

Downtown & Wayfinding

Downtown Gladstone is the city's historic heart and primary retail district. City Hall and the Post Office are both located downtown, which otherwise hosts a mix of general and specialty retailers and small restaurants in one and two-story buildings, with upper floor residential uses permitted. The district does not have a prevailing architectural style, but the Downtown Development Authority's ongoing façade improvement program has helped rehabilitate several building exteriors.

This Master Plan retains the 2015 plan's goal of developing downtown Gladstone into a regional specialty retail destination. The downtown faces several challenges:

1. How to encourage sustainable commercial activity around the downtown anchor of 9th Street and Delta Ave.
2. Though downtown is surrounded by the city's densest neighborhoods, it has very few residents; downtown residents often provide local businesses with their most reliable source of customers.
3. The downtown has locational disadvantages: it is located away from the waterfront, and it is located off the main highway. Consequently, many visitors may miss what downtown Gladstone has to offer. As outlined in the upcoming Implementation section, the city is actively exploring strategies to create gateway corridors for visitors from M-35 and our waterfront districts to the downtown district while also working with MDOT to encourage safe and slow access into the city along US 2/41.

A strategy for improving the downtown going forward should incorporate several elements:

- **Aesthetics:** Continue the façade improvement program and make incremental streetscape improvements, including street trees and crosswalks as funding allows. Encouraging screening standards for industrial uses along US-2/41 would also improve the aesthetic entrance to the city.
- **Business Development:** Continue to support specialty retailers, but work also to bring in potential anchors, such as a pharmacy, clothing store, or mid-size family restaurant. Develop a brochure with a corresponding online version touring downtown businesses.



- **Connectivity:** The 10th Street Corridor project improved the downtown's most direct connection to the water; a similar project at the west end of Delta Ave could improve the connection to US-2/41.
- **Residents:** Promote upper floor living in the downtown.
- **Visibility:** Though downtown Gladstone is removed from the highway and waterfront, it is not far from either. Simple signage on the highway, in the district, and at other destination points in the city, such as the sports park, could direct people to the downtown and increase awareness of its presence.

Wayfinding Signage

The City of Gladstone plans to focus wayfinding efforts to attract the attention of passersby on US-2/41 by highlighting our community's incredible assets and facilities, while also providing direction within the downtown to further direct people to our community resources.