

Community Visioning Workshop Summary

October 30, 2024

The City of Galena hosted a Community Visioning Workshop on October 30, 2024 at Galena Middle School Commons. The workshop allowed residents, business owners and operators, and other stakeholders to discuss the community and provide visioning input for Galena. The feedback received will help guide the planning process and help City leaders make thoughtful decisions for the community. The Community Visioning Workshops were designed to allow participants to voice their thoughts on the City before Plan recommendations are crafted.

Total participants engaged: 22 attendees

Workshop Format

The workshop included a brief presentation introducing the Comprehensive Plan purpose and planning process, and a group mapping exercise. Participants worked together in breakout groups at tables. Each group was provided with a packet that included guidelines for discussion along with a large map of the City. Groups worked as teams to prepare their visions for the community, including mapping desired improvements and development. The exercise allowed community members to identify where they believe future uses should be developed within the City, as well as opportunity sites and other improvements. Each group was then tasked with translating their maps into a written vision statement or set of big ideas that explained their envisioned future for Galena. At the end of the workshop, groups presented their maps and summaries of their big ideas and vision statements.

Note on Summary Context:

The following summaries reflect the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in the workshop. 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 workshop.

Summarized Results

A summary of community input received from the maps, activity packets, and the ensuing discussion is provided by topic area on the following pages.

Housing and Residential Areas

- **Affordable and Workforce Housing.** Many groups stated that there is an affordability issue in Galena. They noted that young families and Downtown workers face significant housing challenges, emphasizing the need for housing conveniently accessible to Downtown workplaces. Suggested locations included vacant land east of Highway 20 and north of Summit Street. Participants also noted a shortage of housing due to the high number of vacation rentals. They suggested limiting vacation rentals to help ease housing availability.

- **Multi-family Housing.** Participants highlighted the need for small, clustered multi-family housing with shared spaces. Potential locations include the old primary school site and the area from James Street to USPS, behind NAPA Auto Parts.
- **Senior Housing.** Many groups emphasized the housing need for the growing elderly population. Developments for seniors could also cause a nice domino effect for people vacating homes in the City. Desired locations include vacant lots near Midwest Medical Center and south of Galena Golf Club.
- **Historic Homes Preservation.** Participants stated that preserving historic homes is vital to maintaining Galena's character. To support homeowners in the Historic District, grants or loans for home maintenance were suggested.
- **New Developments.** Groups expressed a preference for moderate-scale single-family residential development over large housing projects. Suggested areas for new developments include vacant land behind Piggly Wiggly, west of James Street; the east side of Franklin Street between Dodge Street and High Street; Bartell Boulevard adjacent to scenic meadows; the north edge of the City limits around Galena Golf Club; the west edge near Greenwood Cemetery; areas near the County Health Department; and the low-density residential area from Red Gates to Cross Road.
- **Infill Housing.** Groups emphasized the potential for infill housing within existing City areas, especially within the historic neighborhoods. Identified locations include vacant lands bounded by Field Street, Dewey Avenue, and Council Hill Road, and the existing subdivision between Power House Hill Road and Highway 20.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

- **Continue to Expand Industrial Parks.** Participants highlighted the need to continue expanding industrial parks to support Galena's economic growth. Suggested expansion areas include locations to the west and south of the current Industrial Park. Some groups also recommended placing new industrial areas near strategic infrastructure, such as the City-owned wastewater treatment plant solar array, the old power plant building by the river on South Main Street, and the Galena Marine Hospital.
- **Commercial Development.** Multiple groups emphasized the importance of creating a dedicated economic development role to support Galena's commercial growth. They suggested expanding commercial sites along key corridors such as Highway 20 and IL 84, prioritizing vacant land behind Walmart north of Bartell Boulevard, completing the commercial corridor between Franklin Street and Bartell Boulevard, between Gear Street and Highway 20, and enhancing commercial properties along Franklin Street from First Community Bank to the Middle School. Participants also noted a need to accommodate truck supply in these areas.
- **Development Timing along Stagecoach Trail and Council Hill.** Participants recommended delaying development along Stagecoach Trail and Council Hill until the Galena Bypass becomes a viable option. This would help manage traffic and infrastructure demands associated with new developments in these areas.

Transportation

- **Public Transit.** Groups noted a pressing need for public transit options that can serve local workers, including a new transportation center where employees can park and ride to Downtown. Suggested locations for such a center include areas near Highway 20 and Chetlain Lane, as well as east of the Jo Daviess County Health Department. One group also expressed interest in exploring grants for electric buses to support sustainable public transportation. Participants envisioned local bus or shuttle services with regular stops at key locations and advocated for additional transportation options to improve access for affordable and senior housing residents.

- **Traffic Control and Management.** To alleviate Downtown traffic issues, groups suggested multiple strategies, including offering e-bikes at hotels and extending the bike path to connect with the hospital and other hotels throughout the City. Additionally, participants proposed a residential parking sticker program and hang tags for vacation rental guests, along with a requirement for parking spaces in occupancy permits for uses like AirBNBs and apartments. Ideas for expanding alternative transportation included offering boat tours on the river and developing an equestrian trail from Gateway Park to support both tourism and local activity options.
- **Parking.** Multiple participants highlighted the need for additional parking options to accommodate residents and visitors alike. Suggestions included building a parking structure at the lot across from St. Mary's, and considering permit-based off-street parking for residents on Bench Street to help alleviate parking challenges for those living Downtown.
- **Second Bridge.** All groups emphasized the need for a second vehicular bridge to improve connectivity between the northern and southern parts of Galena. Participants envisioned this bridge extending from Meeker Street southward across the Galena River, connecting at Westwick Foundry to ease traffic flow and provide additional access options for residents and visitors.
- **Road Improvements.** Participants underscored the need for road enhancements throughout Galena's neighborhoods to address congestion and safety. In particular, they pointed to the section of Highway 20 south of the bridge from Park Avenue to Bouthillier Street, which would benefit from a turning lane and wider lanes with sidewalks. They also suggested improvements to Blackjack Road, either by extending Bouthillier Street or creating a connector route from Jupiter Drive to Highway 20, which could help resolve several ongoing traffic issues. Keeping the Galena Bypass plan on the horizon was also noted as crucial, especially near the intersection of Highway 20 and IL 84. Finally, participants suggested adding a turning lane at the primary school to improve access and flow.

Parks, Open Space and Natural Resources

- **Protect Existing Parks and Natural Resources.** Many groups expressed their appreciation for Galena's existing parks, open spaces, and natural resources, highlighting areas like Horseshoe Mound Preserve, Gateway Park, and Galena Recreation Park as valuable community assets. Participants emphasized the importance of protecting these sites along with other City-owned parks and river trails to ensure continued access and enjoyment for residents and visitors alike.
- **Promote Recreational Opportunities.** Participants expressed significant interest in enhancing recreational amenities to attract more people to Galena's parks. Ideas included introducing volleyball leagues, a splash pad, and expanding facilities at Wiene Park. One group suggested developing the ferry landing into a full marina with increased ferry service to Downtown to expand recreational options and accessibility. Additionally, there was interest in creating an all-inclusive park similar to Platteville's, which could provide accessible recreational options for all residents and visitors.
- **Park Management.** Some participants noted that the plaza area Downtown appears underutilized, with suggestions to transform it into a pocket park to increase community engagement off of Main Street.
- **Trail Network.** Participants suggested that a trail that would integrate watershed management at Horseshoe Mound, connecting to Parker and eventually linking with the Galena River Trail, with provisions for equestrian use. Additional proposals included developing an equestrian corridor from Gateway Park to the Blacksmith Shop, and building a bridge over Harney Creek near the water treatment plant to connect to the levee trail.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

- **Public Amenities and Facilities.** Groups expressed a strong desire for more public restrooms, with suggested locations including the old public works buildings and the Visitor Center. Participants also emphasized the need for a new community center to better serve residents, possibly by updating existing facilities like the old Arts and Recreation Center (ARC) on Bench Street or the old primary school, which are currently used for limited activities.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity Improvements.** Participants expressed support for ensuring fiber optic internet access for all residents, which would improve cell connectivity across the City.
- **Educational and Cultural Facilities.** Many participants supported the idea of establishing a culinary arts and hospitality school on the northwestern land of the current Business Park, which would help develop local talent and provide job training. Additionally, groups expressed interest in a new convention center along Highway 20, north of the Industrial Park and near the Golf Course, which could serve as a venue for larger community events and business gatherings.
- **Recreational and Gathering Spaces.** Participants proposed creating an amphitheater for community gatherings, particularly for ghost tours, with a suggested location between Vinny Vanucchi's and Amelia's Galena Ghost Tours. Participants also presented a vision to expand river recreation opportunities by developing a marina and docks on the Downtown levee, which would increase waterfront access and offer more activities for both residents and visitors.

Cultural Resources and Assets

- **Historic Resources Preservation.** Participants emphasized that all of Galena is a valuable cultural asset, with particularly notable buildings such as Turner Hall, the Galena Center for the Arts, and historic churches throughout the City. Concerns were raised about churches being abandoned, particularly on Bench Street, due in part to limited parking options in these areas.
- **Entertainment and Venue Management.** Participants expressed support for relocating late-night outdoor music venues away from Galena toward locations like Chestnut Mountain Resort, which could better accommodate such events without impacting on the historic and residential character of the Downtown area.

Visioning Maps

Images of each map are included on the following pages and high-resolution images are available to view and download by clicking [HERE](#).

