



Our Downtown Renaissance

Monmouth Downtown Revitalization Plan - revision date: 11/12/15



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Executive Summary

This document is a strategic plan for the continued revitalization of downtown Monmouth, Illinois. This plan begins at the end of a five year strategic effort entitled “Reimagining the Heart of Our Community.” This previous effort saw the improvement of over 16 downtown buildings and a “plus 18” growth in the number of retail and service businesses in our community - and culminated in the Monmouth/Roseville region being named a quarterfinalist in the America’s Best Communities national competition.

A core group of community members and stakeholders have driven a large research effort into the needs and wishes of our community members, from online surveys to face-to-face community engagement brainstorming sessions, as well as bringing in professional consultants to facilitate sales and demographic data research and essential downtown design.

The context of the current state of Monmouth (both social and economic) is defined by a number of core principles that provide the foundation upon which this strategic plan is built. The physical scope of this plan coincides with the boundaries of the Warren County Courthouse Commercial Historic District (recognized as a historic district on 2/1/2006). While this plan should be seen as a “living” document, it was written with a five-year horizon in mind (slated for a major revision in late 2020).

This revitalization plan is based upon five primary pillars of action: Business Development, Arts and Culture, Physical Restoration, Community Development and Marketing. Each pillar represents a vital system in the overall economic ecosystem of Monmouth’s downtown.

These five pillars are further broken down into logical topical action areas and specific implementation projects are then outlined. Each Fall, the core action team will review these projects and lay out the implementation plan for the following year, with an eye towards the required social and financial capital for successful completion of the prioritized tasks.

The plan will be published on the City of Monmouth website as a living document, automatically incorporating any document revisions. A Decision Principles Checklist has been created to help the key stakeholder and action team to properly evaluate and vet new and unanticipated opportunities and challenges.

The goal of this plan is to lay out a roadmap for the growing and nurturing of a healthy, vibrant and fun downtown ecosystem that is also a robust and sustaining economic engine for our region.

Vision Statement

Our goal is to nurture the continued growth of a vibrant, historical and beautiful downtown that is a shared resource for all community members. We see our downtown as our community “stage” for laughter, smiles, conversation, fellowship, music, art, food, shopping, discovery, idea creation and commerce. Our downtown is THE place where we want to hang-out.

A Day in the Life

The following prose imagines a partial day in downtown Monmouth in 5-7 years.

Rich looks at the upper right hand corner of his laptop screen - 12:05 p.m. Time to grab some lunch. He clamshells his computer and heads for the back steps, running his fingers over the old pneumatic brass tubing that used to carry customer money and change back and forth to the accounting department when this building used to be a department store.

Out on the street, Rich crosses south Main mid-block, waving at his banker who stops his car to let him cross. He notices the curved text of “Purington Paver” on each rectangular brick of the cobblestone crosswalk. A couple of high school kids share a slice of pizza on the bench on the other side of the street, partially hidden by the ornamental grass of the bioswale. He wonders if they are on a date or just friends.

Turning right on the Public Square, he heads down Market Alley, past the tables shaded by red umbrellas and folks out enjoying their lunches. At the end of the alley, he pushes open the cut-glass door to Sal’s Bodega and takes a seat to the far end of the lunch counter. He grabs a menu and flips it open, but Rich has already made up his mind - he’s been thinking about the Spanish chorizo banh mi since he hit Main Street. He orders the sandwich and a tangerine soda from DeNovo, who make the pop and their craft beers over on the west side of the Square.

The crusty bread almost shatters as he bites into the sandwich - Rich loves a good, toothsome crust, and the pickled carrots and jalapenos mesh perfectly with the Spanish chorizo. After he finishes his sandwich and shoots the breeze with chef Jason for a few minutes, he heads over to the little grocery area that’s part of the bodega. Looking over the fresh ingredients, he picks a four pack of the house-made chorizo - he just can’t get enough of those sausages, and they’ll go great in huevos on Saturday morning.

Back at the office, he drops the chorizo in the fridge, making a mental note not to forget it when he heads home. He’s got a bit of Swift coding to do on the interface of their latest iPhone app - a public jukebox controller that can be customized for various public spaces. This time, he’s “skinning” the app for the Village of Barrington up near Chicago. He smiles when he thinks that their hip new public application is being made in a loft office in a small town in the Illinois cornfields, and not in a high-priced loft up in Chi-town.

At two thirty, it's time for Rich's weekly mentoring pow-wow with the UX guys at the startup down the hall. They call themselves Railtown Games, and it's three recent grads from Monmouth College - their idea took second place in Monmouth's last business competition and they've already got their first gig - making a game to help promote the new Railroad Hall of Fame museum over in Galesburg. It's a basic match-three mechanic - "digital crack" is what Karen calls it - but the idea is to arrange rail cars in a switching yard, like the huge Burlington yard 13 miles to the East of Monmouth.

The team is struggling with the right feel when the rail cars mash together after a match pops off the screen. Rich has been preaching the gospel of "it's all in the subtle details" for the last few weeks, and it looks like they are finally getting it when he reviews their latest build in the the incubator's shared conference room. Not too long ago, this space, once the third floor of one of the nation's largest department stores ("How'd it end up in Monmouth?" Rich often wonders), was full of old pigeon poop and abandoned TVs. Now it's a mix of incubator office space and small tech companies - the workaday home for over 30 geeks and nerds and one awesome candy-apple red espresso machine in the shared lobby space.

After the four pm SCRUM burndown meeting in his office, he shuts down his laptop for the day and heads for the staircase, jogging back to the kitchen area as he remembers his chorizo in the fridge. It's Thursday night, so the Square will be shut down for the farmers market, and he's got his 3D modeling class at six.

Out on the street, he can already hear the music. Rich notices that it's a good early crowd tonight and sees that Sean Kistler is playing guitar tonight. Rich loves his funky rhythms and minimalist style, and it's a perfect fit on a cool summer evening filled with conversation and haggling. The roundabout is closed to traffic on Thursday nights and the families are out in force - the kids who aren't in strollers running orbits around their parents. Larisa from the library is painting faces again, and the students from the College's experimental farm are hawking their fresh strawberries beside the large fiberglass pig painted in Scottish tartan.

Rich grabs some fresh asparagus for grilling out tomorrow and also a bunch of ramps for whatever Karen might be cooking tonight. He also picks up a home-baked zucchini quick bread - awesome with morning coffee. He grabs a latte from Deb's Koffee Kar and heads down the row to listen to the music.

After tapping his feet to Sean playing a great syncopated rendition of "Put the Lime in the Coconut," Rich crosses the roundabout to Rotary Park and settles down on a bench to finish his coffee. Kids are playing in the fountain at the center of the park, trying to catch the globs of jiggling water as they mortar out of the fountain's shallow basin.

He hears that Sean is taking a break, and the small speakers crackle to life around the fountain. Rich pulls out his smartphone and opens up the Downtown Discovery app (one he helped to

write, thank you very much) and heads to the Fountain page. He thumbs through the list of songs and selects Harry Belafonte's *Jump in the Line* to cue up the song. In a few moments, Bellefonte's voice comes to life in the speakers: "Shake, shake, shake Senora..." and the lights and water jets pulse to the rhythm of the beat. Rich smiles as the kids spin through the dancing parabolas of the water jets.

Checking his watch, Rich notices that it's close to 6 and almost time for his class at Makelt Monmouth, downtown's new makerspace. He's been a member for three months - starting out wanting to get more handy with basic woodworking, but he became just mesmerized with the 3D printing process, and now he's taking every 3D modeling and printing class they offer.

He gathers up his bags and heads up north Main to the old City Hall. The squat brick building, built in 1919 as a cutting-edge City Hall, is almost a perfect cube - Rich wonders what that architectural style was called - both modern and old fashioned back in the day. The impervious building held City offices for over 80 years, and then stood empty for nearly 20 years until it was repurposed. Riding up in the elevator, the door opens up into the old Council Chambers - huge floor-to-ceiling windows, oak flooring and amazing plaster friezes on the ceiling - now the home of Makelt Monmouth, a vibrant makerspace that always seems to be hopping with hobbyists of all ages.

Rich heads back into the old Mayor's office, now a classroom fitted with workstations and two 3D printers. Today, the small class features Rich, a couple of Monmouth College students, the IT guy from City Hall and a super smart high school student named Rachel. They settle down on their computers and log in the Google Hangout for the class - the teacher is actually videoing in from a makerspace in Green Bay. They are learning to use Milk Shape, an open source 3D modeling program that allows them to create shapes that they can then download on the 3D printers for fabrication.

Rich is working to fabricate some gripper pieces for a linear robot he is building that will move pieces on a backgammon board. He loves playing backgammon with his friend Tim up in Chicago, but wants to take it beyond just playing in a web browser in the the Yahoo game space - so they can play with a real board and real pieces by simple telepresence. As he works on joining together two cylinders in 3D space, he chuckles at the fun absurdity of his project. Rachel, sitting to his left, is working on a nasal insert that she thinks will help folks with sleep apnea rest through the night. She'll be a millionaire by thirty, he thinks.

After class wraps up, they all end up hanging around the printer as it works to build up the tomb layout of one of the great pyramids - something one of the college students is doing for a presentation on ancient Egyptian history.

Rich says his goodbyes and heads out on the street. The sun is slowly dropping behind a line of clouds, painting the western horizon in a smear of bright fuchsia. The cafe lights are on in Market Alley and folks are sitting out at the tables, enjoying their wine from Susan's shop. The

farmers market vendors are packing up and calling it a night and as he steps back into the Square, he sees the light flick on in his loft in the third floor of the Patton Block building. Karen must have beat him home, and he's pretty sure they are going to whip up some stir fry tonight.

Looking out over the Square, he marvels that he hasn't strayed more than three blocks from the Square all day, but he's exhausted - that rewarding kind of tired when you feel your mind has had a real work out over the course of the day. He heads up the steps into the Patton Block and wonders how he ever thought Monmouth was too small a town for a "city boy" like him. It is, in fact, just the right size, and it fits him like a glove.

Preparation

This downtown community revitalization plan did not spontaneously appear out of a vacuum. This document puts forth a precise action-oriented plan based upon past efforts, community engagement, hard data and proven best practices. In the past six years, our community has come together to develop a clear, shared vision of where we would like to see our downtown. This document is that road map.

"Monmouth More Than Ever," the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Monmouth, prepared by the Western Illinois Regional Council, was adopted by the City Council in 2007. This plan served as the scaffolding upon which our 2011 downtown strategic plan, "Reimagining the Heart of Our Community," was built.

"Creative Placemaking," by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, is a research-based study (prepared for the Mayor's Council on City Design by the National Endowment for the Arts) which explores how arts, culture and creativity can serve as a unifying force (and strategy) that can greatly enhance the economic development and livability of a community. This white paper provided the inspiration for much of the specifics of our previous plan, and still points towards an ecosystem in which arts and culture help drive sustained economic growth.

Over the past several months, the community has come together to discuss, share, experiment and explore potential next steps in the revitalization of our downtown. Through facilitated brainstorming and discussion sessions (that mirrored our five pillars, outlined below), the community had an opportunity to react, critique and celebrate work done in the past five years. In addition, they worked to crystalize their future vision of their community, down to a very granular detail level.

In parallel, but not treading over exactly the same territory, we also implemented an in-depth community survey. The survey sought to capture past behavior in relation to community involvement, as well as allow residents an opportunity to prioritize and offer ideas for future efforts related to downtown community revitalization. This survey was web-based, and was advertised on social media, in print and radio media and was also introduced to every Monmouth household on the City's water bills.

This plan was also greatly influenced by the incredible opportunity of having the Monmouth region named as one of 50 quarterfinalists in the America's Best Communities national competition. Designed as a means to help small cities (with populations from 9,500 up to 90,000) take that next big step, the competition provided an opportunity for us to tell our story, to engage the imagination of our community and to bring unexpected resources to bear.

The America's Best Communities competition brought with it \$35,000 from the competition itself (sponsored by Frontier Communications, Dish Network, CoBank and the Weather Channel), \$15,000 from our community mentor, State Farm Insurance and \$15,000 from the City of Monmouth. Those resources allowed us to truly engage the community, develop a "learning library," hire interns and most importantly, bring in professionals (The Retail Coach and Houseal Lavigne Associates) to help us gather essential data and provide skilled design work.

We have also assembled, over the last few months, a driven action team of local leaders to help drive this process forward - first in authoring this plan and then in the implementation. Our team features stakeholders from many key players in our community, from finance, higher education, and social services to retail entrepreneurs and representatives from the public sector.

In short, we have done our homework as a community. We see where we want to be. We know that we are not yet to the destination, but progress over the past five years have showed us to be on the right path.

Core Principles

In order to develop a strategic action plan, we must first lay a foundation of core principles that outline the context of our current reality and the larger priorities that we see as key drivers in our community. This principles, outlined below, frame how we see the world from our vantage point in the cornfields of West Central Illinois.

- The primary physical asset of our downtown is the population of historic buildings, certified as the "Monmouth Courthouse Commercial Historic District" by the National Register of Historic Places. These structures inform who we have been and who we are as a community.
- While many buildings in the historic district have been renovated, there are still a number of key "at risk" buildings that need to be a top priority.
- Utilizing the upper floors of multi-floor buildings (as residences or offices) is key to provide needed cash flow to allow for renovation.
- Life-safety is an essential aspect of multi-floor building restoration.
- Our downtown can sustain 25-28 market-rate apartments, based on population and layout.
- Monmouth College desires an economically vibrant downtown to provide a destination place for their students (and visiting family members).
- Our growing downtown residential population will require supporting retail

establishments to support a vibrant quality of life.

- Based on the changes to how and where we shop, the most successful downtown retail businesses will be those that serve a specific niche (rather than general merchandise), offer exceptional customer service and create a “destination” environment.
- When we seek to recruit retail shops or restaurants into our community, we will do so with an eye towards competitive balance and data-driven opportunity recognition (based on the psychographics and gap analysis provided by the Retail Coach reports)
- To maximize the success of downtown businesses, we recognize the need to bring in people and dollars from outside of our community - this will be done by cultivating a core of niche “destination” businesses, unified marketing efforts, frequent events in Public Square and the general downtown area, creating an aesthetically vibrant street space and by celebrating arts & culture.
- Embracing the arts as a core pillar of our downtown plan will enhance our community quality of life, foster continued creative activity, help to further crystallize our sense of place and provide real economic benefit. The arts in this context are seen as both experiential (attending a gallery, concert or play) and practicing (artists working in the downtown).
- Stewardship of new and existing businesses is key to the long-term viability of a vibrant downtown. Sharing new data and information on purchasing behavior in our primary market area, as well as offering training, mentoring and networking opportunities will help to ensure economic stability and growth.
- Fostering an entrepreneurial culture community-wide will help us home-grow the next generation of downtown retail entrepreneurs and business owners, as well as fostering an engaged, excited and involved community.
- We realize that not every effort will meet with success. By using this plan as a decision guide, and interpreting each misstep as an opportunity for learning and growth, we are confident we will make significant and lasting forward progress.

Key Stakeholders

The goal of this plan is to create a path towards implementation - and implementation means a revitalized downtown that can be enjoyed by all community and regional residents, as well as visitors. It will truly be “our downtown.”

With the end in mind, we are all important stakeholders in this process. Practically speaking, though, a subset of community groups are key stakeholders who are essential in providing the wisdom, social capital, funding and inertia to take action and implement the various aspects of this plan. These are listed below, in alphabetical order:

- The 1st Street Armoury
- The Buchanan Center for the Arts
- The City of Monmouth
- The Intercultural Committee of Warren County
- Jamieson Center

- Monmouth's service clubs (Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary)
- The Monmouth Area Chamber of Commerce
- The Monmouth Business Council
- Monmouth College
- The Pattee Foundation
- The Regional Office of Education #33
- School Districts 238 and 304
- The Village of Roseville
- West Central Leadership

Social Capital

The end-goal of our community revitalization plan is two-fold. First, it is to firmly establish downtown Monmouth as a healthy economic ecosystem, supporting existing businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship and generating public tax revenue. Second, it is to re-establish our downtown as the social heart of our community - a place where our diverse community can come together to share fellowship, conversation and a sense of belonging.

As we move forward with the continued revitalization of our downtown, we acknowledge that we not only need to bring together needed financial capital, but we also need to grow and expand the wealth of our community's social capital as well.

Six years ago, when we started the strategic planning process for our downtown, our community knew something needed to be done. Businesses were largely gone from downtown and historic buildings were in disrepair. We came together in a series of community engagement meetings to discuss our vision of the future. Ideas (many of them were great) were plentiful, but they were all over the map. It was more of a mathematical exercise to determine a consensus out of the many data points.

As we prepared for this plan, and re-engaged the community (both in-person and online), we soon realized that our community had evolved a shared vision of what we want our downtown to be like. We know we aren't there yet, but we, collectively as a community, can clearly see where we want to be. It's because of that shared vision that this community revitalization plan is far more specific in the projects listed in the Action Areas below - we know what we want, and we know what needs to be done to make it happen.

This shared community vision grew out of five years of "working the plan," but also out of intangible victories such as the creation of "third places" in our downtown and true destination businesses that serve as a model of what could be. In this way, we were able to compound and grow our bonding social capital to help us, almost organically, develop a shared vision for our future.

We certainly have an advantage, as a small and tightly-knit community, in growing social capital locally. We do have some challenges, though. Our community has a growing immigrant population, largely due to the work at Smithfield, our local pork processing plant. As of today, nearly 40% of our high school student body is either Hispanic, Chin Burmese or Sub-Saharan African. Moving forward towards a truly inclusionary downtown experience will require the creation of significant bridging social capital to bring these disparate groups together, and that will be a challenge.

Our goal is not the unrealistic “everybody will just get along” but more in line with the late Harold Washington’s dream for Chicago - as a place where all groups and community factions can share, communicate, argue and discuss as a means to reach a shared end and solve the inevitable and unanticipated problems that arise.

Area of Focus

The physical focus of this revitalization plan roughly coincides with the boundaries of the Warren County Courthouse Commercial Historic District (recognized as a historic district on 2/1/2006), covering buildings and businesses on both sides of the street from Archer on the North, 2nd Avenue on the South, A Street on the West and 1st Street on the East. This is also roughly the area of the downtown portion of Monmouth's TIF district.



This plan should, by no means, create the impression that other efforts of economic development are on hold. Indeed, the opposite is true. With the activation of our new Enterprise Zone by year's end, the Monmouth region stands at the ready to grow in support of our largest employer, Smithfield Foods, as well as expand our stock of new housing and continue to develop the economic corridor near the intersections of Route 34 and Highway 67.

This plan is purposefully limited in focus to the downtown area, to allow for precision project implementation. Also, it is acknowledged that our downtown area is truly the part of our community that belongs to all of us - and by enhancing the center of our community, we can add value to all our residents' lives.

While this plan should be seen as a fluid, "living" document, it was written with a five-year horizon in mind, meaning it will be slated for a major revision in late 2020.

Lean Methodologies

Whenever possible, in order to reduce initial project costs and achieve measurable results quickly, we will utilize lean methodologies (borrowed from the realms of software development and "just in time" manufacturing). A "lean" approach means working towards a "minimum viable product" as quickly as possible to test viability assumptions. In downtown revitalization, this means working quickly and cheaply on a project to get it to the point of "human use" before any sizable investment is made.

For example, in our Makerspace, it might mean bringing together some borrowed tools into a rough space with a few introductory training sessions before setting up a formal space, investing in a professional 3D printer or setting up a membership system. For the South Main Art Center, it might mean a few days of community "elbow grease" work to get the space ready for a few artists who can try out the studio space to see if it holds promise as both a workspace and as a "community draw."

Plan Funding

The myriad of projects that will arise as a result of this revitalization plan will require different funding approaches, from traditional bank financing to public financing, from loans to grants. As we did with our previous strategic plan, the overarching goal will be to maximize public funds as a leverage for private and grant investment.

Key aspects of future funding:

- Leverage public dollars (most likely TIF dollars) to spur renovation and business recruitment
- Acknowledge and work within the prevailing wage requirements of any public money investment

- Carefully plan for the expenditure of any monies for downtown streetscape and infrastructure improvement
- Actively engage local foundation dollars within their areas of interest
- Work with key developers to create realistic and viable ROI estimates on targeted large-scale renovation projects
- Locate developers and investors interested in historic building renovation
- Locate potential private or foundation investors for loss-leader cultural draw projects
- Actively engage multiple local banks in cooperative funding ventures to lower risk and interest rates

Implementation and Communication

This revitalization plan lays out our target results for a revitalized downtown Monmouth. We've come a long way over the last five years, and that journey has informed both our process and our target.

Each Fall, over the next five years, we will revisit this plan, ready to modify it if needed (based on changes in context or unanticipated challenges and opportunities), but more importantly, to plan for the next year's tasks. We will explore priorities, funding challenges, stakeholders and volunteers and lay out the work plan for the next calendar year.

Obviously, in year one (calendar year 2016), we will prioritize some low-cost "low hanging fruit" in order to come out of the gates strongly and provide early and highly visible successes for our community. We will also spend some time this winter laying out multi-year tasks and how they fit into the time and resource flow for the next five years (and beyond).

The core driver for this plan will be, as in the past five years, the City of Monmouth - and more precisely, the office of Community and Economic Development. The action team assembled to bring this plan to fruition will remain in place as the primary coordination tool to steward projects to completion.

As with our previous plan, we will "live publish" this document on the City of Monmouth website, for easy access by all community members (it "lives" as a dynamic Google Doc, and will be shared in an iframe on the City's website). We will also provide quarterly status and progress updates online, and at minimum, yearly community presentations (doing the circuit of local community groups and service clubs).

Core communication for the various projects outlined in this plan, from event planning to workshop design to streetscape project planning will take place online using Basecamp as the centralized communication and document archiving tool.

Action Areas

This revitalization plan is based upon five primary pillars of action: Business Development, Arts and Culture, Physical Restoration, Community Development and Marketing. Each pillar represents a vital system in the overall economic ecosystem of Monmouth's downtown. The five pillars do not exist in isolation, and all contribute significantly to the health and vitality of our downtown (as well as the community as a whole). They do represent different types of projects and efforts, from the small (and inexpensive) to the large scale, and will involve different stakeholder stewardship groups and sources of financial, social and political capital.

I. Business Development

The Business Development pillar focuses directly on commerce. Growing the business aspect of our downtown creates opportunities to draw in local, regional and visiting shoppers, creates jobs (both full and part time) and generates revenue, both for business owners and for the larger community (in the form of sales tax dollars). Business Development is broken down into three primary Action Areas: Existing Business Stewardship, Local Entrepreneurship and Business Recruitment.

A. Existing Business Stewardship

It is vital to our downtown ecosystem that we do everything possible to help our existing businesses (both relatively new and long-standing) survive and thrive in our community.

- Business Retention and Expansion survey
 - Develop and deploy an online BR&E survey based on the best practices championed by Blane, Canada Ltd. Couple online survey with face-to-face meetings with key businesses.
- Training on eCommerce as expansion tool
 - Present a two-part seminar on establishing an online shopping presence for local businesses in an effort to incrementally add to their sales (part one will be a general introduction while part two will focus on implementation strategies).
- Workshops sharing psychographics and gap analysis findings
 - In early 2016, run several information-sharing seminars for existing businesses, focusing on our primary trade area psychographics and the retail leakage reports prepared by the Retail Couch, with a focus on expansion opportunity recognition.
- Reestablish local Revolving Loan fund
 - Reestablish a locally-managed revolving loan fund (the State of Illinois required the City to exhaust their fund reserves in support of a BDPIP grant award) at the City of Monmouth focused on new business start-ups and existing business expansion - work through programs at either DCEO or USDA to secure start-up funds (we will be able to establish 180 days after IDOT certifies Cloverleaf Drive project as complete, which was where we had to allocate our previous RLF funds per State mandate - which should be in April 2016).

- Succession planning
 - Present a program on business succession planning based on the research of Dr. Norman Walzer at NIU's Center for Governmental Studies.

B. Local Entrepreneurship

Home growing local entrepreneurs is the most likely source of new niche retail businesses in the core downtown area. Providing support systems for new entrepreneurs is also essential, along with access to capital. Cultivating a long-term understanding of community entrepreneurship is key to local buy-in and support. Finally, encouraging youth understanding of business development can be a vital component in limiting the brain drain of the best and brightest high school and college graduates.

- Local business competitions
 - Working from the model of our successful 2014 Shops of Monmouth Retail Business Competition, hold business competitions in 2016 and 2018. The scope will be expanded beyond purely retail entrepreneurship to encompass more potential startups.
- Entrepreneurial mentoring system
 - As a follow-up to the 2016 business competition (above), design and implement a business mentoring program, pairing successful local business leaders with startups to mentor and guide them through their first year of operation, with bi-weekly meetings.
- Multicultural basic business skills workshops
 - Working with the Warren County Intercultural Committee and the Knox County Area Partnership for Economic Development, develop a program to present basic business skills and information to our regional immigrant Hispanic, Chin and African populations (with translations and content developed in partnership with the regional Small Business Development Center)
- CEO program
 - Work with Carl Sandburg College to plan and implement a local CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) high school program based on their successful efforts with the Carthage, IL program.
- Micro-loan program
 - Create a local micro-loan program (loans up to \$5,000) for small startups as a local entrepreneurial resource. Work with a consortium of local banks with one lead lender to help mitigate lender risk - direct applicants to applicable local technical support.
- "Open Source" incubator
 - Develop a "lean and mean" local virtual incubator - not necessarily physical incubator space, but a centralized downtown location that provides key 21st century incubator services (logo design, web development, online and traditional marketing assistance, software training, entry into more traditional technical assistance), small hourly office and meeting rooms (with web and telepresence connectivity), and facilitates entrepreneurial networking.

- Student-run business downtown
 - Develop a retail business location in partnership with Monmouth College in the core downtown area. Business would be entirely run by college students from multiple disciplines in conjunction with coursework in entrepreneurship, business management, marketing, graphic design, etc. Business would sell college-created products, such as “Scots Roast” - whole bean and ground coffee roasted by Monmouth College chemistry students.
- Share desired businesses and gap analysis to identify downtown retail opportunities
 - Based on the gap analysis research provided by The Retail Coach, develop an online profile of the most desired and potentially viable businesses that could thrive in the downtown area. Share that information locally and regionally, both on the web and through physical presentations.
- Chamber resource packet
 - The Monmouth Chamber of Commerce will develop a new business startup packet for businesses interested in starting or relocating in Monmouth. The information guide will provide a catalog of local and regional technical assistance contacts. This will be distributed as a folder from the Chamber (also including membership and general community information) and also available online.

C. Business Recruitment

Not all businesses can be boot-strapped from the local talent pool - larger franchises need to be recruited into key sites in the City to drive real estate and sales tax growth (as well as job creation). Special care will be given to creating a balanced recruitment strategy that will not try to supplant existing successful businesses.

- Three-region business recruitment with the Retail Coach
 - Work with the Retail Coach to identify 20 potential national retail and restaurant businesses that could thrive in the Monmouth trade area (as well as potential retail development partners). Opportunities will be broken down into three regions: the Highway 34 bypass, North Main Street and Downtown. Develop customized market analysis for each recruitment target, and seek to bring in at least three new businesses in the next four years.
- Franchise opportunity workshop
 - Working with the Retail Coach and the Small Business Development Center, develop and deliver a franchise opportunity workshop for potential regional franchise entrepreneurs. Identify specific franchise targets and present on the opportunities of the two core franchise approaches: investment only and investment and management.
- Anchor downtown restaurant project
 - An “anchor restaurant” in the central downtown area is one of Monmouth’s most essential recruitment targets. Downtown dining is the glue that binds together both shopping and cultural experiences. Gap analysis shows the opportunity is strong, and our community survey ranks this as the number one most desired new business in Monmouth. In the past, we have lost several downtown

businesses due to undercapitalization, and we need to make sure the next downtown business is poised to succeed. To this end, we will work to coordinate site development, experienced chef recruitment, and investor recruitment to bring together an enterprise that has the maximum potential for long-term success.

- Regional recruitment of potential downtown niche retail
 - Using the Retail Coach's gap analysis reports, develop a list of regional non-franchise businesses within a 75 mile radius that may be ripe to explore the possibility of opening a second or third location in the downtown Monmouth area. Develop a customized marketing document for key recruitment targets and after an initial query into expansion potential, initiate a face-to-face meeting (ideally in Monmouth).

II. Arts and Culture

The Arts and Culture pillar focuses on expanding opportunities for community residents and visitors to enjoy varied arts and culture experiences downtown. Growing and enhancing our local catalog of art and culture experiences will serve as a primary driver to get people downtown - and once downtown, they will be able to explore downtown merchants, service business and restaurants, enhancing downtown's economic vitality. In addition, these experiences will bring people together in fellowship and shared-experience, and can serve as a catalyst for the lively conversations that sometimes only the arts can ignite. Arts and Culture is broken down into three primary Action Areas: Events, Enterprises and Farmers Market.

A. Events

Community events are an essential tool to bring community residents and community visitors together for a shared experience. Bringing more people into our core downtown area will create opportunities for shopping and dining and spending dollars locally.

- Market and promote existing events
 - Enhance community and region-wide marketing of our existing catalog of events to draw in more residents and visitors (such as 64 Arts, BaconFest, Cruise Night, the Deep Blue Innovators Blues Festival, the Fly-in Breakfast, the Maple Leaf Community Concert Series, Market Alley Music Days, etc.). Utilize regional media such as the River Rambler and Macopolitan (magazines) and Tri-States Public Radio (our regional NPR affiliate).
- Coordinated scheduling of events
 - Bring community stakeholders together for a winter meeting (after the holidays) to coordinate the calendars of all groups for event scheduling throughout the year - include not only larger events, but fundraisers like the annual Rotary BBQ and church events, such as United Presbyterian's Indian Taco Supper. Work to eliminate overlap and encourage cross-marketing.
- Expanded blues festival
 - Expand the Deep Blue Innovators Blues Festival to include one or more music workshops on the day of the event as well as bring in local retailers for a record and CD swap and a musical instrument swap and sale. Set up a regional shuttle

with Galesburg to bring more attendees in from that community (so they don't have to worry about driving after a few beers at the event).

- Expanded bacon festival
 - Based on the successful “minimum viable product” event held on August 7, 2015 (500 people expected, 3,500 attended), expand the number of food vendors and products vendors. Take advantage of festival ordinance (see below) to open up entire Public Square area. Extend hours of the event until 10 p.m., bring in additional musical acts and allow for the pre-sale of tasting tickets.
- Festival ordinance
 - Several years ago, the City of Monmouth passed a cafe ordinance (that served as a model for other communities to adopt) to allow for outdoor dining and drinking on public sidewalks. Based on that success (and City Council buy-in), develop a festival ordinance that allows for managed open alcohol consumption in festival spaces (clearly marked and monitored). For larger events, this will work much better than the City's current “beer garden” ordinance. Prospective events to utilize this ordinance would be the BaconFest (see above) and the Prime Beef Festival.
- Final Friday event on Market Alley or Pattee Plaza
 - With the festival ordinance in place (see above), the Monmouth Business Council would add a “final Friday” event to its Market Alley Music Days summer music series. For June, July and August, the final Friday of the month will feature an outdoor event (either in Market Alley or on Pattee Plaza - see below) with a musical act, dinner provided by a local restaurant and beer and wine provided by a local establishment, such as Market Alley Wines. Evolve this event so that local community groups take over the running of specific events, handling the logistics and marketing and also serving as event sponsors (and providing an opportunity for community organization marketing).
- Outdoor art festival on Square
 - Work with the Buchanan Center for the Arts to develop an outdoor arts festival that brings in local artists to show and sell their wares (like so many successful art fairs throughout the state and country). This event would be unique in that it would celebrate the agricultural and manufacturing heritage of Monmouth - the plow industry. A special sculpture competition will be held where local metal sculptors work with cast-off plow and tractor parts to create unique sculptures. The winner of these competitions then will have their work purchased and added to the outdoor sculptures throughout downtown.
- Oktoberfest
 - Based on our community survey, community members are wild about the prospect of an Oktoberfest event in Monmouth. With the popularity of craft beers, one established micro-brewery and one on the way, the stage is set for a fall event focusing on beer and bratwurst. Our community would start with a basic trial-run event, most likely organized by the Monmouth Business Council and

local breweries and held in Market Alley or Pattee Plaza. If proven successful, then the event would move to the full Public Square for a day-long event.

- Intercultural food event
 - Food has a way of bringing people together and an intercultural food event celebrating Monmouth's growing immigrant population is a great way to develop community and fellowship. To be organized by the Warren County Intercultural Community, in collaboration with Monmouth College (and the college/community PUSH initiative), the downtown tasting event would highlight Hispanic, Burmese and African cuisines.
- "Famous Son" event
 - To honor one of Monmouth's historic "famous sons," the Warren County Historical Society would, in partnership with other community stakeholders, develop and present a winter event at either the local History Museum or the 1st Street Armoury. The event would either focus on Ralph Greenleaf, arguably the best professional pool player in history, or the Great Nikola, one of the world's foremost vaudeville-era magicians - both calling Monmouth home.

B. Enterprises

There are several opportunities for new cultural venues in our downtown area - specifically, publically accessible studio space for practicing artists and expanding the program opportunities in the Rivoli Theater to allow for the showing of movies. Both ventures have been vetted and community buy-in and desire is very strong.

- South Main Arts Center
 - Work with the site owner and community volunteers through 2-3 working Saturdays to prepare the old JC Penney store as a "minimum viable product" studio space for local artists - recruit those artists to test the viability of the practicing studio model. If successful (all indications so far are to the positive), work to recruit a local entrepreneur to develop an embedded frame and art supply store in the space. Initial feasibility planning was done for this enterprise through a cooperative grant between the Illinois Arts Council, the Buchanan Center for the Arts and the City of Monmouth. See render below:



- Rivoli as Brew and View
 - Work with Monmouth College entrepreneurial students on a semester-long project to develop a two-week test run of the Rivoli Theater as a Brew and View movie theater (utilizing rented equipment). Consult with the owners of the Lory Theater in Highland, IL (who have successfully done such a transformation). If successful, work to mentor a local entrepreneur to take over the enterprise and run a successful regional Kickstarter campaign for the purchase of a digital projector. This venture was identified as highly desirable on both our online survey and through several community engagement meetings.

C. Farmers Market

Our local Farmers Market has been a fixture just out of our core downtown (one block north of the Public Square), run successfully by the Chamber of Commerce. The time is ripe to bring this event into the Public Square and take the steps needed to broaden the number and scope of the vendors, creating a more vibrant local event.

- Move to Thursday evening
 - Currently, the Farmers Market runs from 7 a.m. until noon on Friday mornings. This time is inconvenient for many residents (who are working), and limits the number of vendors. Vendors are not interested in a Saturday morning Farmers

Market, because they already have presences in the larger regional markets at that time. To increase the number of residents who take advantage of the market and to recruit new regional vendors, the market will be moved to Thursday evening, from 5 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

- Move to Public Square
 - To increase visibility and access to the market, it will be moved from the First State Bank parking lot to the Northeast quadrant of the Public Square. This will allow vendors to bring in their trucks directly to the sidewalk (that quadrant of the Square will be closed off to normal traffic), provide ample room for customers and plenty of parking in adjoining quadrants.
- Expand the scope of the market
 - To create more of an “event” feel, more vendor types will be recruited, such as bakers, meat merchants, small-scale vendors (such as jewelry and other ethnic goods) and artists. In addition, regional musicians will be recruited to play when the market is open.
- Recruit regional food trucks
 - Two or three times during the summer Farmers Market season, recruit regional food trucks to come into the community (they could come in from Peoria, Quad Cities, or the Chicago, Springfield or St. Louis regions). The Thursday night time wouldn't cut into their key weekend sales, and it would create much more “buzz” at the event.
- Purchase needed event supplies for Farmers Market and beyond
 - To better serve the Farmers Market, and other downtown events, purchase a number of 10x10 canopy tents, easy to stack and move outdoor chairs and tables (for 20-30), a portable stage area and public-use PA system. Equipment could be stored at either the Chamber of Commerce or City Hall.
- Illinois WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program
 - Work with the State of Illinois, and locally Jamieson Center, the First Street Armoury and the PUSH initiative to get Warren County certified as an eligible county for this program that provides access (via local farmers markets) to fresh fruits and vegetables to those nutritionally at-risk.

III. Physical Restoration

The Physical Restoration pillar is one of the most important and challenging aspects of this revitalization plan. Our downtown is defined by physical space - the buildings, the roadways, the sidewalks all create the canvas upon which everything else downtown takes place. For our downtown to truly be revitalized, the physical space needs to be safe, attractive, code-compliant and configured to meet the current and future needs of downtown residents and businesses. Brick and mortar revitalization is expensive, especially so when it comes to historic buildings over 100 years old, so finding and allocating needed funding will be a significant challenge for this pillar. Physical Restoration is broken down into six primary Action Areas: Building Renovation, Downtown Residential Living, Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety, Streetscaping, Drainage and Parking.

A. Building Renovation

Over the past five years, 16 buildings have been renovated downtown, including some of the most at-risk mature structures. Renovation was accomplished by leveraging TIF dollars, local foundation dollars and federal historic tax credits, and this approach will be utilized again on larger scale projects, especially those with residential potential (see below). Other tools and approaches need to be developed to help and incentivize local building owners to improve their buildings.

- Facade program
 - The Facade program was launched by the City of Monmouth in late summer 2015, and funds have been budgeted through the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The program provides a 50% matching grant (plus technical assistance) for improvements that preserve or restore this historic nature of a building's facade. Work with Facade Committee to identify most vital candidates for facade improvement and reach out to those building owners.
- Educate downtown building owners on value of historic renovation
 - Hold an informal workshop for downtown building owners on the economic value of an historically renovated commercial district. Focus on both the benefits to an individual building owner (increased visual awareness, ability to use upper floors to generate income, etc.) and to the larger commercial district (better walkability, consistent and aesthetically pleasing architecture, draw for out-of-region visitors, etc.). Educate them on the facade program and federal historic tax credits as tools to help them increase the value of their buildings.
- Upper floor on Bowman/Colwell
 - Work with the building owner of the registered national landmark Bowman/Colwell department store to remove the sheet metal hiding the third floor windows (and restore the windows - see image below). Also work to develop a plan for highest and best use of third floor space (currently used as storage).



- Removal of the old Dairy building
 - The old Maple City Dairy building on south A street is too far gone to be a viable renovation candidate. The building needs to be demolished. In its place, a landscaped parking lot that would service the Buchanan Center for the Arts and Danny's Tap and Grille would be a good option.

B. Downtown Residential Living

Based on our local population, and the breakdown of our workforce (as well as education attainment), our downtown can support between 25-30 market rate apartments. Over the past five years, twelve such apartments have entered the rental rolls and are fully occupied with demand outstripping supply. A downtown residential population is essential, both for building owners to receive maximum value from their historic buildings and to support the growing retail offerings downtown.

With the expected growth of Monmouth College, many new faculty members will be coming into the community looking for housing. In addition, future expansion of our primary employers, as well as continued staff rotation at the Monsanto research farm will all contribute to increased demand for quality, market rate apartments.

- Construct 4-8 market rate apartments in historic Patton Block building
 - Work with owner/developer Frantz Community Investors to convert the second and third floors of the historic landmark building into loft apartments (the building already has a new external elevator).
- Construct 5-6 market rate apartments in old Vaughn Jewelers building complex
 - Bring in a new regional developer to take ownership of the south Main building complex (200-204 South Main) and convert the second story into 5-6 market rate apartments (or specialized Monmouth College student housing for upperclassmen). Utilize Federal historic tax credits, rent backstop agreements and TIF dollars to provide needed gap funding for the restoration of this Queen Anne style block building. See image of the building below:



C. Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Safety

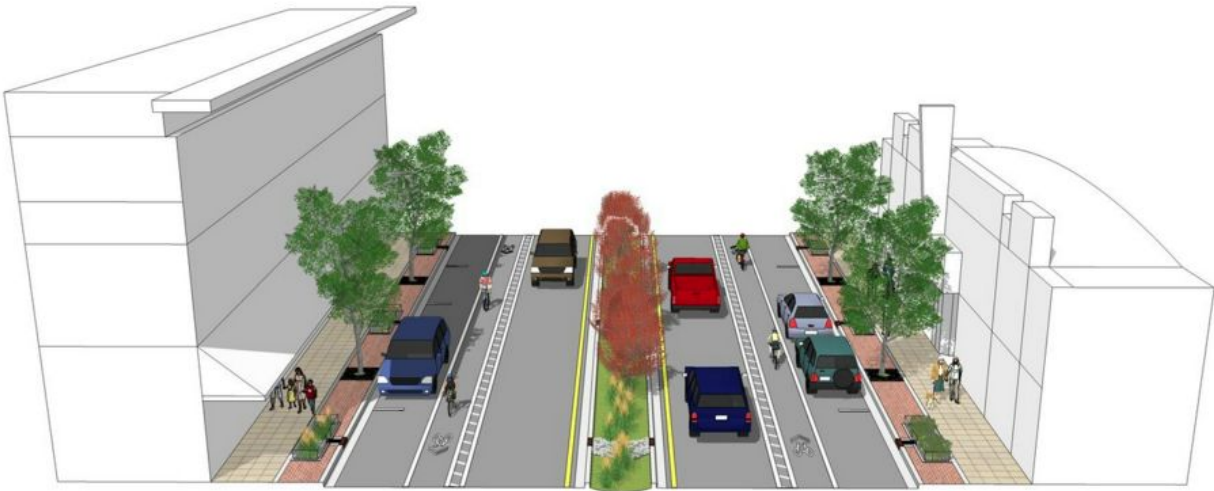
Monmouth's downtown area has the potential to be very walkable. Wide sidewalks and the Public Square offer ample opportunities for pedestrian engagement. Crosswalks, however, remain a challenge. Street signage installed several years ago has certainly helped, but the crosswalks are definitely longer than they need to be. Also, vehicles drive through the roundabout and both north and south Main streets at excessive speeds.

- Reduce entry to roundabout to a single lane
 - Currently, cars enter the roundabout two abreast, causing right-of-way confusion and driver blind spots - limiting to a single lane will slow down roundabout traffic and clarify right-of-way issues.
- Shorter pedestrian crossings around Public Square
 - With curb widening, and the single lane entry mentioned above, crossing the main four entrances to the Public Square will be safer for the pedestrian.
- Well-marked crossings from center islands to Rotary Park
 - With a single lane roundabout and clearly-marked pedestrian crossings from the "porkchop" islands into Rotary Park, pedestrian access to the central park will be much safer.



Proposed rendering of the Public Square roundabout.

- Page on City website explaining pedestrian laws and how to “ride the roundabout”
 - Add a simple page under “For Residents” on how to properly drive around Monmouth’s unique Public Square roundabout (always yield to cars in the roundabout).
- Reduce the width and lanes of first two blocks of southbound Main Street
 - Currently, the first long block of south Main Street is six lanes wide, making it far too easy to speed through as a driver. By adding a partial boulevard (that will give way to turn lanes when needed) and adding a bike lane in either direction, traffic will slow down, and the street view will be far more aesthetically pleasing. See rendering below:



- Mid-block pedestrian crossing on first block of south Main Street
 - To break up the long first block of south Main Street, and to allow easier pedestrian access to the arts and culture destinations on both sides of the street (the Fusion Theatre, the Rivoli Theater and South Main Arts), a mid-block pedestrian crosswalk will be added, along with boulevard seating. See rendering below:



D. Streetscaping

One of our core principles for our downtown is the belief that improvements made to our historic buildings must be accompanied by aesthetic streetscaping - making the downtown more physically attractive and inviting for pedestrians (potential customers all). We have an excess of undecorated concrete and a scarcity of landscaped green spaces.

The overall implementation regions for downtown streetscaping are outlined in Appendix A: Recommended Improvements Framework, designed by Houseal Lavigne Associates. Specific streetscape projects are outlined below.

- Pattee Plaza
 - Sometimes buildings just can't be saved. The oldest building on Public Square sat in the Southwest quadrant of the Square, but decades of deferred maintenance, a dangerously unstable foundation and cramped second floor made it a demolition candidate (for safety reasons) rather than a restoration candidate. A local foundation has stepped in to provide the funding to create Pattee Plaza (named after one of the historic families in Monmouth who started and operated a turn-of-the-century plow factory). The buildings have been recently torn down and work will begin on the plaza in Spring 2016. Once completed, the property will be deeded to the Buchanan Center for the Arts for on-going care (with monies placed in trust to care for the park in perpetuity). See the planned layout below:



- Cafe lighting on Market Alley
 - Market Alley is one of the four old alleyways that lead into the Public Square. Eight years ago, it was landscaped as a public engagement space after a major water main replacement project. The “alley” currently plays host to the Market Alley Music Days summer music series. Stringed cafe lights (spanning the streetwalls) will be added to the space to provide casual evening lighting and a festive atmosphere. See an image of Market Alley below:



- Rotary Park project for Monmouth Rotary Club Centennial
 - The Rotary Club of Monmouth's centennial will be in 2018. The club wishes to make a significant, lasting gift to the City of Monmouth's residents. In September 2015, the club voted overwhelmingly to support a project in Rotary Park, at the heart of Public Square. A Centennial Committee has formed and has been charged with leading the project and the required fundraiser. While details are still in the planning stages, this project will most likely be a new fountain in the center of Rotary Park, replacing the aged and in-need-of-repair fountain currently located there.
- Green space and public space near old auction house and Woodshed
 - Two buildings on south 1st Street, originally built as a car dealership and most recently utilized as an auction house are falling down and irreparable (the City of Monmouth condemned the buildings in 2013 and the owner has made no effort to repair them). Utilizing local foundation funds, the City of Monmouth will purchase and demolish the buildings in November of 2015. Once down, the space will be transformed into both additional downtown parking and a vest-pocket green space connecting south 1st Street with the alley off of 1st Avenue (now used as a summer location for a popular pop-up BBQ restaurant). This will also be one of the key locations for a new mural (see below). See image of building to be demolished (green) and proposed mixed use space below:



- Refurbishment of two existing murals
 - Working with art students from Monmouth College and the Monmouth High School Art Club, the two existing murals in downtown (both at the corner of 1st

Street and First Avenue) will be repainted, restored and clear-coated. See image below:



- Creation of new downtown murals
 - Given that our downtown is a mix of old and new buildings, we have many brick “exposed faces” in the downtown that would be great locations for new murals. Locations such as the east wall of the Woodshed, Prairie Radio building (west wall), The Warren County Public Library (east wall), B Parlour (north wall) and MC Sports (north wall). With this in mind, we seek to bring a Walldog mural event to the community in 2018 or 2019. Our region has a local Walldog muralist (who created the two murals above) who will assist us in getting on their queue once needed local funding has been pledged.
- Installation of matching 5-globe sidewalk lights in Roseville
 - As part of the effort to unify the communities of Monmouth and Roseville, the communities will work together (along with some Ameren Clean Energy grant assistance) to purchase and install historically styled (and low-energy, utilizing LED and CFL bulbs) five-globe street lights on Roseville’s Main Street and Penn Avenue. These streetlights will match those in downtown Monmouth.
- Installation of matching light-pole banners for downtown Roseville
 - Working with the Village of Roseville and design students at Monmouth College, banners will be designed based upon the overarching banner layout utilized in

Monmouth. These high quality banners will then be placed on light poles throughout downtown Roseville.

- Special Service District after TIF district expires
 - Once the City of Monmouth's TIF district expires in 2017, the City will work with local downtown building owners to set up a special service district that will roughly coincide with the downtown historic district. The special service district will allow a mutually agreed-upon surcharge to be placed on the annual real estate taxes - these monies will go into a special fund that can be used in the future to repair, enhance and beautify the public spaces in the district.

E. Drainage

One of the primary combined sewers runs diagonally through the first block of south Main and under several key buildings in the downtown. As a component of a larger scale Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) plan, the goal is to redirect, and where possible, retain stormwater before it enters this major sewer. Other aspects of the City of Monmouth's CSO plan seek to increase the flow through the stormwater system as well as increase lagoon holding capacity at the end of the stormflow - drainage issues that relate specifically to downtown are listed below:

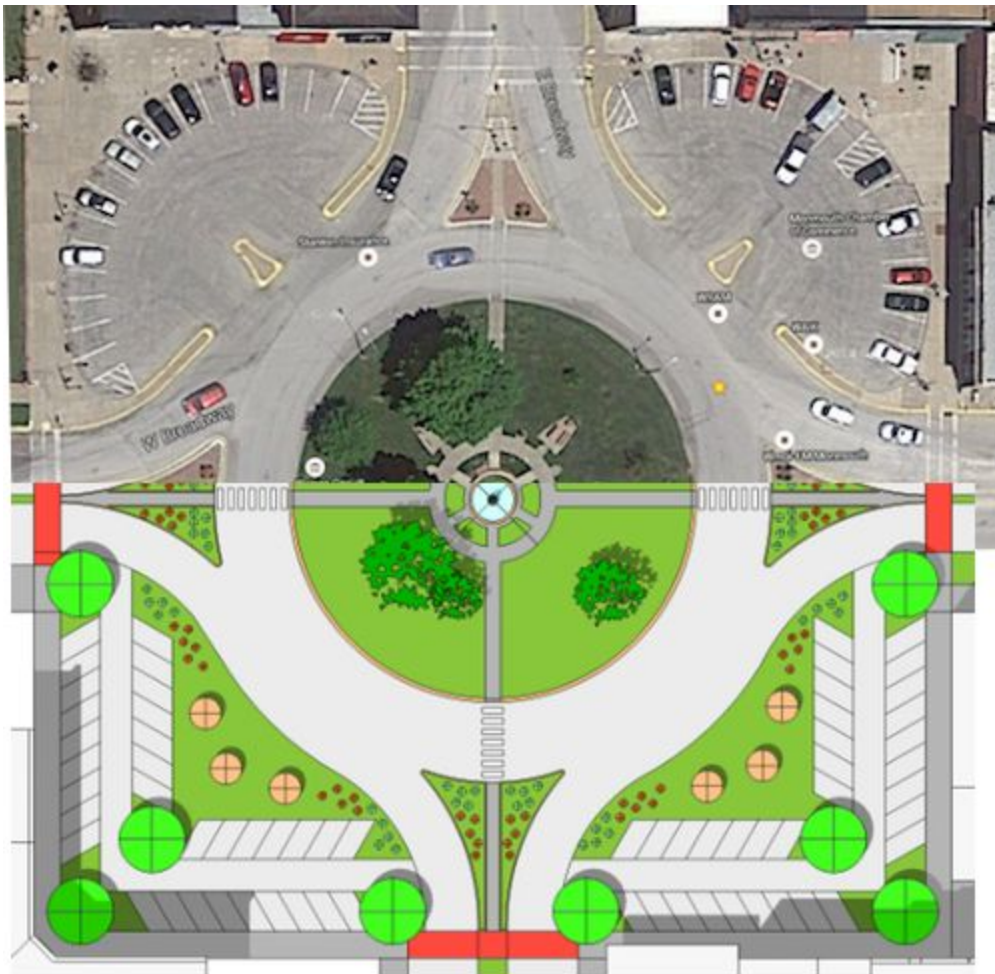
- Permeable pavers on La Tapatia lot
 - The small gravel parking lot to the south of the La Tapatia Mexican grocery store is the location where much of the runoff collects for that portion of south Main. Excavating down several feet, filling with fine gravel and then paving with permeable pavers will allow the parking lot to act as a water retention area.
- Grading and drainage control behind Fusion Theatre
 - Frantz Community Investors (owners of the Fusion Theatre and 226 South Main buildings), working with the City of Monmouth will regrade the area at the northwest corner of the two buildings to provide proper runoff and water retention, so excess rain water won't flow back into the basements of these two structures.
- Line diagonal sewer on south Main Street
 - As part of the City of Monmouth's long term CSO plan, the old brick combined sewer running diagonally under south Main Street will be lined with new material, providing a clear flow surface and long-term structural integrity to the sewer.
- Construct landscaped bioswales on each end of pedestrian crossing
 - As part of the mid-block pedestrian crosswalk on south Main, each end will feature a landscaped bioswale for water retention and better drainage.
- Expand use of brick pavers
 - When possible, as part of enhancing the existing pedestrian crosswalks downtown, replace asphalt with decorative permeable pavers - allowing for water retention and absorption as well as more visible pedestrian crossing areas.

F. Parking

Parking is often mentioned by community members as a key frustration downtown. Yet an analysis of the use of existing parking spaces reveals that it is very rare that even a majority of spaces are utilized. The problem arises from customers wanting to park very close to the

businesses they wish to enter. Slowing traffic on south Main will allow more comfortable access to the parallel parking spots on that block. It is also essential to connect existing public parking areas (often behind the Main street buildings) with the Main street and Public Square areas, encouraging visitors to “park once and walk often” as they shop and enjoy downtown. In addition, several “missing teeth” parking lots downtown (where buildings once stood) should be enhanced with some pedestrian-friendly boundaries to increase the walkability of the area.

- Enhanced Public Square parking
 - As seen in the Public Square concept rendering above, parking off the roundabout will be transformed from the current “arc” of parking spots to one-way diagonal parking. This will create more parking spots (56% more), slow down traffic in the quadrants, and offer more pedestrian accessible green spaces to enjoy on the Square. See image of current and proposed parking layout below:



- Enhanced layout to public parking lot behind City Hall
 - The public parking lot behind the current City Hall is heavily used, both by downtown day workers and residents, though it is never full. Landscaping the lot and creating a more aesthetically pleasing entrance onto Public Square will allow

visitors and shoppers to utilize the lot and feel like they are already in the core downtown area. See visualization below:



- Planters separating Young parking lot from sidewalk
 - The vacant area north of 214 S. Main Street was once the site of a historic Victorian-era building. It has recently been improved with a concrete footing to serve as a parking lot for employees of the business at 214 S. Main. However, it is a large and rather jarring “missing tooth” in the south Main Street streetwall, and the vastness of the open space creates anxiety for pedestrians that pass by. The addition of a mid-height wall (with planting areas on top) separating the parking lot from the sidewalk will make this stretch of south Main more inviting to pedestrians. See image below:



- Reconfigure A Street parking
 - On-street parking along A street to be reconfigured to provide benefits such as reducing traffic pattern confusion, providing direct access to the sidewalk for driver and pedestrian safety, increased efficiency for vehicular traffic flow and more space for landscaping.
- Downtown overflow in high school parking lot
 - Utilize easternmost side of the high school parking lot as overflow parking for downtown (especially for event). Provide some landscaping to help it mesh in with the enhanced downtown aesthetic.
- Parking information on website
 - Add easy-to-find parking information on the City and Chamber websites (and ShopsOfMonmouth.com and GoMonmouth.com) for out of town visitors.

IV. Community Development

The Community Development pillar seeks to encourage interaction and information sharing between community members. With enhanced interaction comes enhanced understanding and empathy, essential elements for a cordial and supportive residential and commercial community. Special effort will be placed on creating opportunities to enhance education and interaction opportunities with our region's growing immigrant population.

- Continue nonprofit web program
 - Continue existing City of Monmouth nonprofit web development program. Every Spring semester, two to three Monmouth College interns take for-credit internships to learn Joomla 3 development and work with local nonprofit to develop world class websites for their organization. Sites done to date: the Buchanan Center for the Arts, the Edward Arthur Mellinger Educational

Foundation, GoMonmouth.com, ShopsOfMonmouth.com, the Warren County Public Library and the Warren County Virtual Museum.

- Develop PUSH website
 - In concert with the effort of the local PUSH (Presidents United to Stop Hunger) committee, develop an online information resource for access to local food resources, serving both the food-challenged and those interested in the local foods movement. Develop through the nonprofit web program (see above).
- Makerspace
 - Partner with Monmouth College, Carl Sandburg College and the local school districts to set up a Makerspace in an underutilized downtown location (there are several possibilities). Begin with the “minimal viable product” approach to bring in existing tools and technology and start with a 180-day “founding member” program for \$10 per month to gauge local interest. Hold equipment and technology training sessions and open work times. If 180-day test shows promise, move to a full \$30/month subscription level and seek funding for more expensive equipment (such as a laser cutter).
- Fix It Monmouth event
 - Hold a series of events at the local makerspace (see above) that aim to train community members in simple tool and appliance repair with an eye towards sustainability (reuse rather than throw out). The programs will focus on small appliances and electronics, clothing and toys and stuffed animals. This series will also be used as a recruiting tool for potential makerspace members.
- Education programs with key immigrant groups
 - Working through the Regional Office of Education, the Warren County Intercultural Community and local law enforcement officials, present a series of live-translated panel discussions on local laws, the court system and interfacing with local police officer and firemen. These programs will be presented separately in Spanish, Chin Burmese, French and Portuguese.
- New resident guide
 - Working with the Warren County Intercultural Committee, Monmouth College and the City of Monmouth, assemble and curate an essential “new resident guide” for new immigrant families moving into the community. This guide will be published online and will also be made available in printed form. Once completed, the guide will be translated into the four key immigrant languages.
- Smartphone walking tours
 - Working with the Warren County Historical Society and several Monmouth College interns, and utilizing open-source technology, develop GIS-enabled walking tours of Monmouth’s downtown historic district as well as the historic homes surrounding the downtown area.
- Warren County Virtual Museum
 - Continue partnership with Monmouth College and the Warren County Historical Society to develop relevant local exhibits for the online museum. Historical Society members, in partnership with college interns, will develop exhibits to

enhance and support the changing museum exhibits. Monmouth College's Local Heroes capstone course in civic engagement will continue to author exhibits on local "heroes," both current and historical. Continue working with the City of Monmouth to evolve and enhance the museum's custom technology.

V. Marketing

The Marketing pillar focuses on telling our story - both to members of our own community and to potential visitors from the larger surrounding region. Getting the word out helps draw people downtown for our events and shopping and dining experiences. Crafting and disseminating a unified, "branded" message helps to add impact and validity to our individual marketing efforts. If you build it, they *may* come - but if you tell a compelling and clear story, then they *will* come.

- Update and revise City website
 - Update the City of Monmouth website from Joomla 1.5 to Joomla 3+. Enhance and update the Community Profile. Implement the "Local Investment" timeline to showcase community investment in the last 15 years. Expand the "For Business" pages with updated demographics and psychographics. Expand online payment options.
- Conversion of GoMonmouth.com to cover all cultural events
 - Expand the existing GoMonmouth.com site, which currently focuses only on live music, into a community and region-wide site for marketing all arts and cultural opportunities, from plays to gallery openings. Also allow for online purchase of tickets for events such as the blues festival, the Maple Leaf Community Concert series and theater performances at Monmouth College.
- Enhancement of ShopsOfMonmouth.com
 - Enhance the existing ShopsOfMonmouth site to include more retail profiles and photos, integration of Chamber of Commerce membership badges and an enhanced focus on available retail and downtown living spaces.
- Training seminars on social media marketing
 - Working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Monmouth College Political Economy and Commerce Department, develop and deliver an annual program on social media marketing for local business owners.
- Electronic community newsletter
 - Develop an online community newsletter with a wide reach focusing on delivering information on all community events, as well as vital information from the City of Monmouth (such as upcoming street repairs, etc.). Utilize MailChimp.com for newsletter delivery and also cross-market through stakeholder social media pages. Aim for twice-a-month publication.
- Billboards advertising downtown Monmouth
 - As we enter years two and three of the implementation of this plan, plan, design and implement several regional billboards marketing downtown Monmouth as a shopping and cultural destination. Funding and organization for this marketing effort will be guided by the Monmouth Business Council with assistance from key local financial institutions.

- Logo and branding of this revitalization plan
 - Utilizing DesignCrowd.com, develop a professional logo for this revitalization plan to be utilized over the next five years. Develop with an eye towards the web as the primary media vehicle and share the logo “badge” with all stakeholders for highly visible inclusion on their web sites.

Decision Principles Checklist

During the revitalization of Monmouth’s downtown area, new opportunities and challenges will certainly arise. This decision principles checklist will help us determine if the opportunity is harmonious with our larger goals.

New ideas and opportunities will not “match” each and every question in the checklist below, but reviewing the checklist should provide an initial sense of the potential of an opportunity.

- Is the opportunity located within the Area of Focus of this plan?
- Does it fit within one or more of the Action Areas of this strategic plan?
- Does it enhance the aesthetics of our downtown?
- Does it support the historic feel of our downtown?
- Is there a clear way that it can be paid for or potentially paid for?
- Do we know who will be involved?
- Is there a plan for long-term sustainability?
- Does it positively enhance our residents’ experience with downtown?
- Is it a draw? Will it pull people downtown?
- Does it service an upper-scale residential population?
- Does it provide a service for the College population?
- Can it be used as a model for similar future efforts?
- Is it in conflict or competition with an existing business or program?
- Will it help build social capital (bonding or bridging)?

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this community revitalization plan is two-fold. First, it is an organized catalog of tasks and projects that, as a whole, comprise a realistic path towards continued and meaningful downtown revitalization. Second, it is a living tool to guide decisions and track the priorities and progress of the component actions that make up the revitalization of our downtown.

The process of revitalizing our downtown is complex, with many moving and inter-related parts.

This plan is an attempt to capture that complexity and break the larger thematic pillars into actionable, achievable atomic parts. This plan also serves as a guidepost with which to measure new opportunities and ideas.

Our overarching goal is significant: to build upon our past work and continue to revitalize our core downtown district in order to better serve our community and enhance the economic prosperity of the Monmouth region. While this is a large and complex goal, it should be remembered that results are not merely “good for the bottom line”, but rather the results will provide a fun, entertaining and nourishing city-center which will enhance the happiness and enjoyment of all in our community.

One final note: this is a long process - a marathon rather than a sprint. To sustain our efforts, all participating stakeholders and community members should “enjoy the ride.” After all, in a very real way, the journey IS the destination.

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Downtown Monmouth Recommended Improvements Framework

- 1 Streetscape - Main St/Broadway St.** Improvements include a road diet, expanding sidewalk area, creating a consistent street tree wall, installing coordinated site furnishings, and establishing branding opportunities.
- 2 Streetscape - Perimeter Streets.** Improvements include promoting walkability to the Downtown, improving sidewalk connectivity, enhancing crosswalks, and installing directional signs, etc.
- 3 Streetscape - Residential Transition.** Improvements include blending the streetscape into the surrounding neighborhood.
- 4 Parking Area Enhancements.** Improvements include installing screening, landscaping, and directional signs to provide clear and easy access into the Downtown.
- 5 Town Square Reimagined.** Improvements include efficient circulation pattern, providing more parking, slowing down vehicular traffic, simplifying parking access, improving pedestrian mobility and safety, and establishing a unique environment for Downtown Monmouth.
- 6 Potential Plaza.** Current Pattee Plaza design.
- 7 On-street Parking.** On-street parking along A St. to be reconfigured to provide benefits such as reducing traffic patterns confusion, providing direct access to the sidewalk for driver/pedestrian safety, increased efficiency for vehicular traffic flow, and more space for landscaping.
- 8 Parking Area Enhancement.** This parking lot and drive-thru area should be reconfigured to decrease curb cut widths, minimize travel lanes, and provide additional space for on-street parking.
- 9 Potential Crosswalk Improvements**
- 10 11 Parking Area Enhancements.** Improvements include installing screening, landscaping, and directional signs to provide clear and easy access into the Downtown.
- 12 Parking Area Enhancements.** The High School parking lot should be used as a potential overflow area for Downtown parking. Improvements for this parking area include screening, landscaping, and directional signs.
- 13 Potential Infill Site**
- 14 Potential Midblock Crossing.** A midblock crossing here to help pedestrians safely cross Main St. providing direct access to adjacent uses and parking.
- 15 Potential Infill Site**
- 16 Potential Infill Site**
- 17 Parking Area Enhancements**

