



FOREST LAKE

DOWNTOWN PLAN

DRAFT: June 22, 2022





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Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN

Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN



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 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 over the next fifteen (or so) years.

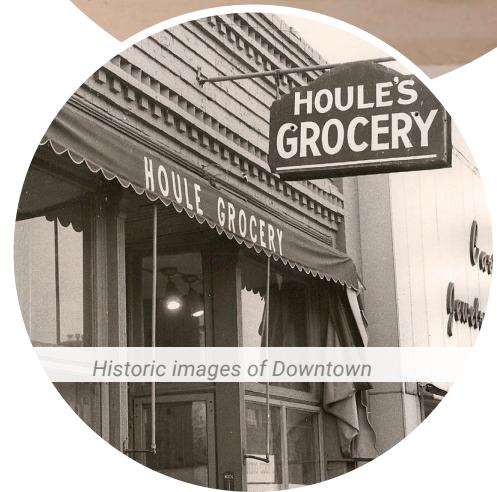
By engaging the community, understanding the district and its context, and suggesting creative and targeted solutions, the plan will be a vital tool in accomplishing the community's vision.

Of course, the plan is only step one. Implementation is the real work and will demand continued attention to the vision and investments (public and private) necessary to accomplish it.

The Vision, Downtown Guide Plan and associated directives described in Chapters 4 and 5 will take time to accomplish. Across the lifespan of the plan, it will be easy to lose track of "why." Although it is recognized that circumstances will no doubt change, the plan will act as a guidepost 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 communicate 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 accomplished in ways that not only benefit the investor but contribute to the urban fabric and vitality of the district.



Historic images of Downtown



Historic images of Downtown

Some of the directives expressed in the Downtown Guide Plan are dependent on other actions happening first. That's okay. This plan is an expression of long-term vision and Forest Lake will be presented with opportunities to accomplish directives that, today, seem unlikely. Those of us helping the community prepare the Downtown Master Plan see this situation often with our client communities. There is something about the act of preparing a vision that leads to new opportunities popping up.

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 and Chapter 6 is devoted to it.

Finally, Chapter 7 outlines an implementation strategy and budgets for the projects suggested in the plan. Some may believe the plan represents an extraordinary amount of public investment. It certainly is not insignificant. A few things to consider around expense are:

1. Forest Lake will find partner agencies, grants, public/private partnerships and other forms of assistance to reduce Forest Lake's share of the overall investment demand.
2. The Forest Lake Downtown Plan represents a fairly typical level of public investment compared with other communities with robust downtown districts (some of which you may wish downtown Forest Lake were more like).
3. The vision Forest Lake has expressed in its Downtown Plan and the implementation of the plan will draw private investment that will increase downtown property tax capacity that, in turn, will help offset public investments.



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



STUDY AREA

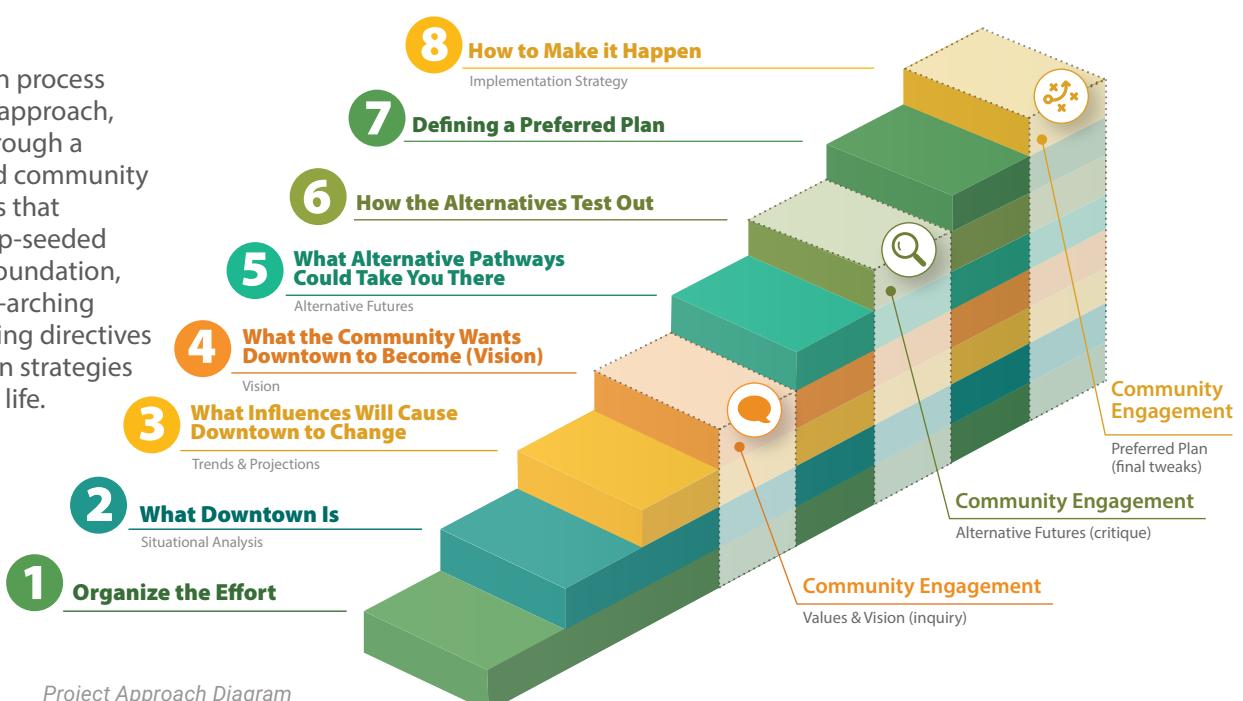
The plan is focused on roughly 72 acres centered on the Lake Street and Broadway Avenue intersection. The study area extends between 3rd Avenue SW and 4th Avenue NW and between 3rd Street SW and the Forest Lake, Lake 1 shoreline. The study area generally represents the historic downtown core of Forest 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.



PLANNING 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.



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 - July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Workshop• Downtown Committee Meeting• City Council Meeting





ANALYSIS

A SNAPSHOT IN TIME

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



LAND USE



Mixed-use development (office, residential, retail) with commercial retail street frontage on Lake Street



Commercial retail frontage on Lake Street



Office development adjacent to Lakeside Memorial Park

LAND USE

Downtown has a healthy mix of retail, office and residential land uses. The presence of residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors helps ensure activation throughout the day and seasons.

Commercial retail uses in combination with retail frontage predominate the east side of Lake Street between 1st Street SE and 2nd Avenue NW with a lesser presence on the west side in the same stretch. Beyond this stretch to the north and the south, commercial retail has a more minor presence.

Office is mixed throughout the downtown district. While the presence of office uses is a very healthy sign of downtown, when it predominates the street frontage, it can have negative impacts on retail traffic. It brings employment to the district which bolsters retail services like dry cleaning, daycare, dining, pharmacy and entertainment. Changes in work patterns accelerated by the pandemic have had profound impacts on office tenancy and it is unclear what the lasting impacts will be. Current projections favor district-scale office location like downtown Forest Lake over regional locations.

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 residential within the district, or transitioning single-family residences to live-work spaces or retail shops is a strategy often seen in successful downtown realms.

Downtown has only a few vacant few parcels along Lake Street that, once developed, will help stitch together the fabric of downtown by providing a more active street frontage.

FRONTAGE

An important aspect of downtown retail strategy is establishment of the retail loop. This concept suggests that retail success of a district is dependent on the unbroken cadence of activated storefronts + dining. Gaps in storefronts caused by service commercial, office or residential uses or through vacant parcels diminish retail viability and lessen shopper enthusiasm. The downtown district has experienced a significant transition away from retail storefronts and toward office/service - a trend addressed with strategies in the Downtown Plan.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Forest Lake is to be commended for maintaining a traditional pattern of building frontage at the street with parking behind in its downtown district. For decades, it has not been easy for communities to resist the suburban development pattern of buildings set back with parking in front. Having the traditional pattern in place provides the opportunity to focus on "next-level" investments rather than attempt to reverse unfortunate past patterns.





FIGURE 2.1 LAND USE AND FRONTAGE DIAGRAM





PUBLIC REALM



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.

PROXIMITY TO PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

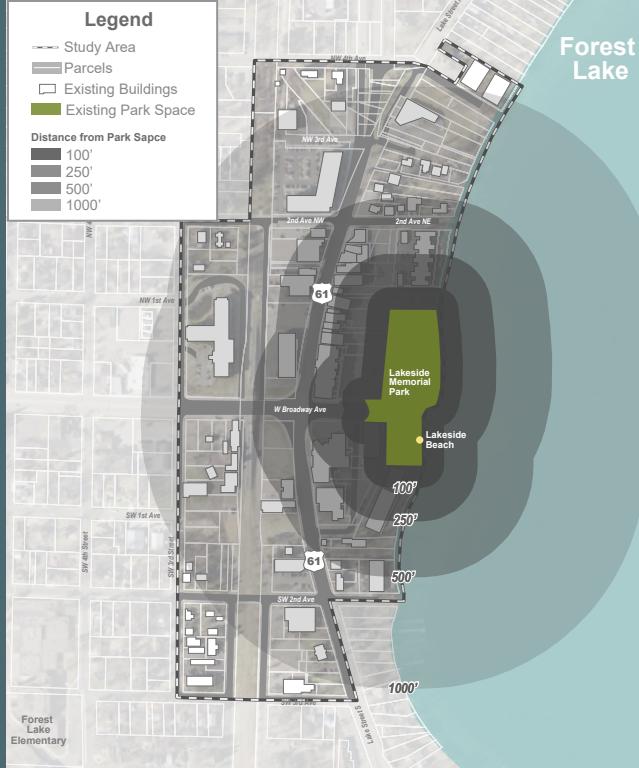


FIGURE 2.2 PARK PROXIMITY DIAGRAM





FIGURE 2.3 GREEN SPACE AND NATURE DIAGRAM

CIRCULATION

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

A robust sidewalk network into and within the district will be important to its continued success as a commercial district. Today, numerous streets in the adjacent neighborhood are without sidewalks and many that do exist offer a less than pleasant walking experience due to sidewalk placement/design and adjacent traffic. The adjacent neighborhood is within walking proximity and is therefore, downtown's "built-in" constituency but these downtown guests need sidewalk infrastructure and pleasant sidewalk environments to convince them to walk downtown. There are six pedestrian access points into the study area, most along street corridors with few pedestrian comfort amenities or clear wayfinding. While the current sidewalks generally meet universal access standards, some access barriers exist in the southern portion of the study area and varying sidewalk widths impact guests choosing to use them. FYI - pedestrian crossings are addressed in the Pedestrian Amenities section of this chapter.



Hardwood Creek Regional Trail overpass of W Broadway Avenue

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

BIKE NETWORK

Currently, three entrance points within the downtown study area support cyclists including either end of the Hardwood Creek Trail and W. Broadway Avenue. Within downtown, there is not a bike network or support amenities (lock-ups, water, wayfinding, identified routes, etc.). This leads to bikers passing by the district.

The Hardwood Creek Regional Trail connects with 36 miles of regional trail and several local trails beyond the downtown district. The Hardwood Creek Trail offers significant opportunity for downtown identity, visitorship and economic activity. However, there is little to no invitation of trail users to stop and explore downtown Forest Lake. The regional trail crosses local streets at three intersections within the study area and bridges over West Broadway Avenue, which acts as a visual gateway into downtown and offers outstanding views of the downtown and Forest Lake, Lake 1.

The W. Broadway Avenue shared-use trail extends from the I-35 corridor to Lake Street. It is an important element of pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Although it provides a functioning bike/ped corridor, it has several challenges from a user-comfort standpoint that cause it to not be robustly used. Those challenges include the number of driveway and street crossings, the trail's close proximity to the curb, and adjacent traffic volume and speeds. The trail lands in the downtown district at the Lake Street roundabout, which many residents perceive (accurately or not) as a challenging bike/ped crossing point.

ACCESS TO DESTINATIONS

The Lake Street commercial corridor the central economic engine of the downtown district. It is obviously centered on transportation routes. True "access" to storefronts and services however, is much more nuanced with a focus on parking (car or bike) and the pedestrian experience once a visitor parks then walks to their destinations. In these ways (wayfinding and visitor experience of parking and walking), downtown has many opportunities to improve.

Lakeside Memorial Park and beach is one of downtown Forest Lake's most popular destinations. It can be reached directly as a pedestrian from Lake Street via the W Broadway Avenue intersection. Other pedestrian links are nearly but not quite complete and require manoeuvring through parking lots for some stretch to reach the park.





FIGURE 2.5 SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS DIAGRAM



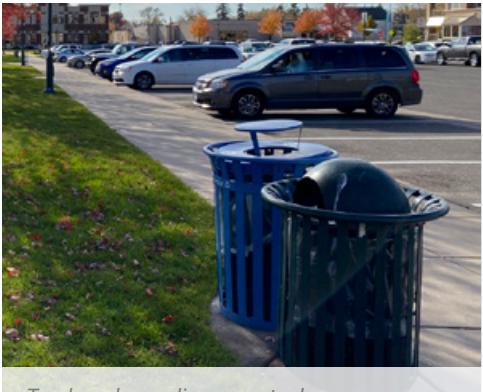
Lake Street streetscape and parking bay



W Broadway / Lake Street roundabout



Pedestrian-activated mid-block ped crossing of Lake Street



Trash and recycling receptacles

PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES

Pedestrian comfort and security (both real and perceived) are important to creating and maintaining a bustling public realm. Comforts and functional amenities such as well-scaled and connected sidewalks (addressed earlier), comfortable street crossings,, traffic calming, inviting lighting, tree canopy, cared-for landscaping, and visitor comforts are central to the set of amenities needed to support pedestrian activities and a successful district.

CROSSINGS & CALMING

Figure 2.6 illustrates street crossings of various type in the downtown district. In general, crossings of local streets are in good locations, function well and meet basic universal access design standards. However, crossings and calming of Lake Street are not as robust as needed to support a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented shopping district.

Both the quantity and comfort of pedestrian crossings of Lake Street are primary barriers to downtown visitorship. Community feedback in the planning process had a strong focus on perceptions of traffic safety at the W Broadway roundabout but traffic speed, the lack of a controlled crossing at the south end of the district and confusion about how to use the pedestrian-activated crossing at the north end of the district also contribute to feelings of unsafe conditions for pedestrians. We know through research that successful retail districts provide visitors with a shopping *loop* experience, which makes street crossings and traffic safety pivotal elements.

LIGHTING

Lighting in the downtown district is primarily vehicle-oriented and most prominent along Lake Street with lower levels of lighting along local streets and in parking areas. Lakeside Memorial Park is the primary area of pedestrian-oriented lighting (lower height and closer together). Light levels vary through the district, which is common and expected. Lighting, however, when designed strategically at the district scale is a form of wayfinding and a cue that this place is meant for people as pedestrians. Lighting can be used to create safe environments, guide visitors along preferred routes and as an invitation to linger/socialize at key downtown destinations.

TREES AND LANDSCAPING

Trees are one of the most important elements of creating an inviting pedestrian environment. The shade they provide is critical in encouraging walking and their presence, like pedestrian lighting is a cue that this is a place for people. Because Lake Street is a State highway constructed in a certain era, street trees were not allowed. The lack of trees on the street has a significant negative impact on the corridor's character and the level of pedestrian activity it realizes. Street trees are present elsewhere in the district and are instrumental in creating pleasant pedestrian spaces.

Landscaping in addition to trees provides aesthetic interest to visitors and sends a message that this place is cared for (or not). Landscaping in Lakeside Memorial Park is excellent while landscaping on Lake Street and Centennial Drive is generally lacking.

COMFORT AMENITIES

Comfort amenities can have a significant impact on visitor's length of stay in a downtown district as well as their interest in returning. Today, most of downtown's comfort amenities like restrooms, benches, drinking water, and waste receptacles exist within Lakeside Memorial Park. They exist sparingly on Lake Street and the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail. Future strategies for both trail and streetscape amenities will, no doubt have a strong focus on comfort amenities.



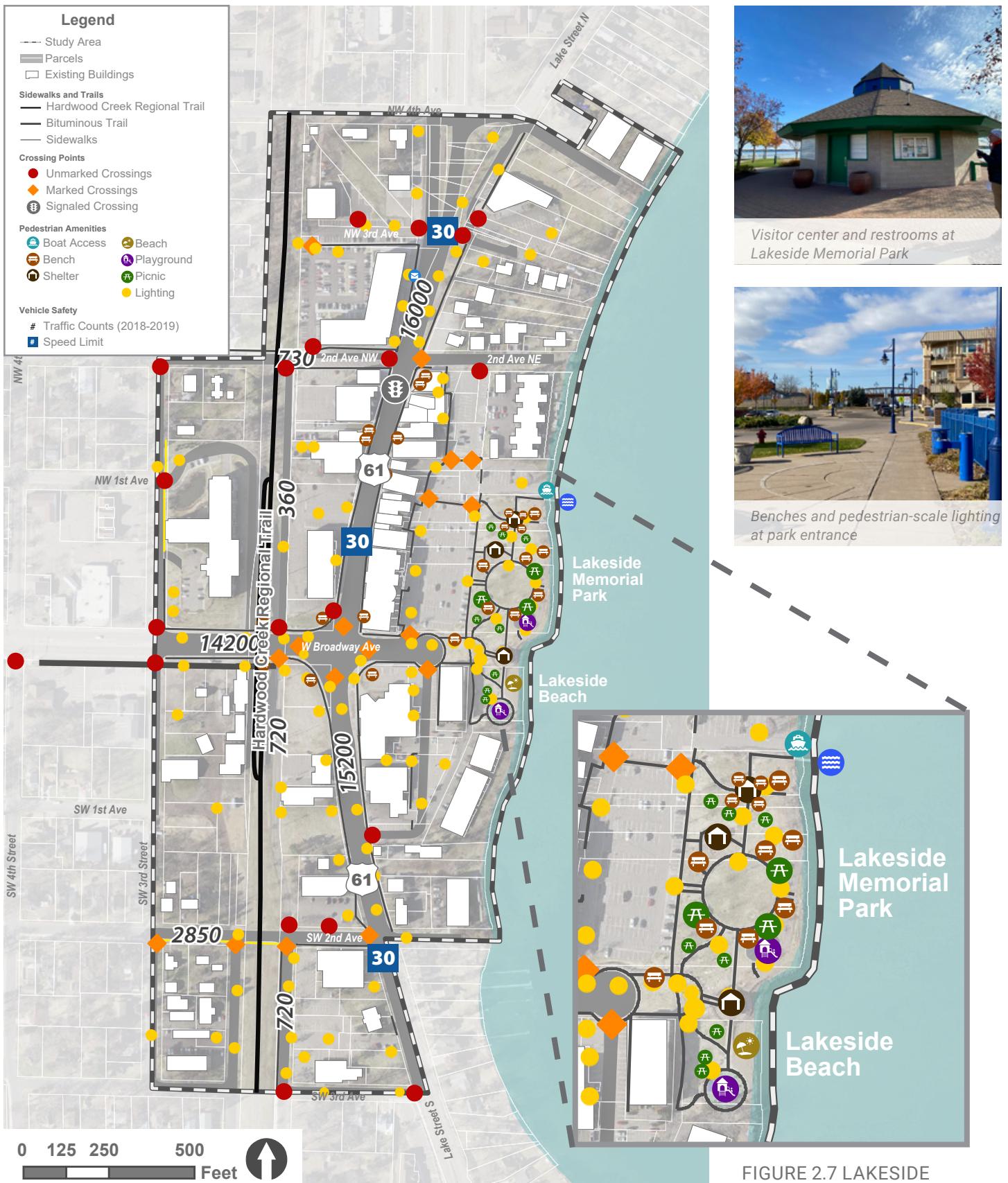


FIGURE 2.6 PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES DIAGRAM - FULL STUDY AREA

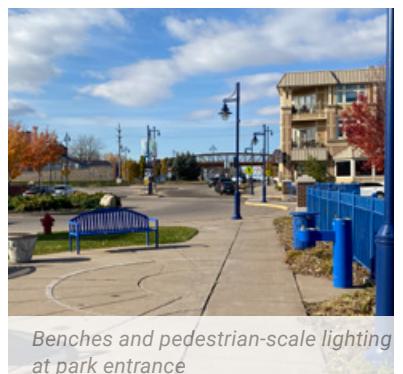
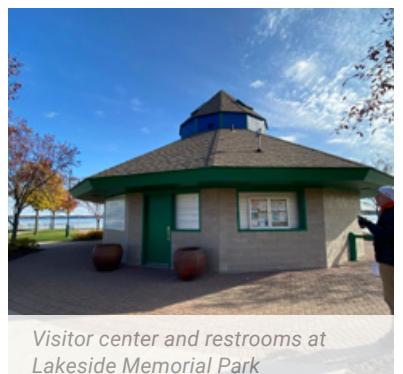


FIGURE 2.7 LAKESIDE MEMORIAL PARK ZOOM VIEW



PRIVATE PROPERTIES



Downtown's newest redevelopment - a mixed-use project with commercial and residential street frontage and 4 stores of residential above.



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



Business for sale



Vacant parcel along Highway 61

REAL ESTATE VALUES

Real estate value is derived by an intangible combination of history and prospect. Thriving downtown districts translate into good property investments. This is generally a very good thing although there is an interesting dynamic many communities face between real estate value and the interest/need to assemble multiple properties for redevelopment.

Forest Lake has downtown properties arguably in need of redevelopment and many of them are too small or too narrow for today's development interests. Developers have been and continue to be interested in downtown Forest Lake and patiently assemble properties for their future development interests. This ongoing activity will be an important adjunct to Forest Lake's public realm investments that are an outgrowth of the Downtown Plan.

COMMERCIAL LEASE RATES

There are many nuances to lease rates of downtown properties but at their core, they are a direct outgrowth of property value, which is a direct outgrowth of district vibrancy or sales potential.

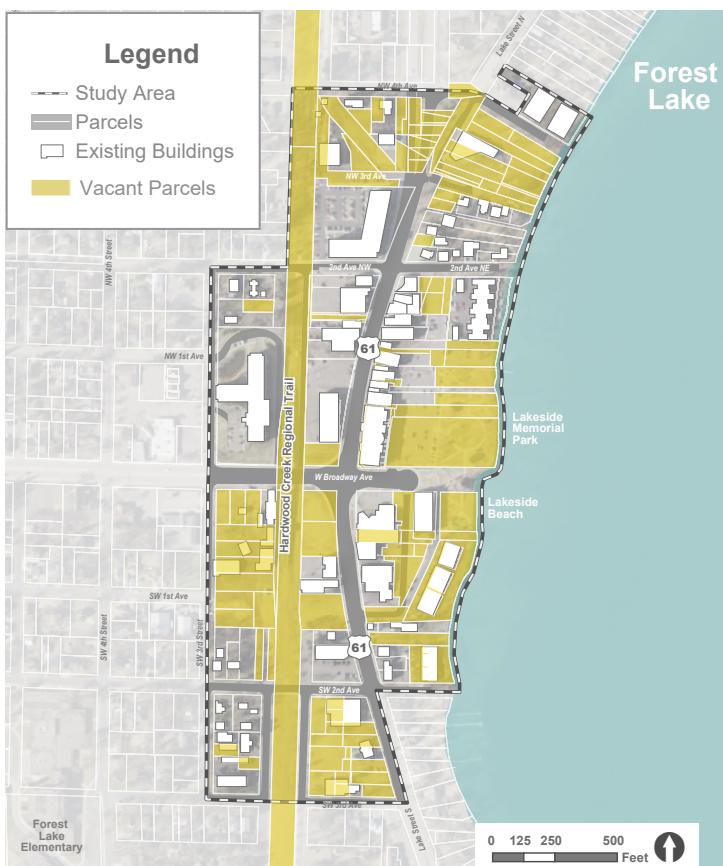
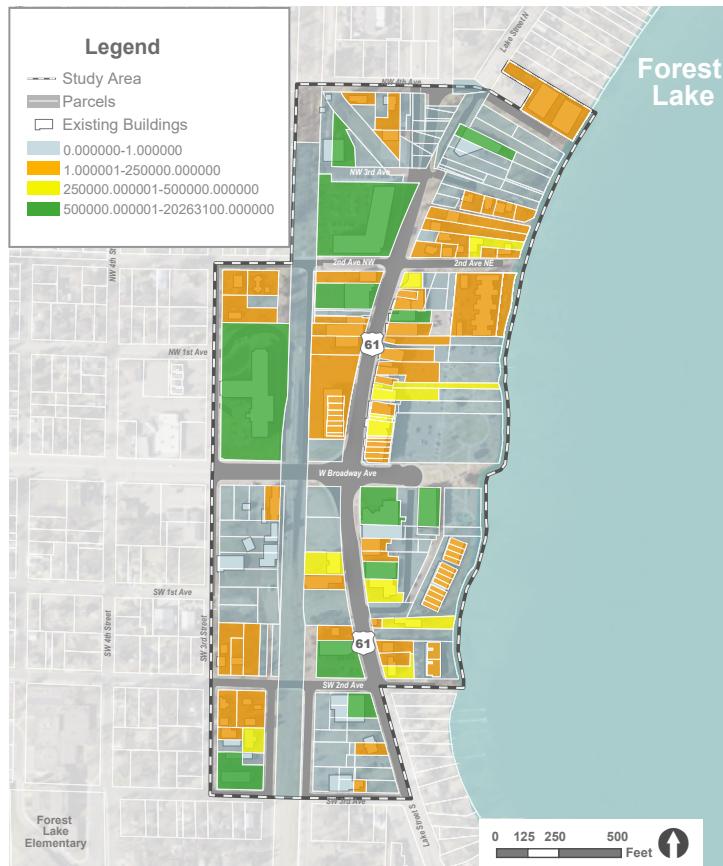
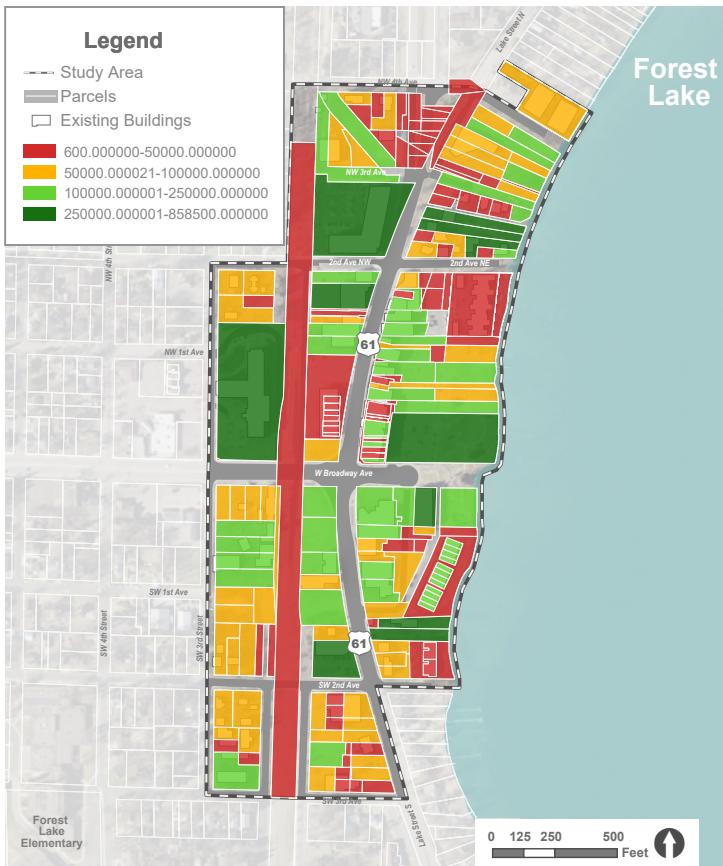
Although a detailed analysis of lease rates in downtown Forest Lake has not been conducted, anecdotal feedback suggests that office lease rates are comparable to other similar districts and retail lease rates are somewhat lower than other downtown districts recognized for their vibrancy. These realities are likely the result of 1) strong interest in locating professional and retail services in proximity to the broader Forest Lake community, 2) the challenging pedestrian environment and public realm aesthetics of downtown that lead to a difficult retail setting, and 3) some downtown buildings in poor condition that do not meet the needs of contemporary retailing.

OCCUPANCY

Downtown occupancy is relatively strong. There are few vacant storefronts, most of which are in buildings in poor condition. There is also some low occupancy in very new development that still gaining a foothold in the commercial mix of downtown.

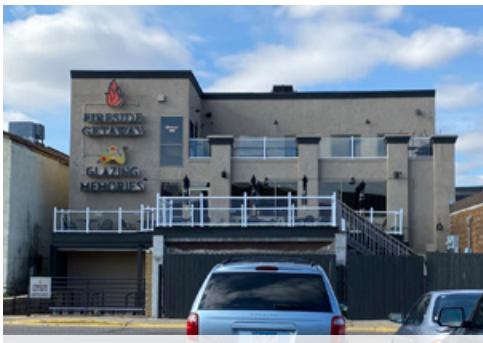
There are several sites where buildings have been torn down (in some cases for many years) and new buildings have not replaced them. This is likely due to the dimensions and access configurations of particular sites. Many of these sites will need assembly with adjacent parcels to make for viable redevelopments.



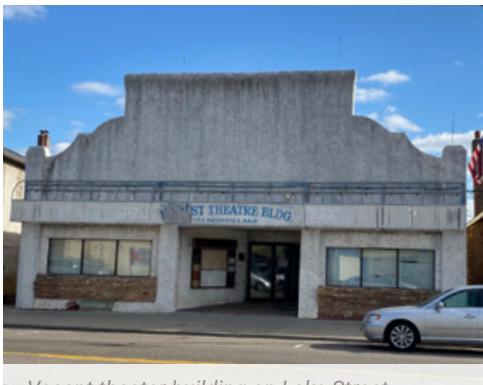




Local business with small patio space out front



Restaurant building on Lake Street with rear outdoor patio overlooking the lake.



Vacant theater building on Lake Street.



Mixed-use redevelopment with frontage on Lake Street and commanding views to the lake.

BUSINESS INVENTORY

Businesses in the study area have been inventoried as part of the planning process. The inventory is further evidence of the healthy mix of retail and commercial uses in the downtown district. While the mix of uses is a good one, placement of the varying uses is challenging the functionality and guest attraction of downtown as a whole.

Businesses seem to be making location decisions around two key factors; the convenience of parking and the condition/functionality of buildings. These are important, logical, and smart factors to drive location on a business-by-business basis. However, the community interest is to lift up the whole district as a vibrant destination. Therefore, many of the directives recommended later in the Downtown Plan are meant to help overcome parking and access disparities, property condition, the discomfort of walking in the district, and the aesthetics of the Lake Street corridor.

These issues are strategically important because they mitigate for shortcomings with a particular property and allow downtown to be experienced by visitors as district rather than a collection of one-visit/one-use commercial destinations.

What other communities find as they move through the process to implement a district vision is that 1) challenging properties become less difficult to lease and their investment levels increase, and 2) storefronts that have been transitioning over time to office or service retail begin to be reoccupied by storefront retail. These shifts begin to reestablish a cohesive retail loop (discussed earlier in this chapter) and draw more pedestrians willing to circulate the district for multiple stops in a single visit.





FIGURE 2.11 BUSINESS INVENTORY

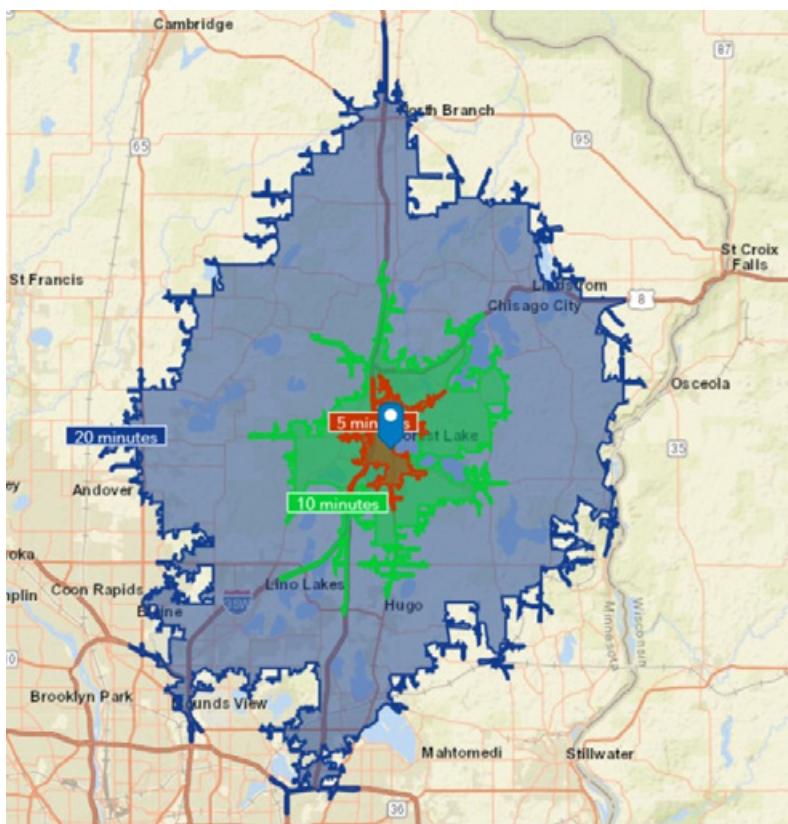
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|--|---|
| ① Wells Fargo Bank | ⑯ VerBout Services |
| ③ Butts, Schneider & Butts, LLP | ⑰ Five Star Financial Resources |
| ⑤ Miller & Stevens Law | ⑲ St Croix Endodontics |
| ⑦ E J Houle Inc | ㉑ Fry & Associates |
| ⑬ Brian Leneweaver Coldwell
Banker Realty | ㉒ iSmile Orthodontics |
| ⑮ Johnson / Turner Legal | ㉔ Fairview Health Services |
| ⑯ Timothy Garry, Coldwell Banker
Burnet | ㉖ American Family Insurance |
| | ㉙ Sewing and Fitting Mentor |
| | ㉚ LaBelle Real Estate Group |
| | ㉛ St. Croix Valley Peach |
| | ㉜ Aaron M Peterson: Allstate
Insurance |
| | ㉝ Chad Smoley, White Oaks Real
Estate, LLC |
| | ㉞ 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:

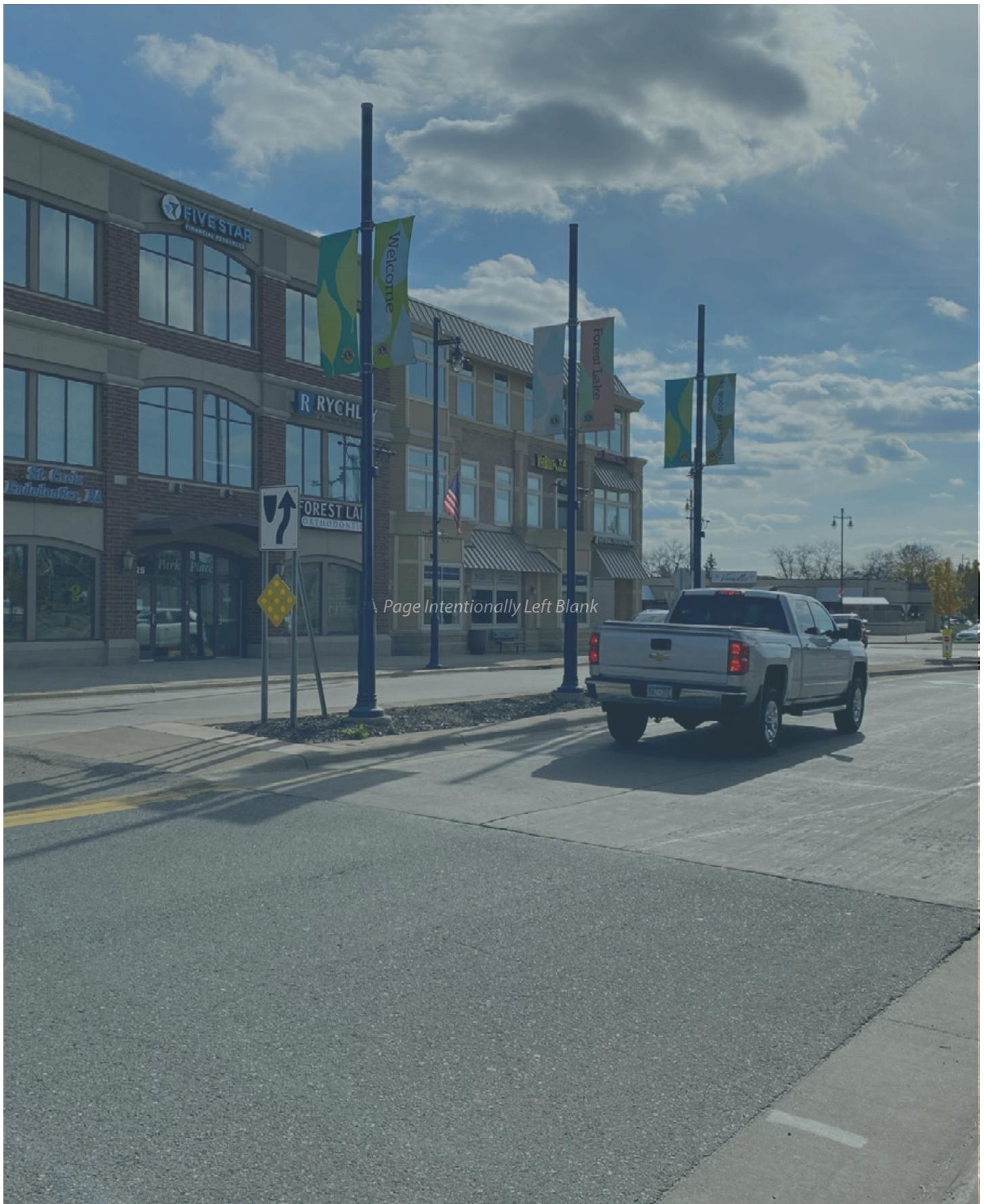
Drive Time	Retail	Food/Drink
Study Area	\$3,480,028	\$376,160
5 Min	\$108,368,308	\$11,628,585
10 Min	\$438,171,379	\$47,172,001
20 Min	\$2,859,340,261	\$309,845,616

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%





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DOWNTOWN ACTIVATION



Arts in the Park



Flake festival



Arts in the Park



4th of July festivities

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
- Winter Plunge

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.



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.

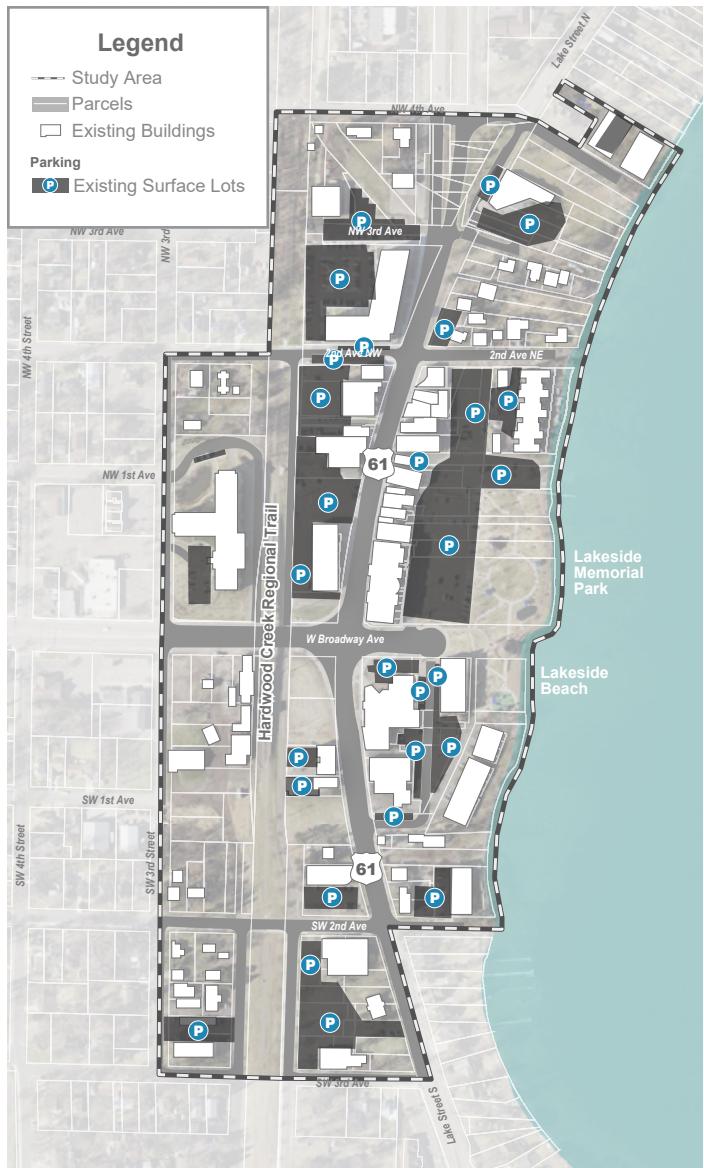


FIGURE 2.12 PARKING DIAGRAM



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
District-wide Surplus	117			



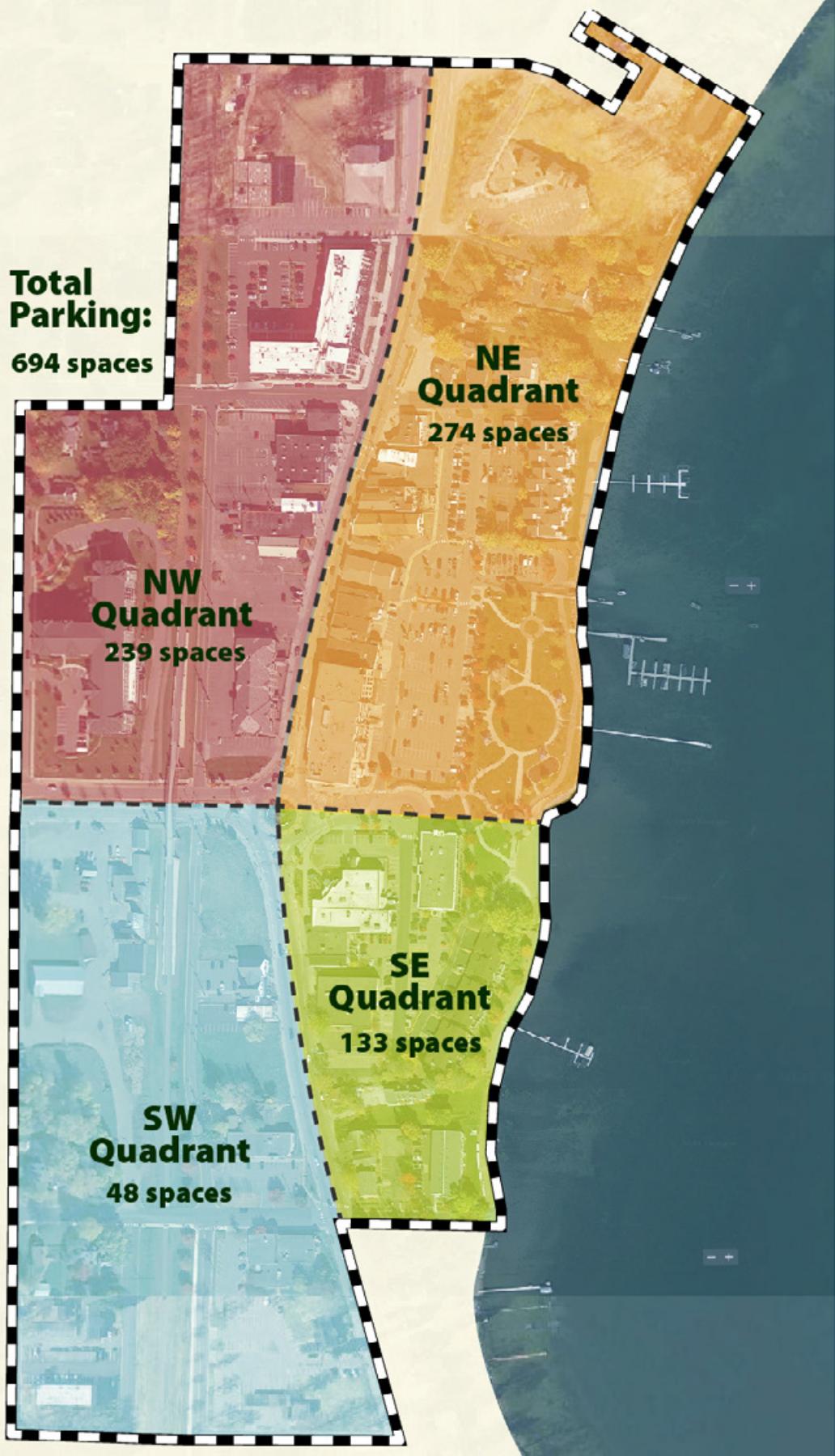


FIGURE 2.13 EXISTING PARKING QUANTITIES BY QUADRANT



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 ROUNDABOUT 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

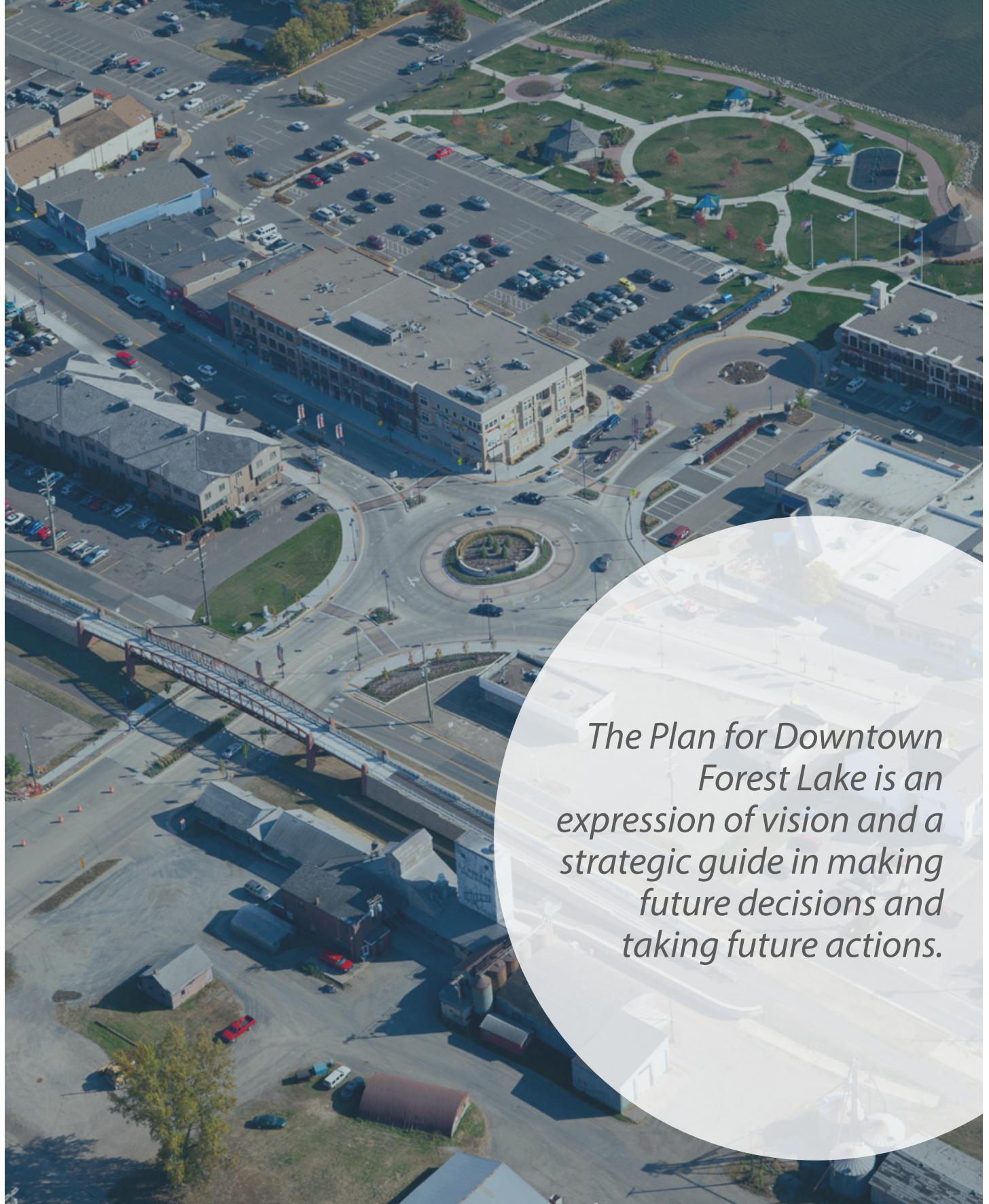
Lack of bike and pedestrian amenities, wayfinding, human-scale lighting, and busy vehicular traffic make Lake Street an uninviting space for visitors to spend time.

(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

STAGES OF ENGAGEMENT

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.

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 STAGE 1: VISION AND VALUES

2 STAGE 2: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES

3 STAGE 3: CONVERGING ON A PREFERRED PLAN

STAGE 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.



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

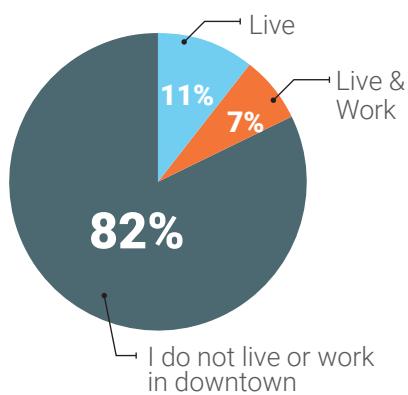
697

Comments (Number of unique individuals to engage with the site)

81

252

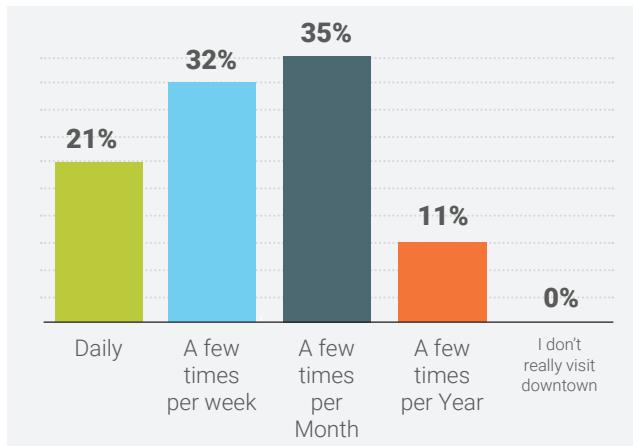
Do you live or work Downtown?



Why do you go Downtown?



How frequently do you visit Downtown?



If you don't visit Downtown often, why?

Not Inviting	Freeway focused	To busy with traffic at night
Hassle	Car-Centric	Needs more by the lake
Not a Destination	No shopping	Dangerous crossing busy roads
Not much to do	Want more restaurants and retail	Wish there was more for kids

Closed for Comment

Sort Comm.

Home Accessible	I would like to see downtown become Vibrant 3 months ago	I would like to see downtown become Successful 4 months ago	Fun 3 months ago
wn. It needs to improve that lake nearby. It's a street or where you your necessary big box stores, barbers, rx, Broadway with better fit.	Sparse - we have a nice lake and water front but nothing much to do around it. Instead of renovating the older buildings that had character some were torn down and replaced with nondescript unexciting "modern" buildings. The renovations of the older buildings took too long without a plan. Forest Lake needs to pick a direction and make it happen for a 10 to 20 year period, not just for the term of the current elected officials. 3 months ago	Needs more for kids to do! Better parks and maybe a splash pad 3 months ago	Please look into slips like White large portion of provide yearly public short term to come visit this town for more business 3 months ago
Potential. Seeking Stillwater and	Difficult. It's difficult to navigate by car, difficult to park when things are busy. It's hard to see what is even all there since 61 is such a busy thoroughfare. 3 months ago	I agree with the comments suggesting we look to other cities with waterfronts for examples of how to improve our area. We need to keep the lake, reserve the lakefront and Main Street for businesses such as shopping/dining/tourism, and move the medical and legal companies to another location. 3 months ago	Eyesore with so many eyesores. So many to make the main another White 1 3 months ago
	Currently run down worn out looking. Weeds and over run plants around the round about. Event signs left out past events. So many empty buildings. Traffic lines not repainted on round about. 3 months ago	Could be better. Hwy 61 needs to be reconstructed and Lake St access road needs to be placed from the park down to Scandia Trail. More streets on the west need to connect to Hwy. 61. City council needs to change ordinances, to reflect a growing city. Move all industrial companies to the industrial part of downtown. The way as it is right now looks dismal Streets are a macrame of unfinished through streets. Impression: unkempt, the 3 months ago	Thought of more immediate maintenance! No more trash. Restaurant sole something that you want to str 3 months ago

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.*



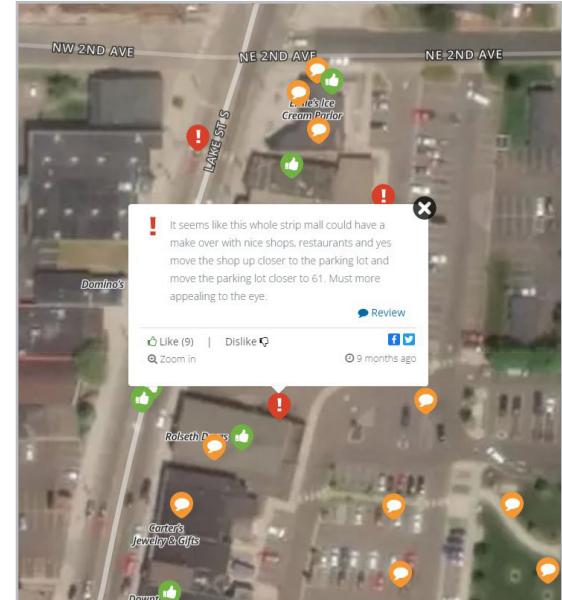
INTERACTIVE MAP SUMMARY

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

socialpinpoint

Closed for Comment

Survey

Survey

Do you live or work Downtown?

Live
 Work
 Live and work
 I do not live or work Downtown

How frequently do you visit Downtown?

Daily
 A few times a week
 A few times every month
 A few times per year

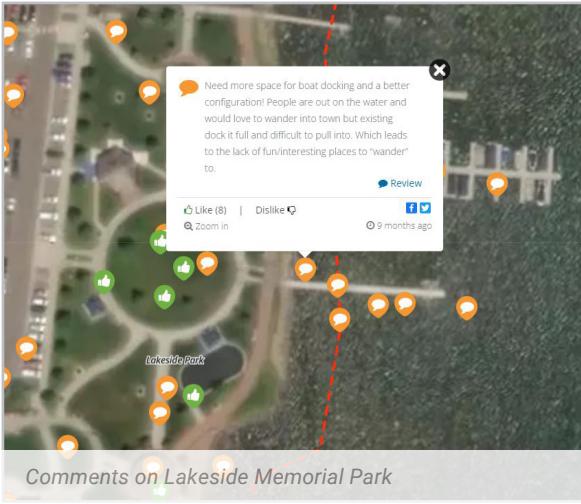
Map View

Mallards, and really this entire block of apartments and businesses, is a huge improvement on the street. It's well kept and nice to look at, as well as offering great workout and dining options. Good call on allowing this to become a part of our downtown!

Like (1) | Dislike Review Zoom in 9 months ago

Legend
— Hardwood Creek Regional Trail

The interactive mapping tool and corresponding online survey



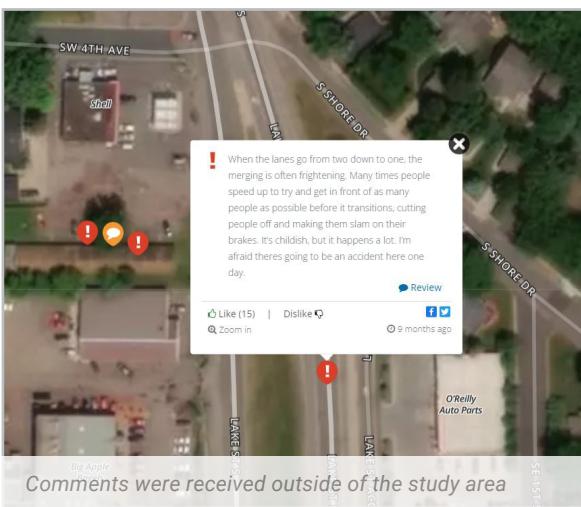
- The street is very uninviting and scary to pedestrians, lacks signage and wayfinding, bike racks, benches, and other comfort amenities. Crossings feel unsafe and are sparse. Many avoid the noise and bustle of the fast traffic and use the backside of businesses instead, leaving the street without life 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

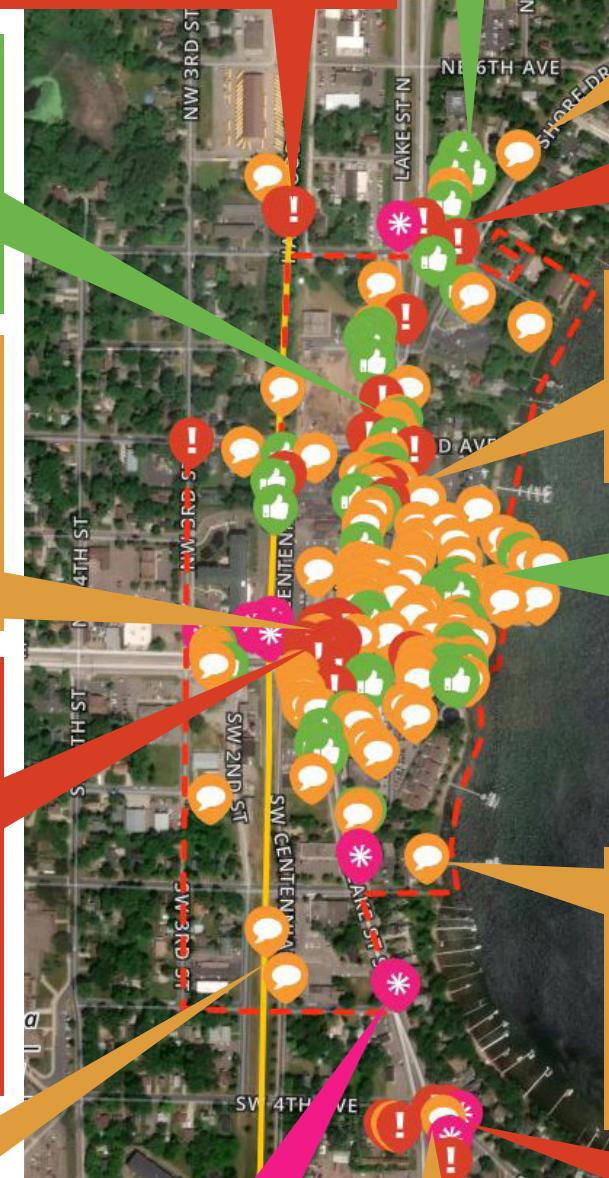
This area is constantly full of canine feces. It's disgraceful and doesn't look good for anyone passing through. It's also not sanitary and dogs can carry diseases and it can get into the ground and infect many other dogs and even humans.

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.

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

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.

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



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!

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.

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!

Your Boat Club has brought many people to try out our beautiful lake and get to know our shoos 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.

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 dinning establishments.

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.

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 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:

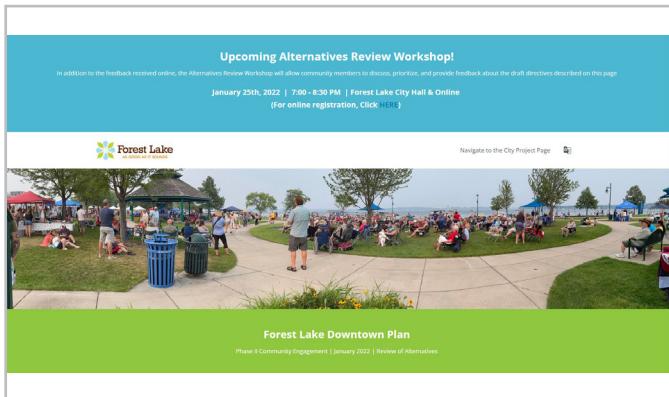
- Businesses facing the lake are not well supported by pedestrian amenities and public realm improvements.
- There is very little reason for shoppers to come downtown.
- Highway 61 is not a business-friendly street.
- Forest Lake has not been a business-friendly local government.
 - More transparency 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.

STAGE 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.

This screenshot shows a section titled 'Downtown Directives Video Presentations & Surveys'. It features two video thumbnails: 'Directive 1 Video' (Lake Street Corridor) and 'Directive 2 Video' (District Parking). Each video has a 'Watch on YouTube' button. To the right of each video is a 'Directive' section with specific strategies and a comment box. For Directive 1, strategies include narrowing lanes and widening sidewalks, and for Directive 2, it includes creating a district parking facility with direct pedestrian linkage to Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park. There is also a general comments box for each directive.

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

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

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.

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 Plan
Forest Lake, MN

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.



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 than 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 ideal!! 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.

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with MNDOT & Mn/DOT Co. to narrow lanes and widen sidewalks. Implement ped-oriented streetscape with street trees, landscaping, and reduced traffic circles. Maintain/expand on-street parking. 	
	DIRECTIVE: DISTRICT PARKING	Create a district parking facility in the downtown core to accommodate visitors and linkages to Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of broader redevelopment, construct structured, direct parking in NW quad of downtown core with line of sight to the lake. Connect parking via skywalk across Lake St. to NE quad of downtown core for visitors, employees, and staff needs. Add to zoning code to reduce parking requirement. 	
	DIRECTIVE: CENTENNIAL DRIVE	Redesign Centennial Drive as a strategically important access route to parking and businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range the street as extent feasible while maintaining two-way travel. Enhance streetscape environments including lighting and a sidewalk. Allow for temporary signage on the far side to extend feasibility. Add wayfinding signage at each corridor entry. 	
	DIRECTIVE: RETAIL LOOP (BROADWAY - 2ND NW)	Strengthen the land use pattern between Broadway Avenue and 2nd Avenue NW to encourage continuous retail storefronts on both sides of Lake Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make minor adjustments to zoning code to compel retailing at the street. Offer financial incentives to establish continuous retail baseline. 	
	DIRECTIVE: DOWNTOWN GREENWAY LOOP	Integrate Lakeside Memorial Park into the downtown greenway/pedestrian circuit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish amenity-rich, pedestrian greenway routes on either end of Lakeside Memorial Park that loop back to Lake Street. Make minor pedestrian improvements to the pedestrian transition within the park. 	
	DIRECTIVE: LAKE 1 RECREATION (Visiting Spider)	Expand recreational programming in all seasons at the Lake 1 waterfront destination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number and enhance the quality of transient boat slips. Establish shore launch-type beach area for canoe/kayak. Introduce winter programming such as bonfire, pontoon boat, and snowshoeing. Improve site lines and character of snowmobile lake access on the east side of the lake. Enhance shoreline aesthetics and improve resistance to ice action through bio-engineering strategies. 	
	DIRECTIVE: TRAIL INVITATION	Establish an inviting pathway network from downtown from the Hardwood Creek Trail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a trail wayfinding park on the 1st Avenue SW alignment. Develop a trail system for the Centennial Program could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bike lockers & service station Playground Defining trail edges Lawn & shade Wayfinding kiosks Expand sidewalks using the door-to-door and social sidewalk philosophies. Conduct small investments within the 10-minute walking loop of downtown. 	
	DIRECTIVE: SOCIAL SIDEWALK NETWORK	Establish a door-to-door sidewalk network connecting "door-to-door" sidewalks through the surrounding neighborhood with direct connections to downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider alternative design solution such as art and lighting for Broadway Avenue roundabout that allows visitors to see beyond it to the lake. Locate new beach house in a place that does not obscure the view of the lake. Analyze viewed impacts in future landscaping decisions. 	
	DIRECTIVE: VIEWSHED TO THE LAKE	Open the viewshed to Lake 1 from the Broadway Avenue/Lake Street intersection.		
	DIRECTIVE: WAYFINDING	Establish district wayfinding to direct visitors to popular destinations and district parking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a downtown branding process. Implement a district-wide wayfinding signage strategy that incorporates branding strategies. 	<p>Clear wayfinding is a necessity no matter what directives are chosen.</p>
	DIRECTIVE: ACTIVATION	In addition to larger and more prominent events, expand routine / regular downtown happenings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with the Forest Lake Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to develop every-day/more downtown events and happenings. Art Crafts Fairs Recreation 	

Framework

The Framework map illustrates the proposed spatial framework for the downtown area, including:

- Proposed Land Use:** Downtown Mixed Use, Retail and Commercial Focus, Residential.
- Public Realm Improvements:**
 - Seawmable Routes:** Shown as red lines along the lakefront.
 - Improved Pedestrian Realm:** Shown as green shaded areas.
 - District Parking:** Shown as a large red area with a 'P' symbol.
 - New Iconic Skyway:** Shown as a yellow dashed line.
 - Branded Retail Loop:** Shown as a blue dashed line.
 - Gateway Landscaping:** Shown as a green shaded area.
 - Relocated Beach House & Concessions:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
 - Redevelopment Opportunities:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
 - Neighborhood Connections:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
 - Future Redevelopment:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
 - New Hardwood Creek Trail Wayside:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
 - Centennial Drive Streetscape Improvements:** Indicated by a yellow arrow.
- Key Features:** Lakeside Memorial Park, Canoe/Kayak Launch, Transient Boat Slips, Sunniva Garden and Overlook, Wild Ice Speed Skating Oval, and Kayaking Landing Locations.

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.

Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN

40

Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN

STAGE 3: CONVERGING ON A PREFERRED PLAN

The final stage of engagement included gathering feedback from community members, city leaders, and direct stakeholders. Feedback was obtained via online engagement, a public open house and direct stakeholder engagement. The feedback has been documented in the following pages. It has lead to both modifications and clarifications in the final plan document.

JUNE 2ND OPEN HOUSE

A final community open house was held June 2, 2022 to gain feedback on the draft plan. Review materials were placed around the room, plan directives were presented and a robust q&a session was held. Attendance, at over 60 people, was tremendous. The key topic attendees wanted to discuss was relocation of the downtown boat launch. There were questions about its viability, cost, and potential relocation sites. In addition to the boat launch, there was a broad range of discussion topics. Several comment cards were collected and are reflected in following participation summary.

PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

The numbers below capture total activity on the Phase III Social Pinpoint (online) site:

Total Visits
(Total number of visits to the site)

334

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

151

Comment Responses
(Number of unique individuals to provide comments)

21

ONLINE FEEDBACK

Housed on the Social Pinpoint site for Forest Lake Downtown Plan public engagement, was comment opportunity complimented by 7 short videos explaining the master planning process for Downtown Forest Lake. After each video, residents were asked to offer comment and feedback to help shape the final plan.

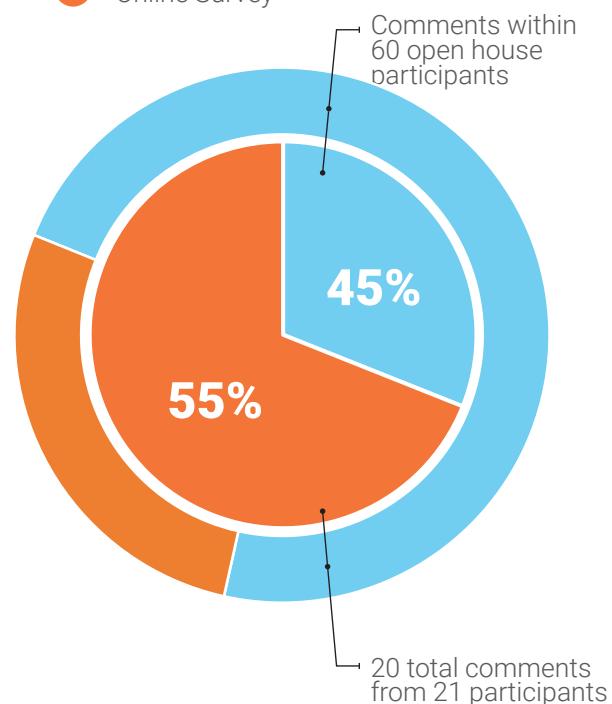


DIRECT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Washington County Transportation staff and the Parks, Trails & Lakes Commission provided direct stakeholder feedback that is specifically in the pages to follow.

Quantification of open house participant comments compared with online comments

- Open House
- Online Survey





OVERALL FEEDBACK

Feedback summaries of the third and final stage of engagement are provided below.

COMMENTS FROM OPEN HOUSE

- Concerns: written comments from the Open House show concerns about Forest Lake not being bike friendly and the Downtown area not being boater friendly. Other concerns are that the playground is not in a good location and that future planned activities should not be directly adjacent to residential.
- Design Suggestions: community members gave many design suggestions, the most prominent being the desire to spur business development in the Downtown area. There were also 3 comments to move the boat launch, and 2 people suggesting to relocate funeral home and move the launch in its place. Finally, there were multiple suggestions to move parking to the West side of Lake Street to preserve the lake front appeal.

COMMENTS FROM ONLINE SURVEY

- Concerns: comments from the online survey show the most concern about projects being too expensive for the city. There were also comments about not eliminating the boat launch.
- Design Suggestions: the most prominent comments about the future design of Downtown were to spur small business in the area.

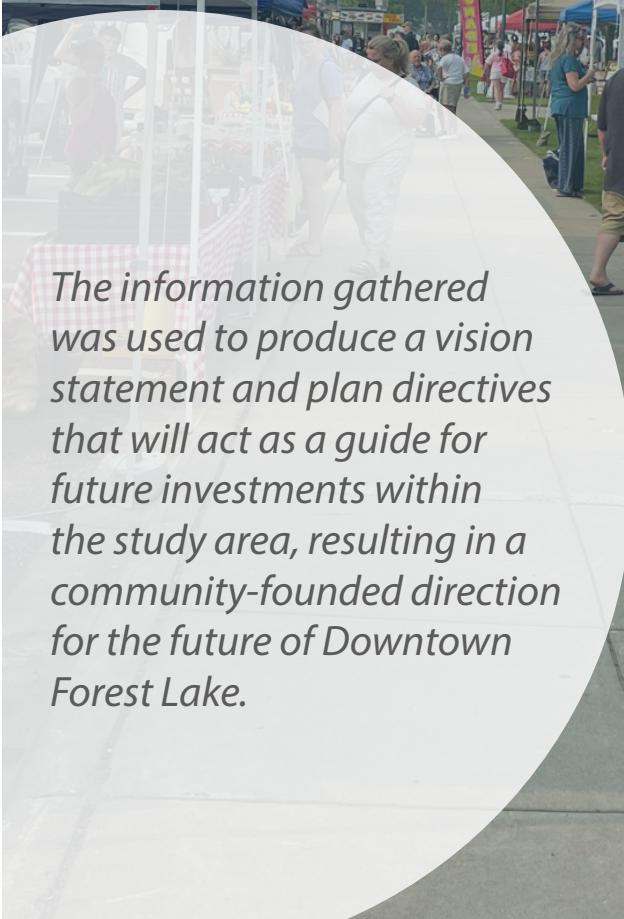
COMMENTS & CONSIDERATIONS FROM WASHINGTON COUNTY:

- Many proposed directives impact Lake Street, Broadway Avenue, and the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail. Washington County should be included in the design process of any of them.
- Proposed additions or relocations of pedestrian-activated crossings of Lake Street will require close analysis to understand feasibility and appropriate approaches.
- Addition or change to pedestrian crossings at the Broadway & Lake roundabout could compel similar changes to other roundabouts in the city to ensure uniform user expectations.

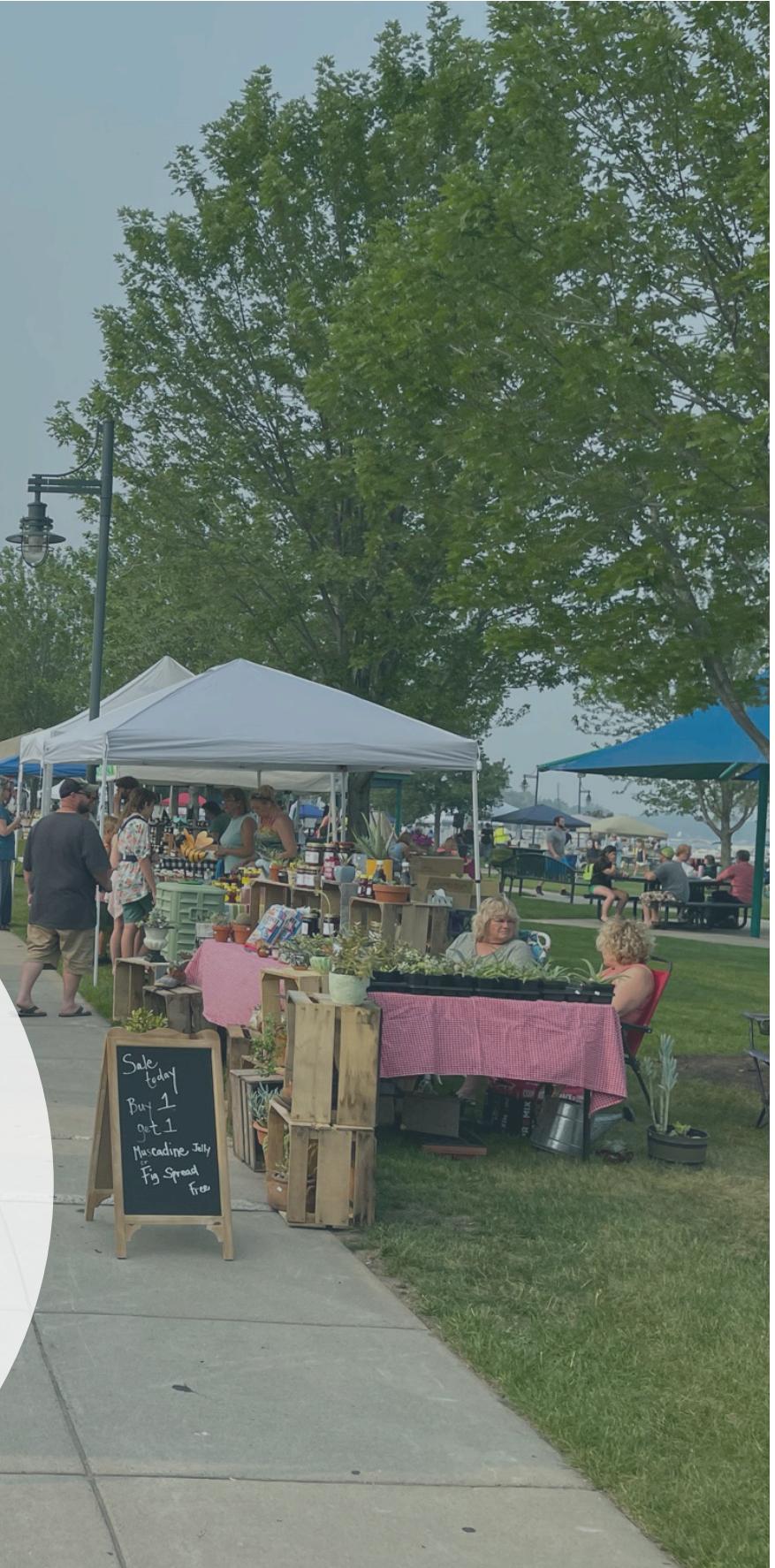
CONCERN FROM PARKS, TRAILS, & LAKES COMMISSION:

- Concern about relocating the playground in Lakeside Memorial Park.
- Response: The final document does not include a suggested alternative location for the playground.
- Concern about the cost and user impact of relocating the boat launch.
- Response: Clarifying language has been added to the final document about conducting a boat launch relocation study that analyzes feasibility/possibilities to relocate downtown boat trailer parking and the boat launch. The document notes the recommended actions that would be contingent on boat launch relocation.
- Concern about feasibility, cost and impacts of constructing a band shell in Lakeside Memorial Park.
- Response: Clarifying language has been added to the final document about proposed band shell orientation to minimize (and improve from current conditions) noise impacts to surrounding residential properties. Detailed feasibility and structural analysis of a band shell would be conducted as an early implementation step.
- Concern about relocating the beach house and especially relocating it to a lease situation in an adjacent building.
- Response: A suggested alternative to relocate to an adjacent private building has been removed from the final document. Clarifying language has been added to the document that the current beach house will likely reach the end of its useful life within the implementation window of the Downtown Plan and, if that occurs, to consider an alternative location that will keep the view to the lake as open as possible from Broadway/Lake Street intersection.
- Questions about the proposed lakeside parkway.
- Response: A lakeside parkway would include an on-street parking bay that could accommodate food trucks. The parkway would represent a shift in parking and traffic configuration from the current parking lots but would not equate to reduction in parking.
- Expressed support for lake recreation, added transient boat slips, canoe/Kayak launch, Hardwood Creek Trail Wayside Park,





The information gathered was used to produce a vision statement and plan directives 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.



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VISION

OVERVIEW

The vision for downtown Forest Lake was built on an engagement process that involved nearly 700 participants. Truly a community-grounded endeavor, people collaborated to:

1. Explore various approaches to a vision for downtown,
2. Understand the audiences downtown will serve in the future, and
3. Establish consensus around a downtown vision that captures the nuanced interests of downtown's audience.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement for downtown Forest Lake built through community consensus and adopted by the City Council 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 the Forest Lake City Council on October 11, 2021.

AUDIENCES

Care was taken to identify the variety of audiences that downtown does or will serve in the future and to project their needs and interests. The audience profiles detailed on the following pages were developed as part of the visioning exercise, in which participants selected their top five. Ultimately, audience categories of **businesses, visitors, and neighbors** were broadly incorporated into the final vision. Together, they provide a fascinating look into the variety of audiences downtown will serve.



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 is 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.

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.

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).

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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.

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.

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 lock-up facilities once they arrive. If they like what they experience, they'll be back with friends and family.



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.

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.



Neighbor

AUDIENCE SUB-CATEGORIES:

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.



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.



PLAN DIRECTIVES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter manifests the vision for downtown Forest Lake into 1) a set of directives built from key findings and translate into recommended actions and 2) a physical plan for improvements called the **Downtown Guide Plan**. Some of the recommended actions are policy or program shifts w/o physical change to downtown while others translate into physical downtown changes that are illustrated in the Downtown Guide Plan.

DOWNTOWN GUIDE PLAN

The Downtown Guide Plan on the following page illustrates the recommended actions that will lead to physical downtown change. Features of the Downtown Guide Plan include:

- Transformed Lake Street streetscape with wider sidewalks, narrower traffic lanes, pedestrian/aesthetic amenities, and ped-activated crosswalks.
- As more redevelopment occurs, creation of a district parking ramp.
- Creation of a 1-mile downtown loop trail that interlinks the Hardwood Creek Trail, Lake Street, Lakeside Memorial Park, and downtown shoreline.
- Creation of a Lakeside Parkway with on-street parking bay that establishes a coherent, continuous and pleasant vehicle loop between Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park.
- Establishment of a concentrated and continuous loop of retail storefronts along Lake Street between Broadway Avenue and 2nd Avenue NW.
- Gateway enhancements to Broadway Avenue.
- Streetscape enhancements to Centennial Drive.
- Addition of district wayfinding signage throughout the downtown district.
- Establishment of a social sidewalk network linking the surrounding neighborhood with the downtown district.
- Establishment of a trail wayside park that draws Hardwood Creek Trail users into downtown and offers teen recreation in the form of a skate park/spot.
- Securing of alternative boat trailer parking and boat launch site to allow for relocation of downtown trailer parking and, if feasible, boat launch.
- Enhancements to Lakeside Memorial Park including: canoe/kayak landing, bandshell, expanded transient boat slips, beach house upgrade, winter ice recreation, shoreline rehabilitation, and a veteran's memorial plaza.
- Better snowmobile access between Hardwood Creek Trail and the lake.



Speed skating on Forest Lake's proposed oval



Street-oriented dining with views of the lake

Forest Lake Downtown Guide Plan

0 200 400 Feet



FIGURE 5.1 FOREST LAKE DOWNTOWN GUIDE PLAN



DOWNTOWN DIRECTIVES

The following pages identify key findings, associated plan directives and action steps resulting from each directive. Written actions on the following pages are encapsulated in the Downtown Guide Plan on the previous page.



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.

ACTIONS:

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.

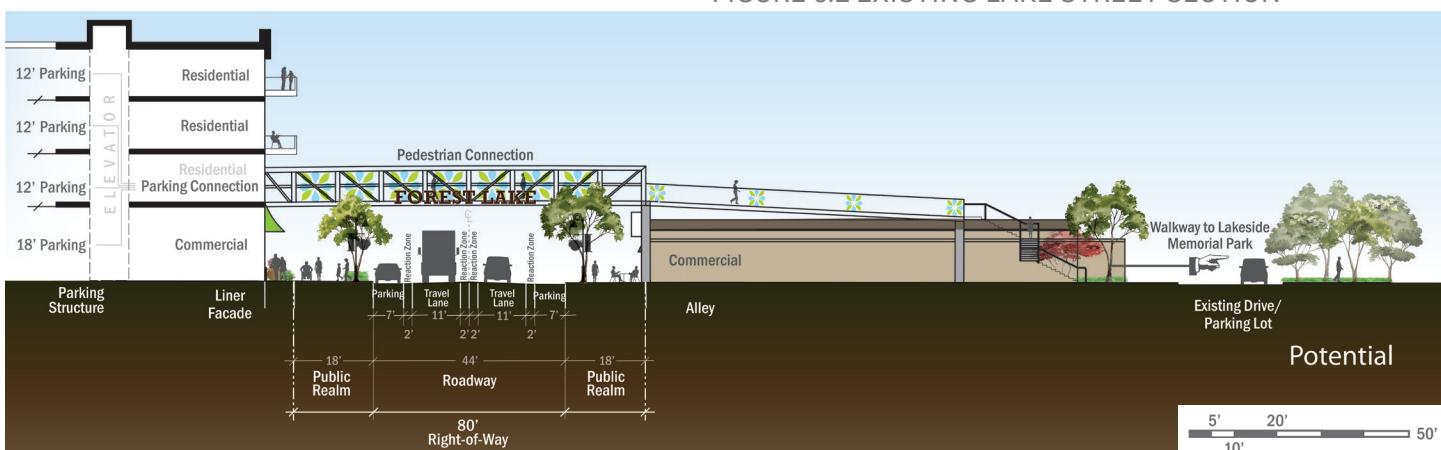
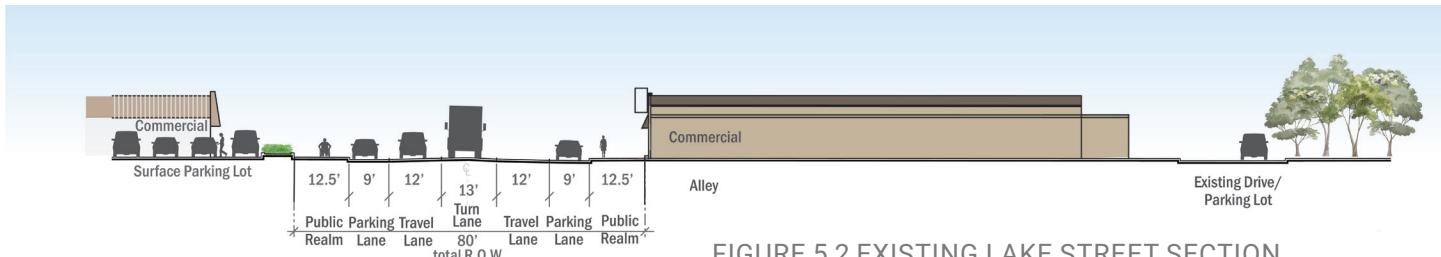


FIGURE 5.3 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION, OPTION 1
(SHOWING IMPROVED LAKE STREET STREETScape)

DISTRICT PARKING

FINDING:

Based on preliminary analysis, three of the four downtown quadrants are shy of adequate parking capacity and the greatest parking demand is east of Lake Street. Parking shortage east of Lake Street is a limiting factor in downtown carrying capacity; however, surface parking in that quadrant is currently maximized, pinched by boat trailer parking and would require structured parking.

DIRECTIVE:

Implement approaches that increase downtown parking capacity open to downtown visitors. Identify alternative scenarios for a district parking facility in the downtown core with varying approaches to creating direct pedestrian linkages to Lake Street and Lakeside Memorial Park.

ACTIONS:

- Coordinate with future redevelopments for district parking opportunities.
- Relocate the downtown boat launch and associated trailer parking to a location outside the core downtown to reduce parking conflicts and free up surface parking.
- Conduct feasibility/impact study of creating structured parking in the current parking lot adjacent to Lakeside Memorial Park.
- With district parking option west of Lake Street, consider skyway.
- Conduct a detailed downtown parking study as part of the first opportunity for district parking.
- Consider zoning code adjustment to reduce parking requirements.

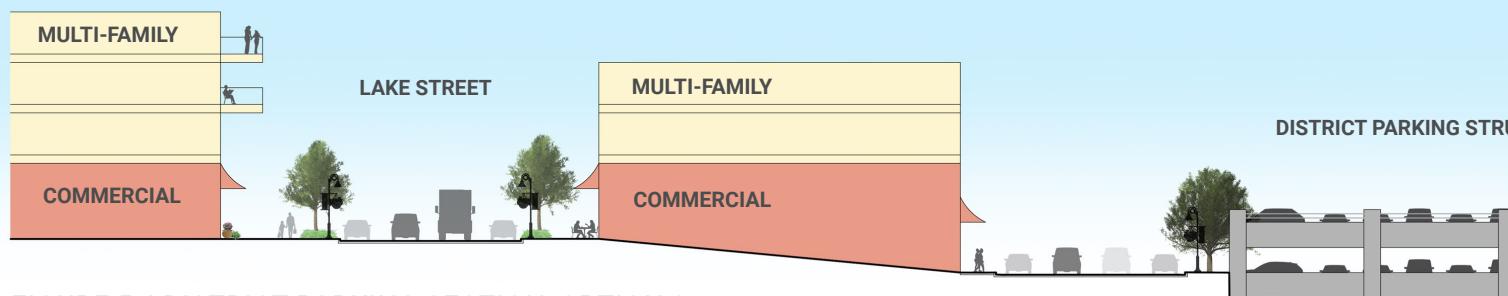


FIGURE 5.4 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION, OPTION 2

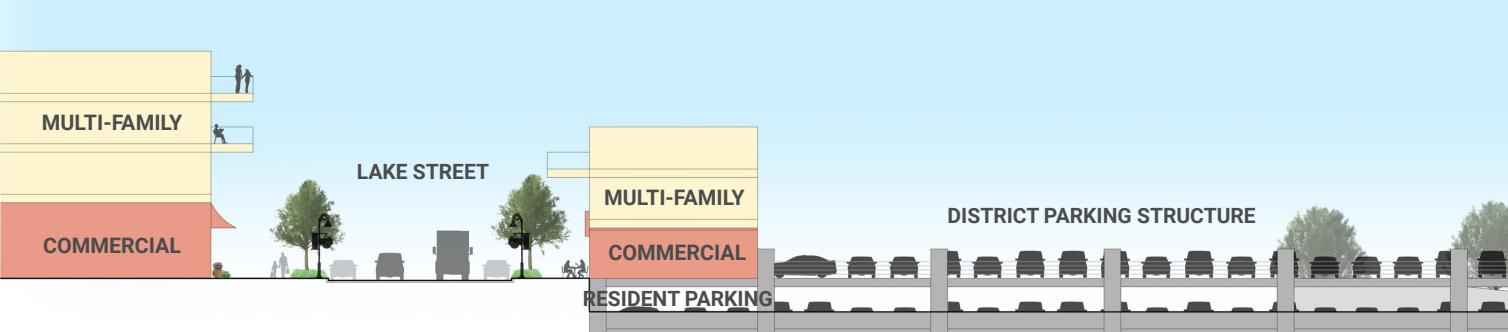


FIGURE 5.5 DISTRICT PARKING SECTION OPTION 3



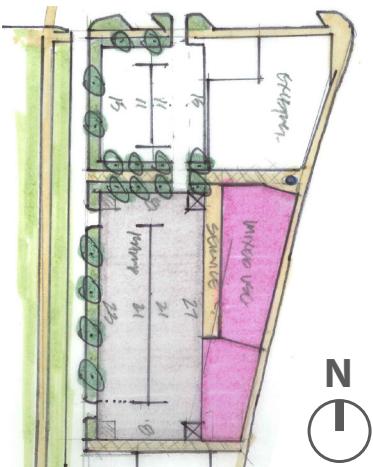


FIGURE 5.6 DISTRICT PARKING
PLAN, OPTION 1



FIGURE 5.7 DISTRICT PARKING
PLAN, OPTION 2

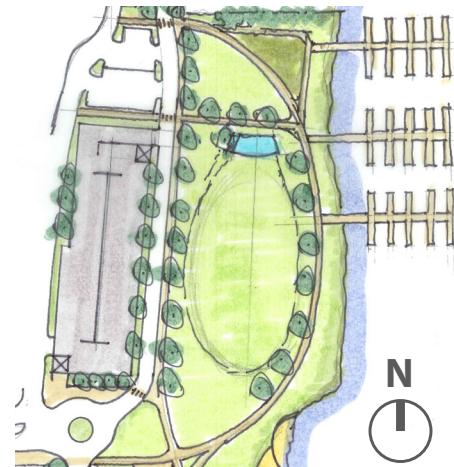
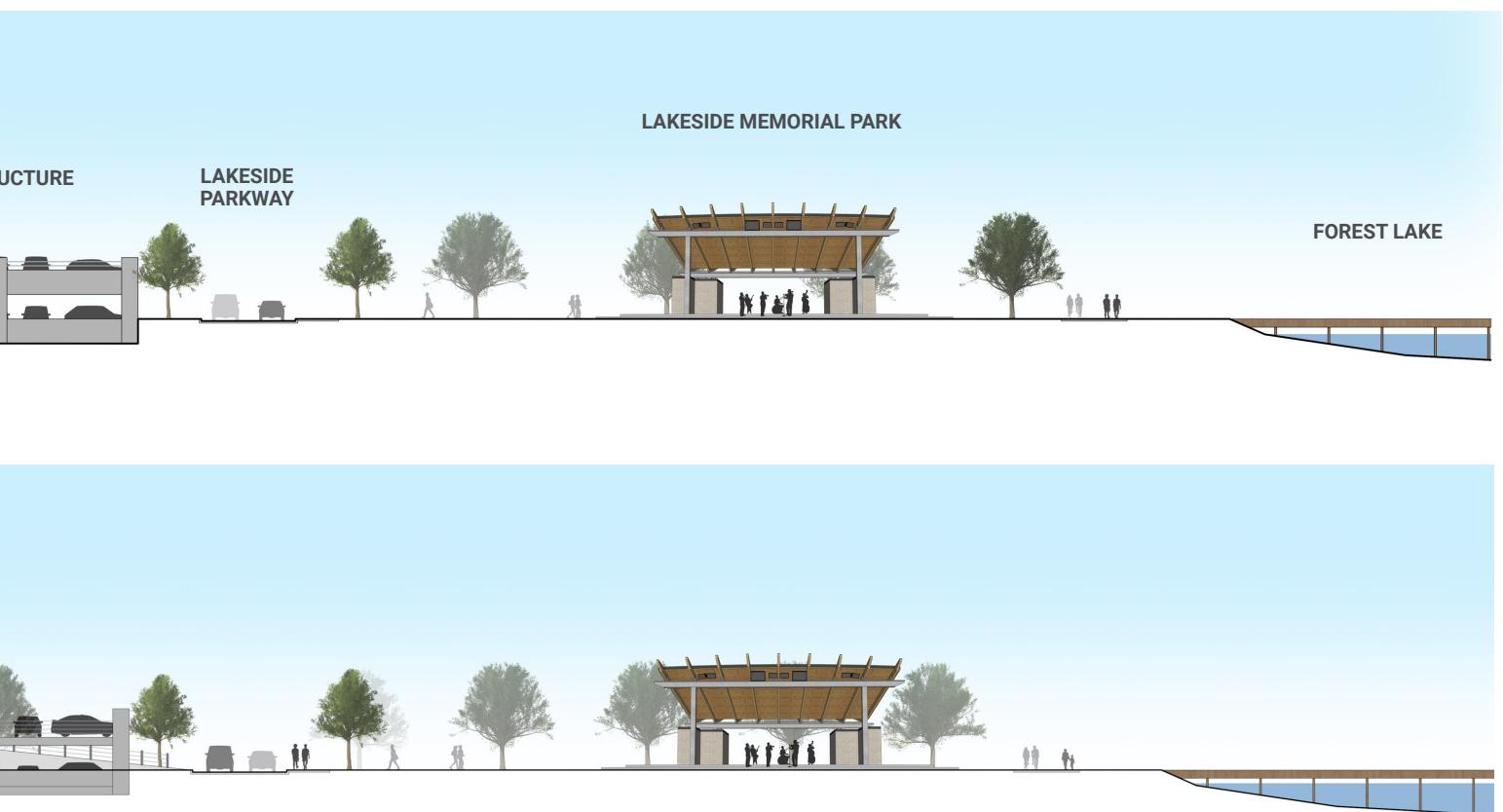


FIGURE 5.8 DISTRICT PARKING
PLAN, OPTION 3



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.

ACTIONS:

- Make minor adjustments to zoning code to compel retailing at the storefront.
- 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.

ACTIONS:

- 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 well.

DIRECTIVE:

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

ACTIONS:

- Create a district-wide wayfinding signage strategy that incorporates previously-prepared branding strategies.



INTEGRATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCE

FINDING:

Because of its isolation from the “circuit” of downtown, Lakeside Memorial Park and the Hardwood Creek Trail are only a marginal economic and experiential contributors to the downtown district.

Also, there are few recreational activities in the downtown to support teens.

DIRECTIVE:

1. Create new ways to integrate Lakeside Memorial Park with the broader downtown district and link the park with Hardwood Creek Trail and Lake Street.
2. Establish an inviting gateway and teen-centered experience into downtown from the Hardwood Creek Trail on a currently vacant parcel.

ACTIONS:

- Establish an amenity-rich, pedestrian trail loop around downtown and through Lakeside Memorial Park.
- Reconfigure circulation from Lake Street to the Park by creating a continuous parkway loop with on-street parking bay adjacent to the park and connecting with Lake Street via 1st Street SE and 2nd Avenue NE.
- Create a broad and amenity-rich pedestrian promenade or “paseo” from Lake Street to the Park mid-way between Broadway Avenue and 2nd Avenue NW.
- Create a trail and teen-focused wayside park on the 1st Street SE alignment between Lake Street and Centennial Drive. Program could include skate park / spot, bike lockers & service, 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, Lake 1 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:

Maintain the viewshed to Forest Lake, Lake 1 from the Broadway Avenue / Lake Street intersection.

ACTIONS:

- Consider design solutions such as art and lighting for the Broadway Avenue round-about that allows visitors to see beyond it to Forest Lake.
- Create gateway landscaping along Broadway Avenue at Lake Street.
- When the current beach house reaches the end of its useful life, modify its location to a place that does not obscure the view to Forest Lake from Broadway Avenue.
- Analyze viewshed impacts in future landscaping decisions.



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.

ACTIONS:

- Narrow the street to extent feasible while maintaining two-way travel.
- Collaborate with adjacent property owners to implement streetscape enhancements including lighting and a sidewalk on the business side.
- Where feasible, add on-street, parallel parking.
- Incorporate the corridor into district wayfinding signage strategy.



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.

ACTIONS:

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

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



REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

FINDING:

Key sites within the downtown district are well-suited to redevelopment.

DIRECTIVE:

Identify and prepare for private redevelopment opportunities as they arise.

ACTIONS:

- Identify potential redevelopment sites and continue to build relationships with downtown property owners and development interests.
- Ensure zoning and design guidance is in place to appropriately direct development proposals.
- Ensure a spectrum of financial participation tools are in place to leverage development for public interests.
- Use the Downtown Master Plan as a guiding document in developer coordination.



LAKEFRONT RECREATION

FINDING:

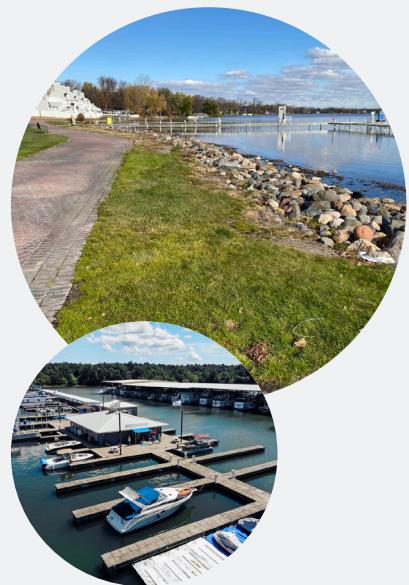
Lakeside Memorial Park is a tremendous asset that could accomplish even more visitor/recreation benefit. The lake itself is an under-utilized recreational asset that holds potential for greater programming through all seasons to draw people into downtown.

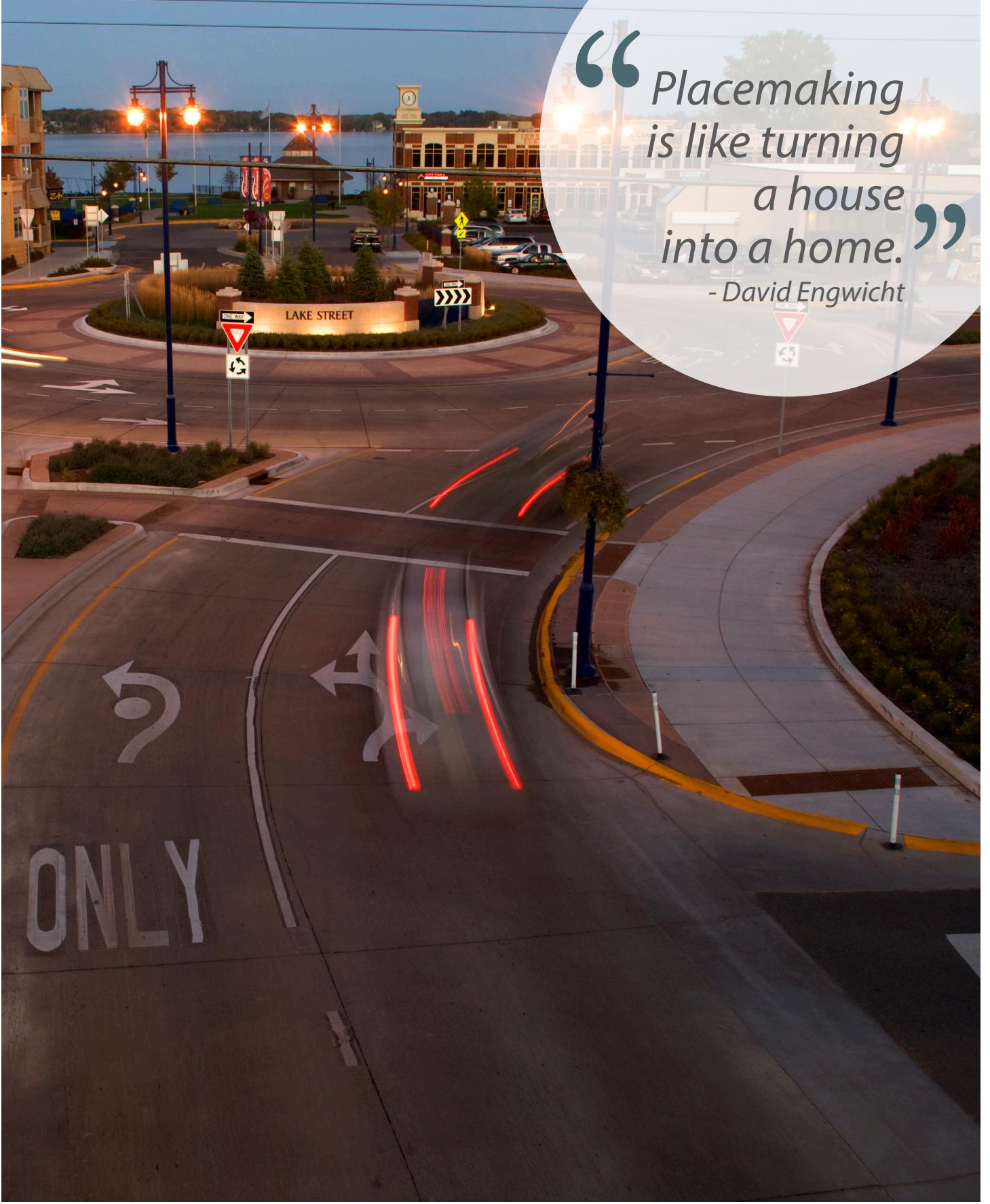
DIRECTIVE:

Expand recreational programming in all seasons in Lakeside Memorial park and at the downtown shoreline.

ACTIONS:

- Conduct boat launch relocation study to identify potential alternatives to downtown trailer parking, boat launch, or both.
- Secure and develop alternative boat trailer parking / boat launch site to allow for relocation of downtown facilities. Ideal location would be close to downtown but outside the core.
- Expand Lakeside Memorial Park across the relocated boat launch.
- Construct a performance venue (bandshell) in the Park with an orientation/design that will not impact surrounding residential neighbors. This action is dependent on boat launch relocation.
- Install expanded and more guest-friendly transient boat slips.





**“Placemaking
is like turning
a house
into a home.”**

- David Engwicht



58

Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN

Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN



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

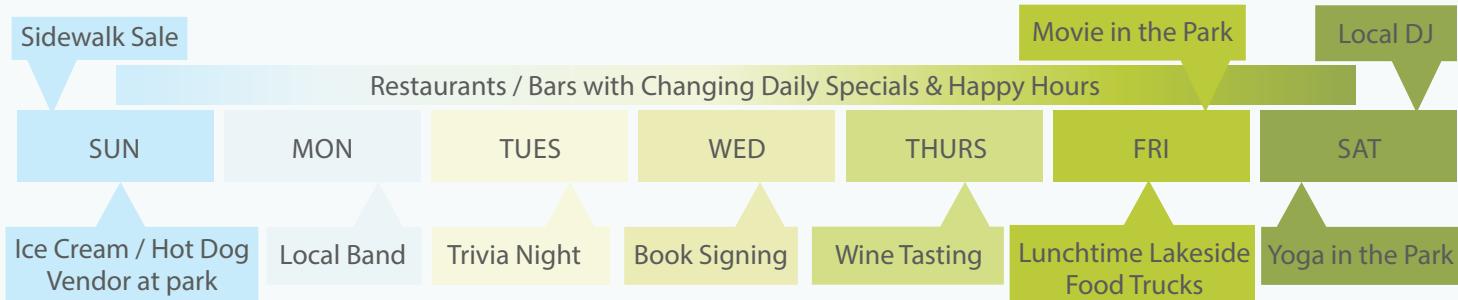


SAMPLE CALENDARS

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





4	Paseo Project	\$879,336	Early Phase	Memorial Park quadrant of downtown.
5	Downtown Loop Trail Project	\$1,714,705	Early Phase	Broad pedestrian way from Lake Street to the Forest Lake shoreline roughly in line with the current boat launch.
6	Hardwood Creek Trail Wayside Project	\$888,129	Early Phase	A nearly one-mile recreational trail loop around the downtown district.
7-a	Lakeside Parkway Project (Broadway - 2nd NE)	\$2,716,254	Later Phase	A pocket park as a downtown gateway adjacent to the Hardwood Creek Trail.
7-b	Lakeside Parkway Project (1st St SE - Broadway)	\$1,918,145	Opportunistic	A parkway loop from the Lake Street/1 st St. SE intersection, past Lakeside Memorial Park to the Lake Street/NE 2 nd Avenue intersection.
8-a	Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (Broadway - 2nd NW)	\$804,071	Opportunistic	Streetscape enhancement to the Centennial Drive corridor.
8-b	Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (2nd SW - Broadway)	\$804,071	Opportunistic	Streetscape enhancement to the Centennial Drive corridor.
9	Broadway Avenue Gateway Project	\$141,648	Catalyst	Rehabilitation of gateway landscaping, lighting and furnishings on either side of Broadway Avenue between the Hardwood Creek Trail and Lake Street round-about.
10	1st Avenue SW Neighborhood Trail Connector Project	\$174,208	Opportunistic	A short trail link from the proposed wayside park, across the Hardwood Creek Trail, to SW 2 nd Street a block east of the regional trail.
	Ramp Relocation Project	\$2,420,529	Late Phase	Removal of the downtown motorized boat launch and associated infrastructure, working to a predetermined location away from Lakeside Memorial Park.
	Ant Boat Dock Project	\$2,420,529	Early Phase	Expansion of transient boat storage facilities at downtown's Lakeside Memorial Park.
	Ant Bandshell Project	\$2,420,529	Later Phase	A performance venue in the portion of Lakeside Memorial Park

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the Forest Lake Downtown Master Plan is not a single step. It is considered a fifteen to twenty-year plan, although experience tells us that implementation will find its greatest success if organized across the next decade.

Achieving the vision established in the plan involves a series of interrelated actions. This chapter provides a guide for actions and investments required to implement the master plan and set a vibrant trajectory for downtown Forest Lake. Several factors will be key to successfully realizing the vision. They apply regardless of the actual form and timing of the actions.

Commitment to the plan and patience go hand-in-hand. This plan does not simply seek to invest in downtown. It seeks to move the district toward a cohesive vision for the future. There is a difference. Commitment to the plan means the willingness to actively promote public and private investments that achieve the vision, and to deter actions that do not. Not all decisions will be easy.

Comprehensiveness. The master plan is a comprehensive framework for guiding public and private investments in the downtown district. Viewed in its entirety, undertaking the plan may seem to be an overwhelming task. Implementing the plan, however, is not a single step but a series of actions that will span more than a decade.

Public/Private Partnerships. Leveraging public/private partnerships will make plan implementation achievable. This approach ensures that public monies are used to leverage desired public outcomes in combination with the interests of private investors.

Strategic Investments. With limited funds, every expenditure is strategic. It is not possible to immediately undertake all of the actions described in the plan. Needs and opportunities not contemplated in the plan may arise in the future. Every investment should be evaluated for its impact on achieving the vision for downtown.

Financial Planning. The ability to make strategic investments relies on the City's wise financial planning. Implementing the plan should be viewed as a series of interrelated actions. In some instances, downtown investments will yield revenues (such as TIF) that can offset related public investment demands. Other instances will require up-front public investments to attract private ones. The ability to coordinate public actions with private development will be key to implementation success. Failure to consider the implementation relationships between elements of the plan will lead to missed opportunities and increased risk for the City of Forest Lake.

Forest Lake Downtown Guide Plan

0 200 400 Feet



DOWNTOWN GUIDE PLAN PROJECTS

The Downtown Guide Plan illustrates a full-spectrum vision for downtown change. Identified projects that translate into capital investments are highlighted in the figure above and listed at right.



Downtown Plan
Forest Lake, MN

Project Legend		Project Estimates	Phase
1	Lake Street Streetscape Project	\$7,398,912	Early Phase
2	District Parking Ramp Project	\$8,119,540	Opportunistic
3	Lake Street Skyway Project	\$3,894,912	Opportunistic
4	Paseo Project	\$879,336	Early Phase
5	Downtown Loop Trail Project	\$1,714,705	Early Phase
6	Hardwood Creek Trail Wayside Project	\$888,129	Early Phase
7-a	Lakeside Parkway Project (Broadway - 2nd NE)	\$2,716,254	Later Phase
7-b	Lakeside Parkway Project (1st St SE - Broadway)	\$1,918,145	Opportunistic
8-a	Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (Broadway - 2nd NW)	\$804,071	Opportunistic
8-b	Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (2nd SW - Broadway)	\$804,071	Opportunistic
9	Broadway Avenue Gateway Project	\$141,648	Catalyst
10	1st Avenue SW Neighborhood Trail Connector Project	\$174,208	Opportunistic
11	Boat Ramp Relocation Project	\$327,175	Later Phase
12	Transient Boat Dock Project	\$265,942	Early Phase
13	Lakefront Bandshell Project	\$3,430,528	Later Phase
14	Wild Ice Winter Recreation Project	\$95,904	Catalyst
15	Veteran's Memorial Project	\$0	Catalyst
16	Beach House Project	\$941,850	Opportunistic
17	Shoreline Enhancement Project	\$275,649	Catalyst
18	Snowmobile Lake Trail Project	\$25,415	Catalyst
19	Downtown Plan Implementation Budget	\$400,000	Catalyst
Total Budget		\$35,216,394	

FIGURE 7.1 DOWNTOWN GUIDE PLAN PROJECTS, COSTS, AND PHASING

PROJECT BUDGETS

The projects outlined in this chapter are key to the incremental implementation of the Downtown Plan. The project budget estimates represent a preliminary, high-level accounting of hard and soft project costs plus escalation (inflation) based on the preliminary phasing strategy. This level of budgeting will be fundamental in building Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) if future Forest Lake budgets and conducting informed decisions with potential financial partners.

- The budgets are built from high-level cost estimating based on a quantification of elements included with each project along with past project experience. Budgets include a full spectrum of anticipated construction, contingency, and professional service costs, which are referred to as hard and soft costs.
- Contingencies are included with each project budget. Project budgeting at this preliminary stage cannot anticipate all the obstacles each project will face. Carrying contingencies within the budget is an increasingly-used hedge against unanticipated costs.
- Design/Administration fees are included with each project budget. The budget generally identifies the industry norm for this category of cost although some projects use lower percentages based on their simplicity.
- Project hard and soft costs are calculated at the “current value of money.” However, escalation/inflation has also been factored into project budgets based on the preliminary implementation phasing strategy.

PHASING

The phasing categories identified with each project are as follows:

C

Catalyst Projects: Relatively lower-cost that are ready to implement over the next two years from plan adoption.

E

Early-Phase Projects: Projects identified for implementation within five years.

L

Later-Phase Projects: Projects identified for implementation five to ten years out.

O

Opportunistic Projects: Projects that are either dependent on other efforts or could be opportunistically coupled with the efforts of others. Forest Lake should be prepared and looking for opportunities to leverage in completing projects in this category.



PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

E

1. LAKE STREET STREETSCAPE PROJECT: \$7.4M

This project enhances pedestrian comfort and character along both sides of Lake Street through the district. The project includes narrowing parts of Lake Street to create wider sidewalk spaces and adding decorative lighting, electrical hookups, street trees, landscaping, decorative pavement, pedestrian-activated crossing signals, irrigation, furnishings, and wayfinding.

Some elements could be implemented opportunistically with adjacent redevelopment.

O

2. DISTRICT PARKING RAMP PROJECT: \$8.1M

This project constructs a parking ramp in one of three alternative locations identified in the Downtown Plan. The quantity of parking to be built (which drives cost) will remain fluid until a specific site is chosen and detailed parking analysis completed. Cost estimating is based on a 150-stall ramp, which does not fully satisfy but approaches what has been preliminarily identified as the current district parking shortfall. Two of the three identified sites are redevelopment opportunity sites and, as a result, a parking structure could be coupled with private redevelopment. Also, the identified site west of Lake Street could be a more expensive project than the other options if the skyway project is determined essential to connecting parking with the lakefront.

O

3. LAKE STREET SKYWAY PROJECT: \$3.9M

This project constructs a pedestrian skyway over Lake Street from an optional district parking ramp location to the Lakeside Memorial Park quadrant of downtown. The skyway would connect with the parking ramp elevator core on one end and include a rampway/stairs touching down on the paseo on the other end. Discussion through the downtown planning process suggests consideration of the skyway project only if a district parking ramp is constructed west of Lake Street.

E

4. PASEO PROJECT: \$880K

This project constructs a broad pedestrian way from Lake Street to the Forest Lake shoreline roughly in line with the current boat launch. The project includes decorative paving, street trees, landscaping, decorative lighting, furnishings, and wayfinding. The project could be implemented in conjunction with private redevelopment and is reliant on some form of land procurement (acquisition or otherwise) for the portion closest to Lake Street.

E

5. DOWNTOWN LOOP TRAIL PROJECT: \$1.7M

This project establishes a nearly one-mile recreational trail loop around the downtown district. Part of the loop is already in place with the Hardwood Creek Trail. The remaining project includes trail pavement, street crosswalks, pedestrian-scale lighting, landscaping, furnishings, and wayfinding. Note that the cost of pedestrian-activated crossing signals at Lake Street are included with the Lake Street Streetscape Project rather than this one.

E

6. HARDWOOD CREEK TRAIL WAYSIDE PARK PROJECT: \$890K

This project creates a pocket park as a downtown gateway and teen-centric space adjacent to the Hardwood Creek Trail. The wayside includes skate park/spot, picnic facilities, shelter, lighting, landscaping, water, bathrooms, bike lockers/racks, and wayfinding. The project could be implemented in conjunction with private redevelopment and is reliant on some form of land procurement (acquisition or otherwise).

L

7. LAKESIDE PARKWAY PROJECT

- A. BROADWAY AVE TO 2ND AVE NE: \$2.7M
- B. 1ST ST SE TO BROADWAY AVE: \$1.9M

This project constructs a parkway loop from the Lake Street/1st St. SE intersection, past Lakeside Memorial Park to the Lake Street/NE 2nd Avenue intersection. The north segment (A) is from Broadway Avenue to 2nd Avenue NE. The south segment (B) stretches from 1st Street SE to Broadway Avenue. The project will unify/make coherent the circulation to the park rather than vehicles circulating through a series of parking lots. The project includes reconfiguration of current parking lot adjacent to the park, an on-parkway parking bay and parkway paving, curb & gutter, decorative lighting, street trees, streetscape elements, and wayfinding.

The south segment (B) is placed in the opportunistic implementation category to suggest it can be coupled with adjacent redevelopment.

O

8. CENTENNIAL DRIVE STREETSCAPE PROJECT

- A. BROADWAY AVE TO 2ND AVE NW: \$800K
- B. 2ND AVE SW TO BROADWAY AVE: \$800K

This project enhances the Centennial Drive corridor. The north segment is from Broadway Avenue to 2nd Avenue NW. The south segment stretches from 2nd Avenue SW to Broadway Avenue. Because the current right-of-way is too narrow to accommodate most of these improvements, the project will be implemented in cooperation with adjacent landowners. As a result, the project may be implemented incrementally and opportunistically. The project includes sidewalks, decorative lighting, ornamental street trees (to accommodate overhead power lines), landscaping and wayfinding.

C

9. BROADWAY AVENUE GATEWAY PROJECT: \$140K

The project includes the rehabilitation of gateway landscaping, lighting and furnishings on either side of Broadway Avenue between the Hardwood Creek Trail and Lake Street round-about.

O

10. 1ST AVENUE SW NEIGHBORHOOD TRAIL CONNECTOR PROJECT: \$170K

This project creates a short trail link from the proposed wayside park, across the Hardwood Creek Trail, to SW 2nd Street a block east of the regional trail. The alignment generally follows 1st Avenue SW. The project includes the trail, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping. The project could be implemented in conjunction with adjacent site improvements and in cooperation with the landowner.





11. TRAILER PKG / BOAT RAMP RELOCATION PROJECT: \$330K

If a suitable relocation site can be determined and secured, this project relocates the downtown boat trailer parking and, if feasible, motorized boat launch to a yet-to-be-determined location away from Lakeside Memorial Park. The project includes demolition of the current launch, restoration of the launch area to parkland, and parking lot re-striping. Project budgeting does not include land procurement for a new launch or construction of new parking or launch. Costs and strategies for these items will be determined with a boat launch relocation study identified in the Downtown Plan Implementation Activities category.



12. TRANSIENT BOAT DOCK PROJECT: \$270K

This project expands the number of transient (short-term stay) boat slips at downtown's Lakeside Memorial Park. The project also creates a more inviting and secure docking experience by building finger docks from a primary or terminal dock (today, boats tie up directly to a terminal dock, which many boat owners dislike). The Guide Plan illustrates two potential locations for the docks. One is reliant on relocation of the downtown boat launch.



13. LAKEFRONT BANDSHELL PROJECT: \$3.4M

This project constructs a performance venue in the portion of Lakeside Memorial Park currently occupied by the boat launch. The project includes a bandshell structure with built-in restrooms, reconfiguration of surrounding walkways, landscaping, furnishings, and site lighting. The project is dependent on relocation of the downtown boat launch.



14. WILD ICE WINTER RECREATION PROJECT: \$100K

This project establishes a lake-ice recreation facility on Lake One at the downtown lakefront. Most of the costs associated with the project are in the O&M category but there are capital costs in temporary lighting, rink boards, skate ramp and miscellaneous furnishings.



15. VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PROJECT: NOT ESTIMATED

This project is currently being designed by a community group to be located the apex of Broadway Avenue in Lakeside Memorial Park. The project includes decorative paving, sculpture, landscaping, interpretive panels, furnishings, and decorative lighting.



16. BEACH HOUSE PROJECT: \$940K

This project replaces the current beach house in an alternative location adjacent to the beach but less obstructive to views of the lake. The project includes public bathrooms, changing facilities, and a warming room for wintertime lake recreation. The project is placed in the opportunistic phasing category to leverage other park investments and because the current beach house has useful life remaining but will likely reach the end of its useful life within the implementation window of this plan.



17. SHORELINE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT: \$280K

This project rehabilitates the Lakeside Memorial Park shoreline to be more esthetically-pleasing, to protect the shore from erosion and to provide greater foot-traffic access to the water. The project also creates a canoe/kayak beach

landing with lock stanchions so boaters can secure their craft while visiting downtown.

C

18. SNOWMOBILE LAKE TRAIL PROJECT: \$30K

This project formalizes and clarifies the snowmobile access route from Hardwood Creek Trail to Forest Lake, Lake 1 via 2nd Avenue SW. The project includes wayfinding, landscape modifications and minor grading/soil stabilization.

C

19. DOWNTOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS: \$400K

There are studies and budget allocations apart from construction projects that will support project implementation. They include:

- Wayfinding Plan that leverages previous signage plans to create a district-wide wayfinding strategy that will guide visitors.
- Boat Launch Relocation Study to identify potential locations, costs and actions necessary to relocate the downtown boat launch.
- Ongoing Planning Services that “work the plan,” maintain partner communications and continually pursues implementation.



- Land Acquisition Fund that allows for seizing on acquisition opportunities needed to accomplish the plan.

ACTIONS MATRIX

The vision for downtown Forest Lake will be achieved by the cohesive implementation of the actions adopted through the Downtown Plan. The following table outlines all the actions identified in the Directives chapter and the translation of

ACTIONS	Budget	Phase
Incentives for retail frontage	\$100,000	Catalyst
Broadway Avenue Gateway Project	\$141,648	Catalyst
Shoreline Enhancement Project	\$275,649	Catalyst
Snowmobile Lake Trail Project	\$25,415	Catalyst
Downtown Land Acquisition Fund	\$200,000	Catalyst
Wild Ice Winter Recreation Project	\$95,904	Catalyst
Veteran's Memorial Project	\$0	Catalyst
Zoning code adjustments for parking, retail frontage and subdivision.	\$5,000	Catalyst
Coordinate with development interests.	N/A	Catalyst
District wayfinding strategy.	\$5,000	Catalyst
Keep development financial tools up-to-date.	N/A	Catalyst
New activation strategy.	N/A	Catalyst
Boat launch relocation study	\$15,000	Catalyst
Ongoing downtown planning services	\$50,000	Catalyst
Lake Street Streetscape Project	\$7,398,912	Early Phase
Paseo Project	\$879,336	Early Phase
Downtown Loop Trail Project	\$1,714,705	Early Phase
Hardwood Creek Trail Wayside Project	\$888,129	Early Phase
Transient Boat Dock Project	\$265,942	Early Phase
Lakeside Parkway Project (Broadway - 2nd NE)	\$2,716,254	Later Phase
Boat Ramp Relocation Project	\$327,175	Later Phase
Lakefront Bandshell Project	\$3,430,528	Later Phase
District Parking Ramp Project	\$8,119,540	Opportunistic
Lake Street Skyway Project	\$3,894,912	Opportunistic
Lakeside Parkway Project (1st St SE - Broadway)	\$1,918,145	Opportunistic
Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (Broadway - 2nd NW)	\$804,071	Opportunistic
Centennial Dr. Streetscape Proj. (2nd SW - Broadway)	\$804,071	Opportunistic
1st Avenue SW Neighborhood Trail Connector Project	\$174,208	Opportunistic
Beach House Project	\$941,850	Opportunistic
District parking feasibility/impact study.	\$25,000	w/redevelopment
Expand sidewalk network in adjacent residential neighborhood.	N/A	ongoing

TABLE 7.1 DOWNTOWN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ACTIONS