



downtown strategies

HANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Downtown Strategic Plan

July 2023

About Us



Who We Are

Downtown Strategies, a division of Retail Strategies, exists to provide realistic, implementable strategies to communities for revitalizing their downtowns. Led by a team of downtown revitalization practitioners and real estate experts, our combination of real-world experience, plus expertise in real estate and retail uniquely qualify us to assist communities with backfilling vacancies, increasing tourism, and enhancing the sense of place in their downtowns. Serving rural communities in 24 states, Downtown Strategies is the leading national firm for downtown revitalization planning with an emphasis on real estate and retail.

5-Year Plan

At Downtown Strategies, we believe that action and implementation are more important than a flash 20-year vision. Our process is based on our team's experience as practitioners. Our team members have been in your shoes as community leaders and know what it is like to manage downtown revitalization efforts.

Most communities do not suffer from a lack of ideas, they struggle with knowing where to start when it comes to implementing their ideas. Rather than brainstorming everything that you could ever potentially do in your downtown, we focus on a five-year timeframe. This plan is designed to help you identify where your community should focus its energy and effort in the near-term. Implementing these short-term, doable strategies will incrementally shift the trajectory of your downtown and create the spark that you desire.

Our Team



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Key Focus Areas: Organization; Resources; Communication

Our Partnership

Downtown Strategies is thrilled to partner with Hanford to identify short-term opportunities for enhancing their downtown district.

In Hanford, Downtown Strategies conducted an in-market workshop including a Strategic Visioning Workshop and provided strategies within this 5-year strategic plan that are implementable, practical, asset-based, and market-driven. Following adoption of this plan, Downtown Strategies will assist with implementation to give a jump-start to the Hanford team in order to spark action locally.



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Types of Plans



Food Waste - initial interview insights

• Lived in Germany & became more aware of it. Didn't know what it was.
 • Many portuguese people struggle with budget.
 • Food went bad. Didn't plan adequately enough. Are not unexpected.
 • "It's important to him."
 • Use a platform that isn't just comparing instead.
 • Waste more fruits/veggies - (and veggies)
 • I waste because I don't plan enough.
 • I would use an app to keep track of food.
 • Bento helps with planning.
 • TOTTA - very important.
 • Healthy same meals - unhealthy the next.
 • When I buy something different (for new recipe)
 • When I buy something different (for new recipe)
 • Waste man



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TIMELINE

6-8 Weeks

18-24 months

18-24+ Months

SCOPE

5-Years

20+ Years

20+ Years

COST

\$

\$\$

\$\$\$

FOCUS

Action, Incremental Change

Vision, Goals, Ideas

Drawings, Visions, Plans

RECS

Tactical, Practical

Big Picture, Visionary

Big Idea, Extensive

Partnership Timeline

In the winter of 2022, the City of Hanford partnered with Downtown Strategies to develop a short-term strategic vision for Downtown Hanford.

The focus of the vision was to enhance and accelerate the current revitalization efforts occurring in downtown and provide a shared vision for community organizations and stakeholder groups.

Partnership Began December 2022

Kick-Off Call January 2023

Strategic Visioning Workshop April 2023

Market Analysis Presentation July 2023

Strategic Plan Presentation July 2023



The Five Pillars



Market Analysis

Assessing your consumers from multiple geographies allows you to uncover and define the economic potential in your downtown.



Tourism & Promotion
Smart promotion initiatives position your downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.



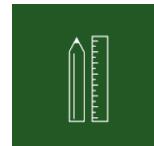
Policy & Administration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.



Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality involves analyzing retail and real estate as the foundation of your redevelopment opportunities, and creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.



Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the downtown district apart.



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DATA & ANALYTICS

Market Analysis

Assessing your consumers from multiple geographies allows you to uncover and define the economic potential in your downtown.

\$8.76

Avocado Toast

Coffee

Tax

\$5.50

\$2.50

\$0.76

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

Market Analysis

We begin by assessing your consumers from multiple geographies. Using our advanced analytics, proprietary tools, and cell phone data, we uncover and define the economic potential in your Downtown area based on a custom trade area derived from mobile data tracking.

Custom Trade Area (CTA) Demographics

Using our advanced analytics and proprietary tools, we uncover and define the economic potential in your Downtown area based on a custom trade area derived from mobile data tracking.

The custom trade area identifies consumers who are **already** traveling to your community on a regular basis to purchase goods and services.



37 Avg. Age
3.08 Avg. Household

48% Latino
38% White



88,685
Daytime population



58,013
City population



101,103
Custom Trade Area Population



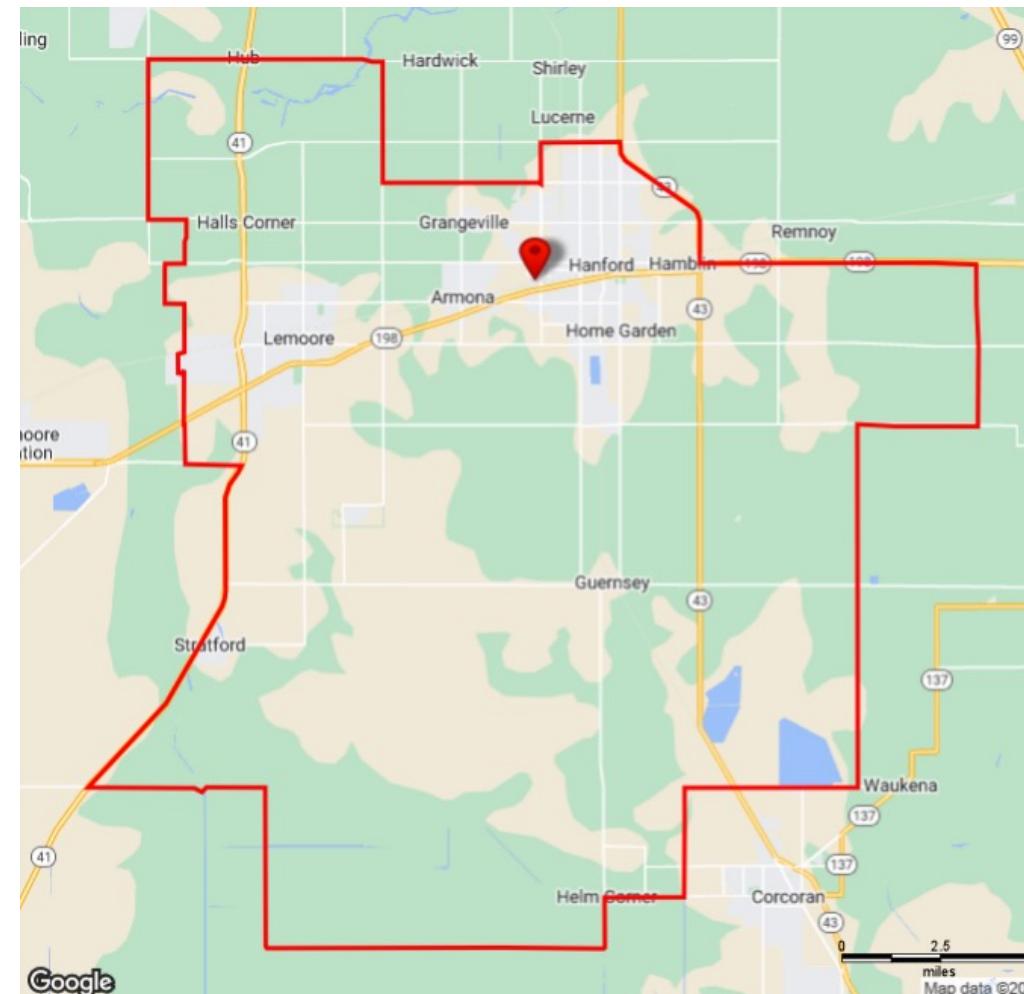
7.72%

Estimated CTA Growth



\$66,655

Median Household Income

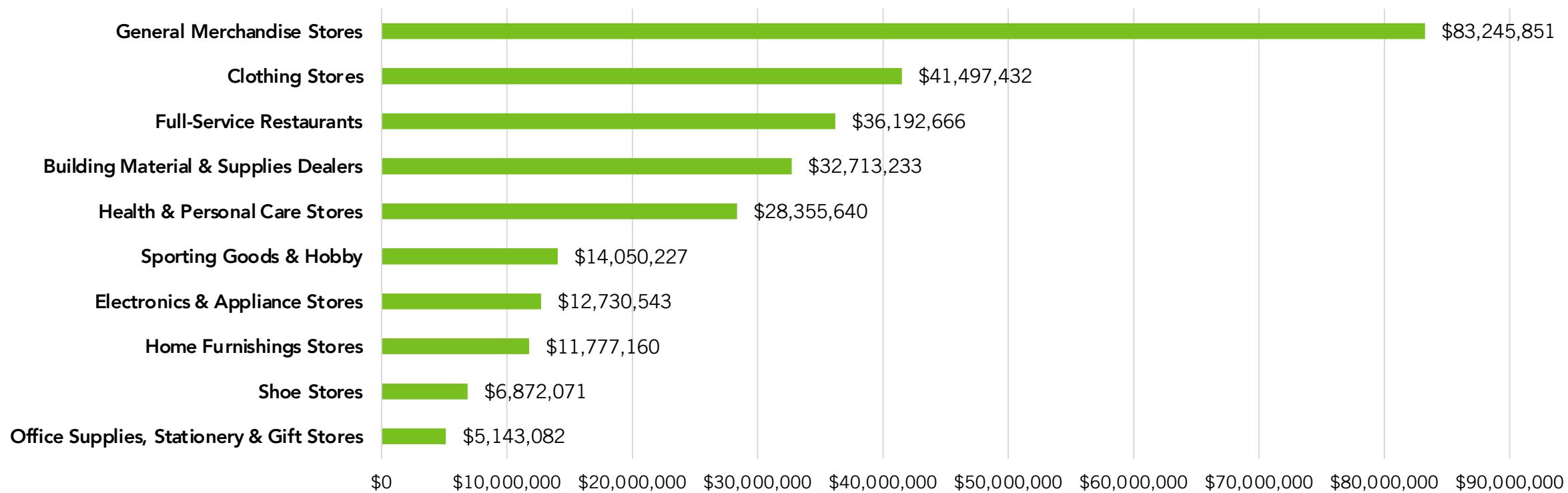


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & KEY FINDINGS

GAP Analysis

When customers leave the trade area and purchase goods and services, that creates what is called **leakage**. Money is leaving the trade area creating a gap in the market.

Communities can attempt to reduce the leakage by recruiting businesses and entrepreneurs within the top categories.





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FOCUS AREA 1

Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the downtown district apart.

Public Art

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Public art brings life into a downtown area. Many downtowns focus on traditional art such as murals and sculptures, both of which add creative elements to the district. However, other elements can also be used to create the foundation for an artistic community. Creative business signage, ghost sign restoration, painted crosswalks and intersections, selfie stations, temporary art installations, and other additions add to the artistic personality of the community.

In Hanford

Hanford has struggled with the addition of public art, mainly murals, in recent years due to the potential controversial nature of art. Community leaders have struggled to identify artwork and designs that would be appropriate for the downtown area and not receive negative feedback from residents. Community leaders understand the important role that public art plays in creating a vibrant downtown, but they need to find an initial pilot project that will generate positive feedback and engage the overall community.

A simple "Downtown Hanford" or "Welcome to Downtown Hanford" mural should be designed. The message of the mural is clear and should not be viewed as controversial by most stakeholders. The background of the mural should be a simple geometric or similar pattern. A vibrant, but tasteful color palette should be chosen. The mural should be located in a visual location that provides a safe photo opp for downtown visitors.

Case Studies

Clayton, North Carolina's Public Art Advisory Board hosts an annual Downtown Sculpture Trail which places sculptures throughout the downtown area. The program started small and has grown to include 12 sculptures by artists from around the country. Artists submit their artwork to the advisory board who selects the artwork for the year. The sculptures are placed in strategic locations throughout the downtown district which encourages visitors to explore the area. A brochure with a map is also created to identify the locations, artists, and artwork.

Learn More

[Annual Sculpture Trail - Clayton, North Carolina](#)





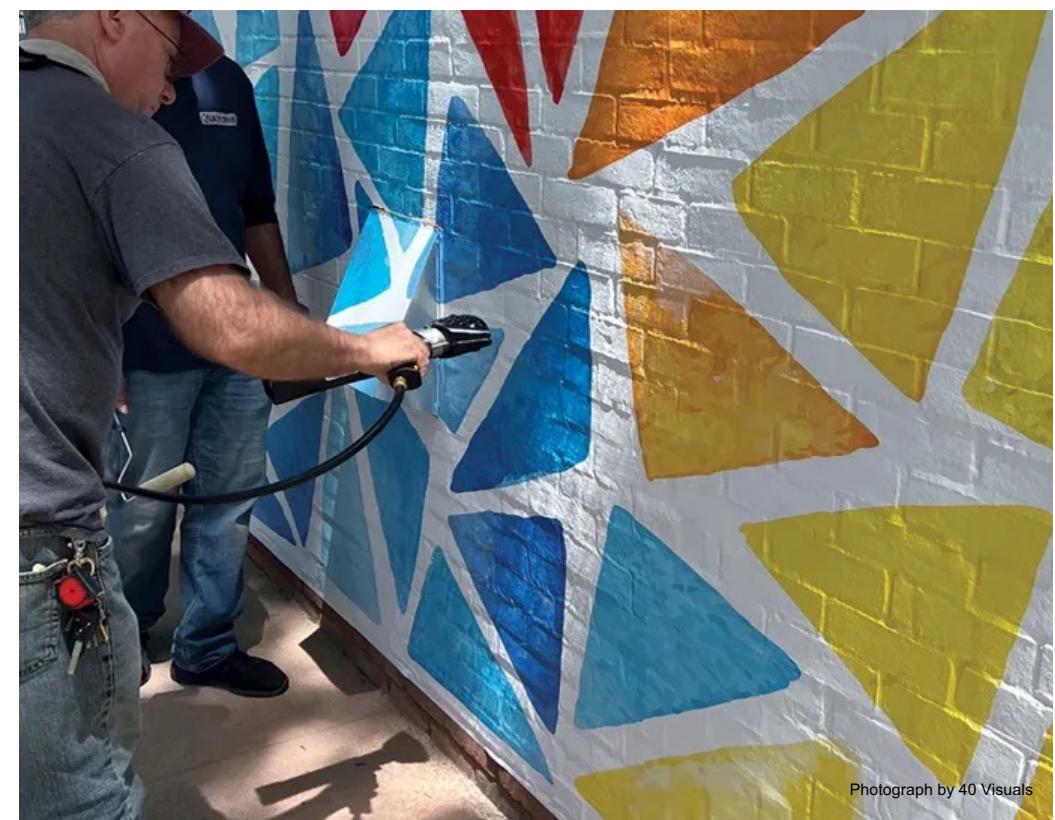
Public Art

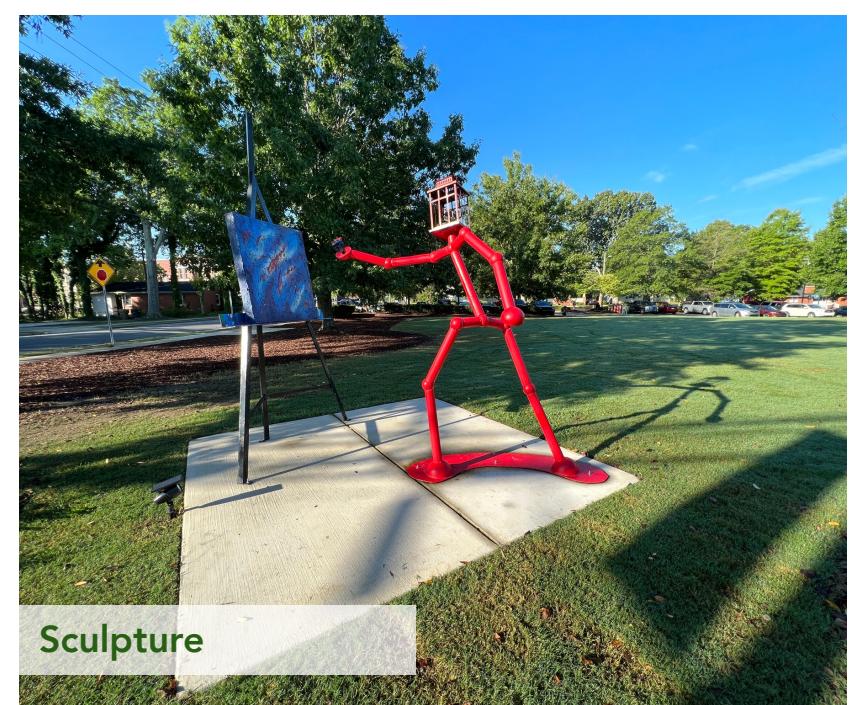
Murals – Heat Applied Graphics

Advancements in technology have opened the door for a wide range of creative signage and art projects. Heat applied graphics, like heated vinyl, allow a seemingly endless range of possibilities for murals and public art. These graphics are printed on panel rolls similar to wallpaper and applied using a specific heating process so that the material adheres to the brick, block, or other material. The adhesion allows the texture of the material to show through giving the mural a painted appearance.

Anything from artwork, logos, graphics, or photographs may be printed on the material. The same heat treatment is used to remove the sign without damaging the wall surface. This process can also be used indoors without damaging sheetrock walls. This type of project requires a partnership with a qualified professional installer.

Heat applied graphics allow for murals to be installed without permanently painting the wall surface which may be more appealing to partnering property owners. The semi-permanent nature also allows for a wider variety of artwork and uses. Some communities have used the opportunity to display seasonal events calendars in the downtown area. This is something that would not have been practical with traditional mural treatments.





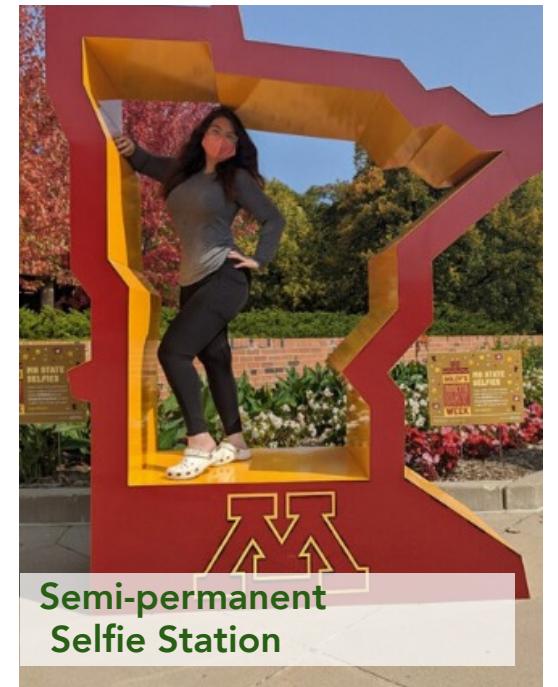
Sculpture



Ghost Sign Restoration



Temporary Selfie Station



Semi-permanent
Selfie Station



Selfie Wall Mural



Traditional Mural

Adopt a Planter Program

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Landscape planters are a key component of a downtown streetscape. Curb extensions reclaim excess asphalt and convert the space into planters for landscaping and aesthetic enhancements. Adding street trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and annual color greatly enhance the walkability and appearance of downtown and add to the vibrancy of the district.

While the addition of planters is a tremendous asset, they can quickly become a distraction if the landscaping and spaces are not well maintained. Weeds, overgrown plant material, and empty planters give a negative impression to visitors, business owners, and stakeholders. So, if planters are added, it is critical that they are maintained properly throughout all seasons. Realizing that the addition of annuals, perennials, shrubs, or groundcover will require additional maintenance demands, various options should be explored for upgrading and enhancing the plantings in these areas. Creative solutions could include an adopt-a-planter program.

In Hanford

The curb extension planters throughout Downtown Hanford have allowed for the addition of street trees and provided space for additional landscaping. The street trees provide shade, soften the appearance of downtown, and add to the walkability of the district. However, many of the planters were void of any additional plant material leaving the area at the base of the trees empty.

If the city budget will not allow for increased maintenance in the short term, an adopt-a-planter program should be explored. These programs allow for private businesses, civic groups, and other volunteers to claim responsibility for a specific planter. Whoever adopts the planter is responsible for the planting and maintenance of the space.

Standards which outline appropriate plant species, maintenance standards, etc. can be established to create a unified appearance throughout the downtown area. This type of program could involve a partnership between the city and Main Street Hanford.



Adopt a Planter Program

Focus Area 1: Design

Case Studies

Many communities host adopt-a-planter programs. Most are very similar and allow the partnering group to plant and maintain the planters throughout the year. Some programs place all responsibilities on the volunteers, others share the responsibilities. For example, some cities are responsible for the watering of the landscaping either through an irrigation system or other methods. Some cities share the initial cost of the plant material by purchasing in bulk during planting times.

The Town of Los Gatos, California partners with the Los Gatos Community Foundation, Inc. Beautification Committee to host an adopt-a-planter program for the 30 planters along Santa Cruz Avenue. The town offers an annual \$150 per planter voucher to offset the costs associate with planting and maintaining the planters. They also outline appropriate plant species for each season, soil tips, and other guidelines. The town is responsible for the irrigation system and the street trees while the adoptee is responsible for seasonal landscaping throughout the year.

Learn More

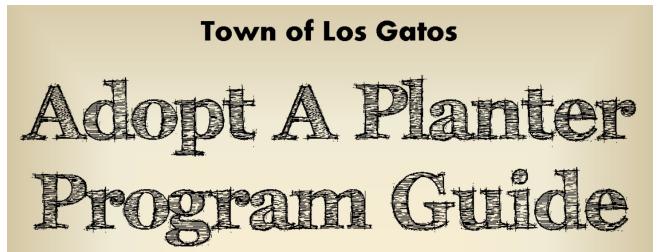
[Town of Los Gatos, California Adopt-a-Planter Program](#)

[East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania Adopt-a-Planter Program](#)

[Plymouth, Michigan Adopt-a-Planter Program](#)

[Lewiston, Pennsylvania Adopt-a-Planter Program](#)

[Highland Park, Illinois Adopt-a-Planter Program](#)



Sidewalk Vibrancy

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Vibrant sidewalks are key to creating a successful downtown environment. Creating street-level vibrancy involves adding **layers** of various streetscape elements that attract pedestrian activity. Public investment in streetscape elements such as pedestrian infrastructure, streetlights, street trees, benches, and other fixtures set a firm foundation. Additional layers from the private sector such as potted plants, creative signage, outdoor dining, merchandise displays, and lighting bring the sidewalks to life. The combination of public investment and private sector engagement creates a unique sense of place and an active downtown district.

In Hanford

While the city and community development organizations play an important role in improving the public infrastructure within the streetscape, the private business owners can add life and unique character into the space. Encouraging business owners to activate the streetscape through storefront displays, outdoor displays, planters, signage, seating, and other elements will add life to the downtown sidewalks. The city could educate downtown stakeholders on the importance of creating vibrant downtown sidewalks through the various layers of streetscape elements and encourage, or even incentivize, their participation.

Case Studies

Downtown Williamsburg, Virginia (right) provides an excellent example of how layers of streetscape elements combine to create a vibrant and active space. Street trees, decorative streetlights, outdoor dining, brick paver sidewalks, sandwich board signage, and attractive storefronts create an attractive sidewalk.

Norfolk, Virginia developed a "Vibrant Spaces" program and accompanying Vibrancy Grant Program. While the program focuses on creating street-level vibrancy through larger scale projects like storefront renovations and business development, it outlines the importance of vibrant storefronts and provides an excellent mood board of images as examples. A similar Vibrancy Grant program could be developed to fund small scale additions such as planters, signage, merchandise displays, and other elements.

Learn More

[Vibrant Spaces Grant Program - Norfolk, Virginia](#)







Alley Activation

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Alleys are typically utilitarian corridors. They provide access for employees, service vehicles, garbage collection, and utility lines. However, many downtowns have given alleys a new purpose and role in creating a vibrant atmosphere.

Many downtowns have utilized alleys for outdoor seating, event spaces, public art, and other amenities. They often still provide connections, but rather than focusing on service vehicles, the alleys focus on pedestrians by connecting them with public parking areas or other parts of the downtown.

In Hanford

China Alley in Downtown Hanford serves as a unique east-west connector throughout the entire downtown core. Opportunities for activating the alley for public art, lighting, outdoor dining, event space, and other experiences exist throughout the corridor. Previous efforts were stalled following the devastating 2021 fire that severely damaged the Taoist Temple Museum, but opportunities for utilizing the alley in the future could emerge.

Case Studies

Fishbone Alley in Downtown Gulfport, Mississippi has been a popular addition to the downtown area and has become a hub for artistic activity for the community. The activation of the alley included initiatives such as gateway signage, string lights, outdoor seating, live music, events and public art. The alley is adjacent to numerous bars and restaurants so the alley has added additional outdoor seating and event space for the local businesses.

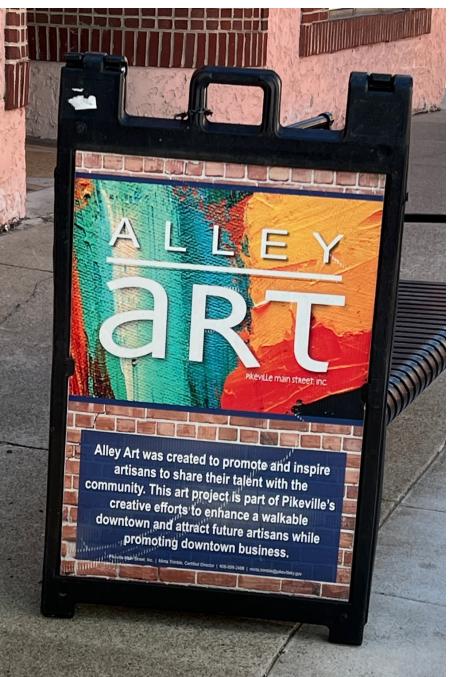
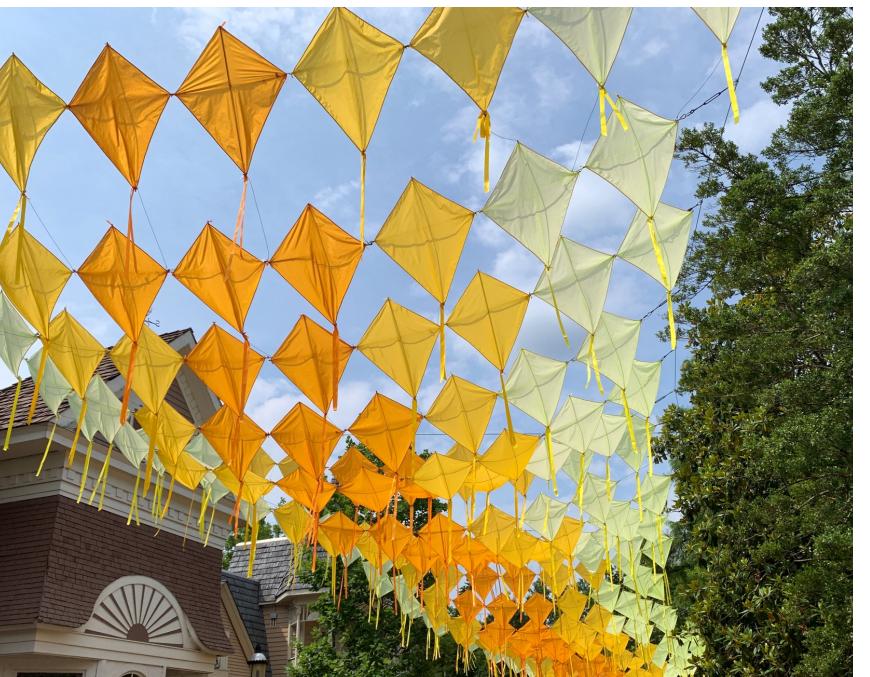
Downtown Pikeville, Kentucky, activates their downtown alley with public art through a rotating 2D artwork program featuring regional artists as well as an impressive overhead display that changes throughout the four seasons.

Learn More

[Fishbone Alley - Gulfport, Mississippi](#)

[Umbrella Alley - Pikeville, Kentucky](#)





Test Before You Invest

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Infrastructure changes such as streetscape enhancements often require extensive resources and progress on a very slow timeframe. Many downtowns are in need of major streetscape enhancements in order to increase the walkability of the district, but large-scale projects are not immediately feasible. Also, downtown stakeholders are often cautious about permanent changes that may impact their property or business.

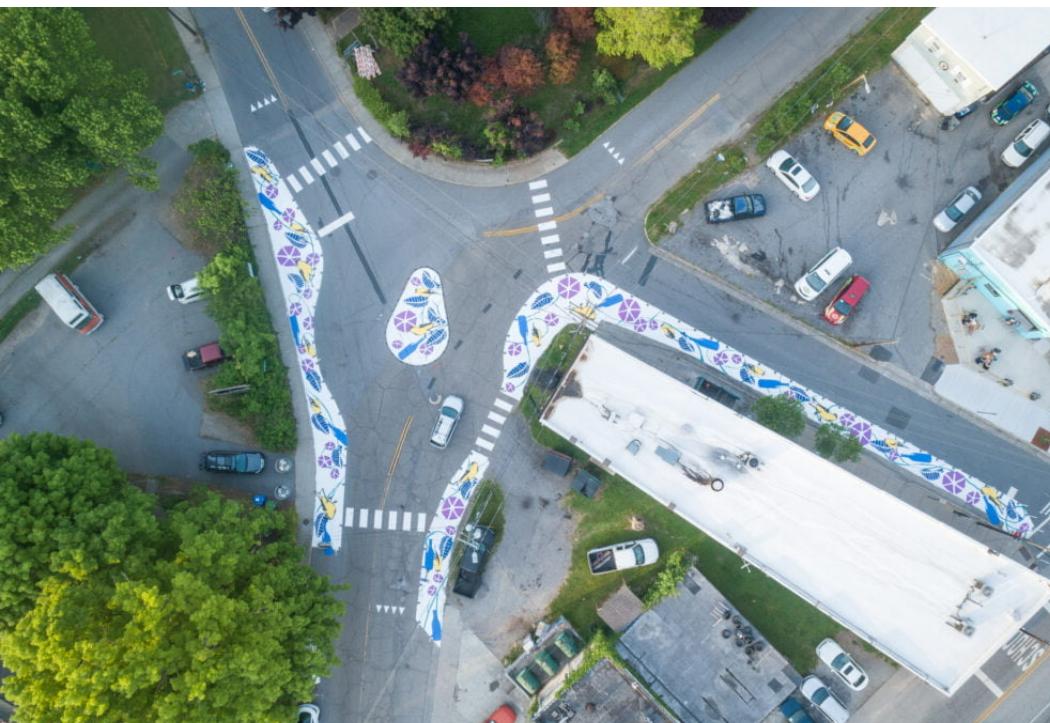
Many cities and neighborhoods are utilizing principles of Tactical Urbanism and Better Block to test streetscape enhancement ideas utilizing temporary and short-term strategies to test infrastructure changes, streetscape enhancements, and other ideas before making long-term (and permanent) changes. The concept of "Test before you invest," allows the city, organizations, and volunteer groups to quickly test ideas in low-risk, low-cost situations. Painted crosswalks and intersections; temporary landscaping; outdoor dining areas; parklets; on-street parking; vacant lot activation; and pop-up retail shops are components of Tactical Urbanism and Better Block principles.

In Hanford

The City of Hanford is currently developing engineering plans for various improvements in the downtown core. Many of the infrastructure and streetscape recommendations will require funding, resources, and time to implement. While funding sources are being identified and more detailed designs are being considered, the city should explore various design alternatives utilizing the principles of Tactical Urbanism and Better Block. This will allow the city to test various infrastructure enhancements in a low cost and low risk environment. This could also eliminate concerns or identify needed modifications prior to permanent changes.

Case Study

In Asheville, North Carolina, Asheville on Bikes, the AARP, North Carolina Mountain Region, and the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club partnered to establish the Asheville Street Tweaks program. The program focuses on making public spaces more accessible, safe, and functional for all users. In order to provide proof of concept and test various infrastructure enhancements, Asheville Street Tweaks utilizes the principles of Tactical Urbanism to guide small-scale, community-driven projects following a low cost, low risk, incremental approach to change.



Test Before You Invest

Focus Area 1: Design

Learn More

[Asheville Street Tweaks – Asheville, North Carolina](#)

[Tactical Urbanism Guide – Fayetteville, Arkansas](#)

[Tactical Urbanism Program - Snellville, Georgia](#)

[Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design](#)

[Better Block](#)



TACTICAL URBANIST'S GUIDE
TO MATERIALS AND DESIGN **VERSION 1.0**

DECEMBER 2016 | CREATED BY THE STREET PLANS COLLABORATIVE, WITH FUNDING FROM THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION

Hear the Sounds

Focus Area 1: Design

Strategy

Creating an experience for people is an essential component of a vibrant downtown. Everything from the physical appearance of the downtown to the amenities and events should focus on creating an environment that will attract people into the district. Visual elements such as banners, landscaping, benches, and public art are typically included in early enhancements. However, elements that create a welcoming ambiance are often overlooked. Outdoor speaker systems that add background music to the environment can greatly enhance the walkability and vibrancy of a downtown. Current technology has made speaker systems much more feasible in years past.

In Hanford

Downtown Hanford is a large, active downtown district. Numerous investments have been made over the years in creating quality public spaces and enhancing the streetscape. The addition of an outdoor speaker system throughout downtown would greatly enhance the environment and create a positive experience for pedestrians. The system could be used to project seasonal music, highlight local or regional talent, and enhance current events.

Case Study

Downtown Prestonsburg, Kentucky (population 3,600) is currently in the midst of a rebirth. Community leaders are investing in the downtown area through streetscape enhancements, public space activation, lighting improvements, and public art. The addition of overhead string lights transformed Court Street and has sparked a renewed interest in the downtown area.

The city is currently overseeing the addition of a wireless speaker system throughout the downtown district. The speaker system allows various combinations of controls such as synching up the entire system, activating specific portions/zones, or other combinations. The wireless system allows for easier installation since it does not require conduit and direct wiring of the speakers. The speakers will feature regional musicians and greatly enhance the ambiance of Downtown Prestonsburg.

Learn More

[Street Sounds - Main Street Wireless Speaker System](#)





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FOCUS AREA 2

Policy & Administration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

Community Roundtable

Focus Area 2: Policy & Administration

Strategy

Communication is a key component of advancing community development and downtown revitalization initiatives. Oftentimes multiple organizations are involved with downtown projects, but efforts are fragmented due to a lack of communication between the entities. With multiple organizations and entities focused on community and economic development, there is an opportunity for enhanced communication and strategic visioning through a Community Roundtable program.

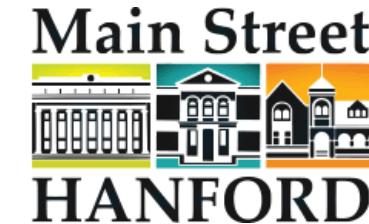
Each month, leaders of key community organizations should gather, with no formal agenda, to discuss current projects, opportunities for partnerships, shared resources, and visioning and planning. Each quarter, additional members of these organizations should gather in a public setting for benchmark updates, providing an opportunity for the press to report on positive happenings within the community.

In Hanford

In Hanford, the City of Hanford, Main Street Hanford, Hanford Chamber of Commerce, Kings County Economic Development Corporation, Kings Community Action Organization, and boards for the Business Improvement District are key partners with a desire to influence the revitalization of Downtown Hanford. A Community Roundtable should be formed shortly after adoption of this plan including a representative from all partners. The meeting should be a standing meeting, once monthly, that partners commit to attending. The meeting should begin with a round-robin of updates from each partner, as it relates to the downtown and all community development efforts. Through discussion, new opportunities for collaboration, grant opportunities, and better communication will emerge. Quarterly sessions should take place at a larger venue with the entire executive board from each partner group. The local media should be invited as each partner gives a quarterly update regarding their successes, new projects, and communication wins through this effort.

Case Study

In Starkville, MS, the Community Roundtable was a key catalyst to successful implementation of strategic projects, communication, and streamlined funding. Partners included the City of Starkville, Oktibbeha County, the Greater Starkville Development Partnership, and Mississippi State University.



City Development Process

Focus Area 2: Policy & Administration

Strategy

A development approval process decides whether or not to allow a proposed development project to proceed with construction. Within jurisdictions, development approval processes will vary based on a number of factors, for example: the zoning of the parcel intended for the project; land use regulations at the local, state, regional, and federal level; and whether the project is by-right or it requires discretionary approval. Improving the city development process and streamlining permitting and development approvals is essential for fostering economic growth, encouraging investments, and creating sustainable, vibrant communities.

In Hanford

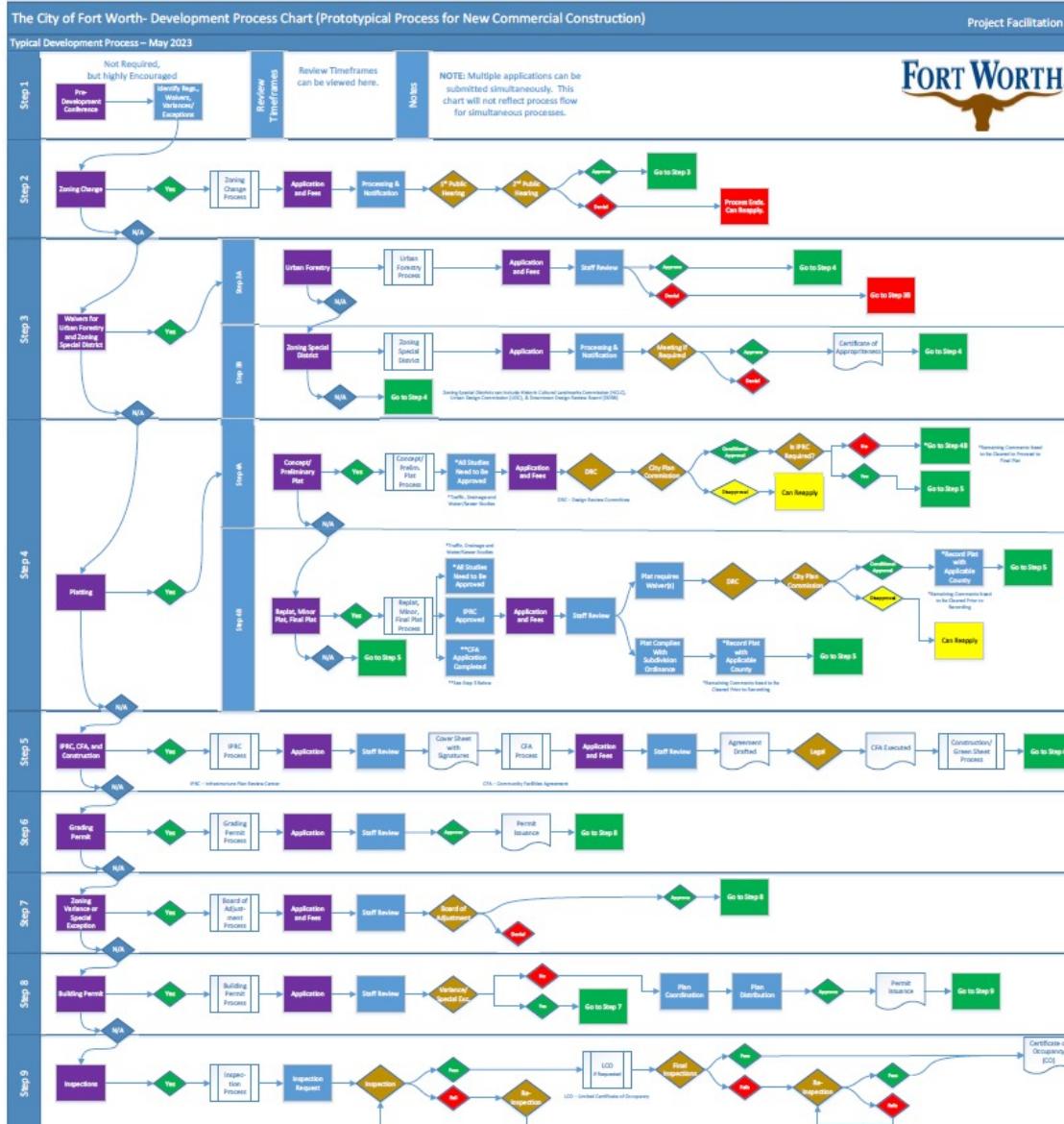
In Hanford, there is a perception that the development and permitting process is complicated and unclear. Begin by implementing a Pre-Assessment Meeting for developers looking to develop or redevelop a site. An online form can be created to make scheduling more streamlined. This meeting would give developers an opportunity to sit down with all major players in the city development process and get anecdotal feedback and direction about their project. Next, a graphic cheat sheet, check list, flow chart, or tool should be created and posted online to very clearly show developers every element that will be needed throughout the process. It should also clearly state a time range that each step should take the city to undertake so that developers have a fair understanding of the length of the overall process. Continue to build relationships with developers and take opportunities to share code changes and improvements with groups like Downtown property owners, Rotary, Chamber, and others.

Case Study

There are various examples of handbooks, flow charts, and check lists that communities are implementing to simplify and clarify the development process. Fort Worth, TX has a flow chart that visually represents the steps that should be taken using an "if this, then this," format. Similarly, the City of Durham and Durham County, NC have a joint Development Plan Checklist that requires the applicant and the City/County to sign-off at every step of the way.

[Learn More](#)

Durham, NC Development Plan Checklist



National Register District

Focus Area 2: Policy & Administration

Strategy

Listing a property or district on the National Register of Historic Places is the first step towards eligibility for National Park Service-administered federal preservation tax credits that have leveraged more than \$45 billion in private investment nation-wide. There are many misconceptions about listing a property on the National Register – the first being that it restricts what the property owner can do with their building. Design standards only apply to properties on the National Register when a property owner wishes to apply for tax credits for a redevelopment project. In that case, National Department of Interior's design and historic preservation standards do apply. Rehabilitation Tax Credits are dollar-for-dollar reductions in income tax liability for taxpayers who rehabilitate historic buildings. Credits are available from the federal government. The amount of the credit is based on total rehabilitation costs. The federal credit is 20% of eligible rehabilitation expenses. California's legislature passed a state historic tax credit bill in 2019 that is currently being implemented. Both federal and state tax credits can stack for eligible projects, widening the benefit to the developer.

In Hanford

In Hanford, the Hanford Carnegie Library, Kings County Courthouse, and the Taoist Temple in China Alley are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. While listing individual properties is possible, it's much more impactful to list an entire district. The application process will exclude structures considered "non-contributing," which means that their architectural and historical significance has diminished over the years due to modifications to the original design. All properties listed as "contributing," are eligible for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits. Preservation consultants can complete the historic inventory and application for the Downtown district and assist the City with submittal. It's recommended that the historic Downtown district that is applied for through the National Register District mimics the boundaries of the existing Business Improvement District for simplicity and continuity.

Learn More

[Case Studies of Successful Tax Credit Projects in National Register Districts](#)



Upper Floor Housing Program

Focus Area 2: Policy & Administration

Strategy

Having people living in downtown areas can lead to increased economic activity. Residents become customers for local businesses, supporting restaurants, shops, and cultural venues, which, in turn, can attract more businesses and investment to the area. A well-populated downtown area with residential buildings on upper floors tends to be safer, particularly during evenings and weekends when office buildings may be empty. More residents mean increased "eyes on the street," which can deter criminal activity and promote a sense of community and security. Concentrating housing in the downtown core makes it more feasible for residents to rely on public transportation and walk or bike to work, services, and amenities. This can reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and the demand for parking spaces. Many downtowns feature historic buildings with unique architectural value. Converting upper floors of these buildings into housing can help preserve their character and history while giving them new life and purpose.

In Hanford

As an entitlement community, Hanford is expected to receive approximately \$520,000 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for FY 2023/2024. CDBG funds are ideal for housing rehabilitation, including upper floors in historic downtown buildings, although some units that are built or redeveloped must be reserved for those that are in the Low to Moderate Income (LMI) category. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Guidelines would dictate the annual household threshold for eligibility, as well as the percentage of units in the development that must be reserved for LMI families.

The primary barrier for developers or property owners to redevelop upper floors is modern-day fire code that requires sprinklers and elevators or ADA access. These funds can help offset the cost of bringing buildings up to code and offer a needed layer of the capital stack to make the pro forma on the project make sense. If there are additional non-federal funds available within the City's budget, those funds can be used in the same manner, but without the LMI requirement.

Case Study

[Covington, Kentucky created an Upper Floor Residential Rehab Program utilizing CDBG funds.](#)





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FOCUS AREA 3

Tourism & Promotion

Smart promotion initiatives position your Downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

Downtown Storytelling

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy

Many cities struggle with managing the narrative associated with the community and the downtown area. Negative perceptions of the past, generational biases, historical events, and other factors often cloud the perception of locals and outsiders. Many people, especially locals, are often stuck in the past and only remember the dead downtown of the late 20th Century and are blind to the current success stories and momentum. They remember the glory days of the 1950s and the decline of the 1970s. Many remain unaware of the legacy businesses that have survived for generations or the new entrepreneur that opened a trendy coffee shop or the influx of young professionals living in upper floor apartments and working in the new co-working space. Cities and downtown leaders need to promote the successes and tell the stories of the downtown "heroes" who are making a difference. Traditional media like newspapers and local news outlets are helpful with these efforts, but social media has opened the door for city and downtown leaders to take control of the narratives themselves and tell the story of their downtown.

In Hanford

Hanford has a unique skillset when it comes to communication. The city staff includes a former traditional news media member which creates tremendous opportunities for the city to promote itself and Downtown Hanford. This skillset combined with the longstanding relationships and trust of Main Street Hanford creates the potential for a collaborative story-telling campaign. Utilizing social media to tell the story of Downtown Hanford, specifically the history, current momentum, downtown champions, legacy businesses, and new businesses would create an authentic campaign to promote the downtown district to outsiders and locals alike.

Using the work of Phil Eich at [Storyville](#) and [Human of New York's](#) Brandon Stanton as inspiration, Hanford should launch a storytelling campaign featuring authentic stories highlighting the unique aspects of Downtown Hanford. Story topics could include historic buildings; architecturally significant properties; legacy businesses; local business owners; special volunteers and downtown heroes; new businesses and entrepreneurs; special attractions; events; and other unique stories.



Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy

In simple terms, tourism involves connecting visitors with retailers and restaurants. This can take place through large community-wide events and festivals or small-scale retail promotional events such as wine tastings or farm-to-table dinners. Rather than large events and festivals that require extensive planning and resources, the largest return on investment can often come from simple but targeted promotional events. The key is to find any simple or sometimes silly reason to invite people downtown. Coordinating with retailers and restaurants to create an experience for customers can drive activity into the downtown area and have a financial impact the businesses.

Small-scale promotions can be focused on anything. The sillier the better in most cases. Simply give people a reason to come downtown and visit a local retailer or restaurant.

Social media opens the door to free and inexpensive outlets for promoting events, stories, businesses, etc. Using this tool to tell your target audience about your businesses, downtown activities, improvement projects, etc. is key to communicating a positive message about the downtown area and generate a positive perception. Every new business that opens, ribbon cutting event, streetscape improvement project, or other "win" must be promoted on social media under the downtown brand.

In Hanford

Hanford hosts a variety of successful events and festivals throughout the year including a St. Patrick's Day event, Food Truck Takeover of Civic Center Park, Winter Wonderland, and the extremely popular Thursday Night Market. Other events such as Wine & Chocolate Tasting, Christmas Tree Walk, Witches Night Out, Oktoberfest, and Blues & Roots Festival create a diverse slate of events designed to bring visitors downtown during all seasons. Many events are managed by Main Street Hanford and are well promoted on social media.

The City of Hanford is also active on social media and posts a mixture of news, official city updates, cross promotions of events, and playful posts such as National Carousel Day.

The city and Main Street Hanford should include more frequent posts promoting downtown activities, highlighting local businesses and business owners, etc. These posts could also highlight quirky reasons to go downtown (National Coffee Day, National Margarita Day, etc.). These posts do not require the same level of planning as events and festivals but can be successful strategies for bringing visitors downtown on a regular basis.



Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Case Studies

The Starkville Partnership is the umbrella community development organization that includes the convention and visitor's bureau, chamber of commerce, economic development, and Main Street Association. The Partnership has long been the "voice" of the community utilizing the [Starkville: Mississippi's College Town](#) brand on social media to promote events, activities, and quality of life. In addition to promoting their own events, the brand cross-promotes events hosted by other community organizations, local businesses, or the local university. They also share the posts of local businesses and highlight sales and promotions. The Partnership constantly reminds followers about downtown and local businesses through creative posts like highlighting quirky holidays like National Selfie Day.

Recently the [City of Starkville](#) hired a communications director who has utilized the city's social media accounts to showcase the community's quality of life. Recent posts include highlighting the work of the local first responders, celebrating the local school district, promoting local businesses, showcasing local citizens, and cross promoting community partners.

The combination of the city and the Partnership's social media accounts help promote the high quality of life and constantly spread positive stories about the community and the downtown.

 Starkville: Mississippi's College Town
5d · 4

Happy National Selfie Day! What's your favorite spot to snap a pic in Starkville?
#NationalSelfieDay #Starkville #Selfie



 Starkville: Mississippi's College Town is at Starkville: Mississippi's College Town
May 11 · Starkville, MS · 4

Calling all GRADS! 🎓 We have a perfect photo op ready for you in downtown, Starkville.. it will be here all weekend. Always remember your time in Mississippi's College Town ❤️



City of Starkville, MS
June 28 at 3:00 PM · 4

☀ Meet the shining star of Starkville! Shirley Ross Powell has been an iconic presence at [Starkville Cafe](#) for over 20 years, delighting local patrons and guests with her warm smile and impeccable service. Dedicated to her craft, Shirley is a beloved figure in our community.

Beyond her career, Shirley is a loving wife and proud mother of two children. She cherishes her role as a grandmother to four adorable grandchildren, who bring immense joy to her life.

When it comes to her favorite dish, Shirley can't resist the mouthwatering combination of waffles and loaded hashbrowns. It's a delicious treat that always puts a smile on her face!

Next time you visit Starkville Cafe, be sure to say hello to Shirley and experience her exceptional service firsthand. Let's give a big shout-out to this incredible member of our community! 🍽️🌟 #StarkvilleStar #CommunityIcon #StarkvilleCafe #starkville #starkvegas #cityofstarkville #starsofstarkville

STARS OF STARKVILLE

Shirley Ross Powell

CITY OF
STARKVILLE

Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion



- Seasonal Open House Events (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
- Holiday Open House Events (Christmas Open House, Halloween Open House, etc.)
- Holiday Promotions (Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Fourth of July, St. Patrick's Day, Black Friday, etc.)
- Themed Promotions: Back to School, Homecoming, Summer Kick-off, Football season, Prom, etc.



- Quirky Holiday Promotions (National Coffee Day, National Margarita Day, National High Five Day, etc.)
- Super Bowl Weekend
- Scavenger Hunt
- Happy Hour dining and shopping event
- Trivia Night



- Wine Tasting Events
- Ladies Night Out
- First Fridays
- Craft Beer Tastings
- Market on Main
- Arts Festivals
- Concerts/Live Music



- New Business Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies
- "Humans of New York"-style storytelling campaigns
- Videos and interviews with downtown merchants and local heroes

Comprehensive Signage System

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy

Signage is often overlooked as a way to enhance downtown areas. While directional wayfinding signage is commonly used as a tool to direct and guide visitors to important destinations and attractions, a comprehensive wayfinding signage system involves a variety of signs. A system also provides opportunities to showcase a community's brand; delineate various districts and neighborhoods; and announce arrival into a special district.

A system could include a variety of signs such as directional wayfinding signs, welcome signs, street signs, gateway signs, parking signs, and general destination signs. The various types of signs can be phased in over time to create a comprehensive system.

In Hanford

Downtown Hanford has a collection of unique custom carved wooden signs throughout the district. While the signs are unique and loved by most locals, the maintenance of the signs is challenging. If a sign is damaged, there is no way to replace the sign and replicate the original design. Therefore, an updated signage system should be developed for the downtown area.

The system should include directional wayfinding signs, street signs, and public parking signs and could be expanded over time. Custom signage provides an excellent opportunity for showcasing the community brand and color palette.

Case Study

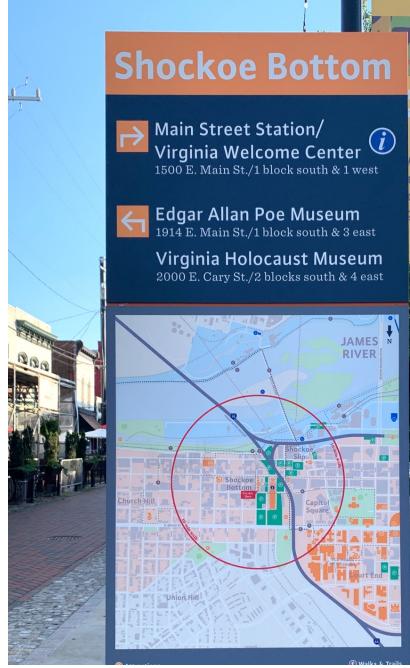
In an effort to streamline the design and implementation process, [Downtown Strategies](#) has developed a series of wayfinding signage system templates and has a relationship with a sign fabricator.

[Arnett Muldrow and Associates](#), based in Greenville, South Carolina, is the premier community marketing and branding firm in the country and specialize in downtown and Main Street settings. As part of their work, they have implemented comprehensive wayfinding signage systems in communities around the country.









Self-guided Historic Sites Tour

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy

Downtowns typically contain the most historically significant buildings in the community. They were the original commercial hub of the community and continue to be the heart and soul of the city. Unfortunately, many historic buildings have been lost to neglect or demolition over time. Communities that have maintained their historic building stock are able to offer an authentic sense of place that is directly tied to the history of the city. Many people are fascinated with the history of a place. Not only the technical details or the architectural vernacular, but the actual stories of the buildings. Stories about how the building has adapted over time from the turn of the century to modern day.

Many cities have preserved those stories and highlighted them in various ways including walking tours, plaques, signage, and photographs. These initiatives showcase the unique sense of place of the community and preserve the stories for future generations. These programs can also be used to encourage visitors to explore the district.

In Hanford

Downtown Hanford is blessed with a large stock of historic buildings and sites that showcase the history of the community. In addition to typical historic commercial buildings, Hanford is also home to unique facilities like the historic courthouse and the carousel. The Carnegie Museum of Kings County, and the Kings County Historical Society have worked to preserve the historic photographs, stories, and documents associated with Downtown Hanford and should be a key partner in this effort. The work of the Carnegie Museum could be used and highlighted through a program like a historic walking tour or historic marker program. This could be accomplished through traditional signage and plaques or by utilizing current technology like QR codes. The Carnegie Museum work could be used to create a website that is linked through QR codes similar to the South Main Historic District in Memphis, Tennessee.



Self-guided Historic Sites Tour

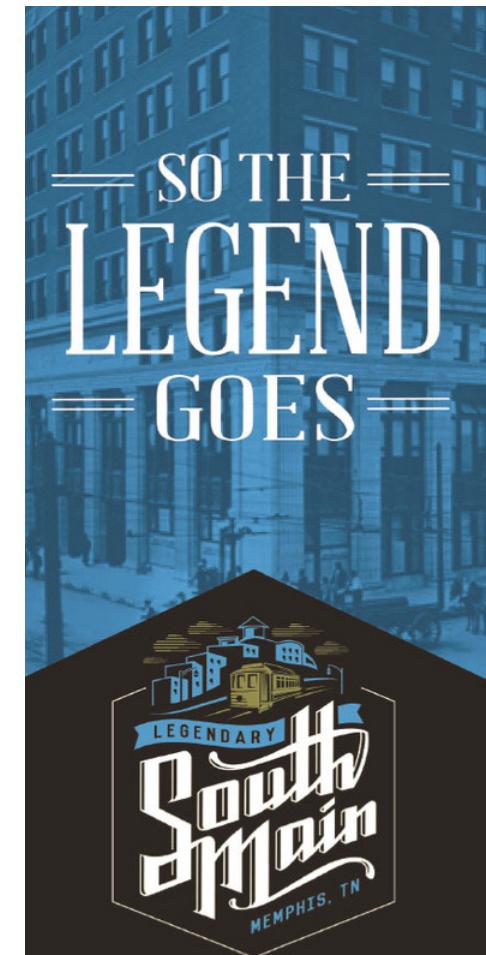
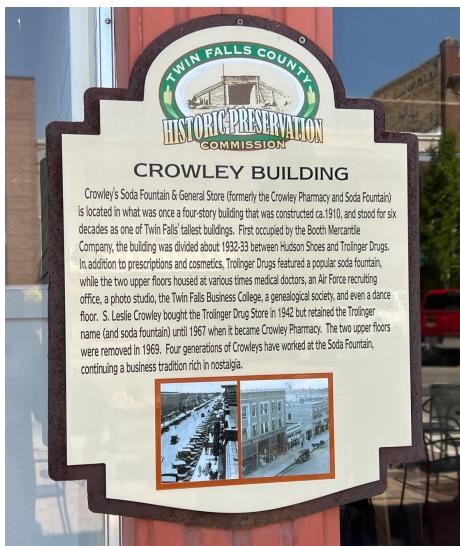
Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Case Study

Abilene, Texas utilizes traditional bronze plaques to highlight significant historic buildings throughout the downtown area.

Twin Falls, Idaho uses modern signage that includes a brief story about the property as well as historic photographs of the building.

The [South Main](#) district in **Memphis, Tennessee** embraced modern technology to create a creative [self-guided walking tour](#). A high-quality website was created with a page for each historic property in the district that included the history of the building and photographs when possible. Well-branded posters were placed in the storefront windows with the message "This building has a story to tell," the website address, and a QR Code. When visitors scan the QR code they are directed to the page for the specific building. The site also includes information on public art within the district, events, projects, and attractions. Sample itineraries are also included to show visitors how to experience the district. This creative, modern approach to a historic walking tour can be created faster than a traditional brochure or bronze plaques and will likely appeal to a wider variety of generations.



This building has a story to tell.



241 South Main

Learn about this building's history and other legendary stories as a part of the South Main Stories Walking Tour.

GoSouthMain.com/Tour



downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 4

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

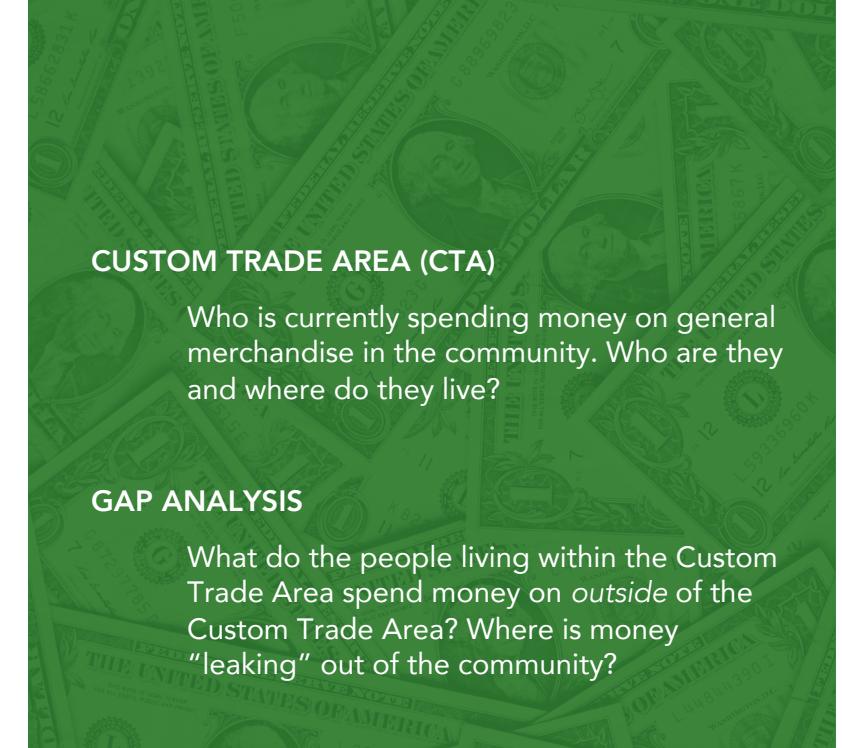
Target Businesses that Fill Gaps

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy

When recruiting national retail to a community, an extensive Market Analysis is used to identify current consumer trends, a profile of current consumers, Custom Trade Area (who is currently shopping in the community), and a Gap Analysis (Leakage Report). Community leaders should utilize the same data to inform decisions about business growth, development, and recruitment for the downtown area. The Market Analysis chapter of this Strategic Plan identified this information based on the Custom Trade Area from a major general merchandise store within the community.

Customers who are regularly shopping in the community for general merchandise, are a great target audience for downtown businesses. The Gap Analysis identified which retail categories people within the Custom Trade Area are currently leaving the trade area to buy. In other words, what are these people spending money on outside of the community? Since local customers are currently spending money on goods and services outside of the community, it is reasonable that they would spend that money locally if those needs were offered. **Below are some of the top retail categories identified in the Gap Analysis that would be excellent targets for downtown.**



CUSTOM TRADE AREA (CTA)

Who is currently spending money on general merchandise in the community. Who are they and where do they live?

GAP ANALYSIS

What do the people living within the Custom Trade Area spend money on outside of the Custom Trade Area? Where is money “leaking” out of the community?

General Merchandise



\$83.2 million

Clothing



\$41.5 million

Full-service Restaurants



\$36.2 million

Building Materials & Supplies



\$32.7 million

Restaurant Incubator

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy

A restaurant incubator is a program or facility that provides support, resources, and a shared workspace for aspiring food entrepreneurs and restaurant owners. The concept of incubators originated from the tech industry, where startup companies receive support, mentorship, and access to resources to help them grow and succeed. The same idea has been adapted for the culinary world to foster innovation and success in the food industry. Typically, in a restaurant incubator, there is shared kitchen space, as well as business support and mentorship, access to equipment and resources, assistance with marketing, and overall cost sharing to minimize the risk and barriers of starting a restaurant concept. Often, cities will develop and own the incubator space and partner with outside organizations to train and support entrepreneurs. Additionally, it's helpful if cities can create an incubation cycle for restaurants, meaning that in the early stages, their rent is zero or very low, followed by incrementally raising the rent until the restaurant is fully sustainable. At that point, the restaurant would move out of the incubator into its own brick and mortar location.

In Hanford

In Hanford, one of the biggest needs and desires for the downtown area is an influx of locally owned restaurants. However, opening a restaurant requires a considerable amount of capital and many times ends in failure. Supporting these entrepreneurs, much like cities support tech start-up companies, is a sensible and sustainable way to increase the restaurant mix in the downtown. Begin by identifying a site for a restaurant incubator. The historic Courthouse would be an ideal location if it's not developed in the near-term. Next, partner with outside experts, such as [PROOF Incubator](#), to assess the market, plan the build-out, and ultimately provide technical assistance and training to new restaurant entrepreneurs.

Case Study

To address the impacts that COVID-19 had on the restaurant industry, the City of Mesa used funds from the American Rescue Plan Act to purchase the building at 111 W. Main St to open a [restaurant incubator](#). In partnership with Local First Arizona, the incubator will feature a shared commercial kitchen & commissary, business development space that will provide business training, and a public dining facility where participants in the incubator can sell their product.



Deep Dive: PROOF Incubators

Partnering with Food Experts to Plan and Execute a Restaurant Incubator

[PROOF Incubator](#) is a Chattanooga, TN-based firm that provides industry education and mentorship through online programs, workshops, and one-on-one coaching for emerging food and beverage companies to help build stronger, more scalable, and sustainable businesses.

In addition to technical assistance, the firm offers planning and execution services for incubator space and test kitchens to support the growth of up-and-coming concepts from talented food and beverage and consumer packaged goods (CPG) entrepreneurs.

Their flagship incubator in Chattanooga houses a community of talented food and beverage entrepreneurs who operate out of a shared commissary kitchen. In addition to physical space, PROOF offers support, mentorship, and a growth opportunity for new businesses based on their extensive industry experience.

Since opening their home location, PROOF has scaled their incubator program and now has five new locations in the works, including Green Bay, WI, and Athens, Maryville, Lebanon, and Winchester, TN.

Incubator locations in ...

- Chattanooga, TN

422 E MLK Blvd.

Chattanooga, TN 37403



Coming soon to ...

- Athens, TN

- Lebanon, TN

- Green Bay, WI

- Maryville, TN



PROOF



White Box Program

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy

White box incentive programs are initiatives offered by cities to encourage property owners or developers to renovate or retrofit downtown buildings into "white box" condition. White boxing refers to preparing a space for lease by providing the basic infrastructure and utility services but leaving the interior largely unfinished or neutral in terms of design and layout. This approach allows future tenants to customize the space to suit their specific needs, preferences, and branding. Here are some examples of white box incentive programs offered by cities for downtown buildings:

In Hanford

In Hanford, various incentives are provided by the City or Main Street Hanford. Consider adding a "White Box" grant to the incentive suite to assist property owners in getting their spaces retail-ready. Prospective tenants have a hard time imagining what messy and dilapidated spaces could look like for their entrepreneurial needs, which oftentimes results in the business not opening up. By white boxing spaces, entrepreneurs can move into available space within 90 days typically and customize the space for their concept's unique needs.

Case Studies

[The City of Sand Springs, OK White Box program](#) is designed to encourage the redevelopment of older commercial buildings within the historic downtown Triangle District as vibrant, retail commercial/office spaces. The City recognizes that many buildings may be non-compliant with today's modern building codes and that cost is often a barrier toward making needed upgrades. That's where the White Box Grant program can help. The White Box Grant program creates an incentive to commercial building owners, developers, and investors by offering an 80% reimbursable grant award to recipients for work done on their building. The maximum single grant award available is \$10,000 per award. So, for example, if your project was awarded the maximum grant amount you could receive \$8,000 in cash back for a \$10,000 project (after completion, inspection and submitting receipts). Projects may exceed the \$10,000 grant limit, but the reimbursement amount will be capped to 80% of the \$10,000 limit.



Business Recruitment Packet

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy

Almost every downtown desires to have more retailers, restaurants, and other businesses. Ideally this growth would happen organically as the perception and reputation of the downtown shifts to become a destination. Building a strong sense of place within the downtown is important. The downtown should be clean, inviting, safe, and attractive. The properties and buildings should be well maintained and ready for tenants. The area should be active and frequently used for events. While all of these elements are important pieces of the puzzle, communities can also take an active role in recruiting businesses to the downtown.

Many communities have successfully targeted specific businesses in nearby cities or regions and recruited them. This could be a relocation, convincing the business to open a second location, or convincing them to open another concept in the new community. Successfully pitching the community to this business requires a structured and organized presentation of data and real estate details.

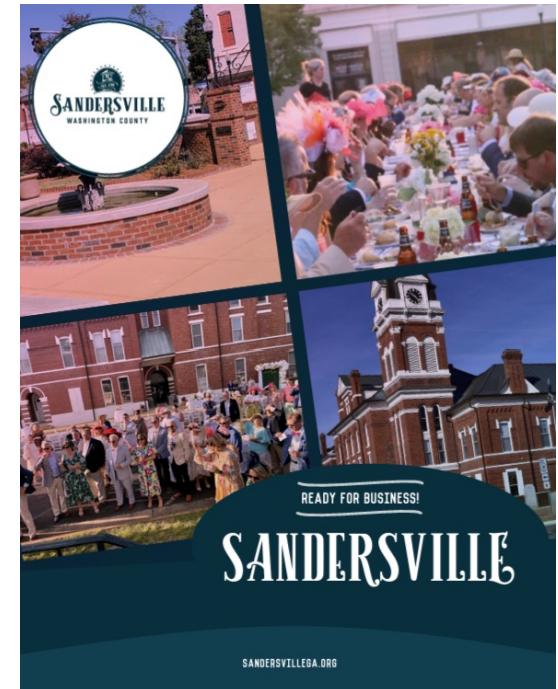
A Business Recruitment Packet contains information relevant to recruiting a potential business in an easy-to-follow format. The packet should include:

- Market analysis data summary
- Map of the downtown district
- List of available properties with real estate information
- Guide to necessary approval processes
- Guide to available incentives and programs
- Point of contact information

In Hanford

In Hanford, the Business Recruitment Packet should be reviewed by the Community Roundtable and shared electronically and in printed format with partners. Main Street Hanford can be a strong partner in recruiting ideal tenants to vacancies, utilizing the market research and other information listed above.

If desired, Downtown Strategies can create this Business Improvement Packet for Hanford through our Implementation partnership for quick implementation.



ARE YOU A BUSINESS OWNER OR ENTREPRENEUR LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP?

Downtown Sandersville is the perfect place for you! Whether you are an existing business looking for a new home, a business looking to expand and add a new location, a start-up looking to take the next step, or an entrepreneur ready for a new adventure, our downtown is the ideal place to start your next chapter!

Our downtown is a network of business owners, organizations, and civic organizations constantly looking for ways to enhance our downtown. We regularly invite visitors to downtown through our festivals, events, social media marketing, and promotions. We also understand the importance of a first impression and regularly improve our curb appeal through design and beautification projects. We strive to create an authentic visitor experience so your business can thrive!

Are you tired of the red tape and constant jumping through hoops? We recognize that most city governments seem to constantly look for reasons to tell you "No." Our goal is to get you to "Yes" as quickly as possible. We recognize how challenging it is to open a business and we want to make sure you feel welcomed and embraced as a part of our community.

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to join our existing business community and get your ideas off the ground soon! Our "Ready for Business" guide provides all the resources you need to get started. Whether you are a first-time business owner or a seasoned professional, our guide will make the process simple and straightforward.

Find tips and details about incentives, policies, processes, and key contacts necessary to successfully open a business. Do not wait another minute – take the first step to launching your dream business in our dynamic downtown today!

Use this guide as a resource to help you get Ready for Business and join our downtown family.

1 DOING BUSINESS 2 ABOUT 3 INCENTIVES 4 PARTNERS/ PROPERTY 5 RULES/ CONTACTS



downtown strategies

Next Steps

Downtown Strategies assists with the implementation of the plan. This is not going to be another plan that sits on the shelf. The combination of local action and support from Downtown Strategies will result in the incremental improvement of your downtown.