



Idea Lounge VIII
Global Ideas We Can Use Downtown:
Customizing Our Space with International Flair
January 29, 2009

Panelists:

- William “Bill” Benson, Professor Emeritus of Art at UW-Eau Claire
- Christie Blink, Director of Physician Recruitment at Luther Midlefort
- Brady Foust, Professor Emeritus of Geography at UW-Eau Claire
- Shu-Chaun Cheng, Programs Coordinator at UW-Eau Claire
- Dr. Karl Markgraf, Director of the Center for International Education at UW-Eau Claire

Moderator: Al Shannon, 92.9 *The Big Cheese*

Attractions: Paris has the Eiffel Tower and New York has the Statue of Liberty. What could Eau Claire have, maybe the world’s largest string cheese? People love to travel and they love to spend money. If we have people that means we have something that attracts them.

Currently we have:

- Phoenix Park
- Farmers Market
- DECI events

Suggestions for improvement:

- Phoenix Park
 - Establish a constant activity flow, rather than just seasonal events
 - Include food vendors during *VI Summer Concert Series*
- Farmers Market
 - Capitalize on recent success and look to expand size
 - Have market open year round
- An Indoor Bazaar
 - Featuring shops, cafes, kiosks, etc.
- Establishing at least two events every summer/spring month
- Outdoor Skating Rink (similar to Rockefeller Center in NYC)
 - Open skating
 - Lit up
 - Open late
- Increase residential and retail space in downtown

Transportation: Transportation can become an attraction in itself – think of the Sky Glider at MN State fair, horse drawn wagon rides in Krakow, Poland. Even Stillwater has successfully implemented a streetcar for tours. There’s always been a talk about light rail or a train connection to the Twin Cities and Chicago. How do we make Eau Claire more accessible and efficient to get around?

Currently we have:

- Bus system
- Taxis
- Bike/Walking Trails

Suggestions for improvement:

- Creation of Trolley or Tram system
 - Connect UWEC w/downtown
- Make downtown more “pedestrian friendly”
 - Install stop signs/lights
 - Improve sidewalks
- Free parking ramps
- Bus system
 - More accessible and extensive
 - Express buses taking riders directly to downtown
- Construct a Hub downtown
 - Station for buses, trains, etc.
 - Aesthetically pleasing
 - Cost effective

Public Space/Public Art: The importance of public space is immeasurable. Historically a good public space is a place where people gathered, discussed personal and political issues. To this day town squares and plazas are used for Christmas Festivals, Farmer’s Markets and in China even night markets. But to add to the ambience you need music and art as well. Human statues and street theater are other ways of bringing more color to the streets. Public Art isn’t necessarily just about entertainment. It can create a visually pleasing destination.

Currently we have:

- 2 South Barstow mural building
- Phoenix Park

Suggestions for improvement:

- Create iconic sculpture/architecture
 - Use UWEC art students as resource
- Introduction of more restaurants downtown
 - Need for greater variety of international cuisines
- Winter carnival
 - Crafts, ice-skating, ice/snow sculptures, fireworks, etc.
- Establish trails during winter for snowshoeing/cross country skiing
- “Don’t turn our backs on the river”
 - Create loading docks
 - Public rental of canoes, inflatable rafts, and kayaks
 - Boating/floating event
- Playground in Phoenix Park
- Indoor Park
 - Botanical gardens, food booths, play area for children