



downtown strategies

ALACHUA, FLORIDA

Downtown 5-Year Action Plan

MARCH 2024

Our Partnership

Downtown Strategies appreciates partnering with the City of Alachua on an action-focused 5-Year strategic planning process for Downtown Alachua.

In Alachua, Downtown Strategies conducted an in-market workshop including a Strategic Visioning Workshop and provides strategies within this 5-year action plan that are implementable, practical, asset-based, and market-driven.

This action-oriented plan was informed by an extensive Market Analysis, electronic community survey, and input from a Stakeholder Input Session held on January 25, 2024. Below is an overview of the partnership schedule:

Partnership Began	August 2023
Kick-Off Call	October 2023
Strategic Visioning Workshop	January 2024
Market Analysis Presentation	February 2024
Strategic Plan Presentation	March 2024



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Focus Areas

In this 5-Year Action Plan created for Downtown Alachua, we've identified four (4) Focus Areas that help organize similar thoughts and themes. Each focus area was identified based on feedback received during the In-Market Workshop, as well as the consultant team's expertise and analysis. The four (4) Focus Areas for this 5-Year Action Plan are:



Policy & Administration

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



Design

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



Tourism & Promotion

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

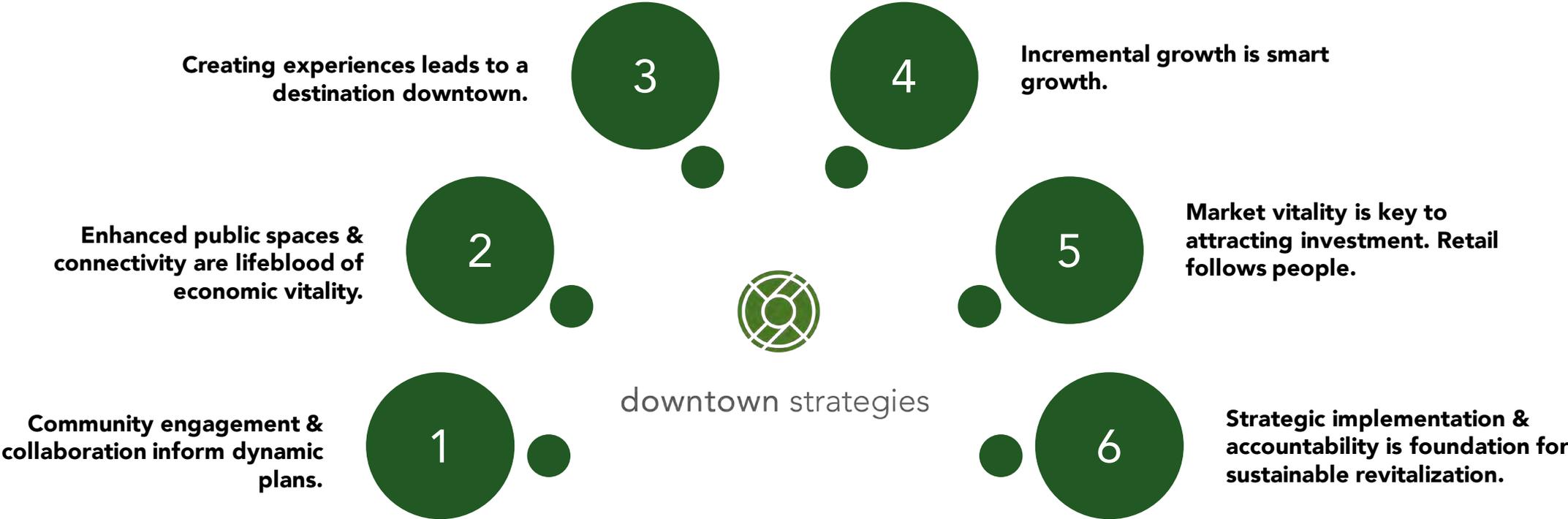


Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality involves analyzing the retail and real estate as the foundation of downtown's redevelopment opportunities and creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators.

Guiding Principles

At Downtown Strategies, we believe that short-term action plans, focused on these guiding principals, lead to sustainable, palpable growth and development in rural downtowns. These principles were key to the development of Downtown Alachua’s 5-Year Strategic Action Plan.



Guiding Principles

Short-term Wins Outweigh Years of Hoping for Catalytic Development

Incremental Development

Revitalizing downtown areas in rural communities is imperative, and executing this transformation incrementally is a pragmatic approach that aligns with the unique challenges and opportunities these areas present. Rural downtowns often serve as the heart of the community, embodying its history, culture, and economic potential. However, revitalization efforts must be carefully tailored to the specific needs and resources of these communities. **Incremental revitalization allows for a phased approach, prioritizing achievable short-term goals while laying the groundwork for long-term success.** By breaking the process into manageable steps, rural communities can make steady progress without overwhelming financial or organizational strain.

Incremental revitalization fosters community engagement and ownership, crucial factors for sustainable development. In rural areas, where residents often have deep-rooted connections to their surroundings, involving locals in the revitalization process builds a sense of pride and investment in the outcome. Through participatory planning and feedback mechanisms, residents can contribute their insights, ensuring that revitalization efforts are responsive to community needs and aspirations.

Additionally, **incremental changes can generate visible improvements over time, bolstering community confidence and attracting further investment and support.** By embracing a gradual approach to downtown revitalization, rural communities can pave the way for enduring prosperity while preserving their unique character and heritage.



Guiding Principles

Prioritizing Market Readiness Key to Attracting Local Investment

Retail Follows People

The concept of "**retail follows people**" underscores the idea that vibrant downtown areas are created when there is a significant influx of foot traffic and activity. It begins with activating downtown common spaces, such as Main Street, parks, plazas, or cultural hubs, to serve as focal points for community gatherings and events. By creating inviting and engaging spaces, people are drawn to spend time downtown, whether it's for leisure, socializing, or attending events. **This increase in foot traffic not only enhances the overall vibrancy of the area but also creates a fertile environment for businesses to thrive.**

When downtown common spaces become hubs of activity, it instills confidence in entrepreneurs and investors to establish or expand their retail and restaurant ventures in the vicinity. These businesses recognize the potential customer base created by the increased foot traffic and the vibrant atmosphere generated by community engagement. **As a result, they are more inclined to invest their money in opening or renovating establishments downtown.** This phenomenon is driven by the understanding that where there are people, there is demand for goods and services, presenting a lucrative opportunity for businesses to capitalize on.

Therefore, by strategically focusing on activating downtown common spaces to generate activity and foot traffic, communities lay the groundwork for attracting new businesses and revitalizing the local economy. **This approach not only enhances the livability and attractiveness of downtown areas but also fosters economic growth and sustainability by creating a thriving commercial ecosystem.**





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FOCUS AREA 1

Policy & Administration

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

Community Roundtable

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Strategy (1.1)

Communication in community development focuses on enhancing the interaction between the people promoting change that will impact positively on improving the living conditions of members of the participating communities and the people with whom they work to actualize their ideal quality of life. With multiple organizations and entities focused on community and economic development, there is an opportunity for enhanced communication and strategic visioning through a Community Roundtable program. Each month, leaders of key community organizations should gather, with no formal agenda, to discuss current projects, opportunities for partnerships, shared resources, and visioning and planning. Each quarter, additional members of these organizations should gather in a public setting for benchmark updates, providing an opportunity for the press to report on positive happenings within the community.

In Alachua

The City of Alachua should lead the formation of a Community Roundtable shortly after adoption of this plan that also includes the CRA, Alachua Chamber of Commerce, Alachua Business League, local pastors' association, school district, and other key partners. The meeting should be a standing meeting, once monthly, that partners commit to attending. Each entity would be represented by one decision-making, senior level figure. The meeting should begin with a round-robin of updates from each partner, as it relates to the downtown and all community development efforts. Through discussion, new opportunities for collaboration, grant opportunities, and better communication will emerge. Quarterly sessions should take place at a larger venue with the entire executive board from each partner group. The local media should be invited as each partner gives a quarterly update regarding their successes, new projects, and communication wins through this effort.

Case Study

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



Design Technical Assistance Grants

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Strategy (1.2)

From tax abatement, façade grants, building improvement, tenant assistance, vibrancy, loans, and preservation grants to building stabilization, tax increment financing and rebates, there are a multitude of downtown appropriate incentives that can be offered to developers, property owners, tenants, and investors. In many downtowns, investing in vacant buildings comes with risk, and there's a need to fill the gap in an investment proforma to mitigate the risk and incentivize the project.

In Alachua

The City of Alachua should add to their existing Façade Grant by implementing Design Technical Assistance Grants to assist downtown property owners with renderings and design concepts for exterior property improvements to their buildings. These could be offered in \$500 - \$1000 increments, through a competitive application process, and/or by connecting property owners with an approved architect with the work product being a design rendering, following the Department of Interior's standards for historic preservation, and identifying various improvements that could be made to the exterior of the building that would contribute to the overall character of the downtown. Examples of design technical assistance could include:

Conceptual Design Development: conceptual designs for exterior improvements, including façade renovations, signage, awnings, and storefront enhancements. This might involve creating sketches, renderings, or digital models to visualize proposed changes.

Historic Preservation Guidance: guidance on preserving and restoring historical features while making necessary upgrades and improvements.

Material and Color Selection: selecting appropriate materials and colors for exterior improvements and advising on durable, weather-resistant materials that enhance the aesthetic appeal of the building and complement the character of the downtown area.

3D Visualization and Virtual Reality: provide property owners with immersive experiences of proposed design concepts, which allows stakeholders to better understand and evaluate design options before implementation.



Example of concept rendering for awning and added streetscape vitality.

Vibrancy Grants

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Strategy (1.3)

The foundation for a successful downtown streetscape is created through public investments in pedestrian infrastructure and streetscape enhancements such as streetlights, street trees, and benches among others. While infrastructure and streetscape enhancements are important, creating a truly active and vibrant downtown requires the involvement of the local business community through activating their storefronts and adjacent sidewalks. Activating sidewalks through the addition of potted plants, outdoor dining, sandwich board signs, outdoor merchandise displays, lighting, and creative signage can greatly enhance the vibrancy of a downtown and allow businesses to highlight their unique character. The combination of public investment and private sector engagement creates a unique sense of place and an active downtown district.

In Alachua

In addition to design technical assistance grants, the City should add a Vibrancy Grant Program as a complement to the Facade Program that will assist in activating the sidewalks and storefronts. Eligible projects could include:

- Planters/pots
- Landscaping/potted plants
- Sandwich board or A-frame signage
- Custom business signage
- Professionally hand-painted window signage
- Outdoor merchandise displays
- Outdoor dining
- Outdoor seating
- Exterior lighting enhancements
- Interior storefront display lighting enhancements
- Creative exterior storefront modifications
- Public art (murals, sculpture, etc. – designs and locations require prior approval)
- Activities (cornhole, oversized outdoor games, etc.)



Action Team Implementation



Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Responsible Party
Policy & Administration	1.1	The City of Alachua should lead the formation of a Community Roundtable shortly after adoption of this plan that also includes the CRA, Alachua Chamber of Commerce, Alachua Business League, local pastors' association, school district, and other key partners. The meeting should be a standing meeting, once monthly, that partners commit to attending. Quarterly sessions should take place at a larger venue with the entire executive board from each partner group.	NOW	-	City
Policy & Administration	1.2	The City of Alachua should add to their existing Façade Grant by implementing Design Technical Assistance Grants to assist downtown property owners with renderings and design concepts for exterior property improvements to their buildings. These could be offered in \$500 - \$1000 increments, through a competitive application process, and/or by connecting property owners with an approved architect with the work product being a design rendering, following the Department of Interior's standards for historic preservation, and identifying various improvements that could be made to the exterior of the building that would contribute to the overall character of the downtown.	Years 1-3	\$	City/CRA
Policy & Administration	1.3	In addition to design technical assistance grants, the City should add a Vibrancy Grant Program as a complement to the Façade Program that will assist in activating the sidewalks and storefronts.	Years 1-3	\$	City/CRA



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FOCUS AREA 2

Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the environment for people and creating vibrancy in the downtown area.



"The physical design of the downtown streetscapes has created a post card worthy atmosphere. The next phase is to level up the experiences and amenities for visitors through arts and cultural offerings."

Design Theme

Alachua offers a quaint small-town lifestyle while living in close proximity to the amenities of Gainesville. The community is currently experiencing tremendous growth in the biomedical, high tech, and other industries. The quality employment opportunities are attracting young professionals and more affluent residents. This demographic strives for quality of life offerings, authentic experience, and a sense of connection to their community.

Despite the development of Tech City and other areas of the city, Downtown Alachua is poised to become the heart and soul of the community. The city has invested in improving the physical environment of the downtown core. The addition of street trees, curb extension landscape planters, benches, decorative streetlights, and other amenities has created a charming and beautiful Main Street. Despite the strong foundation, many locals feel as though downtown is currently overlooked by many residents and visitors. In the short-term, community leaders must focus on reintroducing locals and visitors to Downtown Alachua through targeted and strategic initiatives, enhancements, experiences, and promotions.

The physical design of the downtown streetscapes has created a post card worthy atmosphere. The next phase is to level up the experiences and amenities for visitors through arts and cultural offerings. Although the historic core is very classic and traditional, adding creative, funky, and abstract artwork will create an interesting dynamic and vibe. These authentic and unique experiences are attractive to young professionals, retirees, and more affluent audiences but can also be enjoyed by all.

The city, CRA, and other organizations are able to introduce artistic and cultural features through public art, events, promotions, and activities. This foundation will eventually spark activity in the private sector through growth in cultural businesses such as art galleries, specialty stores, and experience-based businesses.

Key Connections

Focus Area 2: Design

Strategy (2.1)

Downtown Alachua is a quaint and charming district that extends along Bob Hitchcock's Main Street from Highway 20 to the railroad corridor near Peggy Road. The downtown core stretches approximately 4-blocks that is bookended with a node of commercial buildings at the north end and a node of buildings at the south end near the railroad corridor. The continuous facades of historic buildings are divided by 1-2 blocks of beautiful historic houses. While the houses have been preserved and are extremely attractive, the visual change from urban-style buildings with storefronts and continuous facades to the low-density residential neighborhood creates a gap between the two nodes. Visitors to the downtown core often fail to realize that the downtown extends multiple blocks. Strategies should be implemented to visually connect the north and south ends of the downtown core to encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the entirety of Downtown Alachua.

In Alachua

As a short-term strategy, **downtown leaders should add sidewalk stickers to downtown sidewalks to connect the north and south ends of downtown and encourage visitors to explore the entire district.**

The existing streetlights and street trees provide a repetition that can visually link the two ends of Main Street. **Custom streetlight banners should be used to create a visual link along the Main Street corridor.** The banners can be updated seasonally to extend their lifespan. Bright colors utilizing the city's color palette will contrast with the green tones of the street trees.

Lighting can be an extremely impactful strategy to visually connect the two areas and add layers of vibrancy to the downtown area. Similar to the streetlights, the existing street trees provide a visual repetition that can link the two ends of downtown. **Christmas-style lights could be added to the street trees along Main Street to create a visual connection between the north and south ends of the district.** Lights could be strung in the tree canopies or wrapped around the trunks to create an interesting effect. Initially lights could be installed alternating trees in a zig-zag pattern along the corridor and additional trees could be lit in future phases. **As an alternative, up lighting could be added to the trees along the corridor.**

String lights are a common trend to add vibrancy and visual interest to downtown streets and public spaces. **Overhead string lights should be added between NW 150th Avenue and 148th Avenue as well as between NW 146th Avenue and NW 145th Avenue to create a visual linkage between the two areas.**

Rooftop lighting could be added along the roofline of the downtown buildings as a vibrancy element.





Outdoor Dining

Focus Area 2: Design

Strategy (2.2)

Several factors contribute to creating a vibrant downtown atmosphere. A clean downtown makes visitors feel safe. An attractive streetscape with street trees, benches, and other amenities make visitors feel welcome. Activated storefronts create an interesting experience. All of these factors are important to creating a vibrant atmosphere, but nothing attracts people better than other people. Seeing activity like people shopping, jogging, biking, walking dogs, and other activities will do more to attract visitors to the downtown than any other strategy.

One of the easiest ways to encourage this type of activity is through outdoor dining. Colorful umbrellas, planters, furniture, and other fixtures adds to the streetscape while people utilizing the dining space adds activity and attracts other visitors.

Some communities can accommodate outdoor dining areas within the existing sidewalks. Even a simple two-top bistro table adds activity and interest. In communities with limited sidewalk space, parklets have been used to create spaces for outdoor dining. Parklets are temporary or semi-permanent installations that convert a single parking space into a space for outdoor dining. Parklets range from basic barriers with picnic tables to extravagant enclosed structures. Incorporating planters, colorful furniture or overhead coverings, string lights, etc. can really create an interesting destination for people.

In Alachua

Visually Downtown Alachua is a postcard downtown, but it lacks the constant activity needed to be a truly vibrant downtown. Activity can be generated through events and promotions, but the goal is to establish a consistent and predictable daytime population in the downtown core. The existing restaurants can be used to create a spark.

The narrow sidewalks create challenges, but community leaders should [explore opportunities for adding spaces for outdoor dining by converting existing curb extensions into dining areas; encouraging businesses to redesign alleys and unused spaces; or adding parklets to strategic locations.](#) Overhead string lights, colorful umbrellas, colorful furniture, or other amenities could provide a spark of activity to the sidewalks. Many of the existing restaurants are clustered together so the addition of outdoor dining could create an immediate impact on the perceived activity and vibrancy of the downtown core.



Outdoor Dining

Focus Area 2: Design

Case Study

The Thornton Park neighborhood in Orlando, Florida, is a quaint and eclectic district with beautiful historic residential streets and a small commercial node with retail shops and restaurants. What likely began as a response during the Covid-19 Pandemic has evolved into a permanent activation strategy. Restaurants within the small downtown area have introduced outdoor dining spaces ranging from a collection of bistro tables to simple parklets. One parklet in particular at the corner of Washington Street and Hill Avenue used simple planter boxes to create a barrier between patrons and the street



Removable Bollards

Focus Area 2: Design

Strategy (2.3)

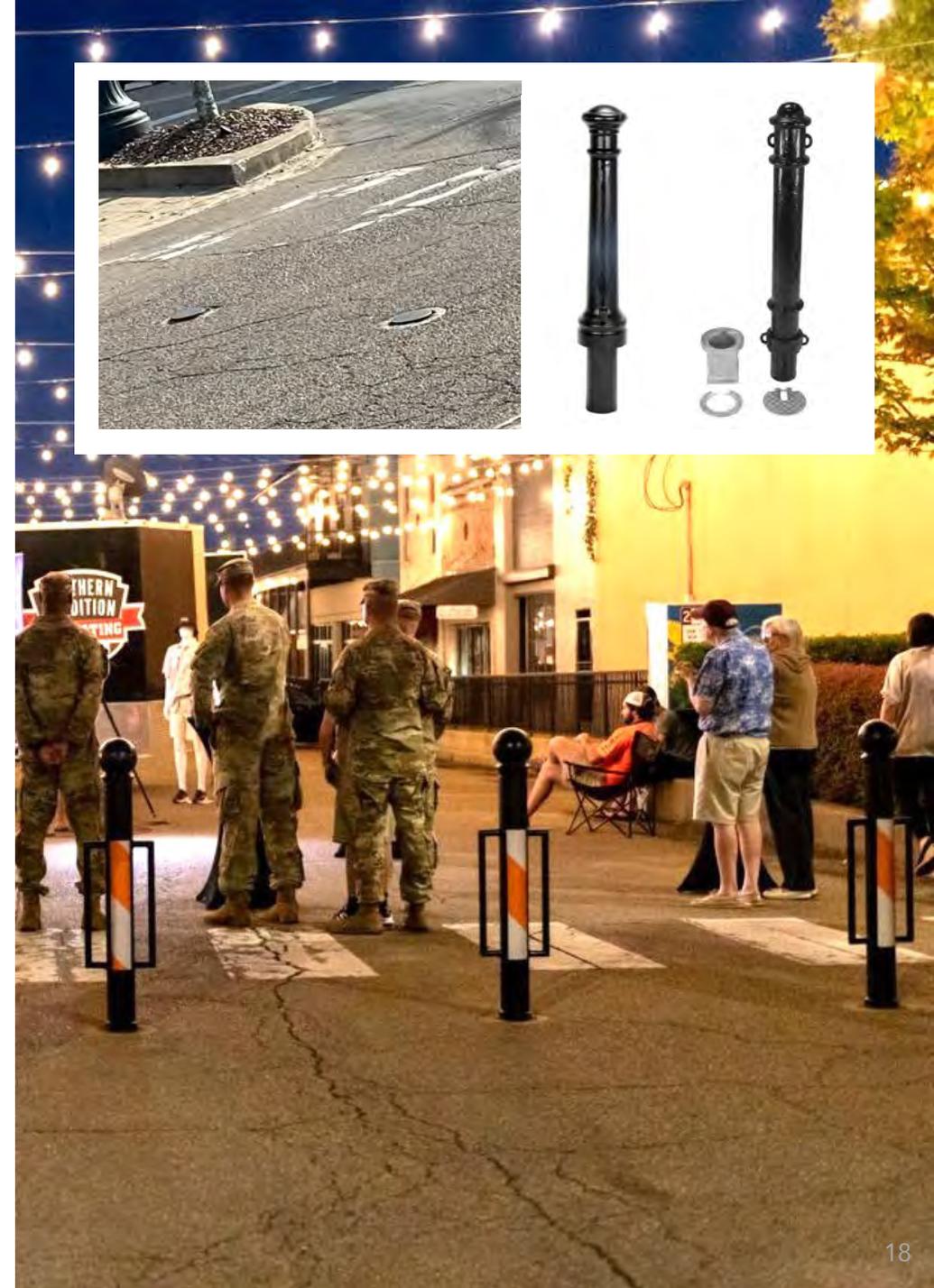
Festivals and events play an important role in activating downtowns. Attracting visitors to the downtown core connects them with the amenities, attractions, and most importantly, the businesses. It is critical that visitors have a great experience during these events. They must feel comfortable and safe. Making a good impression is key so the downtown should be clean, welcoming, and inviting.

Oftentimes streets are closed during large festivals and events to create a safe environment for pedestrians. This creates a tremendous amount of activity on the street and creates a vibrant atmosphere. The local police department is typically a strong partner with large events and manages the street closures. It is common practice to block the streets with police cars. Having law enforcement involved in the event is key to creating a safe environment, the presence of police vehicles with flashing lights does not create a welcoming environment. Additionally having a police vehicle parked for hours at a time is not an efficient use of resources.

An alternative to blocking the streets with vehicles or unattractive barricades is to install removable bollards on streets that are regularly used for events. Infrastructure is installed near the intersection that includes a below-ground sleeve that is capped when not in use and a bollard that slides into place when needed. Various styles are available, many of which are decorative and add to the quality of the downtown area. Bollards are a much more efficient and attractive way to block streets during events and festivals.

In Alachua

Blocking sections of Main Street for various events and activities adds to the quality of life in Alachua and activates the downtown area. The city should **install removable bollard infrastructure at key intersections along Main Street to facilitate street closures for various activities**. This will provide flexibility for various events and allow for more efficient road closures.



Action Team Implementation



Focus Area 2: Design

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Responsible Party
Design	2.1	Add sidewalk stickers to downtown sidewalks to connect the north and south ends of downtown and encourage visitors to explore the entire district.	Now	\$	CRA
Design	2.1	Continue to use custom streetlight banners to create a visual link along the Mian Street corridor.	On-going	\$	CRA
Design	2.1	Add Christmas-style lights or up-lighting to the street trees along Main Street to visually connect the north and south ends of the district. Lights can be added to the tree canopies or wrapped around the trunks.	Years 1-3	\$\$	City
Design	2.1	Add overhead string lights across Main Street between NW 150 th Avenue and 148 th Avenue as well as between NW 146 th Avenue and NW 145 th Avenue to create a visual linkage between the two areas.	Years 1-3	\$\$	City
Design	2.1	Explore the potential of adding rooftop lighting to downtown buildings as a visual enhancement and vibrancy element.	Years 3-5	-	CRA
Design	2.2	Explore opportunities for adding spaces for outdoor dining by converting existing curb extensions into dining areas; encouraging businesses to redesign alleys and unused spaces; or adding parklets to strategic locations.	Now	\$	City and CRA
Design	2.3	Install removable bollard infrastructure at key intersections along Main Street to facilitate street closures for various activities.	Years 1-3	\$	City



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FOCUS AREA 3

Tourism & Promotion

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

Wayfinding Signage

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.1)

Guiding and directing visitors around the community creates a welcoming experience and educates visitors on the various attractions and destinations. Consistent signage allows visitors to easily navigate the community and find key destinations. Many communities have established a comprehensive wayfinding signage system which includes directional signs, welcome signs, gateway signs, parking signs, and even street signs. Signage systems provide an opportunity for incorporating a clear community brand (logo) and color palette to further create a sense of place.

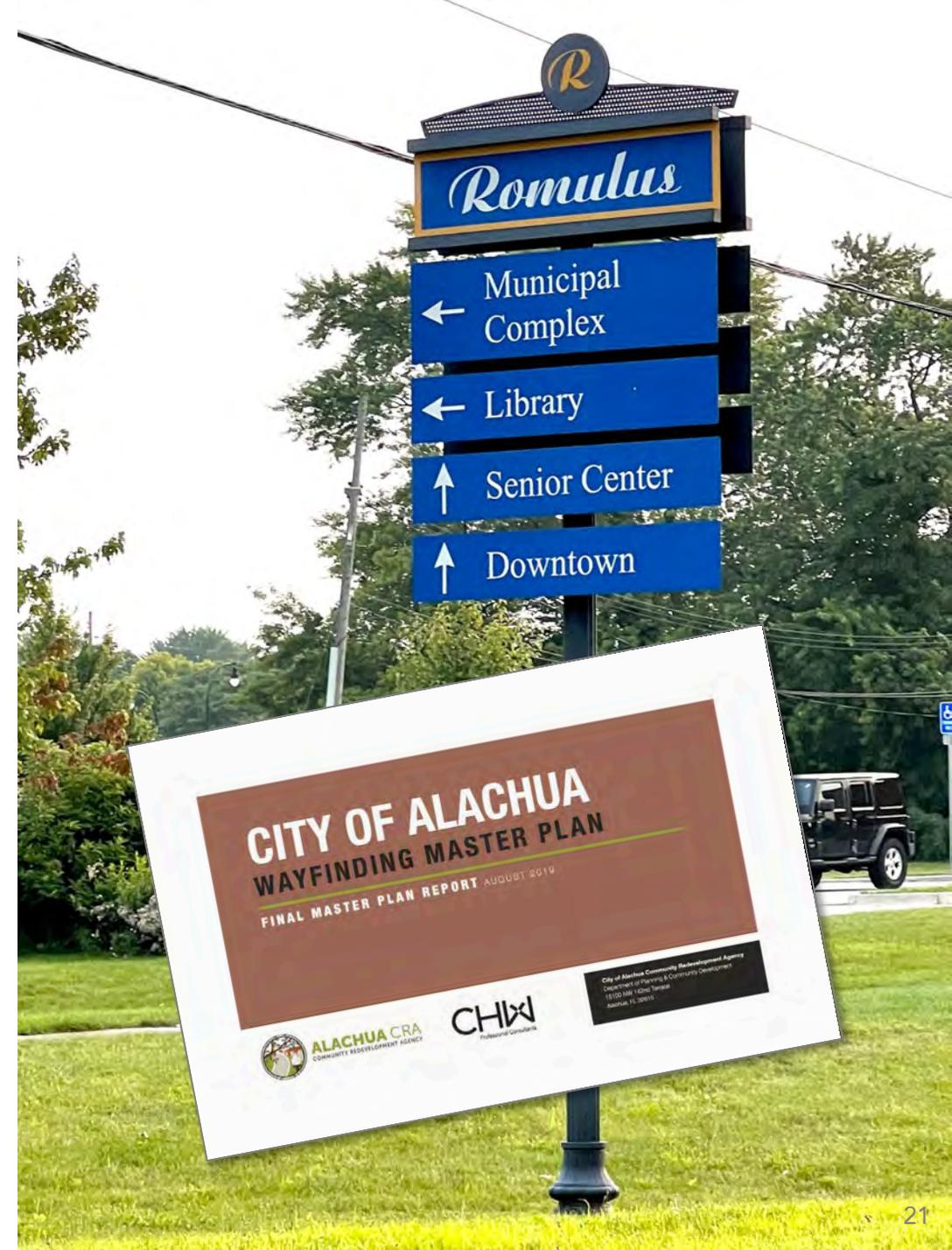
In Alachua

Linking Downtown Alachua with key attractions and destinations like the San Felasco Hammock Preserve State Park, Tech City, etc. is key to raising the awareness of the district and increasing visitor traffic. A Wayfinding Master Plan was developed by CHW Professional Consultants in August of 2019. The plan included a comprehensive wayfinding signage system with directional signs, public parking signs, gateway signs, and other types of signage. The plan has not been implemented, but the desire and need for wayfinding signage still exists within the community. The costs of the custom signage is likely a barrier for implementing the system on a large scale. However, breaking the overall system down into smaller projects can make the overall initiative more attainable.

The initial phase of the wayfinding signage system should include the installation of public parking signs within the downtown core. The sign design concept could be simplified to reduce the costs of the project. The scope of the public parking signs project would create an easier starting point for the local team.

A mid-term strategy should include the development of custom and branded “Open” signs for downtown businesses. These branded signs will showcase local businesses and add vibrancy to the downtown sidewalks. Future phases of the wayfinding signage system could include custom street signs within the downtown district and directional signs.

A long-term phase of the project should include the installation of a gateway sign at the intersection of Main Street and Highway 441. The Wayfinding Master Plan developed a concept for a large cross-street sign over Main Street. This concept would make a visual statement and gateway entrance into the downtown core. If costs are a barrier, perhaps the design could be divided into phases. The initial phase could include one or both of the columns (similar to Gateway Type ‘B’ on page 32). Then the cross-street portion could be added later. The custom nature of the design could also be simplified to make the project more attainable.



Wayfinding Signage

FINAL DESIGN

03.2 | Signage Design GATEWAYS

CITY OF ALACHUA WAYFINDING MASTERPLAN (DRAFT)



GATEWAY TYPE 'A'

30

03.3 | Signage Design GATEWAYS

CITY OF ALACHUA WAYFINDING MASTERPLAN (DRAFT)



GATEWAY TYPE 'B'

32

CONCEPT OPTION 2

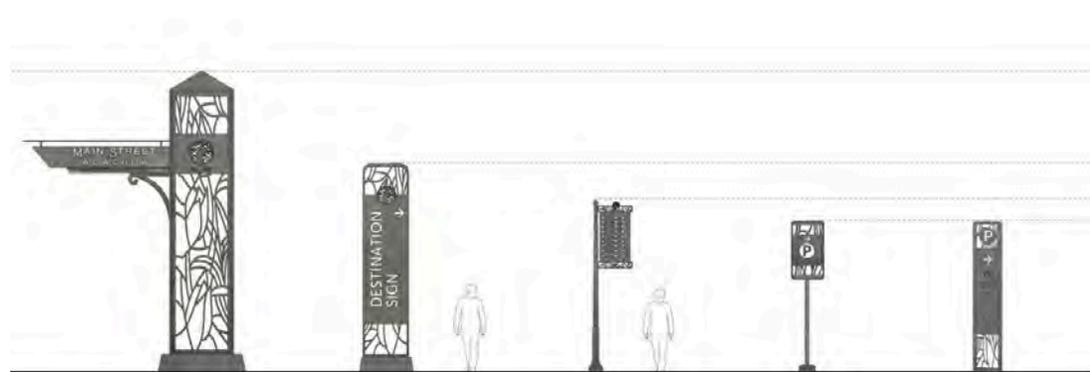
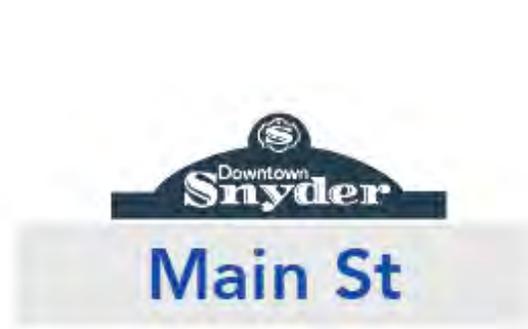
OVERVIEW

- Selected as the preferred concept by CRA Advisory Board & CRA Board and further refined between Task 3 & Task 4. See Appendix for original concepts presented to the Board.
- More modern/contemporary approach.
- Gateway Option 'A' arches over the R.O.W. and would be recommended for Main Street entrance off of US 441.
- Gateway Option 'B' cantilevers over the R.O.W. and would be recommended for use for all other gateways. Secondary gateways would be scaled down in size from primary gateways.
- Leaf pattern fits with the C.R.A.'s branding efforts and is reflective of the Bradford Pear trees lining Main St. Alachua.
- Metal patterns are an abstraction of historic ornamental ironwork.
- Acrylic panel behind metal pattern can provide many opportunities for LED lighting.

MATERIALS

- OPAQUE/TRANSPARENT**
 - Acrylic
 - Glass
 - Null
 - LED lighting optional
- TEXT**
 - Standoff/recessed
 - Powdercoated
 - Stainless Steel
 - Brushed Nickel
 - Corten Steel
 - LED lighting optional
- METAL**
 - Powdercoated
 - Stainless Steel
 - Brushed Nickel
 - Corten Steel

The Wayfinding Master Plan developed by CHW Professional Consultants in August 2019 included the Gateway Signage concepts above. Phasing the implementation of the wayfinding signage system is key. For example, the large cross-street gateway sign (Gateway Type 'A') could potentially be installed in phases. One column could be installed as an early gateway sign similar to Gateway Type 'B.' Another column could be added at a later date. Finally, the cross-street portion could be added as resources allow.



GATEWAY TYPE 'B' DESTINATION DIRECTIONAL TYPE 'B' PARKING TYPE 'A' PARKING TYPE 'B'

Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.2)

In simple terms, tourism involves connecting visitors with retailers and restaurants. This can take place through large community-wide events and festivals or small-scale retail promotional events. Rather than large events and festivals that require extensive planning and resources, the largest return on investment can often come from simple but targeted promotional events. Coordinating with retailers and restaurants to create an experience for customers can drive activity into the downtown area and have a financial impact the businesses. Simply give people a reason to come downtown and visit a local retailer or restaurant.

Small-scale retail promotions can take many forms. Reoccurring extended hours promotions such as Third Thursdays, First Fridays, Last Fridays, etc. are very common. Open Houses are also a common type of small-scale promotion. These are typically focused on a season (Spring, Summer, Fall, Holiday) and encourage visitors to shop local for the upcoming season. These styles of events coordinate the hours of downtown merchants which likely requires them to remain open longer than usual, merchants often offer a specific sale (10% off, BOGO, etc.), and in return the lead organization heavily promotes the event. Occasionally additional amenities are added such as live music or local art.

Sip-n-shop style events are also very popular. Sip-n-shops are similar to the extended hours promotions but add a culinary component with wine or beer tastings and appetizers. These are ticketed events, which provides fundraising opportunities, for a limited number of participants. Each participating merchant provides an appetizer and provides a tasting of wine, beer, or other beverage. Participants are given a tasting cup and are encouraged to visit each participating businesses to taste the various offerings. These events create tremendous opportunities for partnerships (wine provider, local breweries, beer providers, etc.) and sponsorships (event naming sponsor, tasting cup branding, etc.). Some communities have used the same approach for a more family-friendly event with a "Cookie Stroll."

Cultural events like art walks and art crawls are also popular. Art walks place local artists at participating merchants to either sell their wares or conduct live demonstrations (painters, potters, etc.). Similarly, art crawls pair artists with merchants, but add a sip-n-shop element of a wine or beer tasting. Both styles of events generate traffic for the merchant and provides exposure for the artist.



Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Some small-scale retail promotions only require creative messaging and social media promotion. Finding creative ways to remind people about downtown attractions, promote local businesses, and highlight unique experiences is the key to generating constant traffic in the downtown area. Many communities use quirky holidays as inspiration for targeted promotions. "National Selfie Day" can inspire posts encouraging visitors to take photos in front of their favorite mural. "National Coffee Day" can inspire posts encouraging residents to visit the local coffee shop. "National High Five Day" could be used as a creative promotion where customers that high five the clerk at check-out receive a 5% discount. The possibilities are endless and the sillier the better.

Creative events can also attract audiences to the downtown core. Pet parades, duck hunts (with rubber duckies), scavenger hunts, Salsa in the Streets dancing events, Zombie walks, Witches Ride, trivia night, Selfies with Santa, etc., are all examples of creative events that are perfect for downtown settings.

In Alachua

Downtown Alachua has a variety of events and festivals such as the Main Street Festival and the Harvest Festival. These types of festivals are great for inviting large groups of visitors into the downtown core. However, large festivals and events require a tremendous amount of time and resources to plan and execute. Downtown Alachua needs visitor traffic on a more regular basis to create a consistent daytime customer base and eventually create a night life crowd as well. Small scale retail and culinary promotions require leaders to coordinate with local businesses and social media promotions. These types of events could include seasonal open houses, creative holiday promotions, or regular extended hour events.

A short-term priority of Downtown Alachua should be to incorporate creative small-scale promotions into the scope of work for downtown. Lead organizations should pilot 4 small events that simply require coordination with downtown merchants and social media promotion such as a seasonal open house. Other creative events can be incorporated over time as confidence builds with the merchants and downtown organizations.



SEASONAL

- Seasonal Open House Events (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter)
- Holiday Open House Events (Christmas Open House, Halloween Open House, etc.)
- Themed Promotions: Back to School, Homecoming, Summer Kick-off, Football season, Prom, etc.



QUIRKY

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



REGULAR

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



STORYTELLING

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

Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

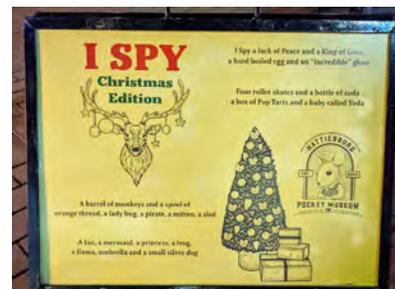
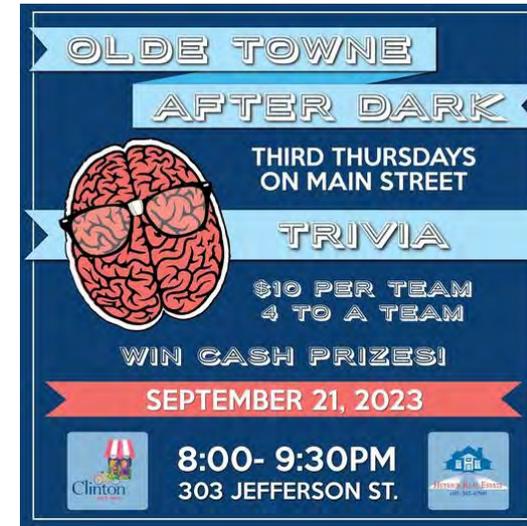
Case Studies

Olde Towne Clinton, Mississippi unlocked the key to attracting a younger demographic to the downtown core through their "Olde Towne After Dark" series that featured Trivia Night. Teams of 4 participated in the event for \$10 per team. Participants brought their own lawn chairs and set up on the historic brick streets while an emcee guided the trivia competition. Harry Potter night was by far their most successful event!

Laurel Main Street in Laurel, Mississippi, home to the popular HGTV show "Hometown," took a creative approach to the sip-n-shop style events. During the Christmas shopping season, they hosted a "Cookie Stroll" to encourage last minute shoppers to patronize local merchants. The family-friendly event also featured live music, sales, and other special activities.

The Hattiesburg Pocket Museum in Downtown Hattiesburg, Mississippi, is one of the quirkiest attractions you will ever see and hosts a variety of creative events and promotions. The "Tiniest Museum" is housed in a former newspaper stand along a downtown alley. The star of the show is the quirky exhibits, but the museum hosts a variety of events and maximizes the use of social media for promotions. Creative events and activities include an "Eye Spy" scavenger hunt style activity and "Ink in the Alley" tattoo event. They also organized a "Duck Hunt" featuring rubber duckies that were scattered around various downtown businesses. Social media was used to promote the activity and provide clues to the locations of the ducks. This creative promotion encouraged customers to visit various merchants to "hunt" the ducks in order to receive special deals and prizes.

Several communities have organized "**Howl-o-ween**" events focused on pet-themed promotions. Pet parades, costume contests, and other activities encourage pet owners to visit downtown and local businesses. Oftentimes fundraising for the local Human Society or shelter is incorporated into the event.



Small-scale Retail Promotions

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Case Studies (continued)

Starkville, Mississippi is a small college town that is home to Mississippi State University. Despite the presence of the major university and the tens of thousands of tourists that visited the community for various university athletic events and other activities, Downtown Starkville was not capitalizing on the tourism potential. In 2011, the community began efforts to revitalize the downtown and better capitalize on being a college town.

For example, at that time 50,000+ visitors would attend a football game on Saturday, but very few visited the downtown area. There was nothing to do on Friday night prior to the game and all restaurants and businesses were closed on Sunday. So, there was very little opportunities to generate an economic impact from the large number of tourists.

The initial focus of downtown revitalization efforts focused on creating opportunities for visitors to experience local businesses during their football weekend. “Bulldog Brunch & Browse” was created to provide a Sunday shopping and dining experience for university visitors. On the Sunday after a home football game, downtown retail businesses were open and offered a small discount; and restaurants offered a brunch and lunch menu. It was important that most businesses participate in order to create an enjoyable experience. Rather than permanently altering their hours, business owners were asked to commit to piloting the event series during the 6 home football game weekends.

In return the Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) promoted the event heavily on social media as well as storefront posters. All promotions included the names and logos of the participating businesses. Many business owners were skeptical but most participated.

The initial Bulldog Brunch & Browse series was a resounding success. Sunday, when they were previously closed, became one of the largest sales days for retailers and restaurants. Eventually downtown merchants began planning their own promotions throughout the year.

Today, in 2024, most merchants are regularly open for a few hours on Sunday. Restaurants throughout the city now offer brunch menus and have a consistent Sunday customer base. The event was a tremendous success, but only required coordination with the downtown merchants and strategic and targeted promotions.



Guide the Narrative

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.3)

Changing the perception or narrative of the downtown area is challenging. Sometimes downtowns have the reputation of being unsafe, empty, or simply boring. Changing that narrative can be jumpstarted through targeted and strategic marketing and messaging. Community leaders must make the downtown look inviting, interesting, and exciting. Sharing high quality photographs of events can make them look exciting and make people want to share in the experience at the next opportunity. Telling the story of a local business owner or downtown hero makes people feel a part of their story and creates a connection between the reader and subject. Creating regular posting showcasing content that tells the story of the downtown can begin to create a buzz about the district.

In Alachua

Oftentimes organizations such as the Main Street Association, Tourism Association, or lead downtown organization lead messaging efforts for the downtown. However, many cities have realized the important role that quality of life plays in the growth of the community and have started taking an active role in the marketing of the community. The City of Alachua has recently hired a Public Information Officer for the city. The city, CRA, or other organizations should partner to **develop a marketing series focused on promoting the positive stories of Downtown Alachua. Content could include photo galleries from events, highlights of local leaders, spotlights on local businesses, or simple "Day in the Life" posts about downtown.**

City of Starkville
@COStarkville

From MSU grad to Mississippi's first female franchise founder Starkville holds a special place in Lauren Ann Cooper's heart. Learn more about this week's fantastic feature in [#StarsofStarkville](#) HERE: bit.ly/3wSZBIO



City of Starkville
@COStarkville

There is no shortage of pride when we say that we are from Starkville. Combine our rich history, our quality of life, and our focus on the future, and it all adds up to success.



Water Valley Main Street
19m

On Tuesdays, we'll be highlighting all the deliciousness you can get in the Valley, and first up for [#tastytuesday](#) is [The B.T.C. Old-Fashioned Grocery!](#)

The BTC serves lunch Wednesday-Friday 11am-2pm and Saturday brunch 10am-2pm. They also keep the store stocked with take-home casseroles, chicken salad, pimento cheese, dessert breads, soups, and more, AND they make party platters like wings, sliders, charcuterie, crudite, and more to order. Everything is scratch-made and portions are plentiful! One visit and you'll see why folks come from far and wide to give it a try! Follow The BTC on social media for their daily specials, and check out their website to see what's been just picked, just delivered, and just made in the grocery!



Starkville: Mississippi's College Town
5d

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



Reestablish the Farmers' Market

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.4)

Farmers markets allow consumers to have access to locally grown, farm fresh produce; enables farmers the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with their customers; and cultivate consumer loyalty with the farmers who grows the produce.

Markets can be located on the highway corridors or in the downtown core. While markets located along the highway generate easier sales for growers, downtown markets create a unique atmosphere and add to the community's unique sense of place. Great markets are created through the clustering of activity. They require the intentional aggregation of local food production, but also of other services and functions. The food is the central reason for why people gather, and that gathering creates a hub for community life. Food will always be the core, but how you build off that depends on local needs. Culinary demonstrations, live music, children's art activities, and local plant sales are all ways to grow your market into a true community hub.

Markets positioned properly can serve as business incubators, allowing bakers, artisans, and other makers to test the market for their products and offerings. These budding entrepreneurs can develop loyal followings at the weekly or bi-weekly markets, which affords them greater chances of success in the brick-and-mortar realm.

In Alachua

Alachua should **reestablish a local farmers' market located in the downtown core to highlight the local farmers, growers, and area culinary attractions.** The market will serve as a reoccurring anchor event and attract visitors into downtown. Additionally, the market can serve as an incubator space for local culinary entrepreneurs by providing a space for them to test products and build a customer base. Vendors can line the street rather than building a permanent structure.



Farm-to-Table Dinner

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.5)

The local food network and community's culinary talent can be showcased through a fun and creative Farm-to-Table Dinner. These dinners are ticketed events with limited capacity and can serve as great fundraising opportunities. Local chefs use locally grown and sourced produce, fruit, meats, and other ingredients to create a multi-course meal. The attendees are treated to a delicious and fun experience as local chefs highlight locally sourced products and showcase their creative abilities.

Downtowns are the perfect venue to host Farm-to-Table Dinners. Communities often set up a long row of tables in the middle of the street and add overhead string lights, creative table settings, and other decorations to create a fun atmosphere for attendees. They are a great way to showcase the local culinary talent and build relationships between growers and restaurateurs.

In Alachua

Reestablishing the farmers' market will create opportunities to showcase Alachua's local culinary products and talent. The CRA should [host a Farm-to-Table Dinner on Main Street to create a unique experience in Downtown Alachua](#). In addition to showcasing local culinary assets, the event would also showcase the beauty and quaintness of the downtown core while providing high-end entertainment experience.. The narrow streets, street trees, and other details would create a beautiful atmosphere for this type of event. Professional photography should be taken to collect high quality imagery for future promotional efforts.

Case Study

Downtown Stockton, California, is home to the historic Bob Hope Fox Theatre. Visit Stockton hosts an annual dinner called the "[Feast at the Fox](#)" serves as a fundraiser for the local community college's culinary program. The Farm-to-Table dinner takes place on Main Street directly in front of the theatre and features local foods and ingredients harvested within 30-minutes of the city. The four-course meal prepared by local chefs also showcases local wines. The event is limited to 176 attendees and tickets are \$175 each. In addition to the dinner, a live auction and live music add to the fun atmosphere.



Downtown Merchant Meetings

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Strategy (3.6)

Communication is key within the network of downtown businesses. Gathering regular feedback regarding the successes and challenges within the downtown is critical. This is especially true with downtown events and promotions. The goal of most tourism initiatives is to bring activity into the downtown area in order to connect customers with local businesses. Ideally retailers and restaurants are able to capitalize on the increased traffic from the event and increase sales during that time. However, sometimes events hinder downtown merchants in some way. It is important to understand the issues and identify potential remedies for the concerns.

The appropriate downtown organization (Main Street Association, Downtown Business Association, chamber of commerce, etc.) should organize a text group for downtown retailers and restaurants. This allows for easy communication between the organization and merchant group. Text-based communication allows for fast engagement and response. Apps such as GroupMe are commonly used for this type of communication. In addition to the text group, regular meetings with retailers should be held monthly or quarterly to discuss topics relevant to downtown. This allows for organizations to explain upcoming events; notify them of disruptions such as street closures; outline upcoming policy changes or political affairs; and gather feedback from previous events and promotions.

Regular communication with the retailers can improve the relationship between the various business owners as well as with the partnering organization. The organization can utilize the feedback from the meetings to determine what worked, what did not work, and what can be modified with future events to ensure that the return on investment is maximized. These meetings should be brief, focused, and productive.

In Alachua

The Alachua CRA should **host regular merchant meetings to improve communication between the local organizations (CRA, city, etc.) and downtown merchants.** These meetings will allow community leaders to outline upcoming events, promotions, and initiatives so that downtown stakeholders are fully aware of current efforts. These meetings also provide opportunities to gather input and feedback from merchants about past events. The CRA should also **create a group text with all downtown merchants in order to facilitate fast and efficient form of communication.** These lines of communication are key to building trust between the merchants and downtown organizations.



Downtown Merchant Meetings

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Case Studies

The **Starkville Main Street Association (SMSA)** in Starkville, Mississippi, hosts monthly “Retail Meetings” with downtown business owners. During the meetings, the director provides an overview of the upcoming slate of events, important times (road closures, start/end times, etc.), and other relevant information. They also discuss recent events and provide opportunities for the business owners to provide feedback. Additionally, the SMSA director manages a group text with all downtown merchants.

Through these discussions the SMSA has received valuable feedback that has allowed them to make crucial decisions regarding events, activities, and promotions to ensure that they provide a positive impact on downtown merchants. For example, one retailer asking that an entertainment trailer used for an event be moved a few feet further so that it does not block their doorway. That simple request was easily accommodated and had a tremendous impact on the business owner. Another example is when merchants provided feedback that the large fall festival, Downtown Pumpkinpalooza, was negatively impacting their businesses because the street was closed on a typical high-traffic night which reduced their sales, and the line of trick-or-treaters blocked the entrances to their storefronts. The event was moved from a Friday night to a Thursday night and the trick-or-treating was relocated to the street rather than the sidewalks. Those adjustments did not impact the success of the event at all but had tremendous impacts on the businesses. The years of open communication between SMSA and the business owners has built a strong level of trust between the merchants and the organization.

Stephenville Main Street in Stephenville, Texas, established monthly “Downtown Halls” (A play off of the term “Town Hall Meetings”) to build trust and increase communication between the organization and downtown merchants. The topics of conversation also cover past and upcoming events, downtown needs, and other initiatives.



Action Team Implementation



Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Responsible Party
Tourism & Promotion	3.1	Install public parking signs within the downtown core.	Years 1-3	\$	City
Tourism & Promotion	3.1	Develop custom "Open" signs for downtown businesses to be placed along the sidewalks.	Years 1-3	\$	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.1	Install the initial phase of a gateway sign at the intersection of Main Street and Highway 441 (following the Wayfinding Master Plan).	Years 3-5	\$\$\$	City
Tourism & Promotion	3.2	Incorporate creative small-scale promotions into the scope of work for downtown.	On-going	-	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.2	Pilot a series of 4 small-scale retail promotions focused on connecting visitors to downtown merchants.	NOW	-	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.3	Develop a marketing series focused on promoting the positive stories of Downtown Alachua. Content could include photo galleries from events, highlights of local leaders, spotlights on local businesses, or simple "Day in the Life" posts about downtown.	Years 1-3	-	City or CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.4	Reestablish a local farmers' market located in the downtown core to highlight the local farmers, growers, and area culinary attractions.	Years 1-3	\$	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.5	Host a Farm-to-Table Dinner on Main Street to create a unique experience in Downtown Alachua.	Years 3-5	\$	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.6	Host regular merchant meetings to improve communication between the local organizations (CRA, city, etc.) and downtown merchants.	NOW	-	CRA
Tourism & Promotion	3.6	Create a group text with all downtown merchants in order to facilitate fast and efficient form of communication.	NOW	-	CRA



downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 4

Economic Vitality

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

Google Business Profiles

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

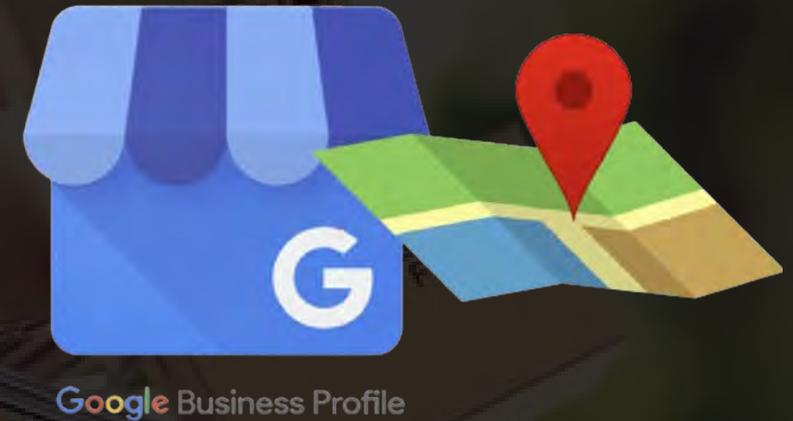
Strategy (4.1)

Claiming a Google Business Profile (GBP) – formerly Google My Business – is essential (and free) for small businesses to manage their online presence. It assists busy residents and visitors to know the hours of operation of local businesses, as well as to get a quick idea of the business' aesthetic and offerings by glimpsing at photos and quick links. Google Business Profile (GBP) serves as a digital storefront in the online world. Optimizing it is crucial for attracting customers and enhancing a local business's online presence.

In Alachua

Hold a training workshop for small businesses on how to claim or create a Google Business Profile and focus on ways to optimize their listing. Use the worksheet provided as a supplement to the training. Below are key takeaways for small businesses from our guide:

1. **Complete your business information:** Fill out all the relevant fields in your GBP, including business name, address, phone number, website, business hours, and categories. Provide as much information as possible to ensure accuracy.
2. **Use high-quality photos:** Upload high-resolution images of your business, including the interior, exterior, products, and team. Visual content helps customers get a better sense of your business and can improve engagement.
3. **Encourage customer reviews:** Actively encourage satisfied customers to leave positive reviews. Respond promptly to both positive and negative reviews to show that you value customer feedback. Positive reviews can boost your business's credibility.
4. **Add posts regularly:** Use the "Posts" feature to share updates, events, promotions, or new products/services. Regularly posting relevant content helps keep your audience engaged and informed.
5. **Optimize business description:** Write a concise and compelling business description that accurately represents your offerings and highlights your unique selling points. Use relevant keywords to improve your search engine visibility.



76% of people who conduct a local search on their smartphone visit a physical place within 24 hours.

28% of those searches result in a purchase.

Entrepreneur Meet-ups

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy (4.2)

Downtowns serve as a great “nest” for entrepreneurs to test concepts and grow over time. A common question for many communities is how to identify entrepreneurs and foster their growth? A short-term strategy is to tap into the existing entrepreneurs in the community. Citizens who recently took a risk and opened a new downtown business. These types of people are often connected with other like-minded individuals in the community. They likely know others who are operating an at-home business, striving to become a start-up, exploring options for brick-and-mortar locations.

In Alachua

The CRA, in conjunction with the Chamber and Business League, should lead efforts to identify and nurture entrepreneurs through partnerships with existing tech industry in the area, the Florida Small Business Development Center in Gainesville, and Santa Fe College by holding regular meet-up events for existing and budding entrepreneurs.

- **Build a list of entrepreneurs by engaging with existing entrepreneurs, adding makers and vendors from festivals, and consulting Tech City, Progress Park, and Santa Fe College.**
- **Schedule a regular series of Entrepreneur Meet-ups in Downtown Alachua with a loose programming schedule such as:**
 - **Peer-to-peer storytelling from start-up and seasoned entrepreneurs**
 - **Maker-focused sessions (such as field trips) to include potential small-scale manufacturers**
 - **Real-estate Open House to showcase available buildings and to build connections with property owners**



Case Study: Real Estate Open House Tour

Sandersville, Georgia: Upstairs Downtown Tour

In many downtowns, limited retail-ready (or restaurant-ready) space is the biggest barrier for entrepreneurs. Potential tenants don't know which buildings are available, who owns them, or what the lease prices are, and many times, contact information is not posted at the property. An available property open house tour event showcases available spaces and matches entrepreneurs with property owners in a fun a light-hearted setting.

In Sandersville, Georgia, the Chamber of Commerce hosts the Upstairs Downtown Tour, which is a ticketed event (\$15 per person,) and aims to showcase historical and architectural highlights of downtown properties in an after-hours organized event. The event in Sandersville has won statewide awards and has given inspiration to other rural communities to showcase their properties for strategic purposes.

In Alachua, the purpose should be to showcase successfully renovated spaces and highlight available commercial space – connecting entrepreneurs with property owners. In addition to entrepreneurs, developers, potential investors, and other members of the business community should be invited.



7 203 NORTH HARRIS

CIRCA 1898
FOR RENT: \$400/month
CURRENT USE: Vacant
The space located at 203 North Harris Street (800 sq ft, bottom floor) is a portion of the original Holt-Chapman Building erected in 1898 and designed by the architect Choate. This space most recently served as a nail salon and later a downtown coffee shop.
OWNER: William Rawlings, Pasqua Management
rawlings@pasquamangement.com, (478) 552-1125



9 THE ICE HOUSE

CIRCA 1923
FOR SALE OR RENT: Contact owner
CURRENT USE: Vacant
Built in 1923, the Ice House was Sandersville's first and only ice production plant. The building was purchased by McGinnis Leathers in 2005.
OWNER: McGinnis Leathers
mcginnisleathers@hotmail.com, (706) 247-3245



11 THE NEWMAN-BELL HOUSE

CIRCA 1890
FOR SALE \$120,000
CURRENT USE: Vacant
Built in 1890 by Isidore Newman and his wife Lala Newman. Three families have enjoyed this beautiful home since the Newmans: the Bells (1963-1989), the Thides (1989-2004) and the Brights (2004-2014). The Brights began renovations on the home, but due to illness, were unable to complete renovations. The home was taken over by the Geo. D. Warthen Bank which currently owns the home.
REALTOR: Beverly Bell Webb
beverly@tandcrealestate.com, (478) 232-8830



1 THE PRINGLE BUILDING

CIRCA 1890
NOT FOR SALE
CURRENT USE: Event space
First built as the Farm and Mercantile store. Later the building served many purposes, some of which were (not in chronological order): Meat Market(1908), General Store(1908), Sears, The Sandersville Progress, law offices (upstairs) and apartments(upstairs). Cindy, Joey and Tracy Giddens purchased the building in 2012 and renovated the first floor, opening downstairs shops in October 2012. They then began upstairs renovations in 2013 and opened the second floor as an event space in June 2014.
OWNER: Joey Giddens. ggifts@att.net



3 ESQUIRE

CIRCA 1858
FOR SALE: Negotiable, contact owner
CURRENT USE: Upstairs vacant
Constructed in 1858 as The Sandersville Hotel, this building became an addition to the first Rawlings Sanitarium about 1905. Later becoming offices and a nurses' home in 1914 until the early 1960's.
OWNER: Suki Griffin
(478) 234-2369



5 WILSON FURNITURE

CIRCA 1905
FOR SALE: \$169,500
CURRENT USE: Storage
This building is the only remaining portion of the original Isidore Hotel, transitioning into the Herman-Evans Sanitarium from 1910-1913 and then the Rawlings Sanitarium, known to the community as "The Hospital" from 1913-1961. There was an addition to the back of the building for storage, circa 1960. The lower floor of the building became the Wilson Furniture Company in 1994. The original hospital operating room with skylight remains on the second floor, front room.
REALTOR: Beverly Bell Webb
beverly@tandcrealestate.com, (478) 232-8830



8 THE TOWN SHOP

CIRCA 1970
FOR SALE: Negotiable, contact owner
CURRENT USE: Vacant
This building was constructed in 1970, serving as a gas station and convenient store until 2003. The gas tanks have since been removed and all ground testing and monitoring is complete. The property is available for renovation or redevelopment.
OWNER: Trey Sheppard
trey@howardshppard.com, (478) 552-5127



10 THE POWER BUILDING

CIRCA 1905
FOR SALE OR RENT: Contact owner
CURRENT USE: Vacant
The city constructed the Electric Light Plant and Pump House circa 1905 to serve the City of Sandersville, its businesses and residents with electricity. The City of Sandersville/ Downtown Development Authority of Sandersville sold the building to McGinnis Leathers in December of 2009.
OWNER: McGinnis Leathers
mcginnisleathers@hotmail.com, (706) 247-3245

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WASHINGTON COUNTY Chamber of Commerce



2 OLD BELK BUILDING

CIRCA 1982
FOR SALE \$180,000.00
CURRENT USE: Upstairs vacant
Old Belk department store. The Stewart family purchased and remodeled for their printing business. In 2006 they sold the business and the building. Served as commercial rental property since 2006.
OWNER: Trey Sheppard
trey@howardshppard.com, (478) 552-5127



4 RAWLINGS SANITARIUM

CIRCA 1895
NOT FOR SALE
CURRENT USE: Upstairs vacant
Built in 1895 as a two-story, 10 room hospital with patient rooms and operating room located on the second floor; the latter distinguishable today by its tile floor (down a hallway to the back of the building). The central waiting room on the second floor is distinguishable by its sky light.
OWNERS:
John Dana: jadatty@sandersville.net, (478) 552-6031
Jim Jeffords: jimjeffords2003@gmail.com



6 MASONIC LODGE

CIRCA 1924
NOT FOR SALE
CURRENT USE: Upstairs apartments
This building was the third Masonic Hall on this site. The first, dating from 1847, burned in The Great Fire of 1855 that resulted in the layout of today's City Square. Its replacement, a Greek Temple style, burned in 1921 as a result of lightning. The local Masonic Lodge occupied the current structure until 2001. The building was restored under NPS guidelines, and now has commercial space downstairs, and three apartments upstairs, one of which is used by the owner as his private office.
OWNER: William Rawlings, Pasqua Management
rawlings@pasquamangement.com, (478) 552-1125

UPSTAIRS, DOWNTOWN TOUR SANDERSVILLE georgia

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2016, 1:00 - 7:00PM SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Washington County Chamber of Commerce



UPSTAIRS, DOWNTOWN LOCATION MAP

- Space Renovated
- Space Not Renovated
- Tour Starting Point
- Courthouse

Business Recruitment Packet

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy (4.3)

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

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

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

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

In Alachua

In Alachua, the Business Recruitment Packet should include any focus properties, market analysis key components from this plan, incentives available, and contact information for the City to ensure that no balls are dropped. A key opportunity for Alachua is to promote business opportunities to thriving existing businesses in the region.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Catalyst Opportunity

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Strategy (4.4)

Thriving downtowns generally have a common component, and that's a traffic generating "anchor" such as a popular restaurant, brewery, or other asset. When aiming to attract a new anchor or catalytic business opportunity, it's key for city leaders to think proactively and take actions that will deliberately attract what they desire. While many cities don't want to be "in the real estate business," redeveloping key properties puts community leaders in the driver's seat and allows them to stabilize a key property and either sell it, use the asset as a development incentive, or redevelop it themselves. RFPs can be issued specifying a desired use (such as mixed with retail and residential) and the gifting of the asset can sometimes provide enough gap financing to make a development pro forma "pencil," where it normally would not.

In Alachua

In Alachua, property on the far south-end of the downtown corridor at the intersection of NW 145 Avenue and Bob Hitchcock's Main Street (building and parking pictured right,) stands out as a catalyst redevelopment project for a brewery and potentially a mix of uses because of its size, location, access to parking, and location in a more underdeveloped section of downtown.

- The City should take steps to acquire the property and evaluate the structural integrity of the shell.
- Next, the property should be stabilized or scraped and a design concept featuring a brewery should be assembled.
- Then, an RFP should be distributed to the development community and posted on the City's website for the building requesting project proposals.
- Once a credible and financially sound developer is identified, the City should consider using the asset as a development incentive, instead of selling the asset for profit.
- It's imperative that the codes related to the downtown core in the LDRs be reviewed and amended as necessary before the property changes hands. Being a catalyst project, this could be the first iteration in a series of mixed-use, multi-level structures.



Action Team Implementation



Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Focus Area	Identifier	Strategy	Timeline	Level of Investment	Responsible Party
Economic Vitality	4.1	Hold a training workshop for small businesses on how to claim or create a Google Business Profile and focus on ways to optimize their listing. Use the worksheet provided as a supplement to the training.	NOW	-	City
Economic Vitality	4.2	Build a list of entrepreneurs by engaging with existing entrepreneurs, adding makers and vendors from festivals, and consulting Tech City, Progress Park, and Santa Fe College.	NOW	-	CRA
Economic Vitality	4.2	Schedule a regular series of Entrepreneur Meet-ups in Downtown Alachua with a loose programming schedule such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-to-peer storytelling from start-up and seasoned entrepreneurs • Maker-focused sessions (such as field trips) to include potential small-scale manufacturers • Real-estate Open House to showcase available buildings and to build connections with property owners 	Years 1-3	\$	CRA
Economic Vitality	4.3	Create a Business Recruitment Packet which should include any focus properties, market analysis key components from this plan, incentives available, and contact information for the City to ensure that no balls are dropped. A key opportunity for Alachua is to promote business opportunities to thriving existing businesses in the region.	Years 1-3	\$	City
Economic Vitality	4.4	The City should take steps to acquire property on the south end of Main Street for a catalytic development opportunity.	Years 3-5	\$\$\$	City
Economic Vitality	4.4	The property should be stabilized or scraped and a design concept featuring a brewery should be assembled.	Years 3-5	\$\$	City
Economic Vitality	4.4	An RFP should be distributed to the development community and posted on the City's website for the building requesting project proposals. Once a credible and financially sound developer is identified, the City should consider using the asset as a development incentive, instead of selling the asset for profit.	Years 3-5	\$	City