

Kick-Off Workshops Summary

October 29-30, 2024

On October 29 and 30, 2024, the City of Galena hosted three meetings as part of the Comprehensive Plan project. These included the Department Heads Workshop, Planning Commission Workshop, and the Business Community Workshop. The workshops provided attendees with the opportunity to share their thoughts on the current state of the City and provide feedback on desired future changes. Input from these outreach activities will help guide the planning process and inform the goals, recommendations, and policies for the Comprehensive Plan.

Note on Summary Context:

The following summaries reflect the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in the workshops. The items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but represent feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshops.

Department Heads Workshop

October 29, 2024

Attendance – 8

The Department Heads Workshop consisted of eight representatives from various City departments and agencies. The Department Heads Workshop was an opportunity for representatives to offer their input and feedback regarding the City to inform the Plan. The workshop included a review of the planning process as well as an exercise to gather input regarding issues, opportunities, and key strengths and assets of the City.

Issues and Concerns

Participants were asked to individually identify the issues and concerns facing Galena. Next, participants worked to create a single, cumulative list as a large group where each participant shared issues from their list. Participants were tasked with ranking the top three most important issues discussed from the cumulative list.

The summaries identify the highest-ranked collective issues as determined by this method, as well as all other issues identified throughout the workshop. The number of votes an issue received is included for issues most often identified by participants.

Below are the top issues as determined by this method, along with all other issues identified throughout the workshop.

Highest Group-Ranked Issues

- Housing needs, especially affordable housing (6).
- Infrastructure upgrades (3).
- Increase in property taxes (3).

Other Issues by Category

Economic Development and Retail

- Balancing growth of tourism with livability (2).
- Need more professional job opportunities (2).
- Attracting new industries (3).
- Regulatory challenges in historic district.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- Public health (linked to connectivity and walkability).
- Stormwater system updates.

Community and Population Growth

- Aging population (2).
- Social equity/gentrification (3).
- Limited appeal for young families moving in.

Mobility and Transportation

- Parking shortage, especially Downtown (2).
- Connectivity and walkability.
- Sidewalk improvements.

Governance and Financial Management

- Sustainability of public services, especially Fire Department.
- Continuation of volunteer fire and EMS services.
- Public safety.

Priority Actions and Projects

In response to the list of issues, participants were asked to name specific projects or actions that would provide solutions to those issues identified in the first part of the exercise. Below is a list of the projects identified by participants.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Develop higher-density housing or mixed-use buildings in appropriate areas (2).
- Develop multifamily housing complexes.
- Expand retirement housing options.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- Eliminate sanitary lift stations and reroute sewers.
- Complete planned construction of a new high school.

Mobility and Transportation

- Replace sidewalks throughout the City (2).
- Develop parking garages and peripheral parking areas (2).
- Implement shuttles or public transit options (2).
- Improve major roads, especially Highway 20.

Governance and Financial Management

- Work to reduce City property taxes.

Strengths and Assets

As the Comprehensive Plan is developed, the key strengths and assets of Galena should be regarded as areas to maintain and build upon. For the final part of the exercise, participants were asked to list the strengths and advantages of Galena that should be preserved. The following were identified:

- Welcoming and strong community, small town atmosphere (4).
- Historic charm (3).
- People, active volunteer presence (2).
- Access to nature (2).
- Parks and trails.
- Multigenerational families.
- Tourism, lots of things to do.
- Beautiful city with great amenities.
- Hospital.
- Strong local government and great staff, well-maintained City services and financially healthy (2).
- Public safety departments (Police Department, Fire Department) (2).
- Currently improving school facilities.

Planning Commission Workshop

October 29, 2024

Attendance – 27

The Planning Commission workshop held at the Galena Middle School Commons consisted of 5 members of Galena’s Planning Commission and was open to the public with livestream access. The meeting, which served as the Planning Commission’s introduction to the project, consisted of a presentation on the planning process, and a discussion of the Commission’s role in the project. The workshop provided an opportunity for the project team to gather input regarding issues, opportunities, and key strengths and assets of the City via an interactive exercise with the members of the Planning Commission.

Issues and Concerns

Planning Commissioners were asked to individually identify the issues and concerns facing Galena. Next, participants worked to create a single, cumulative list as a large group where each participant shared issues from their list. Participants were tasked with ranking the top three most important issues discussed from the cumulative list.

The summary identifies the highest-ranked collective issues as determined by this method, as well as all other issues identified throughout the workshop. The number of votes an issue received is included for issues most often identified by participants.

Below are the top issues as determined by this method, along with all other issues identified throughout the workshop.

Highest Group-Ranked Issues

- Not enough parking, especially for residents and employees in Downtown (5).
- Lack of housing options (5).
- Need for industry attraction (3).

Other Issues by Category

Economic Development and Retail

- Future industrial and commercial development planning (2).
- Difficulties of attracting business-minded developers.
- Longevity of tourism.
- Manufacturing.
- Economic diversification beyond tourism.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Shortage of senior housing.

Mobility and Transportation

- Need more public transit options.
- Traffic congestion, especially congestion within Downtown (2).
- Limited availability of ride-sharing services (Uber/Lyft).

Priority Actions and Projects

In response to the list of issues, participants were asked to name specific projects or actions that would provide solutions to those issues identified in the first part of the exercise. Below is a list of the projects identified by participants.

Economic Development and Retail

- Implement TIF and other developer incentives.
- Transform the lower partial block of homes on Franklin Street into parking.
- Identify new areas for commercial development.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Identify potential housing locations, such as areas behind Walmart, existing PUD, and Westwick Foundry.
- Provide incentives for Downtown building owners to convert upper floors into apartments instead of short-term rentals (e.g., AirBNBs).

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- Explore opportunities to widen the Galena River.

Mobility and Transportation

- Identify potential locations repurposing parking lots or ramps within Downtown.
- Consider relocating some business from Downtown to create more parking.
- Establish a new route for entry to Blackjack Road.
- Build a parking ramp on the outskirts of town with trolley service to Downtown.
- Build a clustered parking pad off Bench Street over top of the existing public parking, between the Galena Gazette to Galena Bakehouse.

Strengths and Assets

As the Comprehensive Plan is developed, the key strengths and assets of Galena should be regarded as areas to maintain and build upon. For the final part of the exercise, participants were asked to list the strengths and advantages of Galena that should be preserved. The following were identified:

- Strong community identity (2).
- Tourism, history, architecture, beauty, and reputation of the City (4).
- Great restaurants, lots of things to do (2).
- Attractive infrastructure.
- Fiber connectivity.
- Rich natural beauty.
- Hospital.
- School.
- Beautiful Galena River.

Business Community Workshop

October 30, 2024

Attendance – 22

Issues and Concerns

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The summaries identify the highest-ranked collective issues as determined by this method, as well as all other issues identified throughout the workshop. The number of votes an issue received is included for issues most often identified by participants.

Below are the top issues as determined by this method, along with all other issues identified throughout the workshop.

Highest Group-Ranked Issues

- Lack of parking (17).
- Affordable housing shortage (15).
- Need for more Industrial and commercial opportunities with balanced locations (5).
- Need for more skilled workforce for retail and service (5).
- More public transit (5).
- Lack of childcare facilities (4).

Other Issues by Category

Economic Development and Retail

- Business building façade improvements.
- Vacancies and maintenance enforcement, especially on Main Street.
- Limited retail opportunities and economic dependence on tourism.
- Incentives for existing businesses.
- Diversify restaurant options.
- Desire to attract tech/remote workers.
- Public education on property assessments.
- Lack of light industry.
- Need for a more sustainable economy that supports young residents.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Insufficient affordable multifamily and single-family housing – partner with developers, assist with resources (3).
- Restrictions on AirBNBs to prioritize long-term rental.

Community Facilities

- Main Street streetscape design.
- Need more public restrooms.

- Develop outdoor recreation.
- Enhance ADA compliance.

Community and Population Growth

- Attract young professionals, families.
- Hispanic population assistance.
- Balance tourism with local community needs.
- Continued historic preservation (3).
- Zoning with historic preservation consideration.
- Convention tourism, especially midweek events.
- Sustainable growth.
- Slow population growth.
- Strategies to keep people after graduation for better job positions.

Mobility and Transportation

- Limited transportation options.

Governance and Financial Management

- Understaffed City government departments.

Priority Actions and Projects

In response to the list of issues, participants were asked to name specific projects or actions that would provide solutions to those issues identified in the first part of the exercise. Below is a list of the projects identified by participants.

Housing and Development

- Identify residential locations for multifamily housing/starter homes and senior housing in PUD districts behind Walmart and near edge of Downtown (e.g., current City parking lot by Westwick Foundry).
- The City should be proactively working with developers to leverage tax credits to create affordable housing in some of the multi-story Downtown buildings.
- Start to annex land between the industrial park and the hospital for commercial and industrial developments
- Workforce housing on Bench Street or Commerce Street.
- Turn old Art and Recreation Center (ARC) building on Bench Street into an apartment complex with underground parking for residents.
- Allow AirBNB in Downtown – AirBNB licenses.

Economic Development

- Identify areas of relocation or redevelopment existing industrial in Downtown.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

- Develop childcare facilities Downtown, potentially on Commerce Street, with incentives for childcare training.
- Provide training incentives for trades.
- Enhance recreation along the Galena River, such as docks.
- Infrastructure improvements on streets, curbs, gutter, signage, etc.

Transportation and Mobility

- More Downtown parking facilities
 - Parking garage at St. Mary's lot.
 - Build a parking garage along the levee (old lumber yard site).
 - Make Bench Street residential only parking and encourage tourist parking by old depot by building a new walk.
 - Improve parking on Bench Street with lot or garage, same on Commerce Street.
 - Evaluate public parking through shuttle service or other parking facilities.
- Main Street streetscape improvements.
- Passenger rail service.
- Pedestrian-only mall in Downtown in summer.
- More outdoor dining.
- Build a vehicular bridge across the river.
- Expand Highway 20 to four lanes.

Strengths and Assets

As the Comprehensive Plan is developed, the key strengths and assets of Galena should be regarded as areas to maintain and build upon. For the final part of the exercise, participants were asked to list the strengths and advantages of Galena that should be preserved. The following were identified:

- History (10).
- Commitment to preserving historic Downtown with strong ordinances, though there's interest in modernization.
- Architectural beauty.
- Downtown Galena's Main Street.
- Natural beauty (7).
- People, great sense of community, community spirit (4).
- Tourism, tourism income (5).
- Active community events and quality of life.
- Access to local food – farmer's market, Jo Daviess local food.
- Healthcare facilities – medical center/hospital, Emergency Room, Fitness Center, and Rehabilitation services (3).
- School District (3).
- Security and public resources.
- Digital infrastructure – fiber optics connectivity (2).
- Infrastructure.
- Changing demographics – growing number of young families and Hispanic residents.
- Local business owners.
- City Council.
- Interest in welcoming a "greener" community.
- Proximity to Dubuque.
- Great family location.