



Vision and Guiding Principles

Solutions and directions for planning are best if they are firmly rooted in the desires and traditions of the community for which they are intended. The input provided by the community framed a vision for downtown's future on which this plan for downtown is based. To support that vision, a series of principles are used to further guide planning, and ultimately, improvement and development efforts.

The Vision

A vision for downtown Hutchinson serves as a statement of purpose for the revitalization process, painting a picture of downtown's future with broad strokes. It describes the community's desires and intentions for their downtown and allows them to share in an understanding of what downtown will become. It provides the foundation for building toward future objectives with a sense of positive change. Most important, the vision was shaped by the people who have a stake in downtown's future; it is their ideas, their words and their dreams. This is Hutchinson's vision for its downtown:

Downtown is not one thing, but a collection of many things. Downtown is the center of the Hutchinson community – a place of commerce, a place to live and a place to share in the civic life of the community. It is a place that celebrates local history and a proud community heritage.

Storefronts in downtown, on both old and new buildings, welcome pedestrian activity and reflect the integrity of downtown's traditional "Main Street" character. Older buildings celebrate their original architectural integrity and become treasures for downtown; new buildings are designed so that they, too, will one day become valued pieces of downtown. Activity thrives in downtown buildings, with street level shops and upper level residences and offices. In downtown Hutchinson, buildings accommodate an ever-changing array of uses, but the buildings stay largely the same.

People are attracted to downtown not only because of its shops and housing. The public spaces of downtown are attractive and inviting, and foster the sense of a vibrant and traditional downtown. While Library Square captures the traditional character of a downtown park, the Crow River Commons celebrates downtown's connection to the river with a tightly integrated series of public and private spaces and buildings.

Downtown is not only the place for commerce, it is also the place for the community's civic life. Important community institutions are located in downtown, on prominent sites in buildings that convey a sense of permanence. Civic life is not always a business function; whether it's friends meeting on the street, a meal at a downtown restaurant, a community celebration, or a trip to the farmers market, downtown is a place where the community comes together.

While great effort may be directed the creation of attractive storefronts and inviting streetscapes, downtown's vitality will come from people. It's important that there is a sense of visible human activity in downtown. As a place where people shop, live, work and entertain, downtown is a place of nearly constant activity. When projects are undertaken in downtown, they

might well begin with an understanding of how people become a part of each project.

Change will not come easily in downtown. Strong partnerships will be needed, and citizens will need to be active to see that their vision is maintained. No single entity can revitalize downtown; it is only through a sense of common effort that downtown can move toward this vision. And it will not happen overnight. The better path is one that accepts the long-term vision, and assuming a pace of incremental change and taking positive steps that lead toward the community's vision for downtown.

Downtown is a collection, but not just a collection of things. As the evolution of downtown occurs, it should place great value on creating new memories and experiences for people who will spend time here. It should be a place that continues to be the focus of stories told by the people of Hutchinson, so that the traditions of a small town downtown are as vital for the next generation as they are today.

Guiding Principles

Without exception, downtowns are evolutionary places, the patterns we see today have taken years, decades and even centuries to become apparent. Elements of downtown Hutchinson's foundations may still be visible, but these historic elements are set in the context of the 20th or even the 21st century. It was not without a sense of vision that Hutchinson's early leaders reserved one block of their downtown to create Library Square. It is with this sense of vision that the community must look forward to these next years and decades of downtown Hutchinson. And it is with these same expectations of evolution that we frame the principles for downtown's future.

Initial directions for downtown Hutchinson are founded in a set of principles that, if pursued, will allow downtown to evolve consistent with the vision articulated by the community. These guiding principles provide the foundation of this plan and will be used by the community to review proposals for change in downtown.

- ***Invite retail activity to Main Street***

While downtowns are no longer the primary retail centers of most communities, it is important that, to the greatest degree possible, the experience of Main Street and Washington Avenue should focus on street level retail and entertainment uses and eating and drinking establishments.

- ***Surround downtown with vital living areas***

A downtown cannot be separated from those areas immediately surrounding it. Vital residential areas most often surround a vital downtown; in Hutchinson, the mix of single and multi-family uses is a great supporting use for downtown.

- ***Embrace the river as the community's place***

As a natural resource, the Crow River in downtown should be a great public place. The goal should be a continuous, publicly accessible riverfront throughout downtown.



Invite retail activity to Main Street



Surround downtown with vital living areas



Embrace the river as the community's place

- ***Provide housing for a wide range of lifestyles***

Downtowns can be attractive to a range of residents, each with their own preferences for a living environment. Most important, there is no single dwelling unit that can be a universal fit, so a range of housing choices must be provided with a character befitting downtown Hutchinson.



Provide housing for a wide range of lifestyles

- ***Use public spaces as a place to celebrate community***

It's not enough to have a public space as a focal point of downtown. While it can be a great signature piece, Library Square should be programmed with events that celebrate community and attract people to downtown. The nearby Farmers Market is exactly that kind of event.



Use public spaces as places to celebrate community

- ***Set up special elements as focal points and highlights of the downtown experience***

There should be points of special character in both the public and private realms of downtown, elements that are unique and memorable. Historic buildings such as the State Theater and the Hutchinson Hotel can be great focal points; the power plant might someday have a similar quality. As streetscapes are developed, the introduction of public art that celebrates Hutchinson's heritage might offer elements that are more delightful or whimsical, and most important, more memorable.



Set up special elements as focal points and highlights of the downtown experience

- ***Expect buildings to acquire "historic" status***

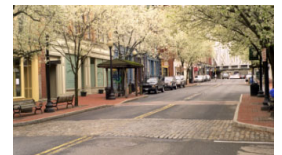
Historic buildings cannot be built today, and simple replication of historic styles will only serve to diminish the integrity of truly historic structures. Buildings created for downtown Hutchinson should be representative of their own time, and be built with the sense that, one day, they too will become a part of downtown's historic fabric.



Expect buildings to acquire "historic" status

- ***Build from the pedestrian perspective***

Downtowns are experiential places, and downtown Hutchinson must be, above all, a pedestrian experience. Buildings, public spaces and streetscapes should be built with a sense of human craft with attention to the forms, scales and materials that will result in a truly high quality pedestrian experience.



Build from the pedestrian perspective

- ***Build parking for pedestrians***

Once a driver parks their car, they become a pedestrian. Parking lots, therefore, should offer continuity with other pedestrian spaces of downtown, with a similar degree of attention to aesthetics. In doing so, the spaces are "humanized" and become more comfortable places for people, and they offer greater consistency with other improvements in downtown.



Build parking for pedestrians

- ***Accept traffic on downtown's terms***

Traffic is necessary to support the business activities of downtown, but it should occur in the context of a vital and pedestrian-oriented place. From this perspective, it is important to consider traffic flow, but also to control the speed at which traffic moves.



Accept traffic on downtown's terms

- ***Allow uses to change, not buildings***

The best downtown buildings are those that encourage their continual evolution within the same basic structure. This kind of use will allow the building stock to maintain its value and its place in the long-term perspective of downtown.



Allow uses to change, not buildings