



Reimagine Downtown DeForest: Online Responses

March 1, 2022

COMPREHENSIVE AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATES

Overview

In February 2022, the Village provided an opportunity on its website for residents assist the Village in preparing a new plan for DeForest's Downtown, covering the area generally outlined on the map to the right. This opportunity supplemented an in-person open house with similar subject matter held on January 12, 2022. The following are participant responses, data, information, from each exercise available on the website. Please see the separate document that shares the results of the in-person open house.

Exercise 1: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

Participants used an on-line tool called "Jamboard" to post virtual post-it notes to identify the following Downtown strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



STRENGTHS

- Unfortunately, a participant mistakenly erased the Jamboard covering strengths.

WEAKNESSES

- Mixture of industrial and commercial uses. Industrial uses take up space that could be used for commercial or housing.
- No pre-existing downtown traffic
- Dog park is a nice idea but too secluded and can't walk there from many areas of town.
- Not enough small businesses/restaurants. We love Waunakee's main street and were hoping our library area would have offered something like that.
- TRAIN NOISE IS TERRIBLE!!! We can't sleep with our windows open anymore because it is so disruptive late at night/early mornings.
- Many unattractive homes/buildings in immediate downtown area and North Main Street.
- No sidewalk along V.
- Residential growth has been in subdivisions on edge of town and not downtown.
- Not downtown, but need more grocery options. Pick and Save is too small, crowded, empty shelves, limited options, too expensive, terrible parking lot, eye sore of a building/strip mall.
- The intersection by Norske Nook is terribly busy.



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- More downtown feel like Waunakee. A county road with strip malls and old homes is not attractive. More variety in business and restaurants/bars. Make me stay in DeForest to consume instead of driving out to Sun Prairie or Madison.
- Downtown is not a downtown.... see any other town/village in surrounding community. A bank, old car wash, liquor store, a park, strip malls/plaza and a park is not a downtown.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Ability to reshape our downtown.
- Residential growth in the area will lead to more commercial business viability.
- Keep leaning into the small town feel but open up the area for small businesses that like foot traffic. I desperately need a good coffee shop and a board game store in the area.

THREATS

- Lack of community acceptance of high density residential could limit commercial viability in the area.
- Building apartments to create more downtown residents does not encourage more single-family residents to the area.
- Buildings that need to be refurbished but won't invest in themselves
- Too many different areas that need to be focused on.
- Big corporate chains. Keep franchises out of the downtown area. Encourage small business growth. The franchises can set up shop near the interstate or Pick and Save area.

Exercise #2: Visual Preference Survey

49 individuals participated in the online visual preference survey, which contained 30 images of buildings and uses that *could* feasibly be in the Downtown in the future. Participants graded each image on the on the design of the building shown, the density/scale of the building, and the use/occupancy of the building on an A, B, C, D, F scale. The survey contained a section to write any comments about the building, including where in the Downtown the building(s) shown in the image may fit.

In order to quantitatively analyze the data, the grading scale (A, B, C, D, F) was weighted, so that an A equals 5, B equals 4, C equals 3, D equals 2, and F equals 1. This weighted average grade is shown for each criterion for each image below, as well as any comments about the image.



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1

Design Grade:

3.4

Density/Scale Grade:

3.4

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.4

Comments: "Looks average; can see on Holum St"



2

Design Grade:

3.8

Density/Scale Grade:

3.5

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.4

Comments: "looks more modern and upscale; too jumbled; like the rooftop"



3

Design Grade:

3.3

Density/Scale Grade:

3.2

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.2

Comments: "Looks boring and over saturated like what's popping up all over town; Not so many colors though"



4

Design Grade:

2.2 (2nd lowest)

Density/Scale Grade:

2.5

Use Occupancy Grade:

2.6 (2nd lowest)

Comments: "Boring and cheap; Not attractive at all; Garages are nice"



5

Design Grade:

3.5

Density/Scale Grade:

3.1

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.3

Comments: "Looks more modern and upscale"



6

Design Grade:

3.9

Density/Scale Grade:

3.8

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.7

Comments: "Looks more eye appealing; Feels more like a home"





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7

Design Grade:

3.4

Density/Scale Grade:

3.4

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.4



Comments: "I like the porches/deck up top; Attractive."

8

Design Grade:

2.8

Density/Scale Grade:

2.2 (2nd lowest)

Use Occupancy Grade:

2.8



Comments: "Would like this if business were intermingled in; Too tall for Holum Street, better for Main Street; A bit crowded"

9

Design Grade:

1.9 (lowest)

Density/Scale Grade:

2.1 (lowest)

Use Occupancy Grade:

2.2 (lowest)



Comments: "Hate this look. Looks crowded; Unattractive; Very old looking"

10

Design Grade:

3.8

Density/Scale Grade:

3.8

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.9



Comments: "Has curb appeal I like it; Would like to see more establishments, restaurants, etc."

11

Design Grade:

3.1

Density/Scale Grade:

3.2

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.4



Comments: "Typical Walgreens look; Hoping not to see anymore chain stores"

12

Design Grade:

4.3 (highest)

Density/Scale Grade:

4.4 (highest)

Use Occupancy Grade:

4.3 (highest)



Comments: "Great curb appeal; I like it. Looks like a quaint shop."



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13

Design Grade:
2.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.2
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.3



Comments: "Has potential with better signage and landscaping for a business; I wouldn't go in a shop like that."

14

Design Grade:
3.1
Density/Scale Grade:
3.0
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.1



Comments: "don't need more Kwik Trips, except maybe expanding the one on the corner of Main St./Vinburn; no gas station in the 'downtown' area; How many gas stations do we need? Please enhance the culture rather than gas; Love our Kwik trip; I like our Kwik Trip locations and how they look; No more Kwik Trips please"

15

Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.8 (3rd highest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.8



Comments: "Looks more modern; It's all right"

16

Design Grade:
3.1
Density/Scale Grade:
3.4
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.7



Comments: "Great curb appeal; Not attractive; Would love to have some fun food/beverage things come in"

17

Design Grade:
4.1 (2nd highest)
Density/Scale Grade:
4.0 (2nd highest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
4.1 (2nd highest)



Comments: "Love this look; I would go in there.; Love this"

18

Design Grade:
3.0
Density/Scale Grade:
2.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.9



Comments: "Depends on the business underneath"



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19

Design Grade:

3.2

Density/Scale Grade:

3.3

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.3

Comments: "Just kinda blah"



20

Design Grade:

2.4 (3rd lowest)

Density/Scale Grade:

2.7

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.0

Comments: "Typical strip mall "



21

Design Grade:

3.9

Density/Scale Grade:

3.8 (3rd highest)

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.9

Comments: "Like the patio seating;
Attractive; I like the idea of it"



22

Design Grade:

3.7

Density/Scale Grade:

3.5

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.8

Comments: "Just kinda plain; Attractive; I like
the multiuse "



23

Design Grade:

4.0 (3rd highest)

Density/Scale Grade:

4.0 (2nd highest)

Use Occupancy Grade:

4.0 (3rd highest)

Comments: "Like patio seating needs more
vibrant type stores I feel; Bike parking and
outdoor seating are great"



24

Design Grade:

3.2

Density/Scale Grade:

2.9

Use Occupancy Grade:

3.3

Comments: "Looks like more offices and
typical office space"





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25

Design Grade:
2.5
Density/Scale Grade:
2.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.7 (3rd lowest)



Comments: "Bright vibrant and appealing; Not sure what this is"

26

Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.5



Comments: "Love the look and signage; No thank you"

27

Design Grade:
3.4
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.6



Comments: "More modern; More greenery would be nice"

28

Design Grade:
2.8
Density/Scale Grade:
2.4 (3rd lowest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.0



Comments: "Too big and packed together; Looks nice, but it is massive"

29

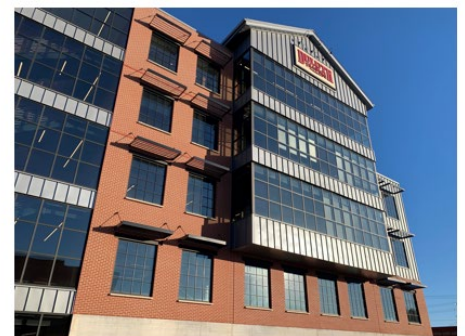
Design Grade:
3.7
Density/Scale Grade:
3.6
Use Occupancy Grade:
3.9



Comments: "Like the brick; Nice."

30

Design Grade:
2.4 (3rd lowest)
Density/Scale Grade:
2.2 (2nd lowest)
Use Occupancy Grade:
2.6 (2nd lowest)



Comments: "Too big; Like the look depends on what business would go in "



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Exercise #3: Written Comments

There were 11 comment forms completed by participants through the online survey. Responses to each question are combined below:

1. *What excites you most about the planning and future of DeForest's Downtown area?*
 - a. I think expanding the downtown will bring more people to our community.
 - b. We are pretty limited when it comes to bar/restaurants...if small communities like Mount Horeb, Waterloo, Sauk City, Lake Mills, etc. can support a microbrewery and restaurant...why can't DeForest? Let's attract one here.
 - c. The idea that we can have nice restaurants, coffee shops, grocery stores, car washes, and other places to spend our money, rather than feeling like we need to go to Waunakee, Sun Prairie, or Madison. For example, we drive to the Metro Market in Sun Prairie because it is much nicer with better selection, compared to the Pick n Save much closer in DeForest.
 - d. Developing run down areas of Holum St and Main St is an exciting thought...I just hope it isn't done at the expense of homeowners and business owners who have done the work to maintain their properties over the years simply in the name of 'progress'.
 - e. Idea of more commercial business and removing ugly buildings.
 - f. Local business, family oriented
 - g. I hope they get rid of the unattractive buildings on Holum and Main Street
 - h. My husband and I are in our 30's with no kids. We would love to see some more culture, dining, establishments, coffee shops, etc. to be able to walk to or bike to.
 - i. Revitalization. Currently it seems like we don't have a real downtown area.
 - j. I'm hopeful the decision makers will create an opportunity for DeForest to have a viable downtown that will attract new businesses and residents.
 - k. Some new shops or coffee shop. Clean up and perhaps tear down most of the buildings behind BB Jacks. Find a purpose or remove the old school building.
2. *What concerns you most about the planning and future of DeForest's Downtown area?*
 - a. I am concerned the plan is just for housing and not businesses that will bring more people to our town.
 - b. The only concern would be higher than our already higher taxes
 - c. There won't be enough change in the Village, and we will keep our current habits of leaving the DeForest area for shopping and dining.
 - d. There seems to be a big push to bring businesses into downtown but it took quite awhile to fill open storefronts once the apartment buildings were built and there are some areas in Windsor that still don't have storefronts filled. My worry is that we are going to have open storefronts that can't be filled or that businesses will not be able to sustain themselves given lack of business and employees to operate it (i.e. Norski Nook).
 - e. Impacts to my house and neighborhood.
 - f. Traffic, parking congestion, loss of hometown feel



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- g. I live on North Stevenson. I don't want the village to remove houses on this street to put up apartments, but then leave all of the unattractive buildings that already exist on Holum and Main.
 - h. I grew up in DeForest and I love the look of the current downtown. It's really sad that there really isn't anything fun to do downtown though for young adults. DeForest has a lot of potential but all the restaurants are in strip malls or away from downtown. A good coffee shop would be amazing.
 - i. Biased opinions; one-sided views
 - j. We won't have enough interest from commercial businesses and building owners will charge exorbitant leases that will deter businesses. Decision makers will invest in this but it won't be enough to create and sustain a downtown. Resistance from community members who view progress as a threat. They moved here or built homes here with the expectation nothing would change. This is painfully obvious from the debates over the proposed golf range business, affordable apartment housing, and a mountain bike trail.
 - k. That residents won't have a day and that new businesses will not be attracted to our downtown.
3. *Please share any other thoughts about this planning effort or open house:*
- a. I was recently with an am old classmate that mentioned their town offers chamber checks in River Falls to encourage community members to spend money in the community. They call in Chamber checks but I think we could DeForest Dollars. They could be purchased like gift cards and be used at DeForest businesses who choose to participate. They could be used. See attached .<https://www.rfchamber.com/chamber-checks/>
 - b. I appreciate the fact you're reach out to the community
 - c. There needs to be improvements to the area - shopping, dining, and basic services like car washes. The parking lot in front of the post office/Anytime Fitness/NorthSouth is a perfect example of the shopping area locally - there is no investment in creating nice places, so we decide to spend money in other places. I realize the parking lot is more on the owner of the property and not the Village, but it shows the overall feel of shopping and commercial areas not being important to the residents.
 - d. The focus should be on the run down and vacant commercial properties in the area first. i.e. - SE corner of Main St. and North St.
 - e. I agree that the downtown needs revitalization, but I hope it is focused on the areas that need it the most first.
 - f. Just moved back after being gone for close to 15 years. Hoping to see the culture and restaurant/activity seen for young adults improve.
 - g. I think it's great to plan but getting buy in from building owners will be a challenge.