

MEMORANDUM

To: Common Council
From: John Weidl, City Manager
Date: 12/20/24
Re: Spring Splash Taskforce Final Report Synopsis

Council Members,

As directed, the Spring Splash Taskforce convened representatives from the City, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, and community stakeholders to collaboratively address the challenges posed by the unsanctioned Spring Splash event. This report summarizes the outcomes of three workshops held from October through December, focused on balancing the safety and quality of life of residents with the University's need for student engagement.

The taskforce identified several key concerns, including resource strain on public safety agencies, risks to student and community safety, and the event's impact on public perception of Whitewater. Through this process, participants developed actionable recommendations:

1. Centralized University-Led Event

The taskforce unanimously recommended a University-hosted event on campus, targeting students while allowing controlled participation by non-students. This approach enhances safety and engagement by leveraging University resources, including public safety, infrastructure, and communication channels.

2. Enhanced Safety Measures

Safety was identified as the top priority. Recommendations include focusing enforcement efforts on life safety and property protection while fostering collaboration between City and University law enforcement to ensure efficient resource allocation.

3. Unified Communication Strategy

A comprehensive, multi-platform communication plan will set clear expectations for students, landlords, and businesses, mitigating confusion and fostering goodwill. Key messaging will emphasize safety, personal responsibility, and the event's positive potential.

4. Success Metrics and Evaluation

Success will be measured through both quantitative (e.g., citations, arrests) and qualitative data. Recognizing that cultural change takes time, the taskforce recommended a multi-year approach with post-event evaluations to refine strategies.



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While the taskforce has laid a solid foundation, additional steps remain. The University must take ownership of the event's planning and implementation, supported by City resources where needed. Discussions with University leadership, student representatives, and public safety agencies will be critical to finalizing and executing these plans.

This initiative underscores the importance of strong University-City relations. Collaborative efforts like Spring Splash, Starin Road, the Innovation Center, and other joint projects reinforce our shared commitment to a safer, more vibrant Whitewater. Strengthening these partnerships benefits not only our residents and businesses but also the students and faculty who make Whitewater a dynamic university community.

I will ensure these recommendations are integrated into planning and will keep the Council informed of progress. Thank you for your direction and support in initiating this important effort.

Sincerely,

John S. Weidl

City Manager

JSW/RLM