

Wisconsin Downtown Action Council (WDAC) 2005 Membership Survey

1. As we begin the strategic planning process, what are the three most important issues affecting you that the WDAC should consider? (in no particular order)

1. Urban sprawl
2. Retention
3. Recruitment

1. Declining municipal support
2. Volunteer recruitment
3. Surviving road construction

1. Market analysis
2. Establishing an historic district
3. Volunteer recruitment

1. Continuing the Development of tools and expertise in maintaining or insuring that central business districts continue to be contributing areas of the community.
2. Continuing the education of WDAC members and community members on the importance of continuing investments within central business districts and providing guidance and inspiration to WDAC members and community members that will permit the creation and maintenance of successful central business districts.
3. More frequent networking opportunities among members and member communities to exchange ideas and techniques.

1. Business retention and recruitment
2. How to find out what resources (assistance) is available.
3. How to work in partnership with your surrounding communities.

1. Dwindling membership
2. Lack of a voice that anyone will listen to
3. We need to be part of a professional organization with the staff to make it function as it should

1. Funding, we must spend too much time in fund raising and seeking sponsorships and selling raffle tickets instead of doing our jobs!!
2. Inequity of assistance. Those in the northern half of the state must continually travel to the southeast quarter of the state for meetings, training, etc. Travel expense is always an issue. Workshops in the NW quarter of the state are far and few between!
3. Follow-thru of WDAC promises. Track record is not good. Promises of copies of award nominations...didn't happen. WDAC award nomination info comes late, if at all. I understand you are working as volunteers....perhaps a paid staffer would be in order?

1. Better marketing and branding of downtowns
2. More coordinated regional approaches to marketing
3. Revising DOT standards for Main Street highway segments

1. Eminent Domain/Condemnation
2. Marketing/Promotion
3. "Team Building"--how do you get everyone on the same page

1. Helping downtowns keep dollars local - not sent to some chain headquarters in Bentonville or Texas
 2. Helping downtowns position themselves to bring in people from around the community by celebrating its history, sense of place and real community character.
 3. Foster entrepreneurship in downtowns as a component of community economic development.
1. The elimination of historic buildings in our rural downtowns.
 2. Big box retail gutting our downtowns.
 3. Downtown facelifts (need for facade incentives, etc.).
1. Financial and technical resources for Downtowns
1. Valuable information for both small and large downtowns, specifically rural vs. urban issues.
 2. Opportunities for small communities to compete with larger municipalities in areas such as high-speed internet, etc.
 3. The overwhelming need to keep younger people in our local economies, whether it be community, county or state.
1. There is a voice in legislative affairs for Wisconsin downtowns
 2. There is a venue for networking, training and education on downtown issues
 3. Connections are being made between economic development and downtown vitality - they are mutually dependent.

2. Please select from the list below all of the benefits that you would like made available to WDAC members. (Please select all that apply.)

Education 88% (14 out of 16 surveys)
 Advocacy 75% (12 out of 16 surveys)
 Networking 69% (11 out of 16 surveys)
 Host conferences & seminars 69% (11 out of 16 surveys)
 No Response 6% (1 out of 16 surveys)

Please list all other benefits that you would like to see provided by the WDAC.

- Networking with developers and planners
- Lobbying (during then advocacy)
- Recognition (Banner Awards) is always positive for local programs visits from MS managers in other states...develop a Main Street to Main Street network. Or downtown to downtown network...whatever you want to call it does not matter
- Database of best practices that can be shared among communities. More than the awards-rather a constantly growing database that is easily searchable by topic (i.e. housing, retail, restaurants, etc.
- Database of business recruitment possibilities linking downtown businesses, not just downtown professionals
- Example ordinances for everything from parking lots to signs.
- An organization that has a full time staff to be effective
- Occasional partnering with other organizations that touch on or share concerns regarding downtown issues.

3. Which benefit is most important to you? (Please choose one from the list or add one in the "Other" field.)

Education 25% (4 out of 16 surveys)
Advocacy 19% (3 out of 16 surveys)
Networking 38% (6 out of 16 surveys)
Host conferences & seminars 12% (2 out of 16 surveys)
No Response 0% (0 out of 16 surveys)

Please list the one other benefit that would be most important to you.

- Advocacy
- Conferences and seminars
- Networking is the best way for all community leaders to share...good and bad....other people doing the same work and facing the same challenges are the only ones who truly understand how you feel. Letting off steam is a good thing and we spend so much time in our own community wearing "the invisible cheer leading outfit" that the sounding board outlet is not available to us.
- Learn from Wisconsin and beyond. Merge conference with the WEDA conference - specific track on downtown revitalization sponsored by WDAC.
- Conferences allow networking and idea exchange as well as education. They roll it all into one. It also shows a tangible for our budgets and helps justify the membership!
- Advocacy
- Ability to interface with other small, rural communities around the state with like problems.
- Networking

4. Would like to receive updates from the WDAC Board throughout the strategic planning process? If so, please list your email address below.

Yes 75% (12 out of 16 surveys)
No 19% (3 out of 16 surveys)
No Response 0% (0 out of 16 surveys)

- Perhaps a quarterly e-mail update that goes beyond strategic planning. Focus on what can benefit the community's downtown efforts in this e-newsletter. People may not be interested in the organization's strategic planning efforts. They want to know what the organization can offer them.

5. Please share any additional information or comments that you would like to share that could be helpful to the WDAC.

- Being in the far corner of the state, it is sometimes hard to participate in WDAC activities. This is true with other trade organizations the City is a member of as well. But it would sure be nice if some creative mechanism could be found to better assimilate those of us who practice the profession on the edge of the earth into the mainstream of WDAC events. I would like to see programming that would help central business districts identify and pursue their "niche." How does a particular community identify its downtown strength and become rabid in its pursuit of leveraging that strength. The best conference I attended (I believe that WDAC sponsored it) was in Ripon a number of years ago. The programming of that downtown conference was

- exceptional. The program's content was really on message. The tours were great. If that conference could be re-created annually, members would really have the inspiration and tools to move our organizations and communities forward. Every conference should take advantage of its location to provide for on-site case studies of successes and failures. There is a lot to be learned from such educational programs.
- I think it is time that we strongly consider merging with another organization that would give us the numbers to support a legitimate association/organization.
 - Thanks for doing this! I know how tough it is to keep a group like this together and functioning at a high level. I know WDAC has been struggling for a long time...as have most of us in the field! Good luck!
 - One difficulty I have in general is that I'm never included on info regarding events and activities. For instance, I didn't get the information about the Wausau Downtown forum until the day the event occurred. I do now plan to be a WDAC member to find out more about the organization (I don't have really any knowledge what WDAC is and does).
 - Strongly consider operating under or in close proximity to WEDA and the BID group. Interest in downtown revitalization should not be divided between two or three organizations. Give yourself a pat on the back for great work. A small core group of WDAC leaders are helping move the organization ahead. It is time to actively groom new members to take up responsibility before our existing leaders get too worn out to continue. Great web survey. This is fantastic. A double pat on your back!
 - Over the past year this is the first I've heard from you. There are no seminars, literature, nothing. I think this has to change or you will start losing memberships. We are instructed to cut items out of our budgets, and if there are no deliverables, it's hard to justify membership. I even tried linking to your web site as a resource to help communities, but the link doesn't even work. WDAC needs to be a bigger, more helpful presence.
 - WDAC 1st needs to get its legal and business act together before even attempting to become effective
 - My group spent much time trying to get involved with WDAC and I went to a couple conferences and a couple meetings around the state. We never felt our concerns were being addressed -- everything was centered on issues faced by larger urban communities -- so unless we would believe our issues are important to the group we will not be continuing our membership or interest.
 - WEDA is a strong organization that could bring resources to WDAC's mission. There are issues regarding maintenance of a focus on downtown issues and occasions where downtown issues conflict with economic development issues, but there may be ways to satisfactorily resolve those issues. The idea of partnering or merging with WEDA should be explored. The WEDA Board is willing to explore this concept with WDAC.