

Downtown revitalization committee to hold open house Feb. 2

Isanti-Chisago County Star

Stan Gustafson, Jan 25, 2017

The newly established downtown revitalization committee, Discover Downtown, invites the public to attend a special open house on Thursday, Feb. 2, from 6-8 p.m. at Sidelines Sports Grill, 138 2nd Avenue SE, Cambridge, where members of the group and their subcommittees will present their research and concepts focusing on beautification and ambiance ideas, traffic, parking and business mix considerations identified as opportunities to revitalize downtown.

“I’ve been watching the process go from individuals interested in improving downtown,” said Stan Gustafson, Cambridge Economic Development Director, “to a cohesive, committed group meeting every week to develop fresh ideas the city and ongoing community support can study further for possible implementation in the future.”

The committees have been working since September to learn what other cities have done to repurpose their downtowns into a thriving center for community activity for ages 8 to 80. Some ideas include offering outdoor dining patios, better directional signage, creating stronger connections to local establishments and possible new businesses not found elsewhere in the Cambridge area.

Committee members are eager to hear from the community as to what issues, needs and creative ideas they have that can be included in the downtown planning. Community input will be incorporated into final committee recommendations to be presented to the city council and community on the evening of March 23 at the Cambridge-Isanti High School auditorium.

Other Components of Revitalization

Another component of the revitalization project includes the possible formation of a Cambridge Community Foundation created to assist the community in revitalizing downtown as well as supporting other greater Cambridge community activities.

Representatives of the Initiative Foundation will be on hand to provide more information.

Discover Downtown will also be working with a committee from Pine City to conduct exchange visits to each other's downtown as a means to have a fresh set of eyes and to review downtown for additional opportunities both cities can use to improve the consumer experience.

Focus of subcommittees

The focus of one of the subcommittees, the Community Connections Committee, is moving people to and from downtown. Ensuring everyone can easily find the businesses they seek is just as important as having new businesses drawing the community to downtown throughout the week as well as on weekends.

Creating a vibrant atmosphere is the goal of Experience Downtown Committee. They are creating beautification ideas, streetscape themes and open gathering spots central to generating new interest for businesses to locate downtown.

The work of the Destination Downtown Committee includes repurposing vacant buildings and lots into brew pubs and coffee shops, offering a special vibe unique to Cambridge for employees and residents, among other business offerings.

Downtown Promotion Committee is creating new branding and marketing ideas drawing attention to downtown's growing business climate, community activities and year-around events.

The Civic Support Committee is working with the city to seek zoning and ordinance options used in other cities to boost business development. This could include new design standards created to develop a strong visual theme embracing downtown's past with needs of the future.

Want to get involved?

The downtown revitalization project is conducted by Todd Streeter, principal of Community Collaboration, and sponsored by the Initiative Foundation.

Discover Downtown invites anyone interested in helping transform downtown into a thriving center of community activity to contact Lynda Woulfe at (763) 552-3216 or email lwoulfe@ci.cambridge.mn.us.

Stan Gustafson is the Economic Development Director for the city of Cambridge.