



Summary Report

Gilman, Wisconsin

January 27, 2025

Gilman, Wisconsin
Community Design Charrette

In collaboration with:

Gilman Public Schools
Taylor County
Village of Gilman

This report was prepared by:

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Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Community Vitality + Placemaking

Signature Effort



Design Wisconsin Team

A research-based approach to community **placemaking**

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Introduction

Engaging in a community placemaking process was one of several outcomes from a Community Economic Analysis conducted by Extension in 2023. On October 11th and 12th, 2024, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension facilitated a community placemaking program called Design Wisconsin. The purpose of the program is to work with the community to develop a shared vision for improving the downtown, enhancing and strengthening volunteerism and public participation, and fostering a growth mindset from local quality of life. The purpose of this document is to provide details as to the purpose, process, and outputs of that program.

Design Wisconsin

Design Wisconsin is a community design program offered by the University of Wisconsin-Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking Team—a "Signature Effort" that combines best practices and expertise from applied research in community development, economic development, natural resources, positive youth development, organizational and leadership development, and sustainability. Design Wisconsin helps communities identify and visualize their short-, medium-, and long-range visions. University of Wisconsin educators and specialists worked with local high school students to facilitate the process. Outputs from this process will be used to inspire and guide positive community change. Michelle Grimm, Community Resource Development Agent, University of Wisconsin-Taylor County, and Todd Johnson, Land Use & Community Development Specialist, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension will provide the technical support necessary to bring the ideas from this report to life.



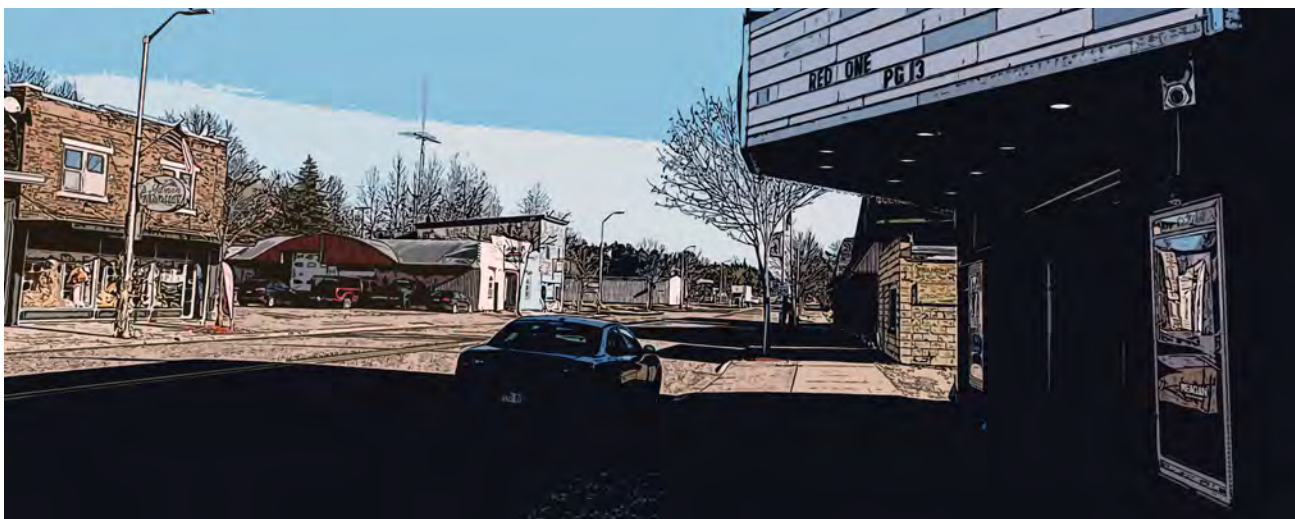
Community Economic Analysis

Prior to this Design Wisconsin program, Gilman Public Schools was awarded funding to work with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension to develop a Gilman School District Area Strategic Plan as part of the Community Economic Analysis for Rural Wisconsin Communities (CEA-RWC) program. CEA-RWC is a joint effort between the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to bring a structured community economic development strategic planning program to a set of five rural Wisconsin Communities throughout the state. The School District of Gilman was one of five communities chosen for this pilot program.

Through the CEA-RWC process, Gilman stakeholders identified priority concerns for their community and set strategy for forward momentum. As a group the following priorities were identified:

- Developing a Growth Mindset Around Gilman's Quality of Life
- Creating a Vibrant Main Street
- Strengthening Volunteering & Community Engagement

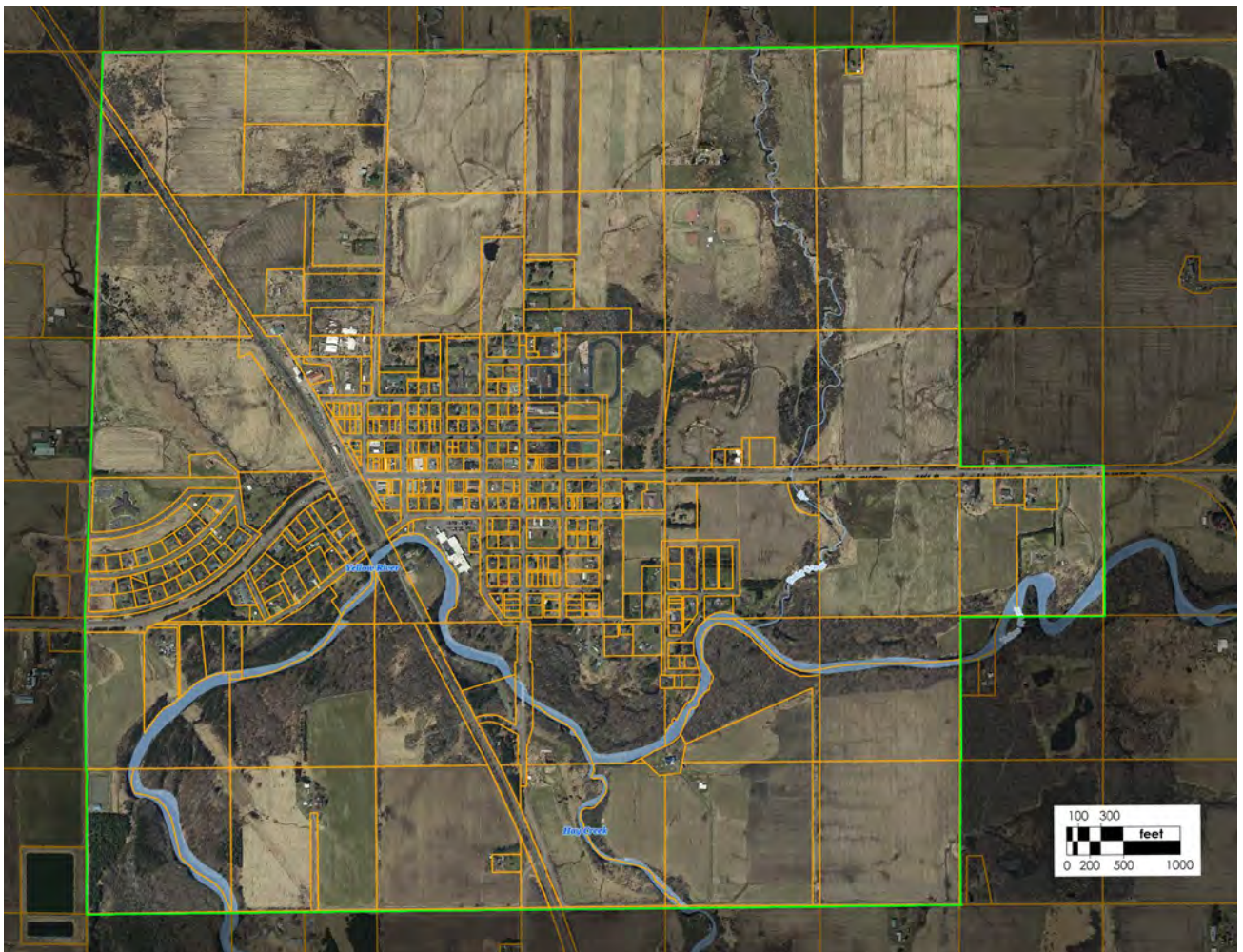
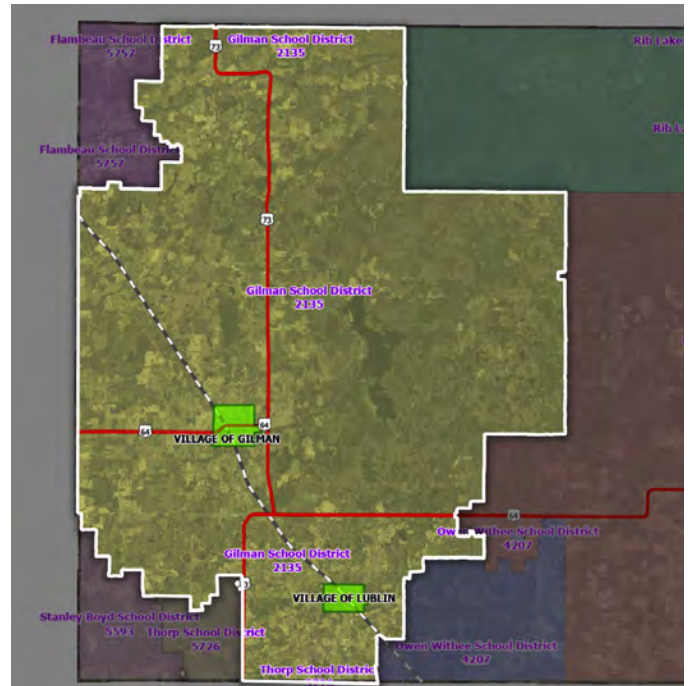
The Design Wisconsin program for Gilman was in direct response to the outcomes of the CEA-RWC process to provide greater definition and direction for implementing strategies addressing the above goals.



The Study Area

For the purpose of this Design Wisconsin program, the study area includes both the physical setting of the Village of Gilman (map below) along with the population within the Gilman Public School District (map right).

Although this adds complexity, considering both does a better job of capturing the unique community and economic dynamics of Gilman. For the purpose of this document, the words "community" and "Gilman" are used interchangeably to express the "study area" which includes areas outside the Village of Gilman.





The Community Design Charrette

Community design “charrettes” are high-energy community planning activities that concentrate public involvement into a multi-day event (i.e., the charrette) in order to discover a shared vision for the future while generating the energy needed to pursue that vision. Design Wisconsin uses the charrette process to quickly gather information from the community and reflect it back using images that illustrate the community’s vision for the future. The program builds and motivates positive community change using a team of professional volunteers embedded in the community using a variety of public participation methods including surveys, conversations, focus groups, and large group processes.

The Community Planning Team

Design Wisconsin is a community development program that is requested by communities who are in search of a vision for the future that they can pursue with resources already available to them. It is important to stress that communities must already possess the sense of urgency to mobilize local resources. In the case of Gilman, a group of local community leaders identified an opportunity to coordinate the efforts of the local government, businesses, organizations, and the school district to create positive community change. Extension worked with the following community members to develop and deploy the Design Wisconsin program for Gilman.

Candice Grunseth, Gilman Village Clerk

Fred Romig, Owner Romig’s Hardware & Plumbing

Jane Destaercke, Gilman Village President

Lynn Rosemeyer, Taylor County Board of Supervisors

Tom Tallier, Gilman Chief of Police

Wally Leipart, Gilman School District Administrator

The Design Team

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension’s Community Vitality & Placemaking Team assembled a group of planning and design professionals to serve as the Design Team for the community design charrette in Gilman. To address the wide range of issues identified by the Community Economic Analysis and the Community Planning Team, the Design Team included architects, landscape architects, planners, and community development professionals from the public and private sectors.





In addition, Gilman Student Council Members joined the Team to assist with charrette and post-charrette implementation activities. Design Team members are listed below:

Addison Vick, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Allison Olynick, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Aubrey Mann, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Aubrey Steinbach, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Ava Webster, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Averie Olynick, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Claire Drier, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
David Timmerman, Editor/Journalist/Photographer/Misc., Lancaster, WI
Ed Freer, Landscape Architect & Urban Designer, Madison, WI
Jaylen Copenhaver, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Jerry Exterovich, Community Project Specialist, USDA-RD, Baraboo, WI
Kayleigh James, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Kelly Maynard, Cooperative Development Specialist, UW-Extension, Madison, WI
Kelly Westlund, Housing Educator, UW-Extension Bayfield County
Kristin Runge, Community Economic Development Specialist, UW-Extension, Madison, WI
Kylee Copenhaver, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Michelle Grimm, Community Resource Development Agent, UW-Extension Taylor County
Mylie Stephans, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Neil Klemme, 4-H Positive Youth Development Educator, UW-Extension Iron County
Norah Noonan, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Olivia Buske, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Raygen Soper, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Reece Weir, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Scarlett Stuner, Student Planner & Designer, Gilman, WI
Todd Barman, Downtown Specialist, UW-Extension, Madison, WI
Todd Johnson, Land Use & Community Development Specialist, UW-Extension, River Falls, WI
Wenwen Cheng, Assistant Professor, Planning & Landscape Architecture, UW-Madison



Pre-Charrette Learning & Input

The Design Wisconsin process consists of 3 primary phases: community capacity building for positive change, the community design charrette, and implementation planning. Each phrase includes components that feed into the following to prepare the community to take action with clarity, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Community Capacity Building for Positive Change

Most members of the Gilman community will only encounter the Design Wisconsin process during the 3-day community design charrette. In order to provide the illusion that the charrette is fun, fast, and productive, Extension works with the Community Planning Team months in advance. UW-Extension's Michelle Grimm, Community Resource Development Agent and Todd Johnson, Land Use & Community Development Specialist facilitated the following workshops with the Community Planning Team.

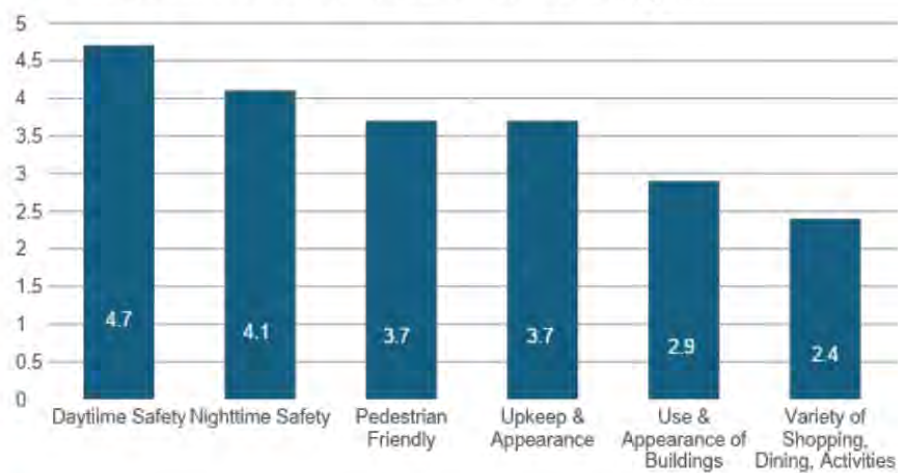
- Introduction to Design Wisconsin: The purpose of this workshop is to introduce community members to the entire process and ascertain to what extent the community is prepared to host a charrette.
- Building a Successful Team: Extension shares best practices regarding "High-Performing Teams" to assure the assembly of a complete Local Planning Team. Afterwards, the Local Planning Team identifies local precedents in which the community successfully mounted an event and/or made a positive community change to develop a "Recipe for Success".
- Community Change & Resistance: Participants will learn about the behavioral science and techniques for developing an inclusive community change process and for addressing resistance.
- Community Capitals Framework: Extension will provide an overview of the "Community Capitals Framework" to inform a discussion that identifies local assets and stakeholders.
- Community Placemaking: Participants are introduced to the "Principles & Practice of Community Placemaking" to inform a discussion that identifies unique community characteristics that could be used to enhance existing places and create new ones.
- Planning for Implementation: The purpose of this workshop is to prepare the Community Planning Team to not only mount a Design Wisconsin program, but to lead implementation afterwards. Extension walks through the final checklist of logistics for the charrette and provides an overview of the implementation workshop that follows.



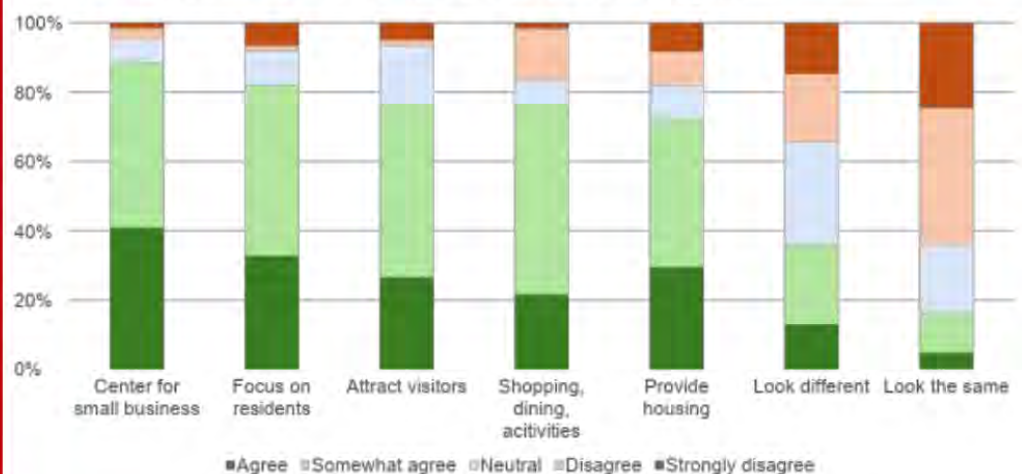
Community Survey

All Design Wisconsin programs feature a community-wide survey to provide everyone in the community an opportunity to share what they think about their town. The community survey serves 2 primary purposes: to collect information from the broader community and to encourage participation in the community design charrette. UW-Extension's Kristin Runge, Community Development Specialist, worked with the Local Planning Team to develop and deploy the survey in the weeks leading up to the charrette. Survey questions targeted local thoughts about the downtown, relationships among community members, belongingness, and welcoming. Key outcomes are featured in the next few pages.

How would you rate Gilman's downtown on the following ...

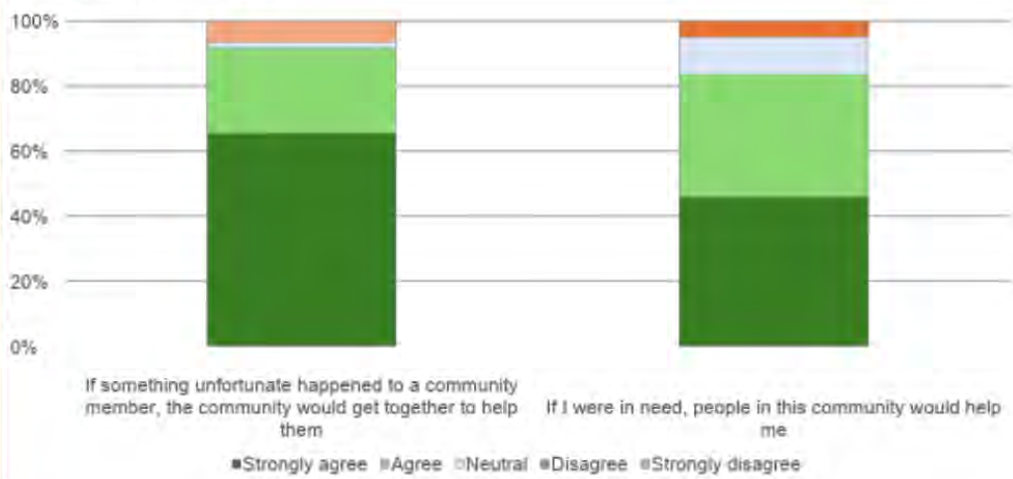


How would you rate Gilman's downtown on the following ...

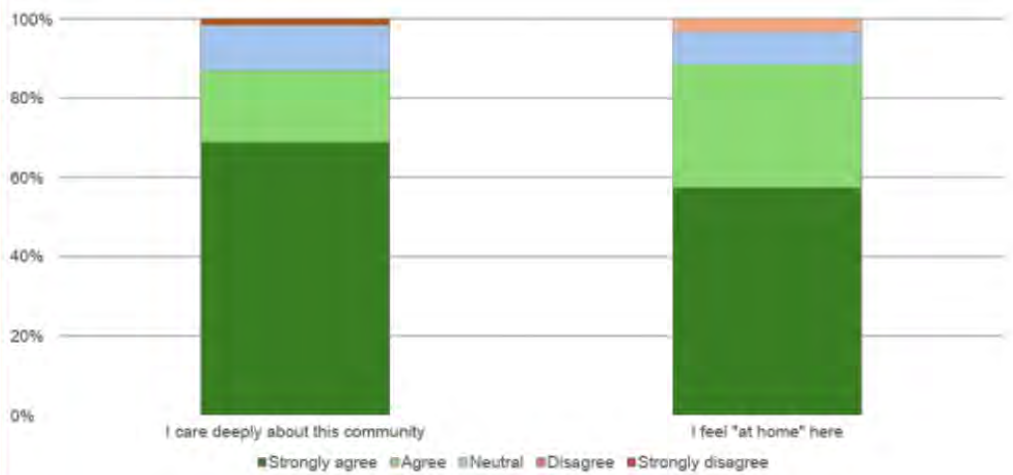


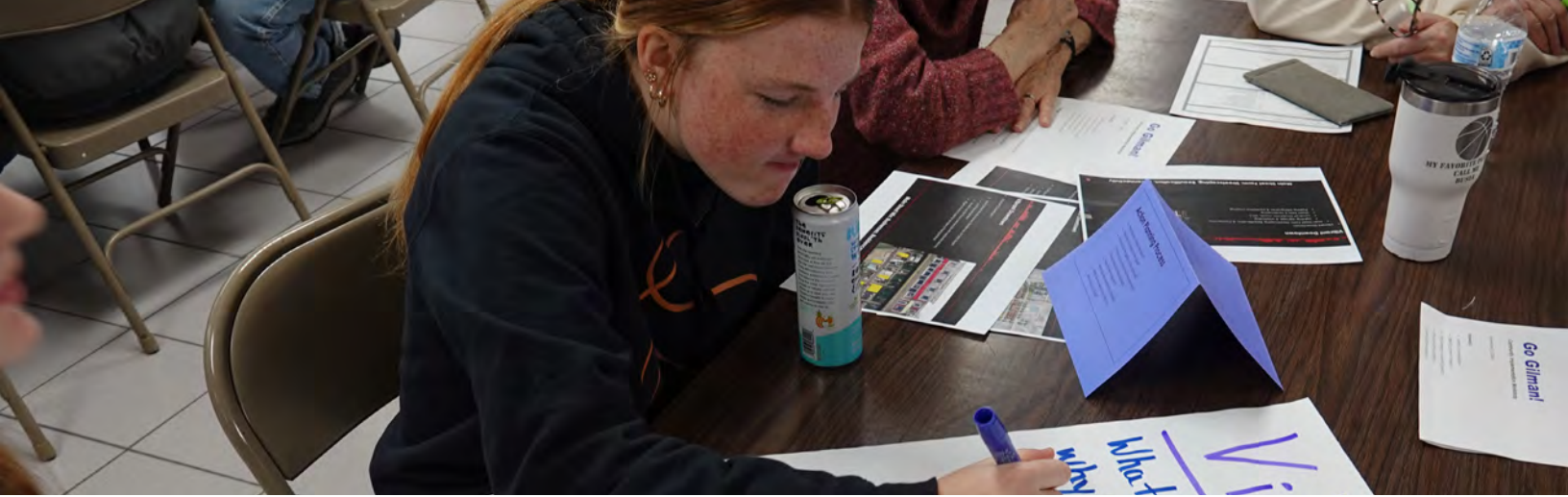


Caring for Fellow Community Members

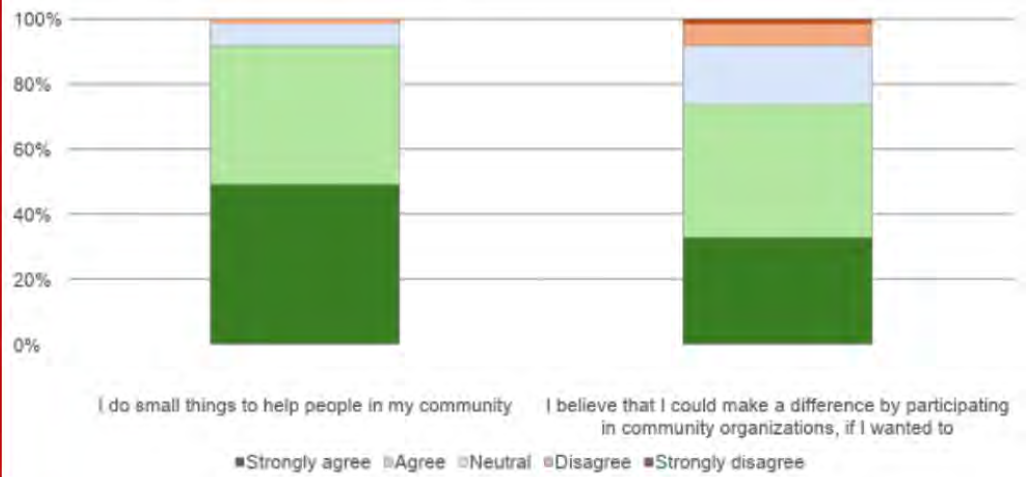


Belonging

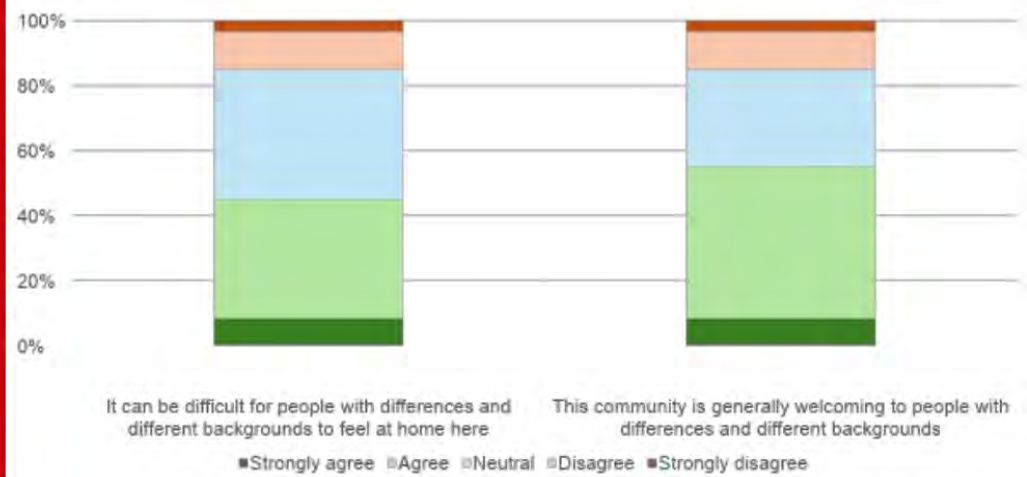




I Make a Difference



Welcoming



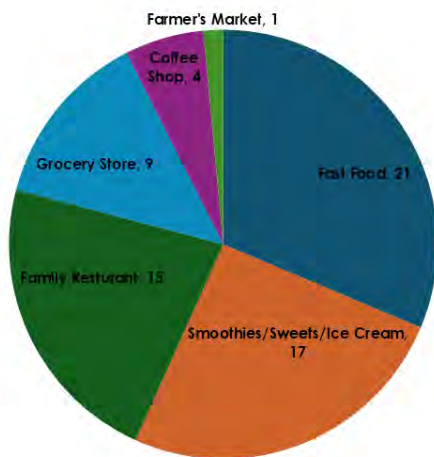


Above: Examples of youth survey drawings submitted by Gilman students.

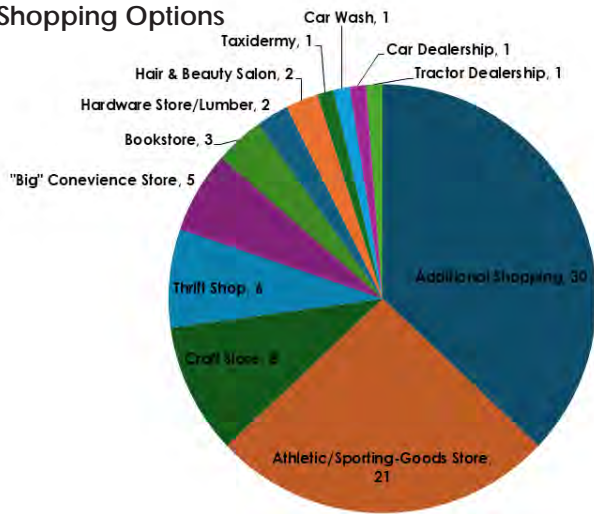
Youth Survey

In order to collect information from young people, students were asked to draw a picture (or list) the things that they would like to see in their community. A total of 53 students responded to the survey (see examples above). Approximately 50 unique features were identified in the drawings and lists. Those features were grouped into the following themes.

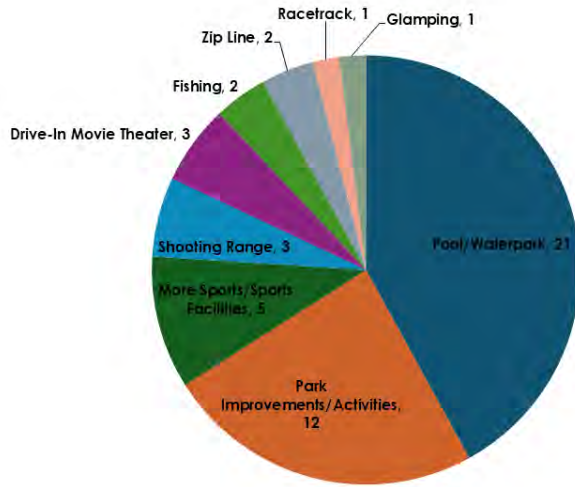
Food Options



Shopping Options



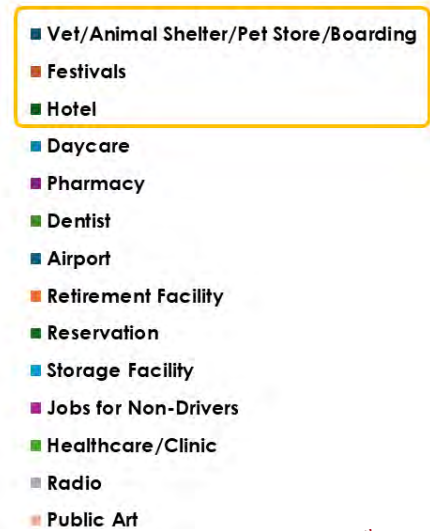
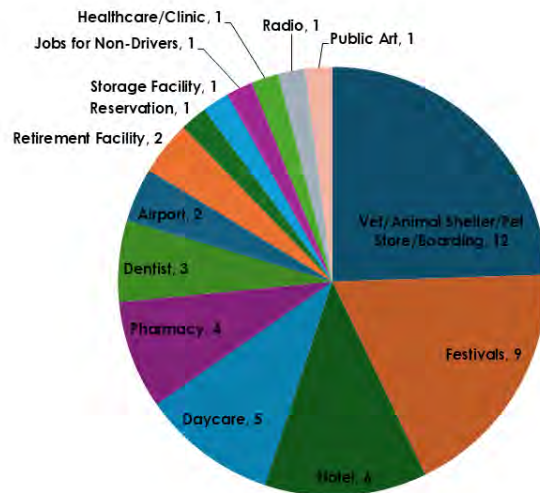
Outdoor Activities



Indoor Activities



Community Infrastructure



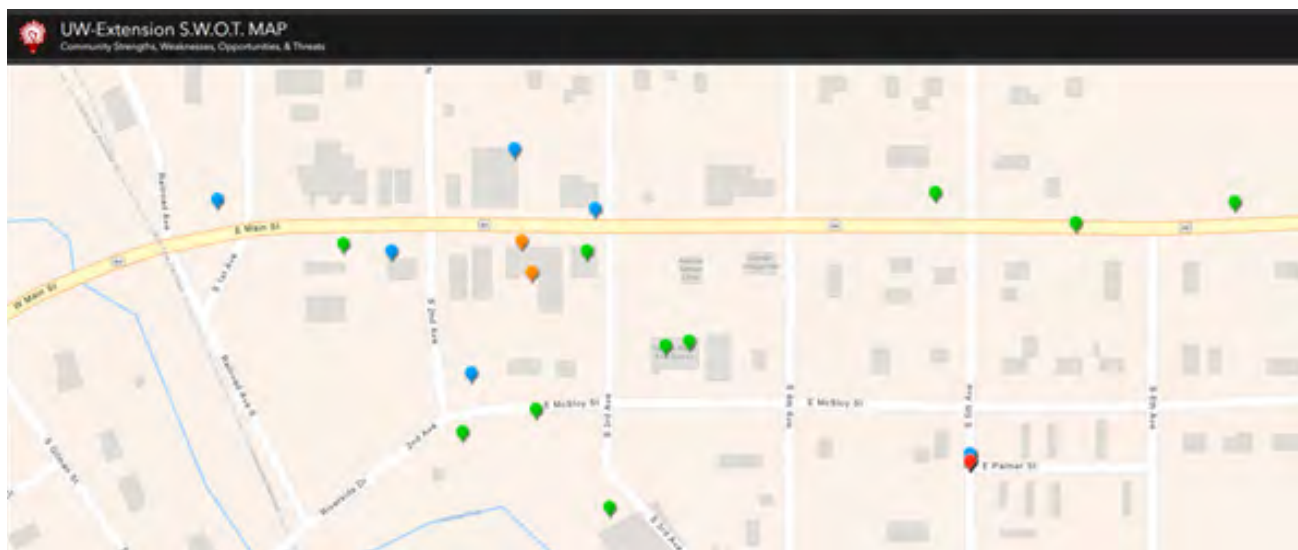


Teen S.W.O.T.(C.) Analysis

Because they are transitioning from children to adults, teenagers provide a unique and important perspective on community quality of life. They possess knowledge of navigating the community by foot, bike, and automobile and recognize the factors that contribute to their childhood and young adulthood. Extension worked with teens from the Gilman Student Council to conduct a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats (Challenges) S.W.O.T.(C.) Analysis”. Students were provided training on how to identify S.W.O.T.(C.) features in their community and to map them online to be used as a resource by Design Team members.

- Strengths (existing community assets): Library, Community & Senior Citizens Center, Amanda Place, Gilman Cheese factory, fire department, Romigs, Vault Village, and the hair salon.
- Weaknesses (existing community liabilities): Large metal building next to Community & Senior Citizens Center, 1st floor residence on Main Street, and the Main Street buildings in disrepair.
- Opportunities (hopes): Corner of the electronic sign on Main Street, empty lot on Main Street and N. 3rd Ave., old laundromat building, old hair salon building, empty lot behind th movie theater, and the bowling alley.
- Threats (challenges): The bowling alley.

The image below is a screenshot of the online S.W.O.T.(C.) website developed by the students.





The Gilman Charrette

The Design Team arrived on the evening of Thursday, October 10 to meet with the Local Planning Team to prepare for the 2-day charrette.

Thursday, October 10

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Reception at the school gym

Friday, October 11

8:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Community presentations at the school gym.

12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

Focus group lunches at the school.

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

Walking and bus tours.

3:15 PM – 4:30 PM

Design Team meeting at the school.

4:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Community meal & workshop at the Celebration Hall.

Saturday, October 12

7:00 AM – 8:30 AM

Design Team breakfast with community members.

8:30 AM – 7:00 PM

Planning & design studio.

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Final presentation at the school cafeteria.

Community Presentations

The Design Wisconsin process begins with a morning of public presentations given by 10 community members for 10 minutes each. The purpose of the presentations is to provide Design Team members with background information that provides context for the remainder of the weekend. The Local Planning Team selected the following topics to present:

- School District & Childcare Survey
- Government
- Development
- Teens
- History
- Natural Resources
- Transplants & Boomerangs
- Gilman Cheese
- Farming Community
- Community Engagement



Community Conversations

Part of the Design Wisconsin process involves a series of focus group sessions with local stakeholders to learn more about the community. Team members met with 3 distinct groups: the business community, senior citizens, and teens. The outputs from each facilitated discussion were shared, in confidence, with other Design Team members to inform the process.



Walking & Bus Tour

The Community Planning Team and Design Team conducted a walking tour of the City Park and the downtown as well as a bus tour of the entire community. Participants shared concerns and hopes along the way and identified possible planning and design alternatives. Some overall concerns included the lack of businesses open after school, first-floor residential uses on Main Street, the juxtaposition of the Gilman Cheese Factory, access to the Swinging Bridge, and current state of the former bowling alley and laundromat properties. Positive observations included the adaptive-reuse of the old grocery store and bank building, murals in the downtown, movie theater, and City Park.





Large Group Process

Following the walking tour, Design Team members facilitated a visioning workshop with the Community Planning Team at Celebration Hall. Over 120 participants were asked to respond to questions that would identify strategies to address the key outcomes of the Community Economic Analysis. The following text summarizes and ranks the most frequent responses to each question into themes.

- **What could we do to make Main Street more vibrant?**
 - Bowling alley and laundromat sites
 - Downtown beautification
 - Update buildings
 - What would make it easier for you to be involved in your community?
 - Better communication
 - More opportunities for young people
- **What is your 1 sentence sales pitch to a potential new resident/business?**
 - Quiet, small town charm
 - Family-orientated
 - Welcoming
 - Friendly
 - Good schools
- **What is your 1 sentence sales pitch to a potential visitor?**
 - Outdoor recreation
 - Friendly
 - Businesses
 - Swinging Bridge
 - Downtown & Park
- **What physical changes would you like to see in Gilman?**
 - Fix, update, or tear down old buildings
 - Housing
 - New Businesses
 - Clean up site (trailer park)
- **If we could tackle one thing to make Gilman better, what would it be?**
 - Housing
 - Appearance of Downtown
 - More Jobs
 - More Businesses



- **What do you want to tell us that you haven't told us already?**
 - Suggestions for various Businesses
 - Tourism and Entertainment
 - Develop Trails and Parks
 - Social opportunities and social support
 - Shared Vision: Growth Mindset & Quality of Life
 - Park Improvements
 - Amenities & Activities

After the community workshop, Design Team members synthesized the data above and began organizing it into planning and design alternatives that could address the initial goals of: Developing a Growth Mindset & Quality of Life, Creating a Vibrant Main Street, and Strengthening Volunteering & Community Engagement.



Above: Design Team members organizing individual community responses from the large group workshop into themes. These themes are used to help direct planning and design alternatives.



Quality of Life: The Great Outdoors

One of the key goals from the Community Economic Analysis was “Developing a Growth Mindset Around Gilman’s Quality of Life”. Gilman has an abundance of natural assets for its size. Developing those assets and communicating their value is key.

Park Improvements

Through surveys, many community members mentioned adding more parks or improving park facilities and amenities. Many youth participants mentioned adding pools, playgrounds, games, sports facilities, shooting ranges, and other activities to Gilman’s parks. Archery and GaGa Ball are also popular activities for youth in the area, so many suggested adding space for that. Finally, pickle-ball has emerged as a popular activity in recent years, and seems to be popular with all ages in Gilman. Other activities that could appeal to all ages and activity levels include movie nights, live performances, and other festivals or events. Community members identified the need for general upgrades and light maintenance to make parks more accessible and enjoyable.



Above: Simulated illustration of outdoor movies being shown in the City Park.



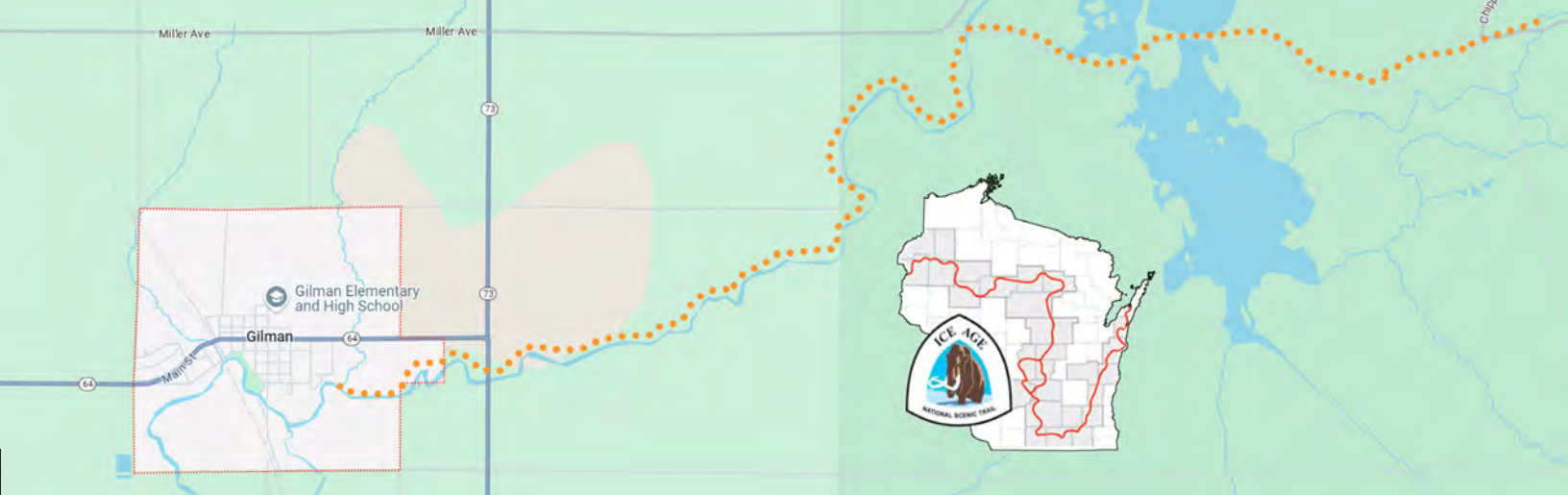
Image 1: Riverwalk connecting the downtown to parks with a pedestrian bridge.

Water Sports & Riverwalk

Gilman is situated on the Yellow River, providing an opportunity to embrace outdoor recreation and water activities. Water sports are among the fastest growing recreational activities, and many people travel to partake in river rafting, kayaking, paddle-boarding, fishing, and swimming. Providing access to the river through kayak and boat launches, equipment rentals, and signage can help promote these recreational activities. Adding a trail system and/or river walk with seating and areas to view wildlife could provide additional opportunities to enjoy the river. Overall, embracing measures to improve the accessibility of the river can help attract residents and visitors seeking to enjoy one of Gilman’s greatest natural assets.



Above: A.I. generated image of a potential kayak launch for the City Park.

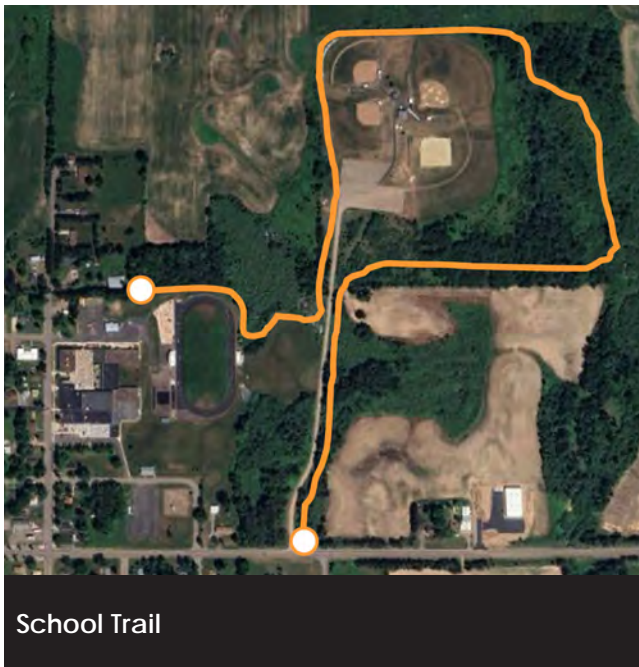


Gilman Trail System

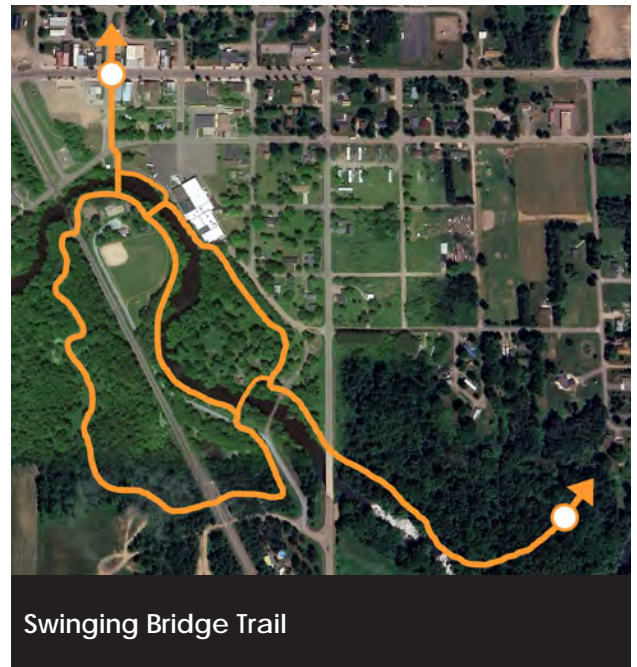
Gilman has valuable outdoor recreational opportunities on land as well. Taylor County as a whole has more mileage of the designated ice age trail than any other county in the state, and it was recently designated as a national scenic trail by the U.S. National Parks Service. Currently, the trail ends on state route 64, but there could be an opportunity to extend it across Beaver Creek to end in Gilman instead. This would bring in more visitors who may stay in Gilman, purchase food in Gilman, or take a break and enjoy different recreational activities in Gilman. This extension would be known as the school trail and could also be used by students for sports practice, gym class, or just hanging out. These trails could also connect to the swinging bridge, a key attraction in Gilman. Overall, these trail improvements would create a more interconnected, multi-use regional trail system for hiking, biking and other activities.



Downtown Trail



School Trail



Swinging Bridge Trail



Quality of Life: Housing

Communities across the country are grappling with a housing crisis, and Gilman is not immune. Throughout surveys and focus groups, housing came up as a key theme. A vibrant community with a thriving population must have adequate, affordable, and accessible housing options for different types of households and individuals. Relying exclusively on single-family housing can leave out the needs of aging seniors, individual working professionals, students, and others. Townhouses, condos, duplexes, and apartments, with a mix of rental and owned options, can help accommodate these diverse needs. Adding more housing near downtown can also spur development and drive traffic to the businesses, enhancing the overall vibrancy of Main Street. Some of the development ideas and renderings throughout this report show opportunities for this kind of housing development.

Life-Cycle Housing Choice

All communities should provide a variety of housing choice in order to meet the housing needs of current and future residents. “Life-Cycle Housing” assures that everyone who wants a place to live in Gilman can live in Gilman. This is done by providing a variety of housing types and ownership options that serve different people at different stages of their lives.

- Single-Family Housing: The single family home is the most common and typically the most expensive housing type. One way to make single-family homes more affordable is to rethink the design and layout of the home. The house and lot can be smaller. Amenities such as driveways, yards, and garages can be shared. Another way to reduce the cost of single-family homes is to separate the cost of the land from the cost of the home itself. The land trust model has been used in other communities to develop affordable housing. The trust owns the land and manages land leases. The site is leased for many decades to the building owner. The housing land trust is usually a non-profit organization in which homeownership entry costs are reduced in exchange for modest equity gains when the house is sold to another owner. This enables first-time home owners to live in a single-family home that will be affordable for the next owner.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or “Granny Flats”: Granny Flats provide additional housing at low cost. They can be located as separate units at the back of property, be built as part of a garage, or as part of a home’s addition (basement, attic, or expansion).
- Multi-Family Housing: Multi-family housing is the most efficient way to provide affordable homes in a community. Locate higher concentrations of housing units near schools, parks, and other services so that people can live near where they work, learn, and play. Less reliance on the automobile reduces their impact on the existing roads. Different ownership models and price points for multi-family housing help address the wide range of incomes and lifestyles in Gilman.





- Cottage Clusters: Cluster developments increase the number of units per acre. That makes most use of the lots and minimizes the cost of services by sharing driveways, walks, yards, utilities and parking. The flexible arrangement and lower cost of cottages makes them attractive for addressing the housing needs of everyone from first-home buyer to retiree.
- Strategic Layout Provides Opportunities for Mixed-Incomes: When assembling a community housing strategy beware of creating too much separation between different housing types and price points. This can stigmatize affordable housing and designate desirable and less desirable areas of a town. One strategy is to mix the housing sizes and amenities within a larger project. The example below is a “shared court” design in which a mix of housing types are assembled around a shared green space to minimize building footprints/cost and encourage community interaction.
- Encourage Mixed-Use Infill Development Downtown: Housing in and around the downtown brings vibrancy to local businesses and doesn’t require new utilities and roads. When developing housing options downtown, reserve the first floor for businesses and upper floors to residential. This allows the downtown to serve its primary purpose as a business district.

- Mixed-Density Pocket Neighborhood: When developing new and affordable housing options, consider a mix of housing types and rents to meet a diverse portfolio of housing needs. Pocket neighborhoods are developments that lower the entry cost of housing by consolidating individual yards into parks and individual garages into shared facilities. The illustration to the right is an example of a mixed-density pocket neighborhood. It includes single-family detached condominiums, apartments, and shared garages and park space.





Planning for Housing

Develop a plan for housing that balances current needs and future trends with local values. Consider working with an outside facilitator to assist in walking through the process. The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension offers the following programs:

- Housing Situational Analysis: The purpose of the Housing Situational Analysis program is to help communities have a better understanding of their housing situation using labor statistics, housing data, and cost of living. Community stakeholders will learn how to interpret and use these data sets to identify specific housing issues and opportunities.
- Housing CEA: The “Housing CEA” program is based on the traditional Community Economic Analysis program developed by Glen Pulver and Ron Shaffer in the 1980s. The program is aimed at bringing together a group of concerned citizens from the community with the aim of (1) better understanding the housing market, (2) better understanding the range of potential strategies to address their self-identified housing issues, and (3) develop an action plan to address housing issues within the community. In addition to the pre-planning process of identifying the core group of community residents, the program is composed of three working sessions. The first session focuses on analyzing data relevant to understanding the local housing market. The aim is to both broaden and deepen participants understanding of housing issues. The second session utilizes the Housing Preparedness Index, a tool designed to facilitate a discussion around a wide range of housing strategies. The third and final session is designed to identify three or four specific objectives to be addressed by the group with specific action steps and/or strategies to pursue. Extension’s role is both a facilitator of the process and educational relative to the data analysis and Preparedness Index.
- Community-Led Housing Market Study: The goal of the Community-Led Housing Market Study is to put municipalities in the driver’s seat when it comes to attracting developers to build the types of housing that are needed most by a community’s residents and stakeholders. We take a comprehensive look at housing, with a focus on identifying housing-related needs across all segments of the community. We create a profile of residents and commuters, dig into statistics on cost-burdened households, and look at regional growth trends. To fill in the gaps, we conduct a survey of residents and stakeholders to better understand their needs around housing. The results are compiled into a report that is useful in guiding local housing policy while also serving as a market research document to attract developers and builders. Residents and stakeholders who participate in this work learn a great deal about housing and are better equipped to address local housing issues.





West End Housing Development

Gilman has several opportunities to develop a variety of housing options within the Village limits. This makes it more cost effective to maintain services while providing convenience access to community amenities, and businesses. The properties along the west end of town are the most “ripe” for development and able to provide much needed higher-density/more affordable housing. This conceptual plan features duplexes along the south side of Hickory Street with higher density apartments to the north.



Above: This concept plan for the “West End” features 9 duplexes orientated along the south side of Hickory Street with 6 apartment buildings and shared garages. These duplexes could be sold out-right, rented, and/or be part of a condominium housing cooperative or private operation (i.e. neighborhood association). Although mixing the ownership model is more complicated, it provides different levels of affordability which helps Gilman create more access to housing.



Above: Simulation of a new mixed-use development on the corner of Main Street and 3rd Avenue North.

Downtown Mixed-Use Development

Downtowns are more vibrant places when there are a variety of things to do and a variety of land uses. This includes housing. Providing affordable housing above shops and stores allows the main level to contribute to the mix of businesses while increasing residential densities nearest to the city core. The lot on the corner of Main Street and 3rd Avenue North is strategically located in the downtown and slopes from the residential neighborhood to the north down towards Main Street. This change in topography may be enough to help offset the cost of building a two-story mixed-use building in which apartments could be accessed via the rear without the need for a staircase. The concept illustration features balconies for those units that provide a covered entry and outdoor seating for storefronts below. In this example, a laundromat, arcade, and senior center with access to one another encourages a multi-generational multi-use facility.



Above: The mixed-use concept with curb extensions (bump outs) for increase pedestrian safety.



Quality of Life: Childcare

Childcare is also a huge issue nationwide and here in Gilman. Childcare is essential for early childhood development and parents' ability to work and further their education. Many families have shared clear concerns with access to childcare in Gilman, and some are delaying having additional children or having children at all because of it. Some families have also reported that access to childcare affects their decisions on where to live, which presents a risk to Gilman's ability to attract and retain residents. Some parents drive more than 30 minutes each way to drop their children off for childcare, which essentially provides economic benefits to other communities and causes parents to miss out on work hours and other opportunities. To address this issue, Gilman can consider two different childcare models: cooperative and district-based. For both, the school has signaled that they are open to serving as a location for some sort of childcare facility.

Cooperative Childcare Model

The cooperative childcare model tries to get as many people involved as possible. The district would provide the space, which would help lower the startup costs. If the childcare facility is run independently, it would pay the school for rent, while a parent-run model would have the parents help organize it and make the key decisions. This ensures that everyone has a seat at the table, and that the burden of costs and logistics doesn't fall to one single entity. Additionally, school staff could potentially get guaranteed spots or a discount which would help with staff attraction and retention.

District-Based Childcare Model

The district-based model would have the school district oversee the program, because it is already certified for children and wouldn't have to go through the review and certification processes. Schools also have a community fund, which could help cover the costs. Students looking to get into childcare careers could also help staff it while getting credits at a technical college. It also enters children into the school district at a younger age, which helps with attraction and retention. Currently, parents who take their kids to facilities in other communities often then enroll their kids in those schools instead to maintain consistency, contributing to declining enrollment.



Quality of Life: Branding, Marketing & Events

A key component of meeting the goal of “Developing a Growth Mindset Around Gilman’s Quality of Life” is being able to share that mindset with others. To retain and attract visitors, businesses, students, and residents, it’s important to share what makes Gilman special. When communicating a growth mindset around Gilman’s quality of life, the first step is to determine what is Gilman’s quality of life.

Community Branding

Community branding holds significant value for small rural communities in Wisconsin as it helps to create a unique identity that distinguishes them from other areas. By highlighting local strengths, such as natural beauty, historical significance, or unique cultural events, community branding can help retain and attract tourists, new residents, and businesses. This influx can boost the local economy, enhance community pride, and foster a sense of belonging among residents. Effective branding also helps to communicate the community’s values and vision, making it more appealing to those who share similar ideals and are looking for a place to call home. Developing a shared understanding of what living, working, and playing in Gilman is an important first step in developing a community brand that can be used not just for marketing, but for rallying groups and organizations in Gilman around a common theme.



The second most beautiful downtown in the United States, 1970.

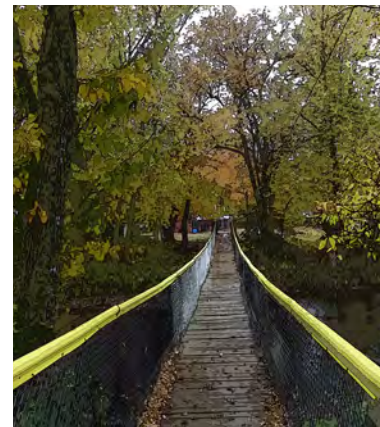
Above: “Retro” A.I. generated postcard reflecting on Gilman recognized as the 2nd “Most Beautiful Downtown in the United States” behind Honolulu, Hawaii. (Citation needed.)

Identifying a Desired Target Market

Identifying a target market (audience) is crucial when communicating a community’s quality of life because it allows for tailored messaging that resonates with specific groups. By understanding the needs, preferences, and values of the target audience, communities can highlight aspects of their quality of life that are most appealing (i.e. excellent schools, vibrant cultural activities, or a strong sense of safety and community). This focused approach not only increases the effectiveness of marketing efforts but also ensures that the right people are reached, ultimately fostering a more engaged and satisfied community.

What is Gilman’s Story?

Throughout this process, many described Gilman as a safe, welcoming place that is family-friendly and community-oriented. The Design Team heard many times that Gilman’s brand is “Home of the Swinging Bridge”. If this is true, then consider developing a community branding strategy that includes a marketing study and best practices and examples from other rural communities. If the jury is still out on whether or not the “Home of the Swinging Bridge” is the preferred brand, then take time to work with community leaders to develop a brand that does work. Remember, the community brand needs to not only resonate with the community, but to its target market as well.



Summary Report

Gilman (2024)



How to tell Gilman's Story

Assuming that the "Home of the Swinging Bridge" is the right brand, look for examples from other communities that have successfully incorporated a physical architectural feature as a brand.

Communities have successfully developed branding around unique physical structures by incorporating images into various elements of their marketing, wayfinding, and street furnishings. For example, the town of Galena, Illinois, has used images of its historic Main Street and iconic 19th-century architecture in promotional materials, websites, and social media to attract tourists and highlight its charming, historic character¹. Similarly, the small town of Stillwater, Minnesota, has leveraged images of its historic lift bridge in brochures, event posters, and merchandise to create a strong visual identity that resonates with both residents and visitors.

Incorporating images into community branding can extend beyond promotional materials. For instance, images of iconic structures can be used in wayfinding signs, murals, and public art installations to create a cohesive and visually appealing environment. These images can also be featured in local business logos, community newsletters, and even on local government websites to reinforce the community's unique identity and foster a sense of pride among residents³. By strategically using images, communities can create a memorable and engaging brand that highlights their unique assets and attracts attention from a wider audience.

Events & Festivals

Small towns in Wisconsin have effectively incorporated their community branding efforts into local events and festivals to enhance their unique identities and attract visitors. For example, the town of Cedarburg leverages its historic charm by hosting the annual Strawberry Festival, where branding elements like logos and imagery are prominently featured on banners, merchandise, and promotional materials. Similarly, New Glarus, known for its Swiss heritage, integrates its branding into events like the Wilhelm Tell Festival, using traditional Swiss imagery and themes to create a cohesive and immersive experience. These efforts not only boost tourism but also foster community pride and engagement by celebrating the town's distinctive characteristics.





Above: Gilman's Main Street already has strong amenities for a community its size (i.e. event center, movie theatre, bank, bar, cafe, gift shop, post office, library, hardware store, etc.)

Vibrant Main Street: Planning & Enforcement

A vibrant Main Street offers a variety of services, activities, employment, and housing in a setting that celebrates the unique culture and history of the community. It attracts visitors and retains residents and businesses. Vibrant Main Streets (and communities as a whole) develop and change over time. They are able to respond to changes in technology, demographics, and economics while staying true to the values of its citizens. This requires thoughtful planning, meaningful public participation, and enforcement of local ordinances.

Local government relies on informed leadership and staff as well as plans, ordinances, and policies to make and enforce decisions. As stated above, meaningful public participation is at the heart of community and economic development. When communities create plans with meaningful public participation, plans are richer and more valuable and are more likely to be implemented.

Healthy community and economic development requires investment. Investment comes with risk. In order to reduce risk, communities create and implement policies that reduce uncertainty. The League of Wisconsin Municipalities and Extension have resources to help communities develop protocols and procedures to mitigate uncertainty and risk to help encourage development.

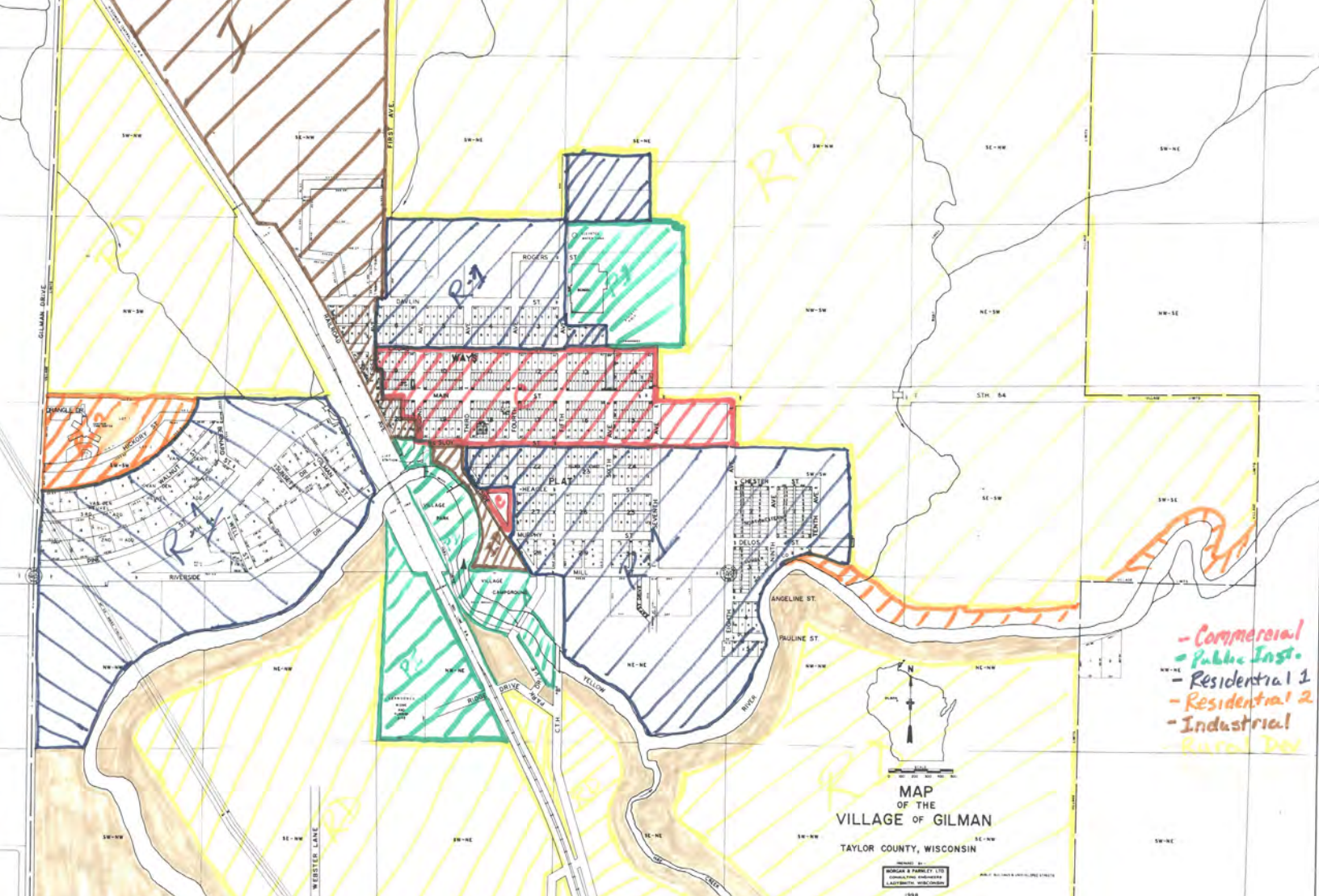
Comprehensive Planning

The state of Wisconsin requires communities who engage in land use decision-making to have a comprehensive plan. These plans are called "comprehensive" because they take into account a variety of planning decisions a community might make (land use, transportation, housing, economic, infrastructure, natural resources, etc.). It contains valuable data, community visioning and value statements, strategies, and goals for the future. This holistic approach to planning enables decision-makers to reduce unintended consequences while making strategic, efficient, and sustainable decisions.

Comprehensive plans are developed with community input to assure that plan meets state requirements while addressing local needs. The plan is the "playbook" for the community and is used to guide and shape local building and zoning ordinance, outdoor recreation plans, tourism plans, transportation decisions, housing plans, etc.

By law, comprehensive plans are used to guide land use, community development, and economic development decisions and should be updated every 10 years. Gilman's plan needs to be revised. This Summary Report could be used as a starting point for that process.





Above: Gilman’s Zoning Map (2024) helps guide land use decisions. Most zoning ordinances in rural communities separate uses to mitigate potential incompatibilities that might be perceived negative.

Zoning Ordinance

The Village’s zoning ordinance is one of the tools used to realize the comprehensive plan. It needs to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. When making changes to the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance, consider to what extent the existing plans and ordinances are being used and what impacts they may have. Most zoning ordinances in Wisconsin were developed long before comprehensive planning came into being. It’s important to review your ordinance to make sure its doing what the plan intends. Like most communities in Wisconsin, Gilman’s current zoning map (above) segregates land uses and densities with different designations: (C)Commercial, (PI)Public Institutions, (R)Residential (1=Single Family, 2=Multi-Family), (I) Industrial, (RD) Rural Development.

A lot has changed over the years in how planners think about zoning. With housing shortages and safety and environmental stemming from automobile-oriented planning, many communities are reconsidering segregated uses and densities in favor of downtown and neighborhood-friendly designs that encourage a mix of uses and densities. Consider working with a trained professional to update both your comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance to meet Gilman’s needs.

Vibrant Main Street: Development

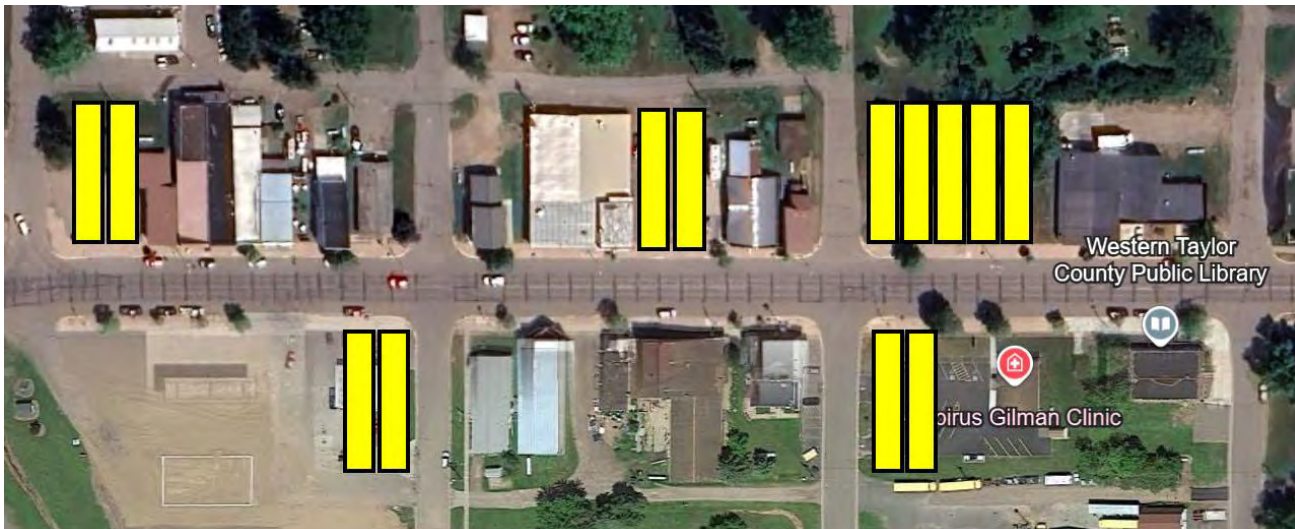
Gilman has an exceptional downtown for its size. It has many of the key ingredients for a successful, vibrant downtown: civic spaces, entertainment, retail, office, residential, and parking. Some notable features include the library, local government offices, post office, senior center, movie theater, and event center. Gilman has potential to build on these existing assets to increase economic and community vibrancy in the downtown. Consider the following strategies.

Downtown Infill

When thinking about increasing the vibrancy of Main Street, think of the downtown the “living room” of the community. Historic photos show that Gilman’s Main Street originally consisted of adjacent storefronts lining the sidewalk, where pedestrians could encounter merchandise in shop windows or enter a different business every 20 feet or so. This condensed “street wall” provides visual interest and encourages activity. Over the years, Gilman lost some of these buildings (i.e. through fire, closure, disinvestment etc.), leaving gaps in this street wall. Downtown infill, or constructing buildings in these gaps, can encourage new business development and spark additional activity. An intact street wall makes the downtown more comfortable for pedestrians and more opportunity for businesses activity. In addition, transitioning to angled parking can accommodate more cars without disrupting the street wall, further facilitating business activity. Downtown infill and diagonal parking can help Main Street serve as a destination where people can choose to shop, eat, and relax.

Downtown Redevelopment

In redeveloping downtown, it is important to keep businesses on the ground level, with residential, office, or hotel space above. This helps manage the space while maintaining a mix of commercial and residential activity. As stated earlier, its important to develop a street wall of businesses and reduce the amount of dead space in the downtown created by too much parking or from underutilized or vacant property. Through surveys and focus groups, many people specifically identified the bowling alley and laundromat sites key opportunities for downtown redevelopment. Their central location and importance to the community provide an exciting opportunity to re-imagine what downtown Gilman could offer.



Above: Opportunities for infill define the “street wall” and strengthens the vibrancy of Main Street.



Above: Concept for a new hotel at the bowling alley site. Next door, the landromat building is transformed into a deli with second story apartments added above.

Former Bowling Alley Property

One option for the former bowling alley site is to build a hotel, which would accommodate visitors who come to Gilman to enjoy its outdoor amenities and help cement Gilman as a destination. The images below show renderings of what this hotel could look like. To keep the street wall intact and further encourage activity, the structure would front the sidewalk, with the lobby and potentially another business on the ground floor with hotel rooms above, not much higher than two stories to maintain the scale and feel of Main Street. The additional businesses or activities on the ground level could include a gift shop, café, candy store, or even a couple of miniature bowling lanes to nod to the space’s history and provide an additional activity. This could be especially valuable for youth and families.

Former Laundromat Property

Throughout the engagement process, many youth participants expressed that they wanted a “Subway” sandwich shop in town. With Gilman Cheese located here, there is an opportunity to open a local deli in the laundromat property that uses the products made locally. Keeping the structure along the sidewalk contributes to the street wall. Adding an additional story would allow for additional residential space as well.

Right: Concept illustration of new deli and hotel at the current site of the old laundromat and bowling. The design places hotel parking in the back of the lot acced via the alley. A trail between the deli and theater directs pedestrians from Main Street towards the Swinging Bridge.





Above: Reducing the width of the travel lanes will slow traffic and provide space to consider angled parking or bike lanes (blue) and street trees, planters, bioswales, benches, etc. (green).

Rightsizing Main Street

Road and sidewalk sizes and layout have a significant impact on the feel and use of the downtown. Although Gilman’s Main Street is currently zoned with a 25-mph speed limit, the street width makes it feel like a 35- or 45-mph zone. This can have an adverse affect and/or perception pedestrian safety. Rightsizing Main Street – adjusting the street size and its surroundings to feel more like a 25-mph local corridor – can help promote the vibrancy of downtown. One way to do this is by narrowing the street through parking, which could be angled or parallel to the street. Angled parking between the street and sidewalk can fit more cars and slow the surrounding traffic. Parallel parking could provide space for a bike lane in between the sidewalk and the parked cars, which creates more space for multi-modal transportation options. Another way to narrow the street and “rightsizing” the corridor is to install crosswalk extensions or “bump outs” to shorten the distance that pedestrians travel to cross the street. These can be simple concrete structures or can be more elaborate to include planters, café seating, benches, greenspace or other amenities that would add to the vibrancy of Main Street.

Right: Rightsizing Main Street may include reducing the width of the travel lanes to allow for bikelanes and to provide planter strips wide enough to be incorporate bioswales, raingardens, and other stormwater management and landscaping devices (below).





Above: Downtown Gilman, 1973.

Business Mix

In promoting a vibrant downtown area, it is important to consider not only the visuals but the mix of businesses and activities as well. A downtown district is often successful when there is a good mix of businesses that play into each other and share customers. When businesses are clustered together, they are all likely to perform better than if they stood alone. For example, if someone is considering where to eat, they may seek out a street with multiple restaurants and choose one when they arrive rather than actively seeking out a standalone restaurant and heading there directly. The restaurant that operates in this clustered corridor will likely have more business than the restaurant standing alone. The same often applies to retail: if there are multiple shops on the same street, customers will be drawn by the different options and ability to comparison shop. These corridors then become a destination: people go there because they know there are options and things to do.

Historically, Gilman had an impressive mix of businesses in its downtown. In 1974, its list of businesses included bars, hardware stores, grocery, mechanics, apparel retail, personal services, and more. While the landscape of brick-and-mortar business has changed since then, Gilman still has an opportunity to prop up a mix of businesses that complements what already exists in the community. When we asked local business owners what other businesses would be complementary and who they might share a customer with, many mentioned a hotel/motel. This can provide a place for the outdoor recreation visitor to stay when they come to explore Gilman's trails. There is currently a campground which helps to accommodate visitors, but a hotel/motel could bring in more visitors who stay in town, eat in town, and shop in town after hitting the trails. A local deli (like the one rendered for the laundromat space) would provide additional food options for residents and visitors alike. Residents and visitors would also likely enjoy indoor entertainment options like an arcade or bowling, which would provide a hangout space for local residents and a break from the outdoors for recreational visitors. Other business options that would feed into the current mix include personal care services, sporting goods, and kayak or bike rentals. All of these could help market the region as a great place to live or visit and drive more activity to downtown.



residential uses above



businesses on street level

First Floor Residential in Downtowns

Downtowns are unique places within a community. Historically, they serve as the “central business district” -the main commercial area of a town in which a variety of activities are densely packed. Downtowns are different from other commercial areas because they encourage multiple uses: retail, services, entertainment, dining, manufacturing, government, recreation, and housing. When successful, downtowns provide a variety of things to do all within walking distance.

In order to support a downtown, there needs to be a critical mass of things to do, street access to those activities, and people. Vibrant downtowns need residents, businesses, and parking. That’s why most communities prevent residential uses on the first floor in their downtowns and to reserve it for valuable business space. This balances the multiple uses within the same area and provides the most potential for economic development.

Gilman has allowed the first floor of downtown buildings to be converted to residential use. Although this helps address the need for affordable housing, it limits the potential for commercial use within the downtown. If this trend continues, the area may not retain enough critical mass of commercial activity and cease to function as a downtown.

In order to protect property values, local businesses, and community identity, limit first floor residential to those buildings outside the downtown area. When making exceptions, require conditional use permits to minimize negative impacts and reduce risk. These might include:

- Maintaining a small storefront/gallery space along the street frontage.
- Limit the duration of the permitted use (number of years).
- Require periodic inspections to ensure public safety.
- Design the first floor and its facade to allow for future commercial use.
- Design the facade to give the illusion of an active storefront.



Right: Most communities in the United States have too much surface parking. Instead of quantity, aim for quality. Provide just enough surface parking in the most strategic location and make it special. This reduces stormwater runoff, keeps the downtown pedestrian safe, and transforms public parking lots into flexible community event/parking spaces.



Parking

Most parking requirements for restaurants and bars are excessive and create large dead spaces in downtowns that are unattractive and inhibit pedestrian accessibility. Parking requirements of 2 spaces per unit in multi-family also drives up the cost of housing, making it more difficult to pencil out. All parking spaces and parking lots are impervious surfaces that prevent surface runoff to penetrate into the ground. This increases stormwater runoff - making it more costly to mitigate and potentially harming the water quality in the Yellow River.

Consider a revision of parking requirements and limit parking lots to well-designed and maintained public parking areas that can double as a plaza and gathering space. Include decorative landscaping and lighting to transform parking lots into attractive “car parks”. Adopt sustainable design features such as bioswales and permeable pavers to protect the Yellow River.

Vibrant Main Street: Beautification

Another key theme that arose from surveys and focus groups was the overall beautification of downtown. Gilman has a proven track record on downtown beautification: in the 1970's, it won second place in the Main Street Pageant (Honolulu, Hawaii took first). Beautification measures could help restore Gilman's main street legacy – even slight changes in signage, seating, art, greenspace, or lighting can have a big impact on the feel of a space, making it more welcoming for people to visit and linger. Consider the following strategies.

Building Facades

Gilman has numerous historic buildings in the downtown each with its own character and style. Individual building facades express the history of the building as well as the use of what's inside. Collectively, building facades in a downtown paint a picture of the community's history as well its current vibrancy. Care should be taken to protect the structural and aesthetic integrity of each building. This protects the individual and collective property values of the downtown and the image of the community as a whole.

Some best practices include: historic color palette of paint schemes, using durable and appropriate materials, maintaining original window openings when feasible, maintaining and highlighting unique architectural features, and incorporating awnings and well-designed signage.

Reedsburg

Above: Bike rack in downtown Reedsburg, Wisconsin.

Signage

Signage provides information to residents and visitors. Well-designed signage not only tells people where they can find what they are looking for, but it attracts people and provides value. With any downtown beautification measure, it is important to ensure that the businesses are still prominent. Pendant (bracket-mounted) signs, allow pedestrians and drivers to easily navigate the downtown while creating opportunities for unique and attractive imagery. Well crafted signage adds to the visual aesthetic of Main Street and can help drive more traffic to the area. This signage could be created by Gilman-based Pirate Ship Productions, keeping dollars in the local economy.





Image 2: Existing park bench serves as a canvas for a mural.



Image 3: Sculptural elements transform benches into works of art and serve as photo opportunities.

Seating

Because a vibrant downtown attracts people, providing folks with a place to sit and rest is important. In addition, the choice of seating is important too (cost, comfort, aesthetics, and maintenance). Street furniture can also serve as street sculpture and downtown art. Gilman might create outdoor seating that supports its unique history and “community brand”. Consider providing seating that is movable as well. This allows for flexibility and encourages groups of people to congregate. The examples above and below show some different ways in which communities had developed creative seating.



Image 4: Bench carved out of a log.



Above: Tailgate bench in Gilman, Wisconsin.



Image 5: A wooden bench above a section of the Ashford Tunnel in the United Kingdom features an engraved map of the tunnel and canal system with local landmarks. This demonstrates how a bench can serve as an informational kiosk as well as seating.



Above: Simulation of lighted mural along the event center on Main Street designed and installed by local students. It could tell the story of Gilman while enhancing Main Street.

Local Art

Public art, such as murals, sculpture, and reliefs, add to the overall aesthetics of the downtown and make it more welcoming. It can also highlight local artists and showcase the area's history and culture. There are plenty of opportunities to add more public art and greenspace throughout the downtown corridor, but the most immediate is at the laundromat. The owner has expressed interest in having students paint a mural on the side of the building and is working with the school and Village to move it forward. This is a prime example of how community partnerships are key to moving from vision to implementation.



Image 6: Metal sculpture on a plinth with mural in the background.



Image 7: Ceramic sculpture and landscaping along a sidewalk.



Above: Simulation of LED string lights directing residents and visitors towards the Swinging Bridge. A mural with images from Gilman's past provides education while providing visual interest.

Lighting

Lighting plays an important role in the aesthetics and comfort of a space. Intentional lighting choices can accentuate architectural or artistic features and assist with navigation. Light enhances visibility which enhances safety and marketing. Light can add color, movement, whimsy and intrigue to a downtown. It can accent and highlight, and help tell a story that welcomes and draws people in. Lit storefronts in windows after business hours, advertises businesses while indirectly helping to light the sidewalk. Lit store windows allow nighttime strollers to see displayed products and see into the store, further "selling" after hours while improving nighttime security.



Images 8 & 9: Lit storefronts market wares after business hours while enhancing Main Street.



Image 10: Decorative lighting used to accent architectural details and draw people in.



Image 11: Lighting along the riverwalks provides safety and serves as visual art.

Consider enhancing the visual quality of the buildings at night using inexpensive LED lighting. The placement, intensity, and color of light can punctuate architectural elements. The overall effect can attract visitors and provide additional visual security at night. Gilman already has a popular Christmas lighting program, which could also be incorporated into the parks, trails, and downtown, driving more activity to the area.

Street Trees

In addition to new buildings, consider additional trees along Main Street. This creates a much more inviting downtown for visitors and residents, provides shade, and creates opportunities for decorative lighting. Research shows that the more time visitors spend in a commercial district, the more money they spend. The images below show two methods for planting street trees.

Image 12: Street tree planted in "pit" with decorative ivy for ground cover.



Image 13: Decorative brick pavers metal grate provide a more formal aesthetic.



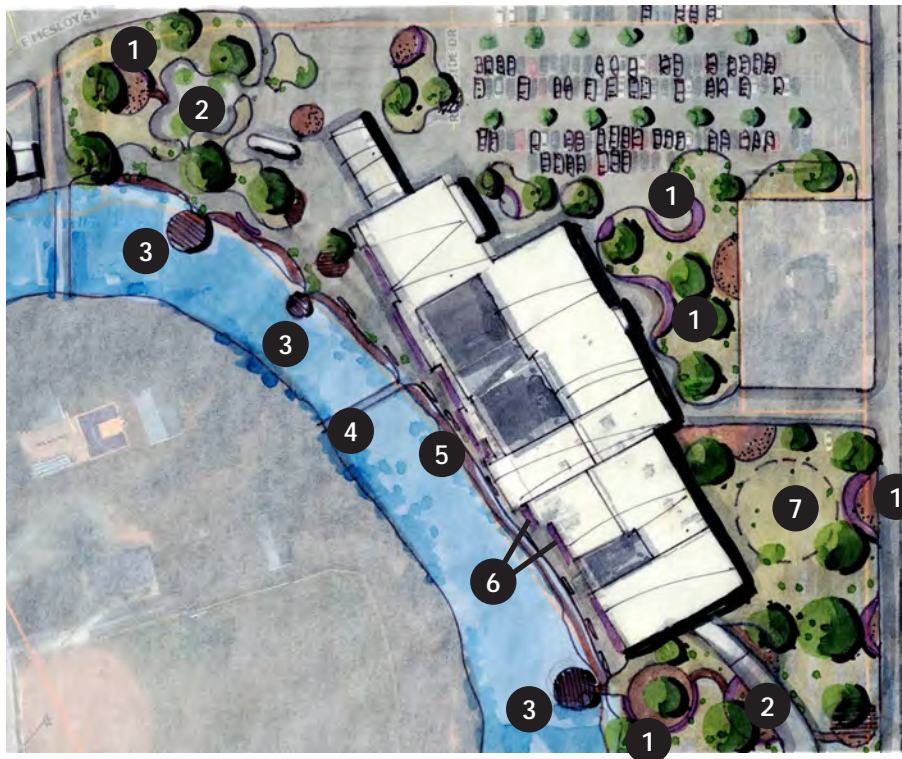


Vibrant Main Street: Cheese Factory

The Gilman Cheese Factory is an important part of the community. It is well established, serves as the largest employer, and contributes to the identity of Gilman. The significance of the Cheese Factory should be celebrated and considered as an opportunity for economic as well as community development.

Enhancing Existing Site

The Cheese Factory has maintained positive business growth, and the market exists to grow even more. Supporting Gilman Cheese to expand would help ensure its long-term success and promote further employment growth. Beautification measures and shifts in landscaping could make the Cheese Factory more prominent and attract visitors. The landscape renderings below show an effort to soften the edges around the factory making it more inviting for pedestrians. In addition, installing public art, murals, greenery, sidewalks, lighting, and benches could transform the periphery of the Cheese Factory into a public realm that celebrates the history of the site. Landscaping and murals at the back of the facility could improve the experience for those using the Swinging Bridge.



Left: Site Enhancements

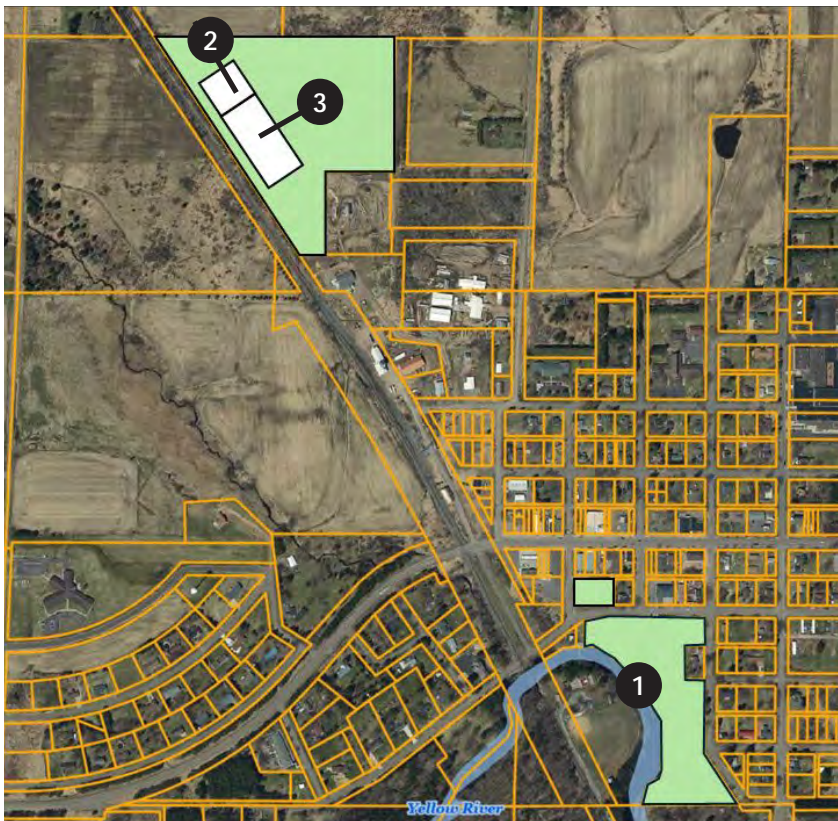
1. Seating Areas
2. Gathering Spaces
3. Observation Decks
4. Swinging Bridge
5. Riverwalk
6. Murals & Projections
7. Flexible Outdoor Space



Above: The Cheese Factory site is nestled among residential neighborhoods with direct pedestrian access to the Yellow River, Swinging Bridge, City Park, and Main Street businesses.

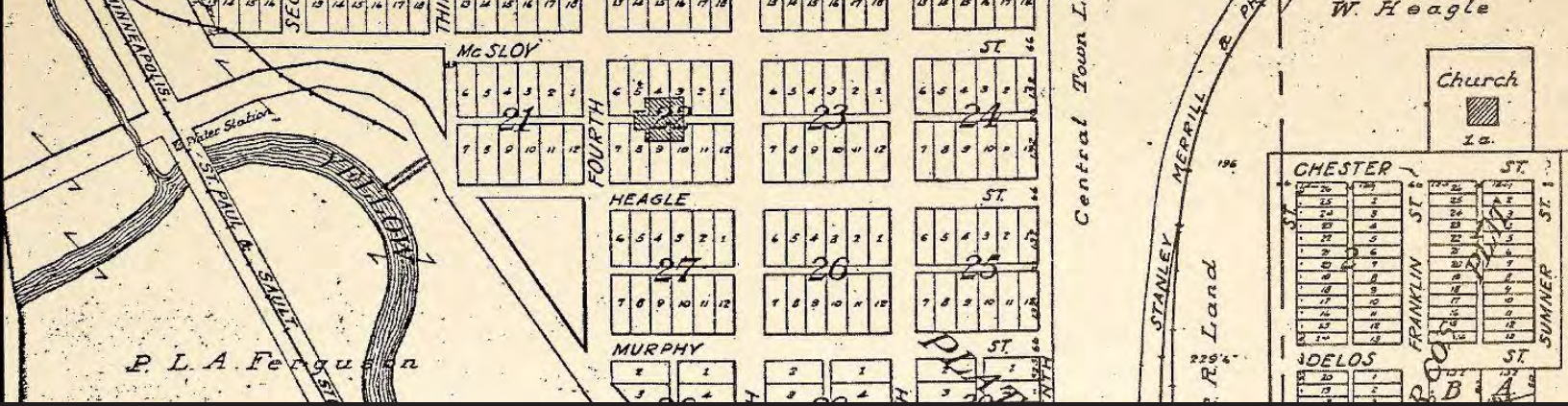
Expansion & Relocation

Gilman Cheese site is limited in space. It's landlocked between the Yellow River to the west and south, residential neighborhoods to the east, and the downtown to the north. Its current location places demand on residential streets and access to parks and trails from the downtown. Because the Village owns land on the edge of town with room to grow and with rail access, there may be an opportunity to relocate the factory. This would provide plenty of space for Gilman Cheese to grow, which would help cement its future in Gilman. Many communities have seen major employers consolidate or close in recent years. A large corporation may purchase a local plant and then consolidate its operations to another location, depriving the community of a key employer. Providing space for Gilman Cheese to expand would help ensure its presence for generations to come. The new site could also serve as a catalyst for a broader industrial park, where suppliers and other businesses related to the Cheese Factory could cluster and provide additional employment and economic opportunities.



Left: Gilman Cheese Options

1. Existing Site
2. Potential Expansion
3. Potential Relocation



Above: The original plat for the community identified residential neighborhoods and parks along the Yellow river.

New Waterfront Development

Relocating the Gilman Cheese creates an exciting opportunity to redevelop the land into a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood that connects the downtown to the City Park. The new development could include options for additional housing, a riverwalk, open greenspace, and more. Consider housing developments that feature a mix of housing types, including townhomes, duplexes and condos. A variety of housing options (type, size, cost, etc.) helps to accommodate different population groups such as families, young professionals, aging residents, etc. Developing mixed-use buildings that feature businesses on the main level with housing above, create opportunities for more businesses while attracting residents who want to live close to services, the Yellow River and City Park, and the downtown.



- Left: Neighborhood Plan**
- 1. Mixed-Use/Townhomes
 - 2. Central Park
 - 3. Riverwalk Trail
 - 4. Swing Bridge Plaza
 - 5. Flexible Outdoor Space
 - 6. Public Parking
 - 7. Pedestrian Connection

Incentives & Support

While the ideas outlined above would certainly come at a cost, Gilman would not need to front the full cost on its own. The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) offers business development tax credits and refundable tax programming that could help fund projects to beautify, expand, or relocate the Cheese Factory. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development also has grants and loans for these types of projects and there are other government and philanthropic programs that could help ease the cost burden.

Volunteerism & Public Participation

A third goal from the Community Economic Analysis was “Strengthening Volunteering & Community Engagement”. For a community the size of Gilman, this means examining what is already being done, eliminating barriers, identifying opportunities, and supporting a local culture of collaboration. Like many rural communities, Gilman is an aging community that relies on fewer and fewer (an typically the same) volunteers to “get things done”. Unlike other communities, Gilman has been successful in getting local government, local groups, local businesses, and local schools to work together. This “Gilman Model” is key to community and economic development.

Bridging the Communication Divide

Because of Gilman’s aging population and the strength of its school district, successful volunteerism and public participation should include young people. This comes with great opportunities and challenges. Young people provide unique and fresh perspective, bring energy and enthusiasm, as well as their parents and grandparents. They also bring expectations and skills that can differ from those from previous generations. This generation of young people have grown up with a variety of communication technologies and have adopted those technologies into their way of life. If volunteerism and public participation is to be successful, communities need to work with young people to create communication strategies and expectations that meet everyone’s needs. Consider working with schools, communication professionals, and Extension to navigate those decisions.

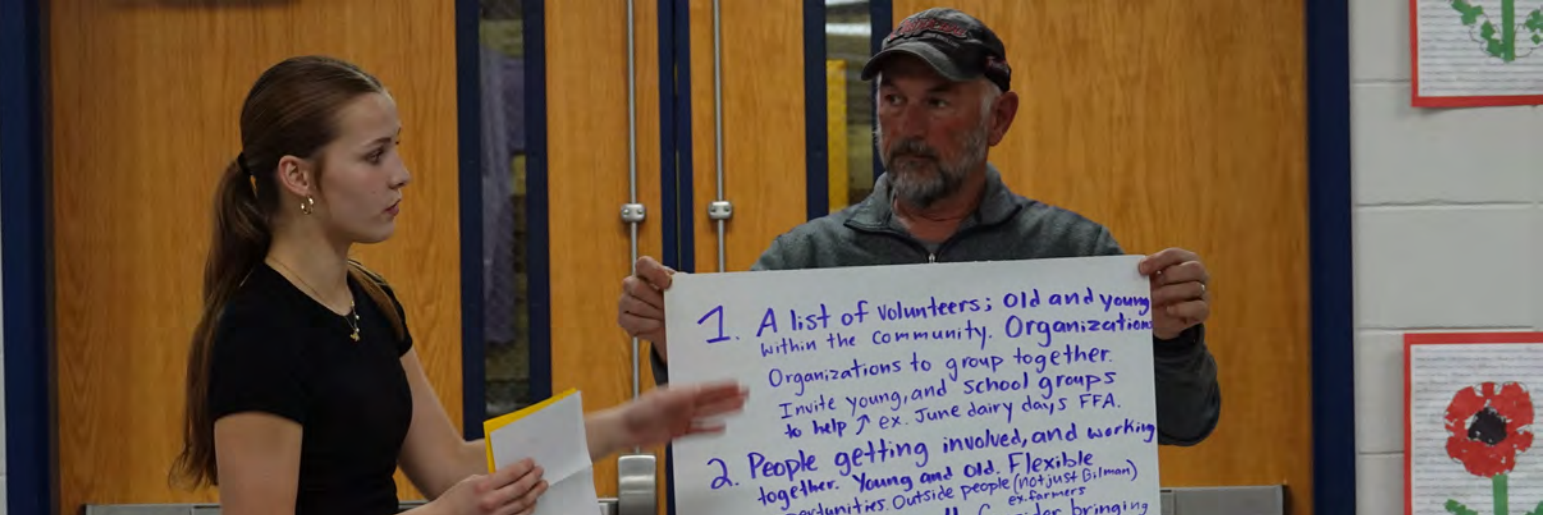
Forming Connections by Engaging Youth & Building Skills

Young people possess real world knowledge of electronic devices and software applications that many adults do not. Consider expanding the reach of the High School’s technology education as a public service, community education, or another source of revenue. This might include youth-taught tech programs in which community members can come to the school to trouble-shoot issues with their phone, tablet, or laptop or learn more about a particular software application. These tech sessions can provide a valuable community service while empowering young people and helping the young people form a stronger bond with their community.

Building a Multi-Generational Volunteer Force

When planning events, consider who the audience is but also who the host is. Identify partnerships within the community that can meet the needs and interests of all ages. This may involve shifting or letting go of existing expectations to attract multi-generational audience and volunteer force. The age of joining an organization to volunteer are fading. This generation of volunteers is anxious to get to work, but not all that interested in belonging to an organization to do so. Understand the change does not come easy but often is required to meet changes in demographics, economics, and technology. Building a multi-generational volunteer force requires patience and positivity.





Youth Participation

Young people want to have a role in shaping the world around them. Providing students with opportunities empowers youth while building a better community. Consider the following strategies.

- Service Learning: High school service learning programs integrate community service with academic instruction, emphasizing critical thinking and personal reflection while fostering a sense of social responsibility. These programs are crucial for youth as they provide opportunities to develop leadership skills, enhance civic engagement, and apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations. For communities, service learning brings valuable resources and fresh perspectives, addressing local needs and fostering stronger community bonds.
- Mentorships & Apprenticeships: Mentorship and apprenticeship programs for high school students pair young individuals with experienced professionals to provide guidance, hands-on experience, and career insights. These programs are vital for youth as they help build essential skills, boost confidence, and offer a clearer pathway to future careers. These programs can help create a skilled workforce, encourage local talent retention, and strengthen community ties.

Youth in Governance: Youth in governance programs in Wisconsin, such as those facilitated by the UW-Madison, Division of Extension and the YMCA, engage young people in local government and decision-making processes. These programs are crucial for youth as they provide opportunities to develop leadership skills, understand civic responsibilities, and actively contribute to their communities. Communities and organizations benefit from fresh perspectives, enhanced civic engagement, and better decision-making processes resulting in better decisions being made.

- Youth Entrepreneurship: Youth entrepreneurship programs provide young individuals with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to start and manage their own businesses. These programs are important for youth as they foster creativity, innovation, and self-reliance, while also offering practical experience in business management and financial literacy. To develop and sustain these programs, it is essential to establish partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions, provide mentorship and access to funding, create a supportive and inclusive environment, and continuously evaluate and adapt the programs to meet the evolving needs of young entrepreneurs.



Implementation

Implementation is work, but it doesn't have to be painful. Ideas are realized when a group of people come together to get something done, take deliberate steps to bring folks into the process, provide clear and consistent communication, and celebrate success.

The ideas generated during the charrette provide opportunities for community members to come together to create something that benefits the entire community. Use these ideas to identify common interests and energy. Convene a series of planning meetings to identify why people are interested in the idea, what they can offer, and what's left to figure out. Start with simple "quick wins." Build capacity and confidence to take on larger more complex projects.

Local Implementation Workshop

On November 15, 2024, Extension worked with the local planning team and the Gilman Student Council to facilitate an implementation workshop with community members. The purpose of the workshop was to review the outputs of the charrette, fine tune desired outcomes, and develop draft action plans to realize those outcomes. Participants self-sorted themselves into teams and asked to identify what "success" would look like and then consider what things would be necessary to get started and to sustain the effort. The following is a summary of the outputs from each group.

Parks & Trails

Participants developed an action plan to create and promote trails in and around Gilman.

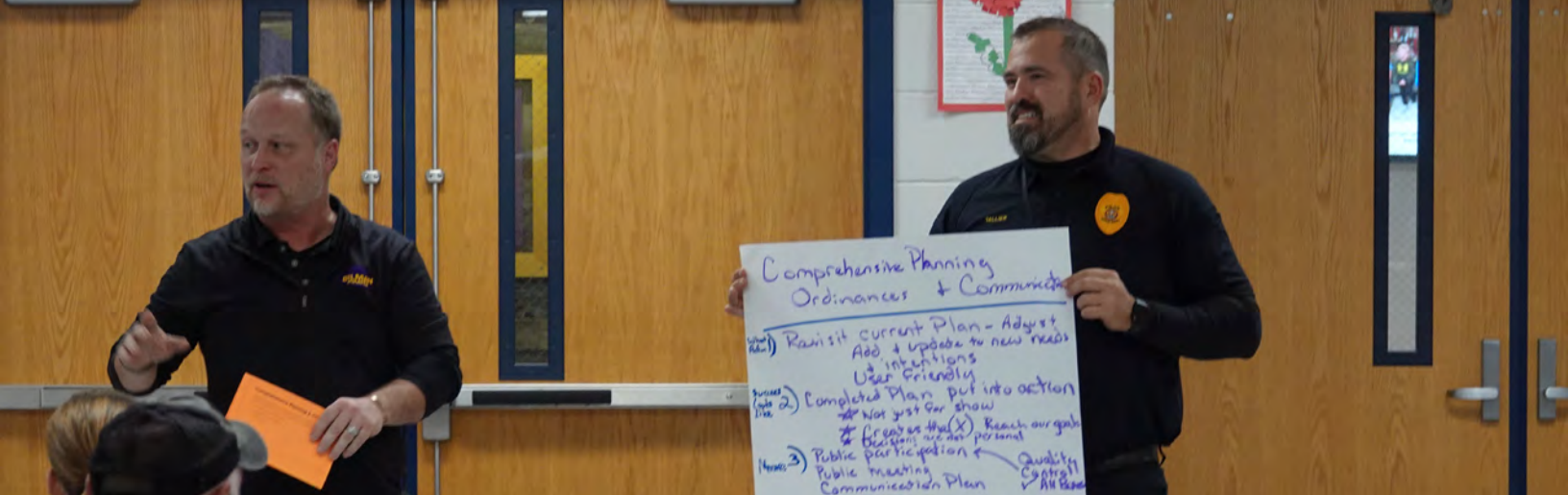
- Success: Many people are using a network of trails in the Gilman area for a variety of activities.
- Medium-term: Developing and maintaining maps, trails, and fundraising.
- Short-term: Work with partners (DNR, Village, School, property owners) to develop a plan.

Childcare

The "Childcare" team focused on developing a childcare model that would be housed out of the Gilman Public School.

- Success: Gilman will retain and attract more families and businesses.
- Medium-term: Developing a childcare program that meets community and district needs.
- Short-term: Examining other district childcare programs, finding space, and securing funding.





Volunteerism

Participants worked on develop an action plan to create and sustain volunteer efforts.

- Success: Everyone is involved and working together.
- Medium-term: Developing and sharing a list of volunteers among groups.
- Short-term: Individual groups in the community need to co-lead efforts but share resources.

Vibrant Downtown: Beautification

One of the groups focused on improving the look of downtown with beautification and wayfinding.

- Success: New businesses and activities downtown.
- Medium-term: Downtown beautification, parking, and wayfinding.
- Short-term: Fundraising and planning for: Swinging Bridge signage, lights and flowers, angled parking, and cleaning out the old laundromat.



Vibrant Downtown: Economic Development

A second group interested in the downtown focused more on the economics of the district.

- Success: New thriving businesses, new ideas, open-mindedness, population growth, etc.
- Medium-term: Improved signage, direct mail advertising and newsletter.
- Short-term: Partnership with local organizations and school to look for grants and investors.

Comprehensive Planning, Ordinances & Communication

Participants identified a need to revisit the current comprehensive plan and update it to reflect the existing and future needs of the community and to make it more user-friendly.

- Success: Completed plan put into action that enables the community to reach its goals.
- Medium-term: Developing and deploying a public participation plan for the process.
- Short-term: Develop a planning team to review the existing document.



Positive Community Change

Creating and sustaining positive community change requires planning. When developing action plans, consider the following elements:

- Recipe for Success: Reflect on past community projects that were successful in: volunteerism, communication, ideation, fundraising, and leadership. As a team, document what aspects of each local example made it successful and what lessons can be learned and applied to future projects.
- Community Change Structures: Document existing community structures/organizations for change and identify resources needed to move forward. Consider the relationship of formal and informal groups, businesses, and individuals who “make things happen”. What is the path of least resistance? Who is equipped to support change? What barriers exist that need to be removed, repositioned, or bridged to support change? What new community resources or relationships might be needed to support change?
- Positive Change Workforce Assessment: Identify local community assets and resources that can create and sustain positive community change. Ask community members to provide information needed to assess what types of skills, associations, and interests are available to make change happen. Using a simple form, individuals document what they “bring to table” to help make positive change happen.
- Prioritization: Allow community members to “self-sort” themselves into similar interests and explore ways in which their group can make positive change happen.
- Action Planning: Describe the purpose and character of the desired change and create a basic action plan for executing that change. The action plan should address the following questions:
 - What is the proposed activity/project and what is its purpose?
 - What does success would look like? How would we measure it?
 - Who needs to be involved in the activity for it to be successful?
 - What do we need to get started?
 - What to we need to sustain it?
 - Who will co-lead this effort?
- Celebration & Reflection: Community members should consider how they will evaluate the success of their effort that might double as opportunities for celebration and benchmarking.



Leading Change

Dr. John Kotter describes the steps for making change happen in a community in two books, "Leading Change" and "The Heart of Change." He recommends the following steps:

Step 1: Establish Sense of Urgency

- Examine market and competitive realities
- Identify and discuss crises, potential crises or major opportunities

Step 2: Form a Powerful Coalition

- Assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort
- Encourage the group to work as a team

Step 3: Create a Shared Vision

- Create a vision to help direct the change effort
- Develop strategies for achieving that vision

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

- Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies
- Teach new behaviors by the example of the Guiding Coalition

Step 5: Empower Others to Act

- Remove obstacles to change
- Change systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision
- Encourage the risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions

Step 6: Plan for and Create Wins

- Plan for visible performance improvements
- Create those improvements
- Recognize and reward people involved in the improvements

Step 7: Change Improvement Checkpoints

- Use increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don't fit the vision
- Hire, promote, and develop people who can implement the vision
- Reinvigorate the process with new projects, themes, and change agents

Step 8: Institutionalize New Approaches

- Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success
- Develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession

Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press. Kotter, J. P. and D. S. Cohen (2002). *The heart of change : real-life stories of how people change their organizations*. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press. Boston, Mass., Harvard Business School Press.



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Acknowledgments

Members of the Community Planning Team and the University of Wisconsin-Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking Team thank the Village of Gilman, Taylor County, Taylor County Extension, Aspirus Community Foundation, School District of Gilman, Gilman Lions Club, Celebration Hall, Romig's Hardware & Plumbing, and Vault Village.

UW-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking *Signature Effort*

The UW-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking Signature Effort is a group of UW-Extension county educators and state specialists who research, create, and test community placemaking curriculum in response to the challenge set forth by the Wisconsin Idea. Design Wisconsin is one of several community placemaking programs offered by the group. Current members include:

- Barry Hottmann, Community Development Educator, Iowa County Extension
- Brandon Hofstedt, CED Program Manager, UW-Madison, Division of Extension
- Brian Gauthier, Community Development Educator, Lac du Flambeau Extension
- Christa Van Treek, Positive Youth Development Educator, Marquette County Extension
- David Timmerman, Editor/Journalist/Photographer, Grant County Herald Independent
- Ed Freer, Landscape Architect & Urban/Waterfront Designer, GRAEF, USA
- Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator, Portage County Extension
- Kellie Pederson, Community Development Educator, Bayfield County Extension
- Kristin Runge, Community Development Specialist, UW-Madison, Division of Extension
- Mariah Goode, Director of Land Use Services Department, Door County
- Michelle Gobert, Positive Youth Development Educator, Forrest County Extension
- Nathan Sandwick, Supervisory Community Liason, USDA Rural Development
- Neil Klemme, Positive Youth Development Educator, Iron County Extension
- Sharon Krause, Positive Youth Development Educator, Oneida & Lac du Flambeau Extension
- Steve Grabow, Professor Emeritus, Jefferson County Extension
- Taylor Seale, Positive Youth Development Educator, Dane County Extension
- Todd Barman, Downtown Development Specialist, UW-Madison, Division of Extension
- Todd Johnson, Land Use + Community Development Specialist, UW-River Falls (Extension)



Extension

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension provides statewide access to university resources and research so the people of Wisconsin can learn, grow and succeed at all stages of life. UW-Extension carries out this tradition of the Wisconsin Idea – extending the boundaries of the university to the boundaries of the state.

Who We Are

With an office in each Wisconsin county, Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to local needs and based on university knowledge and research. We deliver our expertise to the public, addressing a wide range of needs to people, plants and animals, in both urban and rural areas of the states.

What We Do

We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

The Wisconsin Idea

“The University of Wisconsin’s direct contributions to the state: to the government in the forms of serving in office, offering advice about public policy, providing information and exercising technical skill, and to the citizens in the forms of doing research directed at solving problems that are important to the state and conducting outreach activities.”

– Jack Stark, “The Wisconsin Idea: The University’s Service to the State”, p.1



Contact

For more information about the University of Wisconsin-Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking Signature Effort and the Design Wisconsin program, please contact:

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