



Chamber | Main Street | Tourism
118 East Bremer Avenue | Waverly, Iowa 50677
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Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Brief Organizational History

The Waverly Chamber of Commerce (WCC) was formed in 1937.

In November 1985, the Waverly Economic Development Corporation (WEDCO) was created to recruit and maintain industry for Waverly and surrounding communities. WEDCO spearheaded the creation of the Waverly Fund through contributions by local business, banks, the city and Waverly Light and Power to provide a gap loan fund to enhance Waverly's recruiting efforts.

In October 1989, Waverly was accepted into the Main Street Iowa program. This was the result of an application filed with support of the City of Waverly and WEDCO. The underlying principle of the agreement was to follow the Main Street four-point program (Main Street Iowa overview on following page). Waverly entered the Main Street program at a time when downtowns were undergoing significant change from the farm crisis and pressure from discount retailers.

Waverly quickly developed a statewide reputation as a "can do" community within the Main Street program. The Waverly Main Street program has received 60+ awards including the prestigious Spirit of Main Street Award.

In January 1994, the Chamber of Commerce and the Waverly Main Street program combined to cooperatively accomplish their missions and reduce overhead expenses. In January 2000, WEDCO joined the Chamber/Main Street to form the Waverly Area Development Group (WADG).

In 2007, WADG worked with the City Council to create a city staff position for economic development. This change removed the overall economic position from the WADG office. The WCC continues to work both independently and cooperatively with City Economic Development on business recruitment. Most new projects apply for both Waverly Fund and IRP gap loans.

In 2008, we updated our name to the Waverly Chamber of Commerce (and use the tag line "A Main Street Community") to better reflect our mission. Today our responsibilities include Tourism, Main Street Development, Retail Promotions, Design and Membership. Our efforts center around making Waverly a great place to live, visit and do business.

Travis Toliver, Executive Director | Tiffany Schrage, Events & Tourism Director

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Main Street Affiliations

The Main Street Iowa (MSI) program provides a framework for improving the social and economic well-being of a community. MSI is directed by the Iowa Department of Economic Development. The purpose is to support selected Iowa communities (50+ active programs) in their economic development efforts within the context of historical development. MSI provides resources through a national network of 40 programs and 1,200 communities. Annual reviews are conducted by Main Street Iowa office to remain certified as a National Main Street America and Main Street Iowa program. The most recent national review for Waverly was completed in 2021. Waverly has been a member of the Main Street Iowa program for 30+ years. Below is a quick list of services/benefits provided by Main Street Iowa.

Downtown funding services:

- Community Catalyst Building Remediation – [download link](#)
- Downtown Housing Grants – [download link](#)
- Downtown Loan Guarantee Program – [download link](#)
- Downtown Revitalization Fund Community Development Block Grants – [download link](#)
- Derelict Building Program – [download link](#)
- Historic Preservation and Cultural and Entertainment District Tax Credits – [download link](#)
- Nuisance Property and Abandoned Building Remediation Loans – [download link](#)
- State Historic Preservation Office Grants – [download link](#)
- Workforce Housing Tax Credits – [download link](#)

Community/small business resources:

- Guides for starting businesses, funding, growth, innovation, and exiting
- Local webinars and physical events related to marketing, social media, developing a business model, etc. – [View calendar of events](#).
- National webinars and conferences
- Local and national conferences for program leadership and board members
- Market analysis tools
- Economic impact studies
- Web resources and toolkits – local and national
- Fundraising guides and resources
- In-community workshops for commercial district leaders
- In-community multi-day technical assessment and plan developments for revitalization

Main Street Four Point Approach®:

The Main Street Approach is centered around Transformation Strategies. A Transformation Strategy articulates a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy.

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A program’s work on Transformation Strategies should be organized around the Four Points: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

A revitalization program’s work – and its Transformation Strategies – need to be informed by a solid understanding of local and regional market data and sustained and inclusive community engagement.



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ECONOMIC VITALITY focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

DESIGN supports a community’s transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

PROMOTION positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community’s unique characteristics.

ORGANIZATION involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

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Waverly Chamber/Main Street Mission

The Waverly Chamber of Commerce and Main Street program develops and sustains dynamic progressive programs supporting the economic and business environment to provide a quality experience for residents and visitors to our community and historic downtown district.

Our Vision

Together, we amplify and champion the unique qualities of Waverly to become a destination of choice.

Our Values

- Connection – there is power in bringing people and ideas together
- Loyalty – shared responsibility to accomplish goals
- Communication – trust built and maintained through effective communication

Goals, Objectives, and Tactical Plans

All tactics are assigned to specific committees/groups. Below is a key for the abbreviations in the parentheses that follow the tactic). The first committee/group listed is charged with execution of the tactic. If there is another committee/group assigned, they should be included in the process as well.

- B - Business Development
- D – Design & Beautification
- E – Executive Committee
- M – Membership & Marketing
- R – Retail Promotions
- T – Tourism

1. **GOAL – To enhance awareness of the importance of the Chamber/Main Street program by telling the story of the organization, Waverly, and its businesses.**

OBJECTIVE 1 – Develop and/or re-establish partnerships with important stakeholders of the organization, both internal and external.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Gather at least 20 stories/testimonials of member businesses each year.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Engage at least 35 businesses to be active champions with social media campaigns.

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OBJECTIVE 4 – Enhance workforce recruitment for members and tourism through Waverly Welcome Home partnership/initiative and effective advertising/promotion to reach more than 1 million people/impressions annually.

OBJECTIVE 5 – Share annually the economic impact of the Chamber/Main Street program to key stakeholders and members.

Application of Four Points Transformational Strategies

- ***ECONOMIC VITALITY***

Defined strategy: Gather member stories and feedback

- Tactic 1: Create a new member gathering for orientation and networking opportunities. (M, E)
- Tactic 2: Survey and interview businesses to listen to their stories, record testimonials for potential promotion. (M, R, B)
- Tactic 3: When calling on businesses, encourage use of the Waverly Welcome Home resources. (B, M)
- Tactic 4: Develop check-in meetings with Economic Development to monitor the progress of the Waverly Welcome Home initiative. (B, E)
- Tactic 5: Re-establish connection with the Bremer County Supervisors and encourage more regular county-wide updates from them. (E)

- ***DESIGN***

Defined strategy: Tell the stories visually.

- Tactic 1: Develop ways to publicly promote façade improvement projects and specifically those that were funded through the façade improvement grant program and to encourage others to support and apply. (D)
- Tactic 2: Add before and after shots on the Chamber website as a way to visual tell the story of this program and how it helps members create attractive shopping venues. (Staff)
- Tactic 3: Utilize and share the new design guidelines toolkit. (D)
- Tactic 4: Take photos of volunteer work that goes into visually enhancing Waverly's downtown; share photos through various communication channels. (D, Staff)

- ***PROMOTION***

Defined strategy: Identify key audiences and ways to reach them.

- Tactic 1: Expand the use of the Experience Waverly Facebook group. (B)
- Tactic 2: Develop a comprehensive communication/marketing plan for the organization that defines all key audiences and strategies to reach them. (M, Staff)
- Tactic 3: Create a social media calendar of strategic posts. (Staff)

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- Tactic 4: Send more regular updates to local media (Waverly newspaper/KWAY) for mass awareness of events and achievements of the Chamber/Main Street. Also include Cedar Valley media to increase outreach potential. (All, Staff)
- Tactic 5: Continue to produce hospitality/relocation packets, visitors guides and brochures (T)
- Tactic 6: Reach out to bus tour groups to host and visit Waverly (focus on timing with major community/college events). (T)
- Tactic 7: Continue the strategic advertising campaigns in identified publications. (T, M, Staff)

- **ORGANIZATION**

Defined strategy: Utilize information for effective decision-making.

- Tactic 1: Analyze survey feedback for themes and items to share. (B, Staff)
- Tactic 2: Continue to enhance and share the annual report with members, city council, city administrators, donors, and other important stakeholders. (E, Staff)
- Tactic 3: Develop a Learn over Lunch session focused on how businesses can utilize tools and resources from the Waverly Welcome Home initiative. (E, Staff)
- Tactic 4: Recruit effective speakers from within membership for topics identified as important to members. (B, Staff)
- Tactic 5: Create an awards committee, responsible for collecting information and completing Main Street Iowa award submissions. These awards are another way to tell the story/stories of our community at a state-wide level. (E, Staff)

2. GOAL – To ensure the long-term financial stability of the organization.

OBJECTIVE 1 – Review/update/create financial policies that allow for better transparency and best practices.

OBJECTIVE 2 – Retain business memberships at more than 95 percent annually.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Recruit at least 25 new businesses each year.

OBJECTIVE 4 – Encourage enhancement of Waverly’s physical appearance to make it an attractive place to work, live, and visit.

OBJECTIVE 5 – Develop initiatives to enhance non-member revenue.

- **ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Defined strategy: Recruit and retain members.

- Tactic 1: Recruit the top five businesses from the business survey. (B, Staff)
- Tactic 2: Review member benefits and levels to ensure value for membership. (M, E)

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- Tactic 3: Review and continue to improve regular retail promotion events to provide the most value for members and the community. (R, Staff)

- **DESIGN**

Defined strategy: Add value through attractiveness.

- Tactic 1: Continue to create a sense of celebration through decorating for the holidays and support for major retail events. (D, R)
- Tactic 2: Continue to change out downtown planters seasonally to enhance the aesthetic of the downtown shopping atmosphere. (D)
- Tactic 3: Continue to support the façade improvement grant. (D, Staff)
- Tactic 4: Monitor the work of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Historical Society Museum Board and support their initiatives. (D, Staff)
- Tactic 5: Assist in planning of the annual Art Walk event. (R, T)

- **PROMOTION**

Defined strategy: Collaboration of committees to share stories/successes.

- Tactic 1: Promote open buildings and engage with select businesses. (B, Staff)
- Tactic 2: Create investor map and release online. (M, B, Staff)
- Tactic 3: Promote the #WaverlyFirst on social media and conduct in-person visits again about the campaign. (M)
- Tactic 4: Create a plan to promote the historic districts throughout the community. (T)
- Tactic 5: After gathering retail event surveys, share estimated additional revenue downtown businesses received in annual report and other communication channels as appropriate. (R, T, E)

- **ORGANIZATION**

Defined strategy: Sustainable/diverse financial roadmap for success.

- Tactic 1: Develop a process for bi-annual financials review by outside reviewers and a five-year audit process. (E)
- Tactic 2: Review member benefits and levels to ensure value for membership. (M)
- Tactic 3: Develop a plan for the creation of a foundation that can allow for sustained funding of programs and tax incentives for individual donors. If a foundation is created, a separate board of directors will oversee the program. (E)
- Tactic 4: Conduct electronic surveys of members after retail events to gauge not only attendance, but also percentage of increased sales to demonstrate value. (R, T, E)

3. GOAL – To be a catalyst for creativity and innovation in preparing businesses for the 2023 Bremer Avenue Bridge closure.

OBJECTIVE 1 – Develop multiple methods to gather feedback from downtown businesses about their concerns and needs during the bridge replacement.

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OBJECTIVE 2 – Develop a creative wayfinding plan to make traffic flow smooth around and throughout the downtown area.

OBJECTIVE 3 – Develop a plan (including budget) to relocate or create events on both sides downtown to encourage traffic and business.

- **ECONOMIC VITALITY**

Defined strategy: Maintain collaboration to sustain business activity.

- Tactic 1: Conduct a survey of all downtown merchants to identify needs and concerns during bridge closure. (M, B, Staff)
- Tactic 2: Gather feedback at regular intervals during the closure to see if needs have changed. (M, B, Staff)

- **DESIGN**

Defined strategy: Make traffic flow design creative, simple, and easy to follow.

- Tactic 1: Work with city officials to layout map of detour. (D)
- Tactic 2: Develop temporary signage concept that is recognizable and experiential. Perhaps resurrect Denny the Detour Dog concept. (D)
- Tactic 3: Gather feedback about the detour to make any adjustments to signage as necessary. (D, M)

- **PROMOTION**

Defined strategy: Utilize communication channels to build excitement about the new opportunities downtown during this time.

- Tactic 1: Develop a communications plan for the entire time of closure, identifying key audiences, messages, and timelines. (Staff, M)
- Tactic 2: Promote idea in messaging that detour only takes 3 minutes longer and the detour will be an experience. (Staff, M)
- Tactic 3: Use email and social media to promote events. (R, Staff)

- **ORGANIZATION**

Defined strategy: Create events and activities to direct traffic downtown.

- Tactic 1: Create a special taskforce and appoint a board liaison to report regularly to the Chamber/Main Street board on progress related to events and activities during the closure. The taskforce will consist primarily of Chamber board and committee members. The committee would be open to any downtown merchants. (E, Staff)
- Tactic 2: Conduct in-person panel discussion with downtown merchants and the board to discuss needs and concerns during the closure. (E, Full Board)
- Tactic 3: Communicate with all downtown businesses as plans develop through the task force to ensure they are bought into the ideas. (Staff)

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- Tactic 4: Communicate with non-member groups to discuss partnerships for events (farmer's market, Blue's Fest, etc.). Work with tourism committee to possibly relocate certain events during this time to direct traffic downtown. (T, M, Staff)

Overall Planning Timeline – 2022

- January 2022 – Strategic planning/board retreat; vision outlined
- February 2022 – Vision statement approved; goals outlined
- March 2022 – Goals approved; objectives outlined
- April 2022 – Objectives approved; tactics reviewed from existing action plans
- May 2022 – Strategic plan draft reviewed; tactics assigned to committees
- June 2022 – Committee assignments approved; action plan template reviewed
- July 2022 – No board meeting
- August 2022 – Committees submit revised action plans/timelines
- September 2022 – Full strategic plan and action plans approved for implementation
- October 2022 – Return to regular board meeting structure with committee updates from action plans
- November 2022 – Develop plan for plan review for 2023 leadership
- December 2022 – Review progress on action plans and set 2023 planning in motion

Accountability and Evaluation Process

- All tactics identified in this plan will be assigned to a committee of the board or the executive team. Each committee will be tasked with establishing evaluation procedures for all tactics in their ability to accomplish the defined objectives. Evaluation will be used to modify objectives and tactics for each subsequent year.

Committee Action Plans

The following pages are the specific action plans of all committees.

Status Key: **Status:** Not started | **Status:** In Progress | **Status:** Complete

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Executive Committee Action Plan

Status Key: **Status:** Complete | **Status:** In Progress | **Status:** Ongoing | **Status:** Not Started

GOAL 1: TELLING THE CHAMBER STORY

Tactic: Continue to enhance and share the annual report with members, city council, city administrators, donors, and other important stakeholders.

Method of Measurement: Track constituents who receive the information and increase number of influencers receiving the information each year.

Status: In Progress

Tactic: Develop a Learn over Lunch session focused on how businesses can utilize tools and resources from the Waverly Welcome Home initiative.

Method of Measurement: Set up event and gather feedback from participants.

Status: In Progress

Tactic: Recruit effective speakers from within membership for topics identified as important to members.

Method of Measurement: Utilize survey responses to determine topics. Effectiveness of speakers will be determined by event feedback surveys.

Status: In Progress

Tactic: Create an awards committee, responsible for collecting information and completing Main Street Iowa award submissions. These awards are another way to tell the story/stories of our community at a state-wide level.

Method of Measurement: Committee will be appointed by the board. Effectiveness will be measured based annually on the number of awards the community receives and the visibility received at the Main Street Iowa annual awards attendance each May.

Status: Not Started

GOAL 2: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Tactic: Develop a process for bi-annual financial reviews by outside reviewers and a five-year audit process.

Method of Measurement: Plan and process created by summer 2022.

Status: In Progress

Tactic: Review member benefits and levels to ensure value for membership.

Method of Measurement: Member survey feedback and Membership & Marketing Committee input will be used to determine.

Status: Not Started

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Tactic: Develop a plan for the creation of a foundation that can allow for sustained funding of programs and tax incentives for individual donors. If a foundation is created, a separate board of directors will oversee the program.

Method of Measurement: Foundation documents are created, membership is solidified, and 501(c)3 status approved by Dec. 2022.

Status: In Progress

Tactic: Conduct electronic surveys of members after retail events to gauge not only attendance, but also percentage of increased sales to demonstrate value.

Method of Measurement: Gather the quantitative feedback to ensure most respondents saw an increase in foot traffic and sales during each event.

Status: In Progress

GOAL 3: PREPARING FOR BRIDGE CLOSURE

Tactic: Create a special taskforce and appoint a board liaison to report regularly to the Chamber/Main Street board on progress related to events and activities during the closure. The taskforce will consist primarily of Chamber board and committee members. The committee would be open to any downtown merchants.

Method of Measurement: Creation of taskforce and membership selection; ensure members are attending meetings and relaying information back to the board.

Status: Not Started

Tactic: Conduct in-person panel discussion with downtown merchants and the board to discuss needs and concerns before and during the closure.

Method of Measurement: Gather feedback from merchant panelists and board members to gauge effectiveness.

Status: Not Started

Tactic: Communicate with all downtown businesses as plans develop through the task force to ensure they are bought into the ideas.

Method of Measurement: Open rates of emails and gather feedback merchants if their questions aren't being addressed.

Status: Not Started

Tactic: Communicate with non-member groups to discuss partnerships for events (farmer's market, Blue's Fest, etc.). Work with tourism committee to possibly relocate certain events during this time to direct traffic downtown.

Method of Measurement: Task force will report results of discussions back to the board during meetings.

Status: Not Started

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TIMELINE

- March 2022 – Outside financial reviewer identified
- April 2022 – Learn over Lunch sessions confirmed (one includes Waverly Welcome Home topic)
- July 2022 – All financials reconciled with outside reviewer and bi-annual plan for review confirmed
- September 2022 – Identify awards committee lead to recruit other members
- November 2022 – Analyze survey results from retail events and communicate impact; finalize taskforce related to bridge closure; review member benefits and create recommendations for 2023
- December 2022 – Finalize plan for foundation development; update annual report to present to City Council in January
- January 2023 – Present annual report to city council; develop plan for bridge closure communication and reporting

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Business Development Action Plan

Design & Beautification Action Plan

Membership & Marketing Action Plan

Retail Promotions Action Plan

Tourism Action Plan

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