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DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

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In the heart of Boone River Country, Webster City, Iowa is a small community along the banks of the Boone River in Hamilton County. With a current population of nearly 8,000 people, the community boasts impressive amenities to attract visitors from other communities. In 2011, Webster City faced the loss of major manufacturer Electrolux, located just outside of its downtown district. As Electrolux ramped down production, it left 2,000 residents of Webster City and surrounding communities jobless. Not only was Webster City's local economy stifled, but its social identity also suffered as hundreds of families were affected. Community members mentioned that with the loss of Electrolux, the downtown became less active and the community lost the pride it once had. There is great opportunity now to diversify the community's economy and recreate the downtown as a unique place in the region- a place where residents and visitors prefer to spend their time. Examples of positive change have already occurred in the community, including the reopening of the Webster Theater, which is now a highly popular spot for residents and visitors alike. The Webster Theater project demonstrated to the community what great feats residents are capable of when they join together for a common goal and can serve as an example for future revitalization initiatives.

This plan contains an introduction to the city of Webster City with a brief history. The current state of its economy and downtown are also described, followed by recommendations and alternatives for addressing issues within the community. All of the methods for research are explained in detail with their associated outcomes. Recommendations based off research, public input, and peer cities comparisons are described with in-depth instructions for moving forward.

A major portion of this plan was getting public feedback to ensure methods and strategies for success were tailored to what the community wanted. Through a survey, focus groups, and open houses, the planning team found what issues were most prominent to residents, what support businesses owners needed to improve their operations, ideas to increase foot traffic and time spent downtown, and what assets Downtown Webster City already has.

Driven by the extensive public engagement, the planning team conducted research of Downtown Webster City. Methods included a market analysis, a building utilization survey, a peer city analysis, and an examination of the Main Street Iowa program and its relevance to Downtown Webster City. The market analysis provided information regarding gaps in the existing economy. The analysis also helped the planning team understand what retail businesses may be a good fit for Downtown Webster City.

A building inventory survey was completed to gain an understanding of the number of buildings downtown and what each was used for. A corresponding map shows existing buildings with associated use, and allowed the planning team to better understand how commercial spaces were being used, which was not always in line with optimal uses.

Peer cities were identified and described in detail, along with examples of success that Downtown Webster City can learn from and apply to the downtown. Comparing Webster City to peer cities helped the planning team determine where the community was lacking in initiatives, programs, and external support. It also exemplified how sustainable success can be created and maintained.

To determine potential strategies for improvement, the Main Street Iowa program was researched. Because Main Street Iowa offers significant structure and support, the planning team recommends Webster City apply to participate at a point in the future it is a better candidate for the program. Being a Main Street Iowa community would give the community access to a dedicated staff person responsible for downtown initiatives, external resources based off Main Street's proven methods, and access to financial tools only available for members.

Another major section of this plan includes the recommended committees and their purposes. The planning team recommends Webster City create and maintain four new committees dedicated to downtown revitalization efforts, each based off a point of the Main Street Iowa program. They are as follows:

Downtown Committee: Organize and take action to make change happen.

This committee should elect members of the other committees and oversee their processes and tasks. As an overarching committee it will be responsible for keeping processes and tasks organized and easily duplicated. Additionally, it should maintain cohesion between volunteers, tasks, and timelines.

Economic Vitality Committee: Establish Downtown Webster City as an economic hub.

This committee will be responsible for supporting existing businesses, while attracting new ones that will fit in Downtown Webster City. It is also tasked with initiatives for decreasing the number of vacant commercial spaces and encouraging downtown living. Finally, this committee should work to create a pro-business ecosystem and foster entrepreneurialism downtown.

Design Committee: Beautify and activate the downtown. This committee should work to improve the condition of downtown buildings, as well as the look and function of signage. Other tasks include increasing the amount of foot traffic as well as encouraging the arts to improve the general look and feel of downtown.

Promotions Committee: Establish downtown as a destination.

The responsibilities of this committee include establishing a brand specific to Downtown Webster City accompanied by a unified promotional strategy. Other duties include planning and hosting events to take place downtown and actively pursuing how to improve them. Additionally, this committee should maintain a central hub of information for residents to learn more about events and opportunities in Downtown Webster City. It should work to make the downtown a unique experience within the community and region.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

WHY PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN?

Downtowns play a vital role for any city, large or small. They reflect the health and vibrancy of entire communities, serving as a place for business and commerce, shared community events, and interaction between different demographics and cultures. Healthy, active downtowns promote the success of the cities surrounding them. This is also true for Webster City's downtown. Not only do residents of Webster City utilize the downtown for dining, shopping, business activity, and social events, but the downtown serves as a hub for social connectedness.

Through research, observation, and interaction with the public, this plan is designed to improve the current state of the downtown in all the areas that make downtowns successful.

VISION STATEMENT

This plan will help Downtown Webster City become a bustling business ecosystem supportive of current and future business owners, as well as budding entrepreneurs. It can offer a variety of retail, commercial, and service needs, and host a variety of events and activities resulting in regular patronage from all members of the community. Storefronts can be occupied and offer a variety of goods and services, and the facades can transform into attractive and inviting to visitors. Additionally, exceptional second-story housing can be an option for those who wish to be proximal to everything the downtown offers. Downtown Webster City can serve as a center of pride for the community attracting residents and out-of-town visitors to its regular events. It can become welcoming to all segments of the local population by boasting a variety of goods, restaurants, and things to do and see.

CHAPTER 2: ABOUT WEBSTER CITY

HISTORY

For thousands of years, the region which contains Webster City was occupied by Native peoples, most recently the Sioux and Sac and Fox Native American tribes. In the 1840s, the pioneers continued westward expansion and pushed the Natives out. Wilson Brewer and William Frakes platted the town, originally named Newcastle, on October 27, 1854. Webster City became the county seat of newly formed Hamilton County in 1856.

Wilson Brewer, a member of the Legislature, was an instrumental early leader in the formation of the town. He built mills, hotels, an opera house, small business places, and houses, 133 buildings total, and later convinced two railroads to route lines through the town.¹ In the photo below, the building on the right is the Wilson Hotel, built in 1886, on the southwest corner of Second Street and Des Moines Street.²

This plan hopes to achieve the character of a bustling downtown reflected in this photograph. Webster City has opportunities to build upon key historic assets in the downtown, some of which still serve needs within the community today. While not all buildings in this picture remain standing, the former Farmers National Bank, built in 1900, currently serves the community as the office for the Chamber of Commerce (628 Second Street). This property was recognized as one of two downtown buildings eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the State Archaeologist, the other being the former Elks Lodge (713 Second Street). Second Street runs from left to right, or west to east in the photo below.



Figure 1: Webster City in 1907. This panoramic photo shows a thriving Downtown Webster City in 1907

Source: Bandholtz, "Webster City, IA."

CHAPTER 2: ABOUT WEBSTER CITY

Throughout the twentieth century, Webster City became a regional hub for economic activity with two railroad lines, several prominent buildings, agriculture markets, and a variety of manufacturing companies.³ The town enjoyed a reputation of being an attractive multi-functional district where people could work, live, and purchase all their goods and services. While the farm crisis of the early 1980s was hard on Webster City business, the retail district remained fully occupied into the early 1990s. Electrolux, an industry leader in household appliances such as washing and drying machines, began operations in 1946 and employed 2,300 at its peak⁴, closed its doors in 2011. The downtown vibrancy declined as the town lost the final 622 jobs⁵ from the integral employer.



Figure 2: An aerial view of Webster City in 1907

Source: Bandholtz, "Webster City, IA."

COMMUNITY PROFILE

POPULATION | Webster City is a small community along the banks of the Boone River in Iowa. With a population of 7,825 in 2016, the population has declined by 4% since 2000, and the composition of the population has changed significantly.⁶ As seen in Figure 3, while the white population has decreased nearly 8% since 2000, the population of other ethnicities has increased, most notably by over 500 residents for the Latino population. Similar to statewide trends, with the Latino population increasing at a faster rate relative to other

groups, this increasing diversity provides an opportunity for Webster City to focus on newer population segments, especially with the projected increase in population from the new Prestage plant opening in nearby Eagle Grove.

	2000 Census Data			2016 ACS Data			2000-2016 Change		
	Webster City	Webster City	Iowa	Webster City	Webster City	Iowa	Webster City	Webster City	Iowa
	Number	Proportion	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Proportion
Total Population	8,176	100%	100%	7,825	100.0%	100.0%	-351	-4%	6%
Race									
White Alone	7,881	95.4%	93.9%	7,155	91.4%	90.9%	-726	-9%	-3%
African American Alone	46	0.3%	2.1%	47	0.6%	3.3%	1	2%	57%
Other Races	352	4.4%	4.0%	626	8.0%	5.8%	274	78%	45%
Hispanic or Latino									
Not Hispanic or Latino	8,068	98.7%	97.2%	7,199	92.0%	94.4%	-869	-11%	-3%
Hispanic or Latino	108	1.30%	2.8%	626	8.0%	5.6%	518	480%	100%

Figure 3: Webster City Demographics: While the total population of Webster City has dropped slightly from 2000 – 2016, the racial demographics have changed significantly, with a quadrupling of the Latino population and a decrease in the Caucasian population.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, American Community Survey 2012-2016

CHAPTER 2: ABOUT WEBSTER CITY

The average age in Webster City has increased since 2000. While current estimates still show a relatively balanced age distribution, the share of individuals in their twenties and thirties has decreased, even as the number of older individuals has increased. With a median age of 41, compared to 38 for the state of Iowa, this distribution has shifted upwards, with a declining share of younger residents. This is likely due to the departure of Electrolux, which not only caused many residents to leave the area to seek employment elsewhere but also had a likely effect on the number of young families in Webster City.⁷

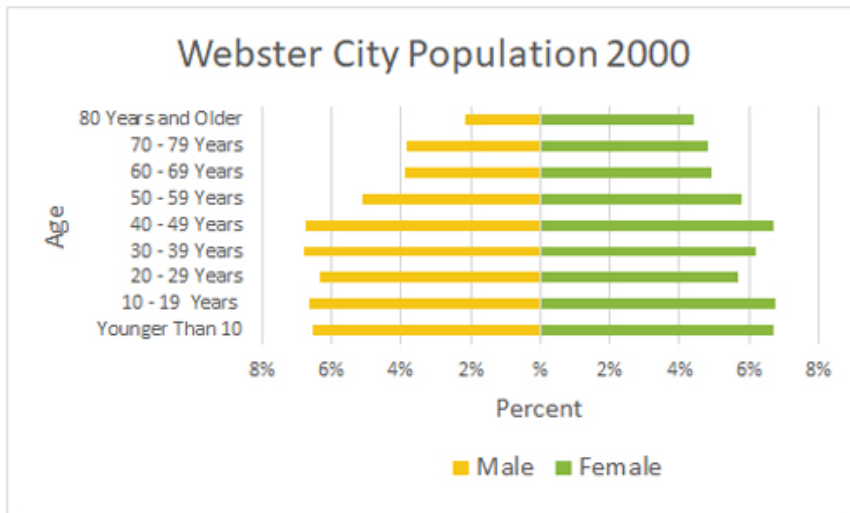


Figure 4: Webster City Population Pyramid

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000

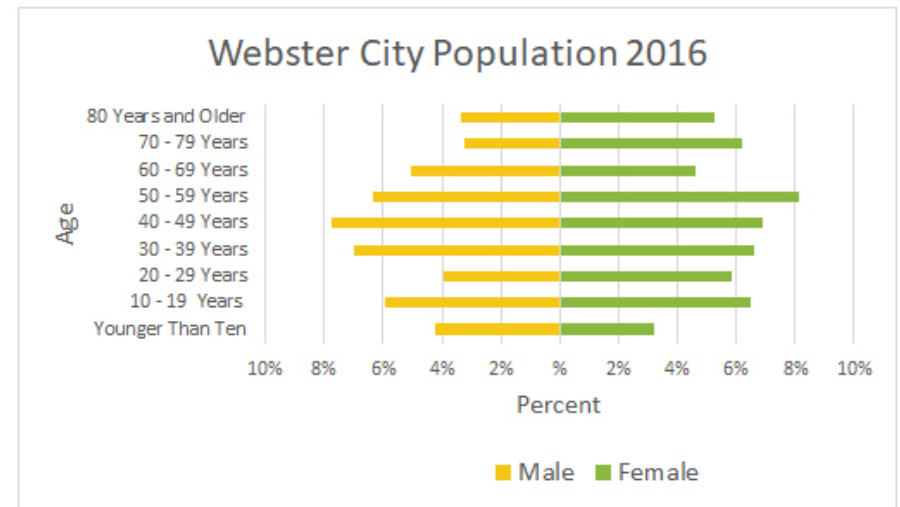


Figure 5: Webster City Population Pyramid

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2012-2016

HOUSEHOLD DATA | Webster City differs from the state when it comes to housing. As seen in Figure 6 below, while the share of non-family household units is the same as for the rest of the state, the proportion of renters is significantly higher.⁸ Moreover, the average household size is slightly smaller than the state average. While this could be an indication of a larger need for rental housing, this could also be an indication of a growing number of seniors who may not need the traditional rental housing.

	Webster City	State of Iowa
Total Households	3,385	1,257,505
Average Household Size	2.26	2.42
Nonfamily Households	37%	37%
Owner-Occupied Units	67%	72%
Renter-Occupied Units	33%	28%

Figure 6: Total households: Webster City has a larger proportion of renters and a smaller average household size.

Source: American Community Survey 2012-2016 Estimates

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT | Webster City has a similar overall educational attainment to the state, as seen in Figure 7. While the percent of the population with associate degrees is larger (14% vs 11%), the share of individuals with less than a high school diploma or some college but no degree is also significantly higher than for the rest of the state.⁹ Additionally, the number of bachelor's and graduate degrees trail the rest of the state.

	Webster City	State of Iowa
Population 25 years and over	5,560	2,067,914
Less than a High School Diploma	9%	8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	31%	32%
Some college, no degree	23%	21%
Associate degree	14%	11%
Bachelor's degree	15%	19%
Graduate or professional degree	7%	9%

Figure 7: Educational attainment: Webster City has a smaller proportion of residents with bachelor's degrees than the rest of the state, contributing to lower incomes overall.

Source: American Community Survey 2012-2016

ECONOMIC STATE

INCOME AND POVERTY | Median household income in Webster City in 2016 was \$46,168, \$8,000 lower than the median household income for the state. Similarly, the poverty rate for Webster City was 14.4% in 2016 compared to 12.3% across the state¹⁰ This suggests that spending capability is a problem for Webster City as lower income households tend to have limited spending power.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR FORCE | Webster City has an unemployment rate of 3%, significantly lower than the rest of the state as seen in the Figure 8. While the unemployment figures are good, the lower labor force participation rate could be interpreted as a sign of a weakness, as fewer residents are earning an income and therefore have a limited spending power.

	Webster City	State of Iowa
Population 16 years old and over	6,240	2,459,591
In Labor Force	3,813	1,665,143
Civilian labor force	61%	68%
Employed	97%	95%
Unemployed	4%	5%
Not in labor force	39%	32%

Figure 8: Labor force. While Webster City has a lower unemployment rate than the rest of the state, the labor force participation is also lower.

Source: American Community Survey 2012-2016

As for the distribution of employment by industry, nearly 14% of Webster City residents are employed by the government, with the top private industry employers being health care, manufacturing, and retail trade, as seen in Figure 9 below.

	Iowa		Webster City	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,587,178	1,587,178	3,696	3,696
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	61,676	3.90%	190	5.10%
Construction	98,744	6.20%	265	7.20%
Manufacturing	241,775	15.20%	575	15.60%
Wholesale trade	45,637	2.90%	121	3.30%
Retail trade	184,920	11.70%	498	13.50%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	73,083	4.60%	146	4.00%
Information	27,781	1.80%	174	4.70%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	120,220	7.60%	129	3.50%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	114,113	7.20%	279	7.50%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	386,743	24.40%	874	23.60%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	115,726	7.30%	165	4.50%
Other services, except public administration	67,384	4.20%	199	5.40%
Public administration	49,376	3.10%	81	2.20%

Figure 9: Distribution of occupations: Webster City has a distribution of occupations similar to that of the state.

Source: American Community Survey 2012-2016.



Figure 10: Downtown Webster City as defined by planning team

Source: Author

DOWNTOWN PROFILE

DEFINING THE PROJECT AREA | In order to gather and analyze data on a consistent basis it is important to establish a single definition of the team's project area, Webster City's downtown. As seen in the multiple overlay maps, different boundaries exist for different purposes. Considering all the different boundaries and their roles was important to the final definition of downtown.

The Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID) was reviewed first. After initially visiting Webster City and walking throughout the SSMID district in person, it was intuitive to include it in the definition of downtown. This district includes both sides of Second Street and much of First Street between Prospect Street and Seneca Street. Shops that fill historic buildings, The Webster Theater, and small parks are included along the tree lined roads. It embodies a stereotypical small-town main street and was the starting point for the project area to be further built upon.

Next, the Central Business District (CBD), Urban Renewal Area (URA), and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district were addressed. All three areas share the same boundaries. Adopted in 1986, the map (Figure 11) is outdated and required heightened scrutiny. A large area north of the railroad tracks was the previous home of Electrolux. Many acres, now unused, were once devoted to operation of the manufacturing plant. It is not considered part of the Webster City downtown definition because it is incredibly large, unused, and zoned M-2 Heavy Industrial. As well, it is entirely enclosed by a substantial security fence with only one apparent access point that has a locked gate. Further, it does not have a consistent aesthetic with the rest of downtown. This plan will not address potential uses for land outside of downtown.

Many single-family housing units along the east, south, and west borders of the 1986 map are not included in the definition either. While housing is an important aspect to consider for the downtown and parts of the research will incorporate downtown housing, many neighborhoods on the periphery have a distinct feeling separate from the downtown. Narrowing the boundaries was concluded once commercial properties with road frontages on River Street and Bank Street were incorporated. These are two main roads with high vehicle traffic and potential for commercial success.

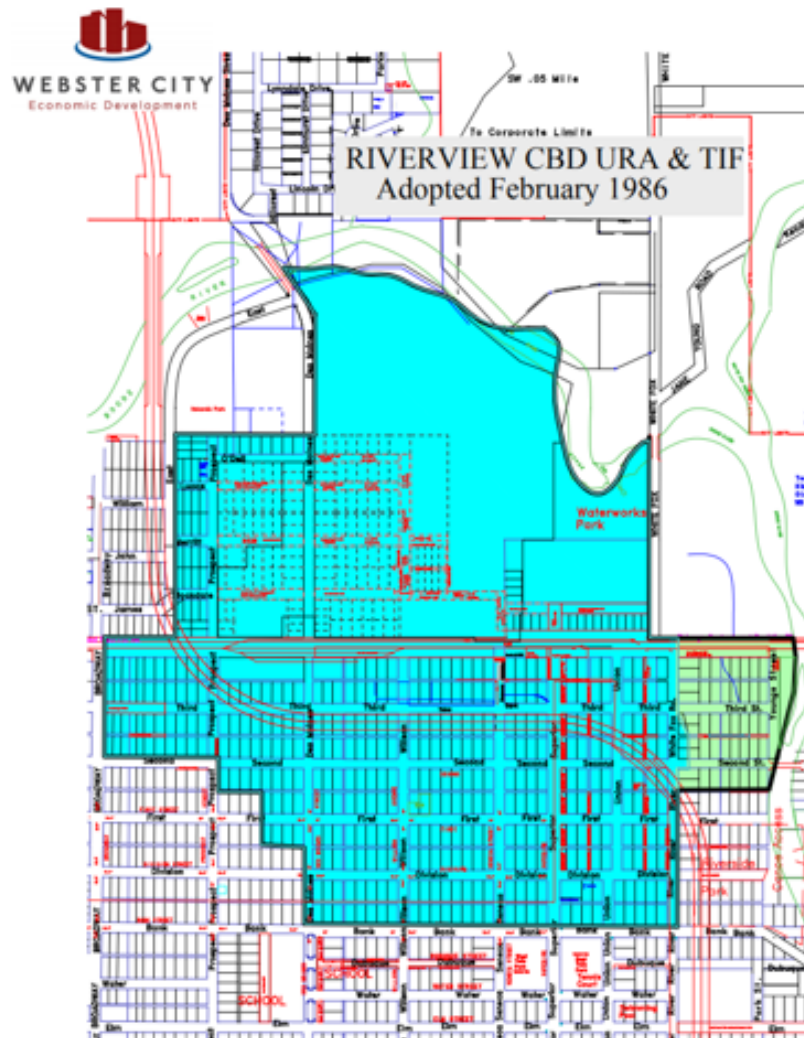


Figure 11: Webster City CBD, URA, and TIF District Map

Source: City of Webster City Economic Development. Riverview CBD URA & TIF Adopted February 1986. (1986)

EXISTING OVERLAY DISTRICTS | The project area as defined by the planning team is affected by three different zoning districts: Commercial, Commercial Highway, and Multi-family Residential. Largely classified as Central Business District (C-2, which includes a variety of uses from retail, restaurants, and banking to dance studios and car dealerships) and Highway Business District (C-3, the previous uses plus light industrial but without residential), the downtown includes a variety of business types. The district is bordered by multi-family and single-family housing, as well as industrial districts to the north.

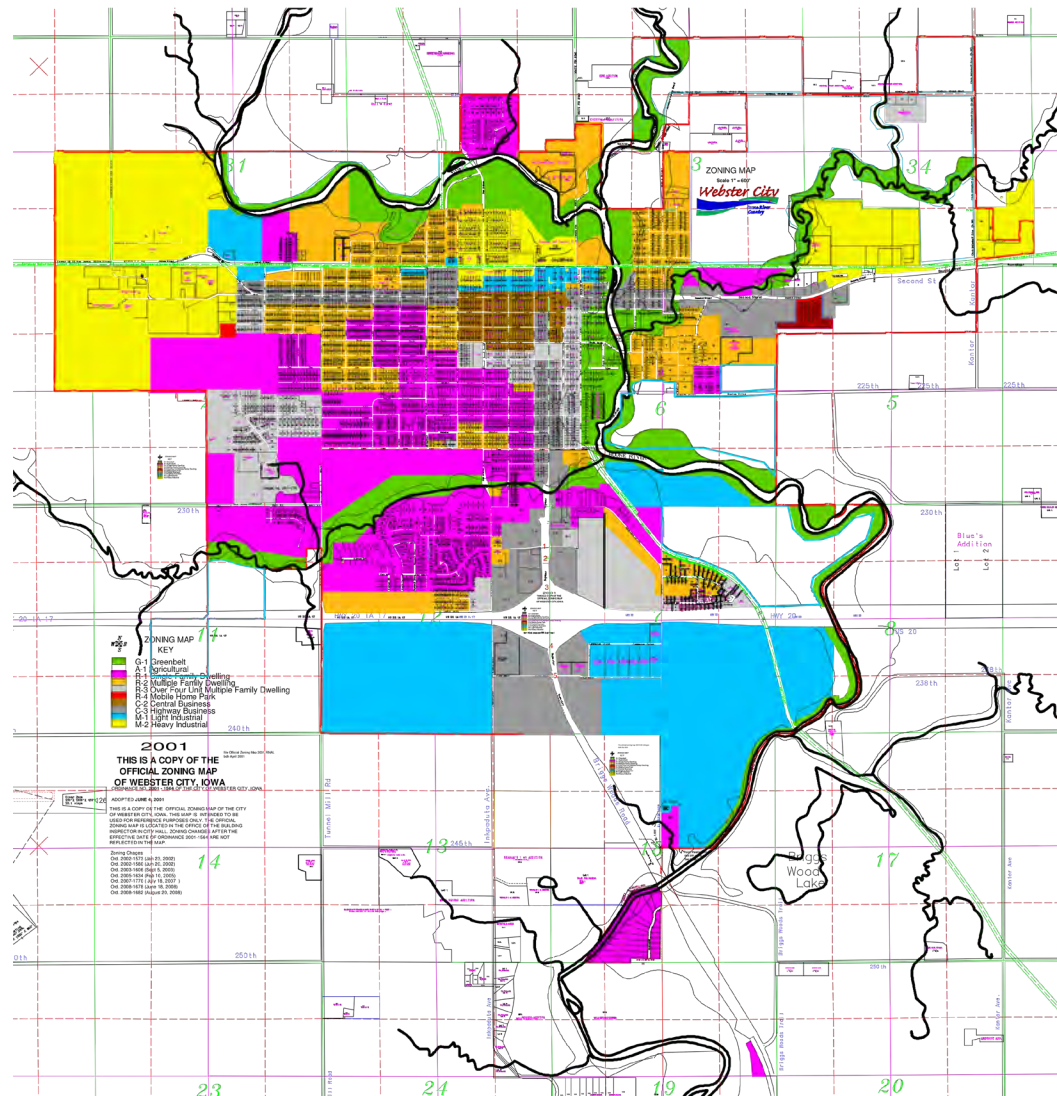


Figure 12: Webster City Zoning Map

Source: City of Webster City Planning, Zoning & Inspections Department. Copy of Official Zoning Map of Webster City. (2001)

The downtown is part of a larger Urban Renewal Area, including the Light Industrial districts to the north and the Residential districts to the south and east (see Figure 12). This area allows for the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF, a tool that freezes property taxes at the assessed value at the time of establishment, with all additional revenues being reinvested in the district selected for the tool. While TIF has been often been used for industrial purposes in Iowa, funds from the district can now be used for almost everything from retail and services, to civic organizations to mixed use and industrial uses.¹¹

In the fiscal year 2018, the Riverview Central Business Urban Renewal Area brought in a total of \$62,450 in revenue from five projects, \$51,800 of which was re-invested in the district.¹² Funds from expanded TIF projects could be used to finance additional redevelopment activities within Downtown Webster City.

CHAPTER 2: ABOUT WEBSTER CITY

Figure 13 shows the existing Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District (SSMID), a financing tool for downtown improvements used in many towns throughout the state, known as a Business Improvement District (BID) in most other states. At the time of this plan Webster City's SSMID supported much of the maintenance of the greenspace within the district including the benches and planter boxes.

The existing SSMID was created on April 20, 1998 when the Webster City city council approved Ordinance No. 98-1515 to levy \$2.50 per \$1,000 of assessed

property value for business owners in the defined district. When the SSMID was renewed in 2008, the vote enacted the continued operation for another ten years. In addition to continuation, the levy rate increased to \$3.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The current SSMID incorporates many properties on either side of First and Second Streets between Superior and Prospect Streets. Over the past 20 years, the money raised by this SSMID has been allocated for potted plants, benches, and trash containers along the sidewalks as well as tree trimmings, downtown kiosk repairs, and Christmas decorations. In 2017, the SSMID district contributed \$10,862.¹³

The use of SSMID financing should be considered in the same context as any other economic development financing tool. In SSMID, members pool their money for the city to spend on projects within the district, including place making and economic vitality. In March 2019, the city voted to raise the SSMID levy to \$5, signifying confidence in the local government's ability to allocate the funds collected into worthwhile projects.

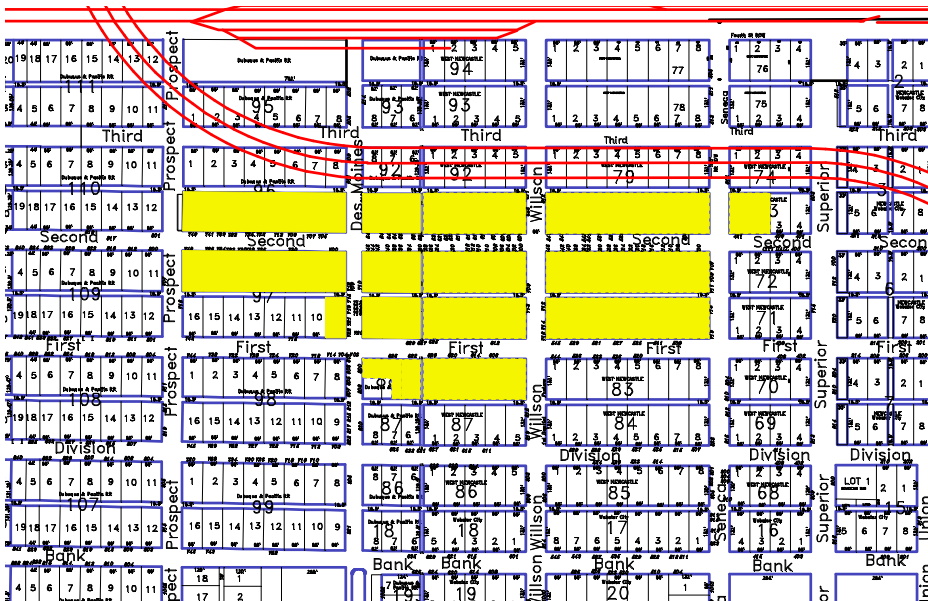


Figure 13: Webster City SSMID Boundary

Source: City of Webster City. SSMID Boundary Map. (Accessed 2018)

CURRENT BUILDING AND ARCHITECTURAL CONDITIONS | Webster City's downtown is notable because of the age of many of the structures. Numerous stores and homes within the downtown were constructed before the turn of the twentieth century. Most of the buildings are reminiscent of others built around the early to mid-1900s. Brick is the main construction material and ornamental brick work can often be found on the upper stories of facades. Unlike other Midwest downtowns, many of Webster City's downtown buildings have dual entrances: one leading to the street and the other connected to a large parking lot that abuts the railroad line.

There are currently two properties within the downtown that are placed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Beaux Arts style Webster City Post Office and a residential property built in the Late Victorian style, the Zitterell House. Due to their age and architectural merit, there are several other properties that could potentially be added to the register in the future.



Figure 14: Rear entrances to stores along Second Street

Source: Author



Figure 15: The Zitterell House

Source: [Ann Sullivan-Larson](#)



Figure 16: Webster City Post Office

Source: [Ann Sullivan-Larson](#)

The age of structures can be an asset or a liability. Due to the age of the buildings and deferred maintenance, the quality of the building stock is becoming an issue. Led by city staff, the planning team observed that on some buildings, mortar is deteriorating away from bricks, joint cracking is visible, and parts of buildings have fallen away from the structure. In some cases, the exact state of the structure is not visible because brick facades have been covered in metal sheets. There are maintenance issues found on buildings that are occupied as well as vacant. On Second Street, a street many would consider the main street, there are 14 vacant buildings.



Figure 17: Storefront showing lateral joint failure on brickwork

Source: Author



Figure 18: Second-story applique metal or vinyl signage

Source: Author



Figure 19: Deteriorating part of a building

Source: Author

DEFINING THE PLANNING APPROACH

The planning and analytical devices explained below are established methods for creating a strategic downtown plan. The planning team relied on existing tools and methods that provided insight into the current state of Downtown Webster City.

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS AND SWOT ANALYSIS | Upon the planning team’s first visit to Webster City on August 13, 2018, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Each team member made notes of their observations, which were later compiled to index the initial impressions of the city. The notes were organized by Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, following the SWOT analysis method that has long been used for assessing the current state of a community, and as a jumping off point for urban development plans. Initial impressions for all SWOT categories can be separated out into three sections: infrastructure, people, and business or commerce. The planning team's first impressions for the SWOT analysis can be found in Figures 20 and 21.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
The Infrastructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pocket parks • Beautiful old buildings; unique and historic downtown • Tree lined streets • Walkability • Abundance of free parking • Brickwork and architectural details • Streetscape • Webster Theater • Amphitheater • Potential for historic renovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deferred maintenance and lack of investment in downtown • Higher cost of operating old buildings • Lack of consistent branding • Lack of design code makes it hard to create an identity • Car-centric • Lack of desirable downtown housing
The People	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly and willing to engage • City officials are knowledgeable and passionate • Ability to rally together and bring back the Webster Theater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscommunication between public and city
The Businesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anchor businesses seem to be doing well • Small-town vibe • Potential for mixed use development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived there is lacking demand for additional businesses. • Poor shop visibility • Vacant storefronts • Long term vacancy • Limited and hard to find store hours • Poor maintenance • Lack of store diversity

Figure 20: Strengths and weaknesses

Source: Author

The planning team began to identify the opportunities and threats for the downtown, listed below.

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
The Infrastructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of the roads could be improved Dress up vacant storefronts to appear active Storm water management opportunities Increase desirability of pocket parks - maintenance, seating, etc. Proximity to US Highway 20 Vacancy Fee - could incentivize absentee building owners to sell or develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Derelict facades and buildings may become ruined past the point of repair and restoration if neglected much longer Lack of housing in surrounding areas
The People	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truly inclusionary downtown experience that engages all cultures in community Engage stakeholders who represent the diversity found within the community Bridge social capital to bring diverse groups together with consideration of the shifting demographics as the pork processing plant may influence population changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aging population was observed on our visit. According to the 2016 estimate, approximately 35% of the population is 55 or older The introduction of Prestage Farms processing plant may threaten resident confidence in the downtown's viability after witnessing a sharp decline and slow recovery of local businesses when Electrolux closed Loss of public confidence can make it harder to complete further projects
The Businesses	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastry shop will be torn down and has the potential to become a very desirable lot Repair or just take down broken things (windows or signage) Descriptive Signage: What's here? Signage continuity with new branding Reduce overhead costs at downtown businesses by making the back portion rented office space First and second floors - improve the storefront Sidewalk café seating Destination niche retail For Sale/Rent standardization – potential buyers/renters have little access to necessary information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived there is lacking demand for additional businesses Poor shop visibility Vacant storefronts Long term vacancy Limited and hard to find store hours Poor maintenance Lack of store diversity

Figure 21: Opportunities and threats

Source: Author

On the initial visit, the planning team began photo documentation of the streetscape, buildings, number of people, and amount of parking usage. These visual assessments helped to gain a broader understanding of the downtown. One of the most apparent qualities of the downtown is the storefronts. There is a variety of detailed, historic brickwork on many of the buildings. A portion of the buildings need significant repairs. The planning team found that many stores on Second Street have entrances at both the front and the back because there is angled parking in front of the stores and a large parking lot behind.



Figure 22: The downtown could contain second-story housing above commercial spaces.

Source: Author

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public participation was a crucial part of creating this plan. In deciding what engagement activities to conduct and when, the planning team relied on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) protocol for public participation.¹⁴ The planning team interacted with the public at large in the form of an open house on November, 12th 2018. A separate focus group meeting was conducted on the same day with downtown business owners.

To initiate work on this downtown plan, the planning team engaged key stakeholders in the downtown, including business owners and residents at large. Through these initial public engagement meetings, preliminary downtown priorities were established, and the planning team used them to prepare draft goals and objectives. The overarching goal is to build upon existing assets and revitalize the core downtown district in order to better serve the community and enhance the economic prosperity of Webster City and the surrounding region.

At the fall open house, the refurbishment of storefronts and historic preservation were identified as the two biggest opportunities in downtown. The major weakness identified for the downtown was the maintenance of buildings and the largest threat was the deterioration of buildings. At the same time, the historic character of buildings was also identified as a major strength, second to only restaurants. Revitalization of existing structures within the downtown is an important objective that the planning team aims to address through various recommendations.

SURVEY | The planning team designed a survey to collect perceptions and general input from residents of Webster City. In addition to a paper version of the survey, there was an online version in both English and Spanish. Paper versions were made available at City Hall, Kendall Young Library, All Cultures Equal, and at the Rotary Club Turkey Dinner. An online version was promoted through the City of Webster City Facebook page and via email to several civic-oriented organizations in the community. The survey was available from October 28th through December 12th, 2018 and yielded 155 responses from community members. The survey yielded useful results that helped steer the later portions of the project. Some of the results are described below.

Less than 1% of respondents reported that the variety of goods and services offered in the downtown were "Excellent" when asked to rate for specific attributes and 64% reported them to be "Very poor." 28% reported safety conditions to be "Excellent", while 3% reported them to be "Very poor."

When asked how frequently respondents visited the downtown, 58% reported they were "Passing through."

In the housing portion of the survey, 60% reported to prefer renting instead of owning a home downtown, which nearly 40% preferred. 69% preferred living in an apartment or townhome versus 31% who reported they prefer a condominium. When asked about specific number of bedrooms, 55% reported a preference for 1-2 bedrooms, while 45% preferred 3+. Finally, 59% of respondents reported to prefer historically renovated units to the 41% who preferred newly built.

There was a total of 263 responses to the question asking what residents would like to see more of in the downtown; this is more than the 155 total responses because respondents could submit more than one answer. The results are as follows:

- Festivals (holiday, music, etc.): 61
- Markets (farmers markets, crafts, etc.): 49
- Live music: 48
- Pop-up stores: 31
- Other: 7 (This included recommendations like city-wide events, food trucks, cook offs, car shows, outdoor dining opportunities, and multicultural and intergenerational events and celebrations.)

SURVEY ANALYSIS | The planning team received 155 responses from the community. 52% of respondents reported to be female and 48% reported to be male (refer to Appendix B for an explanation of the stratification process used to calculate results). A majority (29.5%) of respondents reported to be between 35 and 44 years old with the lowest turnout of respondents being between 18 and 24.

The planning team was unable to reach any respondents under the age of 18. More efforts should be employed to engage this demographic and include its

insight into downtown revitalization efforts. The Youth Advisory Commission could continue to serve as the voice of young people within the community and be leveraged for future involvement in engagement activities. Survey responses served a significant purpose in the remainder of the project as they guided further public engagement efforts and strategies for creating recommendations.

Percentage of respondents by age

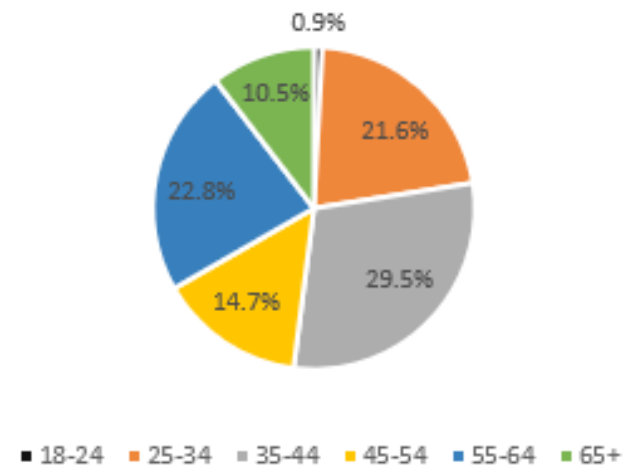


Figure 23: Percentage of survey respondents by age

Source: Webster City Downtown Planning Team, Community Survey. (Conducted 2018)

Question #2

Rate Downtown Webster City for the following attributes:			
	Excellent	Satisfactory	Very Poor
Attractiveness	2%	61%	38%
Cleanliness	17%	62%	20%
Sense of Community	8%	57%	36%
Friendliness	16%	58%	27%
Parking Convenience	22%	58%	20%
Traffic Flow	24%	65%	11%
Shopping Hours	8%	52%	40%
Safety	28%	69%	3%
Variety of Goods/Services	1%	35%	64%
Special Events and Activities	13%	37%	51%
Pedestrian and Bike Friendliness	10%	65%	25%

Note: the percentages for question #1 are derived from each attribute of the downtown. Each entire row will equal 100% of the total responses to Question #2.

As seen in the Question #2 table, a bulk of responses reported that each individual attribute was “Satisfactory”. There were only three attributes that received a rating of “Excellent” beyond 20%: Parking Convenience, Traffic Flow, and Safety. Variety of Goods/Services (64.3%), Special Events and Activities (50.5%), and Shopping Hours (40.3%) received the highest ratings for “Very Poor.” According to the survey data, investing resources into these three areas could improve overall perceptions of and activity in the downtown area.

Question #3

How frequently do you visit Downtown Webster City for the following?					
	Daily	Once or twice/week	Once or twice/month	Once or twice/year	Never
Shopping (non grocery)	7%	15%	41%	25%	12%
Grocery shopping	17%	53%	4%	4%	23%
Restaurants/bars	1%	26%	45%	27%	2%
Government	3%	0%	31%	36%	31%
Services (banking, hair, insurance, etc.)	8%	22%	47%	15%	8%
Passing through	60%	28%	3%	5%	6%
Other	17%	17%	14%	2%	50%

Note: the percentages from Question #3 are derived from each reason for visiting the downtown. Each row equals 100% of the total responses to Question #3.

59.6% of respondents reported they are “Passing through” on their daily visits to the downtown. One positive thing about this statistic is that there is potential to capture all of that through traffic so they spend more time in the downtown, rather than just passing through. The highest ratings for respondents that reported visiting the downtown once or twice per week are as follows: Grocery Shopping (52.5%), Passing Through (27.7%), and Restaurants/bars (25.7%). The lowest three ratings for respondents that reported to never visit the downtown were for the following reasons: Restaurants/bars (1.7%), Passing Through (5.5%), and Services (banking, hair, insurance, etc.) (7.9%). Expanding the variety of restaurants and services could encourage residents to visit the downtown more frequently.

Question #4

What types of businesses in Downtown Webster City are missing that, if there, you would utilize? (Free response)	
Response	Count
Department/Clothing/Shoe Store	20
Greeting Cards/Gift Shop	18
Specialty Food*	18
Men's Store	10
Brewery/Live Music/Young Adult Venue	10
Other**	10
Craft/Hobby/Sewing Store	7
American/Family/Inexpensive Restaurant	6
Kid's Store	5
Sporting Goods/Outdoor Store	4
Electronics Stores	4
Organic Grocery Store	3
Plus-size Clothing Store	3
Arcade	2
Pet Store	2
Goodwill/Dollar Store	2
Clothing Boutique	2

*Specialty Food includes bakery, donut, ice cream, smoothie, high end restaurant, Italian, and restaurant with outdoor seating.

**Other includes book store, pet hotel, coffee shop, appliance store, jewelry, indoor park, maker's space, video rental, antique, and "nothing."

The top three highest ranked business types were as follows: Department/Clothing/Shoe Store (20), Greeting Cards/Gift Shop (18), and Specialty Food (18). The following three all received ten votes in the survey: Men's Store, Brewery/Live Music/Young Adult Venue, and Other. The survey alone cannot

determine what business types would succeed in Webster City. Further research has been done in the Peer City and Market Analysis portions of the report to identify businesses that are a possible match for the community.

Question #10

What attributes would you like to see more of in Downtown Webster City? (Select all that apply)		
	Percentage	Count
Outdoor Restaurants	33%	54
Public art	22%	35
Parks and greenspace	21%	34
Bike lanes	13%	21
Other	10%	17

Question #12

What events would you like to see more of in Downtown Webster City? (Select all that apply)		
	Percentage	Count
Festivals (holiday, music, etc.)	31%	61
Markets (Farmers, craft markets, etc.)	25%	49
Live music	24%	48
Pop-up shops	16%	31
Other	4%	7

In both of the questions above, respondents were able to provide as many answers as they wanted. Of the options provided in the survey, outdoor restaurants were the most popular with 54 out of 161 total responses. Public art received 35 total and parks and greenspace were close behind with 34. Bike lanes received 21 responses, accounting for over 13% of the total responses.

A considerable number of respondents to question #7 reported their interest in more festivals to take place in the downtown area: 31%. Not far behind was the preference for market type events like farmers and craft markets. Live music was another popular option with 48, just over 24% of all responses. Festivals, markets, and live music would tie-in well to responses in question #5 like outdoor restaurants and parks and greenspace.

ROTARY CLUB EVENT | The planning team was warmly welcomed by the Webster City Rotary Club to set up an information booth at their annual turkey dinner fundraiser. This was held at Webster City High School on October 28th, 2018. Hundreds of guests attending the event in the high school cafeteria passed the planning team's table, giving the project ample exposure to the community. This provided an excellent opportunity to meet new people in Webster City, promote the upcoming open house, and gather surveys and trade mapping exercises. In total, the team conversed with over 50 people from Webster City and the surrounding areas and received 33 completed surveys (of the 155 discussed above) and 22 trade mapping exercises.



Figure 24: The planning team at the Rotary Club Dinner

BUSINESS OWNER MEETING | To receive both qualitative and quantitative input from local business owners in Webster City, the planning team invited 85 downtown business owners to participate in focus groups on November 12th, 2018 from 5:30 to 6:30pm. In addition to a mailed invitation, the planning team extended personal invitations via phone call. The 85 business owners were selected based off the businesses included in the SSMID boundary and a list of downtown businesses created by the Chamber of Commerce and supplied to the planning team by the project partner, Lindsay Henderson. 24 local business owners joined the planning team where they were able to discuss the current state of Downtown Webster City via a brief written survey and extensive conversation led by planning team members. Each group contained seven to 10 business owners and one or two planning team members. All the questions asked and discussed at the event were derived from proven methods designed for interaction with business owners. The event was successful in gaining valuable feedback about how to activate the downtown space, understand how the city can assist local businesses succeed, and help the planning team understand the current economic and business climate in Downtown Webster City.



Figure 25: Business owner meeting



Figure 26: Business owner meeting



Figure 27: Business owner meeting



Figure 28: Business owner meeting

FALL OPEN HOUSE | An open house was conducted in the Sampson Room at Fuller Hall in Webster City immediately following the business owner meeting on November 12th, 2018. The event was advertised on The City of Webster City's Facebook page. This online campaign included informational posts, an event creation, and event reminders. Additionally, a radio interview advertising the event was conducted with KQWC in Webster City which was replayed multiple times in the week preceding the event. Finally, informational fliers were handed out at the Rotary Club Turkey Dinner, posted on public bulletin boards and in shop windows, and mailed to City Hall, as well as the Library. Residents were invited to arrive at their convenience between 7:00 and 8:30pm. An informal setting was created starting with a brief introduction of the team's purpose and expectations of the attendees. Small groups of visitors were formed and passed through five stations together. The first four stations included a board to write and rank ideas on. A question at each board, loosely based on SWOT analysis, was prompted to help generate ideas. Everyone was given the opportunity to use a marker and place a written tally mark next to a maximum of five ideas on the board at each station that she or he agreed with. This system enabled the team to obtain many ideas as well understand which ideas are most commonly shared among the residents. The final station included a worksheet to track consumer behavior as part of the trade area analysis portion of the market analysis. Roughly 60 guests attended the open house and provided the planning team with useful feedback.

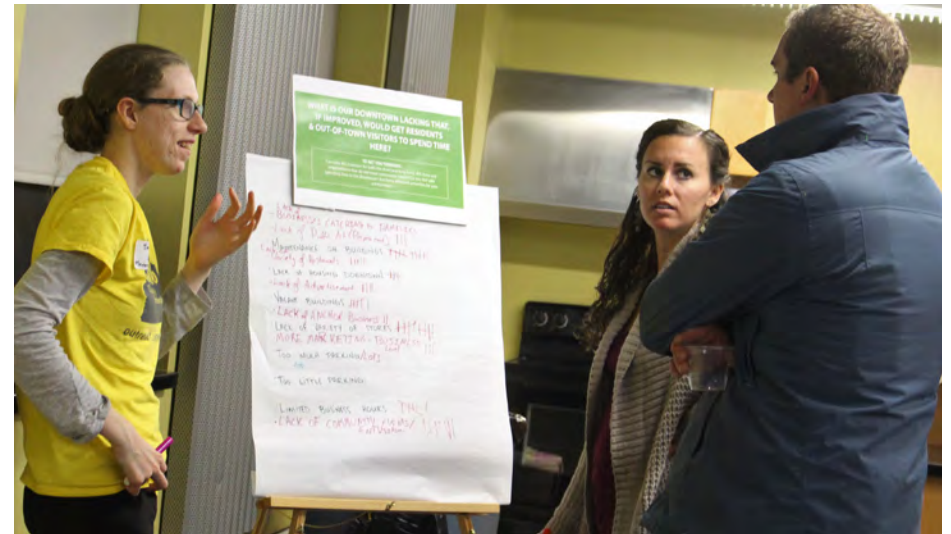


Figure 29: Fall open house



Figure 30: Fall open house



Figure 31: Fall open house



Figure 32: Fall open house



Figure 33: Fall open house



Figure 34: Fall open house



Figure 36: Spring open house



Figure 37: Spring open house

SPRING OPEN HOUSE | In combination with the Parks and Recreation team, a second open house was held in the Sampson Room at Fuller Hall on March 29th, 2019 from 6:00 to 8:00pm. The event was advertised on Webster City’s social media platforms and in the Daily Freeman-Journal. Fliers were distributed at City Hall and the Kendall Young Library. The event was intended to get public feedback on the team’s strategies and objectives for accomplishing potential recommendations of this plan. The strategies and goals were broadly organized under the four leading Main Street Iowa points—economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization—to which each guest was instructed to prioritize. Team members explained that in their prioritization they should not only focus on what was the most important to address first in Webster City, but what strategies could be implemented relatively easily and quickly in order to garner momentum to complete the other strategies as well. In addition to the prioritization boards, guests had the opportunity to sign up for things they would be willing to do or be part of in the downtown. This allowed guests to take ownership over the revitalization process and helped the project partner prepare a list of contacts to assist with future initiatives. Nearly 60 guests attended the event and provided invaluable feedback that helped the planning team wrap up the public input portion of this plan. Refer to Appendix B for copies of documents guests completed at the event.

On the next page are the results of the prioritization activity. The mean and mode of each strategy were calculated. Events downtown, keeping existing businesses, and increasing downtown events were residents’ top priorities for Downtown Webster City, with business attraction, maintaining streetscapes, and enhancing the downtown experience being chosen as second. Along with the comments provided, these rankings helped the planning team prioritize strategies in the later chapters of this plan.

<i>“Establish Downtown Webster City as a Vibrant Economic Hub”</i>	Item	Mean	Mode
	Support existing businesses	2.07	1
	Attract businesses to downtown	2.14	1
	Increase the number of occupied commercial spaces	2.75	2
	Cultivate a pro-business ecosystem	3.66	4
	Encourage downtown living	4.3	5

<i>“Beautify and Activate the Downtown”</i>	Item	Mean	Mode
	Fix downtown buildings	1.73	1
	Maintain streetscapes	3.44	3
	Increase foot traffic	3.52	2
	Improve the look and function of signage	4.05	4
	Encourage extended business hours	4.27	7
	Embrace and encourage the arts	4.42	5
	Develop a historic preservation committee	5.51	7

<i>“Make Downtown a Destination”</i>	Item	Mean	Mode
	Increase the number of events hosted in the downtown	2.89	1
	Enhance the experience of being downtown	3.7	5
	Develop a unified promotional strategy	3.93	2
	Establish a downtown brand	4.89	2
	Greet visitors so they feel welcomed in the downtown	5.34	4
	Celebrate diverse cultures	5.75	7
	Create a central hub for information	5.77	8
	Recognize excellence in business and community pride	5.79	6
	Improve public-private relations	6.37	9



Figure 38: Spring open house



Figure 39: Spring open house



Figure 40: Spring open house



Figure 41: Spring open house

MARKET ANALYSIS

As business attraction and development is a major part of any downtown development plan, the team conducted a market analysis to determine what businesses would be appropriate to attract to and foster within Downtown Webster City. This section uses data from the Esri Tapestry and Retail Mapping services to show what is accessible within a 5-, 10-, and 15-minute drive, provide an overview of key consumer groups, and indicate key industry sectors and leakages.

This analysis captures Webster City in 2017, the most recent year for which data was available at the time of the report writing. Because market conditions and preferences change rapidly, this analysis cannot predict or forecast future changes. The information in a market analysis is intended to provide a foundation of information for making business development decisions, but it cannot and does not ensure business success. Note these opportunities are subject to change with the in-migration of workers at the new Prestage processing plant in neighboring Eagle Grove and other unpredictable economic trends.

TRADE AREA ANALYSIS | Understanding the location of businesses and their spatial interactions with customers is the basis of trade area analysis and can help identify business leakages from Webster City. For instance, based on the free response results from the survey, consumers indicated that they are forced to leave Webster City in order to purchase men’s clothing. While men’s clothing is just one example of a leakage, identifying these types of businesses will help potential entrepreneurs enter in to a currently untapped market. Conversely, this analysis can help identify if other people from outside of Webster City are

traveling in to the area to shop and if so, what for. Lambert Lumber, although outside of the planning team’s definition of downtown, is an example of a business that attracts residents from other towns.

This analysis was completed with the help of two tools. First, a consumer survey was offered at the Rotary Turkey Dinner and the fall open house. The goal of this tool was to understand the availability of goods in Webster City from a consumer’s perspective. In total, 38 surveys were completed and included responses from people that live and work in Webster City, as well as in-commuters (people that live outside of Webster City, but travel in for work) and out-commuters (people that live in Webster City, but travel out for



Figure 43: Number of respondents that purchase certain goods in Webster City

work). All respondents indicated they purchase at least one of the following in Webster City: groceries, drug store items, home improvement items, meals from a restaurant. Groceries and Restaurant meals are also the most popular item purchased within Webster City by individuals living outside of town. In Figure 43, the number of respondents that indicated they purchase each type of good within Webster City is illustrated. Most respondents purchase sporting goods and home appliances outside of Webster City and the data indicates most respondents purchase electronics online.

A business owner map survey was a tool that unfortunately did not provide substantial data and was therefore inconclusive. It was provided to the business owners to complete as they settled in to their focus groups, however, only 12 completions were submitted. Not enough time was given to the business owners to review the survey and provide adequate information before focus group discussions began and the worksheet was not intuitive enough on its own to be delivered without explanation.

MAPPING FOR DEMAND | The following map shows an overview of places within 5-, 10-, and 15-minute drives of the Webster Theater, which is centrally located within Downtown Webster City (Figure 44). Most of Webster City is located within a five-minute drive, the entire city is encompassed in the 10-minute drive, and parts of Kamrar, Woolstock, and Duncombe are reachable within a 15-minute drive.

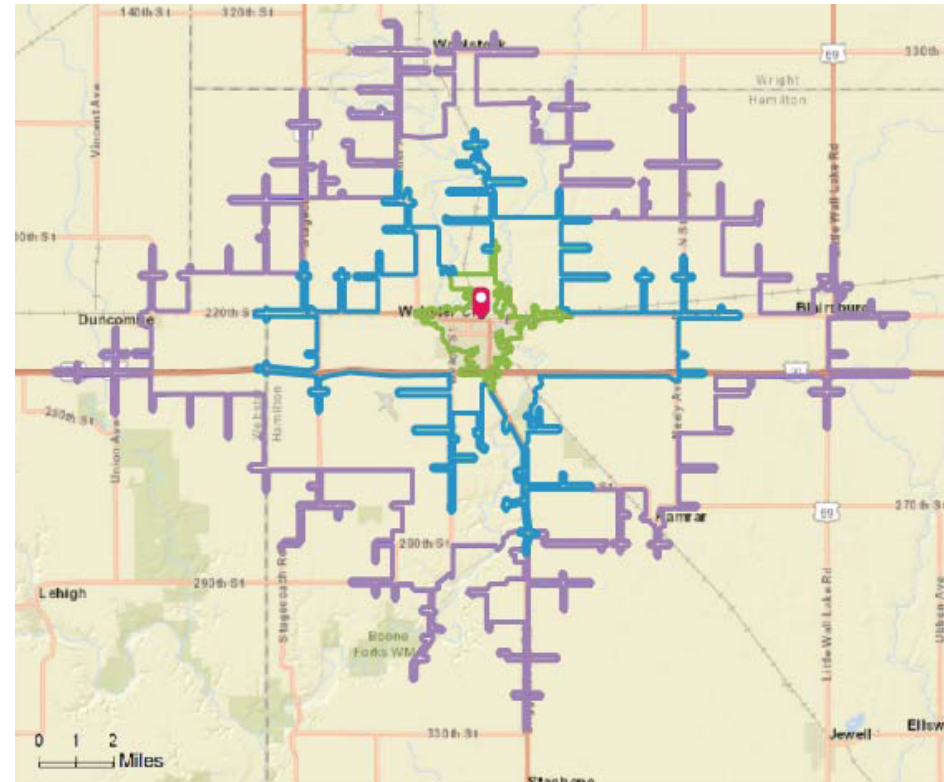


Figure 44: Drive time map: This map denotes areas within 5 minute drive times of downtown in green, 10 minutes of downtown in blue, and 15 minutes in purple.

Source: Author

LIFESTYLE PROFILE | The Tapestry Household Distribution Report identifies the dominant segments of the population and suggests what their likes, dislikes, lifestyles, and purchase behaviors may be.¹⁵ This information reveals what the current consumer base may be like within Webster City.

There are four major consumer segments within the Webster City market: Traditional Living, Heartland Communities, Retirement Communities, and Rustbelt Traditions. This data can be used to help incoming businesses tell what customer bases exist in Webster City as of April 2019.

- **Traditional Living:** Typically employed in blue-collar sectors like retail, construction, or manufacturing. Cost conscious, this group values convenience, from fast food to dollar stores to big box retail.
- **Heartland Communities:** Individuals in this group tend to be older, have white-collar jobs, and are more likely to be retired than their traditional living counterparts. In general, this consumer group likes to buy American-made goods they grew up with, is budget conscious, and is also more likely to volunteer in their community.
- **Retirement Communities:** Individuals in this group tend to be above retirement age. As some of them have outlived their partners, they are more likely to rent their home rather than own. These consumers are especially price conscious, except for spending on healthcare.
- **Rustbelt Traditions:** The highest-income segment in this analysis, most individuals in this group have a high school degree or some college, with jobs in manufacturing or white-collar work. These consumers are slightly less budget conscious than their segment counterparts and prefer American-made goods.

Sector Analysis

The Sector Analysis provides a direct comparison between retail sales and consumer spending by industry. Looking at the relationship between goods supplied by retailers and the goods consumers demand, this analysis defines a “surplus” as the amount by which the retail supply exceeds demand, drawing in customers from other areas. A “leakage” is the amount by which estimated demand exceeds retail supply, where Webster City consumers seek this good outside the city. The sector analysis for Webster City indicates that it is losing sales to areas outside the region in both retail and food and drink, as measured for the 10-minute drive time in downtown, chosen for its inclusion of all Webster City neighborhoods.

Key	10-Minute Drive Time
	Leakages
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44-45,722)	\$15,037,174
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)	\$11,591,542
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	\$3,445,632

Figure 45: Webster City Retail Leakages 2017 - 10-Minute Drive Time
Source: Esri Retail Marketplace 2019

Figure 46 examines the leakage and surplus by industry for the 10-minute radius, an area chosen for its inclusion of all neighborhoods within Webster City. Note that a factor of 100 indicates a total leakage, all consumers leaving Webster City for that good, and a negative number indicates the proportion of sales demanded by incoming customers. Negative numbers show a comparative advantage which could potentially be built upon, while positive numbers show consumers leaving the city to purchase goods in that category, a potential market opportunity.

CHAPTER 3: APPROACH AND METHODS

2017 Industry Group		(Retail Potential)	(Retail Sales)		Factor	Businesses
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	441	\$21,060,912	\$7,853,849	\$13,207,063	45.7	10
Automobile Dealers	4411	\$16,531,884	\$839,422	\$15,692,462	90.3	2
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	4412	\$2,439,123	\$4,055,562	-\$1,616,439	-24.9	2
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$2,089,904	\$2,958,865	-\$868,961	-17.2	6
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$2,576,993	\$708,752	\$1,868,241	56.9	4
Furniture Stores	4421	\$1,665,540	\$297,844	\$1,367,696	69.7	1
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$911,453	\$410,908	\$500,545	37.9	3
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$3,124,396	\$2,685,013	\$439,383	7.6	2
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$5,784,104	\$6,151,667	-\$367,563	-3.1	11
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$5,166,882	\$4,965,123	\$201,759	2.0	9
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$617,222	\$1,186,545	-\$569,323	-31.6	2
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$18,495,945	\$35,941,957	-\$17,446,012	-32.0	8
Grocery Stores	4451	\$17,143,212	\$35,644,335	-\$18,501,123	-35.0	6
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$804,251	\$297,622	\$506,629	46.0	2
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	4453	\$548,481	\$0	\$548,481	100.0	0
Health & Personal Care Stores	446,4461	\$5,890,744	\$7,123,817	-\$1,233,073	-9.5	6
Gasoline Stations	447,4471	\$10,209,633	\$12,773,769	-\$2,564,136	-11.2	6
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	448	\$3,171,825	\$2,540,888	\$630,937	11.0	4
Clothing Stores	4481	\$2,056,927	\$1,305,827	\$751,100	22.3	3
Shoe Stores	4482	\$414,401	\$0	\$414,401	100.0	0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$700,497	\$1,235,061	-\$534,564	-27.6	1
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	451	\$2,309,272	\$592,879	\$1,716,393	59.1	2
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	4511	\$1,917,356	\$592,879	\$1,324,477	52.8	2
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$391,915	\$0	\$391,915	100.0	0
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$16,265,506	\$5,555,540	\$10,709,966	49.1	4
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$13,241,174	\$4,903,593	\$8,337,581	46.0	3
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$3,024,332	\$651,947	\$2,372,385	64.5	1
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	453	\$4,469,072	\$1,787,300	\$2,681,772	42.9	10
Florists	4531	\$243,125	\$204,216	\$38,909	8.7	2
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	4532	\$1,133,853	\$459,865	\$673,988	42.3	2
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$635,880	\$148,072	\$487,808	62.2	1
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	4539	\$2,456,214	\$975,147	\$1,481,067	43.2	5
Nonstore Retailers	454	\$1,948,571	\$0	\$1,948,571	100.0	0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	4541	\$1,224,053	\$0	\$1,224,053	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	4542	\$292,956	\$0	\$292,956	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	4543	\$431,563	\$0	\$431,563	100.0	0
Food Services & Drinking Places	722	\$8,960,783	\$5,515,151	\$3,445,632	23.8	18
Special Food Services	7223	\$181,822	\$0	\$181,822	100.0	0
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$645,571	\$193,876	\$451,695	53.8	2
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	7225	\$8,133,390	\$5,321,275	\$2,812,115	20.9	16

Figure 46: Leakage and Surplus Factors by industry group for areas within a 10-minute driving radius of downtown

In this table, a green color indicates a leakage or opportunity. Negative numbers in red indicate a trade surplus.

Source: Esri Retail Marketplace 2019

In total, there are seven industry groups in which Webster City had a surplus or comparative advantage: Jewelry stores, gas stations, health and personal care stores, grocery stores, lawn and garden, auto parts, and motor vehicle dealers (not automobiles). Notable leakages include shoe stores, book stores, liquor stores (each with a factor of 100), as well as specialty foods (46) and places to drink alcoholic beverages (51). The leakages within these industries suggest that Webster City residents could be using online retailers or shopping in neighboring areas such as Ames and Fort Dodge.

Analysis

In December 2017, retail businesses accounted for 35% of non-residential occupancy in Downtown Webster City. With current demographics indicating a more budget-conscious consumer base, the short-run trends suggest a tight market for traditional retail. Instead the data suggests looking for alternatives to traditional downtown retail, like include the pottery shop on Seneca Street. This could also help with drawing visitors and new residents to downtown in the long run.

HOUSING STUDY AND INVENTORY | Information on downtown housing was obtained from three departments within the Webster City City Government. The Community Vitality Department, Inspection Department, and Finance & Utility Department each provided data on housing that the planning team cross referenced in order to create the dataset for this report. Occupancy was the main data point provided with other valuable information being sparse. It is clear that a full housing needs assessment with special attention on the downtown be completed in order to gain more valuable information such as rental rates, living conditions, number of bedrooms, different amenities,

number of occupants, and occupancy demographics. This type of information could be used to further assess what is available and what could be improved or changed to encourage higher occupancy. This is especially important with the opening of Prestage Farms and any potential increase in population due to relocating workers.

There is space to improve the downtown's housing options. Among the 206 parcels in the downtown, there are 27 with an occupied single-family dwelling, 30 with a multi-family dwelling and at least one occupant, and 13 parcels with a residential dwelling (single or multi-family) that are completely vacant. Based solely on the team's visits, the low estimate of residents living downtown still appears to be too high. Many "for rent" signs were evident throughout the downtown as well as boarded windows where second-story housing would usually exist. The spaces with boarded windows are of particular interest; they represent areas currently used for storage, if at all, that can be converted to residential units in the future. Current vacancies should be filled first, however. The downtown has a vacancy rate of 18.5%, which is much higher than the rate of Webster City at 3% (which includes the downtown) and still over double the national norm of 7-8%.

Nearly 60% of respondents indicated that they preferred renting instead of owning, 55% preferred 1-2 bedrooms instead of 3 or more, and 59% preferred historically renovated buildings instead of newly built. A stronger preference of nearly 69% was given for apartments or townhomes instead of condominiums. Without overly strong preferences by respondents, we are encouraged for the potential to see different kinds of housing downtown and staying away from monotonous homogeneity. The preference for historically renovated buildings can be leveraged for future historic grants or Main Street application.

BUILDING INVENTORY | An inventory of all buildings within the downtown is key to moving forward with downtown development. In its current form, this excel file contains data on the current building stock and allows for quick access to information about the downtown. It is needed in order to make future recommendations, and it can be utilized by the city for many years in the future. For each parcel of land within the downtown, the Downtown Inventory contains ten pieces of information supplied by the Hamilton County Assessor website. This information includes: business name, deed holders name, address, classification of use (commercial or residential), land value, total property value, year of construction, square footage of the structure, and year of most recent sale. Information besides that accessed from the Hamilton County Assessor is also provided. This includes data specific to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) making it compatible with that software. GIS is a powerful tool which can be utilized for mapping and spatially analyzing Downtown Webster City. North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes are provided for each business currently occupying the buildings as well. All of this information is current as of Spring 2019.

The planning team proposes that the document be kept up to date so that key information about the downtown is readily available when needed. New information can be added, as well, once future work is complete on projects such as an updated housing assessment and engineering study of building structural status. Relevant information to incorporate from these findings could include rent prices, apartment amenities, previous code violations, or date and cost of most recent update, prior assessment values, ADA accessibility, façade quality ratings, number of bedrooms, lease or rental rates, construction type, quality of the interior, type of HVAC, utilities utilized by the structure, districts it is

contained within, or photographs of both the building's exterior and interior. Details for each parcel could be organized onto their own Building Inventory Report Card. An example of a Report Card can be found in Appendix B. This report card could provide substantial information on a parcel to parcel level but could also be aggregated to track progress of business origination and diversity as well as housing occupancy downtown. This inventory was used extensively for analysis during the creation of this report and has the potential to be a valuable asset for Webster City.

There are 206 parcels within Downtown Webster City. Of those parcels, 166 are commercial properties. The single industrial property within the downtown is the location of the Daily Freeman Journal. Of the properties that are strictly residential, there are four properties that are multi-family and 35 single-family. Thirty-six property owners own more than one property within the downtown. The entity with the highest number of holdings is the City of Webster City, which owns 11 parcels.

The average date of construction for all buildings within the downtown is 1926. Three buildings have been constructed within the past 10 years and ten additional buildings have been constructed within the past 20 years. As shown in the map, there are several blocks that have buildings with similar build dates that are close to the year 1900. Most of the newer construction has occurred towards the edges of the downtown.

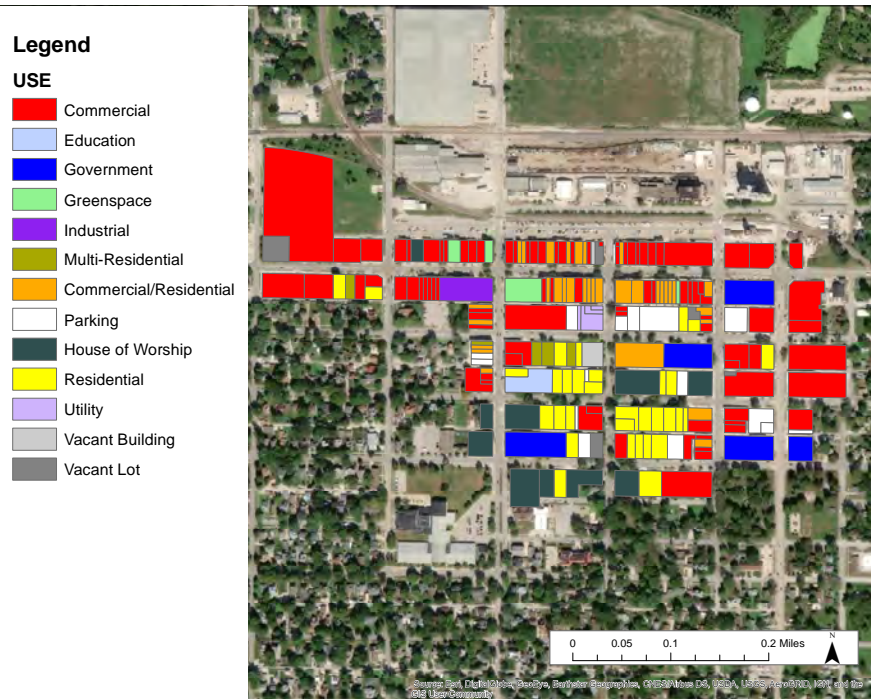


Figure 47: Classification of buildings in the downtown

Source: Author

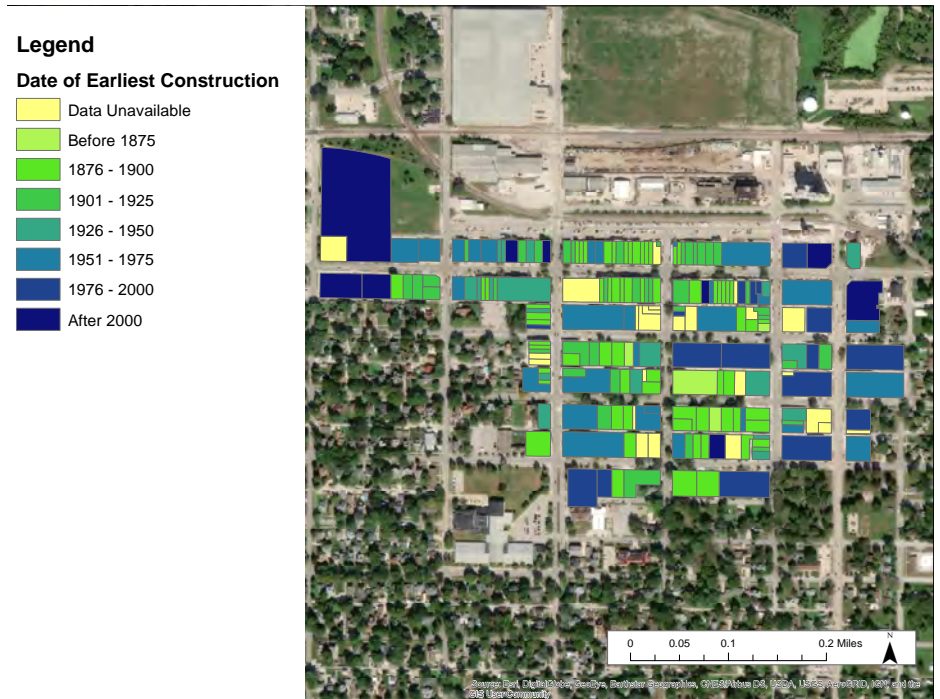


Figure 48: Earliest date of construction of buildings in the downtown

Source: Author

CHAPTER 3: APPROACH AND METHODS

Downtown Webster City has 91 buildings that are more than 100 years old. The oldest building within the downtown, located on the corner of First Avenue and Seneca Street, was constructed in 1850. The building has been well maintained and is home to The Produce Station Gallery & Ice House Gallery, which specializes in handmade stoneware and porcelain.



Figure 49: The Produce Station located at 723 Seneca Street

Source: Google Maps

Other notable, historic buildings that are key contributors to the historic character of the downtown include The Old Post Office, The Elks Club, 628 Second Street (which is home to the Webster City Chamber of Commerce), and The Webster Theater. The Old Post Office and the Elks Club are currently vacant and would be ideal properties for adaptive reuse. Perhaps the Old Post Office would be a good location for a business incubator or a child care facility. Due to its large size, The Elks Lodge could be converted into a business that requires a lot of floor space such as a brewery or restaurant.



Figure 50: The Old Post Office

Source: [Waymarking](#)



Figure 51: The Elks Club
Source: [The Freeman Journal](#)



Figure 52: 628 Second Street
Source: Google Maps

CHAPTER 3: APPROACH AND METHODS

The average property value for parcels within the downtown is \$136,564. As indicated in the map, many of the buildings along 2nd Street have very similar property values. Hy-Vee, in the northwest corner of the downtown district, has the highest value of any property within the downtown—\$1.6 million. Fuller Hall, Saint Thomas Aquinas School, and First State Bank are also three properties that are valued at over \$1 million. The lowest valued properties within the downtown include parking lots, parks, and homes.

Legend

Total Property Value

Yellow	Below \$100,000
Light Green	\$100,001 - \$200,000
Green	\$200,001 - \$300,000
Dark Green	\$300,001 - \$400,000
Teal	\$400,001 - \$500,000
Blue-Teal	\$500,001 - \$600,000
Blue	\$600,001 - \$700,000
Dark Blue	\$700,001 - \$800,000
Very Dark Blue	\$800,001 - \$900,000
Black	\$900,001 - \$1,000,000
Dark Blue	Above \$1,000,000

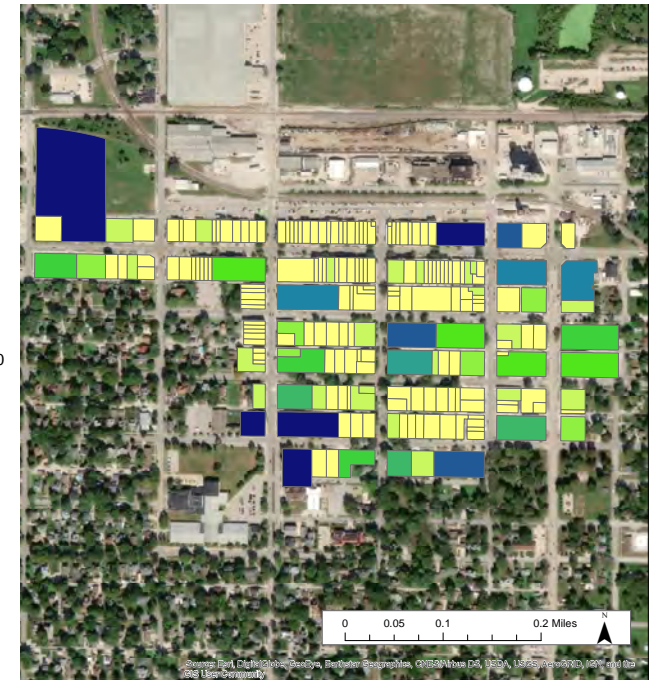


Figure 53: Value of land and buildings in the downtown

Source: Author

PEER CITIES EVALUATION

It is useful to examine the downtown district in comparison to other cities with similar qualities to consider business development strategies. This comparison helps discover business development opportunities that will strengthen economic development vitality in the downtown. Further, it provides real-world scenarios of places that have succeeded in developing a clear position in the market. This comparison may be useful to generate new ideas for refining the downtown market.¹⁶ By applying these lessons, Webster City could implement strategies for revitalization, increase downtown activity, and improve the vitality of downtown.

A list of potential peer cities was created based on similar geographic, demographic, and economic market characteristics. Initial cities were identified according to the suggested groups of peer cities by the 2017 Iowa Community Indicators Program at Iowa State University.¹⁷ Because two of the biggest drivers for downtown business development are population and income, these two metrics were used to indicate initial comparable places. Based on 2016 American Community Survey Data for income and population, the list was narrowed to 21 potential peer cities. Consideration was then given to proximity to urban areas, transportation routes, county seat (or alternately, large share of county population), and the presence of a natural or cultural feature that draws people into the city like Briggs Woods Park. Potential cities were further refined by the presence of large education institutions since this is an important economic driver (i.e. in Decorah and Sioux Center) that would be dissimilar to Webster City and difficult to replicate in the short term. Finally, based on feedback received from Webster City residents and officials that the city does not want to focus too heavily on one employer or employment

industry, potential cities that have exceptionally large employers were omitted (i.e. Le Mars).

This list was further refined to include only cities which have demonstrated success in their downtown business districts. To do so, city level data from the Iowa State University Community Indicators Program was analyzed and a review of the following websites was conducted: city, county, Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Iowa, trade associations, economic development organizations, and various newspaper articles. Based on these criteria, three Iowa peer cities were selected as the best match for Webster City: Centerville, Independence, and Mount Pleasant. A summary of the primary indicators for each city are identified in Figure 54 on the next page.

Figure 54 lists summary statistics for Webster City and each of the peer cities. From 2010 to 2016, the population is slightly declining in each city, except Independence. The Hispanic or Latino population is growing strongly in each city. As described in the economic section of the table, these peer cities were chosen because of their strong performance in economic metrics, such as increased sales, increased number of firms, increased average retail sales per capita, and trade surpluses. Finally, a spatial attribute of each peer city was taken into consideration throughout the selection process. Each city is on a major highway and in proximity to a major cultural or natural amenity. From a geopolitical perspective, each peer city is a county seat like Webster City.

CHAPTER 4: PEER CITIES AND CASE STUDIES EVALUATION

	Webster City	Centerville	Independence	Mount Pleasant
Population Demographics				
Population: 2016 (ACS 5-Year Estimate)	7,825	5,404	6,005	8,491
Population 2010 (U.S. Census)	8,070	5,528	5,966	8,668
Population: Change 2010 to 2016	-3.0%	-2.2%	0.7%	-2.0%
Population Proportion White Alone 2016	87.0%	96.3%	97.5%	86.2%
Population Proportion White Alone 2010	90.8%	96.5%	97.6%	97.5%
Population: White Alone Change 2010 to 2016	-4.2%	-0.2%	-0.1%	-11.6%
Population Proportion Hispanic or Latino 2016	8.0%	2.4%	3.0%	7.4%
Population Proportion Hispanic or Latino 2010	7.4%	1.9%	1.2%	6.7%
Population: Hispanic or Latino Change 2010 to 2016	8.1%	26.3%	150.0%	10.4%
Economic Attributes				
Total Taxable Sales FY 2017 vs FY 2015	-3.4%	1.7%	3.9%	7.8%
Number of Tax Reporting Firms FY 2017 vs FY 2015	-0.4%	3.3%	1.5%	-4.1%
Average Retail Sales Per Capita FY 2017 vs FY 2015	-2.7%	3.0%	3.7%	9.1%
Averages Wages by County 2013 to 2016	Increasing	Increasing	Increasing	Increasing
Trade Surplus (Leakage) FY 2017	Leakage	Surplus	Surplus	Surplus
Trade Surplus (Leakage) Average FY 2015 to FY 2017 (\$000s)	-\$14,697	\$36,111	\$23,024	\$58,001
Trade Area Capture	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive
Geographic Attributes				
County Seat	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City Population as % of County Population	52%	42%	29%	42%
On Major Highway	Yes - U.S. 20	No	Yes - U.S. 20	Yes - U.S. 218 & U.S. 34
Miles to Nearest Town With Population >25,000	23 - Fort Dodge	42 - Ottumwa	24 - Waterloo	30 - Burlington
Proximity to Natural or Cultural Amenity	Briggs Woods Park	Lake Rathbun	Wapsipinicon River	Old Threshers Park

Figure 54: Summarized Demographic, Economic, and Geographic Indicators for Peer Cities and Webster City

Sources: 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate. 2010 Decennial Census. 2017 Iowa State University Community Indicators Reports

CHAPTER 4: PEER CITIES AND CASE STUDIES EVALUATION

The following charts compare Webster City with each peer city by different economic attributes.

Figure 55 compares the total volume of taxable sales in each city from FY 2014 to FY 2017. Because the sales volume of one city (Mt. Pleasant) exceeds the other three cities, the data is displayed by yearly percent change in sales. While Webster City realized an increase in sales in both FY 2014 and 2015, it experienced a decline in both FY 2016 and 2017. Each of the peer cities experienced an increase in sales in FY 2016 and 2017.

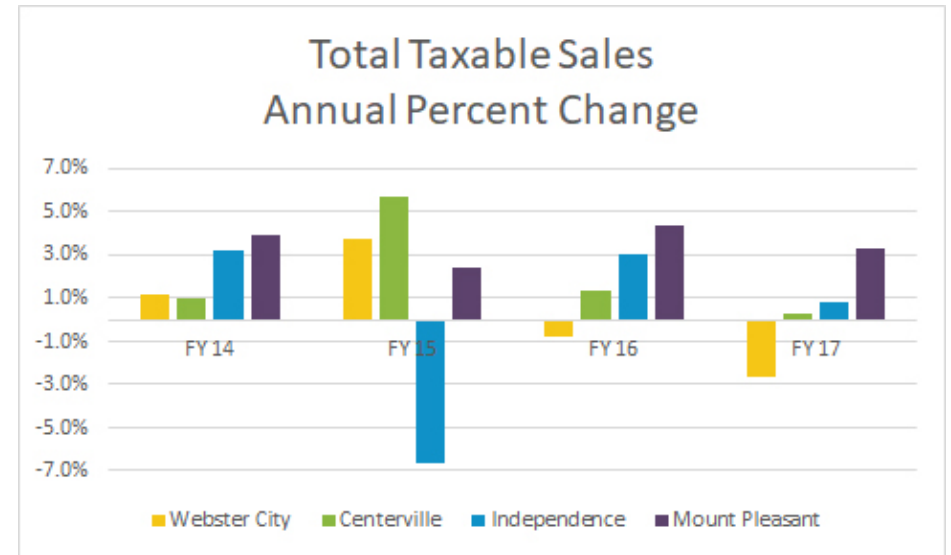


Figure 55: Percent change in total taxable sales each year in real dollars. Each peer city has experienced growth in FY 16 and FY 17 while Webster City has declined.

Source: Iowa State University Community Indicators Reports

CHAPTER 4: PEER CITIES AND CASE STUDIES EVALUATION

Figure 56 displays the annual percent change in number of firms in each city. While Webster City had the same number of firms in 2014 and 2015, by 2016 this increased by four firms (1.5%) and by 2017 declined by 5 firms (-1.8%). In general, the number of firms in each city has remained relatively constant from FY 2015 through FY 2017.

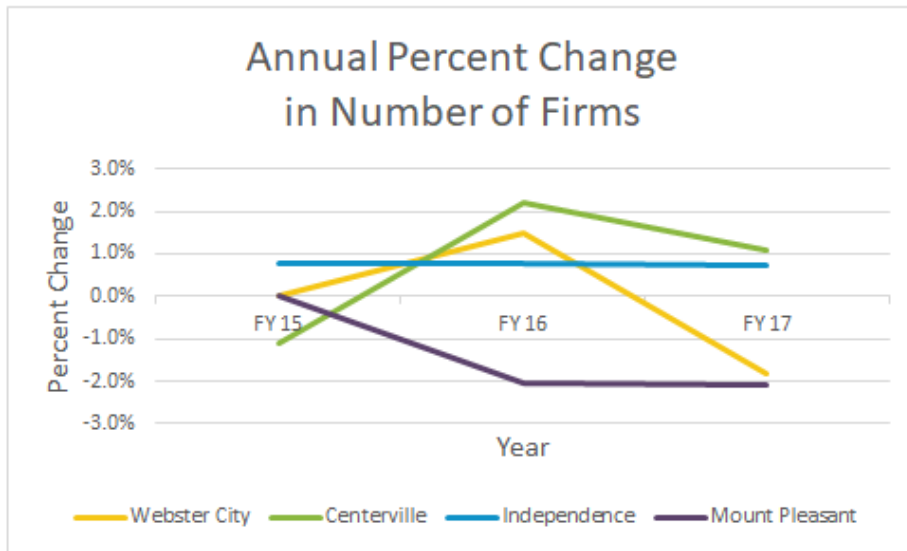


Figure 56: Percent change in total number of firms reporting sales to the state government each year. Centerville and Independence have experienced a positive increase each year since FY 2015 while Webster City and Mount Pleasant have declined.

Source: Iowa State University Community Indicators Reports

Figure 57 demonstrates the volume of retail sales per capita for each of the peer cities. While each peer city exceeds the statewide average, Webster City lags behind the state. Furthermore, Fort Dodge recorded \$20,624 in retail sales per capita in FY 2017, more than double that of Webster City.

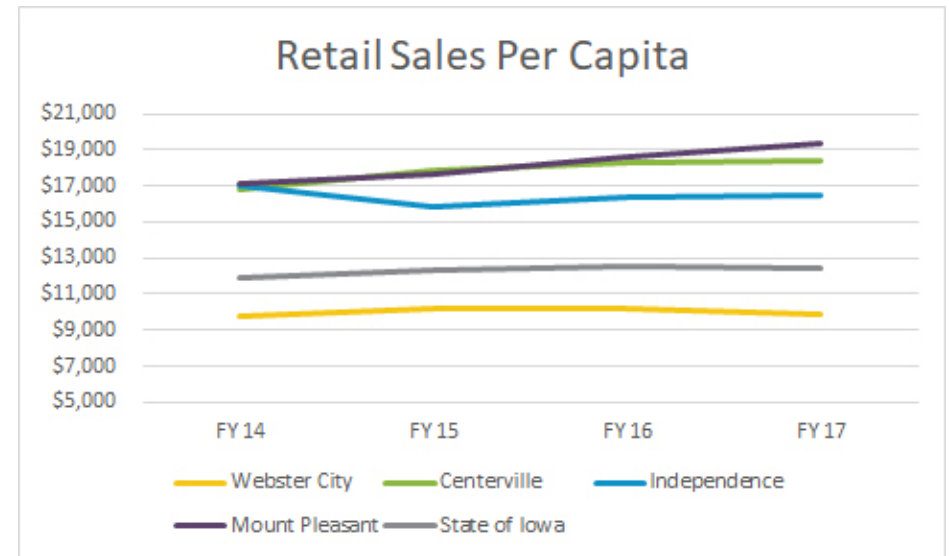


Figure 57: Retail sales per capita in each of the peer cities is compared to the state of Iowa. Retail sales per capita have been adjusted for inflation and are shown in FY 2017 equivalent dollars. Each of the peer cities have retail sales per capita in excess of the state average. Webster City has recorded per capita sales less than the state each year.

Source: Iowa State University Community Indicators Reports

Figure 58 compares trade surplus and leakage across the four cities. This measures the dollar difference in the city's actual sales and the total sales it could generate if residents satisfied all their retail needs locally. A surplus indicates sales above the break-even level to non-residents. A leakage suggests that local resident spending outside the city exceeds local firms' sales to non-residents. As the chart indicates, each peer city has consistently realized a trade surplus in excess of \$20 million. However, Webster City has experienced more than \$10 million in trade leakage each year.

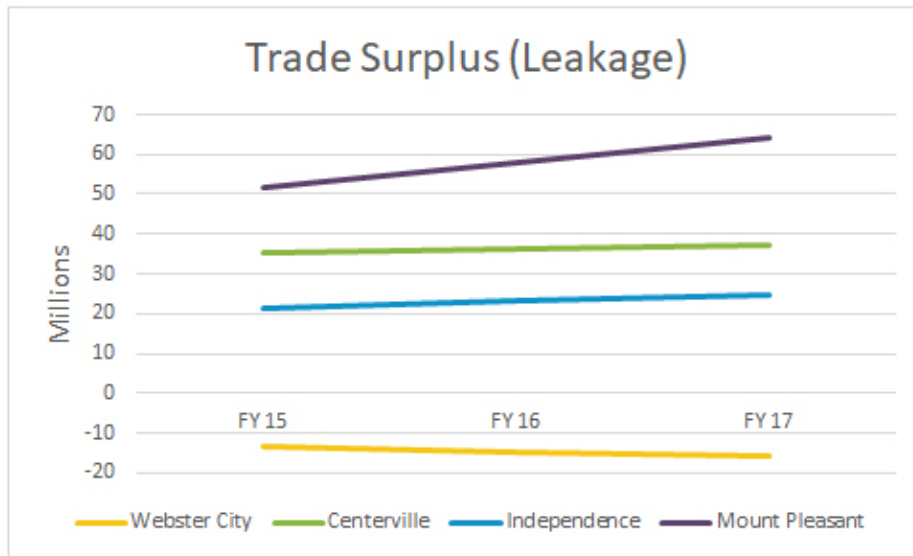


Figure 58: Annual trade surplus for each of the peer cities. Each peer city consistently has a trade surplus. Webster City has experienced trade leakage each year.

Source: Iowa State University Community Indicators Reports

In Figure 59, it is clear each of the cities have historically been a regional draw for employment opportunities. While the peer cities maintain above 15% net inflow in 2005, 2010, and 2015, Webster City declined to a mere 3.7% by 2015. The decline in workers coming to Webster City for work reduces the number of people who may shop, dine, or utilize services downtown.

The current state of the downtown and economic activities for each peer city is described below. For each peer city, it is evident there is well-developed community and government relationships, effective downtown promotion, active downtown recruitment and retention, and collaborative businesses and civic organizations.

	2005 Total Workers	2005 Inflow	2005 Outflow	Net Inflow	% Net Inflow
Webster City	5,777	3,117	1,276	1,841	31.9%
Centerville	3,515	2,250	1,145	1,105	31.4%
Independence	3,316	2,108	1,359	749	22.6%
Mt. Pleasant	7,762	5,661	1,459	4,202	54.1%

	2010 Total Workers	2010 Inflow	2010 Outflow	Net Inflow	% Net Inflow
Webster City	4,558	2,694	1,576	1,118	24.5%
Centerville	2,790	1,900	1,475	425	15.2%
Independence	3,517	2,647	1,953	694	19.7%
Mt. Pleasant	6,199	4,725	1,743	2,982	48.1%

	2015 Total Workers	2015 Inflow	2015 Outflow	Net Inflow	% Net Inflow
Webster City	3,482	1,938	1,809	129	3.7%
Centerville	2,934	1,881	1,390	491	16.7%
Independence	3,437	2,492	1,913	579	16.8%
Mt. Pleasant	6,342	4,702	1,876	2,826	44.6%

Figure 59: Net inflow primary workers in Webster City has declined since 2005. While in 2005 and 2010 Webster City exceeded both Centerville and Independence in percentage of net job inflow, it fell dramatically by 2015, reflecting the closure of Electrolux.

Source: US Census Bureau OnTheMap

CENTERVILLE, IOWA

Centerville has a population of 5,404 and is located in south central Iowa, approximately 42 miles southwest of Ottumwa. In 2005, the Rubbermaid plant, which had been open for 21 years, closed and left 500 workers without a job.¹⁸ While this loss is still felt, Centerville has rebounded significantly.

Centerville, with its downtown commercial district organized around the courthouse square, has been a Main Street Iowa community since 2015. The Downtown District has experienced increased sales each year and realized a 10.9% increase from 2016 to 2017.¹⁹ The Main Street Iowa Business Development Committee recognized Centerville “#3 Best Shopping in Iowa” in 2017.²⁰ To build upon this success, Main Street Iowa released a market study that explores the opportunities for the future of the downtown. Downtown Centerville was recognized by Travel Iowa Magazine as the third best town for holiday shopping in Iowa.²¹

In 2014, the Walldog artist collective painted three historic-themed murals in Downtown Centerville.²² Funds were raised from the community and supplemented by a grant from the Appanoose Community Fund, which disburses funds received from state gambling revenues each year.²³ The Iowa State University Community Design Lab developed downtown wayfinding signage to point out local attractions to visitors in 2016.²⁴

The Appanoose Economic Development Corporation worked with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to implement the Sustainable Economies Program.²⁵ This program stimulated residents, business owners, and community leaders to create committees that worked together toward the same goals.

There is also an engaged Chamber of Commerce that prioritizes member promotion, government relations, community enhancement, and tourism. The Chamber of Commerce also has a committee focused on retail development.

Centerville, like Webster City, shares a location in proximity to an attractive natural resource. Rathbun Lake, an 11,000-acre lake with 155 miles of shoreline, lies just 7 miles north of Centerville.

Key Takeaway: Downtown aesthetics may be improved through partnerships to increase public art and wayfinding.

Key Takeaway: The Sustainable Economies Program is one useful tool to get more stakeholders involved and committed to successful outcomes in Webster City.

Centerville has focused on identifying small businesses within the community and providing an opportunity for them to test new markets, expand, and grow. A nonprofit organization converted a historic mansion into a boutique craft mall with forty vendors who rent space that ranges in size from a full room to just a shelf to start their business. Some vendors have expanded their business to open a shop downtown. The mansion was originally purchased by the local foundation which wanted people to have access to the beautiful mansion. Several businesses have started at the mansion and then expanded to a downtown store front. One example is a craft store that grew into a coffee shop and boutique hotel. They started off by selling floral arrangements and crafts in the mansion, and eventually had taken over nearly the entire second



Figure 60: Centerville, Iowa

Source: [Greenheron47](#)

floor. They then purchased a storefront downtown which offered more space and moved into the west side of the commercial space. The following year, they expanded again by knocking down an interior wall and opening a coffee shop on the east side of the commercial space. They offered coffee, sweets, and lunch in addition to a gift shop. They then rehabilitated the residential space above the shop and converted it into three extended stay guest suites.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to provide start-up or business incubator space includes the opportunity for a non-profit, or cooperative, to operate a large building of tiny shops downtown. This provides low-overhead and exposure to a high volume of foot traffic.

Prior to becoming a Main Street Iowa community, Centerville was not consistent on promoting businesses downtown, and the businesses did not always communicate with one another. One strategy that was implemented to increase continuity among the business community was business development seminars hosted by Main Street. In the beginning, there were approximately four attendees at each event. The seminars covered a variety of topics and often featured guest speakers. As of 2019, the average attendance was around 35 and was hosted monthly for one hour at the Main Street office downtown. One of the factors directly attributable to the increased attendance was the high-quality guest speakers recruited, who usually spoke for free. The participants also reported they gained new skills or expanded upon existing skills at the seminars. Because of the value added, participants kept coming back and attendance increased. Participants were not required to have businesses within the downtown district; in fact, some participants came from as far as one hour away. This provided an opportunity for business owners to meet and discuss

their current business operations in a casual atmosphere.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to increase continuity across the downtown business community includes hosting seminars. It is important that the seminars are interesting, provide useful information, and remain fairly brief.

One particularly successful workshop in 2019 focused on the usage of social media in a hands-on and interactive format. As a result, the business owners placed more focus on promoting one another on social media. There was an increase in the downtown business owners who shared each other's social media posts and pages, liked and commented on posts, and registered for events. In general, this reminded both the business owners and their social media followers to visit the downtown businesses. The different business owners did not engage in this activity before. As a result, the owners are promoting each other's businesses more often and directing customers in their shop to other sales or events within downtown.

Key Takeaway: One strategy to bring business owners together includes developing a regularly scheduled meeting for downtown and area business to attend workshops, seminars, and guest speakers. It is important to provide a platform for downtown business owners to interact in an atmosphere that is casual yet structured to add value to their respective businesses.

Centerville has experienced success with implementing pop-up shops downtown. The pop-up shops have been integrated downtown through a variety of methods. Some have taken the form of new business ideas launched in vacant space temporarily. In March of 2019, The Goodbuy Store was opened in a former ice cream parlor that is an icon downtown. The store sells high end clothing and antiques at 50% off and intends to stay open through October. It was created by a member of the community who had always been an active business owner in Centerville. The owner's daughter was the proprietor of a sister shop in Valley Junction.

A restaurant contained within the historic Continental Hotel downtown opened a pop-up location during extensive kitchen renovations at the hotel. They operated for four months in a separate location downtown. This allowed the restaurant to continue its operations, although the menu was down-sized and the space was limited. Once the renovations were completed, the restaurant, Lucile's, moved back into its location within the hotel.

Existing downtown businesses have hosted pop-up stores. One company that operated a catering service and a food truck worked with the bakery downtown to open a pop up. They offered lunch in the bakery several days each month. This provided them with additional exposure to the community and attracted more customers to the bakery during a slower part of the day. A local spa company worked with a clothing store downtown to offer spa services and style shows in their clothing store several times each month. This allowed the spa company to reach additional potential customers, particularly those who were unable to visit the spa during the typical 9-5 work day. In addition, this generated more traffic for the clothing store. Finally, a high school student had a jewelry business and sold earrings within four different stores downtown.



Figure 61: Historic structure in Centerville, Iowa

Source: [Joanna Poe](#)

Key Takeaway: One strategy to increase business activity downtown includes identifying existing businesses which are able and willing to host pop-up shops within their stores. It is useful to create and maintain a list of these potential host businesses. When the opportunity strikes, these opportunities may be communicated to small businesses and entrepreneurs to encourage growth of pop-up shops in existing stores downtown.

A downtown pizza and steakhouse decided to expand from the location they occupied since the 1960s and moved into a new building downtown, which had formerly housed a flooring store. This move tripled the floor space and added several employees. The owners had focused intently on the interior renovations of the building but had not considered the shaker shingle exterior. The Main Street director approached the owner and offered to provide a conceptual drawing of potential façade improvements for free. This is a service offered by the central Main Street office and is free for Main Street communities. The proprietor asked Main Street for advice on several design selections. As a result, the owner did a façade remodel that looked almost identical to the rendering presented. The building now adds to the historic character and charm of the downtown district. This owner completed all the building improvements through private funding.

Key Takeaway: When a downtown business decides to undergo extensive rehabilitation on the interior, it has proven worthwhile to inquire about the owner's intentions for the façade. When appropriate, a rendering could be provided to the building owner free of charge to encourage the owner to consider adopting the suggested features. This could be conducted by allocating a specific fund for such renderings, working with pro bono architects, or partnering with the Iowa State University College of Design.

The city originally created a Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) to assist in submitting applications for local buildings to be accepted onto the National Register of Historic Places. Major purposes and intents of the committee include stabilizing and improving property values, protecting and enhancing the city's attractions, strengthening the economy, and fostering pride within the community.²⁶ The HPC was established as a Certified Local Government (CLG) with the State of Iowa in 1991. Centerville is now home to 119 buildings on the National Historic Register as contributing to a place of historical significance. One major positive outcome of having the historic properties is the ability to obtain historic tax credits. The city does not administer a design review process for the buildings, however, if State or Federal funding is used for renovations, typically the designs must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. In addition, there is a separate group that is the fundraising arm of the committee. They have purchased and restored buildings within Centerville.

Key Takeaway: Key downtown buildings may be rehabilitated and preserved by establishing a historic preservation commission within the city which assists building owners with listing buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. This is the first step to accessing historic tax credits to fund historic building rehabilitations, and the process has been repeated throughout many cities across the nation.

The Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and AEDC are separate entities but work together to achieve mutual goals regarding economic development. The separation of duties and geographic focus areas is presented below, followed by areas where the entities overlap and work together. The entities reported the ability to have open and constant communication is the greatest contributor to the success realized to date.

The Main Street program stays within its downtown area of focus. They are the primary group responsible for the sustainability and economic viability of the historic downtown district. Main Street is focused on vacant storefronts, attracting residents and businesses downtown, and working with the business and building owners downtown. Main Street takes the lead to attract businesses to downtown, among other areas of emphasis downtown.

The Chamber of Commerce primarily focuses on tourism and is county-wide, not just Downtown Centerville. The Chamber's role is to make the downtown businesses successful and promote prosperity for businesses already located in Centerville. The Chamber supports retail businesses through advertising and attracting tourism. Each year they put together a visitor's guide for the region.

They also host a variety of events throughout the year. Popular events include Second Saturday shopping, a “Junk Jaunt”, Wine Festival, and their flagship pancake day.

AEDC works as a partner with the city and the county to help drive their initiatives. AEDC is mostly focused on the industry park and big businesses with tools for attraction like financial incentives. The AEDC is also focused on work-force development and created a new strategic plan in 2019 to support existing businesses and attract new ones.

While each entity may have separate focus areas, they often overlap with one another. The entities may directly collaborate on appropriate projects or occasions. For example, AEDC offers a revolving loan that has been effective for downtown business owners. Several downtown business owners have utilized the fund when they could not secure working capital through private banks. Main Street Iowa works with the business owner and directs them to AEDC for the capital.

Similarly, in 2019 the AEDC funded a feasibility study after a proprietor expressed interest in opening a new hotel downtown. Once the study was completed and proved the market conditions supported a hotel, the project was handed off to Main Street to work with the proprietor on the next phase, such as identifying a proper site downtown. Additionally, the Main Street committee for downtown businesses includes the director of AEDC because it deals with work-force issues. Finally, the Chamber of Commerce meets with stakeholders in the City and the school at the AEDC office weekly. The Chamber of Commerce and Main Street often collaborate on events, especially those which are hosted in the downtown square. The entities value communication

to ensure they are working toward the same mutually beneficial goals and not duplicating projects or activities.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to improve the downtown is to ensure each organization with a vested interest in downtown housing and economic development are communicating with one another clearly and consistently. It is critical to ensure each organization understands what the other organizations are doing to avoid duplication and work together to realize mutual goals.

INDEPENDENCE, IOWA

Independence (population 6,005) is in northeast Iowa on Highway 20, approximately 24 miles east of Waterloo. While the city does not participate in Main Street Iowa, the Chamber of Commerce is enthusiastically active in the community. The Chamber supports the community through hosting several events, such as parades and Shop Historic Independence, and by promoting community and business development. In addition, the Buchanan County Economic Development Commission supports Independence through a variety of programs, including low-interest revolving loans to help businesses expand.

Absolutely Indee is an organization aimed to organize, create and implement marketing strategies to promote the community visions in Independence. The long-term goal is to persuade new individuals, families, and businesses to locate in the city. Partners include the city, Chamber of Commerce, and Grow Buchanan Economic Development. Absolutely Indee has engaged in creative branding for the City, including leading the creation of a new city brand and logo.

America's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Iowa at the University of Northern Iowa helped one small business secure funding to relocate, expand, and upgrade their facility. The owners had operated a successful garden and gift business since 1998. Their extensive variety of hostas and related décor are sold online, and they now host workshops and special events during the year that draw hosta fanatics from across the Midwest. They have hired two full-time employees and sales doubled from 2011 to 2012. This is an example of identifying an existing business within the local community that could both expand and relocate to a more desirable and profitable location with the

support of local leadership.

Key Takeaway: Strategies that are successful in growing local businesses include seeking businesses within the community that have opportunities for growth and relocation, like the hosta business in Independence.

The "Grow Buchanan" Economic Development Commission hosts a monthly SBDC event in their office. They worked with resident Andy Higgins to create a business strategy for his bicycle accessory manufacturing and retail shop. Grow Buchanan provided assistance with writing a business plan and focusing on long term goals; no financial incentives were utilized. Mr. Higgins launched his business in the downtown in 2015. It is well known in the region and sells accessories online.

Key Takeaway: A successful strategy to growing local businesses is to host workshops that provide technical assistance and pair entrepreneurs with key resources available in the community.

Shop Historic Independence is a self-organized group of downtown business retailers. This group became activated in order to promote the shopping and dining experience in downtown Independence. This began when the Chamber experienced high turnover and there was not an active retail committee. There is not any financial support provided to this group from the City; they are self-funded and typically pitch in among themselves to host events or hold small fundraisers. Since this group has started, they have created a new logo and



Figure 62: Independence, Iowa Source: [J. Stephen Conn](#)

maps, and focused on branding to attract both visitors and shoppers from within the region.

Key Takeaway: One way to increase coordination among downtown retailers is for the business owners themselves to organize and host events, create coordinated promotion material, and increase collaboration to attract more people to the downtown.

One primary objective of Shop Historic Independence has been to improve customer service. The downtown retailers are focused on the shopper experience. In some cases, this has meant addressing the small nuances which may detract from the customer's experience. These potential nuances were identified by downtown business owners visiting one another's stores and discussing possible improvements together. Identified items to address

included improved cleanliness in the stores, increased focus on excellent small-town friendly service, and additional attention to the smells and noises in the stores. Today, downtown business owners are constantly cross-promoting one another's businesses, both in person with customers who visit their shop and on social media by liking and sharing posts. Once they have shoppers in their stores, they work hard to ensure the shopper knows all of what Independence has to offer. For example, they inquire what else the shopper may be looking for and then point the shopper toward other businesses or events downtown. By focusing on unity and customer service they feel they are stronger. In Independence, retailers have self-organized to increase advocacy and organization.

Key Takeaway: A key strategy to improve the downtown shopping and dining experience includes having two or three business owners serve on the Downtown Committee or the Economic Vitality Committee (discussed in Part II). By doing so, business owners will be represented and can identify key areas to focus efforts that will encourage shoppers to spend more time in the downtown and influence business owners to visit each other's shops. As a result, the downtown district as a whole can realize increased sales.

MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA

Mount Pleasant (population 8,491) is in southeast Iowa, approximately 50 miles south of Iowa City and 30 miles west of Burlington. Three organizations, which are housed in the same building, work together to form the Mount Pleasant Area Chamber Alliance and support economic growth and prosperity. The Mount Pleasant Area Chamber of Commerce (MPACC) focuses on economic development, business prosperity, and an improved quality of life. The Mount Pleasant Area Development Commission (MPADC) focuses on business attraction, business retention and expansion, entrepreneurial support, and community development. Finally, Main Street Mount Pleasant focuses on stimulating economic development by encouraging cooperation, building leadership, promoting downtown, and improving the appearance of downtown.

Mount Pleasant has been a Main Street Iowa community since 2002. Since then, there have been 52 new businesses (net), 100 new jobs, 101 buildings renovated, 41 buildings sold, 58 upper story renovations, and \$19.6 million private investments for rehabilitation and acquisition.²⁷ Downtown Mount Pleasant, which is oriented around the town square, is home to 120 specialty shops, restaurants, and services.²⁸ The downtown realized six new businesses, two business expansions, and four new upper story housing units in 2017.²⁹

In 2016, the community received the Gamechanger Award for upper story housing. In 2015, they earned Premier Project of the Year award for Union Block Revitalization, an iconic three-story building from 1861 that sits on the square. Community members financed 19% of the \$3.9 million project while federal tax credits and local and national grants funded 50%.³⁰ The building

now has commercial storefronts on the ground level with event space in the upper stories. It was featured in Preservation Magazine. The Brazelton, a historic hotel built in 1856 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, which is located around the corner, is funded by private investors. The top three floors of this building account for 19 of the 60 new housing units that have been refurbished downtown since 2002.³¹

Key Takeaway: Successful downtowns have demonstrated that existing governmental, non-profit, and private organizations work together to support future development of downtown. This is achieved by collaborating to secure funding, sharing information, and promoting the downtown to achieve mutually desired outcomes.

During a period when downtown Mount Pleasant experienced high vacancy rates, they implemented a program targeted for building façade improvements. This was implemented as a dollar-for-dollar match program between the building owner and the City. The minimum was \$500 and the maximum was \$5,000. Several downtown building owners took advantage of this program throughout the eight years it was in operation. This started to bring life back into the downtown area.

Key Takeaway: One strategy that has improved the condition of downtown buildings includes providing incentives for building owners to improve the façade of their buildings.

The City offers property tax abatement for construction projects that involve three or more dwelling units. These projects receive a 100% abatement on the



Figure 63: Mount Pleasant, Iowa

Source: [Jo Naylor](#)

value added for ten years. This has been utilized downtown to assist building owners with redevelopment of existing housing units. The Brazelton building utilized this ten-year abatement offered for multi-family dwellings.

Improvements to commercial properties are eligible for tax abatements. Typically, this is either a 100% abatement for three years or a ten-year graduated abatement. The Union Blocks building restoration utilized the three-year 100% abatement to help fund the extensive renovations.

The assessed value of properties downtown has increased by 56% since becoming a Main Street community. Buildings that completed upper story housing renovations increased by more, on average.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to encourage investment in downtown building construction and rehabilitation is for the city to offer property tax abatement.

Along with Main Street Iowa, Mount Pleasant conducted a market analysis to identify potential businesses to recruit downtown. One such gap in businesses identified was brew pubs or quality restaurants. The Main Street director also recognized the town had lost a restaurant that filled this niche a few years before. A business that serves craft beers, wines, and offers quality dining options was successfully recruited. This company had an established business in nearby Fairfield and opened an additional space on the ground level of the Union Block building. The business was assisted by Mount Pleasant through a \$5,000 cash grant for building renovations. They opened in 2018 upon completion of the interior renovations.

Key Takeaway: One method to assist downtown business owners with ideas for possible venture creation or expansion includes conducting market survey analysis to identify potential gaps in downtown businesses. This market analysis also serves as a tool to recruit potential businesses to locate downtown and fill the identified gaps.

The downtown is located within in an eight-block beautification district. The City does not regulate signage downtown through an ordinance. However, there is a Community Design Committee housed within the City that reviews and negotiates proposed signs within the downtown area. Owners must get

sign permits in order to display sign in front of the building downtown. The goal is not for each building to look alike, but for the façade to represent the era in which it was built. For example, the design committee would not approve a façade that has sheet metal covering brickwork. Existing regulation prevents building owners from boarding up broken windows and there is no residential occupancy allowed on the first level. In addition, only banks are allowed to have scrolling neon signs in store front windows.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to improve downtown signage includes establishing a community design committee to provide guidance on building signs and storefronts downtown.

In 2004 the City, County, Chamber of Commerce, and MPADC entered into a 28E agreement to achieve economic development through the MPADC board with membership representing each entity.³² As a result, there are twelve total appointees: six appointed by the Chamber, three appointed by the City, and three appointed by the County. The agreement also established a paid administrative position to oversee the coordination of economic development efforts and identified a specific expected financial contribution from each entity. The MPADC is dedicated directly to pursuing new development and economic expansion in the community.

One attractive aspect of having three entities in one office is a stakeholder may call one shop and get their questions fully answered. In fact, the Chamber of Commerce and Main Street share an administrator and there are only four people in the office total. These three entities have a weekly meeting to

discuss ongoing activities and goals. They work hard to ensure activities are not duplicated. If the project is focused on downtown, then it falls within Main Street. If a project is outside of downtown, then it is the responsibility of MPADC. The entities work closely with the City to ensure clear communication and collaboration on projects when appropriate.

The City was praised for the work they had executed within the downtown district. The economic development entities expressed the City is a strong partner in the work they aim to achieve. This has included streetscape and infrastructure initiatives, such as improved ADA access, increased lighting, buried electric lines and removed electric poles, improved sewer and stormwater, improved city park downtown, and razed dilapidated buildings. This has encouraged others to invest in downtown.

Key Takeaway: Successful outcomes have been achieved through collaboration among entities focused on economic development and housing. To achieve mutually desired outcomes, a clear structure had been established that divided the duties of each entity both geographically and administratively. The entities placed emphasis on thorough and regular communication, and collaboration when appropriate.

Mount Pleasant operates pop-up stores downtown during the holiday season. This provides an opportunity to fill the vacant store fronts. The Main Street program works with landlords to obtain rental assistance, which they are often willing to negotiate. This provides an opportunity for the business owner to test out a new idea. To recruit business owners, they have often approached

people who work from home who may be interested in opening a business downtown.

Key Takeaway: One strategy to increase business activity downtown includes identifying existing businesses which are able and willing to host pop-up shops within their stores.

In 2018, Main Street hosted a downtown event “Burgers and Bikes” for motorcycle enthusiasts in honor of first responders. It was surprisingly well attended by more than 250 motorcyclists and community members. One of the participants decided to open a motorcycle apparel shop downtown as a result of attending this event. The owner had operated an apparel business online and through trade shows and decided to expand into a store front downtown.

Key Takeaway: One successful strategy to increase foot traffic and bring people together in the downtown district includes hosting events and showcasing what the downtown has to offer aspiring business owners.

CASE STUDIES

Lessons may also be drawn from cities that have re-developed and revitalized their downtowns, even if they do not meet the criteria to be categorized as a peer city.

BEND, OREGON

Bend (population 94,520) became prosperous in the logging industry, with mills on both side of the Deschutes River that employed more than 4,000 people. Bend became the world's leader in the manufacture of secondary wood products. However, with the depletion of the forest resources, the state faced its worst recession to date in the 1980s, according to job loss statistics. This is not dissimilar to the loss of Electrolux in Webster City. The following summary on Bend's re-development is taken from the Environmental Protection Agency report on smart growth titled "How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets to Rebuild Their Economies: Lessons from Successful Places."³³

In 1981, community leaders established Economic Development for Central Oregon (EDCO) as a non-profit organization to help the city diversify its economy. EDCO assisted with business recruitment and Bend's economy began to rebound in the late 1980s as the population began to increase. Like Webster City, Bend had low cost of living and scenic beauty that attracted new residents. The population grew by 6% per year in the 1990s and in 2001 the city created the Central Bend Development Area Plan encompassing the central business district and adjacent commercial, industrial, and residential areas. The CBD in Webster City also has adjacent commercial, industrial, and residential zoned areas.

Bend's plan was created to develop a downtown center by giving high priority to the river and downtown core projects, give high priority to human scale and quality of life, increase the downtown's role as a center for government and business activity, and maintain and develop cultural, historic, and entertainment resources. To implement the plan, the city created the Bend Area General Plan in 2005. This plan encouraged downtown revitalization by rezoning abandoned mill property on the riverfront from heavy industrial to mixed use commercial and residential use. The new developments preserved and re-purposed portions of multiple historic buildings. The population grew at three times the rate of the 1990s.

The Great Recession hit Bend especially hard as several companies filed for bankruptcies and housing prices plummeted. The city and EDCO focused on recruiting and supporting the creation of small businesses in microbrewing, biosciences, recreation equipment manufacturing, and technology companies. Motivated by the belief entrepreneurs in these industries can choose where they locate, and that they prefer vibrant and walkable cities with cultural and recreational activities, the city and EDCO continued to focus on quality of life and downtown development. They have boosted activities to support entrepreneurial growth, including a competition for \$250,000 in startup funding. In 2011, the city formally established the Bend Economic Development Advisory Board, which is composed of five business community representatives and four local economic development agencies. The board advises the city council to help promote a supportive and innovative business environment.

As a result, the occupancy rates for offices, downtown buildings, retail establishments, and industrial sites which were near downtown all

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increased in the early 2010s. Outside of Portland, central Oregon has some of the best job growth rates in the state, largely due to growth in Bend. Entrepreneur Magazine named Bend the most entrepreneurial city in America, fueled largely by the entrepreneurial environment created by the city and EDCO. By focusing on a vibrant downtown with a high quality of life and preservation of its natural beauty, Bend has been able to recover from the ups and downs in its economy.

Key Takeaway: Focus on Webster City's high quality of life, proximate location to exceptional natural beauty, and leverage key stakeholders throughout the process of downtown re-development.



Figure 64: Bend, Oregon

Source: [Jasperdo](#)

WEST BRANCH, IOWA

Birthplace of U.S. President Herbert Hoover, West Branch (population 2,393) has leveraged its existing assets to create a vibrant Main Street. The Herbert Hoover National Historic Site and the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum are both located near downtown West Branch. There are 15 buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places near downtown. The town has built upon its proximity to these sites, as well as its existing historic buildings, and established a Historic Downtown Commercial District. West Branch is located ten miles east of Iowa City on Interstate 80.

Since becoming a Main Street Iowa community in 2006, the city has realized the following accomplishments: 41 new business starts or expansions; 63 net new jobs created, and \$1,888,050 invested in local building projects.³⁴ In addition, more than \$3 million in private investments have been applied to preserving and/or restoring the historic buildings throughout the downtown.³⁵

Strong partnerships define the continued development of Main Street, including the West Branch Community Development Group, Main Street Iowa, City of West Branch, Iowa City Area Development, Cedar County Economic Development Commission, and the Community Ambassadors Program. There is also collaboration with the National Park Services, which oversees the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site adjacent to the downtown. Several members serve on a variety of boards to increase cross-entity collaboration. This city's Historic Preservation Committee is currently working to become a Certified Local Government by the State of Iowa Historical Society, which will make the city eligible for historic preservation grants.



Figure 65: West Branch, Iowa

Source: Author

Promotion and collaborative marketing efforts focus on the branding and liveliness of downtown. There are four festivals each year on main street, including Simply Summer, Fall Festival, Shop Small Saturday (November), and A Christmas Past. Heritage Square is a small park in the heart of the Main Street district and connects the historic downtown to the National Historic Site. Since 2012, the city has also focused on improvement of the infrastructure on Main Street. This has included replacement of water and sewer lines, storm sewer upgrades, and installation of ADA compliant sidewalks. In 2017, the city added wayfinding signs throughout the downtown and secured a grant to plant multiple trees.³⁶

West Branch received \$800,000 in funding from the state of Iowa Infrastructure Investment Program (I-JOBS) in 2010 to support physical improvements in historic commercial districts.³⁷ Mayor Roger Laughlin cited I-JOBS funding, which was provided in response to the Great Recession, as a catalyst for downtown re-development.³⁸ These grants created a supportive atmosphere that encouraged private investors to purchase downtown commercial buildings. Further, these owners were able to subsidize the costs of attracting commercial tenants by adding or renovating residential units on the upper floors.

From I-JOBS, \$300,000 was allocated to rehabilitate the 140-year old Hoover House with commercial space on the first floor and two dwelling units on the upper floor. This was in addition to the \$42,000 received from the Iowa Department of Economic Development to support renovations in 2007.³⁹ The other \$500,000 from I-JOBS went toward rebuilding the 1907 post office as commercial space for a winery as well as retail and meeting space. Later in 2010, the city received an additional \$100,000 to restore the post office from the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act, secured by senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Tom Harkin.⁴⁰ These funds are typically leveraged against private investments and other support at an average ratio of six to one. In 2012, West Branch was recognized for surpassing \$2 million in private investment for purchase and revitalization of properties within the downtown district.⁴¹

The primary businesses in the downtown are independent, locally-owned food and beverage establishments, retail shops, and a variety of service businesses. The area has experienced a steady increase of new business locating in the

downtown since 2015. In fact, the main street district had 95% street-level store front occupancy in 2017, and no businesses had closed for more than two years.⁴²

Key Takeaway: Engage private foundations, companies, and individual donors throughout the downtown re-development process to encourage their financial contributions toward mutually desired outcomes. Build a relationship with West Branch personnel to become sister cities that share lessons learned and contribute to each other's success.

WOODBINE, IOWA

In southwest Iowa, Woodbine (population 1,407) has excelled at downtown revitalization, which includes rehabilitation of downtown housing units: Woodbine has saved 45 buildings and added 37 upper story housing units.⁴³

Woodbine adopted a model focused on strategies to create a vibrant downtown neighborhood that contains upper story housing units. They focused on revitalizing existing residential neighborhoods and seniors and aging in place by focusing on an array of price points, types, styles, and sizes to attract new residents. In addition, they have focused on geothermal energy in several of the downtown buildings to improve energy efficiency. Many of the housing units are priced within the low to moderate income housing price points, and they celebrate the downtown diversity created by mixed demographics. The estimated total economic impact of an upper floor apartment rented to a couple within an Iowa downtown is \$19,500 to almost \$39,000, according to Donovan Rypkema of PlaceEconomics.⁴⁴

Woodbine has completed several ambitious projects, such as renovation of the 1900 Whitmore Building to add a restaurant, business incubator program, and four additional housing units.⁴⁵ Woodbine reported an increase in assessed value of the abandoned Odd Fellows building from \$18,038 to \$205,968 after it was renovated. The redevelopment was funded by private dollars, historic tax credits, and multiple grants. The finished building added a restaurant, apartments, and office/retail suites.⁴⁶ They received a \$40,000 Main Street Iowa Challenge Grant in 2009 toward exterior restoration of five buildings downtown; the total price tag was \$122,000.⁴⁷

In 2014, Woodbine was awarded the Great America Main Street Award by the National Main Street Center and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. In 2017, Woodbine was awarded both the Keep Iowa Beautiful and the Robert D. Ray Community Award for Excellence.



Figure 66: Woodbine, Iowa

Source: [Jim Roberts](#)

These awards have recognized the town's revitalization efforts of saving downtown buildings and upper story housing, as well as developing the leadership within the community to complete these projects.⁴⁸ Woodbine, which became a Main Street Iowa community in 2008, has commitment from the city, a Woodbine charitable foundation, and the Woodbine Community School District to revitalize the downtown. The high school Construction

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Technology Homebuilding Program has been an instrumental partner through their construction in trades program. Together, they have completed six projects since the program began in 2014.

From 2010 to 2017, Woodbine experienced a 34 net gain in businesses starts and expansions, 62 new jobs, and an increase in assessed property values by almost \$2 million. This is the result of 62 building rehabilitation and downtown projects. Collected sales tax increased by 14 percent from 2011 to 2016 and collected sales tax per capita increased by 28 percent from 2008 to 2014.

The current business mix in the district is 65 percent service and 35 percent retail. Of these businesses, 70 percent are owner occupied. There are a total of 65 upper-story residents who are in close proximity to the public library, city hall, police, post office, grocery, banking, pharmacy, and the senior center, which resembles Webster City downtown amenities.

Key Takeaway: Leverage the Webster City High School and Iowa Central Community College to partner in creating a building trades program that will provide beneficial, hands-on experience for students and downtown revitalization for the community, as they collaborate to rehabilitate housing above commercial storefronts downtown.



Figure 67: Building rehabilitation in Woodbine, before and after

Source: Woodbine Model Comm Housing

In the future, Webster City would benefit from participating in the Main Street Iowa program and from pursuing appropriate funding options for downtown revitalization. Details for both those approaches are explained below.

MAIN STREET IOWA

Main Street Iowa is a state organization committed to preservation-based economic development. The program is part of the Iowa Economic Development Authority and is currently partnered with over 50 Iowan communities. Communities that want to participate in the program must apply and be accepted. Once accepted, the communities have access to a body of procedures and strategies that Main Street has tested and honed. Main Street offers training, leadership development, technical assistance, and funding opportunities that are only available to accepted communities. The Main Street program also works with the community to develop strategies that are specific to the locale. A core goal of the program is to highlight and capitalize upon the unique, local assets that a community has. A common asset that many Main Street communities have is a historic commercial area. The strategies for utilizing local assets fall into four areas, which Main Street Iowa calls the Four Points. These include: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.⁴⁹

Economic Vitality focuses on incentives, financial tools, and creating a supportive environment for business owners. Main Street helps with Esri retail reports, succession planning, building inventories, and downtown housing assessments.

Organization focuses on promoting community involvement and partnerships

that benefit the community. Main Street will help a community with their online presence, review the programmatic documents of local boards of directors, coordinate a volunteer recruitment effort, and assist with nonprofit applications to the IRS.

Promotion creates a positive image of the downtown and helps the district become the center of activity. Main Street communities have access to a promotion specialist that will analyze the effectiveness of all events held in the district, marketing assistance, tourism assessment, and training on how to successfully promote and host events.



Figure 68: The Four Points

Source: Main Street Iowa

Design focuses on enhancing the visual appeal of the commercial district. Assistance includes design support, historic building renderings, help with grants for brick and mortar rehabilitation, information about low-cost ways to improve buildings, training for coming up with well-designed signage, and commercial space evaluations.

Webster City has previously participated in the Main Street Iowa program from 1989 to 1994. In 1989, joining the program was optimal because the downtown had been struggling for some time and the city recognized they could benefit from the expertise the program offers. In 1991, the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street, and Development Corporation formed an entity called the Webster City Association of Business and Industry (ABI). In 1994, Webster City decided to cease being a Main Street Community. The city had received state funding for from 1989 until 1993, but when they did not receive any in 1994, they decided to leave the program. They planned to still use the Main Street ideas without being in the program.

Webster City could benefit greatly if they were to become a Main Street Community once again. Currently, they are not an ideal candidate but, with time and work, they could become an exemplar candidate. Having historic buildings within the downtown is one of the primary features that make a city a good candidate for becoming a Main Street Community. This is good news for Webster City as they have a multitude of historic, brick buildings. Main Street also looks for communities with clean, well-maintained streets. The portion of the downtown that is part of the SSMID already have very well-maintained and attractive streetscapes. Another necessity for the program is both a financial and emotional commitment from the city. The program requires a \$30,000 per year commitment to join the program and three years of pledged operating expenses. Funding is one of the first things the state looks for when considering applications, so this is vital. If city leaders, business leaders, and residents get on board with joining the program, they will have solid community support and a large volunteer base that Main Street looks for when considering applicants. In the application process, having a downtown specific plan can make a community stand out among others, which this plan can help fulfill. If Webster

City decides to apply to the program once again, it is recommended that they attend application meetings two to three years in advance so that they can discuss resources, research, volunteer base, and community commitment. If Webster City were to be accepted as a Main Street community, it may want to take a different approach than it did previously when it comes to the Chamber of Commerce. It can be beneficial for Main Street committee and the Chamber to work in close vicinity to each other, but it is important that their responsibilities remain separate and that their unique roles are clearly defined.

FUNDING RESOURCES

Several of the funding tools which are frequently used to finance downtown improvements are already established in Webster City. This includes the Central Business District TIF district, the SSMID district, and the hotel/motel tax. Webster City could continue to use these tools as the base for revitalization funding. In addition to these resources there are several funding resources available. The following tables summarize these sources which may be utilized to implement the strategies listed within this plan.

Initiative	Entity	Funding Entity	Summary	Website	Use or Action	Eligible Applicant	Amount	Timeline
Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program	City of Webster City Municipal Utilities	Public	This is a low interest loan.	City file received via email.	Appearance, Structural Conditions, Rehab: Roof Repair, Structural Repair, Labor, Windows, Doors, Energy Conservation, Masonry Work	Private	Up to \$25,000	Ongoing
First Time Homeowner Down Payment Assistance Program	City of Webster City Planning and Zoning	Public	First time home buyers within Webster City may receive down payment assistance.	https://webstercity.com/our-community/housing/housing-programs/	The first time home buyer must purchase the home in Webster City, the conventional loan must be with a local financial institution, and income is capped at 80% of county median income.	Private	Up to \$7,500	Ongoing
Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program	City of Webster City Planning and Zoning	Public	The rehabilitation program offers eligible applicants a low cost loan to rehabilitate their dwelling.	https://webstercity.com/our-community/housing/housing-programs/	The home must be owner occupied, within the corporate limits of Webster City, and the household income must be at or below 80% of county median income.	Private	Up to \$20,000	Ongoing
Hotel/Motel Tax	City of Webster City	Public	Grant funds are available for the purpose of increasing tourism, enhancing the quality of life for residents of Webster City, and to increase the population of Webster City.	https://webstercity.com/community-development/hotel-motel-tax/	Previously funded activities include activities, events, city promotion, tourism enhancement, and construction of infrastructure, amenities or attractions.	Private, Public	NA	Annually (Fall)
Revolving Loan Fund	City of Webster City	Public	This program seeks to improve the quality of life in rural areas by contributing to the long-term improvement in the economy.	https://webstercity.com/community-development/business-location-expansion/financial-assistance/	Uses of funds may be for land, buildings, manufacturing machinery and equipment, office and work equipment or infrastructure improvements.	Private, Public	Minimum of \$25,000 up to fund balance less \$1	Ongoing

Figure 69: Local funding sources. This table provides a examples of available funding resources available locally and within the county to support the objectives outlined above.

Source: Author

Initiative	Entity	Funding Entity	Summary	Website	Use or Action	Eligible Applicant	Amount	Timeline
Tax Increment Financing (TIF)	City of Webster City	Public	Downtown is contained within the Riverview Central Business District (CBD) Urban Renewal Area (URA) TIF District adopted in 1986.	View budget estimate for FY 2020.	There are five taxing districts within this URA. This is a perpetual URA designated as Economic Development. The funds may be used for retail, services, civic organizations, mixed use, and industrial use.	Private	City TIF budgeted revenues for FY 2020 was \$256,752. The total Riverview URA TIF Revenue in FY 2018 was \$62,540.	Ongoing
Self Supported Municipal Improvement District (SSMID)	City of Webster City	Public	The SSMID is a special revenue levy on downtown property owners. The levy was approved for another 10 years starting in FY 2020. The levy increased to \$3.50 from \$2.49 (FY 2019) and \$1.49 (FY 2018) per \$1,000.	View City Council meeting minutes from February 4, 2019.	The SSMID is utilized for improving and enhancing downtown. Over the past 20 years, monies have been spent on several downtown improvements such as plant pots, mulch pits, benches, trash receptacles, sign posts, maintenance of bump outs, tree trimming, kiosks, and christmas lights.	Private	City SSMID budgeted revenues for FY 2020 was \$22,145	Ongoing

Figure 69: Local funding sources continued. This table provides a examples of available funding resources available locally and within the county to support the objectives outlined above.

Source: Author

Initiative	Entity	Funding Entity	Summary	Website	Use or Action	Eligible Applicant	Amount	Timeline
Enhance Hamilton County Foundation Grant	Enhance Hamilton County Foundation	Private	Grants are committed to groups that look to improve the quality of life throughout Hamilton County..	http://www.enhancehamiltoncounty.org	Preference is given to projects in arts/culture, community betterment, education, health/human services, recreation, environment, and youth development.	Private, Public	NA	Annually (Fall)
Business Development Revolving Loan Fund	Mid Iowa Development Association (MIDAS) Council of Governments	Public	The purpose is to support business activities for which credit is not otherwise available.	http://www.midasco.gia.net/loanfunds.html	MIDAS intends to bridge the financial gap between owner equity and traditional lending to development opportunities.	Private	\$6,000 to \$75,000	Ongoing
Housing Revolving Loan Fund	Mid Iowa Development Association (MIDAS) Council of Governments	Public	The purpose is to encourage new or expanded housing opportunities.	http://www.midasco.gia.net/loanfunds.html	MIDAS intends to provide funding for the creation or retention of quality and affordable housing for low and moderate income households.	Private, Public	\$5,000 to \$250,000	Ongoing
POWERFund	Corn Belt Power Cooperative	Private	This program provides financial expertise and assistance for business and industry to grow within the region through the Revolving Loan Fund.	http://www.cbpower.coop/aspx/general/clientpage.aspx?pageid=218&n=911&n1=912&n2=970	The RLF priorities include job creation and retention, diversification of the local economy, and public infrastructure upgrades.	Private, Public	\$50,000 to \$150,000	Ongoing
Economic Development Set-Aside (EDSA)	Iowa Economic Development Authority	Public	Provides financial assistance to businesses and industries requiring assistance to create or retain job opportunities.	https://www.iowaecomicdevelopment.com/EDSA	Priority is given to projects that create manufacturing jobs, add value to Iowa resources and/or increase exports.	Private, Public	Up to \$1,000,000	Ongoing

Figure 70: State and regional funding sources. This table provides a examples of available funding resources available within the region and state to support the objectives outlined above.

Source: Author

Initiative	Entity	Funding Entity	Summary	Website	Use or Action	Eligible Applicant	Amount	Timeline
Downtown Revitalization Fund	U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA)	Public	The program is funded by HUD CDBG and administered through IEDA. The program goal is to provide economic opportunities for people, especially those with low and moderate incomes.	https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/DowntownFund	Rehabilitate blighted downtown buildings, and eliminate slum and blight.	City, County	Up to \$500,000	Annually (Spring)
Community Catalyst Building Remediation	Iowa Economic Development Authority	Public	This program assists communities with the redevelopment, rehabilitation or deconstruction of buildings to stimulate economic growth or reinvestment.	https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/Catalyst	Funds are available for the rehabilitation of one commercial building per community (or two if adjacent). Deconstruction is allowed in dire situations or for safety.	City	Up to \$100,000	Annual
State Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Public	The Tax Credit Program provides a state income tax credit for rehabilitation of historic buildings.	https://iowaculture.gov/history/preservation/tax-incentives/state-tax-credit	To be eligible, the building may be on the National Register of Historic Places (or determined by SHPO as eligible), designated as a local landmark by city or county, or recognized as a contributor to the significance of a historic district.	Private	State income tax credit up to 25%	Ongoing

Figure 70: State and regional funding sources continued. This table provides a examples of available funding resources available within the region and state to support the objectives outlined above.

Source: Author

Initiative	Entity	Funding Entity	Summary	Website	Use or Action	Eligible Applicant	Amount	Timeline
Opportunity Zones	U.S. Treasury Iowa Economic Development Authority	Private	Webster City Census Tract # 19079960300 is a designated Opportunity Zone. This includes the downtown study area east of Prospect Street.	https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/opportunityzones	Private investment into delineated opportunity zones through an opportunity fund.	Private	NA	NA
Rural Business Development Grants	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Public	This program is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas.	https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants	Select eligible uses include training, technical assistance, renovation of buildings, capitalization of revolving loan funds, economic development, and rural business incubators.	Public	\$10,000 to \$500,000	Annually (Spring)
Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program	U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service (NPS)	Public	This program encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings.	https://www.nps.gov/tips/tax-incentives.htm	To be eligible, the building must be a certified historic structure per NPS.	Private	Federal income tax credit up to 20%	Ongoing

Figure 71: National funding sources. This table provides a examples of available funding resources available at the national level to support the objectives outlined above.

Source: Author

Part II of this plan is sectioned off into four chapters, each a point of the Main Street Iowa program. The first chapter, and Main Street point, Organization: Take Action to Make Change Happen, focuses on the structure and timeline of strategies and tasks to be fulfilled by appointed committees in the next three chapters.

Chapter two through four of this section identify overarching goals aligned with the benefits of being a Main Street Iowa community. These chapters are displayed differently than previous chapters; by organizing the information into tables, responsible parties can maintain organization through the revitalization process.

As soon as possible once the community is prepared, it should apply to become a Main Street community. Having the goals, objectives, and responsible parties in motion at the time of application would give Webster City an advantage in the competitive application process, all of which are outlined and explained in Part II.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMITTEE AND TASK TEAM STRUCTURE

To execute this plan properly and apply to Main Street as soon as the community is prepared, a downtown specific committee should be created. This could be an existing entity like LIFT WC or HERO, or a new group called, for example, Destination: Downtown, so long as the mission of the committee is to revitalize Downtown Webster City. This committee should be viewed as a steering committee that oversees the actions of the Economic Vitality Committee, the Design Committee, and the Promotion Committee. The downtown specific committee should have between 10 and 15 members; more than this is not productive. Members of the committee should be from all demographic segments of the community and have equal gender distribution, carefully considering the benefits of minority members. Members of the Downtown Committee should include local government, real estate development, the high school and community college, Hispanic and minority populations, economic development entities, business owners, and community development non-profits. Essentially, the committee needs to be made up of individuals with different points of view to ensure all segments of the population are represented. The Downtown Committee should meet quarterly and should continue operations indefinitely. In the beginning, the committee will likely work off a volunteer base, however, it is in the community's best interest for the committee to eventually acquire necessary funding and maintain an operating budget for its own operations and that of the subordinate committees and task teams.

The Downtown Committee will oversee the three sub-committees: Economic Vitality Committee, the Design Committee, and the Promotion Committee,

each with their own chapter in this section. A member of the Downtown Committee will serve as chairperson on each of the sub-committees to ensure that accurate information is being passed on and tasks are completed in an organized manner according to the timeline. The chairperson should also have significant experience in the field of the overarching goal to lead the sub-committee in the right direction. These committees can have between five and six people and should come from a variety of community segments. Additionally, each committee should have equal gender distribution.

Finally, a new task team should be created for each new action item as needed. Task teams should be overseen by the overarching committee it falls under with the understanding that the team will dissolve once the action item is complete. Task teams should include one to two members that are experts in the field.

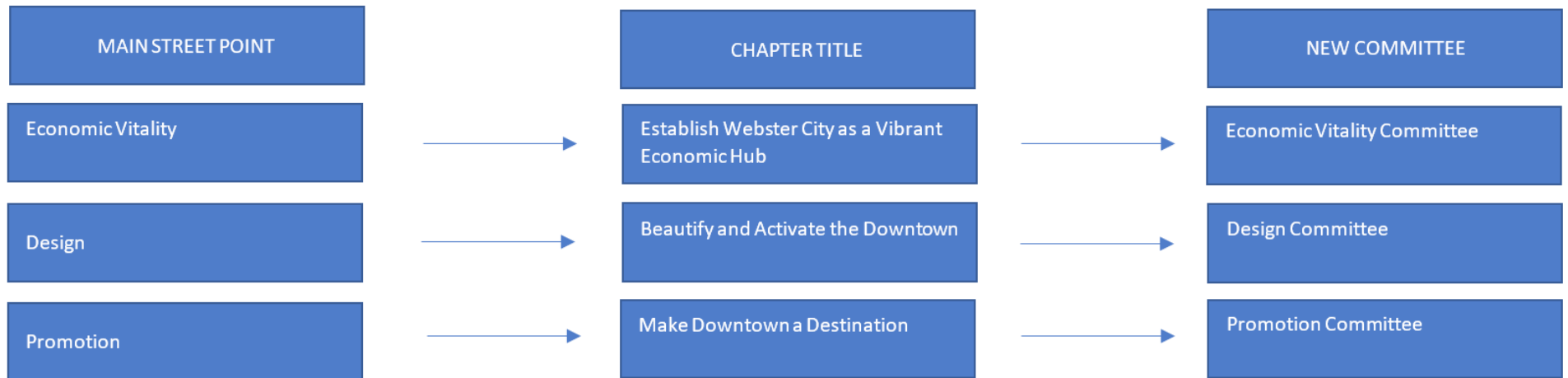


Figure 72: Committee and task team structure

Source: Author

UNDERSTANDING THE ACTION TABLES

To assist in implementing this plan, action tables were created. Using three of the four Main Street Iowa pillars, overarching goals were curated specifically for making Downtown Webster City an active and vibrant place. These goals are reflected by the titles of chapters two through four of Part II: Establish Downtown Webster City as a Vibrant Economic Hub, Beautify and Activate the Downtown, and Make Downtown a Destination.

Each chapter is based off the principles of strategic doing. An alternative to *strategic planning*, which relies on a chain-of-command-hierarchy, strategic doing focuses on collaboration among a network of stakeholders. Based around the four questions of What could we do?, What should we do?, What will we do?, and What's the turnaround?, this approach aims to empower participants to take control of the situation. Through the creation of a safe space, proper question framing, and the uncovering of assets and opportunities, strategic doing helps participants identify high impact, actionable goals. The clear designation of action items and responsibilities enable attendees to leave the meeting, act, reconvene, and pivot when necessary.

The strategies in this plan are based on the principles of strategic doing. The planning team has assembled actionable strategies with suggested partners, costs, and expected impacts. Additionally, a sample action table has been added to each chapter as an example of how Webster City can take these strategies and implement them on the local level, with a blank table included for the necessary future work. Only by involving and empowering the residents will this plan achieve the desired goals of economic vitality, a great built environment, and a beautiful vibrant downtown space. For more information,

on strategic doing, visit www.strategicdoing.net or contact Thomas Banta at the Iowa City Area Development Group.

Each strategy calls on specific committee members and external partners for their completion and were prioritized based on community input from the spring open house with consideration of what action items that could be accomplished relatively quickly to spur momentum and encourage the revitalization process. Additionally, the planning team consulted the city budget to determine what action items would cost in relation to the budget. Several strategies were left for each respective committee to continue the process.

Several items are identified in each action table: strategies for completing objectives, key partners, prioritization of each strategy, ideal completion time, and an estimated cost. Key partners include a range of entities from local and regional all the way to federal partners. This column identifies who should be involved in completing the strategy.

The planning team then ranked each strategy on its priority: what strategies were most important and could be completed relatively quickly to gain momentum and encourage the entire revitalization process in Downtown Webster City. Help for prioritization also came from public input at the spring open house where guests had the opportunity to provide feedback on strategies they saw as most important and easier to act on relative to others. Another guiding indicator the planning team considered when establishing priority for each strategy is the impact any strategy could have on Downtown Webster City and the community. Largely, those that ranked highly by the public were compared to research and examples from peer cities. Coordinating strategies with either high or medium impacts made the final cut for this report; no strategies with a

low impact ranking were included, as they are not worth the valuable work and time of committee members.

The next item identified in the action tables is estimated completion time. Each strategy is ranked either short, medium, or long-term depending on how quickly each can be completed and implemented. The planning team considered several elements while determining estimated completion time for each strategy including how many committee or task team members it would take to complete and the potential impact it could have.

Short-Term	Less than one year
Medium-Term	Between one and three years
Long-Term	More than three years

Figure 73: Key for completion times of strategies.

Source: Author

The cost of each strategy is the final element included in every action table. Before determining how much each strategy would cost to implement, the planning team reviewed Webster City’s fiscal budget, which provided adequate background knowledge for the planning team make cost estimates. Cost is displayed with a dollar sign; generally, the more dollar signs, the higher the strategy costs, displayed below in the table below.

\$	Less than \$5,000
\$\$	Between \$5,001 and \$75,000
\$\$\$	More than \$75,000

Figure 74: Key for cost estimates of strategies.

Source: Author

The table below shows how each strategy was prioritized when placed in the strategy tables. The planning team prioritized strategies based off three factors: what the community rated as a priority at the spring open house, what research from best practices and peer cities revealed, and what items could be completed easier and/or faster than others to serve as momentum for the larger and more complex strategies.

★	Low priority
★★	Medium priority
★★★	High priority

Figure 75: Key for prioritization of strategies.

Source: Author

Within each chapter there are several strategies. Once the new committees based off the Main Street points have been formed, every committee should work on creating complete action tables for all the strategies described in their corresponding chapter. An example of a complete action table has been provided in each chapter to guide future tables. The action tables are a crucial step in making any effective progress happen, so each committee should dedicate as much time as needed in the beginning stages of revitalization to create and then implement them. If new strategies are created in the future, taking the time to create action tables for those will prove to be effective and help keep each committee organized.

ORGANIZATION - TAKE ACTION TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

This chapter is designed to explain the hierarchy of each committee, based off the Main Street points. It demonstrates the relationship of each acting committee and task team and should guide future actions. This chapter is the foundation of all actionable items to ensure an ordered, systematic execution, hinging on thorough communication and the transferring of information via the relational hierarchy.

The operational hierarchy of this chapter is paramount to the success of this plan and ultimately, revitalization, because there is not an appointed Director dedicated to accomplishing the goals and objectives. Rather, it is a community effort that will lead to success. Eventually when the community applies for Main Street, the Downtown Committee should manage and complete the application process. Upon acceptance into the program, a designated Main Street Director should be hired to coordinate the Downtown Committee, along with other Main Street responsibilities.

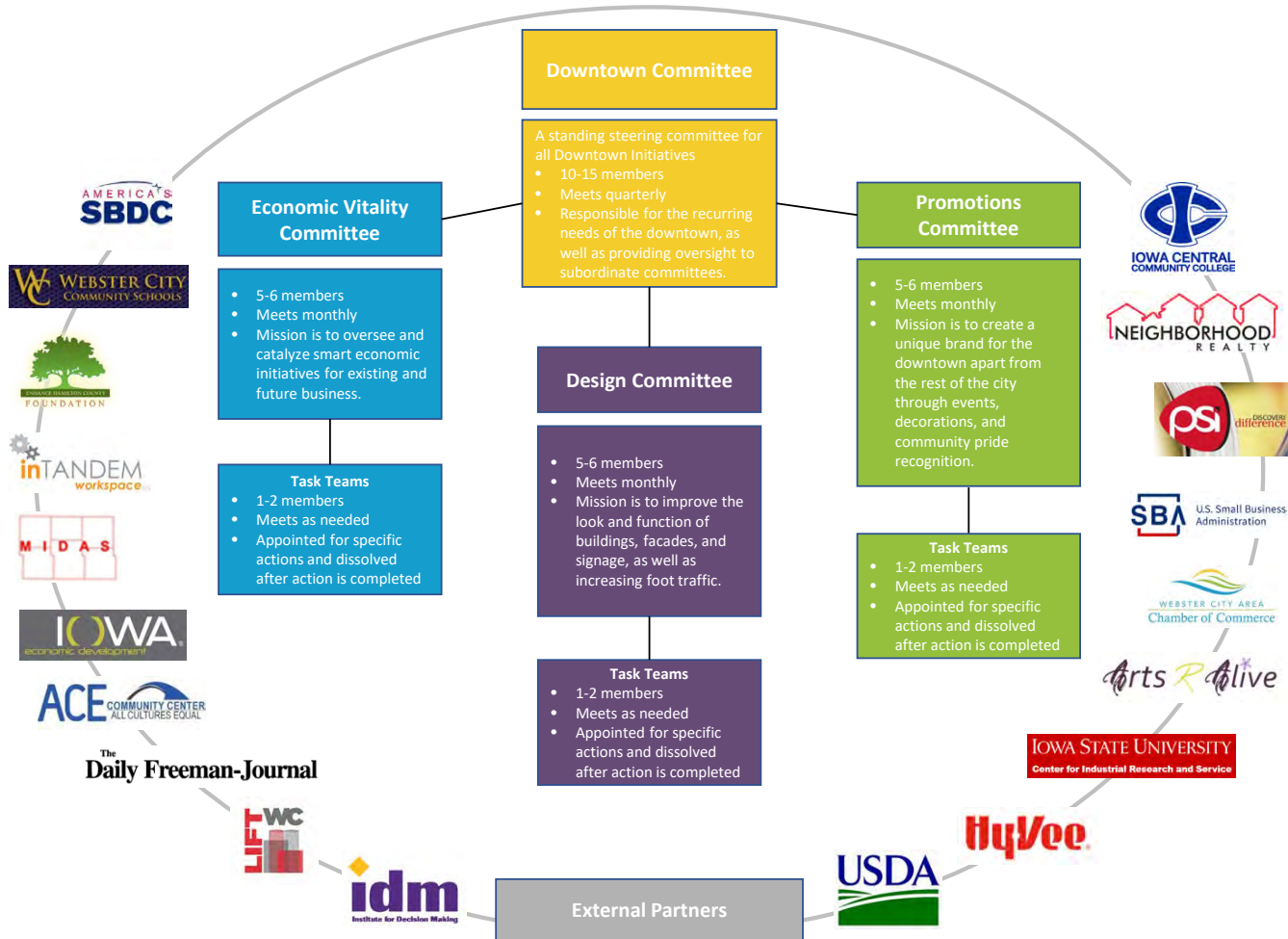


Figure 76: The organization chart above should be used when creating committees and teams to carry out this plan and apply for Main Street Iowa.

Source: Author

ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

While downtown is the historic hub for economic activity in Webster City, the area has struggled in the wake of the Electrolux closure. The public engagement process revealed economic performance as a major priority for downtown revitalization efforts. With traditional retail struggling, Webster City needs to diversify their strategies for economic development with a focus on keeping downtown active not just during traditional business hours but at all hours of the day. This section lays out resources for increasing economic performance across a range of sectors.



Objective E1: Support Existing Businesses

Supporting existing business infrastructure was the number one priority recorded from the spring 2019 open house. This is critical to the economic survival of Downtown Webster City. Through improving access to technical assistance, broadband, and funding, the city will make it easier for existing businesses to remain in Webster City for years to come.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E1.1 – PROVIDE WORKSHOPS AND A CONTACT FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING IN DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES	Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Iowa State Center for Industry Research and Service (CIRAS), Advance Iowa at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI)		SHORT-TERM	\$
	When surveyed at the fall business owner focus group, only half of the 16 respondents had a plan for who would take over when the existing business owner retires. Helping existing business owners plan for retirement will help keep long-term businesses in the community for many years into the future. The following resources can be used to help: Succession Planning Resources .			



Figure 77: Workshop

Centerville, Iowa holds monthly workshops on topics such as social media marketing and hiring. With an average of 35 attendees, these workshops saw clear results for business owners who applied the skills they learned.

Source: Author phone interview with the Main Street Centerville Director, February 2019

Image Source: Adobe Stock

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E1.2 – HOST QUARTERLY WORKSHOPS FEATURING QUALITY GUEST SPEAKERS TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE	Chamber of Commerce, SBDC, Iowa State University Extension, Institute for Decision Making (IDM)	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	From hiring to tax changes to digital marketing, Webster City can provide workshops to help business owners adapt to changing market conditions.			
E1.3 – PUBLICIZE AND MAINTAIN A LIST OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES LOOKING TO EXPAND	inTandem, Chamber of Commerce	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$\$
	While many established businesses are aware of local financing resources, younger businesses may not. This list should include everything from which local banks tend to lend to small businesses to grants from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to federal small business grants.			
E1.4 – RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PRIDE	Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee, The Daily Freeman-Journal	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Entrepreneurship requires community. According to feedback at the business owner focus group in the fall of 2018, many business owners did not know their downtown peers. Through awards like “Business Ambassador of the Year”, “Most Improved Property”, “Volunteer of the Year” and “Business of the Month,” Webster City can recognize progress and create connection among the community and existing business owners.			

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development tool used to freeze property tax assessment at the year in which the TIF was created, with all additional funds collected above this amount being re-invested into the properties in the district.

Source: [Civic Lab](#)

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E1.5 – EXPAND TAX INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) ACCESS FOR SMALLER BUSINESSES DOWNTOWN	Chamber of Commerce, SBDC	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Tax increment financing has been used to finance multiple improvements throughout the downtown already, including bank renovations. Expanding knowledge of this resource will help businesses not already acquainted with the tool.			
E1.6 – PROVIDE FREE PUBLIC WI-FI IN DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY	City	★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	While many residents have data plans for their phones, providing free Wi-Fi downtown will encourage more activity from those otherwise working from home to come downtown and enjoy other downtown amenities.			
E1.7 – CONDUCT CITY-WIDE MARKET ANALYSES EVERY FIVE YEARS TO HELP LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS ASCERTAIN LOCAL MARKET CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	Chamber of Commerce, Iowa State Extension, Small Business Administration (SBA)	★★	LONG-TERM	\$\$
	<p>A top priority at the business owner focus group in fall 2018, several small business owners expressed a desire to expand their operations yet lacked knowledge of the market shortcomings and opportunities. A general market study every few years will help provide existing businesses and new businesses alike get the data they need to expand.</p> <p>For a sample market analysis, see the 2017 study from West Branch. For information on how to do a market analysis, see the University of Wisconsin Extension here.</p>			

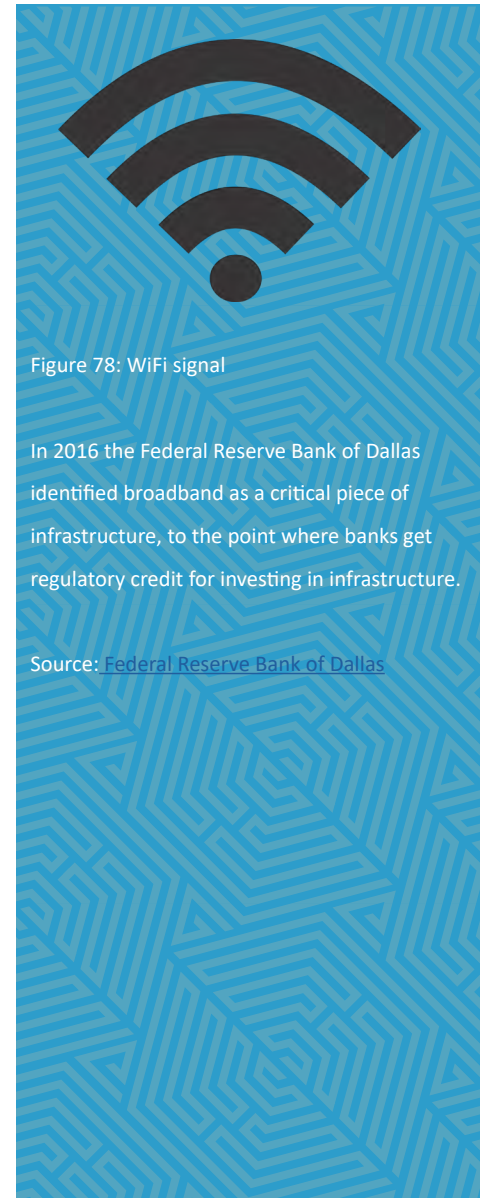


Figure 78: WiFi signal

In 2016 the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas identified broadband as a critical piece of infrastructure, to the point where banks get regulatory credit for investing in infrastructure.

Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas](#)

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
<p>E1.8 – IMPROVE BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE DOWNTOWN THROUGH THE INSTALLATION OF FIBER OPTIC OR COMPARABLE INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	<p>Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee, City, Utility Companies, Banks</p>	<p>★★★</p>	<p>LONG-TERM</p>	<p>\$\$\$</p>
<p>According to residents at the business owner focus group in fall 2018, Webster City lacks uniform access to quality, affordable Wi-Fi. The city should work with banks and the local internet providers to install fiber optic or comparable infrastructure to help local businesses expand their online operations and make room for new technology-based companies and remote workers to expand to Webster City. Because the infrastructure is needed, local banks can get Community Reinvestment Act credit for financing these projects.</p>				



Figure 79: UW Extension Logo

The University of Wisconsin Extension publishes a guide for community market analyses similar to the ones done by Main Street Iowa.

Image source: University of Wisconsin Extension

Objective E2: Attract Businesses to Downtown

As of spring 2019, the number of firms reporting retail sales in Webster City has declined since 2009.⁵⁰ At the spring open house, residents listed attracting businesses as one of their top economic priorities for Webster City. Through the creation of a recruitment strategy, Webster City can improve the diversity of goods and services offered in downtown.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E2.1 – MAINTAIN A DETAILED ONLINE REPOSITORY OF AVAILABLE COMMERCIAL SPACES THROUGH LOCATION ONE INFORMATION SERVICE (LOIS) AND EMBED ON COMMUNITY WEBSITES	Chamber of Commerce, City, Downtown property owners, Mid-Iowa Development Association (MIDAS)	★★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Webster City already uses LOIS, an online property database created by economic developers, to advertise available properties on the city website. By expanding this to include downtown spaces, the City can make it easier for cities looking to expand on a smaller scale. Webster City's current inventory can be found here .			
E2.2 – USE A SCORECARD TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL BUSINESSES TO ATTRACT TO DOWNTOWN	Chamber of Commerce, SSMID, Community Vitality Director	★★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Not every potential business will be a good fit for Downtown Webster City. The scorecard in Appendix C utilizes public opinion, trade area analysis, and the market study from earlier in this document to rank businesses.			

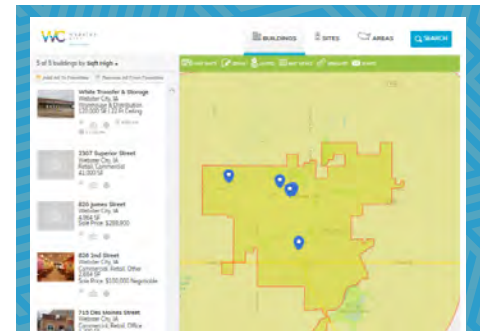


Figure 80: Location One Information Services

Webster City can use existing tools like Location One Information Services to advertise existing spaces.

“Support retail readiness and advertise available spaces” - Feedback from a resident at Webster City March Open House

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

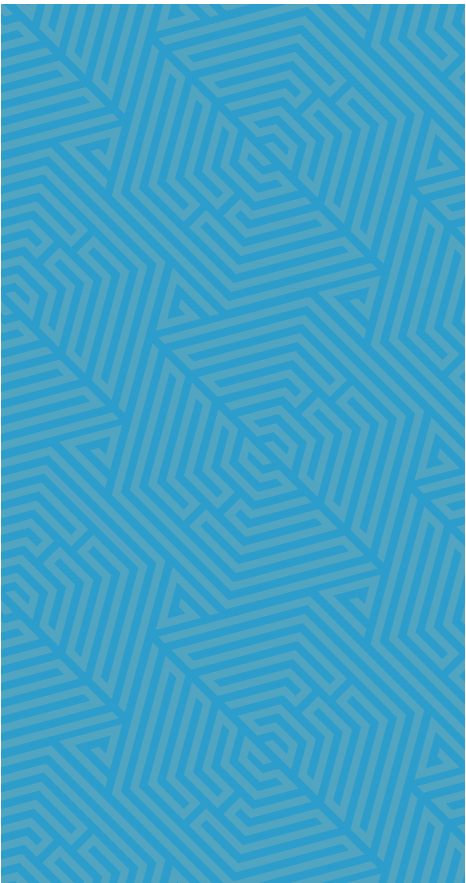
STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E2.3 – USE DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN TO SEND MARKETING MATERIAL TO PRE-IDENTIFIED BUSINESSES INCLUDING SPECIALTY FOOD COMPANIES AND RESTAURANTS	Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee	★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	Working with the Promotion Committee, the Economic Vitality Committee can help recruit businesses by sending material to businesses in sectors suitable for the downtown. Mailings make the initial contact necessary in an unobtrusive manner for potential businesses not otherwise looking to expand to Webster City.			
E2.4 – SEND DOWNTOWN AMBASSADORS EQUIPPED WITH MARKETING MATERIAL TO PRE-IDENTIFIED BUSINESSES IN NEARBY COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO EXPAND INTO WEBSTER CITY	Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee	★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	<p>Capitalize on face-to-face interactions to create connections and encourage demand for Webster City spaces. Having a team of trained committee members responsible for recruitment will show a concerted effort and make the connection for a new business owner to locate to Webster City.</p> <p>For more information on creating a viable recruitment plan, visit the University of Wisconsin Extension.</p>			
E2.5 – REACTIVATE PREVIOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE (HAMILTON HOMETOWNS OR SEED) TO RECRUIT LARGER BUSINESSES TO WEBSTER CITY	Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton County	★★★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	By reactivating an economic development alliance to focus on larger employers, the city and Downtown Committee will have more time and resources to focus on downtown businesses.			



Objective E3: Decrease the Number of Vacant Commercial Spaces

According to the downtown inventory completed by the planning team, as of the fall of 2018, there were fourteen vacant commercial buildings on Second Street alone. The following strategies work in tandem with the Beautify Chapter to make the spaces more accessible and attractive to visitors and to businesses looking to locate downtown.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E3.1 – USE CREATIVE WINDOW DECALS IN THE PLACE OF STANDARD FOR RENT SIGNS	Chamber of Commerce, Neighborhood Realty	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	<p>One challenge when searching for a commercial space in Downtown Webster City is finding who to contact for a lease. Creative decals like the one featured in the action table at the end of this chapter add inspiration and marketing of properties for lease while at the same time giving the necessary contacts for a potential occupant of the space.</p> <p>For more information on the decals, visit Williamston, SC.</p>			
E3.2 – HIRE AN ENGINEER TO DO A COMMERCIAL BUILDING QUALITY ASSESSMENT	Downtown property owners, Consultants, City	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$\$
	<p>With public feedback identifying building quality as one of the largest obstacles to lowering the vacancy rate, Webster City can reduce the costs of rehabilitation by contracting an engineer to perform a building quality assessment on vacant properties, identifying all structural issues for commercial and residential spaces alike.</p>			



STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E3.3 – UPDATE THE DOWNTOWN INVENTORY REGULARLY	City, Consultants	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	In the process of writing this document, the planning team assembled a downtown inventory. This should be updated with the results of the building assessment, and then as needed to track activity, quality, use and vitality downtown. A sample scorecard can be found in Appendix C.			
E3.4 – MAKE A LIST OF PROJECTS THAT NEED ADDRESSING	City, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown property owners	★ ★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	Once the engineer has made a list of all needed improvements, property owners should identify a list of projects to be addressed with the strategies later in this section.			
E3.5 – CONSOLIDATE NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS INTO A MASTER LIST THAT WILL BE MORE ATTRACTIVE TO OUT OF TOWN CONTRACTORS	Chamber of Commerce, Economic Vitality Committee	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	At the spring open house of 2019, one resident and business owner noted the challenges in bringing contractors to Webster City for smaller projects. By compiling of needed improvements, the Economic Vitality Committee can increase the negotiation power of business owners and bring in the necessary help to renovate building facades and interiors.			



CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E3.6 – UTILIZE LOCAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE CLUBS AND STUDENT GROUPS TO PERFORM MINOR IMPROVEMENTS TO UNDERUTILIZED COMMERCIAL SPACES	Rotary, RSVP, Chamber of Commerce	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$\$
	At the spring open house, guests noted the challenge in getting contractors to come out to Webster City for the smaller improvements. With several comments indicating guests’ interest in participating, the Economic Vitality Committee should identify businesses that need help, and then set days for the community to come out and help with items like yardwork, painting, and other minor improvements.			
E3.7 – OFFER BUILDING PERMIT FEE WAIVERS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND VACANT PROPERTIES DOWNTOWN	Economic Vitality Committee	★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	In 2019, LIFT WC purchased the Elks Club building as a non-profit to rehabilitate and occupy the historic building. Through the creation of grants, the city can make it easier for organizations like this and HERO to take ownership of spaces and make them accessible to the community.			
E3.8 – PARTNER WITH HIGH SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONSTRUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS TO MAKE REPAIRS TO UNDERUTILIZED COMMERCIAL SPACES	Webster City High School, Iowa Central Community College	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	At the spring open house of 2019, one resident and business owner noted the challenges in bringing contractors to Webster City for smaller projects. By making a list of needed improvements, the Economic Vitality Committee can increase the negotiation power of business owners and bring in the necessary help to renovate building facades and interiors.			



Figure 81: Second Street in Webster City

Case Study: 6 downtown renovation projects have been completed by high school partners in Case Study Woodbine, IA since 2014.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E3.9 – IDENTIFY PROPERTIES FOR ADAPTIVE RE-USE THROUGH NON-RETAIL AND NON-TRADITIONAL RENTAL OPTIONS	Chamber of Commerce, LIFT WC	★★★	LONG-TERM	\$
	Webster City has two registered historic spaces waiting for adaptive re-use. With LIFT WC purchasing the Elk’s Building in April 2019 and brick and mortar retail declining, identifying spaces for retail alternatives like day care, clinics, dance studios, or popup shops will serve the dual purpose of bringing foot traffic downtown and showcasing historic spaces. Potential uses include daycares, health clinics, or dance studios.			
E3.10 – CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY ZONE FUND FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS, LIKE NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION	Chamber of Commerce, Banks	★★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	With Downtown Webster City being designated as an Opportunity Zone under the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, banks and investors have the opportunity to freeze taxes on property investments in low and moderate income communities. Working with local banks, the Economic Vitality Committee can assemble a list of projects ready for immediate investment and match them with a list of potential investors. More information on Opportunity Zones can be found here .			
E3.11 – OFFER GRANTS COMMUNITY OR COOPERATIVE OWNERSHIP OF SPACES FOR INNOVATIVE BUSINESS AND RENT STRATEGIES	City, Neighborhood Realty	★★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	In 2019, LIFT WC purchased the Elks Club building as a non-profit to rehabilitate and occupy the historic building. Through the creation of grants, the city can make it easier for organizations like this and HERO to take ownership of spaces and make them accessible to all in Webster City.			



Figure 82: Webster City Municipal Building

The City can play a role in helping fill and rehabilitate buildings.

Image Source: [Webster City](#)

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
<p>E3.12 – ENACT A VACANCY FEE FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES AFTER 6 MONTHS OF DISUSE</p>	<p>City, Neighborhood Realty</p>	<p>★ ★ ★</p>	<p>LONG-TERM</p>	<p>\$</p>
<p>By taxing property owners for their vacant commercial spaces, Webster City can increase the opportunity cost of leaving a property empty. For properties that require work before being rented, the City could consider offering a waiver for properties allowing public art in the front windows.</p> <p>A sample of a vacancy fee from Arlington, MA can be found here.</p>				



Objective E4: Foster an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

With the number of businesses in Webster City declining since 2009, the city can no longer rely solely on business recruitment efforts to retain and attract talent. The opening of inTandem Coworking in 2013 marked a transition for Webster City’s efforts for supporting small and growing businesses, with a part-time Small Business Development Center (SBDC) slated to locate in Webster City by the end of 2019. The following efforts will help the city build a local business base to keep downtown growing for years to come.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E4.1 – START BIWEEKLY ENTREPRENEURIAL MEET-UPS	Chamber of Commerce, inTandem	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	By hosting regular opportunities for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs to share ideas as seen in Peer City Mount Pleasant, Webster City can create a supportive environment for people looking to start and expand ideas downtown. For information on an established program, visit 1 Million Cups .			
E4.2 – TRANSLATE EXISTING BUSINESS STARTUP MATERIALS INTO SPANISH	Chamber of Commerce, All Cultures Equal	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	With a growing number of minority-owned businesses from Chicago Style to La Perla Jarocha, taking resources and translating them expands entrepreneurial opportunities to a broader base of Webster City’s population.			



Figure 83: One Million Cups Logo

Yankton, South Dakota hosts One Million Cups meet-ups every Wednesday for local entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas and get community support. By hosting a similar event, Webster City can create a welcoming environment for people to share ideas and develop new ones.

Image Source: [One Million Cups](#)

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E4.3 – UTILIZE EXISTING BUSINESS OWNERS TO MENTOR NEW ENTREPRENEURS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT TO BUSINESSES LOOKING TO EXPAND	Chamber of Commerce, SSMID Leaders, Volunteer base, SBDC	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	<p>Starting a business is challenging, but luckily Downtown Webster City has a wealth of business owners whose companies have been around for decades. This resource can be tapped in order to help downtown entrepreneurs understand the day-to-day realities of business operations and grow their ideas.</p> <p>Additional resources on business mentoring can be found from the Small Business Administration.</p>			
E4.4 – IDENTIFY AND PUBLICIZE EXISTING BUSINESSES WILLING TO OPEN THEIR SPACE FOR POP-UP AND MICRO RETAIL	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown business owners	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	<p>Not all businesses need an entire storefront to start. By listing existing businesses with a shelf or two to spare can encourage pop-up shops without requiring the full rehabilitation of a space, also bringing more traffic to the host business.</p> <p>For more examples visit the Shoppes at Bradley Hall.</p>			

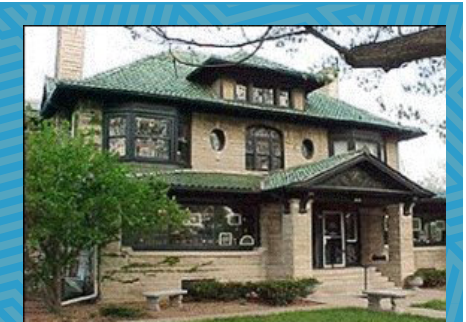


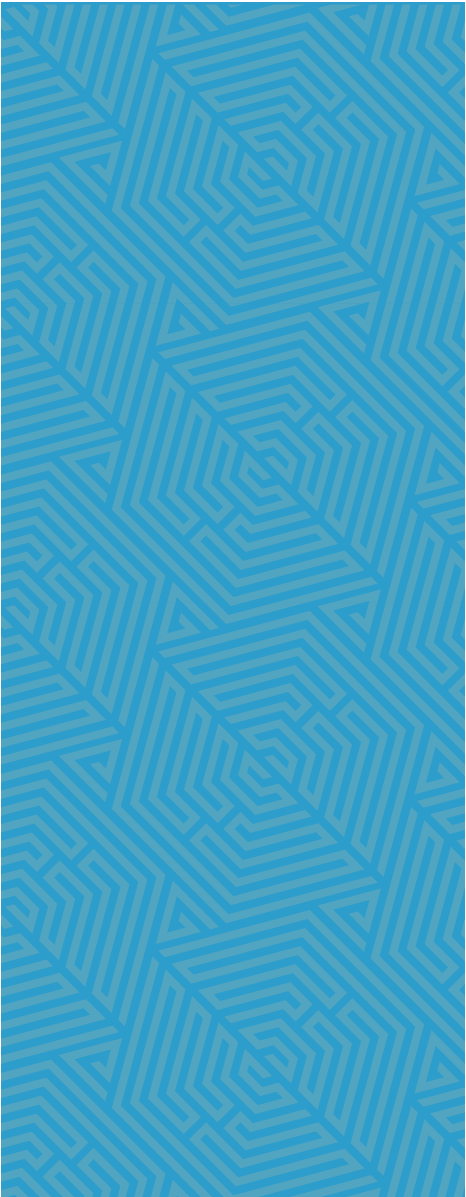
Figure 84: The Shoppes at Bradley Hall

Peer City Centerville saw a non-profit adapt a historic mansion to a craft mall that now supports over 40 vendors whose space ranges from a full room to a single shelf. A model like this could be used to rehabilitate the Elks Lodge building or the Old Post Office

Source: Peer Cities Analysis

Image source: [Shoppes at Bradley Hall](#)

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E4.5 – HOLD AN ANNUAL BUSINESS PITCH OR BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION WITH PRIZES LIKE CASH OR DONATED SERVICES TO HELP JUMPSTART THE WINNING BUSINESS	Chamber of Commerce, SSMID Leaders, SBDC	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	<p>As mentioned during a public input event, there are plenty of residents with valuable ideas, but not much support for execution. Competitions like this could publicize small businesses while providing competition guidelines with the framework necessary for a general business plan.</p> <p>Open For Business – Burlington is a business pitch competition that can be used as a model.</p>			
E4.6 – CREATE A MAKERS-SPACE OR BUSINESS INCUBATOR TO FOSTER LONG-TERM ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH	Chamber of Commerce, LIFT WC, inTandem	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	<p>As noted earlier, small businesses need help to grow and become operational. By offering a location outside the traditional retail space for entrepreneurs to test their ideas and receive support, Webster City can reduce the risk of starting a business and foster business growth for decades to come.</p> <p>Even though Cedar Rapids is a larger city, the Newbo City Market is a good example of this.</p>			



Objective E5: Encourage Downtown Living

Downtown Webster City is more than just a hub for commercial activity, with mixed-use development helping keep the area active at various times throughout the day. According to a housing study conducted for this report, there are 70 single-family and multi-family residences in the downtown area. By supporting quality downtown living units, Webster City will not only expand daily foot traffic but also provide a more inclusive, welcoming environment for residents of all backgrounds.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E5.1 – CONDUCT A HOUSING QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR EXISTING UNITS	Downtown property owners, Consultants, City	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	<p>Through a housing quality assessment, the city can determine the current condition of units and provide a better living environment for residents.</p> <p>This should be done in tandem with strategy E3.10.</p>			
E5.2 – UPDATE THE 2013 CITY-WIDE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OT DETERMINE HOUSING DEMAND DOWNTOWN	Downtown property owners, Consultants	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$\$
	<p>With 45 new houses approved for construction, Webster City should conduct an updated housing assessment to ensure the city is meeting local housing demand and addressing market failures.</p> <p>Source: Messenger News</p>			



Figure 85: Mount Pleasant, Iowa

Rehabilitation of upper story housing has been key to the downtown revitalization of Peer City Mount Pleasant. Since becoming a Main Street community in 2002, 60 new housing units have been constructed.

Source: Peer Cities Analysis

Image Source: Adobe Stock

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A VIBRANT ECONOMIC HUB

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
E5.3 – CREATE TAX ABATEMENTS TO ENCOURAGE QUALITY MULTI-FAMILY OR SENIOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS IN DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY	City	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	<p>As shown in Mount Pleasant, quality, housing is key to keeping Downtown Webster City active throughout the day. With a higher proportion of renters, tax abatement for multifamily housing downtown will help maintain a mix of residents in downtown.</p> <p>A sample program from Dubuque, Iowa can be found here.</p>			
E5.4 – LOCATE A NEW SENIOR HOUSING PROJECT DOWNTOWN	City, Developers, Banks, MIDAS	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$\$\$
	<p>With the old bakery being torn down in spring 2019, Webster City has an open lot that could be used for additional housing. The team identified senior housing as a priority due to the aging population in Webster City and the additional daytime foot traffic such a project would bring to the businesses downtown. This could use funds from a variety of sources, from mortgages from local banks to the MIDAS revolving housing loan fund to the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.</p>			

69% of Webster City residents surveyed preferred apartments and townhomes to condominiums when asked what types of downtown housing they preferred.

Source: Webster City Downtown Survey

EXAMPLE ACTION TABLE

STRATEGY E3.5- USE CREATIVE WINDOW DECALS IN PLACE OF STANDARD "FOR LEASE" SIGNS

There are many inconsistencies among vacant buildings, to the point where it is hard to tell what buildings are available. By creating a window decal to identify buildings for rent with a common phone number, the city can decrease vacancies and help prepare them new ownership.

PRIORITY: ★★

SHORT-TERM

COST: \$

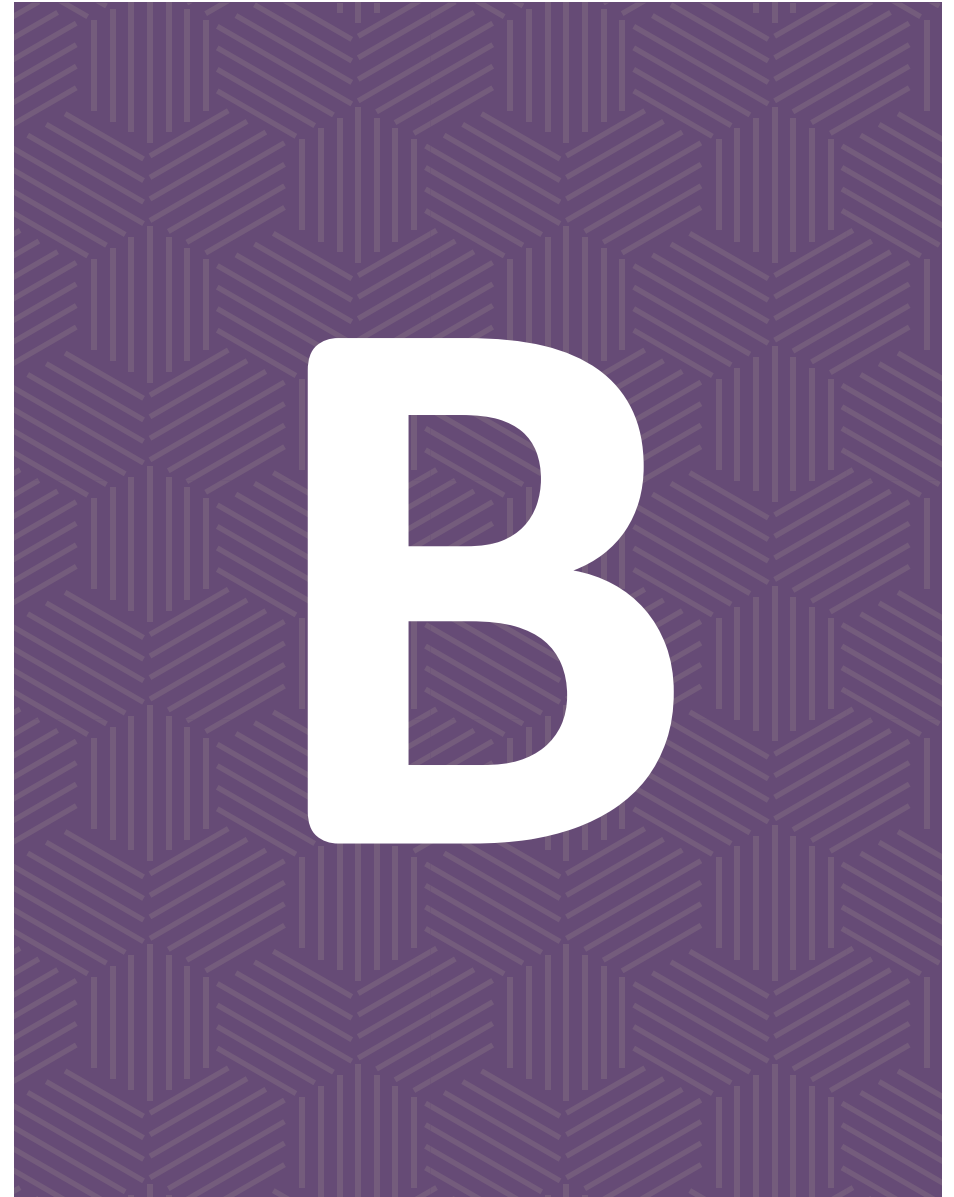
KEY PARTNERS: Chamber of Commerce, City, Neighborhood Realty

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Make a list of properties to target and number of stickers needed	Members #1-2	1st Month	N/A
Talk to property owners to see if they would use the decals	Members #1-2	2nd Month	N/A
Identify information to be shown on decal	Members #1-2	2nd Month	N/A
Compile a list of potential designers and compare prices and capabilities	Member #3	2nd Month	N/A
Hire a designer to provide options	Member #3-4	3rd Month	Downtown Committee, Chamber of Commerce, City
Identify vendors to print the decal	Member #4	2nd Month	N/A
Compare prices and select a vendor	Member #5	4th Month	N/A

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Select a design	Economic Vitality Committee	4th Month	N/A
Print decals	Vendor	5th Month	Downtown Committee
Distribute decals to vacant property owners	Chamber of Commerce, City, Economic Vitality Committee	Ongoing	N/A
Check in with property owners to check for use of decals	Member #6	7th Month post-distribution	N/A
Additional Notes: Use this space to add any additional information, for example: this tool has been successfully used in Williamston, South Carolina .			

BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

Downtown Webster City has the foundation in place to become an even more attractive place to shop, dine, live, and gather. The relatively recent streetscape projects have improved walkability through wide sidewalks and safe crosswalks, as well as added benches, trees, and landscaping. Now is the time to build upon these assets and improve the beauty of the buildings and activate underutilized spaces. By doing so, the downtown will become a more vibrant place for the whole community to spend time and will be visited by residents throughout the region.



Objective B1: Improve the condition of downtown buildings

Through the public engagement initiatives described in Part I, it has been identified that the community places significant importance on the physical attributes of the downtown. Yet, a number of downtown buildings have endured disinvestment and deferred maintenance. As of 2019, there were 14 vacant buildings on Second Street downtown.

Revitalization and redevelopment often involve sprucing up and rebuilding blighted sites, as well as refurbishing obsolete and dysfunctional buildings into new uses.⁵¹ Old buildings may be remodeled from their original purpose into mixed-use buildings, while façade improvements breathe new life into old and tired buildings.



Figure 86: Vacant building in Webster City

At the fall open house, the “maintenance on buildings” was identified as the top weakness of downtown, and “vacant buildings” was the fourth highest weakness. “Buildings crumbling” was the top identified threat. At the same time, the public selected “historic preservation” as the top opportunity with 14 votes, followed by “refurbishing storefronts” with 13 votes. The next highest opportunity item received 8 votes. In addition, the top strength of downtown was identified as “historic buildings and/or historic character of buildings”.

At the spring open house, fixing downtown buildings was identified as the top strategy to beautify and activate downtown.

Regarding the attractiveness of downtown, the majority of survey respondents rated the downtown as “satisfactory” (61% of respondents) while only 2% thought it was excellent and 37% thought it was very poor.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B1.1 – INCENTIVIZE REHABILITATION OF BUILDINGS AND FACADES	Chamber of Commerce, City	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Façade improvements gives new life to an old and unappealing building. Provide incentives and resources for building owners to rehabilitate downtown buildings, including facade and structural improvements. For example, this may involve providing low-interest revolving loans, matching grants, and property tax abatement.			
B1.2 – ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR FAÇADE ENHANCEMENTS	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce, City	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	By establishing guidelines for façade enhancements, the city can encourage building owners to improve the aesthetics of their building, which contributes positively to the visual appeal of downtown. The city could guide future development to ensure design is in accord with the aesthetics of downtown.			
B1.3 – ENFORCE CURRENT BUILDING CODE IN A TIMELY MANNER	City (Building Inspector)	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Building code violations could be enforced quickly and equally to ensure that no buildings are neglected or improperly used. The applicable building code is Title V Chapter 130 (Dangerous Buildings) and 132 (Building Code).			



Figure 87: Mount Pleasant, Iowa

Peer City Analysis: During a period when Mt. Pleasant experienced high vacancy rates downtown, the city implemented a program targeted for building façade improvements. This provided the building owner with a dollar for dollar match ranging from \$500 up to \$5,000. Several building owners took advantage of this program throughout the eight years it was in operation. This program was one of the first activities that started to bring life back into the downtown area.

Source: Phone conversation with Main Street Mount Pleasant director, February, 2019.

Image Source: Google Map Street View

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B1.4 – ENGAGE ABSENTEE LANDLORDS AND BUILDING OWNERS	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Establish communication with absentee landlords to determine the cause for absenteeism or underutilization of buildings. By building a relationship, it may be possible to engage in partnerships to improve the condition of their buildings downtown. It is important to find the common ground to work together, while also better understanding the barriers that cause the observed pattern of disinvestment and deferred maintenance.			
B1.5 – ACQUIRE NUISANCE BUILDINGS	City, LIFT WC	★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$\$
	Cities have eminent domain powers which allow them to acquire and demolish property for purposes of revitalizing the downtown. Once the property is cleared the site is prepared to make it shovel-ready for redevelopment.			
B1.6 – PROVIDE FREE PROFESSIONAL BUILDING RENDERINGS TO DOWNTOWN BUILDING OWNERS IF THEY PLAN TO REHABILITATE	Chamber of Commerce, Volunteer base	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	Providing rendering assistance helps ensure the property owner undertakes appropriate remodeling of their buildings that add to the visual appeal of downtown. This strategy could be paired with strategy E3.12 from Chapter 2, Part II of this report.			

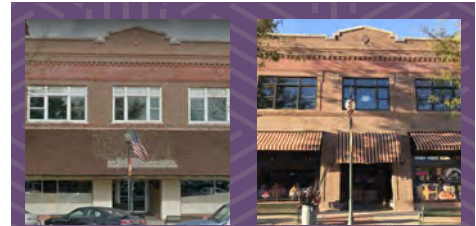


Figure 88: Renovated facades

Peer City Analysis: Main Street Centerville provides professional building renderings to building owners free of charge. In one case, the owner of a downtown business, George and Nick’s Pizza and Steakhouse, was renovating a building to expand their business. While they had specific plans for the interior design, they had not planned to improve the façade to bring it more in line with the character of downtown. Main Street Centerville provided a free professional rendering of how charming the building façade could become. As a result, the owner completed a façade remodel that looked almost identical to the rendering presented. The building now adds to the historic character and charm of the downtown district.

Source: Phone call with Main Street Centerville Director, February, 2019.

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B1.7 – CELEBRATE DEMONSTRATED EXCELLENCE IN IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH ANNUAL AWARDS	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$
	It is important to celebrate achievements in the downtown and encourage other business and property owners to get more involved.			
B1.8 – ESTABLISH AN ORGANIZED EFFORT TO IDENTIFY, PRESERVE, AND REHABILITATE OLDER BUILDINGS	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce, City	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Creating a committee devoted to historic preservation is useful to assist downtown buildings in applying to register buildings on the National Register of Historic Places. Designation as a historic property would help acquire financial support for building improvements, such as historic tax credits. Having multiple sites that are registered with the National Register could help develop a sense of place and an appreciation of Webster City's historic elements. Creating a historic preservation commission is useful to stabilize and improve property values, protect and enhance the city's attractions, strengthen the economy, and foster pride within the community.			

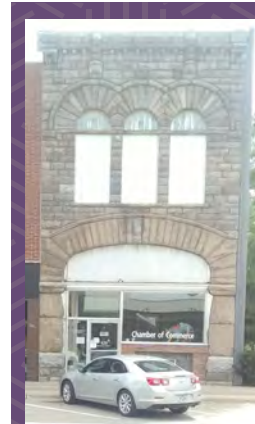


Figure 89: 628
2nd Street in
Webster City

Peer City
Analysis: In
Centerville, the
City created
a historic
preservation

commission to assist with the process of listing properties on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there is a separate group that operates as the fundraising arm of the commission. Organized as a corporation, this group has purchased and restored buildings within downtown. In Webster City, there are two downtown buildings identified as strong candidates for registering, as mentioned elsewhere in this plan.

Source: City of Centerville, IA, "[Historic Preservation Committee](#)," City of Centerville, 2019

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN



Figure 90: Before and After of The Union Block Building in Mt. Pleasant

Peer City Analysis: The Union Block Building in Downtown Mt. Pleasant was in disrepair in 2011. The wall on the west side of the building was falling in and it looked as if the building would need to be demolished. Main Street Mt. Pleasant decided to purchase the building because of its historic nature, large size, and proximity to downtown. Just as Main Street was set to close on the west half of the building, the east half (owned by a separate owner) caught on fire. Main Street decided not to purchase the building.

The Main Street director took local stakeholders to a convention in Des Moines that covered topics regarding downtowns throughout Iowa. They became excited by the opportunities, and one of the stakeholders purchased the Union Block Building and donated it to Main Street. This provided an opportunity to save and improve an older property downtown when no one else in the community would buy it. The building rehabilitation required significant funding. Main Street Mt. Pleasant led the fundraising charge. First, they were awarded a \$100,000 Challenge Grant in the name of Senator Tom Harkin, and later that year, \$500,000 from the I-Jobs Program under Governor Chet Culver was awarded. Main Street then embarked on a local fundraising campaign that raised \$700,000 locally. To do so, they created a design committee and a fundraiser committee. The design committee took the lead and only included six members. The committee members took pride in being few in number, yet the strength of people on this committee was potent. Members included one of each: general contractor, architect, grant writer, resident experienced in local historic high school renovations, member of the local media, and the Main Street director. This demonstrates a small group of activated people can achieve great results.

The Union Block has been fully revitalized and now includes retail, office, and an event space on the third floor. Community donations financed 19% while federal tax credits and local and national grants funded 50% of the \$3.9 million total project cost. The extensive renovations qualified the project for the City's three-year 100% property tax abatement created for commercial properties. The building was built in 1861 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Main Street Iowa continues to hold a \$450,000 mortgage on the property as of 2019.

Source: Phone Interview with Main Street Mt. Pleasant Director

Image Source: [Jimmy Emerson](#)

Objective B2: Increase the amount of foot traffic downtown

The beauty and vibrancy of downtown for employees, residents, and visitors may be increased by maintaining and/or improving the livability and walkability of downtown. Additional foot traffic will support the economic health of downtown by increasing the number of visitors and the amount of time they spend downtown. This leverages the downtown district's existing assets by connecting the downtown to the existing and planned trail and park infrastructure throughout the city.



Figure 91: People sitting on benches in Downtown Webster City

Residents have indicated increased foot traffic is important to the downtown revitalization. At the spring open house, increasing foot traffic was identified as the second highest priority to beautify and activate downtown. Given the choice of five options, 33% and 22% of survey respondents stated they would like to see more outdoor restaurants and public art, respectively, downtown. Finally, regarding coordinated business hours, 40% of survey respondents thought shopping hours were very poor.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B2.1 – ENCOURAGE BI-LINGUAL BUSINESS SIGNAGE	Chamber of Commerce, All Cultures Equal	★ ★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	By increasing the amount of signage that is in multiple languages the downtown will feel more welcoming across different cultures and minority populations.			
B2.2 – INSTALL CROSSWALK INDICATORS	City (Planning, Engineering, Public Works)	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Sidewalk and crosswalk design are major influencers to pedestrian behavior and safety. A complete network of sidewalks and crosswalks improves the safety, especially for the older population.			
B2.3 – MAINTAIN STREETSAPES, LANDSCAPE, AND LIGHTING	City, Self-Sustaining Municipal Improvements District (SSMID) Board, Volunteer base	★ ★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Uphold the improvements that have been made to the sidewalks, planters, trees, and greenspaces. This provides the downtown with excellent integration of the built and natural environments. Maintaining a safe, comfortable, and pleasing landscape downtown creates a welcoming atmosphere for residents and visitors alike.			



Figure 92: Streetscape and sidewalk bump-out in Downtown Webster City

At the open house, it was demonstrated that there is public support for maintaining parks and streetscapes downtown. On the strengths board, “parks downtown” received 8 votes and “streetscapes (benches, plants, sidewalks)” received 8 votes from attendees. These two categories were tied for third highest votes (number 1 was restaurants, and number 2 was historic character of buildings).

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B2.4 – EXPAND SIDEWALK, PLANTERS, TREES, AND GREENSPACE ENHANCEMENTS BEYOND SECOND STREET	City, SSMID, Volunteer base	★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Where possible, expand the streetscape improvements throughout the downtown streets which are perpendicular to Second Street. This will help create a consistent feel throughout downtown and will contribute to the integration of the businesses on the perpendicular streets.			
B2.5 – ENCOURAGE ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION	Chamber of Commerce, SSMID	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Active transportation will be supported by the 2019 Master Parks and Recreation Plan. This plan identifies a downtown connection to the regional trail system and increased bike infrastructure as targeted objectives. By making downtown more bicycle friendly it encourages trail riders to make a stop downtown. Focusing on active transportation may encourage more people to walk and shop downtown. The walkability of a downtown can be measured by online tools such as Walk Score or developing a formula to calculate a walkability score.			



Figure 93: Proposed trail additions from the 2019 Master Parks and Recreation Plan

The Webster City Parks Department plans to expand active transportation throughout the City. New trails will connect to downtown at the following intersections: 1st Street and Des Moines Street; 2nd Street and Des Moines Street; and, 2nd Street and Superior Street. The newly planned trails are indicated by pink dashed lines in the map above.

Image Source: University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning Parks and Recreation Planning Team Master Parks and Recreation Plan

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B2.6 – INCREASE OUTDOOR SEATING	Chamber of Commerce, Business owners	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Restaurants, cafes, and coffee shops could expand to include outdoor seating. To do so, the owners could use mobile patios in parking spots or install seating on portions of the sidewalk. “Outdoor restaurants” was the top requested attribute to add to downtown among survey respondents, with 33% of total responses. Vacant greenspaces could be converted to pocket parks.			
B2.7 – CONDUCT CITY-WIDE PARKING NEEDS ASSESSMENT	Chamber of Commerce, City (Planning, Engineering, Public Works)	★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	The downtown has many parking spots, in front of and behind buildings. Such a study helps document both current and projected parking needs and informs decisions about parking standards that make sense and are not burdensome to downtown businesses. Hiring a firm to conduct a parking study would help determine if the parking is needed or if the space could be better utilized.			



Figure 94: Roll-away seating. A parking space has been converted to an outdoor dining patio by Short’s Burgers in Downtown Iowa City.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B2.8 – DEVELOP COORDINATED BUSINESS HOURS AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES TO PROMOTE ONE ANOTHER	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown business owners	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	The public survey reported that over 40% of respondents rated shopping hours were very poor and only 8% reported them to be excellent. Unified and consistent shopping hours could encourage more use of downtown commercial storefronts. Motivating a small group of business owners to start staying open late once a week, such as a “Downtown, Up Late” initiative, may eventually lead a large base of businesses to stay open later into the evening. Additionally, businesses can support each other because those that remain open later can catch overlap-customers between one another.			
B2.9 – CREATE MAPS THAT HIGHLIGHT THE ATTRACTIVE DOWNTOWN FEATURES	Design Committee, Chamber of Commerce	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	In order to encourage a visitor to have a great experience and frequent more destinations downtown it is important to accentuate all the downtown has to offer. Providing a map that highlights the wonderful features and their location would prove useful to encourage visitors to stay downtown longer.			



Objective B3: Improve the look and function of signage

The downtown is a key distinctive neighborhood within the city and the region. In order to beautify the downtown, it is important to accentuate and complement the unique features of downtown which exist today. This may be achieved through improved signage throughout the downtown that creates an aesthetic charm and cohesiveness to the downtown.



Figure 95: Examples of existing business signage designs and materials downtown on Second Street.

Image Sources: Author



Figure 96: Owl Pharmacy in Centerville

Image Source: Google Maps



Figure 97: Plush Salon and Spa in Independence

Image Source: [Plush Salon and Spa Facebook Page](#)



Figure 98: Chamber Alliance in Mount Pleasant

Image Source: Mountpleasantiowa.org

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B3.1 – IMPROVE AESTHETICS AND FUNCTION OF SIGNAGE	Business owners, Design Committee	★ ★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$\$
<p>Develop guidelines to enhance the overall appearance and materials used on the storefront signs and create a cohesive look for business signage within the downtown. Guidelines for informational signage, such as business hours or wayfinding, could also be created (see Destination chapter).</p> <p>The general atmosphere downtown will be improved by creating a cohesive look for businesses downtown. This can be achieved through increased attention to the appearance and function of signage. Blade signs could be considered for implementation.</p> <p>The Iowa State University signage and wayfinding program is a useful resource for additional information on blade signs. Iowa City has implemented a voluntary blade sign project called CoSign. In Centerville, Iowa State University Community Design Lab developed downtown wayfinding signage to point out local attractions to visitors.</p>				
B3.2 – ENCOURAGE BUSINESS OWNERS TO DISPLAY “WILL BE OPEN AGAIN...” INSTEAD OF “CLOSED”	Chamber of Commerce	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
<p>By displaying business signage in a more positive light it may enhance the overall impressions the residents and visitors have while spending time in the downtown district.</p>				



Lowell Gateway Before



Lowell Gateway After

Figure 99: Lowell Gateway

These two images from downtown Lowell, Michigan show the current appearance and proposed improvements to the downtown’s gateway. The enhanced street crossings and sign provide a sense of arrival to downtown.

Image Source: PAS 590

Objective B4: Embrace and encourage the arts

Focusing on improving the beauty and vibrancy of downtown by emphasizing arts and culture is known as creative placemaking. By building upon existing assets, Downtown Webster City will become a vibrant district infused with art, entertainment, and cultural activities that attract people of all ages and backgrounds to downtown throughout the days and evenings. Art will enhance the image of downtown as clean, safe, walkable, and attractive.⁵² The downtown can become a more cohesive district by encouraging public art, such as murals and sculptures. This may be implemented to match aesthetics and expanded to perpendicular streets to create lineages.



Figure 100: Sculpture in Downtown Webster City

Downtown Webster City is home to a number of public art installations today. A visitor to the downtown district clearly recognizes there is an active and talented community of artists and creative community members. This is further impressed upon the visitor by the placement of public art throughout town, which demonstrates the civic support for such art pieces. This is a wonderful asset in the community that should be supported, celebrated, and leveraged to further improve downtown for all residents.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
B4.1 – PLACE SCULPTURES, MURALS, PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO PROJECTION, AND OTHER PUBLIC ART THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN	Arts-R-Alive, Volunteer base, Design Committee	★★★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Relating to the previous strategy, artwork could be displayed on sidewalks, street corners, sides of buildings, and inside empty store fronts. The art could be created by community members at community-wide public art events, such as painting intersections or murals. Renderings of planned murals within the downtown can be found in Appendix C.			
B4.2 – CREATE A DOWNTOWN BEAUTIFICATION DISTRICT	Chamber of Commerce	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	<p>The downtown could be designated a beautification district in order to focus a concerted effort on the aesthetics downtown. Overseen by a Design Committee that reviews and negotiates proposed design elements within the downtown area. Building owners would then be required to have permits to make changes to signs or facades.</p> <p>Downtown Mount Pleasant is within an eight block beautification district.</p>			
B4.3 – UTILIZE VACANT STOREFRONTS AS A VEHICLE FOR PUBLIC ART	Arts-R-Alive, Volunteer base, Design Committee	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Encourage building owners seeking tenants to host public art events or display art in storefront windows. This can be incorporated with Strategy B3.2.			



Figure 101: Walldog Art Collective Mural

Peer City Analysis: Downtown Centerville is home to the Walldog artist collective. The collective has painted three historic themed murals throughout the downtown district.

Funds were raised from the community and supplemented by a grant from the Appanoose Community Fund.

Source: Phone call with Main Street Centerville Director, February, 2019.

Image Source: [Daily Iowegian](#)

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

EXAMPLE ACTION TABLE

STRATEGY B2.8 – ENCOURAGE COORDINATED BUSINESS HOURS

Encourage collaboration among business owners to have more shops open during the same business hours, and to stay open later in the evenings. Require businesses to display store hours.

PRIORITY: ★★

Motivating a small group of business owners to start staying open late once a week, such as a “Downtown, Up Late” event, may eventually lead a large base of businesses to be open later into the evening.

SHORT-TERM

COST: \$

KEY PARTNERS: Chamber of Commerce

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Create inventory of downtown business names, locations, services, phone numbers, and hours.	Members #1-2	1st Month	N/A
Enter inventory information into a shared database, such as Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel.	Members #1-2	1st Month	N/A
Create a script to reach out to the business owner.	Members #1-2	1st Month	N/A
Create a business letter to reach out to the business owner.	Members #3-4	1st Month	N/A
Select the top 3-5 business owners by their likeliness to become engaged in this topic.	Members #3-4	2nd Month	N/A
Reach out to each business by phone one at a time to invite them to a small group discussion. Build momentum by using peer pressure once people start to commit.	Members #3-4	2nd Month	N/A

CHAPTER 5: BEAUTIFY AND ACTIVATE THE DOWNTOWN

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Host a meeting that discusses the Committee's objective and the benefits of having coordinated and posted business hours to the group. Invite 3-5 business owners and have 3 committee members.	Full Design Committee	2nd Month	N/A
Identify the challenges business owners face to have more coordinated business hours. Work creatively to resolve.	Full Design Committee	3rd Month	N/A
Encourage these early adopter business owners to become your champions. Utilize their assistance to reach out to the next group of 3-5 business owners. Repeat the process.	Members #5-6	4th Month	N/A
Offer free business hour display signs.	Chamber of Commerce	4th Month	SSMID
Prepare meeting invitations to the full list of downtown business owners.	Member #5	4th Month	N/A
Send invitations to each business owner. Follow up with a phone call. Secure the highest number of RSVP possible.	Member #6	4th Month	SSMID
Host a meeting. Provide a plan for coordinated business hours that addresses the challenges. Encourage all business owners to adopt a pledge to adopt new business hours that leads to more overlap of hours and/or staying open in the evening.	Full Design Committee	5th Month	N/A
Market and promote the extended hours in The Daily Freeman Journal and social media.	Members #5-6	5th Month	SSMID
Additional Notes: Use this space to add any additional information			

ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

Downtowns can serve as a community's meeting place and be more than just an area to shop for weekly groceries. Residents of Webster City and visitors alike deserve a fulfilling experience during their time spent in the area. Further, that engaging experience should not just be ancillary to time spent downtown but should be the reason for making the trip. Making Downtown Webster City a destination for events to be held, markets to be strolled, shopping to be done, coffee dates to be enjoyed, and all the other activities that make a downtown delightful is addressed in each of the following tables.



CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

Objective 1: Establish a downtown brand and include visual elements throughout the area

The City of Webster City rebranded itself over the summer of 2018 with a new slogan, “Opportunity Awaits. . .” and logo which is advertised on signage throughout the community. As well, a fresh update to the town’s website was completed with a more user-friendly interface and expanded features such as online permit applications. Both have a profound impact on how locals and visitors view the downtown. Moving forward, a brand specific to the downtown should be established that partners with the overall city branding but is also separated to distinguish itself as a differentiated experience.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D1.1 – CREATE A BRAND SPECIFIC TO DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY	Promotion Committee, Printing Services Inc. (PSI)	★ ★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Creating a brand around the downtown strategically communicates positive attributes that residents and visitors might not be aware of or take advantage of without. The brand should be crafted to evoke feelings of pride and participation, define the community, and ultimately, encourage individuals to act by visiting Downtown Webster City.			
D1.2 – ADVERTISE THE NEW BRAND WITH LAMPPOST BANNERS ALONG SECOND STREET AND FIRST STREET BETWEEN PROSPECT STREET AND SUPERIOR STREET	Electric Utility Supervisor, PSI	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	The new downtown brand should accompany wayfinding signage similar to what was previously attached to light poles with the old Webster City brand. The electric utility supervisor should be contacted for information regarding the usage of and attachment to light poles. PSI offers multiple signage products including vinyl and PBC. Request a quote from this company to support local businesses.			

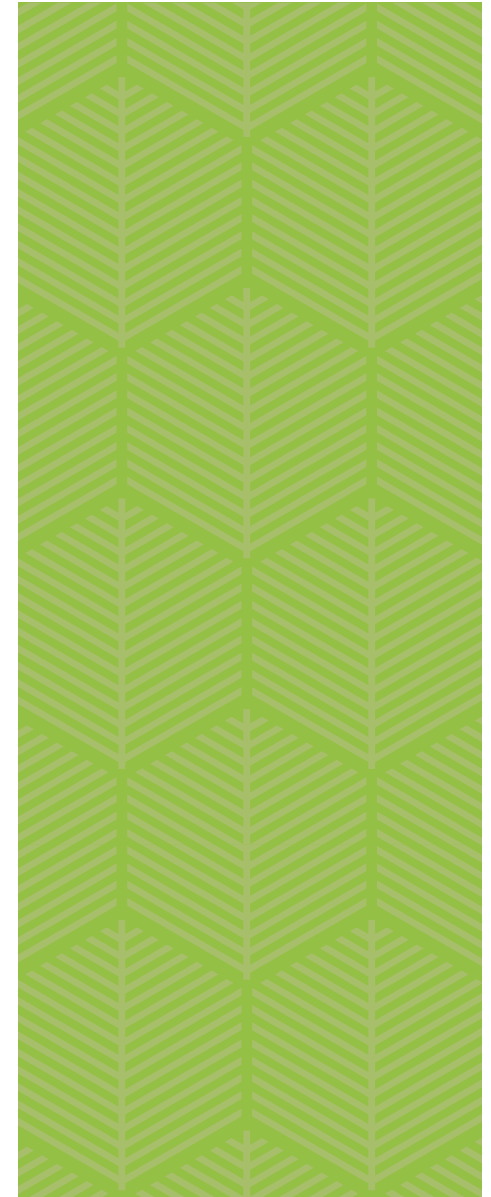


Figure 102: Fresh and new branding

Image Source: [Webster City](https://www.webstercity.org/)

CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D1.3 – ADVERTISE THE NEW BRAND WITH A WELCOME SIGN AT THE DOWNTOWN ENTRY POINTS	PSI, Hy-Vee, City (Fire and Police Departments)	★ ★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Welcoming residents to the downtown distinguishes the area from the rest of Webster City. The positive experience of a visitor starts will start with the invitation from the welcome signs. PSI can offer services to create new signage. Permission may be required by Hy-Vee and the Webster City Fire and Police Departments which are located on the suggested corners.			
D1.4 – ADVERTISE THE NEW BRAND ON THE CITY OF WEBSTER CITY WEBSITE	inTANDEM	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	The current City of Webster City website was created by inTANDEM Marketing, so any additions should be completed by this local firm. Replace the “Downtown District” tab under the “Our Community” drop down with information on the new brand. Potential visitors should be able to find downtown specific information here. The partnership between Webster City and the downtown can be expressed while still advertising a unique experience specific to the downtown.			



Objective D2: Greet visitors so they feel welcomed in the downtown

Polite customer service from downtown business owners and employees is a strength to be proud of and should be emphasized. It is an advantage that Webster City has over other downtowns which lends itself to positive shopping experiences and has the potential to establish repeat customers. The pursuit of friendly service and a welcoming atmosphere should be an established goal by all downtown businesses in order to make the experiences of visitors as positive as possible. This has the potential to lead to repeat customers.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D2.1 – DRAFT AND DISTRIBUTE A CUSTOMER SERVICE PLEDGE FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND WORKERS TO SIGN	Downtown business owners and employees, Chamber of Commerce	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	This pledge will serve as an introduction to discuss the importance of quality customer service and ways to expand on current strengths. Once signed, it should be displayed in each business as a reminder of accountability, pride, and unity with all other businesses on this front.			
D2.2 – WELCOME NEW RESIDENTS THAT MOVE TO THE AREA WITH A BASKET OF SAMPLES, COUPONS, AND PRINT ADVERTISEMENTS OF DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES	Downtown business owners, Chamber of Commerce, Neighborhood Realty	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Feedback from both open houses expressed desire for a “Welcome Wagon” when new residents located to the area. Additionally, welcoming gifts are shown to work in Independence. Volunteers collect donated samples from local businesses and deliver them in a package to newly arrived residents.			



Figure 103: Facebook advertising

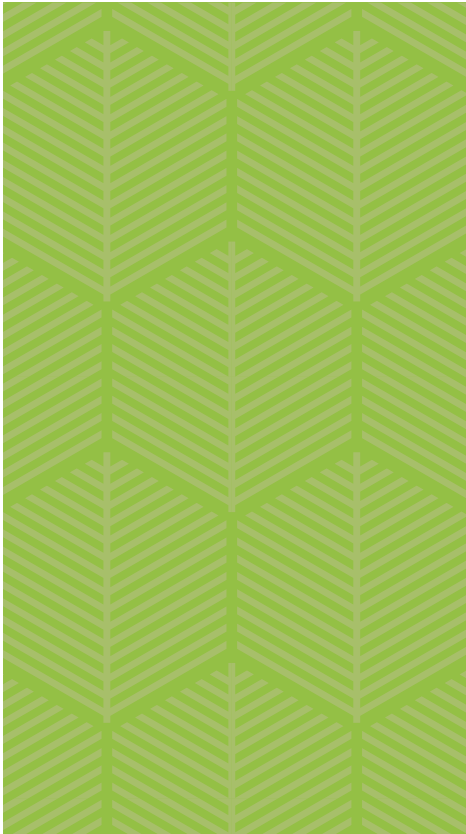
Peer city, Independence, offers a welcome basket full of donations from local business. Some rules apply for eligibility however. New residents must not have owned, rented, or leased property in the town over the past three years. As well, a neighborhood welcome form must be filled out.

Source: Post from [Independence, Iowa's Facebook](#) page advertising the town's version of a welcome package

Objective D3: Keep the downtown district active at least 250 days out of the year

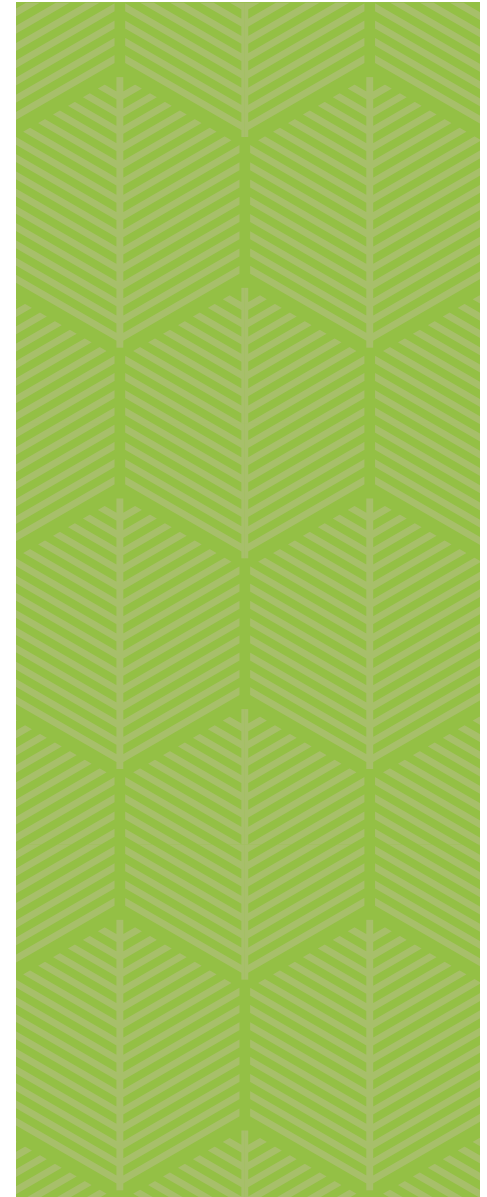
When asked what events survey respondents would like to see downtown, 31%, 25%, and 24% indicated with markets, festivals, and live music respectively. Other options also received votes, such as pop-up shops and food trucks, indicating a variety of events are desired downtown. Events bring a community together and will go great lengths in repairing the diminished identity and pride experienced in the years since Electrolux’s departure.⁵³ This number may seem high but becomes much less daunting with a couple of adjustments such as a year-round farmers market, weekly concerts and weekly movies at the amphitheater between June and August, and weekly sidewalk sales between May and October. These four events executed over the periods of time expressed would account for over 100 event days in a given year.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D3.1 – EXPAND THE EXISTING FARMERS MARKET THROUGH JANUARY 1ST IN AN INDOOR LOCATION SUCH AS THE ELKS LODGE OR OLD POST OFFICE, PENDING RENOVATION	Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$\$
	An excellent alternative use for vacant spaces in the downtown is to create and house a weekly winter farmers market through January 1st. This will provide space for small scale holiday products to be bought and sold. This expansion can account for approximately 35 total events if held weekly between May and January. If demand is high enough, this can be expanded to the other winter months and become a year-round farmers market. This would increase to a total of 52 events per year. A full list of different event options can be seen in Appendix C.			



CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D3.2 – CREATE A NETWORK OF VOLUNTEERS STARTING WITH THOSE THAT SIGNED UP AT THE SPRING OPEN HOUSE	Promotion Committee, Community Vitality Department	★★★	LONG-TERM	\$
	Some events are relatively easy to execute and still impactful, such as sidewalk sales, while others can be large undertakings that require highly coordinated volunteer bases, such as concerts or parades. A list of individuals interested in helping the community was started at the spring open house. This should be the first step in building a strong network of dedicated residents to pull off particularly larger events which may attract the attention of visitors from outside Webster City.			
D3.3 – MEASURE THE IMPACT OF DOWNTOWN EVENTS	Promotion Committee	★★	LONG-TERM	\$
	Attributes of successful events can be used as a base for creating new events. Attributes to record may include time of year, time of day, day of week, weather, location, type of event, or local promotions. Success can be measured on attendance, increased downtown business revenue, or a simple request for feedback via a Facebook post after the event. Further, recording visitor attendance (individuals that came from outside of Webster City specifically for the event) would be valuable in assessing the economic impact of the event on downtown.			



Objective 4: Develop a unified promotional strategy

Similar to sharing the same brand, the downtown should promote itself as a cohesive unit. Feedback from the fall 2018 business owner focus groups demonstrated significant interest in advertising the downtown collectively. Unified advertisement of Downtown Webster City should be executed through a variety of mediums at both local and regional levels. The downtown will be stronger and more resilient if the businesses believe in the collective capabilities of the whole downtown and support one another.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D4.1 – MAINTAIN A DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC FACEBOOK PAGE	Promotion Committee	★★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Based on common marketing practices, at least two Facebook posts with a picture or video promoting the downtown should be published weekly. Boosting the post with a paid placement to a more specific audience costs as little as \$1 and should be considered. All downtown events should have a supplemental event created on Facebook.			
D4.2 – DEVELOP COORDINATED BUSINESS HOURS AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESSES TO PROMOTE ONE ANOTHER	Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Downtown business owners	★★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	The public survey reported that over 40% of respondents rated shopping hours "Very Poor" and only 8% reported them to be "Excellent". Unified and consistent shopping hours could encourage more use of downtown commercial storefronts. Motivating a small group of business owners to start staying open late once a week, such as a "Downtown, Up Late" initiative, may eventually lead a large base of businesses to stay open later into the evening. Additionally, businesses can support each other because those that remain open later can catch overlap-customers between one another.			

Peer city, Centerville, hosted a workshop for business owners which resulted in owners liking, sharing, and cross promoting each other's businesses on social media. This type of collaboration and collective thinking helps the downtown economy as a whole. During the business owner meeting in Webster City, many owners met one another for the first time but expressed interest in unity and quickly understood its importance.

Objective D5: Recognize excellence in business and community pride

Recognizing business and community excellence is important to help boost enthusiasm within the community and should be promoted towards individuals outside of the community. It can serve as an invitation for others to visit and enjoy the marketed excellence. Concern regarding promoting competition among businesses was brought to light during the spring open house so respect of all downtown players should always be maintained.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D5.1 – PROFILE ONE INTERESTING BUSINESS, INDIVIDUAL, OR PROJECT RELATED TO DOWNTOWN ON FACEBOOK THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH WITH #WEBSTERCITYWEDNESDAY	Chamber of Commerce, Promotion Committee	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Using quotations and pictures of community members for the posts makes them authentic, personable, and sharable. Businesses will appreciate the free publicity and be excited to engage. Each #WebsterCityWednesday post should be boosted in order to gain a strong following, particularly early on in the campaign. A similar approach is used by the City of East Moline with its #EastMolineMonday posts.			



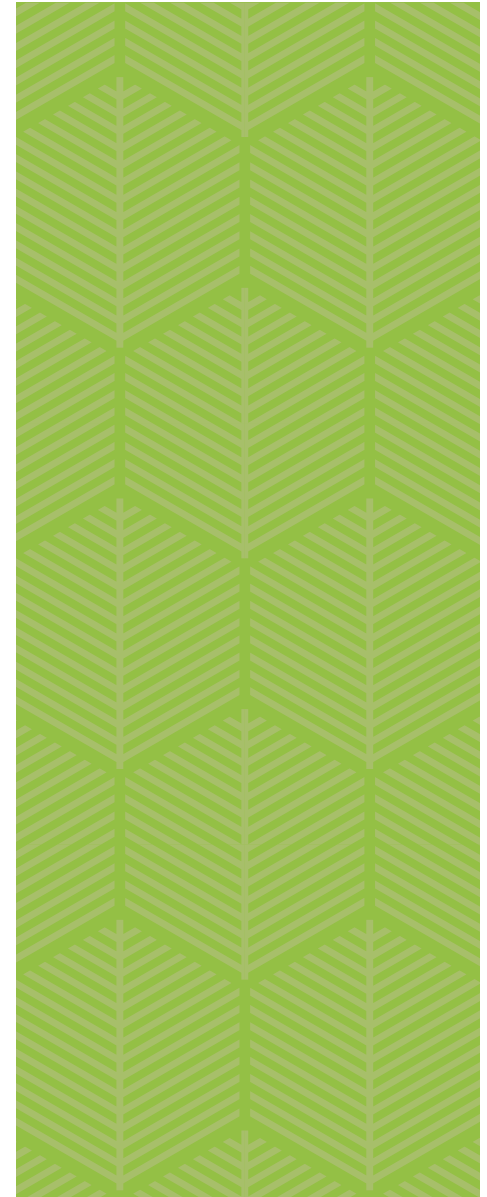
Figure 104: Post from East Moline, Illinois’s Facebook page advertising the city’s weekly #EastMolineMonday.

East Moline, Illinois uses a weekly hashtag to profile a community individual, business, or project which engages hundreds, sometimes thousands, of Facebook users.

Source: [East Moline, Iowa. Facebook](#)

CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
<p>D5.2 – CREATE AWARDS FOR DIFFERENT DOWNTOWN CATEGORIES THAT CAN BE VOTED ON BY THE PUBLIC EACH YEAR</p>	<p>Chamber of Commerce, Business owners, The Daily Freeman-Journal, Promotion Committee</p>	<p>★</p>	<p>MEDIUM-TERM</p>	<p>\$</p>
<p>A bracket system every March to emulate “March Madness” can be set up for best customer service among downtown businesses. It can be posted and voted on through Facebook. Other, more specific, awards can be given out biannually. To ensure a diversity of winners from year to year, preemptively set up rules for a variety of contestants. The focus should be on recognizing multiple diverse entities to overcome the concerns stated previously. This could be facilitated by the Chamber of Commerce or Promotion Committee with help from The Daily Freeman-Journal in reaching out and posting results.</p> <p>“Best of Des Moines” has dozens of categories such as best local place to watch a sporting event, best local dog walker, best local insurance agent, local bar/restaurant with best beer selection, best local bathroom facility. The awards are printed on 8.5x11 printer paper but displayed with pride in winning establishments. More information can be found here. Options for Webster City could include best local place to shop for the family, best date night location, best local radio segment, most improved storefront appearance.</p>				



Objective D6: Create a central hub for information

Through public engagement events, particularly the business owner meeting in the fall, the planning team discovered a lack of communication between residents, business owners, and public officials. Creating a central location for a multitude of information such as financial incentives for businesses, available buildings for sale or rent, general resident or visitor inquiries will connect these parties and keep everyone informed. Lines of communication should be clear and easily accessible through all mediums (phone, email, in-person, social media, paper mail).

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D6.1 – ENCOURAGE THE USE OF LOCABLE.COM THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY	Community Vitality Director, Downtown business owners	★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	A subscription to services provided by Locable.com was purchased by the City of Webster City in January 2019. Its main function is to serve as an online community calendar and can have a profound effect if all members of the community are engaged. It should be advertised on the City of Webster City’s website and Facebook. Keeping residents up to date on events allows attendees to plan ahead for a recreational event (possibly purchase tickets if necessary) or prepare for a public meeting (possibly generate questions for officials). The current community calendar on the chamber of commerce website should be maintained until the community is fully engaged on Locable.com.			



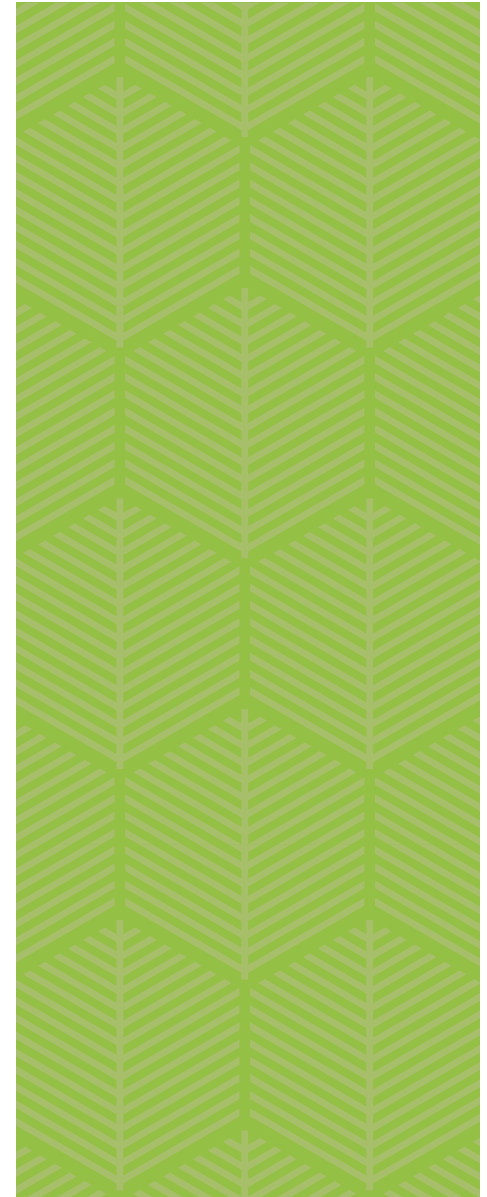
Figure 105: Community bulletin board outside of Webster City City Hall

The community bulletin board outside of City Hall is a good idea but should be updated to an online version with interactive and engaging features. Locable.com will accomplish this.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D6.2 – PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND STAFF AT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ONLINE, OVER THE PHONE, AND IN PERSON	Chamber of Commerce, City	★ ★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Public employees and officials should be held to the same standard of quality customer service and responsiveness that businesses are held to. This requires them to be easily accessible by all forms of communication. Questions and comments via Facebook (inbox or posts) should be taken seriously and responded to within 24 hours. Transparency builds confidence in the relationship between all parties involved. Further, office hours should be held by the mayor, city manager, community vitality director, and chamber of commerce director once each week to provide individuals the opportunity to share ideas and have questions answered.			



Objective D7: Provide a unique experience from the rest of the community or region

What sets the downtown apart from other areas of Webster City and the region? Expanding on the strengths and opportunities provided in the SWOT analysis is the primary attribute of this objective. The downtown is historic with potential to be reinvigorated through restored facades. A mixture of services and products can be purchased downtown and the chance of running in to a friend is reason enough to stroll the tree-lined streets.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D7.1 – UPDATED WAYFINDING SIGNAGE SHOULD BE INCORPORATED THROUGHOUT DOWNTOWN IN HIGH TRAFFIC AREAS	Community Vitality Director, City (Public Works)	★ ★	MEDIUM-TERM	\$\$
	Design of cohesive signage indicating current location and easy direction to engaging locations throughout downtown such as the amphitheater, public space next to the Elks Lodge, Fuller Hall Recreation Center, and City Hall should be created and posted along light poles for pedestrians and visitors. Similar signage has been used in the past and can be leveraged for future action. This signage will help differentiate downtown from the rest of Webster City and allow for greater convenience of visitors.			
D7.2 – PROVIDE MAPS OF DOWNTOWN WITH BUSINESS HOURS OF OPERATION AT CITY HALL AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE	Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce	★ ★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Informative maps of downtown with engaging locations highlighted and business hours displayed should be created and made available at the Chamber of Commerce building and City Hall for visitors. An interactive map marketed as a treasure hunt can be created particularly for families as an engaging activity.			



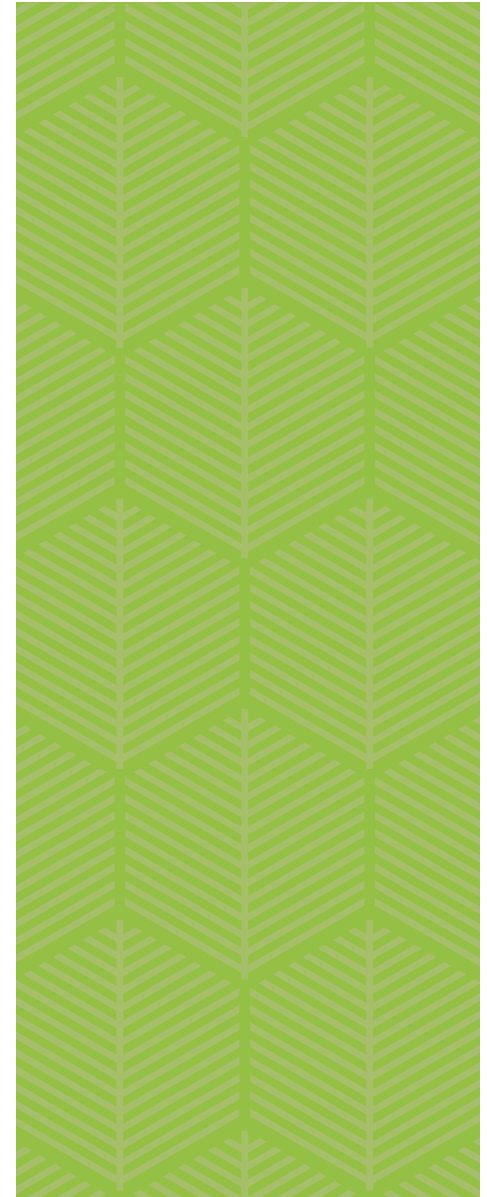
Figure 106: Current wayfinding signage in Downtown Webster City with old logo.

The current wayfinding signage is adequate in content but not style. The new downtown brand should be used in conjunction with new signs.

Image Source: Author

CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

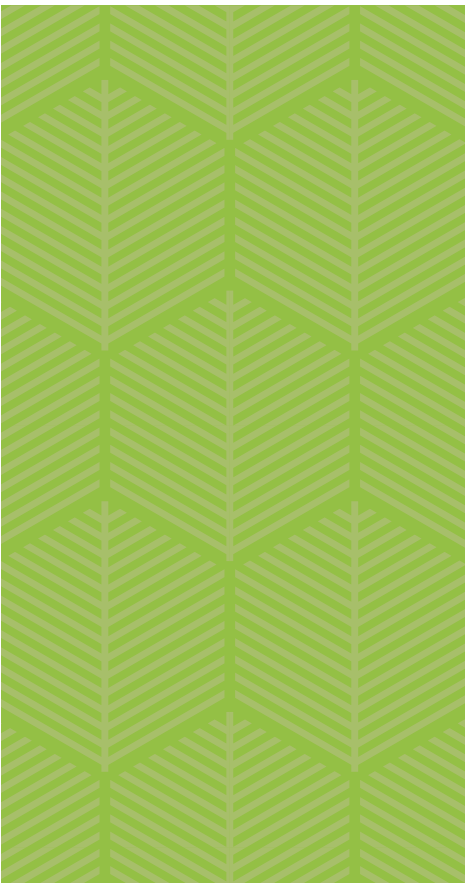
STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D7.3 – CREATE AND SELL A “DOWNTOWN PASSPORT” WHICH PROVIDES DRINK AND DINING SPECIALS FOR MULTIPLE ESTABLISHMENTS	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown business owners, PSI, inTANDEM	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Design and print small booklets, possibly marketed as passports and printed by the local firm PSI. Each page should be dedicated to a local establishment where a drink or dining discount can be applied. When the booklet is presented by the patron, it should be stamped by the establishment to track progress. The booklet may only be valid for a certain amount of time (i.e. one year) and a small prize can be provided to the first person to get a stamp from all establishments, possibly a free booklet the following year. This is a way to engage residents and visitors through the same action while promoting downtown businesses, as well.			



Objective D8: Celebrate diverse cultures

Celebrating diverse cultures is important within the community but it can also serve as an attraction to bring visitors with different cultures to downtown. A Hispanic grocery store and restaurant and Asian restaurant are well recognized downtown. These should be considered alongside other successful downtown entities. The owners should be highlighted and communication should be established with these ambitious individuals to serve as representatives of their respective cultural communities throughout Webster City. Greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures is at the core of this objective.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D8.1 – INCLUDE CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE 250 DAY EVENT CALENDAR	Promotion Committee, ACE	★ ★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$\$
	Cultural holidays should be celebrated alongside all currently established events. As well, a welcoming atmosphere of inclusion for all cultures should be created at every event. This can be created by promoting cultural art as part of a community art festival or holding the Staff Chat at minority owned businesses. (Refer to Appendix for more information on these two events.)			
D8.2 – EMBRACE NEW IMMIGRANT AND MINORITY RESIDENTS	Chamber of Commerce, ACE	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$
	Translate all material in the welcome basket to the native language of new residents if different than English and include contact information for a representative mentor from ACE. This will make newcomers feel particularly welcomed and help them find basic information about living in Webster City such as utility set up, shopping locations, and local events.			



Objective D9: Improve public-private partnerships

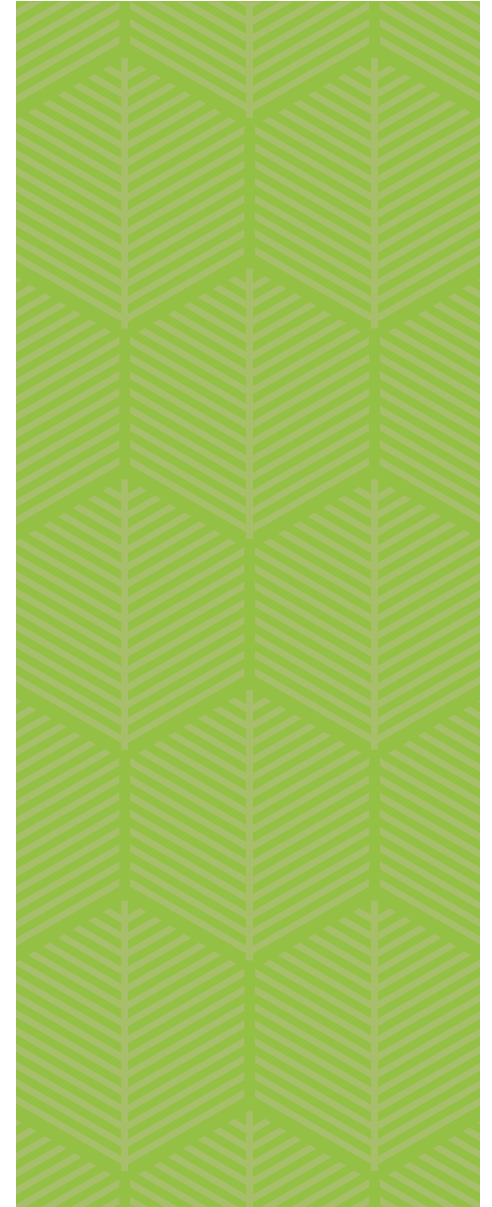
A common theme throughout the public engagement events was a lack of communication between public officials and business owners. A distrust existed as well as lack of dialogue between both parties. This relationship has room to grow and multiple projects may be on the horizon to incorporate this approach where both can benefit, especially with events and other ways to make downtown a destination. Progress has already been made such as the recent approval to continue SSMID.

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D9.1 – ESTABLISH CLEAR LINES OF COMMUNICATION	Business owners, City	★ ★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$
	Transparency is important for trust between business owners and the City of Webster City. Both parties are responsible with keeping the other well informed and this starts with clear communication. A monthly or quarterly business news letter sent from the City could be established or an annual survey of business owners could be conducted to gauge feelings and find ways to adapt to changing economic conditions.			
D9.2 – PROVIDE ADVERTISEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES AT EVERY EVENT DURING THE 250 DAY EVENT CALENDAR	Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce	★	SHORT-TERM	\$
	Advertisement opportunities are a way for local businesses to show support for public events and are mutually beneficial for both the businesses and Promotion Committee. Extra funding can be obtained by the Promotion Committee to execute an event in exchange for low cost advertisement for businesses.			



CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

STRATEGY	KEY PARTNERS	PRIORITY	TIME	COST
D9.1 – UTILIZE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DOWNTOWN PROJECTS	Chamber of Commerce, Business owners, City	★ ★	LONG-TERM	\$
	As much as possible, all projects described in this report and any others that may occur should be sourced from local businesses. Local food and drink vendors should be used at events, local construction companies should be used for structural needs, and local banks and accountants should be used for financial needs.			



CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

EXAMPLE ACTION TABLE

STRATEGY D1.1- CREATE A BRAND SPECIFIC FOR DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY

Creating a brand around the downtown strategically communicates positive attributes that residents and visitors might not be aware of or take advantage of without. The brand should be crafted to evoke feelings of pride and participation, define the community, and ultimately, encourage individuals to take action by visiting Downtown Webster City.

PRIORITY: ★★ ★

MEDIUM-TERM

COST: \$\$

KEY PARTNERS: Promotion Committee, Community Vitality Director, inTANDEM Marketing

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Write a creative brief. This document illustrates the brand goal, target audience, style considerations, current perceptions, and desired perceptions.	Member #1	1st Month	N/A
Circulate the creative brief among business owners and residents in the downtown via email and organize the input.	Member #2	1st Month	Downtown Committee
Update the creative brief with comments provided from the public.	Members #1-2	2nd Month	N/A
Write a request for proposal (RFP) to create a downtown brand including a logo and slogan, as well as a timeline for the project. Other additions can be considered such as social media, print, and video material to accompany the brand.	Community Vitality Director and Member #3	2nd and 3rd Month	N/A
Directly send the request for proposal to familiar marketing agencies such as inTANDEM Marketing.	Member #3	3rd Month	N/A

CHAPTER 6: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN WEBSTER CITY AS A DESTINATION

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources
Write and submit a press release that advertises the RFP in the Des Moines, Ames, Waterloo, and Cedar Rapids media markets. (Television: KCCI, WHO, KWWL, KCRG; Print: The Des Moines Register, The Cedar Rapids Gazette)	Member #4	3rd Month	N/A
Collect, review, and narrow down the top RFP submissions.	Full Promotion Committee	4th Month	N/A
Invite agencies with top submissions to Webster City for an interview.	Member #5	5th Month	N/A
Hire firm that will best execute brand goals. Provide the creative brief for additional context.	Full Promotion Committee	5th and 6th Month	Downtown Committee
Collaborate with firm throughout the project with quick responsiveness to any inquires.	Members #5-6	6th and 7th Month	N/A
Approve downtown brand by vote of downtown committee.	Full Promotion Committee	8th Month	N/A
<p>Additional Notes: Use this space to add any additional information, for example: Peer city, Independence, Iowa, successfully navigated a rebrand which started in 2015. Below are the four steps the committee followed in collaboration with the marketing agency, Bluespace Creative, from nearby Denison, Iowa.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research Phase – Brand Assessment and Strategy 2. Tagline Phase – Positioning Statement 3. Logo Mark Phase – Logo Identity 4. Brand Standards Guide – Overall guidelines for use of logo, color scheme, design elements, font usage, etc. <p>Source: The City of Independence Iowa Branding Project</p>			

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APPENDIX A

Webster City Budget

	FY 2020 Budgeted	FY 2019 Budgeted	FY 2018
Revenues			
Taxes Levied on Property	\$ 3,750,743	\$ 3,659,683	\$ 3,554,999
TIF Revenues	\$ 256,752	\$ 233,437	\$ 296,625
Other City Taxes	\$ 897,729	\$ 837,310	\$ 783,147
Licenses & Permits	\$ 124,430	\$ 107,460	\$ 104,810
Use of Money and Property	\$ 700,516	\$ 440,933	\$ 420,904
Intergovernmental	\$ 1,239,650	\$ 1,709,166	\$ 1,245,530
Charges for Fees & Services	\$ 15,723,626	\$ 16,272,304	\$ 14,398,871
Special Assessments	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,184,189	\$ 2,435,086	\$ 1,670,267
Other Financing Sources	\$ -	\$ 35,000,000	\$ 35,000,000
Transfers In	\$ 4,264,244	\$ 22,853,260	\$ 21,848,052
Total Revenue and Other Sources	\$ 29,141,879	\$ 83,548,639	\$ 79,323,205
Expenditures			
Public Safety	\$ 2,529,810	\$ 2,523,733	\$ 2,490,359
Public Works	\$ 1,881,579	\$ 1,684,905	\$ 1,529,564
Health and Social Services	\$ 57,235	\$ 65,135	\$ 65,135
Culture and Recreation	\$ 1,817,597	\$ 1,689,265	\$ 1,271,448
Community and Economic Development	\$ 315,568	\$ 312,438	\$ 276,054
General Government	\$ 384,415	\$ 351,593	\$ 297,610
Debt Service	\$ 818,501	\$ 802,763	\$ 756,855
Capital Projects	\$ 1,480,411	\$ 969,900	\$ 1,875,203
Total Government Activities Expenditures	\$ 9,285,116	\$ 8,399,732	\$ 8,562,228
Business Type / Enterprises	\$ 15,893,924	\$ 34,441,315	\$ 32,983,421
Total ALL Expenditures	\$ 25,179,040	\$ 42,841,047	\$ 41,545,649
Transfers Out	\$ 4,264,244	\$ 22,853,260	\$ 21,848,052
Total ALL Expenditures / Transfers Out	\$ 29,443,284	\$ 65,694,307	\$ 63,393,701
Excess Revenues & Other Sources Over (Under) Expenditures/Transfers Out	\$ (301,405)	\$ 17,854,332	\$ 15,929,504

Source: Iowa Department of Management

Survey



English ▾

Thank you for giving us a few minutes of your time today. We invite you to participate in a survey being conducted by students in the University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning in collaboration with the City of Webster City. The purpose of this survey is to gather information for the forthcoming downtown plan for Webster City. Your input is very valuable and greatly appreciated!

This survey should take about 4 minutes to complete. All answers are completely anonymous and voluntary. You can choose to skip any question. Progress is shown on the bar below.

This survey is part of a partnership between the City of Webster City and the University of Iowa's Office of Outreach and Engagement. For more information, please visit <https://outreach.uiowa.edu/>

If you have any questions, please contact Travis Kraus, Director of Economic Development & Sustainability in the Office of Outreach and Engagement at 319.335.2798 or travis-kraus@uiowa.edu.



English ▾

Rate downtown Webster City on the following attributes:

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Very Poor
Attractiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of Community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parking Convenience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic Flow	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shopping Hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safety	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Variety of Goods and Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Events and Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedestrian and Bike Friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



English ▼

How frequently do you visit Downtown Webster City for the following?

	Daily	1-2 times per week	1-2 times per month	1-2 times per year	Never
Shopping (non grocery)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grocery Shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Restaurants/ Bars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Services (banking, insurance, hair)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Passing through	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>					



What types of business missing from Downtown Webster City, if there, would you utilize?

If you lived downtown, which kind of housing would you like to live in?

Select one of the following:

Renting Owning

Select one of the following

1-2 bedrooms 3+ bedrooms

Select one of the following

Historically renovated Newly-built

What attributes would you like to see more of in Downtown Webster City?

Select all that apply

Bike lanes

Public art

Outdoor restaurants

Parks and greenspace

Other

What type of physical changes would you like to see in Downtown Webster City?

What events would you like to see in Downtown Webster City?

Select all that apply

Live music

Markets (farmers markets, craft markets, etc.)

Festivals (holiday, music, etc.)

Pop-up shops

Other

Is there anything else you would like us to know about Webster City's downtown?

English ▼

Where do you live

- Downtown Webster City
 - Within Webster City city limits, but outside of downtown
 - Outside of Webster City (please provide name of town)
-

What is your age range?

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other



Thank you for completing the survey for downtown Webster City. As the planning team moves forward, please know your responses will be taken into account.

The original link to the survey can be found [here](#).

Survey Stratification

The survey experienced a substantial overrepresentation of female respondents relative to the town's current population distribution. According to the 5 year ACS estimate for 2017, Webster City's population is 52% female and 48% male. However, in the survey, the percentage of female respondents was 77% and the percentage for males was 23%. The reason for this difference is unknown but possibly due to a higher online participation rate by females. The survey was advertised on Facebook and available to complete online. Post stratification was required to correct the difference. A weight greater than two was assigned to all male answers while a weight of less than one was assigned to all female answers. This means each male answer was worth over twice as much each female answer to make up for the lack of male answers. The weights for males and females were calculated by dividing the population proportions by the sample proportions of each gender. Post stratification only slightly altered the survey results. The overall analysis of each result remained the same.

Focus group invitation for business owners



YOU'RE INVITED

**TO JOIN US FOR A DISCUSSION
WITH LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERS**

Our team would like to extend a special invitation to you to join us for a discussion session about downtown Webster City.

We are working to help create a more active and resilient downtown. We cannot do it without input from business owners like you.

Help establish a vision for the future of Webster City.

Let us know what's important to you!

RSVP at WCDiscussions@gmail.com or 319-382-6704

Monday
November 12th
Refreshments will be served at 5:00
Discussion from 5:30-6:30
in
The Sampson Room
at
Fuller Recreation Center
625 Bank Street

For more information visit: iisc.uiowa.edu/webster-city-downtown-strategic-plan

Fall open house flier in English



JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT A COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

We are working to help create a more active and resilient downtown.
Help establish a vision for the future of Webster City.
Let us know what's important to you!

Monday
November 12th
7:00-8:30
in
The Sampson Room
at
Fuller Recreation Center
625 Bank Street

Refreshments will be served

For more information visit: iisc.uiowa.edu/webster-city-downtown-strategic-plan
Reach us at 319-382-6704 or WCDiscussions@gmail.com

Fall open house flier in Spanish



ÚNASE A LA CONVERSACIÓN EN UN EVENTO ABIERTO A TODA LA COMUNIDAD

Trabajamos para ayudar a crear un centro de la ciudad más animado y energético.
Ayúdenos a crear una visión para el futuro para Webster City.
¡Queremos saber lo que es importante para usted!

Lunes
12 de Noviembre
7:00-8:30 pm
en el salón
The Sampson Room
del
Fuller Recreation Center
625 Bank Street

Se servirán refrescos

Para más información, visite: iisc.uiowa.edu/webster-city-downtown-strategic-plan
Contáctenos en el 319-382-6704 o WCDiscussions@gmail.com

Welcome poster for fall focus group and open house



WELCOME TO WEBSTER CITY DOWNTOWN DISCUSSIONS

WHO WE ARE

Hello! We are Emily, Jess, Jasmine, Ryan, and Reuben.

We're a team from the University of Iowa that is partnering with the City of Webster City and the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities. Our group is tasked with developing a downtown plan that will be heavily influenced by community input and research.



WHY WE'RE HERE

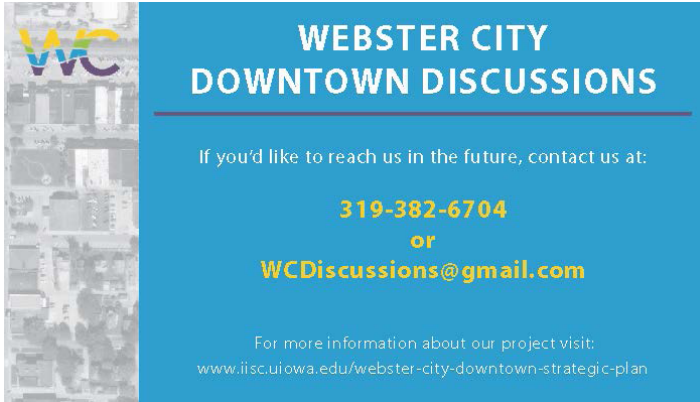
We are in the early stages of developing a plan that aims to revitalize the downtown commercial district through small business growth, building improvements, residential development, and strategies to attract residents and visitors to the area.

Our group is interested in your input and insight, as a resident of Webster City. Your contribution will help drive the vision of the plan for your town. With your guidance, we can help create a more active and resilient downtown Webster City.

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US!



Contact card



WC

**WEBSTER CITY
DOWNTOWN DISCUSSIONS**

If you'd like to reach us in the future, contact us at:

319-382-6704
or
WCDiscussions@gmail.com

For more information about our project visit:
www.iisc.uiowa.edu/webster-city-downtown-strategic-plan

Help establish a vision for the future of Webster City.

Let us know what's important to you!

You can take our community input survey online at:

www.tinyurl.com/dtwcsurvey

APPENDIX B

Sheet filled out by business owners that attended the focus group

1. Name of owner; name and address of business _____
2. How long have you been in operation? _____
3. Do you currently own or rent the building your business is in? _____
Do you prefer owning or renting? _____
4. If there is a second story to your building, what is it used for? _____
5. How many full-time employees do you have? _____
6. Which of the following strategies do you use to increase your sales during less busy days/hours?
 - a. Advertise
 - b. Product promotion
 - c. Extended hours
 - d. Change of product/service
 - e. Nothing
 - f. Other _____
7. Do you have succession plans in place for your business? _____
8. Would you be willing to discuss your business more at a later date? If yes, please provide a phone number we can call. _____

When you're finished, please leave this with one of the planning team members.

If you have any comments for us, please share them here: _____


When you're finished, please leave this with one of the planning team members.

Spring open house: Economic Hub Poster

Establish Webster City's Downtown as a Vibrant Economic Hub


A Attract businesses to downtown

Form a team of "Downtown Ambassadors" to engage outside businesses and attract them to Webster City. Downtown Ambassadors would be equipped with details about the available commercial spaces within the downtown and target businesses that would be beneficial for our people and economy or carry out a targeted marketing campaign.




B Increase the number of occupied commercial spaces

Through partnerships with community service groups work towards incremental improvements to building exteriors. Consider forming partnerships with the local high school and community college technical and construction programs to work towards this goal. Consider alternative uses for spaces that had previously been used strictly for retail. Consider using a vacancy fee for storefronts that are not used.




C Support existing businesses

Offer both technical and financial support to existing businesses. Examples of technical support includes assistance with developing plans for the future of a business, access to an online business resource toolkit, or leadership training. Financial support could include an online resource that lists potential lending sources or improving access to small scale lending or other financing options. Other support could include promoting public WiFi and increasing internet speed.




D Cultivate a pro-business ecosystem

Hosting events where ideas for new businesses are pitched or workshops where business improvement strategies are discussed, information is made easily accessible for those interested in starting a business within Webster City's downtown, including who to contact with questions and available financial resources. Create a business mentorship program for those seeking guidance in business endeavors.



E Encourage downtown living

To ensure that all spaces within the downtown are being used to their full potential, promote downtown living. Consider allowing selling landlords to post their vacancies in a central location on the city's website and social media outlets. Include key details like photos, price, and contact information. Encourage the expansion of underutilized spaces to be used for housing. Connect those wanting to make improvements to their housing to information about loans and financing that are specifically meant for housing.




Spring open house: Beautify and Activate Poster

Beautify and Activate Downtown


A **Fix downtown buildings**

Provide incentives and resources to rehabilitate downtown buildings, including facade and structural improvements. This could be achieved by establishing guidelines for facade enhancements and creating financial incentives for building owners. Building code violations could be enforced quickly and easily to ensure that no buildings are neglected or improperly used. Additionally, demonstrated excellence in enhancements should be recognized and celebrated by the community.




B **Encourage extended business hours**

Keep the downtown active later in to the evening. This could benefit businesses as well as shoppers or diners.




C **Improve the look and function of signage**

Develop guidelines to enhance the overall appearance and materials used on the downtown signs and create a cohesive look for business signage within the downtown. Guidelines for informational signage, such as business hours or wayfinding, could also be created.




D **Increase foot traffic**

Encourage people to walk around our downtown through several methods, including making sure that all crosswalk locations are clearly displayed, offering more outdoor seating, or highlighting the downtown's connection to the surrounding multi-use trails. Motivate those traveling along the trails to stop in the downtown by creating maps that show what is in the area or providing improved bike infrastructure.




E **Maintain streetscapes**

Uphold the improvements that have been made to the sidewalks, planters, trees, and greenways. Where possible, expand those improvements beyond Second Street.




F **Embrace and encourage the arts**

Sculptures, murals, photography, video projection or other types of public art could be placed throughout the downtown. Art could be displayed on sidewalks, street corners, sides of buildings, or inside of empty storefronts.



G **Develop a historic preservation committee**

Consider creating a committee devoted to historic preservation in order to assist downtown buildings in applying for registration on the National Register of Historic Places. Designation as a historic property would help acquire financial support for building improvements. Having multiple sites that are registered with the National Register could help develop a sense of place and an appreciation of Webster City's historic elements.



Spring open house: Destination Poster

Make Downtown a Destination

A **Establish a downtown brand**

Modernize visual elements like banners and signage to differentiate downtown from the surrounding community. Make improvements specific to the downtown and its amenities.



B **Greet visitors so they feel welcomed in the downtown**

Consider preparing a "welcome package" or brochure for visitors that can be kept at visitor information and building. Equip individual businesses to support other, business and community events. Offer customer service or customer training for interested business owners. Consider to design and maintain an ambient downtown atmosphere for visitors.



C **Increase the number of events hosted in downtown**

Enable the downtown area to be a centralized location for regular community events and serve as the heart of the community. This could include already established events like Doochberry Days and Intercity, or solutions for new events. As a summer music series, weekend sales and book festival, food and wine festival, and sponsored Tuesday Markets.



D **Develop a unified promotional strategy**

Downtown business owners could coordinate to advertise their operations collectively in increasing social media or print media activity and agree to similar business hours to help each other gain potential business. Collaboration between business owners could also include identifying shared events like festivals or other events. There may also be an opportunity for join an established group supporting downtown's reputation.



E **Recognize excellence in business and community pride**

Regularly present awards for downtown businesses in the community that have demonstrated exceptional customer care could include service, retail history of the town, or White City guide. The award could feature a banner to display in their storefront.



F **Celebrate diverse cultures**

Embrace the diversity that exists in our community by hosting public events and activities for our diverse population. Develop new events that could bring the community about greater segments of White City's demographics. Consider providing city materials in English and Spanish.



G **Create a central hub for information**

Keep residents informed of important issues to your community. Use Facebook, a business website that is updated, or the community for the most up-to-date information on White City including current events, events and job opportunities.



H **Enhance the experience of being downtown**

Make maps specific to the downtown accessible to downtown businesses, City staff, other downtown centers and the Atwater Young Library. Create a method for anonymous feedback regarding the downtown that residents and visitors can make suggestions for improvement. Consider making recommendations for downtown committees and business owners to encourage and implement.



I **Improve public-private relations**

Consider open lines of communication between residents and public officials to address any concerns, questions regarding the downtown and to better utilize the city's website for residents. In the longer term to better their concerns or questions. Encourage transparency by hosting regular open-house downtown open to the public business topics of interest.



Spring open house: Feedback sheet

Webster City Downtown

Rank the strategies listed below. Please share any comments or thoughts you have about them. If you have questions about any of the strategies, feel free to come talk with us. If you feel a strategy should not be pursued at all, you can indicate that.

Establish Webster City as a Vibrant Economic Hub

Please rank #1-#5, #1 indicating the highest rank

Priority	Strategies	Comments
A	Attract businesses to downtown	
B	Increase the number of occupied commercial spaces	
C	Support existing businesses	
D	Cultivate a pro-business ecosystem	
E	Encourage downtown living	

Beautify and Activate Downtown

Please rank #1-#7, #1 indicating the highest rank

Priority	Strategies	Comments
A	Fix downtown buildings	
B	Encourage extended business hours	
C	Improve the look and function of signage	
D	Increase foot traffic	
E	Maintain streetscapes	
F	Embrace and encourage the arts	
G	Develop a historic preservation committee	

OVER →

Place Downtown in Context

Please rank #1-#9, #1 indicating the highest rank

Priority	Strategies	Comments
A	Establish a downtown brand	
B	Greet visitors so they feel welcomed in the downtown	
C	Increase the number of events hosted in downtown	
D	Develop a unified promotional strategy	
E	Recognize excellence in business and community pride	
F	Celebrate diverse cultures	
G	Create a central hub for information	
H	Enhance the experience of being downtown	
I	Improve public-private relations	

Any other comments or feedback?

Spring open house: Sign up sheet

How can you help make Downtown Webster City into a vibrant place?

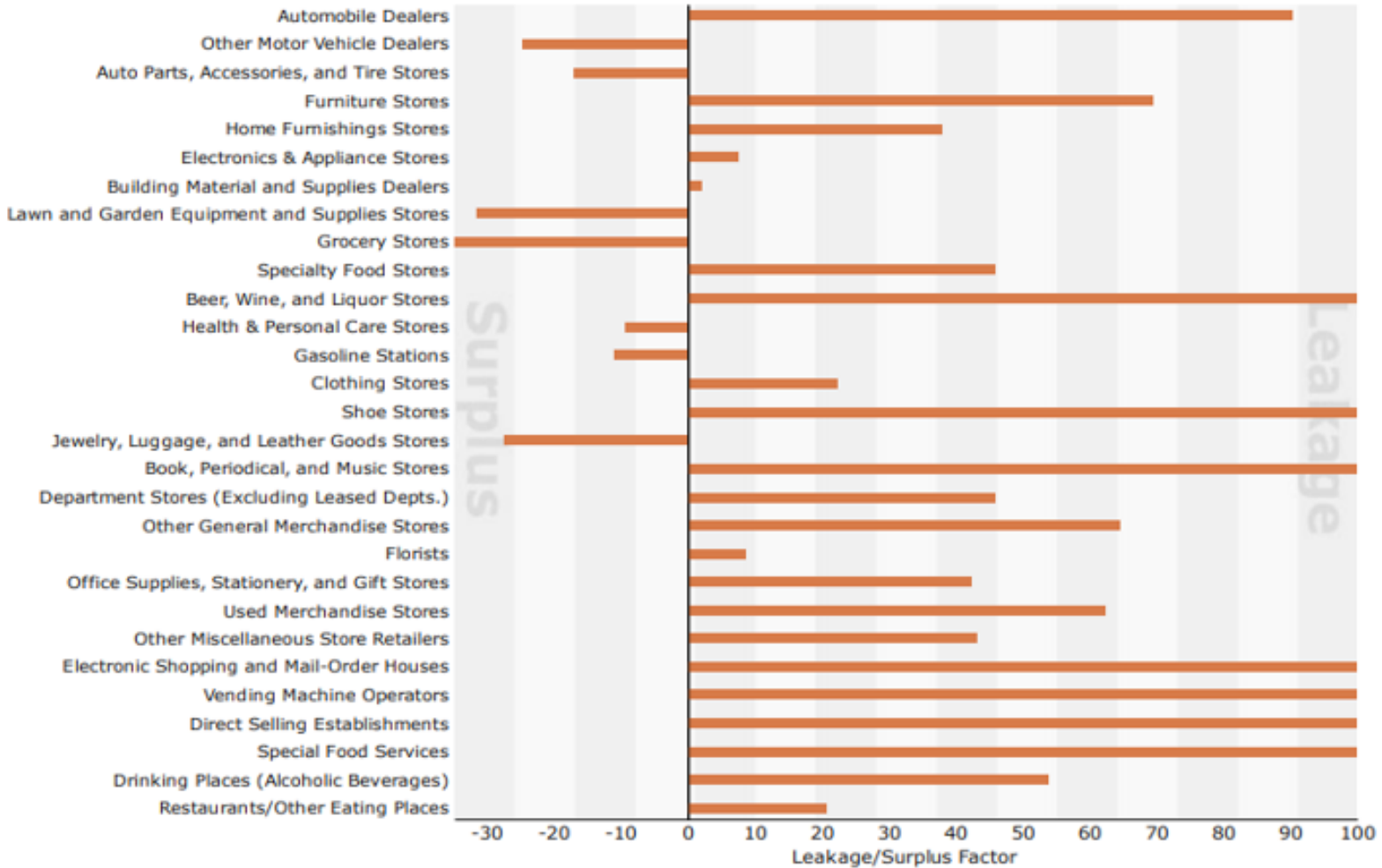
- Create marketing content (i.e. logos)
- Mentor new entrepreneurs and business owners
- Conduct a workshop
- Take high quality photos of the downtown and events
- Commit to spending \$50 every month at a downtown business
- Serve on a committee
- Clean up public and green spaces downtown
- Donate supplies or building space for events
- Provide music for events
- Welcome newcomers and visitors to town
- Manage online data
- Host a roundtable discussion or meetup
- Assist with light construction projects
- Write posts about downtown events
- Attend meetup events and discussions
- Download and use the Locable community events calendar
- Contribute to public art
- Look to local goods and service providers first
- Translate English documents into Spanish
- Create social media content
- Assist with regular landscape maintenance
- Decorating for holidays and events (setup or teardown)
- Organize volunteers
- Paint walls or sides of buildings
- Help organize and plan a downtown event
- Sponsor events
- Donate services to business startups
- Stay open late once a week (for retailers)
- Be positive and enthusiastic about Webster City
- Buy products from the Farmer's Market
- Attend downtown events
- Give community tours
- Share posts and events on social media
- Do you have other ideas? _____

Thank you for your input! How can we contact you?

Name and phone number: _____

Market Analysis- Leakage and Surplus Factor by Industry Group

2017 Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Group




Example of Building Inventory Report Card for a parcel

Building Inventory - Parcel Detail


Property Location: 723 Seneca Street

Map




<p>Doing Business As The Produce Station and County Attorney</p>	<p>Prior Assessed Values</p> <p>2015 \$36,460</p> <p>2010 \$36,460</p> <p>2005 \$38,610</p> <p>2000 \$26,720</p>
<p>Deed Holder Newcastle Properties, LLC</p>	<p>Monthly Lease \$1,200</p>
<p>Classification Comercial</p>	<p>ADA Accessible Yes</p>
<p>Property Value \$26,470</p>	<p>Facade Quality Excellent</p>
<p>Total Value \$32,720</p>	<p>Interior Quality Good</p>
<p>Year Built 1850</p>	<p>Construction Timber</p>
<p>Building Area 2,258 sq. ft.</p>	<p>HVAC Multi-stage, zoned</p>

Facade



Interior



Appendix C: List of possible events for downtown

List of possible downtown events. Some of these events lend themselves well to have a portion of the downtown streets blocked off to encourage foot traffic and more family attendance.

- **Downtown, Up Late:** businesses in the downtown district commit to staying open until 9:00pm once a week.
- **Community art festival:** annual or bi-annual event spotlighting local artists and their craft. This could include classes, demonstrations, and opportunities to buy goods.
- **Wine Walk:** annual or bi-annual event where residents can pay for an engraved wine glass and walk in downtown businesses to get refills of different local wines. Each business could sponsor a different vineyard. Other activities could include wine education classes, grape smashing, or 'sip and make' instructional classes. Here is an example from [Village of East Davenport](#).
- **Doodle Bug Days:** although this event already takes place annually, it could be moved to the downtown area to attract more visitors. Other attractions at the event could include food trucks, mechanic classes on scooter maintenance, or bouncy houses.
- **Staff Chat:** monthly event at a local coffee shop, like Morning Glory, or restaurant where a city staff member makes themselves available for informal conversation with the public.
- **Sidewalk Sales:** annual or bi-annual multi-day event where all downtown merchants display some goods on their sidewalks that may be at a discounted rate. Shutting down Second Street for the event would provide merchants extra space to display goods. Here is an example from [Iowa City](#).
- **Holiday Light Walk:** annual event where downtown stores display lights in their storefronts and possibly offer specials or discounts. Residents walk the downtown streets to view the lights. This could also be a contest for the best light displays. Here is an example from [San Antonio](#).
- **Summer Movie Series:** a weekly or bi-weekly event in the summer months. Residents can bring lawn chairs and snacks to enjoy family-friendly movies displayed on the side of the old bakery or a similar building. Here is an example from [Grand Rapids](#).
- **Taste of Webster City:** annual event where local bakeries, coffee shops, and restaurants are showcased by offering sample portions on the sidewalks and streets. Shutting down Second Street for the event would provide vendors more space for their food items and allow residents to walk around to each vendor. Here is an example from [Iowa City](#).
- **Food Truck Festival:** annual event showcasing local food trucks. Other activities could include crafts for children, a beer garden for 21+ residents, live music, and other things that would encourage different segments of the population to attend. Here are examples from [Cedar Rapids](#) and [Altoona](#).
- **Second Street Songs:** annual event of musical performances. A variety

of music from locals and visitors can be played at different stations down second Street. Allowing different performances to play simultaneously allows visitors to walk freely without missing a beat. Here is an example from [North Liberty](#).

- **Date Night Downtown:** monthly event with specials on alcoholic beverages, dinners, goods, and services ideal for couples. Other specials could be offered by Shanti Rejuvenation Center, Spa Nails, Flower Cart, or Morning Glory. Here is an example from [Washington DC](#).
- **Dub City Block Party:** annual event with an activity for every age group of the population. Some events can occur at a scheduled time like a sand volleyball tournament, vacant building tour, fashion show, children’s story hour, or a concert, while others could go on continuously throughout the day like mini golf, silent disco, or dueling pianos. Residents aged 21+ can purchase a cup and openly drink alcohol purchased from participating vendors. This could be a free event or cost a small fee to take part in the activities. Here is an example from [Iowa City](#).

Blank Action Table

STRATEGY

PRIORITY:

____-TERM

COST:

KEY PARTNERS:

Action Steps	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding Sources

APPENDIX C

Business Recruitment Scorecard: Blank

The following table as referenced in strategy E2.2 can be used understand potential viability for businesses downtown. Each question refers to a different part of the market analysis and public input process.

While this is a guide, as always this has no guarantee of viability or compatibility for an area. Also because of the sensitive information, this tool is for internal purposes only.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT SCORECARD			
Business Name			Date
Main product		Current Location	
Category	Description	Evidence	Yes, No, or Unknown
Target Customer Segment	Is their target customer in Webster City according to the segmentation analysis? If so, which?		
Market Potential	What is the industry gap according to the gap analysis? The higher the number in green from the gap analysis the better.		
Public Input	Do Webster City residents want this type of business as seen in the survey?		
Available Space	Is there a commercial space available for the prospective business?		
Peer City	Does a peer city have this business or a similar one? This can be found on the Chamber of Commerce website.		
Good fit? Yes, No or Maybe			
Comments:			

APPENDIX C

Business Recruitment Scorecard: Example

The following table as referenced in strategy E2.2 can be used understand potential viability for businesses downtown. Each question refers to a different part of the market analysis and public input process.

While this is a guide, as always this has no guarantee of viability or compatibility for an area. Also because of the sensitive information, this tool is for internal purposes only.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT SCORECARD - SAMPLE			
Business Name: Brown's Shoe Fit			Date: May X, 20XX
Main product: Shoes		Current Location: Fort Dodge	
Category	Description	Evidence	Yes, No, or Unknown
Target Customer Segment	Is their target customer in Webster City according to the segmentation analysis? If so, which?	Heartland Communities and Traditional Living	Yes
Market Potential	What is the industry gap according to the gap analysis? The higher the number in green from the gap analysis the better. This should be given the <i>highest</i> weight	+\$414,401	Maybe
Public Input	Do Webster City residents want this type of business as seen in the survey?	20 respondents	Yes
Available Space	Is there a commercial space available for the prospective business?	XX 2 nd Street has 1000 square feet, the average size for a brown's shoe fit store	yes
Peer City	Does a peer city have this business or a similar one? This can be found on the Chamber of Commerce website.	Mount Pleasant	Yes
Good fit: Yes, No or Maybe			Maybe
Comments: while the public obviously wants this type of business and the square foot requirements are met, the retail gap is small, suggesting that the demand for shoes may not be as large as originally expected.			

Murals planned for the downtown



Murals planned for the downtown

