

Framework for a successful Walk-Zata

Creating a more accessible downtown Wayzata

For the past decade, the City of Wayzata has been investing in efforts such as Panoway and the Lakewalk to enhance the vibrancy of downtown. In 2021, the city held a Walk-Zata event that transformed a portion of the city's main street into a cyclist and pedestrian-friendly space, allowing residents and visitors to enjoy the lakefront, local businesses, and community event without the rush of traffic.

Based on business, resident, and visitor feedback, the City of Wayzata decided to look at ways to create space and events downtown that are accessible, safe and appealing to residents, promote healthy lifestyles, and also support local Lake Street businesses. The city partnered with the Active Living program to create a Walk-Zata Action Plan to bring this change into city practice as a guide for future events and make improvements that prioritize accessibility and active transportation, economic vitality, and vibrant public spaces.

The goal of this 2024 effort was to:

- Collect input from Lake Street businesses to understand the impacts of a street event on their operations
- Gather input from residents and visitors on preferences for street events and activation
- Create an attractive way to close the street and draw in visitors
- Pilot an event in the summer of 2024
- Create a template and recommendations for future events



Engagement results

Outreach included conversations with more than a dozen businesses, while over 250 voices contributed through surveys and in-person engagements. Key findings included:

- Residents revealed a strong desire for regular events that activate downtown Wayzata
- Businesses appreciated the increase in visitors but voiced concerns about parking and access
- Residents wanted family-friendly programming, live music, and pop-up dining experiences, with more lighting and public art to enhance the atmosphere
- Over half of participants expressed a preference for walking or biking to these events—if the right infrastructure was in place

Key recommendations

- Activate Panoway (rather than Lake Street) as the primary event space to minimize business disruptions while enhancing pedestrian and bike access
- Introduce a summer event series that pilots three monthly events on a reoccurring schedule featuring music, outdoor dining, and community activities
- Provide additional consideration for active transportation options for events, such as a policy to plan for and better accommodate increased pedestrian and bike traffic
- Improve wayfinding and signage, ensuring visitors can easily navigate between downtown destinations and parking areas
- Enhance bike and pedestrian infrastructure, including safer crossings, temporary mid-block crossings, additional bike parking for events, and designated spaces for micromobility
- Strengthen partnerships with local businesses and other organizations, creating opportunities for collaboration and shared benefits



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