

# ACTIVATION SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DOWNTOWN FARIBAULT, MN



PRESENTED BY  
THE MUSICANT GROUP

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# INTRODUCTION

Downtown Faribault has historically been the center of social and economic activity for the City of Faribault. As populations, industries/jobs and residents preferences change, Downtown areas must be continually adjusting to the needs and desires of their residents and visitors. With a strong foundation of historic buildings, a busy main street and attractive destinations, Downtown Faribault has the opportunity to become even more successful place!

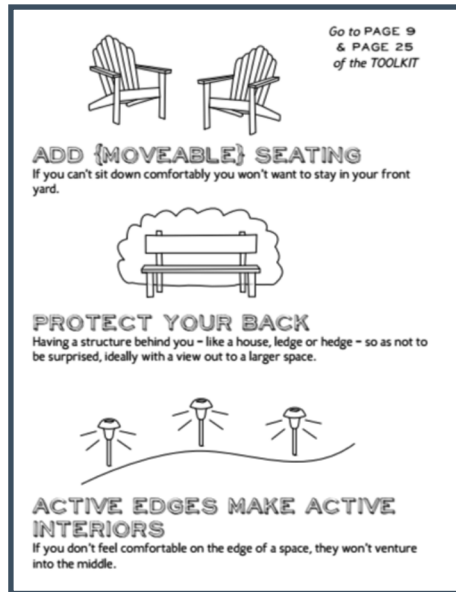
As apart of the Faribault Comprehensive Plan process, The Musicant Group was commissioned to better understand the current conditions in Downtown Faribault and build capacity within residents, businesses and city officials to make downtown Faribault a great place to be!

**To inform our recommendations and help build momentum and capacity for place-making within Downtown Faribault, we focused on work on the following projects:**

## Site Review and Business Outreach



## Placemaking Training



## Pop Up Faribault Event



**The following report is a summary of our findings, the training and events, as well as recommendations on how to improve conditions within Downtown Faribault to make it a destination and long term community asset for the City of Faribault.**

# PROJECT GOALS

- 1. Build capacity and engagement for organizations and businesses in Downtown Faribault to create an active and lively downtown.**
- 2. Understand what the residents of Faribault want to do and experience in downtown.**
- 3. Understand the physical, political, social and regulatory barriers that businesses and organizations in Downtown Faribault experience when working to create a more engaging downtown environment.**
- 4. Provide recommendations and action steps to help create a more engaging downtown that better reflects what residents and visitors to Faribault want to do and experience in downtown.**





# Key Nodes

By understanding what is drawing visitors downtown and how they move while they are there we are able to better understand what activities and key connections are missing or need improvement to build a more active and lively downtown.

*What are the destinations that pull residents and visitors to downtown Faribault?*

*Once downtown, are residents stopping at multiple destinations?*

*Are visitors able to grab a quick lunch at a Cafe after stopping at the Library?*

*Does it seem possible to go for a quick walk down by the River after you have stopped by the bank?*



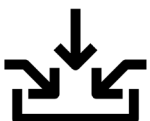
## Why are NODES and their CONNECTIONS important?



Clear connections, strong relationships and 'desire lines' between different nodes encourages walking and 'ground level' interaction with businesses, peoples and spaces along the route. Providing connections between different nodes also encourages visitors to make an unplanned stop or walk through a part of the city they might have otherwise not visited. Creating or linking 'trips' via walking is a great way to create a lively and active downtown.



In most cases, a visitor to downtown Faribault is making a trip to do a specific activity. This may be meeting friends at a restaurant or stopping by the office of their insurance agent. These activities are likely to happen at one of the downtown Nodes. To encourage visitors to spend more time in downtown they must be drawn to engage in other activities. What nodes drive this activity and are their connections to other activities?



Visitors to downtown must be drawn or pulled into a specific space or activity in order to participate. Clear connections and paths draw visitors along by providing a comfortable and engaging environment while clearly showing the destination. Understanding where connections and nodes are needed is essential in being able to help facilitate movement in and around downtown.

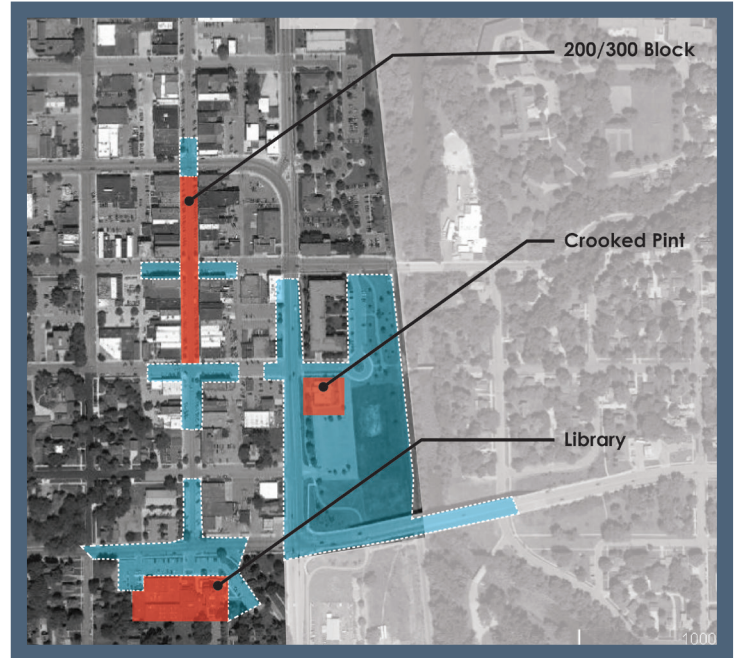
# Key Nodes **Walk and View Sheds**



## VIEW SHEDS

Distance, topography and the urban form all play into the view sheds of a given space. In downtown Faribault the layout of downtown and its urban form create for very limited view sheds. Standing on the 200-300 block of Central Avenue you would have a hard time seeing both the Straight River area and the Library/Community Center. Improving way-finding in areas where view sheds are limited help visitors orient themselves and get drawn into other spaces.

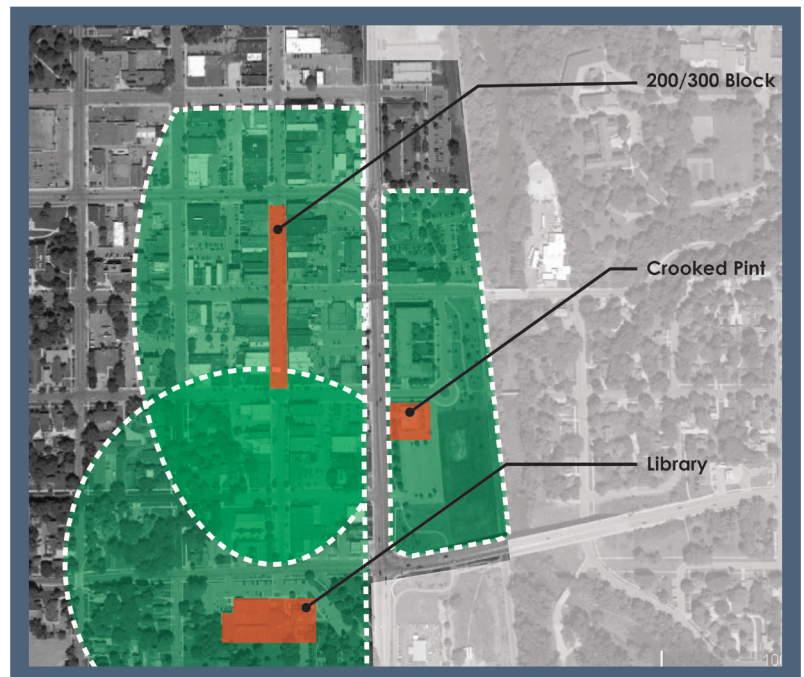
The Straight River Area currently has a large view shed due to fewer buildings and flat topography. When developing this area, the view sheds both within this node and into downtown should be considered.



## WALK SHEDS

The Walk Sheds' of the three identified destination nodes in downtown Faribault show how these three spaces are disconnected either by distance or barriers like Hwy. 60. While the distance between nodes and the existence of Hwy 60 can't be changed, improvements to pedestrian paths/connections, the expansion or addition of nodes and improvements to crossings on Hwy. 60 can help better connect different destinations in downtown Faribault.

Wayfinding and programming focused on connecting these destinations will also help expand the walk sheds of destination in downtown Faribault which will increase the base of potential patrons and users. Increasing the number of people on the street will make pedestrians feel safer, connected and more willing to walk.





# KEY NODES SUMMARY

## 200-300 Block of Central Avenue



The 200 + 300 blocks of downtown Faribault are the center of activity in downtown Faribault. The majority of the use and activity comes from local visitors to the businesses and organizations directly on Central Avenue. Visitors use and fill the parking spaces along Central Avenue parking close to their intended destinations.

Very little green space and shade exists along Central Avenue. In the public realm space that does exist there is little to do. Tilt-a-whirl 'benches' provide a space to take a break but the metal enclosure and limited shade/cover make these spaces uncomfortable to rest. Pedestrian access to other destinations are limited.

## Library + Recreation Center



Located at the end of Central Avenue along Division Street the Library and Recreation Center are a popular destinations. Both the Library and Recreation Center are heavily programmed, attracting families, seniors and all other Faribault residents on a regular basis. Next to the Library is Peace Park, the only "green" space downtown located on the west side of 1st Ave.

The majority of the visitors get to the Library and Recreation Center by car. Limited activity on Central Avenue between Division Street and 2nd Avenue disconnects this area from the highest activity areas along Central Avenue. The pedestrian crossings at Division Street and 1st Ave make accessing other destinations downtown difficult.

## Straight River Area



The area along the Straight River is currently a popular but underutilized section of downtown. With housing, offices, restaurants and green space, area along the straight river has the opportunity to be a destination space. The addition of 'The Crooked Pint' will draw significant more activity and visitors to this part of downtown.

The Straight River area is separated from the rest of downtown Faribault by 1st Ave NE (MN HWY 60). This four lane busy street with limited crossings makes pedestrian access very difficult. Dis-jointed North/South connections don't provide apparent ways to connect the different destinations along the Straight River.

# KEY NODES ASSETS

## 200–300 Block of Central Avenue



- Established and successful businesses
- Historic Architecture
- Community Organizations and Non-Profits
- Arts and Culture Organizations
- Plentiful Parking
- Proximity to Straight River, Shattuck St. Marys and Minnesota Academy for the Blind
- Quantity of commercial and residential space

## Library + Recreation Center

- Successful programming with high use
- Use by wide range of ages
- Location at the end of Central Avenue
- Peace Park
- Proximity to Straight River and Straight River Trail
- Plentiful Parking



## Straight River Area



- Straight River and the Straight River Trail
- Successful and highly used restaurants (Crooked Pint and Depot Bar and Grill)
- Heritage Park
- Higher Density housing units
- Visible location along 3rd Street and 1st Ave.
- Open space for development



# KEY NODES ISSUES

## 200-300 Block of Central Avenue



- Narrow sidewalks with no buffer from parking, tunnel effect
- Running North-South with little shade, maximum sun
- Many businesses hold limited hours or days
- No green spaces and very limited landscaping
- No public benches or tables
- Very limited outdoor 'private' seating
- Disconnected from other nearby destinations
- Vacant buildings (especially on adjacent streets)

## Library + Recreation Center

- Cut off from Central Avenue by Division Street
- No clear crossing at Division Street
- First two block of Division Street have no 'social' businesses or restaurants
- No clear crossing or access to Straight River Area or Straight River regional trail
- Isolated programming with little interaction with downtown



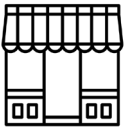
## Straight River Area



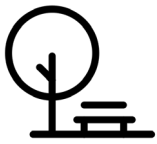
- Separated from downtown by busy HWY 60
- Large areas of open/undeveloped space
- Paths and routes along the river are unclear or no present
- Minimal programming
- No clear connections from Straight River Trail to downtown
- Disconnected from other destinations and no wayfinding
- No seating or informal gathering spaces

# KEY NODES Activation Opportunities

## 200–300 Block of Central Avenue



- Create energy and activity along the sidewalks through programming and design
- Better utilize parking spaces along Central Avenue
- Build capacity and energy in businesses to turn towards the street
- Utilize existing partnerships and relationship to test and pilot projects

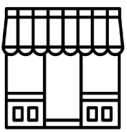


- Under used parking lots can be re-claimed for pocket parks or green spaces
- Large areas of programmable space by Straight River
- Wide streets with excess parking and low traffic 2nd and 3rd Streets provide opportunities for “Greenways”, bike lanes, improved pedestrian conditions, etc.



- Currently no way-finding program or signage that link nodes
- Re-done bump outs provide starting point for improved pedestrian conditions
- Diagonal parking provides significant space for parklets or micro-park installations
- Expand on existing arts businesses and “arts district”

## Library + Recreation Center



- Promote active and social businesses adjacent to Library/Community Center
- Partnerships with local organizations and businesses downtown
- Engage library and community center programming down Central Avenue
- Utilize location as a gathering/launch point to activities in and around downtown

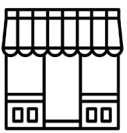


- Utilize Peace Park for public and private events/gathering
- Provide spaces outside on North Side of Library for small gatherings
- Program ‘park and recreation’ activities outside or partner with spaces along Central
- Actively program garden and other green spaces



- Create regularly occurring events to facilitate interaction w/ Downtown + Straight River Area
- Utilize and improve connections to Central Avenue
- Provide way-finding signage at Library and Community Center to encourage walking
- Utilize and improve connection to Straight River Trail and Straight River area

## Straight River Area



- Promote cross contamination between businesses on either side of Hwy 41
- Encourage and assist in events and activation of public spaces outside of businesses
- Draw on active and successful restaurants along to straight river to keep visitors downtown



- Utilize unused open space for programming, events and activities.
- Improve key bike trails to promote biking into and from Straight River Trail
- Improve existing park spaces with benches, picnic and games/activities
- Explore recreation opportunities and programming on the river



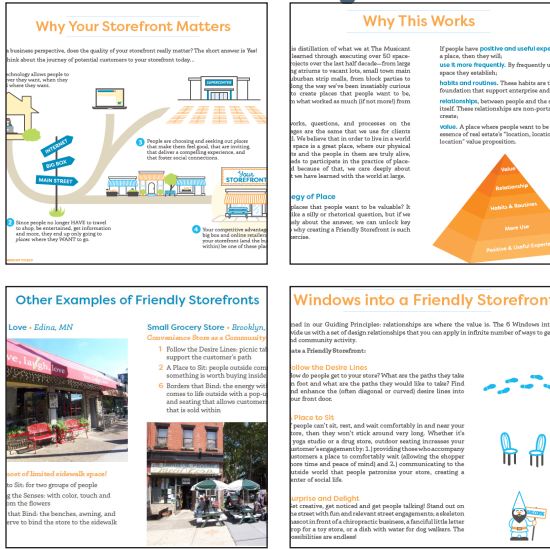
- Improve crossings to encourage walking between Downtown and Straight River area
- Way-finding pulling visitors across Hwy 41
- Utilize and strengthen the North-South pedestrian connections
- Provide pedestrian opportunities and access to residents of “Our Homes” apartments



## POP-UP Event + Training

To build capacity in the businesses, organizations and residents of Faribault a Pop-Up Event and Activation Training was conducted in Downtown Faribault. These events were used to 1) Create connections between residents, businesses and organizations 2) Share activation ideas and best practices and 3) Allow businesses, organizations and residents to test out ideas for making their storefronts and downtown Faribault a more fun, active and interesting place to be.

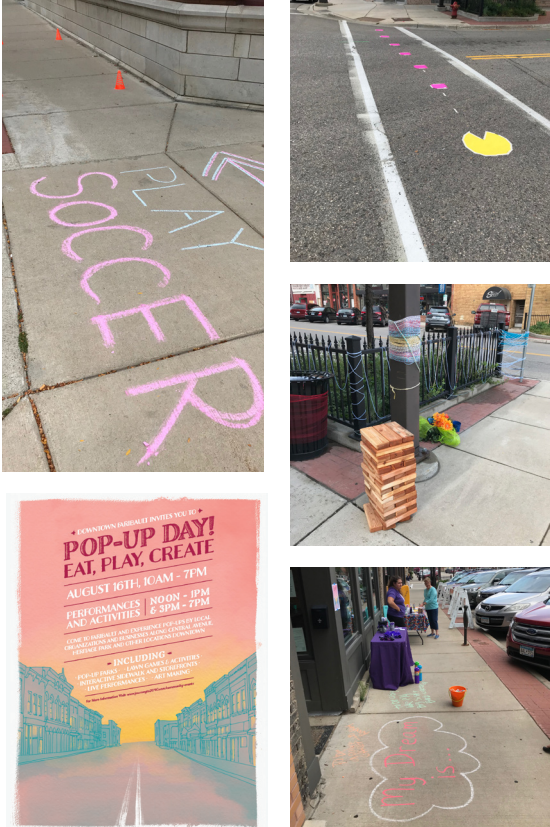
# Activation Training Event



In the summer of 2018, The Musicant Group came to Faribault and presented to eleven different businesses and organizations on the planned 'Pop-Up Faribault' event and held a brief training based on the Musicant Groups "Friendly Fronts" toolkit. Participants learned about strategies for activating places in general and their storefronts and businesses specifically. Case studies of successful 'main street' programs and activations were also presented. Along with the training participants discussed the current issues and activation opportunities for their storefronts.

Information and feedback provided by the participants drove the final structure, timing and presentation of the “Pop-Up” event.

## Pop-Up Faribault Event



On August 16th, 2018 the Pop-Up Faribault event was held. Thirteen businesses and organizations had intended to participate in the event. Their activities and activations ranged from small scale projects like sidewalk chalk to large “Bike Rodeos”. Due to the weather many of the larger scale activations and projects, which were slated to take place in the afternoon, were canceled due to the weather. Overall we had 9 businesses and organizations participate with over 50 residents participating and interacting with various activities.

Despite the weather, businesses and organizations shared overall positive feedback to the concept and community driven approach. The positive outcome most cited by participating businesses and organizations was the ability to meet and talk with other downtown organizations about downtown Faribault and ways to make both the experience for visitors, organizations and residents better.

Additional lessons and discoveries from conducting the Pop-Up event can be found on Page 13- Lessons and Learnings.

# Pop-up Lessons + Learnings

By holding the training and pop-up event we were able to better understand the issues and opportunities in downtown Faribault for creating an even more active and engaging downtown. The items listed below are a summary of our findings.

## #1 – Business and Organization Connections + Collaboration

Overall, we found that there is a demand for stronger connections between businesses and organizations in downtown. Both training and event participants voiced a frustration over a lack of coordination between different downtown groups and expressed the value of speaking with other groups about successes and barriers to being located in Downtown Faribault. In our experience, non-profit organizations downtown were much willing to participate in the Pop-Up Faribault event than the local businesses. This sentiment was also communicated by a few organizations who voiced a need for communication and collaboration between the non-profit organizations and for-profit businesses in downtown Faribault.

One specific gap that we identified and struggled with was connections to diverse businesses and organizations. It seemed that the majority of the communication and connection to these groups happens through the Faribault Diversity Coalition and that there is minimal connection and communication between other organizations/businesses (including the city) and diverse businesses and organizations.

## #2 – Regulatory Barriers

Many organization and businesses who participated in the training and event voiced frustration over either undefined or restrictive regulations which limited their ability to activate their storefronts and downtown. These businesses specifically cited rules around signage, food/drinks, sidewalk + public right-of-way usage and parking space usage.

## #3 – Connections

The layout and development of downtown Faribault has created some distinct but disconnected nodes. While there is a lot of desire and demand to connect these areas many barriers exist that make these connections difficult. Our limited attempts to provide basic way-finding and connections between the 200-300 blocks of Central, the Library area and the Straight River Area were largely unsuccessful. Our suggestions for improving and building these can be found on the next page.

## #4 – Store Front Focus

There is large opportunity to work with businesses and organization to embrace their storefronts and sidewalks. In speaking with a number of businesses, they are excited about the possibility of opening up their spaces to the sidewalk/street and given the resources would be more than willing try new tactics to activate and energize their storefronts.

## #4 – Demand for Energy and Activation

Residents, employees, businesses and organizations are all excited and itching to improve the experience in downtown Faribault. While the ideas on the ways this can be done may vary, the demand and opportunity for improvement is present. Residents at both the initial planning kick-off engagement and on the street in Downtown stated that they wanted a more active downtown and would spend significantly more time in Downtown Faribault if there were more things to do.



# ACTIVATION Summary + Suggestions

The following suggestions were built from community engagement with residents, site visits, conversations and coordination with businesses and organizations, learnings from the Pop-Up event and site visits.

The tactics and improvements suggested in the follow pages are summarized in the Activation Matrix where they are ranked and categorized according to their impact and cost. We suggest using this matrix to guide the implementation of these suggestions to maximize impact with the funding that is available.

## SUGGESTIONS

### Creating and Enhancing Connections

Better connections to and within downtown Faribault will increase visitation and lengthen the stay of those who have already visited. A visitor who can arrive walking or biking is a more captive customer than who who arrives by car. In Downtown Faribault the connections between key nodes and activity centers are weak and discourage walking. To encourage residents to actively engage with Downtown Faribault creating and enhancing connections to and within Downtown is essential.

#### ***Build Up East-West Connections Between Central Avenue and the Straight River Area***

Central Avenue and the Straight River area are separated by one city block and Hwy 60. Due to the parking and space limitations along Central Avenue, drastically improving pedestrian conditions may be difficult. The two main East-West Streets connecting Central Avenue and the Straight River area (2nd and 3rd Streets) provide a unique opportunity due to their current design/use and their physical connection between these two nodes.

While parking along Central Avenue has been a long standing point of contention among businesses and visitors to downtown, 2nd and 3rd Streets carry a similar parking capacity to Central with significantly less demand. Both anecdotal and quantitative parking studies show excess parking capacity along these streets. 2nd and 3rd Streets also see significantly less car traffic than Central Avenue and have more potential space for new tenants and businesses. These conditions make 2nd and 3rd Street great candidates for improvements to the pedestrian and bike infrastructure.

#### **Improvements/Tactics:**

- 1) Create a bike lane which connects to the Straight River Trail. This bike path could continue West along 2nd Avenue through downtown towards the Faribault mall.
- 2) Remove and/or re-design on street parking to provide continual green space with trees for shade and smaller gathering spaces
- 3) Provide unique and clearly labeled way-finding in both directions
- 4) Incentivize 'social' and active businesses along this route with sidewalk seating and activity
- 5) Create activities and items of interest every 20-30, such as: seating, art, signs, active store-fronts, etc

# ACTIVATION Summary + Suggestions Cont'd

## ***Improve and Foster Connections to the Library + Community Center***

While located on at the intersection of Central Avenue and Division Street the Faribault Library and Community Center is both physically and mentally disconnected from other key nodes and destinations in Downtown Faribault. Building up connections between the Library + Community Center and other destinations in Downtown Faribault will facilitate more pedestrian movement downtown, keep visitors in downtown longer and provide more choices/opportunities for partnerships and collaboration



### **Improvements/Tactics:**

- 5) Improve pedestrian crossings at Division and Willow Street through signaled pedestrian lights, bump outs, medians and clear signage.
- 6) Improve street experience on the 000 and 100 blocks of Central Avenue through filling vacant properties, adding benches, green space and informal gathering spaces.
- 7) Provide way-finding at higher activity nodes to Library and Community Center. Allow this signage/way-finding to be changed and updated to current programming and events
- 8) Produce regular Library and community center programming and site fixtures (little free libraries, book tree, etc) at their site, on Central Avenue, and in the Straight River Area.

## ***Improve Crossing and Way-Finding Across Hwy 60 (Chestnut Street)***

Hwy 60 is currently acting as a barrier in downtown Faribault preventing pedestrian, bike and even car crossings. With housing, restaurants, park space and commercial properties on the East side of Hwy 60, improved crossings are needed to allow visitors to either downtown and the Straight River area to visit and interact with other destinations in downtown Faribault. Bringing these spaces back together will exponentially increase downtown Faribault's draw as a destination space.



### **Improvements/Tactics:**

- 9) Prioritize pedestrian and bike crossings at both 2nd and 3rd streets.
- 10) Install traffic calming along Hwy 60. This could include medians, reducing lane widths, physical/visual buffers between pedestrians and cars and lowering speed limits.
- 11) Provide way-finding and signage up to and at Hwy 60 crossings.



# ACTIVATION Summary + Suggestions Cont'd

## Foster Community Partnerships

Creating and building active community partnerships helps share knowledge, build capacity and pro-actively address issues. The City of Faribault should work to both create partnerships with local businesses and organizations and provide the space/avenue for businesses/organizations to create and build relationships with each other. Through our engagement with local businesses and organizations we learned that stronger relationships with both the city and other groups was one of the biggest needs for local businesses and organizations.

### Improvements/Tactics:

- 12) Convene a businesses/organization committee to review and recommend changes to city regulations and processes regarding downtown.
- 13) Build and maintain connections with minority owned businesses and organizations. This could be done with assistance of the Faribault Diversity Coalition but relationships should develop with the City directly
- 14) Provide the spaces and resources for downtown businesses to come together in active and pro-active ways around downtown activation
- 15) Encourage and promote active storefronts through grants, trainings and other resources.



## Create places and reasons to gather

Whether you are down by the Straight River or along Central Avenue there are very few places to gather in downtown Faribault. Restaurants and coffee shops provide limited indoor spaces but outdoor public/semi-public spaces are almost non-existent. By missing these spaces visitors spend little or no time in downtown beyond what is required to complete their errand or visit a restaurant. Residents of downtown must either stay inside private residences/businesses or gather on the sidewalks or unused parking spaces.

### Improvements/Tactics:

- 16) Explore and advocate for a more creative use of alleys and rear parking areas. Work with business and property owners to explore ways to build green spaces and active uses behind their buildings. Use strategic city owned parking lots as examples and catalyst for change.
- 17) Convert parking lot and spaces into usable park, patio, courtyard or other gathering spaces. Partner with businesses to sponsor spaces and utilize city owned lots to create pocket parks.
- 18) Re-design street intersection planting areas. Currently these areas are closed off by permanent fencing. Design solutions to provide for ways to incorporate benches or tables into these spaces to make them more usable.
- 19) Install movable chairs, benches, tables and other seating elements which allow for and encourage gathering. Encourage local business/organizational sponsorship and care.



# ACTIVATION Summary + Suggestions Cont'd

## Utilize and connect unique destinations around downtown

There are many destinations and high use facilities just outside of downtown Faribault. Recognizing, leveraging and connecting key locations around downtown Faribault can help bring more people into downtown.

### Improvements/Tactics:

- 20) Connect with large institutions like MN Academy for the Deaf and Shattuck St. Marys to understand their desires and ideal uses for downtown Faribault. Work to build and foster relationships between local businesses/organizations and these larger institutional partners.
- 21) Provide connections and way-finding to River Bend Nature Center and partner with the center to bring programming and activity to downtown.
- 22) Utilize the Straight River as a connection and path to nearby locations through tubing, boating and hiking next to the River.

## Identify and strengthen the gateways to downtown

Creating 'gateways' or distinguishing markers help build the identity of a place. These features help define, distinguish and draw in visitors through active and engaging edges. Gateways can be subtle like a change in street furniture and fixtures or more complex like a piece of sculptural art or large welcome sign. Working to distinguish downtown Faribault as we place will require both large sym-

### Improvements/Tactics:

- 23) Create gateway markers into downtown at the 1st Avenue Bridge and along 4th Avenue
- 24) Use art or other identifiable features to distinguish and create an entry marker
- 25) Create distinguishing design standards within downtown to designate downtown as a unique place
- 26) Have activities and uses at the edge to draw people in





# Appendix Event Participants

Engaged	Responded	Attended Meeting	In-person Engage	Intended to Participate	Participated
The Upper East Side*	X			X	
Glass Garden Beads*			X	X	X
Pawn Shop MN			X		
Suenos De Quinceanera	X				
Milltown*	X	X			
3 Ten Event Center	X				
Buckham Memorial Library*	X	X			
Faribault Community Center*	X	X			
Faribault Area Senior Citizens*	X				
MN Academy for the Deaf / Blind*	X				
Faribault Diversity Coalition	X		X	X	X
River Bend Nature Center	X	X	X	X	X
Main Street/Chamber of Commerce	X	X	X	X	X
SHIP*	X	X		X	
Health Finders	X			X	
Police Department*	X			X	
Rice County Historical Society	X	X	X	X	X
Rice County Health	X	X			
Rice County Housing					
Big Brothers and Big Sisters	X			X	X
Peter Allen	X	X			
Virtues Project	X	X		X	X
Hannah Roehrick					
Paradise Center for the Arts	X	X	X	X	X
Alexander Faribault Character	X			X	X
The Cheese Cave			X		
Subway			X		
Banadir Restaurant & Grocery			X (FDC)		
Taran Market			X (FDC)		
Crooked Pint	X				
10,000 Drops			X		
Blue Bird Cakery			X		
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>