

Whitewater City Council Retreat – Council Vision & Strategic Priorities (2026)

Based on Council discussion and visioning feedback from the May 14, 2026, meeting, Council identified the following areas as priorities and desired focus areas for future City work programs, strategic planning, budgeting, and community engagement efforts.

Community Growth & Housing

- Encourage diverse housing development options, including workforce and affordable housing.
- Continue exploring opportunities for responsible residential growth and redevelopment.
- Improve housing affordability while balancing neighborhood character and infrastructure needs.
- Support redevelopment and revitalization of aging housing stock.
- Promote mixed-use and higher-density development where appropriate.
- Expand opportunities for homeownership and long-term residency retention.
- Continue planning efforts related to the Highway 12 corridor and future community expansion.
- Identify opportunities to attract and retain residents through quality-of-life improvements.

Economic Development & Business Support

- Attract and retain small businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Continue efforts to revitalize and strengthen the downtown district.
- Expand commercial and manufacturing opportunities within the City.
- Address Business Park stagnation and encourage business recruitment.
- Improve coordination between economic development efforts and housing growth.
- Explore ways to market Whitewater's strengths and unique identity.
- Encourage redevelopment of underutilized properties.
- Continue discussions regarding long-term transportation and highway improvements to support economic growth.

Community Engagement & Communication

- Increase community engagement and participation in civic life.
- Improve communication between the City, residents, businesses, students, and community organizations.

- Continue efforts to make City communications more transparent, accessible, and user-friendly.
- Improve website usability, including searchable meeting documents and clearer navigation.
- Expand use of social media, newsletters, and digital outreach tools.
- Develop more opportunities for residents to interact with Council and staff in informal settings.
- Explore community welcome initiatives for new residents and students.
- Encourage neighborhood-level engagement and community-building activities.
- Continue emphasizing proactive and responsive communication from City leadership and staff.

University & Student Relations

- Strengthen relationships between the City, UW-Whitewater, and the School District.
- Improve engagement with students and encourage long-term residency after graduation.
- Increase visibility of City government and services to students.
- Explore collaborative projects and partnerships with the University and School District.
- Continue conversations regarding student housing impacts and neighborhood integration.

Public Safety & Neighborhood Quality

- Continue focusing on neighborhood quality-of-life concerns.
- Maintain consistent and equitable code enforcement practices.
- Address nuisance properties, trash, weeds, abandoned vehicles, and property maintenance concerns.
- Continue evaluating School Resource Officer (SRO) and public safety initiatives.
- Support community-oriented policing and neighborhood outreach efforts.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and connectivity.

Infrastructure, Transportation & Mobility

- Continue planning for future transportation improvements and regional connectivity.
- Explore ways to improve transportation accessibility for residents without personal vehicles.
- Continue park and trail improvements.
- Improve pedestrian infrastructure and walkability.
- Explore long-term infrastructure needs tied to growth and redevelopment.
- Continue planning related to utilities, water infrastructure, and future service demands.

Parks, Recreation & Quality of Life

- Expand recreational amenities and community gathering opportunities.
- Continue supporting events, festivals, and activities that build community vibrancy.
- Improve visibility and use of natural amenities including the lakes and park system.
- Explore opportunities for additional entertainment, recreation, and cultural programming.
- Support initiatives that encourage families, students, and residents to engage locally.
- Continue investing in public spaces and placemaking efforts.

Health, Human Services & Community Well-Being

- Explore opportunities to improve access to healthcare and mental health services.
- Continue discussions regarding urgent care and transportation access to medical services.
- Support resource development related to mental health and substance abuse services.
- Continue examining ways to improve overall community wellness and support systems.

Organizational & Governance Priorities

- Continue improving collaboration and communication between Council and Administration.
- Maintain focus on professionalism, responsiveness, and transparency.
- Continue evaluating tools and systems that improve Council access to information.
- Develop clearer long-term strategic priorities and measurable goals.
- Continue reviewing City processes and policies for efficiency and accessibility.
- Explore additional opportunities for community visioning and strategic planning.

Long-Term Vision Themes

Council discussions reflected a shared desire for Whitewater to:

- Remain a welcoming, engaged, and connected community.
- Grow responsibly while maintaining community character.
- Become more vibrant, visible, and economically resilient.
- Improve community pride, participation, and collaboration.
- Balance students, residents, businesses, and visitors' needs effectively.
- Continue positioning itself as a forward-looking and opportunity-focused community.

Strategic Goal Update:

1. Increase affordable housing for families - Good
2. Increase communication without a newspaper – reword to expand communication
3. Support thriving businesses and grow the tax base – Good
4. Improve the City’s recruitment, retention and diversity – Change to Engagement and liveliness
5. Align future expenditures with available resources – Pivot to be more clear

Revised Strategic Goals

1. Expand Housing Opportunities and Support Responsible Community Growth

Continue efforts to increase affordable and workforce housing options while encouraging responsible residential, commercial, and mixed-use development that supports long-term community growth and neighborhood vitality.

2. Enhance Communication, Transparency, and Community Engagement

Improve communication with residents, students, businesses, and community organizations through accessible, transparent, and proactive outreach strategies. Enhance the usability and digital accessibility of City communications platforms, including the City website, to increase public engagement, improve access to information, and strengthen community connections.

3. Support Economic and Downtown Development, Business Growth, and Tax Base Expansion

Promote a vibrant local economy by supporting existing businesses, attracting new commercial and manufacturing investment, advancing downtown revitalization efforts, and recruiting development within the Whitewater Business Park. Encourage entrepreneurship, redevelopment opportunities, and strategic growth initiatives that strengthen the City’s tax base and long-term economic vitality.

4. Foster a Vibrant, Engaged, and Welcoming Community

Enhance quality of life by supporting recreational opportunities, community events, neighborhood engagement, beautification efforts, partnerships with the University and School District, and initiatives that encourage residents and students to live, work, and remain in Whitewater.

5. Ensure Long-Term Financial Stability and Strategic Investment

Align future spending and capital investments with available financial resources through responsible budgeting, long-term planning, infrastructure prioritization, and evaluation of operational and service efficiencies to maintain sustainable City services.