



MEMO

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To: Redevelopment Authority
From: Adrienne Nelson, Associate Planner
Date: March 30, 2026
Re: 2026 Downtown Planters

Background

For the past three years, RACK has financed the purchase of flowers for the downtown and uptown planters. Currently, there are three planters on W Wisconsin Avenue, four planters on E 2nd Street, two planters on E 3rd Street, and three planters outside of the police station, for a total of twelve planters. The amount spent last year on flowers for these planters was \$499.28. Historically, local businesses in the area have volunteered to keep the planters near their establishments watered throughout the summer, and the police department have kept the three planters outside of their station watered.

Per the minutes from the [March 25th, 2025, RACK meeting](#), the intent moving forward in 2026 was to locate a new funding source or have businesses sponsor the planters. At that time, there was additional talk on the prospect of starting a Beautification Committee and addressing concerns regarding the lack of consistent watering of flowers by some of the volunteers. With this in mind, staff have done research into alternatives for funding and maintenance, as well as into which flowers may be best suited for the City's planters. Due to Director Kittel's absence, the creation of the Beautification Committee is currently on hold.

Funding

Suggestions for possible funding sources are listed below. Please note that these items have not been discussed with prospective sponsors yet, as staff is looking for direction from RACK before proceeding with any inquiries.

1. **RACK funding.** RACK could continue to fund the downtown planters for another year. This simplifies things on staff's side, as it means staff do not have to seek out sponsors, and it ensures that there are no delays in the purchasing and planting of flowers. The money spent on the flowers, however, means less money in the revolving loan fund and is money that will never come back in.
2. **Business sponsorship.** Staff could reach out to local businesses, specifically those in the downtown and uptown area, and see if there would be interest in sponsoring a planter. If each planter had one sponsor, the cost per business would only be around \$42.00 per planter (\$500.00/12 planters, rounded). Opportunities to place a small sign in the planter and choose the types of flowers planted could be offered as incentives, as well as a social media post. One concern would be finding enough businesses interested in participating and competing with other City sponsorship opportunities, such as Electric City River Jam.
3. **Kaukauna Utilities sponsorship.** Staff could reach out to Kaukauna Utilities and see if they would be interested in sponsoring the downtown planters, with similar incentives as listed above. Kaukauna Utilities donates a seasonal portable toilet at the head of the Konkapot Trail on an annual basis, and they've also provided support for Electric City River Jam, so there are similar concerns as with businesses regarding competing with other sponsorship opportunities.
4. **1000 Islands partnership.** Staff could reach out to 1000 Islands staff to see if there would be an interest in starting a program focused on cultivating native plants at the Environmental Center and then transferring them to the City planters. This would be the option that would require the most work and coordination, and likely could not be implemented this year. It would, however, provide a steady crop of native plants at a fraction of the cost.

Watering

Although some local businesses are only able to water occasionally, City staff do not currently have the capacity to take on additional maintenance duties in place of businesses. It is recommended that this item is addressed further once a formal Beautification Committee is created.

Flowers

Last year, the City planted fountain grass, vistas, verbenas, and marigolds in the planters. Staff is recommending that this year fountain grass, marigolds, and salvias are placed in the planters, as these plants are fairly hardy.

Recommendation:

Discussion and direction for staff on how to proceed.