

washington

I N D I A N A

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to all who participated in the development of the *Washington, Indiana Downtown Revitalization Plan*.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01

OVERVIEW + STUDY AREA

Downtown Washington encompasses nearly fifty blocks—this plan looks in-depth at an area of just ten blocks along the Main Street corridor. Most downtown festivals and events take place here. The concentration of historic and actively occupied traditional downtown buildings is higher within these blocks than in other parts of downtown. Furthermore, outside of the courthouse square, the most prominent downtown public spaces also sit within these blocks. The study area consists of ten downtown blocks along the east-west oriented Main Street corridor from Meridian Street to 5th Street (Indiana State Road 57). W. Van Trees Street and South Street make up the northern and southern boundaries.

PLANNING INITIATIVES

Several planning processes have taken place over the last twenty years that are directly related to downtown Washington. Past initiatives include the *Washington Comprehensive Plan* (2009), the *Active Living Workshop* (2017) and the *Hometown Collaboration Initiative* (2019). Current initiatives include the *Main Street Ready Report* (2024) and the *Pathway to the Heart of Washington* (2024). Other initiatives evaluated as part of the planning process include the *Discover Downtown Washington Vision 2023* and *Annual Report*.

SITE CONDITIONS

The physical and cultural + social conditions of the site were evaluated by the design team in conjunction with the steering committee. The following conclusions were drawn:

- The “bones” of this study area are strong, particularly on the east end, but attention to details like shade, consistent character, and clear wayfinding, will provide a better visitor experience.
- Although active businesses, car lots and self-storage facilities are not the highest and best use of downtown real estate and might be better suited along the bypass.

- New public space has been added to the study area recently—the next challenge here will be upkeep, programming, and vandalism prevention. Updating other public spaces and adding new amenities should be considered to draw visitors downtown on non-event days.
- If moving large volumes of traffic quickly through the study area is no longer a priority, modifying the one-way street network to two-way, if only partially, should be considered within the study area.
- Parking is not lacking here. Opportunities for shared parking between use types, event parking plans and promotion, and coordinated effort between existing businesses to protect on-street parking for patrons should be considered.
- Tapestry segmentation and income could guide for future retail and restaurant options that may be considered within the study areas as well as the development of programming and events.

MARKET CONDITIONS

Overall, Washington is in a better position than many peer communities throughout the State of Indiana. Washington continues to see positive population growth, which is not the case for many rural communities. Washington also has made significant strides in tackling vacant storefronts and activating spaces for the community downtown.

A strategy expanding on services offered to local residents as well as boosting interest by visitors will be needed to foster the relationship between consumer demand and required investment for expanded retail and dining ventures. A focus on continued programming efforts and hosted events can draw more visitors to Washington resulting in subsequent exposure for businesses within the downtown area. Marketing opportunities to help achieve this strategic success include:

- Expand family and casual dining options.
- Introduce convenience and specialty retail.
- Focus on general merchandise and personal care.
- Consider moderately-priced and themed dining.
- Include experiential business such as arcades and bowling.
- Implement community programming such as monthly events and/or seasonal festivals.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public input was gathered during the plan as well as prior to the plan in separate initiatives.

PRIOR TO THE PLANNING PROCESS, two Online public surveys had been implemented as part of separate initiatives by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). Input received was reviewed and used to influence recommendations within this plan.

DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS, public input was gathered via steering committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, and a public open house. Each method was used to gain insight and gather feedback on specific recommendations. Key takeaways from the Public Open House are as follows:

- Downtown Washington festivals and events draw people to the study area, are well attended, and appreciated by the community. However, on non-event days, there is little activity to draw residents and visitors to the study area.
- Although there is an outstanding, regionally known burger establishment on Main Street, a variety of restaurants to choose from at varying times of day and days of the week are lacking.
- Parking appears to be plentiful within the study area yet is a leading cause of frustration for people coming to the study area to patron stores or attend events.
- The study area has had much investment, both private and public, in recent years—a cohesive vision is desired to create a district around these blocks that will guide development, define building and streetscape standards, and create a consistent visual character for this community center.
- Long-time residents are observing a changing cultural dynamic downtown—some are embracing this change and others are hesitant to accept this change.
- It is critical to the community leadership, steering committee, and many stakeholders involved in this planning process that downtown Washington be a place that is inviting and welcoming for all people.

VISION

The vision for this plan is to define a district around this study area so that it may thrive as a lively hub of activity in downtown Washington. The district will:

- Serve as a community center for events, entertainment, and cultural resources
- Prioritize walkability emphasizing pedestrian comfort and traffic calming.
- Provide vibrant public streetscapes and spaces that are welcoming to all.
- Strive to preserve the historic integrity and character of existing buildings.
- Ensure redevelopment fits within the urban fabric of the corridor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ORGANIZATION

Recommendations from OCRA related to Organization focused on the recruitment and function of the board as well as fundraising. Organization considerations include:

Increase Capital: Establishing a local food and beverage tax or a tax increment finance (TIF) district are two ways to collect funds that can be used towards redevelopment projects within the district.

Hire an Executive Director: With the completion of The Commons, the next step to ensure it's success is programming. If this responsibility is put solely on the shoulders of existing staff, it may not receive the attention it deserves, other projects may begin to lose momentum, and/or staff may experience burnout, which leads to turnover.

Establish a DORA District: Establish a DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area) within the district to encourage walkability between bars and restaurants, retail, public amenity space, and event areas, foster community events and festivals, and create a more vibrant downtown atmosphere.

Increase Facade Funding Opportunities: Communities that have a Historic Preservation Committee can apply to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). This helps open the door to additional funding through the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA).

CLG communities can gain a significant competitive advantage in applying for federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants. More than \$100,000 in grant funding is set aside specifically for Indiana's CLGs each year.

PROMOTION

OCRA recommendations on the promotion of downtown focus on the use of social media and other platforms to tell the story of downtown. Promotion considerations include:

A strong, cohesive brand : Perhaps using the recently completed Commons project as inspiration, a strong, cohesive brand should be established for the district that coordinates consistency in materials, signage, lighting, and site furnishing throughout the district.

A culture of diversity and inclusion: An increased understanding and knowledge of different nationalities and ethnicities may serve this community well in overcoming some observed discomfort with diversity. A festival of food may be a place to start as a means to spark some common ground and bring people together. This concept could be tied into the messaging of the district brand as well ensuring all feel welcome in Washington.

A park and walk mentality: Clear, consistent communication regarding available parking on both event and non-event days will help to manage expectations. A combination of on-line information as well as physical signage would be needed to effectively reach the widest audience.

The district as a daily destination: New additions to public spaces downtown will encourage people to come downtown even on non-event days. Further promotion should make people feel welcome to use public spaces for socializing and passive recreation activities without it being considered loitering.

Family-oriented activities: More family-oriented programming was requested in the public survey. One idea in this realm would be a "Dollar Day" downtown. This could include dollar hot dogs or other food items for a dollar, movies at the theatre for a dollar, entrance to the museum for a dollar, booths and retail with dollar-items for purchase.

Extended evening and weekend hours: Extended hours was a common request from the public. Knowing this can put a strain on small business owners, a coordinated effort amongst businesses could build momentum through a routinely schedule event such as a "Fridays after Five" or "Second Saturdays" program. Extending hours once a month via an event would be a good starting point.

Increased engagement with schools: With several schools located adjacent to the district, working together to host more "after-school" events tied to sports or skill and hobby competitions (such as robotic builds) would be a way to draw people to downtown shops and restaurants after events conclude. Patron discounts to event attendees could also be offered as incentive.

Local artists through temporary installs: Temporary art installations, such as Batesville's Umbrella Sky, may be a way to attract residents and visitors to come downtown to see an ever-changing art scene. Without committing to an expensive, permanent sculpture or mural, a call for artists could be put out each year with a location and a budget to develop a temporary piece. Curiosity will draw people to the area to view before it's gone and, perhaps, patron shops and restaurants while in the area.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Recommendations from OCRA related to Economic Vitality focused on business recruitment and retention, pop-up businesses, and business succession planning. Economic Vitality considerations include:

- Expanding Family and Casual Dining
- Introducing Convenience and Specialty Retail
- Focusing on General Merchandise/ Personal Care
- Considering Moderately Priced/ Themed Dining as well as Experiential Businesses (axe throwing/escape rooms).

DESIGN

Design recommendations from OCRA's effort focused on "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" ideas such as crosswalks and movable furnishings, wayfinding, business signage, and design standards. This document also outlines plans for more complex design, amenity, and infrastructure, projects that will require longer timelines and creative funding to implement. These ideas are explored further in Chapters 05 and 06. "Design" considerations include:

- Streetscape + Gateways - incorporating district defining elements and curb extensions, proposing temporary solutions, and engaging volunteers
- Public Space + Event Infrastructure - supporting non-event day activity, including event infrastructure
- Parking + Circulation - planning for quality over quantity, fostering a

park-and-walk mentality, identifying shared-use parking, proposing alternate parking configurations and one-way street arrangements, and supporting pedestrian circulation

- Building Reuse Opportunities - identifying reuse opportunities, and incorporating micro-retail
- Perimeter + Alleys - addressing edge treatment, utilizing district markers, activating alleys, and acknowledging back-of-house uses
- Downtown Architecture - considerations for development an design standards, considerations for architectural guidelines, and considerations for review provisions

IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 06 provides guidance - including proposed time frames and level of investment along with associated costs and potential funding sources - for completion of projects that fulfill the recommendations. Projects are grouped into the following categories:

- Capital + Capacity
- Streetscape + Gateways
- Public Space + Event Infrastructure
- Parking + Circulation
- Building Reuse Opportunities
- Perimeter + Alleys
- Downtown Architecture

SITE CONDITIONS

02

OVERVIEW

Downtown Washington encompasses nearly fifty blocks—this plan looks in-depth at an area of just ten blocks along the Main Street corridor. Most downtown festivals and events take place here. The concentration of historic and actively occupied downtown buildings is higher within these blocks than in other parts of downtown. Furthermore, outside of the courthouse square, the most prominent downtown public spaces also sit within these blocks.

This chapter reviews the existing physical, cultural, and social conditions of the study area though a brief overview of past plans and current initiatives, mapping exercises, and observations seen on a walking tour completed during the planning process.

Although the study area has many positive attributes—occupied buildings, a recently built outdoor event space called “The Commons”, seasonal programming, a newly installed “Welcome to Washington” mural—it lacks aspects that would allow it to thrive as a vibrant downtown district. Streetscape character, pedestrian comfort, electrical access for events, regulations defining preferred building use types, and lack of restaurants are a few missing pieces discussed in the following pages.

STUDY AREA

The study area consists of ten downtown blocks along the east-west oriented Main Street corridor from Meridian Street to 5th Street (Indiana State Road 57). W. Van Trees Street and South Street make up the northern and southern boundaries (see Figure 02a, Project Study Area).

Just two blocks south of the courthouse square, the entire study area sits within a larger National Register of Historic Places District as well as the district Discover Downtown Washington oversees (see Figure 02b). Downtown Washington, and the study area within, are less than three miles from I-69 and easily accessed by car from the north via Indiana State Road 57 and from the west via Old Highway 50. This makes larger communities across the region well within reach including Vincennes to the west along and Petersburg to the south (see Figure 02c).



Figure 02a, Project Study Area

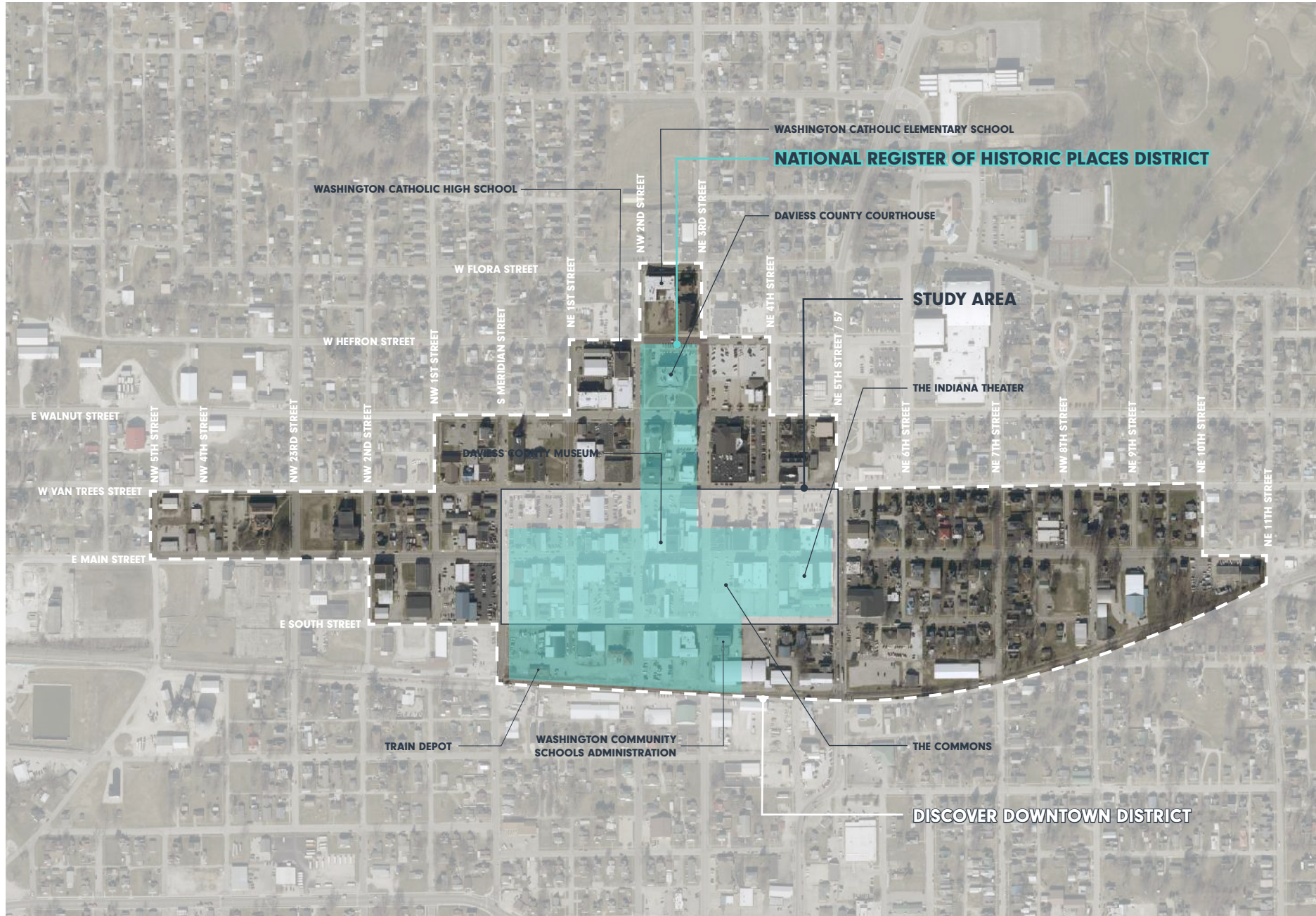


Figure 02b, Downtown Districts

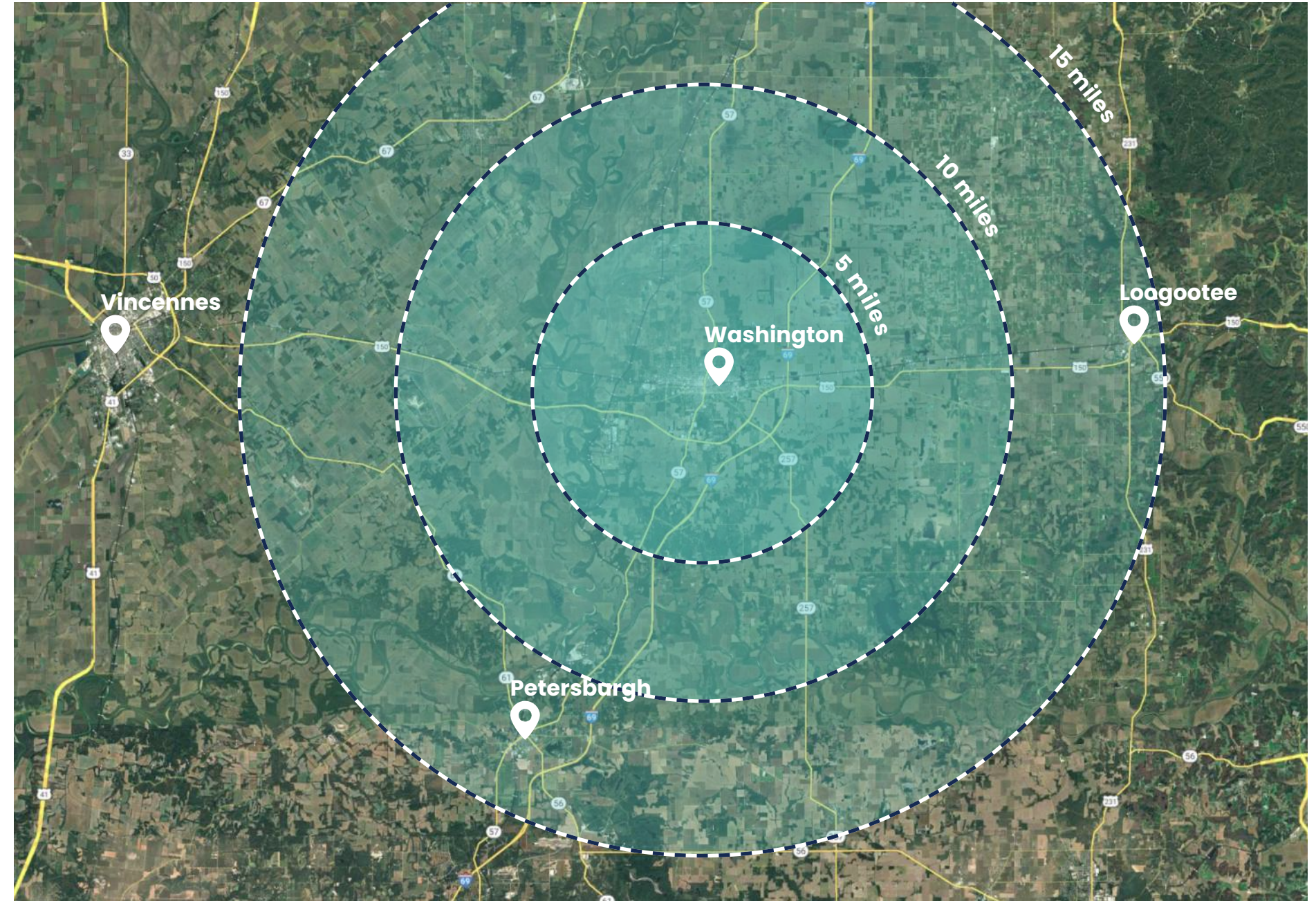


Figure 02c, Regional Map

PLANNING INITIATIVES

PAST INITIATIVES

Several planning processes have taken place over the last twenty years that are directly related to downtown Washington. Summaries of these efforts and how they apply to the study area are outlined below:

Washington Comprehensive Plan (2009)

Although the most recent comprehensive plan is nearly 15 years old, an effort to update the plan is currently underway and should be completed in 2025.

Active Living Workshop (2017)

In 2017, over thirty community members participated in an Active Living Workshop led by the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), Health by Design, and Purdue Extension. After completing a walk audit and suitability mapping, the following priorities were determined as most important: (1) Become a Walk Friendly Community, (2) Adopt a Sidewalk Ordinance, and (3) Install Bike Racks.

Items of note from this initiative, yet to be accomplished, that pertain to current conversations are outlined below:

- Pedestrian Improvements at the intersection of Meridian Street and Main Street downtown including the addition of accessible curbs and ramps, high visibility crosswalks, curb extensions (bumpouts) to decrease pedestrian crossing distance, street trees and stormwater planters.
- Expansion of wayfinding signage to accommodate the growing Hispanic and Haitian populations.

Hometown Collaboration Initiative (2019)

This collaborative initiative between the Office of Rural and Community Affairs (OCRA), Purdue University, and Ball State University was completed in 2019. 832 responses were gathered from individuals residing in or working within Washington. Input was focused around three categories—placemaking, economy, and leadership. The top three preferences voted most important within each category are outlined below:

PLACEMAKING:

- Parks and Trails
- Downtown
- Streetscapes

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

- Retaining existing businesses
- Promoting local businesses
- Expanding youth careers

LEADERSHIP:

- Providing leadership skills and training to youth
- Promoting a culture of inclusivity
- Improving interpersonal skills of current leaders

Outcomes from the initiative included the origination and implementation of the “Welcome to Washington” mural, OCRA-funded concept development for activating the “breezeway” near the CORE center as well as an outdoor dining bumpout, and the generation of new programming (Food Truck Tuesdays).

Conclusions from this planning effort pertain to current conversations as the top three preferences established in 2019 are still applicable today, five years later.

CURRENT INITIATIVES

Two initiatives were active during the planning process—the Main Street Ready Report and the Pathway to the Heart of Washington. Summaries of specific takeaways from each that pertain to this study are outlined below:

Main Street Ready Report (2024)

The Office of Rural and Community Affairs (OCRA) conducted a “Main Street Ready” workshop on August 6th, 2024. A report was developed that summarizes the observations and recommendations from the pre-visit community survey, walking tour, and meetings with community leaders, individuals and groups from the private and public sectors, as well as a public forum. A summary of feedback includes:

STRENGTHS:

- Library and Museum
- Murals
- Theater
- The Commons
- Farmers Market

WEAKNESSES:

- Parking
- Restaurants
- Store Hours
- Streetscape/Gateways
- Shade

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Children’s Center
- Places for Teens
- Events at The Commons
- Art Gallery

THREATS:

- Business Types
- Housing Cost
- Community Involvement

Pathway to the Heart of Washington (2024)

A community member started this initiative to develop an accessible pathway network throughout downtown. Discover Downtown Washington is supportive of these efforts and the general intent. The proposed network (see Appendix for full map) can serve as a quasi-trail master plan for the time being.

As improvements are considered for sidewalks and trails downtown, these routes should be given a higher priority. Sidewalk widths and standards for these priority routes should be developed and implemented.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Discover Downtown Washington Vision 2023

MISSION STATEMENT: “Discover Downtown Washington will implement key strategies for revitalizing downtown Washington by creating a vision for success that is rooted in a solid understanding of the market realities of the district and is informed by broad community engagement.”

VISION STATEMENT: Downtown Washington will be known as the south-central Indiana downtown destination of choice filled with vibrant public spaces and thriving businesses.

GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR:

- Strengthen Funding Stability - Discover Downtown Washington will develop and implement a sustainable funding strategy to ensure organizational stability that will provide support to projects that maintain and increase the economic vitality of the downtown district.

- Broaden Economic Engagement - Discover Downtown Washington will increase community engagement that will result in new and improved partnerships and community education. The overall goal is to transform stakeholders into active partners. Contributions shall be defined both as monetary as well as in-kind.
- Create Vibrancy Through Historic Engagement - The preservation and enhancement of the downtown district buildings will help to preserve the historic integrity of Washington and provide a rich cultural foundation for the community and for the long-term success of our organization.

Discover Downtown Washington Annual Report

Discover Downtown Washington, Inc. is a non-profit organization comprised of over fifty active members who have come together to focus on efforts of downtown invigoration. The organization follows the *Main Street Approach* framework for establishing and implementing the vision for downtown - guided by the standards of the National Main Street Center and the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs’ (OCRA). The framework identifies four areas of downtown investment:

1. Economic Vitality
2. Promotion
3. Design
4. Organization

The Annual Report summarizes the successes of Washington looking at population and outreach, recent project wins (including the *Welcome to Washington Mural*, *Quick Impact Facade Grant Program*, *Merchant Guide*, *Request for Proposals* and *Shop Small 2023*), business development, and hosted community events (including the Eclipse Celebration, Springfest, Color Run, Shop Small Saturday, and Christmas on Main).



“Welcome” mural at Main and 2nd Streets



Farmers Market (photo: Discover Downtown Washington Facebook)

SITE CONDITIONS

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

After the first workshop, the committee walked the district from one end to the other. On this hot August morning, the streets were not exactly bustling with activity; however, the corridor couldn't be described as void of activity either. There were a number of individuals walking the Main Street sidewalks, specifically the south side, which was shaded. Cars were parked along the street filling more than half of the available spaces. Several people were moving in and out of storefronts and others were sitting under the gazebo socializing in Meredith Park Plaza.

Existing physical conditions observed during this walk fit into the following six categories:

- Structures
- Public Space
- Streetscape
- Circulation
- Parking
- Infrastructure

STRUCTURES

Façade condition, building usage type, and vacancy were the focus of the observations of the building stock within the study area.

On the east end of the study area there are very few "missing teeth", or gaps between buildings, where other buildings once stood. Recent private investment has been impactful as updated facades are present in several blocks, including a recent restoration of The Indiana Theater. The matching façade grant program has also had consistent activity over the years making smaller updates like new windows, doors, fresh paint, and upgraded signage.

The west end of the study area tells a different story. Nearly all traditional downtown building structures have been removed from the most western-most block north of Main Street. Car lots encompass this block and most of the block directly adjacent. Buildings on the south side of Main Street are less traditional downtown building structures in that they, in some cases, are large, residential homes renovated into businesses. Vinyl siding is prominent and fewer first floor windows occur in this block.

Vacancies were low throughout the study area. A variety of business types included stores for paint, flooring, home décor, sewing and crafts, and several boutiques selling clothing, books, and gifts. Multiple healthcare facilities, a vape shop, and tattoo parlor were also observed. The New White Steamer, an established burger joint originated in 1938, and a newer coffee shop bookend the west and east ends of the study area as two of the very few restaurants along the corridor.

Not many communities of this size can claim to have lodging within their downtown. The 2-star Budget Inn Washington sits at the southeast corner of the study area with a range of room types within walking distance of downtown festivals and events.

PUBLIC SPACE

Within the study area there are three public spaces of note — The Commons, Meredith Park Plaza, and Fort Flora Historical Marker.

A grand opening was held for The Commons during this planning process making it the newest public space within the study area. A new event lawn surrounded by flexible plaza, a restroom, large event pavilion, and stage encompass nearly three-quarters of the block between SE 3rd Street and SE 4th Street on the south side of Main Street.

Meredith Park Plaza sits at the northwest corner of Main Street and NE 2nd Street. Downtown workers and nearby residents use this space for passive recreation activities. The gazebo was identified as an important feature and should be preserved. The fountain runs less frequently than when first installed and could use some updates.

Across the street from the Meredith Park Plaza is a linear plaza area, the home of the Fort Flora Historical Marker. This space is in direct view of the recently completed "Welcome to Washington" mural on the adjacent building.

STREETSCAPE

Sidewalks were in good condition along the Main Street corridor. More decay and poorer conditions were observed off the north-south connecting streets. A stamped brick detail lines the outer edge of the sidewalk along Main Street, which has held up overtime, but is starting to look dated.

Impactful when first installed along the corridor, the decorative lighting is consistent and serves its purpose for safety and usability for vehicles and pedestrians at night. Many wish it could be reconfigured to provide better access to power for seasonal decorations as well as events.

Outside of the hanging baskets on the light poles, the streetscape is void of landscape. A few trees exist within the public parks and plaza areas, but the long, linear stretches of sidewalk lack shade and seasonal interest that comes with street trees.

While furnishings and signage is consistent and uniquely customized along Main Street, dated products, such as acorn lighting, do not reflect the aspirations of downtown. The Commons could be a point of inspiration for the integration of new furnishings and materials.



Acorn light posts with seasonal hanging planters



The Commons Farmers Market Pavilion



Custom litter receptacle / bench detail, brick walk



Fort Flora Historical Marker



Meredith Plaza



Stretches of historic facades



Pockets of non-historic facades and varied materials

CIRCULATION

A traditional downtown grid organizes the study area from a vehicular and pedestrian network standpoint. Main Street is one-way traveling west and Van Trees and South Streets are one-way traveling east (see Figure 02d). The one-way condition allows vehicles to move around delivery trucks that may be unloading in front of downtown buildings due to poor rear access. Originally implemented to move traffic to and from factories on the west side of the community, the one-way streets today may be enabling higher traffic speeds and can make reaching destinations more challenging. Furthermore, upon entering the study area from the west, visitors are met with a large, “NO LEFT TURN” sign, which is not exactly welcoming.



Of the north-south roads passing through the study area, NE 5th Street (Indiana State Road 57) has the most traffic and activity. A future Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) project is considering the removal of the signals along this corridor, which may move traffic past this area at an even quicker rate. S. Meridian Street is the second most heavily traveled north-south corridor within the study area followed by NE 2nd Street and NE 3rd Street. Because SE 1st Street and SE 4th Street dead end one block south of South Street, they have the least movement.

Although sidewalks are present along each block within the study area, some are in better condition than others. Main Street is generally in better condition than some of the side streets. NE 1st Street would be the exception as sidewalks along one block were replaced with support from the adjacent business owner using the matching funds sidewalk replacement program. The brick street in this location represents the worst condition of roadway within the study area.

The recently constructed bump-out curb edge at the intersection of E Main and SE 3rd Streets off The Commons is good design practice that shortens crosswalks, provides better visibility for pedestrians, incorporates vegetation, and creates pockets for streetscape amenities. Design execution of bump-outs is important as to not impede traffic flow, particularly along corridors with increased parking numbers and required wide-turn traffic movements like conditions seen at the Main Street intersections.

Unique to a community of this size, downtown Washington has electric scooters and bikes available to residents and visitors for a minimal fee. This amenity improves mobility and reduces vehicular traffic.

PARKING

All streets include parking, but only Main, NE 1st and NE 2nd Streets are striped and marked with 2-hour-max signage. Some back-of-house parking is dedicated to “public” or “customer” use (see Figure 02d) while others are denoted as “private” or “employee” parking. Most of these back-of-house parking areas connect to Main Street via the north-south side streets, but some locations have direct connections such as the pedestrian alley adjoining the hospital parking and the through connection at Meredith Plaza.

INFRASTRUCTURE

No major concerns were observed in regard to stormwater, drainage, sanitary, and water infrastructure within the study area. The only utility within the Main Street corridor is water. All others exist within the alleys or other locations within the district. Broadband is present and available. Power needs were the largest concern brought up by the committee and the stakeholders interviewed in the next chapter.



Scooter rentals on display at Levy Electric

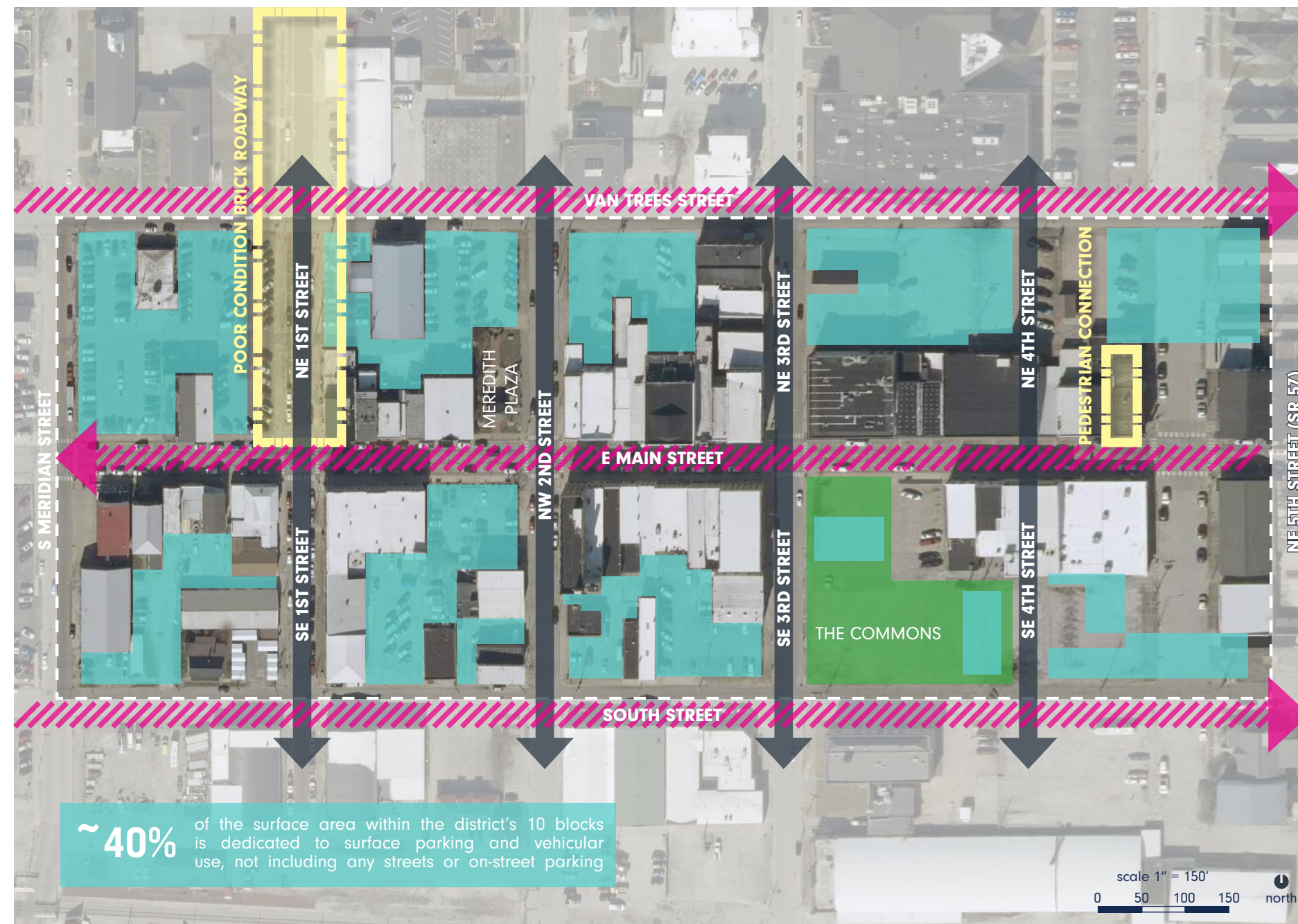


Figure 02d, Downtown Circulation + Parking

CULTURAL + SOCIAL CONDITIONS

DOWNTOWN EVENTS

There are many events throughout the year in Washington, some hosted by the City and others by local organizations and community groups.

- Springfest
- Wine & Brewfest
- Christmas on Main
- Front Porch Music + Art Festival
- Hatchet House athletic events
- Knights of Columbus Treasure Hunt
- Saturday Morning Farmers Market
- Shop Small Saturday
- Washington Catholic Summer Social

INSTITUTIONS

Downtown is fortunate to have several strong institutional anchors within walking distance of Main Street. These anchors help bolster downtown activity and create sense of place.

Daviess County Museum

The Daviess County Museum, located along Main Street in one of the many historic buildings, is home to the Daviess County Historical Society. The organization's mission:

"The Daviess County Historical Society is dedicated to the collection, preservation, research, organization, exhibition, and/or acquisition of artifacts, documents, sites, and other historical relics, regardless of medium, which are significant to the history of Daviess County, and thereby educate by promoting the historical study of said county, and strive to describe, or illustrate, the social, political, industrial, and educational progress of Daviess County Indiana."

Washington Carnegie Public Library

Just four blocks west of the study area sits the Washington Carnegie Public Library. This historic structure provides many events to the community including craft courses, story times, book reviews, and author visits just to name a few and is made possible through the *Friends of the Library* group. The organization's mission:

"The Friends of the Washington Carnegie Public Library work to provide extra resources for the programs and materials for the library and to focus the attention of the community on its most valuable asset, its library. Membership is open to all who share these goals."

Educational Institutions

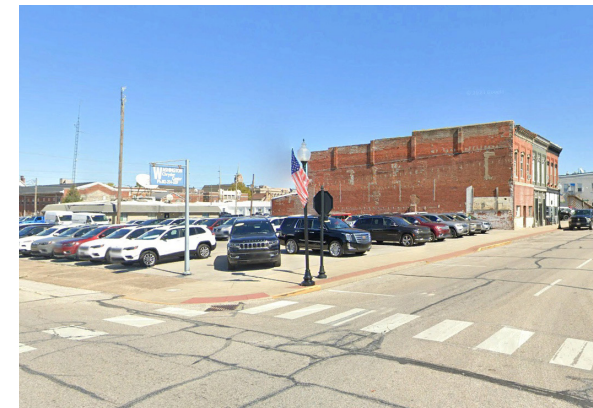
Two blocks north of the study area sit two private learning institutions – the Washington Catholic High School and Washington Catholic Elementary School which are neighbors to the Daviess County Courthouse.

Four blocks east of the private schools sits the Washington Jr. High School and Washington High School located along NE 5th Street (SR 57). Also on these grounds is The Hatchet House, a gymnasium that hosts school-related and community events. The Washington Community Schools Administration Offices are also located near the project site, two blocks south of Main Street overlooking The Commons. Outside of normal school-day operating hours, the parking lot of the administration building doubles as public parking for downtown events and festivals.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The current zoning ordinances for Washington are outdated and do not currently encourage nor support the type of mixed-use development many downtown districts strive to offer. Some observations of the current zoning code include:

- There are currently two ordinances related to development and zoning – City of Washington Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Control Ordinance. Many communities have combined these into one Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).
- The current ordinances contain extensive legal jargon that can be difficult for users to interpret as most are not familiar with the terminology.
- The organization of the ordinances are not intuitive and cause users to bounce back and forth between sections to understand requirements.
- Many data and standards could be listed in tables rather than in paragraphs.
- Permitted uses are difficult to find for each zoning district.
- The zoning map appears outdated and does not reflect all zoning districts.
- A Downtown Development District is described in the ordinance, but does not show up on the zoning map and definition of its boundaries are unclear.



Although drawing patrons to the area, car lots, storage facilities, and warehouses are not contributing to the vibrancy of the district. Updating the ordinance would address preferred uses for the district in the future.

SITE CONDITIONS CONCLUSIONS

- 1 The "bones" of this study area are strong, particularly on the east end, but attention to details like shade, consistent character, and clear wayfinding, will provide a better visitor experience.
- 2 Although active businesses, car lots and self-storage facilities are not the highest and best use of downtown real estate and might be better suited along the bypass.
- 3 New public space has been added to the study area recently—the next challenge here will be upkeep, programming, and vandalism prevention. Updating other public spaces and adding new amenities should be considered to draw visitors downtown on non-event days.
- 4 If moving large volumes of traffic quickly through the study area is no longer a priority, modifying the one-way street network to two-way, if only partially, should be considered within the study area.
- 5 Parking is not lacking here. Opportunities for shared parking between use types, event parking plans and promotion, and coordinated effort between existing businesses to protect on-street parking for patrons should be considered.
- 6 Tapestry segmentation and income (further discussed as part of the following "Market Conditions" chapter) could guide for future retail and restaurant options that may be considered within the study areas as well as the development of programming and events.

MARKET CONDITIONS

03

OVERVIEW

An understanding of market conditions, including community demographics and consumer habits, can help focus potential redevelopment efforts and identify what types of redevelopment may be most successful.

As part of OCRA's Main Street Ready report developed in summer/fall of 2024, several demographic and market indicators were identified. This chapter summarizes some of those takeaways, along with some additional analysis of consumer habits and a review of demographics.

Overall, Washington is in a better position than many peer communities throughout the State of Indiana. Washington continues to see positive population growth, which is not the case for many rural communities. Washington also has made significant strides in tackling vacant storefronts and activating spaces for the community downtown. However, when compared to the State as a whole, challenges remain including lower household incomes and decreased educational attainment levels.

While the community has made headway in filling vacant spaces and renovating and rehabilitating properties in the downtown, further growth and development will be limited if a focus is only placed on local services and demand.

A strategy expanding on services offered to local residents as well as boosting interest by visitors will be needed to foster the relationship between consumer demand and required investment for expanded retail and dining ventures. A focus on continued programming efforts and hosted events can draw more visitors to Washington resulting in subsequent exposure for businesses within the downtown area.

Demographic Highlights

The following data was gathered from the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS).

Population and Growth

- The current population of Washington is 12,076.
- The population within a 30 minute drive time of Washington is 76,953.
- Population has grown by 4.4% between the 2010 and 2020 census.
- Over 76% of the population is white, with around 12% of the population Hispanic and around 4% black.

Housing

- The average household size within Washington is 2.4 people, slightly less than the average within a 30-minute drive time and the State, both at 2.5.
- As of 2020, there were 5,175 housing units in Washington. Owner occupied housing units comprised 51.4% of this total while renter occupied units represented 39.3%. Vacant units stood at 9.3%. This represents a slight increase in renter-occupied units, a decrease in owner-occupied units, and a decrease in vacant units when compared to 2010.
- As of 2020, there are 32,726 housing units within a 30-minute drive time of Washington, of which 62.9% are owner-occupied and 26.9% are renter-occupied.

Educational Attainment

- 85.5% of the population in Washington graduated high school, slightly lower than the population within a 30-minute drive time at 86% and the State at 90%.
- 17.1% of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher, slightly lower than the population within a 30-minute drive time at 18.1% but much lower than the State at around 28%.

Income and Poverty

- The median household income within Washington is \$53,963 with per capita income at \$28,941 and a median net worth of \$107,349. All three indicators are slightly less than the population within a 30-minute drive time of Washington, which reflects a median household income of \$63,285, per capita income at \$33,623, and a median net worth of \$195,103.
- The poverty rate within Washington is 15.8% which is significantly higher than Daviess County at 9.6%.

Commuting

- Washington has more workers coming into the City than leaving at 3,728 and 3,313 respectively, representing a net inflow of 415 workers. 1,790 people both live and work in Washington.
- Most commuters entering Washington are coming from Vincennes (3.6%), Bicknell (1.3%), and Jasper (1.2%). Other communities contributing around 1% of workers include Evansville, Plainville, Odon, Loogootee, and Indianapolis.
- Of those who commute, the average commuting time is around 20 minutes.

Employment

- White-collar and blue-collar jobs make up nearly an even split at 40.9% and 40.2%, respectively, of the local jobs. 18.9% of jobs are in the services sector.
- Within the 30-minute drive time of Washington, a higher percentage of jobs are white-collar (48.7%) than blue-collar (34.9%). 16.5% of jobs are in the services sectors.
- Top industries in Washington include services (33%), manufacturing (28.3%), and retail trade (14.6%).

Market Analysis

Retail Trade Analysis

A trade analysis captures a snapshot of Washington including types of stores and services provided along with an understanding of what how consumers are spending money. According to ESRI and data provided by Data Axle, there are just under 500 businesses within a 5-minute drive time of downtown Washington.

According to data from Discover Downtown Washington, 61% of businesses downtown are service-oriented, 16.9% are local and county government, 12.1% are comprised of restaurants, bars, coffee shops, schools and churches, and 10% are small-town shops. The large percentage of service-oriented businesses reflect a downtown that is heavily oriented on providing services to the existing residents of Washington.

Trade Area

The understanding the types of businesses and services offered within downtown are important when evaluating the spending habits of residents and potential visitors. The Main Street Ready report by OCRA analyzed populations within a 5, 10, and 15-minute drive of downtown. As part of this effort, a 30-minute drive time was also analyzed. Within that 30-minute drive time, there are over 76,000 residents which is more than six times the population of Washington.

The two most requested business types identified from the OCRA Main Street Ready report as lacking in downtown include restaurants and retail/shopping. While the City can take action to help improve the business climate and atmosphere downtown, it is helpful to know which types of businesses offer the most opportunity based on current spending habits both within Washington and within the 30-minute drive time.

The following reports were ran by ESRI and analyzed for further understanding of spending habits: (full reports in appendix)

- Restaurant Market Potential (Washington and 30-minute drive time)
- Retail Market Potential (Washington and 30-minute drive time)
- Retail Demand Outlook (Washington and 30-minute drive time)
- Retail Goods and Services Expenditures (Washington and 30-minute drive time)
- Retail Demand by Industry (Washington and 30-minute drive time)

While these reports vary in the exact methodologies and criteria used, when viewed together they help illustrate the existing consumer habits of residents in Washington and the 30-minute drive time as well as opportunities based on likely changes in consumer habits. These reports generally create an index comparing consumer habits in the analysis area against national averages. This index is reflected as a Market Potential Index (MPI) value, where a value above 100 indicates spending above the national average. This creates the ability to

identify higher and lower demand relative to national averages.

Based on review of the reports, Washington and the surrounding area have the highest spending on essentials (food, health, and household maintenance) and moderate engagement in discretionary spending with a consistent interest in family dining, general merchandise, and home improvement. These patterns suggest a population prioritizing everyday needs with some spending on dining and moderate entertainment or recreational activities. Key areas where spending is above the national average include:

- **Convenience Store Purchases:** Spending on convenience store items, including gas purchases, is significantly above average with an MPI of 121 for gasoline and 109 for general convenience items.
- **Family Dining / Fast-Food Engagement:** Both family restaurants and fast food (curbside and takeout) see high participation with MPIs of 101 for and 111 respectively.
- **Buying American-Made Products:** Psychographics indicate strong local support for American-made products with 36.5% of residents strongly agreeing on a willingness to purchase American-made, giving this segment a MPI of 125.

Opportunities

As part of the OCRA Main Street Ready Report, a community survey was administered which garnered 259 responses. Overwhelmingly, the survey respondents desired additional dining and shopping opportunities in Washington.

The Main Street Ready Report identified growth potential in apparel, entertainment and food sectors. A further review of retail and restaurant ESRI reports (previously discussed) also identified opportunities for:

- **Expanding Family and Casual Dining Options:** With high MPIs for family-style restaurants in both Washington (MPI 100) and the 30-minute drive time area (MPI 101), along with significant fast-food engagement, expanding family-friendly and mid-priced dining options downtown would cater to both city residents and regional consumers.
- **Introducing Convenience and Specialty Retail:** With high MPIs for convenience store shopping (109) and gasoline purchases (121) in the broader area, adding well-positioned convenience stores in downtown Washington could serve local needs while capturing drive-through and commuter traffic. The Main Street Ready report also outlines respondents' wishes for boutiques, an Amish store, candy store, and other specialty retail with some being more kid-centric.



- **Focusing on General Merchandise and Personal Care:** Sales performance indicators (SPIs) showed that general merchandise stores (SPI 81 in the broader area) and health and personal care products (SPI 90 in Washington, SPI 105 in the larger area) align with demand, presenting opportunities for new stores catering to these essential categories downtown.
- **Considering Moderately-Priced and Themed Dining:** Local market trends favor casual dining, with an MPI of 100 for frequent fast-food dining in both Washington and the surrounding area. Introducing themed, mid-priced restaurants with unique dining experiences could cater to a wide demographic while filling gaps in fine dining.

Lastly, the Main Street Ready Report also identified opportunities for experiential businesses, such as ax throwing, arcades, bowling, rage rooms, and escape rooms. Paired with robust community programming, such as first Friday events or other festivals/gatherings, such businesses can appeal to residents outside of Washington. These businesses and offerings do not replace those businesses and services catering to local residents but rather complement them, creating a more diverse and engaging downtown district.

Buying Habits of Local Consumers

In addition to the market reports, ESRI also produces Tapestry Segments of the local population, which offer another insight into the potential interests and shopping habits of local consumers. To create the Tapestry Segmentation, ESRI collects data from credit card purchases and a variety of other sources to group people based upon their buying habits. The following charts show the top three tapestry segments both within Washington and within a 30-minute drive of Washington. More robust summary spreadsheets of Tapestry Segments for Washington can be found in the appendix.

TAPESTRY SEGMENT	MARKET PROFILE + CHARACTERISTICS – WITHIN WASHINGTON, INDIANA
1. Small Town Sincerity (25.8%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$31,500 Median Household Income ➤ Small Town Sincerity features a semi-rural lifestyle, complete with domestic trucks and SUVs, ATVs, and gardens. ➤ Residents enjoy outdoor activities like hunting and fishing as well as watching NASCAR and college sports on TV. ➤ A large senior population visit doctors and health practitioners regularly. ➤ A largely single population favors convenience over cooking—frozen meals and fast food. ➤ Home improvement is not a priority, but vehicle maintenance is.
2. Hometown Heritage (21.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$28,200 Median Household Income ➤ For those with young children at home, watching Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Nickelodeon on TV is popular; diapers, baby food, and children’s clothing are priority expenditures. ➤ Favor shopping at their local discount store, search for bargains on the Internet, or from in-home sales representatives. ➤ Read parenting and health magazines. ➤ Watch programs on BET, VHI, and Game Show Network. ➤ Prefer to listen to gospel, R&B, rap, and hip-hop music. ➤ Like to listen to sports on the radio and watch on TV. Favorite sports include NASCAR, wrestling, and basketball.
3. Heartland Communities (18.1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$42,400 Median Household Income ➤ Traditional in their ways, residents of Heartland Communities choose to bank and pay their bills in person and purchase insurance from an agent. ➤ Most have high-speed Internet access at home or on their cell phone but aren’t ready to go paperless. ➤ Many residents paid off home mortgages but hold auto and student loans. Interest checking accounts are common. ➤ To support their local community, residents participate in public activities. ➤ Home remodeling is not a priority, but homeowners do tackle necessary maintenance work on their cherished homes. They have invested in riding lawn mowers to maintain their larger yards. ➤ They enjoy country music and watch CMT. ➤ Motorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise. ➤ To get around these semi-rural communities, residents prefer domestic trucks or SUVs.

TAPESTRY SEGMENT	MARKET PROFILE + CHARACTERISTICS – WITHIN A 30-MINUTE DRIVE OF WASHINGTON, INDIANA
1. Salt of the Earth (24.6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$56,300 Median Household Income ➤ Outdoor sports and activities, such as fishing, boating, hunting, and overnight camping trips, are popular. ➤ To support their pastimes, truck ownership is high; many also own an ATV. ➤ They own the equipment to maintain their lawns and tend to their vegetable gardens. ➤ Residents often tackle home remodeling and improvement jobs themselves. ➤ Due to their locale, they own satellite dishes and have access to high-speed Internet connections like DSL. ➤ These conservative consumers prefer to conduct their business in person rather than Online. They use an agent to purchase insurance.
2. Heartland Communities (15.4%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$42,400 Median Household Income ➤ Traditional in their ways, residents of Heartland Communities choose to bank and pay their bills in person and purchase insurance from an agent. ➤ Most have high-speed Internet access at home or on their cell phone but aren’t ready to go paperless. ➤ Many residents paid off home mortgages but hold auto and student loans. Interest checking accounts are common. ➤ To support their local community, residents participate in public activities. ➤ Home remodeling is not a priority, but homeowners do tackle necessary maintenance work on their cherished homes. They have invested in riding lawn mowers to maintain their larger yards. ➤ They enjoy country music and watch CMT. ➤ Motorcycling, hunting, and fishing are popular; walking is the main form of exercise. ➤ To get around these semi-rural communities, residents prefer domestic trucks or SUVs
3. Small Town Sincerity (11.7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ \$31,500 Median Household Income ➤ Small Town Sincerity features a semi-rural lifestyle, complete with domestic trucks and SUVs, ATVs, and gardens. ➤ Residents enjoy outdoor activities like hunting and fishing as well as watching NASCAR and college sports on TV. ➤ A large senior population visit doctors and health practitioners regularly. ➤ A largely single population favors convenience over cooking—frozen meals and fast food. ➤ Home improvement is not a priority, but vehicle maintenance is.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

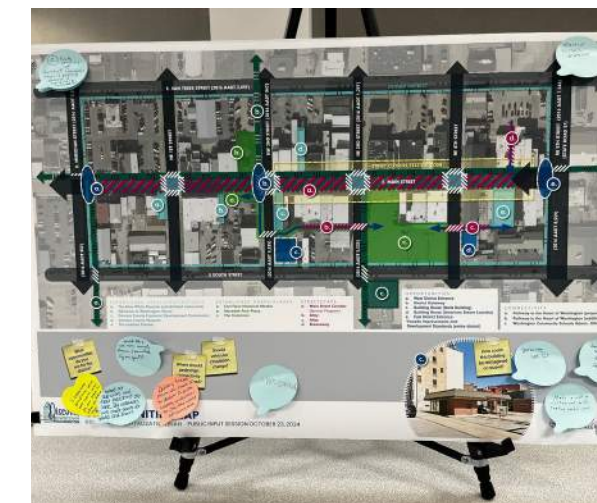
04

OVERVIEW

Public input was gathered during the plan as well as prior to the plan in separate initiatives.

PRIOR TO THE PLANNING PROCESS, two Online public surveys had been implemented as part of separate initiatives by the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). The Hometown Collaboration Initiative completed in 2019 collected 832 responses and the more recent Main Street Ready Report completed this year (2024) collected 259 responses. Both surveys contained questions centered around downtown improvements. Input received was reviewed and used to influence recommendations within this plan.

DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS, public input was gathered via steering committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, and a public open house. Each method was used to gain insight and gather feedback on specific recommendations.



A Public Open House took place on October 23, 2024 as part of the planning process.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

A robust steering committee was assembled of representatives from local leadership (city and city council), organizations (Rotary, Daviess County Community Foundation, Discover Downtown Washington), library and schools (private and public), business owners, and investors. The committee met multiple times throughout the five-month planning process.

MEETING #1 – AUGUST 29, 2024

The first committee meeting established input in two major categories – What’s Working Well? (and) What Needs Work?

When asked “What’s Working Well?”, the group identified the following recent wins in the community:

Annual Events / Seasonal Programming

- Saturday Morning Farmer’s Market (held Memorial Day to Labor Day)
- Wine & Brewfest (springtime, but talks of a summer/fall relocation)
- Washington Catholic Summer Social
- Food Truck Tuesdays (all summer, talks of relocating from the park to The Commons)
- Shop Small Saturday (the Saturday after Thanksgiving)
- Christmas on Main

Investment in Downtown

- Engagement with the OCRA assistance program
- Advancement of the Main Street program
- Enacted a Facade Grant program (successfully matching up to \$3,500 for 11 recipients)

- 50/50 City-Business Sidewalk Replacement program
- Continued private investment downtown

Local Groups

- Knights of Columbus (Treasure Hunt Drawing)
- The American Legion
- Daviess County Historical Society
- VFW Post 3321

Infrastructure + Designed Spaces

- Completion of The Commons public space
- Commissioned “Welcome to Washington” Mural
- Activation of downtown for events via the partial closure of Main Street
- Implementation of a DORA District
- Business 50 Expansion and replacement of HWY 57 (2030 INDOT project)

When asked “What Needs Work?”, the group identified the following current challenges towards improvement and advancement:

Social Dynamics

- Limited dining options
- Identifying programming / event capabilities of The Commons
- Lacking a cultural event that ties to the City’s history and/or people
- Public perception of diversity with an increasing Haitian population

Infrastructure + Designed Spaces

- Evaluate traffic circulation efficiency and parking needs
- Evaluate delivery access and dumpster placement/collection options as a quarter of business do not have alley access
- Upkeep of building storefronts (historic and non-historic)
- Update current ordinances
- Incorporate wayfinding elements
- Improve function of Meredith Plaza

Vision for Downtown

- Attract businesses (specifically retail and restaurant, currently heavy on service-based business)
- Activate the space outside of a regular 8:00am to 5:00pm work day
- Create a destination drawing visitors

MEETING #2 – SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

The second committee meeting reviewed existing site conditions including physical, market, cultural / social conditions as well as existing ordinances. The group also reviewed summarized feedback from the first steering committee meeting, past plans including OCRA Hometown Collaboration Initiative and OCRA Main Street Ready, and stakeholder interviews.

A large portion of the meeting was spent gaining further feedback from the group using mapping exercises to pinpoint opportunities and outline recommendation categories with priority projects. A series of precedent imagery boards were also used for identifying feeling of place and desired elements or features as part of an updated streetscape.

The following topics were brought up by committee members as items of note when developing recommendations:

1. Make downtown more accessible
 - Update infrastructure with ADA accessible sidewalks and ramps
 - Expand trail planning to connect community assets
2. Activate remaining storefronts
3. Improve curb appeal along adjacent uses (such as the car dealership)
4. Evaluate current zoning ordinances for holes and/or updates needed particularly with the UDO.

The following topics were identified as being of highest concern when considering priority projects as part of the recommendations:

1. Update the Unified Development Ordinance.
2. Create an improved green space.
3. Develop a streetscape identity with gateway features, lighting, and cohesive branding.
4. Encourage artistic endeavors within the district like the new mural.



Images above were taken at the Steering Committee Meetings

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Key stakeholders from the city were interviewed on August 29th, 2024, regarding downtown infrastructure related to lighting, power, streets, and safety.

LIGHTING AND POWER

Since originally installed, the decorative street lighting along Main Street has been retrofitted to LED. The side streets within the study area continue to have older fixtures that are harder to maintain. Upgrading to consistent lighting throughout the study area is desired. Power for events is currently brought to Main Street from back alleys through a series of temporary conduit and wiring is customized to each event request. Limiting street closures and event locations designated blocks within the district would simplify this process of connecting to power sources. Permanent power pedestals for festivals and events was also suggested.

STREETS AND SIDEWALKS

Top concerns related to the street and sidewalks included the poor condition of the brick pavers within the roadway on NW 1st Street between Main and Van Trees Streets. Due to a limited budget, this location has not made the top of the priority list for reconstruction. ADA adherence and the increasingly stringent standards and requirements are also of concern. Generally, the stakeholders were not opposed to bumpouts or curb extensions based on the benefits of pedestrian safety, but did want to ensure turning movements for larger delivery trucks and agriculture-related vehicles were considered during design as this is an agricultural community.

SAFETY

Maintaining pedestrian safety at festivals and events when roads are closed to vehicular traffic was brought up as a concern. The barricades that are currently used for road closures would not adequately prevent a vehicle from driving through the area. Installing cameras downtown to monitor and deter vandalism is desired.



PUBLIC ONLINE SURVEYS

Hometown Collaboration Initiative (2019)

A summary of the Hometown Collaboration initiative survey can be found in the Past Plans and Initiatives section of this plan.

Main Street Ready Report (2024)

259 responses were gathered, the majority of which had lived in the community for more than 10 years, were between the ages of 25 and 65, are employed full-time, and visit the downtown on a weekly or monthly basis.

What makes you excited to bring visitors downtown?

- Events (Farmer's Market, Christmas Parade, Front Porch Music, Art Festival)
- Shopping
- The Commons

Why don't you bring visitors downtown?

- Nothing to do/boring
- Parking
- Shops closed
- No restaurants

What programs or projects would you like to see Discover DT Washington undertake?

(Responses highest priority to lowest priority)

1. Business recruitment
2. Restaurant recruitment
3. Festivals, events
4. Façade improvement, parking, retail recruitment, family events/family activities, beautification, building-rehabilitation

What are the business types you would like to see more of in downtown Washington?

1. Restaurants (by far most desired)
2. Clothing
3. Bookstore
4. Bakery, deli, ice cream, arcade, gift shop, art gallery, shoe store, thrift

What one word comes to mind as you think about things you DISLIKE downtown?

1. Parking (by far most disliked)
2. Empty/boring
3. No restaurants

Which of the following are issues in Downtown Washington?

- Lack of businesses/destinations suited to me or my household
- Too many vacant storefronts or vacant lots
- Not enough businesses consistently open while I'm out

Are there any serious issues in downtown Washington that wasn't listed above?

"I personally feel welcome, comfortable, and safe in and around Downtown Washington."

- "Too many violent Haitians coming here."
- "Haitians driving down main street the wrong way."
- "Illegal immigrants lingering in public areas make it feel unsafe with their repetitive crime rate."
- "Large groups of non-English speaking people gather and walk the streets."
- "Too much crime with illegals that isn't being reported publicly."
- "There are so many people from foreign countries that don't read the language, so driving has become unsafe."
- "Immigrants are piling into houses and apartments beyond capacity and their status is uncertain."
- "The thugs that are always seen walking around town, the drugs."

"Unfortunately, we don't know much about them (residents from foreign locations) and their culture, and they don't know much about ours."

Reoccurring themes from this initiative that pertain to current conversations within this plan include:

Perceived or real "barriers" preventing people from coming downtown:

- Parking (perceived)
- Safety (perceived)
- Store hours (real)
- Lack of restaurants (real)
- Lack of activity (real on non-event days)

Long-time residents coming to terms with a changing cultural dynamic downtown is a challenge that was identified and expressed in the committee meetings and at the public open house. The quote below was also shared with the committee during the planning process.

Writing to share a lovely experience we had today in New Harmony. Adam and I met Emily there and we wandered around soaking in all the beauty and creativity and spiritual energy. I noticed benches parked everywhere in lovely places to sit and visit or read or just sit and think. The benches served as a welcoming and invitation to stay and relax and enjoy the moment or hour, untimed by the rule makers who accuse others of loitering. They welcome visitors by offering a place to rest and be. Is this not what we want to do in Washington, welcome visitors, no matter the color or economic status? Is this simple act of kindness worth preserving? I think so.

- Beth Young (Washington Garden Club)

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

A public open house was held on October 23, 2024 from 5:00-6:30pm at the Washington Carnegie Public Library.

Throughout the event, a series of questions and streetscape design considerations were posed to attendees. A detailed summary of feedback can be found as part of the appendix. The following are some highlights from the feedback received:

General Input on the District

When asked what events would bring more people to the downtown district, participants identified music, food, family activities and retail /shopping as the biggest draws. There was a desire for the hosting of concerts, which is more realistic with the recent completion of The Commons. Food-centric festivals and venues/businesses (such as a brewery or wine bar providing a nightlife atmosphere) were noted as suggestions. Some examples of favored family-friendly activities include a Barktober Fest, Odon's Pumpkin Festival, and a summer block party. More shopping events, similar to Shop Small Saturday, were recommended to promote Main Street retail.

When asked what needs to change in the district, participants noted complications with parking, lack of quantity and quality public green spaces, and a desire to incorporate the arts and more dining. It was commented that a design focus on the SR 57 and Main Street intersection should create visual queues when approaching downtown.

When asked what should stay the same or be preserved, participants noted the historic facades, Amish events, and support of Discover Downtown Washington.

Focused District Enhancements

Participants weighed in on creating a strong identity for the district, identified the improvement of existing and creation of new energized spaces, responded to the enhancement of streetscape and circulation patterns, and responded to potential building reuse as the basis for recommendations when considering downtown enhancement.

District Definition + Gateway

Though this area of improvement received the least interest for enhancement from the group, it is recognized by the steering committee and design team as a crucial component to the vitality of the streetscape. Creating strong entries into the district (Main Street in particular) and developing a branded wayfinding package will establish a cohesive identity for the district.

Energized Spaces

This category, along with "Streetscape + Circulation Patterns, received greatest interest from the group with participants in favor of improving the existing Meredith Plaza to better suit today's needs for public space. It was also acknowledged that the streetscape would benefit from more seating options as well as the ability to move seating to create personalized gathering spaces.

When asked specifically about design updates and changes to Meredith Park, the response was largely positive for change. This included desire for incorporating a play structure as well as a water component - such as a spray plaza - to activate the space. The overgrown shrubs were seen as an issue and there was a suggestion to incorporate a statuesque evergreen to be decorated at Christmastime. The gazebo was identified as a key component that should be preserved.

Streetscape + Circulation Patterns

The group appreciated the ideas to include specialty lighting to help define key locations along the corridor and create a sense of place. They also liked the potential addition of curb bumpouts that would make for more comfortable pedestrian connections, incorporate street trees and plantings,, and locate nodes for pedestrian amenities.

This portion of the open house presented possibilities for the reorientation of travel lanes from one way to two-way as well as the selective removal of some on-street parallel parking to accommodate pedestrian movement. Though participants were hesitant on the removal of parking, the benefit to pedestrians was acknowledged.

The design team also presented the potential for periodic street closure during large events and festivals from the intersection of E Main and 3rd Streets (at The Commons) to E Main and 5th Streets. This stretch of streetscape could capitalize on catenary overhead lighting to define the space and curbless streets for ease of pedestrian movement.

Building Reuse + Alley Activation

Close behind in generated interest from the participant group was the response to activating abandoned or underutilized buildings for public space. This included ideas for developing more indoor/outdoor retail and restaurant opportunities within proximate vacant buildings as well as incorporating temporary installations such as parklet spaces along the streets.

Two sites noted for potential reuse include the old laundromat site along SE 4th Street across from The Commons and the old bank building along NW 2nd Street between E Main Street and E South Street.

Ideas for the laundromat include an event space and/or for-rent kitchen spaces for start-up restaurant businesses. The street-front poses opportunity for dining and direct connection to The Commons, creating a prime location during future events and festivals. An activated alley with artful wayfinding along the north building edge could lead to outdoor dining in the rear.

Similar uses are envisioned for the old bank building with expanded outdoor dining and gathering spaces. The teller window turned drive-through food pickup could extend hours of operation and seasonal use when outdoor spaces are not able to function.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

- 1** Downtown Washington festivals and events draw people to the study area, are well attended, and appreciated by the community. However, on non-event days, there is little activity to draw residents and visitors to the study area.
- 2** Although there is an outstanding, regionally known burger establishment on Main Street, a variety of restaurants to choose from at varying times of day and days of the week are lacking.
- 3** Parking appears to be plentiful within the study area yet is a leading cause of frustration for people coming to the study area to patron stores or attend events.
- 4** The study area has had much investment, both private and public, in recent years—a cohesive vision is desired to create a district around these blocks that will guide development, define building and streetscape standards, and create a consistent visual character for this community center.
- 5** Long-time residents are observing a changing cultural dynamic downtown—some are embracing this change and others are hesitant to accept this change.
- 6** It is critical to the community leadership, steering committee, and many stakeholders involved in this planning process that downtown Washington be a place that is inviting and welcoming for all people.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION

A public presentation was made on Monday, December 9th, 2024, during a regularly-scheduled City Council meeting at 6:30pm.. Approximately 25 people were in the audience as well as the City Council officers and members. The presentation covered the planning process thus far—observations about the district, public input, strategies, and implementation. The following summarizes the key takeaways from the comments received:

1. Positive reception to the idea of coordinating a trails master plan for the community that connects city-wide trails already in the works to the downtown and specifically this district.
2. Excitement about some of the "lower hanging fruit" ideas, but some reservation about how to accomplish the larger investment projects that feel much longer term.
3. Feel the plan prepares the community well to apply for Stellar Communities in 2025 pending that program moves forward.
4. INDOT infrastructure grants were also mentioned as potential funding sources in the future.
5. Downtown seems to be getting more traction with larger crowds at events—the recent Main Street Christmas Parade had an excellent turnout—feel the plan will complement that momentum.

VISION + RECOMMENDATIONS

05

OVERVIEW

The vision for this plan is to define a district around this study area so that it may thrive as a lively hub of activity in downtown Washington. The district will:

- Serve as a community center for events, entertainment, and cultural resources
- Prioritize walkability emphasizing pedestrian comfort and traffic calming.
- Provide vibrant public streetscapes and spaces that are welcoming to all.
- Strive to preserve the historic integrity and character of existing buildings.
- Ensure redevelopment fits within the urban fabric of the corridor.

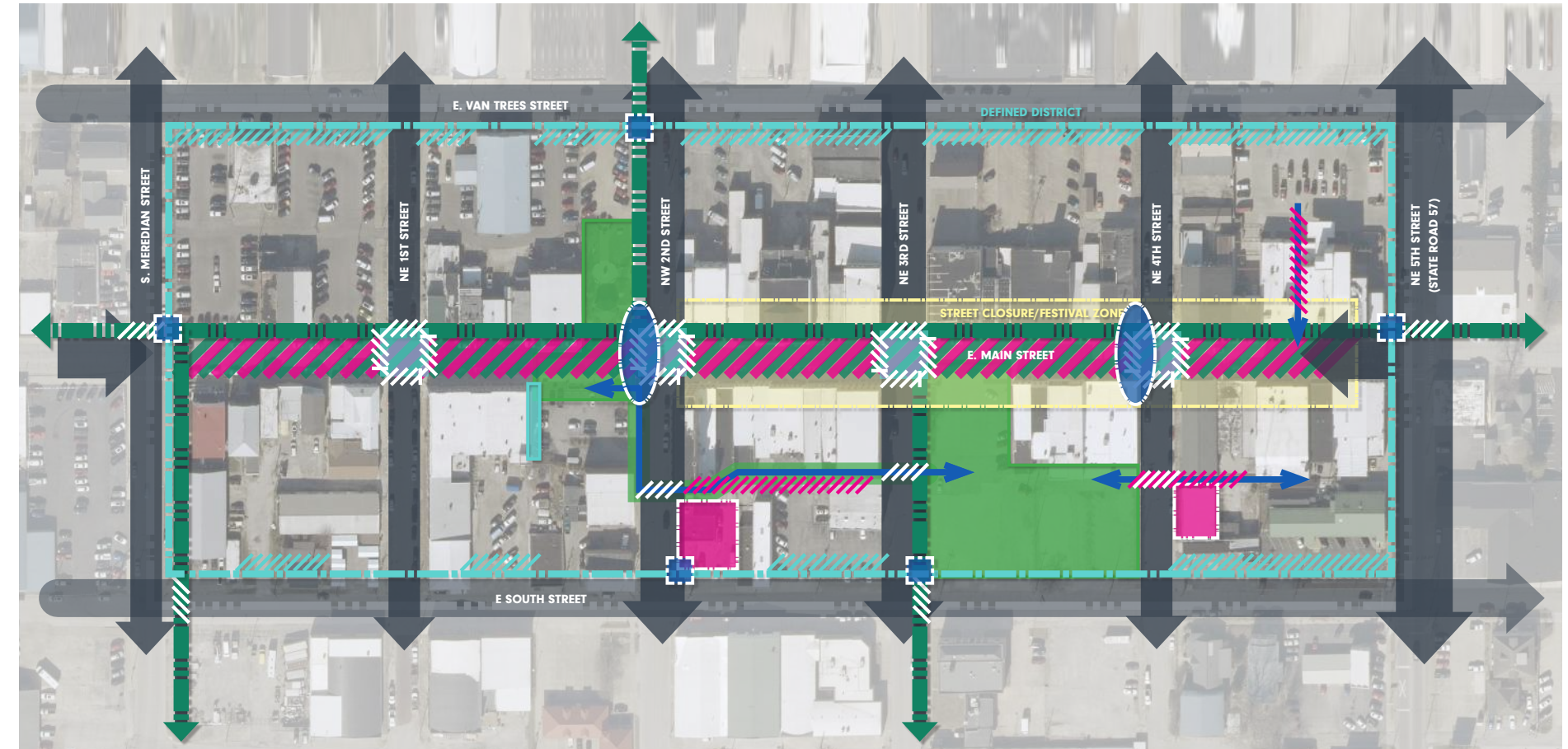
CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

OCRA completed a Main Street Ready Report for downtown Washington just as this study began. Without duplicating efforts, this chapter supports the recommendations made in that plan, and aims to accompany that list with additional suggestions organized by the four pillars--Organization, Promotion, Economic Vitality, and Design. These recommendations can be found on pages 36-37.

The rest of the chapter largely focuses on the category of Design and provides recommendations for the following:

- Streetscape + Gateways
- Public Space + Event Infrastructure
- Parking + Circulation
- Building Reuse Opportunities
- District Edge + Alleyways
- Downtown Architecture

The map graphic on the opposite page illustrates opportunities in each of these categories within the district. The pages following provide more detail.



RECOMMENDATIONS

ORGANIZATION

Recommendations from OCRA related to Organization focused on the recruitment and function of the board as well as fundraising. Additional Organization considerations are outlined below:

Increase Capital: Establishing a local food and beverage tax or a tax increment finance (TIF) district are two ways to collect funds that can be used towards redevelopment projects within the district.

Hire an Executive Director: With the completion of The Commons, the next step to ensure it's success is programming. If this responsibility is put solely on the shoulders of existing staff, it may not receive the attention it deserves, other projects may begin to lose momentum, and/or staff may experience burnout, which leads to turnover.

Establish a DORA District: Establish a DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area) within the district to encourage walkability between bars and restaurants, retail, public amenity space, and event areas, foster community events and festivals, and create a more vibrant downtown atmosphere.

The Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission states in order to establish a DORA, a municipal legislative body must adopt an ordinance that includes the following required information:

- A map of the refreshment area with boundaries defined.
- The location(s) of the proposed designated retail and temporary vendors within the refreshment area.
- A statement that the refreshment area is consistent with the municipality's zoning ordinance.
- The number, spacing, and type of signage designating the refreshment area.
- The dates and the hours of operation for the refreshment area.

Once a DORA is established, the municipality is required to submit the following to the Commission:

- An application for approval of the refreshment area.
- The completed designation forms received by the municipality from retail and temporary vendors to participate in the refreshment area.
- A copy of the ordinance adopted by the municipality.
- A map of the refreshment area indicating where designated retail are located within the DORA and where temporary vendors are permitted to operate.

Increase Facade Funding Opportunities: Communities that have a Historic Preservation Committee can apply to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). This helps open the door to additional funding through the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology (DHPA).

CLG communities can gain a significant competitive advantage in applying for federal Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grants. More than \$100,000 in grant funding is set aside specifically for Indiana's CLGs each year.

PROMOTION

OCRA recommendations on the promotion of downtown focus on the use of social media and other platforms to tell the story of downtown. Additionally, the district should consider promoting:

A strong, cohesive brand: Perhaps using the recently completed Commons project as inspiration, a strong, cohesive brand should be established for the district that coordinates consistency in materials, signage, lighting, and site furnishing throughout the district.

A culture of diversity and inclusion: An increased understanding and knowledge of different nationalities and ethnicities may serve this community well in overcoming some observed discomfort with diversity. A festival of food may be a place to start as a means to spark some common ground and bring people together. This concept could

be tied into the messaging of the district brand as well ensuring all feel welcome in Washington.

A park and walk mentality: Clear, consistent communication regarding available parking on both event and non-event days will help to manage expectations. A combination of on-line information as well as physical signage would be needed to effectively reach the widest audience.

The district as a daily destination: New additions to public spaces downtown will encourage people to come downtown even on non-event days. Further promotion should make people feel welcome to use public spaces for socializing and passive recreation activities without it being considered loitering.

Family-oriented activities: More family-oriented programming was requested in the public survey. One idea in this realm would be a "Dollar Day" downtown. This could include dollar hot dogs or other food items for a dollar, movies at the theatre for a dollar, entrance to the museum for a dollar, booths and retail with dollar-items for purchase.

Extended evening and weekend hours: Extended hours was a common request from the public. Knowing this can put a strain on small business owners, a coordinated effort amongst businesses could build momentum through a routinely schedule event such as a "Fridays after Five" or "Second Saturdays" program. Extending hours once a month via an event would be a good starting point.

Increased engagement with schools: With several schools located adjacent to the district, working together to host more "after-school" events tied to sports or skill and hobby competitions (such as robotic builds) would be a way to draw people to downtown shops and restaurants after events conclude. Patron discounts to event attendees could also be offered as incentive.

Local artists through temporary installs: Temporary art installations, such as Batesville's Umbrella Sky, may be a way to attract residents and visitors to come downtown to see an ever-changing art scene. Without committing to an expensive, permanent sculpture or mural, a call for artists could be put out each year with a location and a budget to develop a temporary piece. Curiosity will draw people to the area to view before it's gone and, perhaps, patron shops and restaurants while in the area.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Recommendations from OCRA related to Economic Vitality focused on business recruitment and retention, pop-up businesses, and business succession planning. Additionally, based on the market analysis, the following could also be considered:

- 1) Expanding Family and Casual Dining;
- 2) Introducing Convenience and Specialty Retail;
- 3) Focusing on General Merchandise/Personal Care;
- 4) Considering Moderately Priced/Themed Dining as well as Experiential Businesses (axe throwing/escape rooms).

DESIGN

Design recommendations from OCRA's effort focused on "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" ideas such as crosswalks and movable furnishings, wayfinding, business signage, and design standards.

This chapter provides considerations for more complex design, amenity, and infrastructure, projects that will require longer timelines and creative funding to implement. These ideas are explored further on the following pages as well as in the implementation chapter in the following categories:

- Streetscape + Gateways
- Public Space + Event Infrastructure
- Parking + Circulation
- Building Reuse Opportunities
- Perimeter + Alleyways
- Downtown Architecture



Farmer's market revenue increased by 30% the summer Umbrella Sky was installed in Batesville.

STREETSCAPE + GATEWAYS

DISTRICT DEFINING ELEMENTS

Elements like specialty lighting (top right), decorative crosswalks (middle right), archways, and district markers (bottom right and left) make it clear to visitors that they have arrived someplace special.

Street trees may be undesirable due to maintenance or concerns with blocking storefront signage; however, it would be a shame to overlook them completely. Street trees offer shade and seasonal interest, creating a more comfortable atmosphere for pedestrians. They could be implemented at the ends of streets in bumpouts (top right) without impacting storefront visibility.

It is recommended these types of elements be developed, with the unique character of downtown Washington in mind, and implemented overtime to help define the district. The effort will draw restaurants and retailers as well as catch the eye of developers, which will contribute to the long term success and vibrancy of the area.

CURB EXTENSIONS

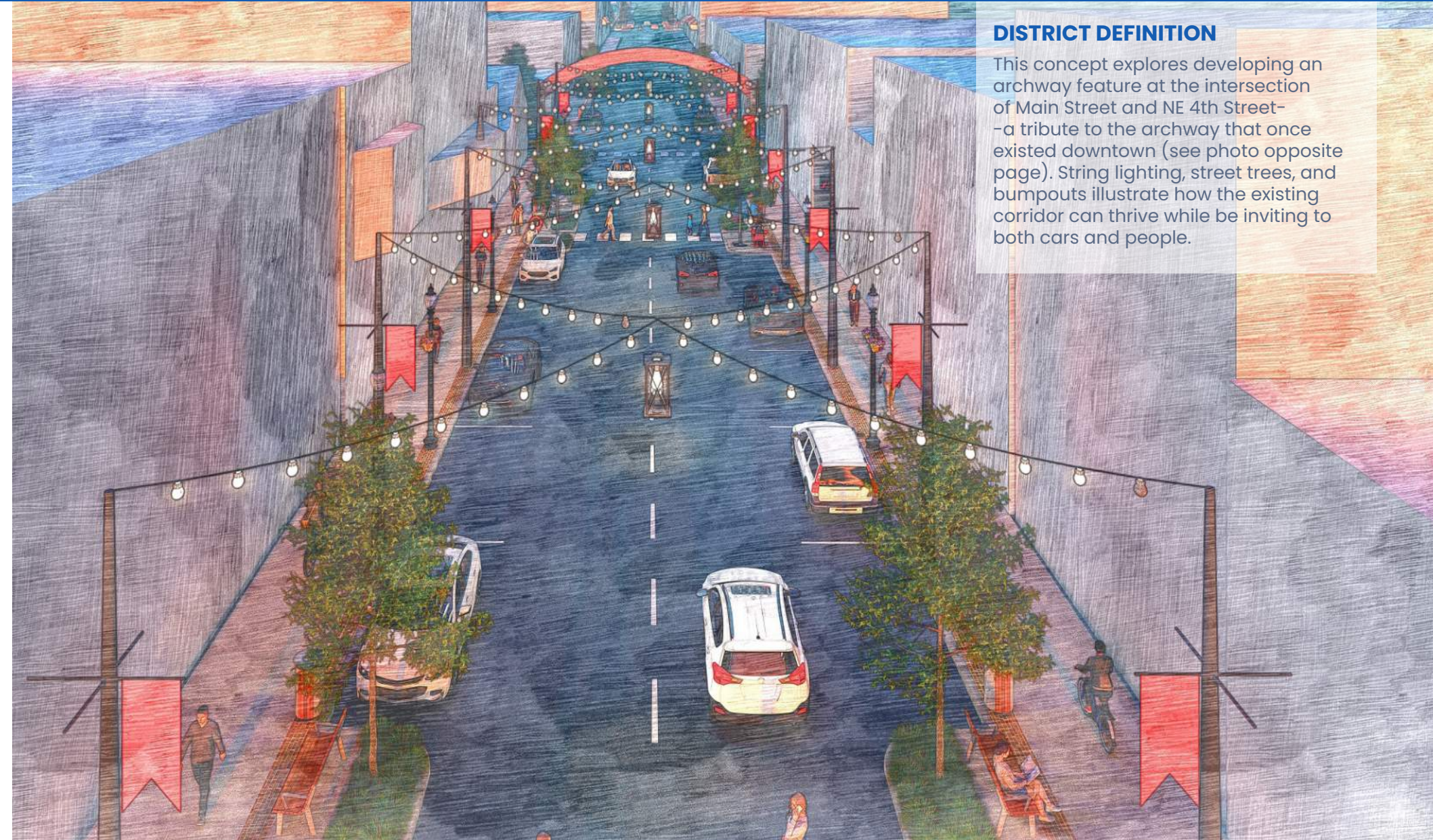
Curb extensions, or bumpouts, have a number of advantages that would serve the Main Street corridor well. Reducing crosswalk widths, making pedestrians more visible to vehicles prior to crossing traffic, calming traffic, and allowing space for trees and outdoor dining opportunities are just a few benefits of bumpouts.

Implementing bumpouts will reduce parallel parking by one to two spots per block. If this is a concern that cannot be overcome, the bumpouts could be implemented on the side streets only in order to balance between prioritizing parking on Main Street in front of businesses and creating more comfortable pedestrian space.

However, if it is concluded that a balance needs to be struck between creating a place for people and cars, then bumpouts along Main Street would provide some of the much needed pedestrian space currently lacking in the corridor. Because this can require an expensive streetscape project to implement, less expensive, temporary solutions are described on pg. 38 of this chapter.



At one time, an archway stretched across Main Street welcoming residents and visitors to the busy corridor.



DISTRICT DEFINITION

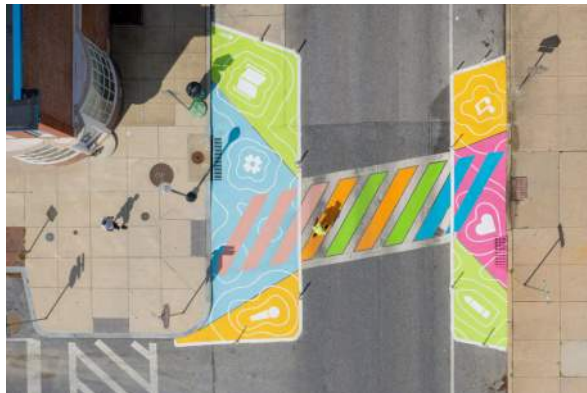
This concept explores developing an archway feature at the intersection of Main Street and NE 4th Street—a tribute to the archway that once existed downtown (see photo opposite page). String lighting, street trees, and bumpouts illustrate how the existing corridor can thrive while being inviting to both cars and people.

TEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

If permanent bumpouts are too great an expense or commitment, temporary solutions could be implemented first. A combination of traffic paint and flexible delineator round posts could be used to test out decorative crosswalks and bumpouts before installing permanently. This offers the public a chance to get used to the feel and function of the design before the community over-invests in expensive infrastructure.



If eliminating parallel parking spots along the Main Street corridor permanently is too large an ask, the concept of “parklets” or temporary social spaces within parking spots could be used. Installations would be seasonal to encourage outdoor dining and social gathering during warmer months, or special events, allowing the spaces to go back to parking the remainder of the year. Parklet placement would be determined by individual businesses owner desire for the use proximate to their storefront.



ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS

Engaging local artists, art clubs, school groups, or other community organizations in this process, especially the conceptual design process, is encouraged. Volunteers will take ownership and feel pride over something they have personally contributed to and become champions for the project.



Prefabricated social seating (upper right) and custom “parklets” (lower right) can turn parking spots into public space, temporarily, throughout the year.

Painted crosswalks and bumpouts (upper and middle left by Graham Projects) offer less expensive alternatives to expensive infrastructure. Permanent bumpouts in North Vernon, Indiana (bottom left) can be implemented when funding allows.



CONVENIENCE VS. COMFORT

It is clear the Main Street corridor is designed with cars in mind today (left). The rendering (above) begins to illustrate a space meant for people and cars to coexist. The district will need to decide where it’s priorities lie, which may mean finding a way to balance both.

PUBLIC SPACE + EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE



NON-EVENT DAY ACTIVITY

Downtown Washington hosts a number of events throughout the year. As The Commons event space is programmed, even more activity will be generated. Amenities like a play sculpture (top left) or spray plaza (middle left), and game tables (bottom left) would draw people downtown even on non-event days.

If the museum, movie theatre, or a planned event are used to attract people to the district, the public space needs to be designed in a way that encourages people to stay downtown for a longer period of time. The longer people stay, the more likely they would be to also patron shops or visit restaurants. This would make the district more desirable to businesses.



EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

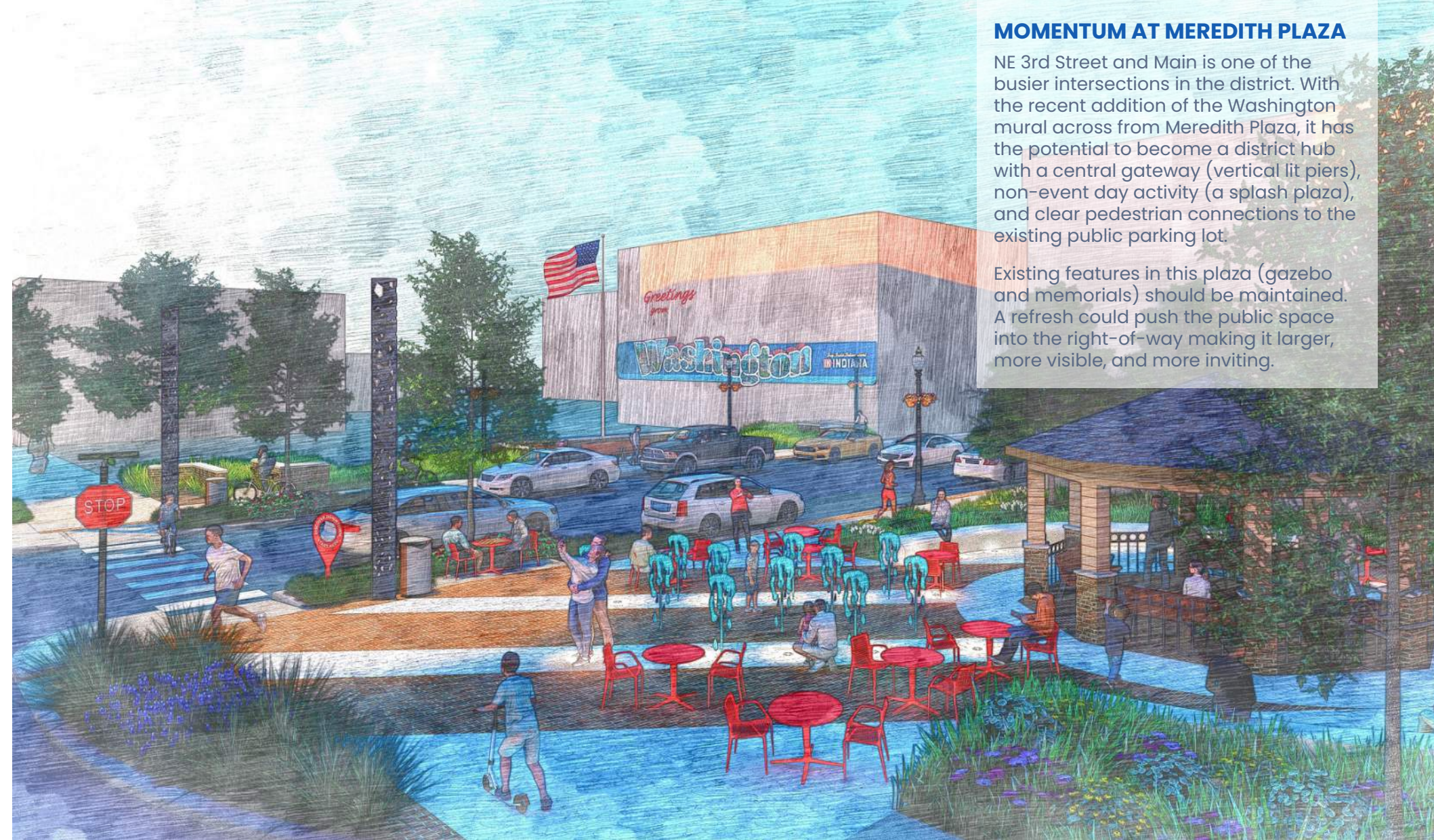
Street festivals occur periodically within the district; however, they are often by request and require city staff to adapt power facilities and closure needs to each, new event. It is recommended an area within the district be established as the designated festival street.

Permanent closure facilities could be strategically placed like retractable safety bollards or swing gates (upper right) and power could be established in a more permanent setup. Receptacles could be added to the base of street lights and power bollards installed (lower right). This would make event requests easier for community departments to manage, implement, and police.



HWC designed the swing gates (top right) to close Crawfordsville, Indiana's Pike Street for festivals and events. When not in use, the gates swing parallel to the street and lock in place.

Strategically placed power bollards (lower right) would make festival and event setup more efficient.



MOMENTUM AT MEREDITH PLAZA

NE 3rd Street and Main is one of the busier intersections in the district. With the recent addition of the Washington mural across from Meredith Plaza, it has the potential to become a district hub with a central gateway (vertical lit piers), non-event day activity (a splash plaza), and clear pedestrian connections to the existing public parking lot.

Existing features in this plaza (gazebo and memorials) should be maintained. A refresh could push the public space into the right-of-way making it larger, more visible, and more inviting.

PARKING + CIRCULATION



Downtown Jasper uses temporary signage to inform visitors when semi-private parking lots are open to the public (upper left) and activated, lit alleys to welcome visitors to park beyond the square and access it by walking a block or two (upper right).

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

There are over 420 parking spaces within the 10-block study area. These spaces include on-street, public, and private parking, some of which act as public outside of weekday business hours. Of the 17.3-acres the district encompasses, around 40% of that area is dedicated to surface parking and vehicular use (including the dealership lots and back-of-house connections and staging).

The quantity of parking in the district is adequate. How the parking is managed and made available could be reconsidered to improve user experience for district visitors, residents, business owners, and patrons.

Although a source of frustration for many, making convenient parking too high a priority will compromise the unique character of downtown and monopolize resources that could otherwise be used towards more fruitful projects and improvements.

PARK-AND-WALK MENTALITY

Often consumers are more than willing to walk hundreds of feet from a surface parking spot to the center of a big box retailer but hold downtown storefront retailers to a different standard. One reason for this can be attributed to direct visibility. Suburban development has generated a mentality that all parking spots must be within a direct site line of retail or dining destination.

This expectation is impossible to achieve in traditional downtown development. However, there are improvements that can be made to encourage a park-and-walk mentality.

When practical, providing clear site lines between public parking lots and downtown destinations may alleviate the perceived burden of walking. Alleys and openings between buildings offer glimpses of the square from public parking lots just outside it in downtown Jasper (see photo lower left).

Parallel parking spots along side streets within the district are often under-utilized. These corridors are also void of clear pavement striping, lighting, shade, and in many cases the sidewalks are in poor condition or inaccessible. Improvements to the streetscape along side streets would make walking a block to a downtown destination more desirable.

Encouraging business owners to park and walk would also free up more parking spaces directly in front of their stores for patrons.

SHARED-USE PARKING

Private parking lots within the district are most utilized in daytime during the work week but sit empty in the evenings and on weekends. Shared-use agreements could be established to transition these lots from private to public at different times of day. Temporary signage can be used to convey each situation depending the day or if events are occurring (top left).

PARKING CONFIGURATIONS

Throughout the planning process, different configurations for Main Street were discussed related to maximizing parking quantities within the district corridor. The exhibits to the right illustrate parking quantities achieved with each configuration including the existing scenario of parallel parking with two travel lanes and no curb extensions (18 spaces per block); parallel parking with two travel lanes and the addition of curb extensions to provide pedestrian amenities (16 spaces per block); angled parking on one side of the street with a widened single travel lane (15 spaces); and angled parking on one side of the street with two-way travel lanes (11 spaces).

The current configuration of the Main Street corridor within the district (top right) is the most efficient setup for parking. However, it offers very little area for pedestrian amenities. Angled parking would only be feasible on one side of the street due to the existing right-of-way width, but does provide an opportunity for larger bumpouts.

Ultimately, the second scenario with parallel parking on both sides and the addition of curb extensions offers the best compromise of maximizing parking quantity while also providing quality of place and pedestrian safety with curb extensions. It is recommended the options be explored further in a streetscape master plan that defines typical sections and parking scenarios for each block within the district.



18

16

15

11

ONE-WAY STREETS

The one-way conditions in downtown Washington were implemented years ago to move traffic efficiently between industrial jobs and residential areas. This pattern of traffic flow is less prevalent today.

One-way streets provide efficiencies in traffic flow but can also lead to higher speeds, confusion for drivers, and be frustrating to navigate. When seeking downtown destinations, visitors may be required to circle the block or go out of the way to turn around. Today, a desire for higher pedestrian activity and slower speeds within the Main Street corridor is prioritized over efficient, through-traffic flow.

One disadvantage of a two-way, two-lane condition is that there isn't a safe way to pass a truck that may be stopped for a delivery in the travel lane. However, with a two-way condition on all streets within the district, drivers could see this situation ahead and turn off the main corridor for one block to avoid this situation.

Variables with on-street parking layout and streetscape design will affect a final decision on circulation and one-way or two-way streets. Because the district has disconnected alleys, and many trucks use the main corridor for loading, two one-way lanes may be best at this time.

Fountain Square (right) is a district southeast of downtown Indianapolis. The Cultural Trail has connected this outlying area and drawn new residents, retailers, and restaurants. (image source: visitindy.com)

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

The Cultural Trail has proven its worth in Indianapolis over the years by establishing clear pedestrian and bicycle routes through its major downtown districts attracting commercial and residential development as well as businesses, retail, and restaurants.

The Pathway to the Heart of Washington is a similar concept that could have an equally positive influence on the district. The opportunities outlined at the beginning of this chapter illustrate how the proposed route could be incorporated into the district. See the appendix for a full map of the proposed network across the City of Washington.



In many cases, the "pathway" may be simply a wide, clear sidewalk that allows pedestrians, able-bodied and those with disabilities, and bicyclists to share the space. Decorative crosswalks, trail maps, and markers, like those shown in the illustration on the opposite page, could begin to define the route more clearly.

Defining a route will draw people to the district and further encourage the park-and-walk mentality. Residents will feel more comfortable walking from adjacent neighborhoods to the district for events or an evening out if the route is designated, safe, well lit, and potentially shaded in the summer months.



PATHWAY TO THE HEART

The existing corner of East Van Trees Street and NE 1st Street has wide paved streets and parking lots. The rendering illustrates how bumpouts and trail delineation could bring vibrancy to the district perimeter and invite people into the heart of the community.



BUILDING REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

Although first floor vacancy across the district is relatively low, a few buildings currently sit empty with potential to be re-purposed.

Dating back to 1930, the American Steam Laundry building sits on SE 4th Street, facing the Commons. With a unique brick facade and large windows facing the street, this building could host a number of uses. The rendering on the following page re-imagines the building as a shared space with a small-business incubator and retail window. The image (bottom right) illustrates how a facade could be preserved and become the perimeter for an outdoor space of some kind.

The old bank building on NW 2nd Street also beckons a new beginning. Although a drive-thru site configuration is not what this urban district is striving for, a temporary solution that takes advantage of the existing canopy for outdoor dining could be an option until a development can take its place.

MICRO-RETAIL

Acquiring an entire downtown building is both daunting and much too costly for most small business owners. The concept of “micro-retail” looks for opportunities to showcase local businesses in small, temporary spaces.

This concept could be applied to existing buildings within the district or even a self-contained structure allowing the opportunity to rotate locations for different festivals, events, street corners, or public spaces.



A retail window facing the street (upper photo) and a micro-shop (lower photo) are both ways the district could offer opportunities to small businesses while also activating the streetscape and public spaces.

Captions (far right column): A gas station re-purposed as bakery (top). A parking lot turned dining plaza using a planter wall and brightly colored umbrella tables (middle). A preserved building facade re-imagined as a children's play space and outdoor museum (bottom).



THE “COMMON KITCHEN”

The “Common Kitchen” concept is three-pronged approach: activate an abandoned building, provide opportunities for small businesses to rent a retail window, and energize an alley with lighting, signage, and outdoor dining. Although shown at the American Steam Laundry building, this approach could be applied across the district.

PERIMETER + ALLEYS

EDGE TREATMENT

E. Van Trees Street and E. South Street create the north and south boundaries to the district. Passersby on these corridors view the backs of buildings as well as surface parking lots and unsightly utilities. The addition of decorative fencing, low landscaping, and signage would partially screen the parking lots while still allowing visibility and access. Wayfinding could direct travelers to the center of the district, the Main Street corridor, from the perimeter.

DISTRICT MARKERS

As more events draw people from surrounding communities who may not be as familiar with the area, district markers would establish a sense of arrival. It is recommended that material, color, and font selection coordinate with features established at The Commons to define a consistent district character.

ALLEY ACTIVATION

Alley activation is most fruitful when the alley itself is situated to connect two destinations. The breezeway that connects the medical facility parking area to the Main Street corridor at the east end of the district is one example of this scenario. The alleys on either side of The Commons are less directly connected to parking lots, but could be improved to provide a secondary east-west pedestrian passageway within the district. Elements such as murals, pedestrian-scale gateways, movable seating, and lighting are effective to create a more inviting space.



HWC completed an alley activation project in Crawfordsville, Indiana that included a custom metal archway, movable seating, lighting, and a painted ground motif to match the existing mural.

BACK-OF-HOUSE USES

It is recognized that inconsistent alleyways and a lack of connection between buildings and rear access create disjointed back-of-house spaces throughout the district. This results in many deliveries being made to the front of businesses, along Main Street, and difficulty for businesses owners in staging unsightly uses such as dumpsters.

The issues surrounding dumpster access and screening were mentioned throughout the planning process. Some solutions include a further consolidation of businesses sharing waste removal services which, in turn, will localize dumpster placement. This will allow for these areas to be better screened for visual appeal as the alleyways become more active to pedestrians while also identifying locations for convenient waste pickup. The image below provides an example of such a condition where a series of dumpsters are congregated within a decorative gate enclosure.



DEFINING THE DISTRICT

The old bank building on NW 2nd Street could be re-imagined as a retail or restaurant space. Using the existing sign infrastructure to develop a Main Street District artistic pillar, along with landscaping, fencing, and decorative crosswalks would liven up this corner and beckon passersby to explore further.



DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURE

Many municipalities have created zoning districts for their downtowns, either as overlay districts or stand-alone zoning districts. Per current zoning ordinances, Washington outlines a Downtown Development Overlay District. However, the current zoning map does not reflect this district and it does not appear the requirements of this overlay district have been applied to downtown development. The current Downtown Development Overlay District includes a provision for a design review committee with some generic provisions under the following categories:

- Building Organization
- Setbacks
- Massing and proportion
- Building height and roof type
- Façades
- Windows
- Color
- Signs
- Drive-Throughs

The details in each of the categories are either lacking in definition or too general for guidance. There are also provisions lacking within the current zoning ordinances, which may be desired for downtown, such as:

- Special parking requirements.
- Specific sign requirements.
- Use-restrictions for downtown - some uses appropriate for underlying base zoning districts may not be appropriate or desired in the downtown district.
- The underlying base zoning districts provide minimum lot widths and coverages which may be inconsistent with the zero setbacks outlined in the Downtown Development Overlay District.
- Provisions regarding activation of first-floor buildings while minimizing undesirable uses on first-floors.

For Washington, it is recommended that a base district be created for the desired downtown area, as opposed to an overlay district. This base district could specify tailored requirements that reflect desired uses and guidelines for the downtown, including architectural and development guidelines. Establishing a base district, specific to Washington, can protect the unique, historic character of downtown with specialty business, residential and shopping amenities as part of mix use development.

Architectural guidelines can be as lenient or restrictive as desired by a community. Some guidelines require more staff capacity or political will to ensure their implementation. No matter the level of detail of the quality standards, they must be required and not optional to be effective.

Development of detailed architectural guidelines beyond the generalities already included in the Downtown Development Overlay District is beyond the scope of this effort and will require a separate dedicated and focused group of individuals to work through the details and how to translate desired guidelines into a zoning ordinance. However, as Washington considers how to guide future downtown development, consideration should be given to the topics of Development and Design Standards, Architectural Guidelines, and Review Provisions.

Considerations for Development and Design Standards

Standards for development and design can provide guidance for quality design and compatible development consistent with the historic character of downtown.

1. Lot Sizes/Setbacks

- 0' building setbacks
- No minimum lot sizes or minimum lot widths

2. Building Height

- Maximum height consistent with existing development

3. Streets

- Maintain existing street grid, including alleys

4. Sidewalks

- Minimum 6' width (or more)
- Consideration of special paving
- Consideration of special paving for crosswalks
- Maintain a min. of 42" of clearance for building columns, landscaping, street furniture, street trees, signs, etc.

5. Off-Street Parking

- No parking within front yard of any lot within downtown
- Reductions of parking requirements in downtown compared to other commercial uses
- Encouragement/incentives for shared parking to eliminate over-parking

6. Loading

- Loading spaces, docks, or oversized doors to be prohibited on primary facades facing the Main Street.

7. Vehicle/Driveway Access

- Prohibit curb cuts from public streets if an alley is present to side or rear of property
- Encourage shared driveways for lots that don't have alley access

8. Street Furniture

- Establish consistent standards for benches, bicycle racks, trash receptacles, etc.

9. Lighting

- Establish consistent standards for street and pedestrian lighting. Provide limits for height of light assembly (16-24')

10. Fencing/Walls

- Limit fencing in front yards within downtown
- Limit heights of any retaining walls along sidewalks (less than 3')

11. Signs

- Correlate allowable sign sizes to building frontage up to a maximum 100 – 150 square feet and allow for larger aggregate sign areas if a combination of sign types are used (awning, projecting, suspended, etc.)

- Encourage blade signs and other signage compatible with character of downtown
- Prohibit ground signs and electronic message boards

12. Public Art

- Encourage public art such as sculptures, play equipment, children's fountains, bike racks, and street furniture on private property, within public spaces and within public right-of-way
- Maintain min. of 60" sidewalk clearance

13. Location of Uses

- Limit residential uses to 2nd floors and above
- Orient ground floor commercial uses to the street.

14. Permitted Uses

- Consider what uses the community may not want to permit downtown that are permitted in other commercial areas, such as drive-throughs or self storage facilities

Considerations for Architectural Guidelines

Architectural guidelines can ensure compatibility with buildings within the downtown area, requiring a minimum standard, while providing developers and builders options to meet the minimums.

1. Context

- Development should be designed with respect to general characteristics of downtown, including considerations of building massing, scale, location and treatment of entryways, surface materials, finishes and textures, size of building footprint, spacing between buildings, setbacks, and proportion of windows, bays, doorways, etc.

2. Massing

- Consistent with adjacent development patterns and oriented to the street
- Require clear delineations between each 'story' of a building through architectural elements such as cornice line

3. Facades

- Facades visible from a street to have criteria for use of materials, such as 100% masonry materials or incorporation of 2 more building materials with 60% of building façade of masonry materials
- Further enhancements of facades through the use of multiple colors, multiple textures (rough, smooth, striated, etc.) or the addition of architectural elements (quoins, pilasters, soldier courses, lintels, friezes, cornices, dentils, architraves, etc)
- Facades visible from an adjacent lot or street to utilize same building material quality and level of architectural detail on all facades (360-degree architecture)
- Facades should have a defined base/foundation, middle, and top formed by pitched roof or articulated cornice or molding
- Lesser requirements for facades not visible to a street.

4. Entryways

- Clearly defined and articulated with multiple architectural elements such as lintels, pediments, pilasters, columns, awnings, porticos and other elements to complement the style of the building

5. Windows

- Encourage a minimum of 50-75% of first floor windows to be transparent to encourage pedestrian interaction along the street (i.e. window shopping)
- Window designs should be compatible with style, materials, colors, details, and proportion of the building
- Window trim and other design elements to accent windows, such as shutters, keystones, masonry arches, awnings, decorative stone frames, masonry rowlock frames, or other trim elements

6. Roofs

- Establish requirements for minimum roof pitches and requirements for multiple roof slope planes for pitched roofs
- Establish requirements for flat roofs such as parapet walls or articulated cornices/moldings

7. Mechanical Equipment

- Completely screen/enclose roof or ground mounted mechanical equipment

Considerations for Review Provisions

If requirements are built into a dedicated downtown zoning district, review of proposed development could occur through the zoning approval process. However, a separate architectural review committee can provide more feedback to the planning staff who facilitate zoning approvals. A design review process should be considered that is both sustainable and integrated with the zoning approval process to review proposed development within the downtown. Additional review items for proposed developments could include items such as:

- Elevations of each building façade
- Specifications or samples of the type/color of exterior materials to be used for all wall, window, roof, and other architectural features
- True color rendering or other realistic depiction of the proposed building, including areas for signage
- Details of exterior architectural lighting



Images above of Downtown Washington facades.

IMPLEMENTATION

06

CHAPTER ORGANIZATION

The following pages provide guidance for the completion of projects that fulfill the recommendations outlined in the previous chapter. These projects are grouped into the following categories:

- Capital + Capacity
- Streetscape + Gateways
- Public Space + Event Infrastructure
- Parking + Circulation
- Building Reuse Opportunities
- Perimeter + Alleys
- Downtown Architecture

The grouping of these projects into and within the provided categories does not imply sequential order for completion. That will be determined by City leaders based upon available resources and budgets in accordance with other community efforts. However, each project is noted as either short-term (requiring less funding and time for completion) or long-term (requiring more funding, broader resources, and a lengthier timeline for completion). Completion of some “long-term” projects are contingent on the completion of “short-term” projects, as they relate to similar interests.

Associated cost ranges to complete projects have been provided, with the understanding that such values are subject to change over time due to fluctuating construction prices and professional service fees. Some potential funding sources to assist in project realization have been identified. It should be recognized that sources such as grants have ever-changing requirements for submissions and should be monitored for relevance to the project at hand.

CAPITAL + CAPACITY

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Establish a DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area) district.	\$10,000 to \$15,000 attorney or consultant fees	Local Funds
Long-Term High Investment	Create a downtown TIF District or expand an existing nearby district to include the study area as a way to generate funds for projects.	\$15,000 to \$20,000 legal consulting fees	Local Funds
Long-Term High Investment	Hire an Executive Director.	\$50,000 and \$75,000 annual salary	Grants / Local Funds
Long-Term High Investment	Implement a local food and beverage tax that would collect funds that could be used towards downtown redevelopment projects.	\$15,000 to \$25,000 (lobbying fees, financial consultant, and PR firm to engage the public)	Local Funds
Long-Term High Investment	Develop a Historic Preservation Commission.	---	---

STREETSCAPE + GATEWAYS

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Develop a streetscape master plan that defines typical cross sections, sidewalk widths, bumpouts, parking, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation for each street within the district boundaries.	\$40,000 consulting fees survey/design/public process	Local Funds (Establish Local Food and Beverage Tax or establish/ expand nearby TIF District)
Long-Term High Investment	Implement streetscape in phases overtime.	Construction: \$450,000 to \$750,000 per block Design: 12% to 15% of Construction Cost	Main Street Revitalization Program (OCRA) / Stellar Communities 2026
Short-Term Low Investment	Work with lighting vendor to develop concept for festival street lighting.	---	---
Long-Term High Investment	Implement lighting alongside streetscape phasing.	ESL (12) Poles, (5) central fixtures, and (400 LFT of string lights) - \$168,000 material only	Main Street Revitalization Program (OCRA) / Stellar Communities 2026
Short-Term Low Investment	Using traffic paint, implement bumpouts at district intersections to temporarily test how they look, feel, and function.	2,500 sft. per intersection \$1,500 to \$2,500 per intersection	Indiana Arts Commission Arts Project Support
Short-Term Low Investment	Develop a decorative crosswalk concept for the district using a local artist or art club. Implement using traffic rated paint and volunteers.	400 sft. per crosswalk \$250 to \$500 per crosswalk	Indiana Arts Commission Arts Project Support
Long-Term High Investment	Implement preferred decorative crosswalk design with permanent decorative thermoplastic product district-wide (26 locations).	\$12,500 to \$ 15,000 per crosswalk \$325,000 (for 26 locations)	Main Street Revitalization Program (OCRA)
Short-Term Low Investment	Work with a designer/fabricator to develop an archway concept.	--	---
Long-Term High Investment	Implement the preferred archway design.	\$250,000 to \$450,000 depending on level of intensity/features/lighting/site work, etc.	Indiana Placemaking Activation Grant (1:1 match up to \$25,000)

PUBLIC SPACE + EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Purchase a prefabricated social space (Platform by mmcite) and experiment locating it in different parking spots or public spaces throughout the district.	Platform by mmcite \$13,500 to \$18,500 each	---
Short-Term Low Investment	Designate festival street	---	---
Short-Term Low Investment	Develop permanent solutions for festival street closures (retractable bollards), lighting and power needs (power bollards), and safety surveillance.	\$15,000 to \$30,000 consulting fees (Electrical/Lighting/ Transportation)	Local Funds
Long-Term High Investment	Implement festival street design alongside streetscape phasing.	\$2,000 per retractable bollard \$4,000-\$6,500 per power bollard	Main Street Revitalization Program (OCRA) / Stellar Communities 2026

PARKING + CIRCULATION

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Restripe parallel parking spaces along side streets within the district to highlight their existence and encourage the park-and-walk mentality	\$20/parking space 220 spaces = \$4,500	Local Funds
Short-Term Low Investment	Host workshop with downtown business owners to relay public feedback, and discuss extended hours, shared-use parking, and owner parking locations	---	---
Long-Term High Investment	Develop a trails master plan for the community that highlights key corridors that will emphasize pedestrian comfort and amenities and accessibility.	\$40,000 consulting fees	IN Department of Health Bike and Pedestrian Plan Funding (\$20,000 1:1 match)
Long-Term High Investment	Implement trails in phases overtime and alongside streetscape work.	\$1.0M/mile depending on type of surfacing / associated amenities	Indiana Trails Program (IDNR)

BUILDING REUSE OPPORTUNITIES

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Develop a temporary outdoor dining space beneath the drive-through canopy structure of the former bank at 2nd and South Streets to promote reuse	\$25,000 to \$50,000 depending on the level of intensity and material/furnishing selection	Indiana Placemaking Activation Grant (1:1 match up to \$25,000)
Long-Term Low Investment	Issue a Request for Proposals for the redevelopment of the drive-through building	---	
Short-Term Low Investment	Obtain reliable information about environmental issues related to the American Steam Laundry building. Based on that information, procure an environmental consultant to discuss what of the opportunities suggested (interior versus exterior uses) could be implemented if property is obtained.	---	Voluntary Remediation Program, State Cleanup Program (IDEM)
Long-Term Low Investment	If still desirable to acquire after environmental consulting process, obtain property and implement preferred use (preserved façade with play space or micro-retail).		

PERIMETER + ALLEYS

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Long-Term High Investment	Procure consultant to develop perimeter landscape/screening plan.	\$15,000 consultant fees	Local Funds
Short-Term Low Investment	Work with sign designer/fabricator to develop district marker concepts. Implement as funding allows.	Design fees may be waived if use fabricator to manufacture signage (Ex. GreenSign)	Local Funds
Short-Term Low Investment	Develop a concept for improvements to the breezeway or an alley	\$15,000 consultant fees	Indiana Placemaking Activation Grant (1:1 match up to \$25,000) Project for Public Spaces Placemaking Grants
Long-Term High Investment	Implement breezeway or alley improvements	\$25,000 to \$50,000 depending on the level of intensity and material/furnishing selection	
Short-Term Low Investment	Issue a Request for Proposals for a temporary art exhibit within the district, obtain funding from IAC	---	Indiana Arts Commission

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURE

TIME FRAME + INVESTMENT	PROJECT	COST RANGE	FUNDING SOURCE
Short-Term Low Investment	Prepare architectural best practices	\$15,000 consultant fees (ArchitectureTrio)	Local Funds
Short-Term Low Investment	Create color guide for repainting buildings		
Short-Term Low Investment	Create incentives for following standards (i.e. if you follow standards, district will provide a standard sign)		
Long-Term High Investment	Create a downtown base zoning district for the study area that includes design review criteria (building form, frontage, site elements, and use) as well as compatibility standards (massing, building scale, architectural materials). Update development ordinance to support desired downtown development standards. Update signage ordinances with emphasis on downtown. Architectural/Historical standards with staff review.	The fee for this service ranges from \$14,000 to \$24,000, depending on the complexity of the ordinance amendments (how many chapters of the zoning ordinance are being adjusted) and the level of detail desired (the level of detail in the design guidelines with accompanying images and drawings).	Local Funds