

Milaca Downtown Revitalization Summer 2008

Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths:

Centrally located compact downtown
Historic buildings (can provide a guide for future development)
Safe streets for pedestrian movement
Proximity of downtown and residential areas
Community and regional connectivity
Range and mix of business, non-profit, office, services, community space, and industry
Grocery store staying in downtown and expanding
Existing businesses able to draw people into downtown
Large yearly events attract residents and visitors to Milaca and downtown
Adequate parking
Parks, Rum River, and recreational opportunities
County Seat of Mille Lacs County
Community atmosphere-people watch out for each other
Partnerships with the Healthy Communities Initiative and community involvement
Established momentum in building a stronger downtown area

Weaknesses:

Downtown hasn't found an identity
No indication of downtown's location from highways
Lack of signage, information nodes, and visitor information center
Missing downtown businesses-daily necessities, coffee, bakery, café
Little connection between businesses like the theater and restaurants
Short business hours due to demand limit times that people use downtown
Lack of design guidelines/material consideration and consistency have led to tin siding
High volume of impervious surfaces
Lack of greenery in downtown
Similar activities and infrastructure provided in all Milaca parks with little differentiation
No programmed regular use of community gathering/event spaces like Trimble Park
Lack of connection between parks and downtown
Wide roads and parking orientation give spatial priority to autos
Lack of shelter or site furniture makes sidewalk less desirable for use and gathering
Missing sidewalks and worn pavement
No identified bike routes or parking
Many downtown buildings have little visual permeability
Exposed service areas, large parking lots and gaps in store frontages give empty feel
Some corners and store fronts have large set backs that mix auto and pedestrian traffic
Few apartment opportunities/demand

Opportunities:

Defining a central downtown area and identity

Enhance streetscape to improve pedestrian experience, connectivity and downtown unity

- Increased safety at crossings through traffic control and pedestrian bump outs
- Widen sidewalks on First and Second Streets SE by altering parking
- Pedestrian scale lighting in downtown
- Site furniture to encourage personal interaction and usage of streetscape
- Bike lanes to encourage alternative means of travel into downtown
- Street trees and paving material selection

Create information nodes, kiosks and community information for residents and visitors
Create unified signage and way finders around town

Encourage building design and material choices that will add character to downtown
Increase visual permeability of business frontages

Open space programming to create wider use of parks and interstitial open space

- Create opportunities for sidewalk cafes and outdoor dining spaces in open lots
- Town square that promotes active use, community space, farm market, art fairs, picnics, music and movies in the park and other opportunities

Create better connections

- Trimble Park and Recreation Park/Rum River
- Parks and Downtown
- Downtown area-Central alleyway and pedestrian friendly sidewalks

Capitalize on proximity to highways 169 and 23

Encourage visitors by informing them of where downtown is and what is there

Visually buffer unsightly, unused, or service and parking areas

Threats:

Large gaps in building frontages, large exposed parking lots, and vacant properties reduce the vitality and sense of identity of downtown

Lack of businesses that provide necessities for Milaca residents

Local shopping dollars going to surrounding communities

Competition with 169/23 corner and business along 23 that may decentralize downtown

Downtown located off of main regional routes

Lack of programming or downtown activity to draw people over a wide range of hours