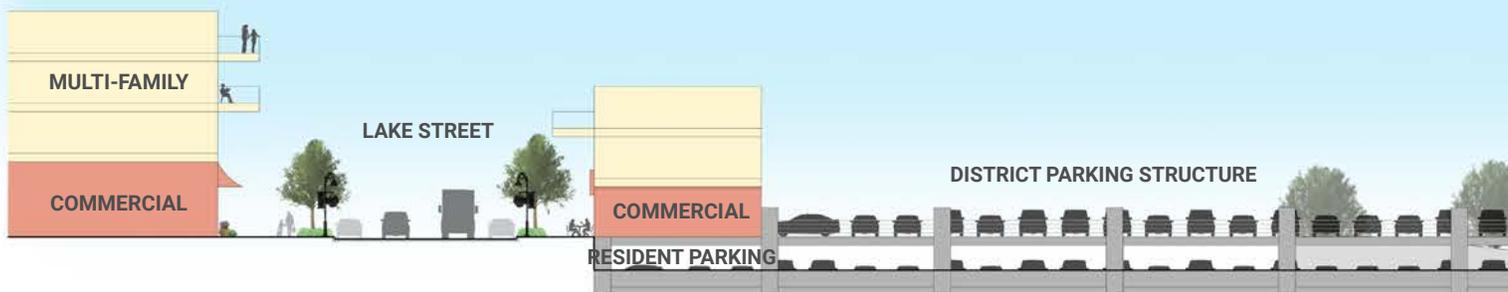


FIGURE 1.6 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION OPTION, 3

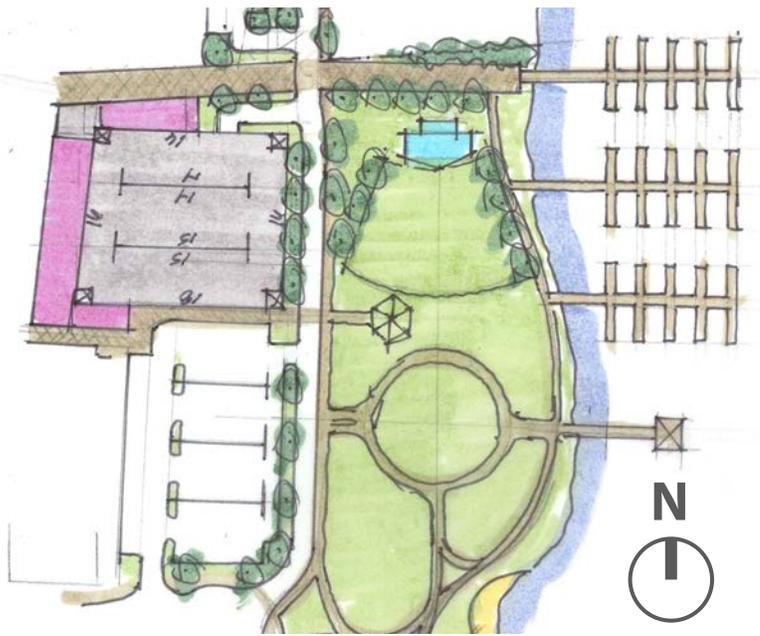


FIGURE 1.7 DISTRICT PARKING PLAN, OPTION 2

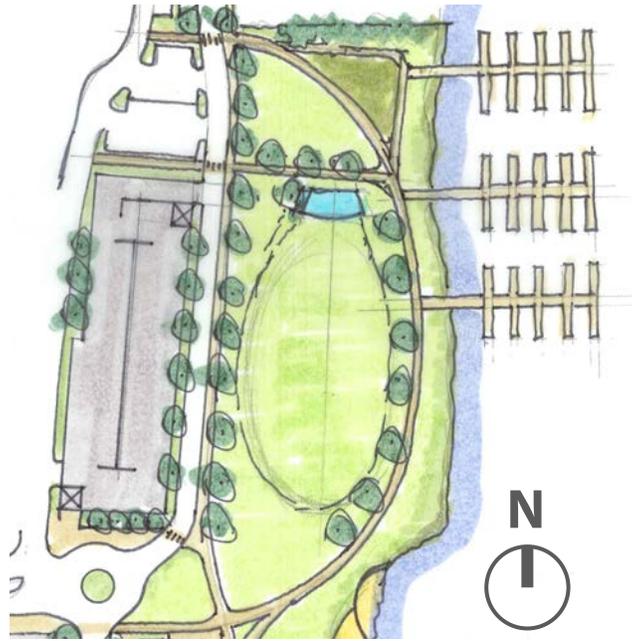


FIGURE 1.8 DISTRICT PARKING PLAN, OPTION 3



RETAIL LOOP (BROADWAY TO 2ND NW)

FINDING:

The evolution of retailing suggests that downtown will likely not support the volume of traditional storefronts needed to re-establish the extent of downtown shopping that once existed. There are currently many gaps in storefronts, causing the district to struggle as a cohesive shopping loop. Other directives will transform the pedestrian experience. This one is focused on establishing a continuous pedestrian circuit of storefronts within a subset of the district.

DIRECTIVE:

Tighten the land use pattern between Broadway Avenue and 2nd Avenue NW to establish continuous retail storefronts on both sides of Lake Street.

STRATEGIES:

- Make minor adjustments to zoning code to compel retailing at the street.
- Offer financial incentives to establish continuous retail frontage.



SOCIAL SIDEWALK NETWORK

FINDING:

Few sidewalks link the surrounding neighborhood to the downtown district. Sidewalks that do exist lack door-to-door links, social design, or pedestrian comfort. As a result, few neighbors choose to walk downtown from their homes even if they live within a convenient, 10-minute walk.

DIRECTIVE:

Establish a door-to-door sidewalk network designed as “social” sidewalks through the surrounding neighborhood with direct connections into downtown.

STRATEGIES:

- Expand sidewalks using the door-to-door and social sidewalk philosophies.
- Concentrate sidewalk investments within the 10-minute walking loop of downtown.



WAYFINDING

FINDING:

Navigating downtown can be confusing to those who don't know it.

DIRECTIVE:

Establish district wayfinding to direct visitors to popular destinations and district parking.

STRATEGIES:

- Conduct a downtown branding process.
- Implement a district-wide wayfinding signage strategy that incorporates branding strategies.



TRAIL INVITATION

FINDING:

There is sparse invitation to cyclists on the Hardwood Creek Trail to visit downtown. As a result, the district captures few trail users and the trail is only a marginal economic or experiential contributor to the district.

DIRECTIVE:

Establish an inviting gateway experience into downtown from the Hardwood Creek Trail as part of redevelopment of a currently vacant parcel.

STRATEGIES:

Create a trail wayside park on the 1st Avenue SW alignment between Lake Street and Centennial. Program could include:

- Bike lockers & service station
- Picnic facilities & shelter
- Play features / games
- Drinking fountain
- Lawn & shade
- Wayfinding & information kiosk



VIEWSHED TO THE LAKE

FINDING:

Visitors barely gain a glimpse of Forest Lake from the downtown street network. Seeing the lake as they travel through offers visitors a subtle yet powerful connection to Forest Lake's core identity.

DIRECTIVE:

Open the viewshed to Forest Lake from the Broadway Avenue / Lake Street intersection.

STRATEGIES:

- Consider alternative design solutions such as art and lighting for the Broadway Avenue round-about that allows visitors to see beyond it to Forest Lake.
- Create landscaped edges on either side of Broadway at the approach to the roundabout.
- Locate new beach house in a place that does not obscure the view to Forest Lake from Broadway Avenue.
- Analyze viewshed impacts in future landscaping decisions.



DOWNTOWN GREENWAY LOOP

FINDING:

Because of its isolation from the "circuit" of downtown, Lakeside Memorial Park is only a marginal economic and experiential contributor to the downtown district.

DIRECTIVE:

Integrate Lakeside Memorial Park into the downtown greenway pedestrian circuit.

STRATEGIES:

- Establish amenity-rich, pedestrian greenway routes on either end of Lakeside Memorial Park that loop back to Lake Street and on to Hardwood Creek Trail.
- Make minor pedestrian improvements to the pedestrian thru-route within the park.



CENTENNIAL DRIVE

FINDING:

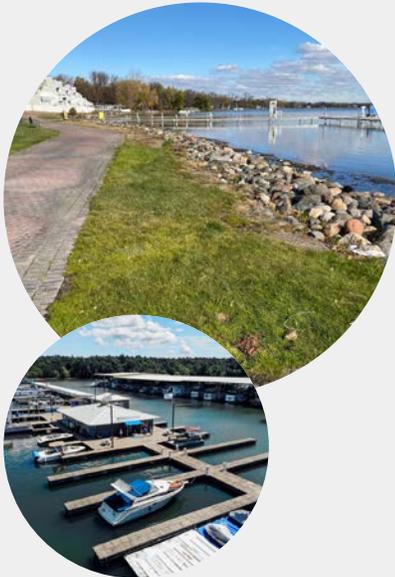
Centennial Drive is functional to those familiar with downtown but not an inviting or understood access/circulation route to most.

DIRECTIVE:

Redesign Centennial Drive as a strategically-important access route to parking and businesses.

STRATEGIES:

- Narrow the street to extent feasible while maintaining two-way travel.
- Implement streetscape enhancements including lighting and a sidewalk on the business side.
- Add on-street, parallel parking on trail side to extent feasible.
- Add wayfinding signage at each corridor entry.



LAKE RECREATION

FINDING:

The lake is an under-utilized recreational asset that holds potential for greater programming through all seasons to draw people into downtown.

DIRECTIVE:

Expand recreational programming in all seasons at Forest Lake's downtown shoreline.

STRATEGIES:

- Increase the number and enhance the quality of transient boat slips.
- Establish shore launch/tie-up beach area for canoes/kayaks.
- Introduce winter programming such as broomball, pond hockey, free skating, and/or a speed skate oval.
- Improve site lines and character at snowmobile lake access on 2nd Ave. SW.
- Enhance shoreline aesthetics and improve resistance to ice action through bio-engineering strategies.

ACTIVATION

FINDING:

Regular happenings in the categories of recreation and entertainment through all seasons will provide ongoing reasons for downtown visits.

DIRECTIVE:

In addition to larger and more prominent events, expand routine / regular downtown happenings.

STRATEGIES:

Collaborate with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to develop every-day / routine downtown district events and happenings.

- Music
- Sales
- Tours
- Art
- Crafts
- Recreation



“Placemaking
is like turning
a house
into a home.”
- David Engwicht





ACTIVATION PLAN

THE VALUE OF ACTIVATION

Investing in a public realm that looks the part sets the stage for an attractive downtown, but does not itself ensure a lively, animated environment. For that, activation is key. Activation creates a critical mass of energy that supports retail and restaurants, fosters healthy social settings, provides a feeling of safety and security, and motivates people to live and work in a downtown. When done well, events, commercial businesses, and the environment combine to draw a representative swath of the community together along with visitors, making a welcoming and comfortable place where people want to spend time. Diverse and changing programming that flows from morning to evening, links weekdays to weekends, and spans seasons ensures repeat visits and increases time spent downtown. Pairing a pedestrian-friendly environment with a variety of things to see and do leads to chance meetings as well as planned gatherings, transforming Lake Street into a living room for the community rather than just a thoroughfare. Over time, residents will have memories and traditions anchored in the downtown, fostering feelings of attachment and connection that will encourage additional investment and stewardship. Property values will increase and economic activity will be self sustaining. Activation breathes life into a downtown, celebrating local character, history, and identity. It makes a house a home.





METHODS AND TOOLS

Successful activation plans utilize a variety of events to keep people coming to the area throughout the year. Encountering even a few of these can help to transform a person's idea of downtown into an interesting destination where, at any time, something fun might be happening.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

SEASONAL EVENTS / OFFERINGS

Seasonal events are easy to schedule into a calendar and repeat year after year. These types of programming can become an annual tradition, and grow into a beloved part of a community's identity. Examples include:

- Business district trick-or-treating
- Speed skating races / training on the Wild Ice Oval
- Open skating on the lake
- Ice carving / snow sculptures
- Ice castles/bars/mazes
- Hockey or broomball games and tournaments
- Art Fairs
- Snowmobile or Speedboat races
- Fun runs
- Parades (boat and street)
- Cultural celebrations
- Farmers markets
- Makers markets
- Spring cleanups
- Holiday festivities
 - Light displays
 - Caroling
- Easter egg hunt
- Scavenger hunts
- Movies in the Park



DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

Daily interactions are touchpoints with the public that ideally showcase a revolving set of activities from week to week. Using the streetscape as an interface, businesses can pique the interests of passersby to generate future business. Examples include:

- Setting up sidewalk sales
- Scheduling food trucks / carts
- Booking musicians or performances
- Holding weekly tastings
- Changing daily specials
- Selling business district coupon books
- Offering Forest Lake-themed coloring pages
- Advertising happy hours
- Hosting trivia nights
- Having local newspapers available
- Setting up lawn games
- Yoga or fitness classes in the park





CURATED INSTALLATIONS

Investments in public art allow a community to express itself, celebrating the unique identities that set it apart from others. When local artists are involved, these commissions give back to the community and inspire local pride. Art, especially when interactive, can be a thoughtful, playful, and memorable way to activate the downtown realm. Examples include:

- Photo-worthy and “instagrammable” places
 - Framed views
 - Wings on walls
- Themed sculpture installations (think Chicago’s “Cows on Parade”)
- Historical interpretation
- Word walls
- Revolving or temporary artworks
- Storefront window displays
- Murals
- Projection art



SAMPLE CALENDARS

SAMPLE SEASONAL EVENT CALENDAR



SAMPLE WEEKLY CALENDAR



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations will help to get an activation program off the ground:

1. Hire an activation coordinator to determine a public art and activation strategy and manage its curation across the downtown
2. Identify interested partners and champions
3. Form a subcommittee of business district stakeholders interested in activation
4. Determine an annual budget
5. Set fundraising goals
6. Plan to test out two new activation endeavors per year
7. Develop success metrics and track progress:
 - spending at local businesses
 - number of events planned
 - attendance at events



“ *The street is the river of life of the city.*

[People] come to these places not to escape, but to partake of it. ”

William H. Whyte