

**Winona Comprehensive Plan Update
Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, March 24, 2022
11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
City Council Chambers (*Zoom Option Available*)**

AGENDA

- 1) **March 24^h Steering Committee Meeting Notes**
- 2) **Vision + Values – Updated Version Adopted by City Council**
- 3) **Presentation and Discussion of Remaining Key Topics Frameworks**
 - a) Downtown & Riverfront
 - b) Community Services & Institutions
- 4) **Key Topics Subcommittees Process and Timeline**
- 5) **Vacant Parcels and Community Growth Approach**
- 6) **Fiscal Sustainability Introduction**
 - a) Staff is requesting steering committee's approval of Charles Marohn as a supplementary featured speaker (see attached)
- 7) **Next Steps**
 - a) Subcommittee Meetings begin – late March / early April
 - b) Steering Committee Meeting - April 28

Attachments:

- February 24th Steering Committee Meeting Notes
- Vision + Values One-Pager
- Downtown & Riverfront Draft Framework
- Community Services & Institutions Draft Framework
- Featured Speaker Profile: Charles Marohn, Founder of Strong Towns



Comprehensive Plan Update

Draft Vision & Values

STATEMENT OF VISION AND VALUES

2045 VISION

Winona is a vibrant, inclusive river city where we are connected with each other and our beautiful environment, and we lead with entrepreneurial spirit and creativity.

PHASE 1 THEMES

- Top dreams: holistic livability, downtown, economy
- Top values: people, environment, activities, livability, small-town feel



CORE VALUE: LIVABILITY & WELL-BEING

We value our community services and events that support our overall health and bring us together. We cherish our connections with each other and work toward a future where we all have access to the places we love and feel a sense of safety and belonging.

- Sense of community
- Small-town feel, ease of getting around
- Variety of activities
- Community services that support and attract residents



CORE VALUE: ENVIRONMENT & RECREATION

We treasure our natural resources, parks, and trails as a source of enjoyment and recreation activities for all residents and visitors. We will actively preserve, enhance, and increase accessibility to our environment for future generations.

- Beautiful environment (natural assets)
- Parks and recreation spaces
- Variety of activities



CORE VALUE: ENTREPRENEURSHIP & ECONOMY

Our entrepreneurial spirit and industrial heritage are the foundation for growth of our robust, diverse economy. We invest in our downtown and other physical assets, and we create the conditions for bold and innovative ideas to flourish.

- Economy
- Downtown
- Heritage
- Environment (built assets)



CORE VALUE: LEARNING & CULTURE

We value our diversity of educational offerings, events, and community institutions that support lifelong learning and exploration of arts and culture. We celebrate the contribution of our youth and community members of all ages to our artistic and cultural fabric, and work to empower everyone to thrive in our city.

- Education
- Variety of activities: arts, cultural events, family-friendly activities
- Sense of community



Comprehensive Plan Update: Downtown & Riverfront Subcommittee

Summary

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

Examples of discussion topic/focus areas:

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

Overall Committee Product:

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

Timeline:

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

Historic downtown and riverfront revitalization

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

Connections to values

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

Issues and ideas

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

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

Additional Issues and Ideas from Phase I Engagement

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

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



Comprehensive Plan Update: Community Services & Institutions Subcommittee

Summary

The Community Services & Institutions Subcommittee explores the ongoing community services provided by the City of Winona and its partnerships with other institutions, community support for those services, feedback on performance, and future community service needs, goals, objectives, and policies/strategies.

Examples of discussion topic/focus areas:

- Coordination between public institutions and schools on capital projects
- Desired enhancements to existing community services
- Desired new community services
- Community Services Ideas and Issues from Comprehensive Plan Phase 1 Engagement (see following pages)
- Increasing equitable access to services

Overall Committee Product:

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

Timeline:

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

Community services and institutions

Community services and institutions support the well-being and education of Winona residents. While not one of the initial 10 comprehensive plan topics, this topic emerged strongly in the engagement as an opportunity for the city to support the well-being of residents through its own community services and facilities, along with partnerships and collaborations with other institutions and organizations. We received 236 comments about community services in response to questions about issues and ideas for Winona's future. We'll also unpack 35 comments about education in the section below.

Connections to values

Community services connect to values of livability, lifelong learning, and community. This topic also connects to the comprehensive plan theme of equity.

Issues and ideas

1. Community spaces. Participants mentioned spaces for kids from early childhood through teens, along with spaces for older adults.
 - -defunding the library is very unfortunate—it decreases access to resources
 - more resources, more afterschool programming
 - don't look at teens as a problem, they get a bad rap - look at them as having a purpose, not a problem
 - connection with other people is how people are staying sober. it would be a lot more beneficial to get rid of the stigma of once an addict, always an addict if we could get the community more involved in these meetings for connection.
 - a lot for kids, but once you graduate there are outdoor activities - but there are not many indoor activities
 - i value the friendship center as a senior - I loved the plan that was intergenerational. we have met people (retirees) who've moved here just for that - at some point we need a place that is reasonable for a friendship center that has daylight
 - -services for families and young people more than services to incarcerate
 - I've always dreamt about having an indoor park - like in Edina, edinburgh park, merged with senior apartments. 3-story atrium with trees, plants, pool, basketball, 3-story climbing wall - for stay at home parents in the winter, having some place to go - hook that up with early childhood family education program.
2. Better communication and citizen involvement in city programming and decisionmaking.
 - general city updates on social media
 - building relationship with law enforcement
 - more teen or youth-focused things in government, so we get interested
 - Further collaboration and sharing of resources within the community. Listening sessions, are we addressing the community
 - Sticking points: for me as a common citizen, where do I go with my concerns, opportunities, small things like tree branches. I never felt like the city really wanted to hear from me, so I don't call them anymore. It's never been received in a welcome manner, even though I get that they can't be everywhere, and I'm trying to help out. Money and resources are always a part of it. Having enough staff - I'm sure that limits what they can do.

3. Community spaces that are open more hours, and located across the city. Participants also noted that bathroom facilities are not present in many of Winona's community gathering spaces, and gaps remain in safety and services for people experiencing homelessness.
 - -seems like the city is consolidating to big playgrounds vs small, local playground - big equity issue— access points
 - We have really good businesses and attractions, but physically it's not comfortable to enter this town - where is the bathroom, the changing table, the signs. Think about tourism, bikes, water fountains, and safety.
 - Too many drugs- worry I will be robbed- we have been robbed and kicked at the levee at night- it is not safe there at night
4. Trust, transparency, and access to government
 - you still can't make public comment at city council, you can't show up to a meeting and present an idea. hope that is resolved soon. allow people to show up at your meeting
 - it seems as though Fastenal gets to decide what happens to land, buildings, our river view. i think the community should have more say, and not just rich white men with money. there are VERY passionate people of all ages working to make more beauty and justice here, and it is so discouraging to see how the town doesn't encourage this passion, especially when it's young people.
 - Some way for the city to have steps for how to get what you need. Here's how you do this, here's how you reach out to us. easier to contact and help walk people through. we are in this major growth period at (my business). I think I remember the founders having to fight to even have a brewery downtown, some kind of restriction in the code.
 - -seems weird we elect officials to represent us who don't seem to care what we think/don't ask/listen—send back a form letter instead
 - accountability for city council - their decisions need to match the strategic plan, and they need to have a better knowledge of public service and how economic development, planning, finances all work. accountability - if they're not really looking at what's best for the community, accountability there.
5. Excellence in programming, with metrics to track outcomes.
 - Measurements and outcomes to ensure a clear understanding of needs and how to support those needs.
 - evaluations - the city of winona does not do program evaluation, build metrics into programs
6. Collaborations and partnerships to address mental health, substance abuse, poverty, and more.
 - many philanthropic opportunities. I'm part of the WCF, and lots of requests come in for services I didn't even know existed. how do we make those services more broadly accessible? lots of services like habitat, food banks, medical clinics, for a community our size. we're a community rich in resources but not always rich in ways that we communicate that those resources are available. e.g. you don't have to go hungry. you don't have to go without medical services.
 - There's a growing prevalence of youth and adult substance abuse, and I want to create more community options for treatment and support. Those who are suffering, and also their family and friends

- The city's plan is everybody's plan, so how do they engage and partner with others to ensure that those things are happening?
- A community support clinic downtown, it would have a CAHOOTS model alternative response team, non-coercive mental health and addiction services, on site support for housing. Community led programming. I know there is money coming from ARPA to support this. There are no longer excuses for our elected officials to do nothing and solely invest in punitive institutions while we sit without these vital resources.

Additional Issues and Ideas from Phase I Engagement

1. Value for education institutions and partnerships in the community as a standout characteristic
 - Winona as a center for learning
 - Value education and etiquette
 - Image associated with education
 - Colleges, education, and work opportunities
 - Connections between education and recreation in the natural landscape
 - Good private schools
 - Vibrant educational and cultural communities
 - Historical connection as an education hub
 - Schools are places where all are welcomed
2. Institutions and businesses as service and connector hubs
 - Shelters for the homeless
 - Community and family connections with churches, coffee shops, the environments
 - Connections to music and recreation organizations that are close by
 - Coffee shops, third places nearby
 - Proximity and access to local service and connector hubs
 - An atmosphere of service
 - Community connectivity
 - A vibrancy in Winona that comes from the collection of organizations across the artistic, entrepreneurial, and intellectual spectrums that make Winona a vibrant place to live.
3. Community culture of service in institutions
 - Farmers market and the connection to the outdoors
 - Awareness of keeping Winona's uniqueness
 - Culturally expansive and able to grow to meet challenges
 - Strong connections to places of worship
 - Winona has the capacity to realize great things and should be focused on development of building systems around compassionate ways of living. Access to education, art, nature, and social/community activism is important to that.

Spotlight: Education

Education also emerged in the engagement as an asset to Winona and an opportunity for improvement. Education was identified as a core value, and it supports other core values like entrepreneurship and community.

Ideas and issues

1. Pathways to success for Winona's youth.
 - A partnership between the public schools, the city and business leaders to collaborate in a way that lifts up the working poor. No one entity can do it alone, but a comprehensive program might. <https://swifoundation.org/what-we-do/grow-our-own/>
 - Commitment to improve the public pre-k 12 school system, including programming, quality and facilities.
 - Improvement across the board in education - lots of options, but it's not universally supported and celebrated. Certain groups focus on areas that need to be improved, but there's a lot to celebrate. Intentional about making improvements, and leverage relationships among educational institutions. Improve the narrative, especially for K12
 - High school internship connections- this feels really possible to have during the school day, trade experience→ Build greater relationships within the town, kids identify what they want/enjoy
2. Partnerships and shared planning with local education institutions.
 - Winona should strive to maintain its educational facilities, both public and private. At the higher education level, there are fewer residential students than in the past. The comprehensive plan should address what will happen when WSU rebuilds its central campus dormitories. When completed, the new dormitories may allow for less student housing off-campus, enabling the city to convert residences now used for student housing into single or multi-family homes.
 - WSU enrollment- big part of economy- general college enrollment, getting that back
 - Partnerships- buy energy together with the city schools etc. buy in bulk for LEDS etc.

Featured Speaker Opportunity:

Chuck Marohn, PE, AICP

Founder of Strong Towns



The Strong Towns Approach

Strong Towns supports thousands of people across the United States and Canada who are advocating for a new way of thinking about the way we build our world.

The approach advocates for the following

- Start valuing resilience over efficiency
- Start taking small, incremental steps and iterating based on what we learn
- Start embracing a process of incremental, continuous adaptation
- Stop building our world based on abstract theories, and start building it based on how our places actually work and what our neighbors actually need today
- Start obsessing about current finances when considering future growth

Strong Towns believes that **Strong Citizens** from all walks of life can and must participate in a Strong Towns approach—from citizens to leaders, professionals to neighbors, and everyone in between.

Charles Marohn—known as “Chuck” to friends and colleagues—is the founder and president of Strong Towns. He is a professional engineer and a land use planner with decades of experience. He holds a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning, both from the University of Minnesota.

Marohn is the author of [Strong Towns: A Bottom-Up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity](#) (Wiley, 2019) and [Confessions of a Recovering Engineer: Transportation for a Strong Town](#) (Wiley 2021). He hosts the [Strong Towns Podcast](#) and is a primary writer for Strong Towns’ web content. He has presented Strong Towns concepts in hundreds of cities and towns across North America.

Similar conversations that Chuck has led are [here \(1 hour\)](#), [here \(15 minutes\)](#), and [here \(1 hour\)](#).

Tie-Ins with Winona’s Comprehensive Plan Update

Based on the Phase I Engagement, the overarching theme of fiscal sustainability, and the identified visions and values from the Steering Committee, staff recommends bringing in Mr. Marohn as a supplementary speaker to engage with the Winona Community. He will lead a presentation and discussion on the growth and development of resilient communities centered on the traditional neighborhood and city development pattern, which creates the connected, small-town feel, encourages neighborhood businesses, and is reflective of Winona’s historic development pattern in downtown.

Strong Towns has developed a powerful, resonating analysis of communities based on public connection and investment which ties in directly with the overarching themes of equity, technology, and

sustainability. Strong Towns' analysis of traditional development patterns will provide a common understanding of the importance of investing in our City's assets. It will also help inform future recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan subcommittees and steering committee to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Proposed Visit with Winona

Staff proposes partnering with the Statewide Health Improvement Program to bring Mr. Marohn to Winona in late June for a community discussion, called a "curbside chat," which will be open to the public. All members of the subcommittees, steering committee, Planning Commission, and City Council will be invited to attend. Expected dates for the event are in mid-late June, 2022.

Should the Steering Committee see value in bringing Mr. Marohn in as a supplementary speaker, staff will request approval from the City Council in April.