

# Wisconsin Downtown Action Council

## Public Policy Agenda and Actions 2010



### Purpose:

- To enhance the ability of Wisconsin's downtowns to make healthy and informed decisions and policies in civic engagement, land use and transportation, and to demonstrate how healthy and vibrant downtowns are vital to their communities and Wisconsin overall.
- To encourage and support the development of assets, resources and tools that will aid Wisconsin communities in their efforts to revitalize their downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts
- To position Wisconsin Downtown Action Council and its partners as experts in and advocate for healthy and vibrant downtowns

**Guiding principles:** To encourage and sustain local, regional, state and federal investment in downtown revitalization throughout Wisconsin, for these benefits:

- New and retained jobs
- New and sustained revenue through increased tourism and escalating property values
- Renewed and sometimes newly-discovered satisfaction with life
- Increased pride in and support of a community by its residents.

**Case statement:** Wisconsin's downtowns are vibrant hubs for their communities and the engine for a community's economy. Historic and contemporary buildings contain residences and retail as downtowns becomes magnets for people involved industries of the mind such as bioscience, the arts and digital media. Streets bustle with neighbors and visitors alike participating in the arts, music, dining, shopping and daily business of downtown. Residents and visitors alike are drawn to a dynamic downtown as the heart of a community.

Urban and rural communities across Wisconsin are engaged in revitalization efforts to renew downtown areas and restore them to their former prominence as a center of community activity. Successful downtown projects may not only expand business, employment, and shopping opportunities but also increase and strengthen the social activity and quality of life in the community. Community support and planning are key elements in a successful revitalization effort. Surveying the community's resources, organizing citizens' participation, and identifying community goals are essential in planning such a project.

Downtowns are:

- Places where residents and visitors come together, places to nurture friends, family, and community connections
- Anchors for vibrant and thriving business districts
- Epicenters of their communities and catalysts for economic vitality and redevelopment
- Focused, cohesive, viable, realistic, and financially sustainable through private/public sector partnerships
- Places with participatory arts, education, and entertainment events and activities
- Multi-faceted and celebratory – mixing up local art, entertainment, music, retail sales, food and beverage sales, events, education
- Vibrant mix of civic design and architectural heritage

- Places that celebrate local culture, creativity and community.

**Recommended legislative actions, through development and expansion of programs in state Department of Commerce, Department of Tourism, WHEDA:**

- Increased funding for Wisconsin Main Street, to expand services for current participating communities and involve more communities in the program
- Targeted planning, implementation and sustainability grants for downtown economic development projects
- Investment in infrastructure (buildings, streetscapes, transportation systems, urban parks)
- Incentives for green technology implementation
- Programs to support research, resources, organizational development, leadership training, technical assistance
- Revolving loan funds and financing
- Establish *Creative Community* Program, supporting community-based arts and cultural programs in Wisconsin's downtowns (a la Wisconsin Main Street).

The Wisconsin Downtown Action Council is a statewide organization established to facilitate the revitalization of Wisconsin downtowns as vibrant social and economic centers. We will pursue our mission through a mix of strategies including developing partnerships with other organizations, information sharing, and facilitating networking and peer learning.

It is our vision that all Wisconsin communities will recognize and support their downtowns as special places and work together for the betterment of all Wisconsin downtowns.

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**For more information on Wisconsin's downtowns and the Wisconsin Downtown Action Council, go to [www.wisconsinowntowns.org](http://www.wisconsinowntowns.org).**