
Monmouth, Illinois

Downtown Report

STRATEGIES FOR A REVITALIZED BUSINESS DISTRICT



BUSINESS MIX

...

Directory of existing businesses located in the historic district.

BUILDING INVENTORY

...

Summary of property ownership and assessment of real estate.

CATALYTIC SITES

...

Leveraging current assets and building a market-based strategy.

2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Monmouth City Council, staff, committees, Monmouth Chamber of Commerce, and the small business community.

Prepared by 353 Court, LLC & Reader Area Development, Inc.
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Downtown

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objective of this report is to provide the City of Monmouth with an outside analysis of observations as it relates to the buildings, businesses, and brand within the historic downtown business district. It also aims to provide City staff and community stakeholders with viable recommendations for revitalization by determining the current conditions, what is missing, preparation that is needed to take place, and how to position for a sustainable long-term level of success.



In this context, the purpose of the Downtown Report is to do the following:

- Evaluate current conditions of a designated geographical area within the downtown district.
- Leverage the current assets, build on them, and find new ways to position for long-term success.
- Develop recommendations to enhance commerce and increase redevelopment opportunities.

BACKGROUND

353 Court, LLC was engaged by the City of Monmouth staff and Mayor Davies in the fall of 2018, to better understand their downtown building inventory and to survey business owners as a way to gain knowledge of how to serve their merchants more effectively while cultivating a wave of new redevelopment activity. The Monmouth City Council entered into an agreement to formulate and implement a downtown revitalization strategy to begin in May 2019.

APPROACH

Site visits to evaluate building conditions were made during the months of May, June, and July. During this period, More than 35 interviews were conducted with various community stakeholders, property owners, and small businesses. An additional 80 responses were submitted from the Downtown Monmouth Community Survey issued electronically. The summary of recommendations for buildings within the downtown are based on exterior visual examinations and interior tours. Additional background information to guide the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was noted during individual interview sessions.

FINDINGS

Several recurring themes were uncovered during this period. In order to articulate and organize the findings in an efficient way, the following categories of buildings, businesses and branding were established and consistently used throughout the body of this report. Overall, the report indicates that there is notable activity occurring in downtown Monmouth. However, there is an opportunity to be more strategic regarding its actions to achieve higher levels of vibrancy within the historic downtown business district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 353 Court team's recommendations focus on taking a strategically balanced approach that the City staff, council and local stakeholders can collectively act upon by utilizing no less than \$500,000 annually. A combination of private dollars, lending capital, foundation grants, and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds must be leveraged together for the greatest impact. These funds that are specifically allocated to the historic downtown business district for revitalization strategy, building stabilization, marketing and other associated costs to improving the area. The outcomes will be best achieved by the annual dedication of funding percentage amounts and programs listed below:

Buildings - 65%

Recommended funding level = \$325,000

Downtown Building Stabilization Program, Storefront Improvement Program, Upper Story Living Grant

Businesses - 20%

Recommended funding level = \$100,000

Startup Business Grant, Signage Enhancement Program, Business Improvement Grant

Branding - 15%

Recommended funding level = \$75,000

Downtown Monmouth Wayfinding & Signage, Civic Placemaking Grants, Downtown Event Series

OBSERVATIONS

What downtown Monmouth looks like today

Historic downtown business districts in rural communities across America have faced similar challenges in the evolution from their historical significance as central gathering places and hubs of commerce to areas lacking adequate reinvestment and those that currently require a very deliberate and coordinated strategy to reap the benefits they once produced.

After gradual shifts in consumer preferences, real estate development trends, and prolonged periods of deferred maintenance - many downtowns have been altered dramatically. The conditions seen in present day Monmouth mirror similar patterns found in communities across the nation.

The 353 Court team quickly observed that there was once a strong atmosphere of entrepreneurship exhibited in this area and that there is still a great amount of historic heritage, community pride and local culture present today.

BOUNDARIES

The central study area is noted with red lines on the following page is bordered on the north by Boston Ave., the east by 2nd St., the south by 2nd Ave., and to the west by B St. The periphery area also includes buildings and businesses that contribute to overall success of downtown Monmouth and is represented in the Business Mix section of the report.

The boundaries were selected as a way to concentrate future strategic activities. Due to the limitations of this report, observations made outside of the boundaries and pertaining to the nearby neighborhoods, and greater region are limited in scope.

HIGHLIGHTS

Despite challenging economic times nationally and locally for small businesses over the recent decade, the vested stakeholders in the historic downtown business district are very resilient and optimistic about staying in Monmouth.

During more than 35 property owner and business operator interviews, the team met with startups, long-standing businesses as well as key business stakeholders from outside the district.

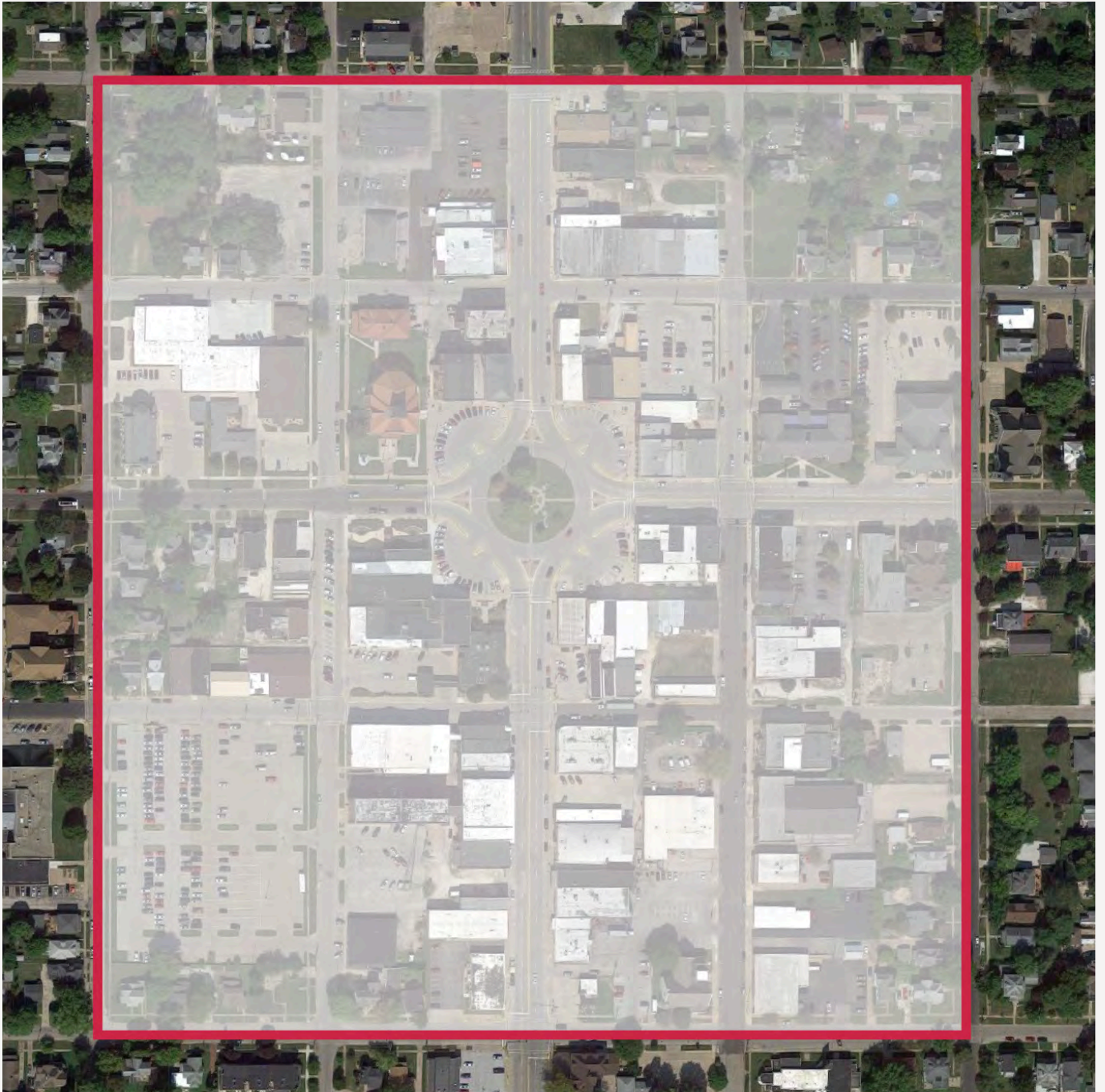
COMMON SIGHTS

The observations contained in this report were made by the team during weekly visits from May 8, 2019 through August 15, 2019, and prior site visits prior to engagement in November 2018.

The following categories are used to organize the common sights observed in the historic downtown business district:

- Buildings
- Businesses
- Branding

Boundaries





AGING EXTERIORS

Visible blight exists in many forms. The out-of-date exterior facades of numerous buildings sends signals of an area in distress.

UNMARKED STRUCTURES

A significant amount of the properties found within the study area are unmarked or otherwise unknown to general public as the purpose of the buildings.



BUILDINGS

ROOFING, STRUCTURAL, FACADE & INTERIOR CONDITIONS

Buildings are at the core of any historic downtown business district legacy. Over the recent decades, a renewed importance has been placed on revitalizing structures that have fallen into disrepair in both major metropolitan areas and rural communities of Main Street America. Without a dedication to structural preservation, many rehabilitation activities only last a short period of time and face a fragile future lacking continued reinvestment.



Through a detailed observation and analysis of the building structures, the 353 Court team has recognized that there are many areas in need of attention throughout downtown Monmouth.

A variety of these issues are highlighted within this report. An existing inventory of buildings can be found in the appendix section.

It is imperative to start by addressing the roofs, masonry, windows and doors, the interior conditions, and mechanical systems of the buildings to adequately ensure the long-term viability of the remaining buildings in downtown.

Numerous structures have noticeable issues with building envelopes - meaning that there are points of penetration for weather and animals to find their way inside of the building.

Several buildings are in need of tuckpointing and have deteriorated and peeling paint. There is roof damage witnessed from the street-level throughout downtown and will need to be remedied. Various storefronts are in need of a proper commercial glass treatment. Lastly, any windows on upper stories that are boarded up or covered are suggested to be replaced with appropriate commercial window treatments.

RESIDENTIAL TREATMENTS

The hallmark of historic business districts are their rich architectural heritage. Many residential construction treatments such as shingle roofing, vinyl siding, windows and doors take away from the character of a commercial downtown.

SIGNAGE

Seldomly have businesses utilized a formalized branding approach and signage of their storefronts. For those that do, an appropriate signs and awnings draw in visitors and passersby alike.



BUSINESSES

STOREFRONT EXPERIENCE

An often overlooked aspect of historic downtown business districts that are lacking a vibrant atmosphere is the storefront experience which shapes perception and economic behavior of an area. In the case of downtown Monmouth, numerous storefronts have windows, doors, and vinyl siding treatments intended for residential housing units as opposed to proper commercial construction.



Also of note are the several businesses with deteriorating awnings and exterior signage that is not suited for historic buildings. Where a window display exists, much of what is showcased is dated, faded or exhibits an unsanitary condition.

As a result, these factors send a mixed message to clientele and visitors which often acts as a deterrent for many would-be consumers to enter a business.

Due to these subtle intricacies, if a business does receive a patron, it will usually have to work harder to over-compensate for the first impression of experience.

The current business mix lacks a substantial clustering effect to show to customers that they can spend time strolling on the sidewalks and have interesting experiences along the way.

Well-merchandised window displays, prominently branded signage, and an enhanced exterior presence would increase the frequency and duration of shoppers to the historic downtown business district.

GATEWAYS

A good first impression is important. To signify that you have arrived in a special “place,” gateways are used to connect a brand with a geographic area. In its current state, downtown is missing the feeling that you made it to a destination.

EMPTY SEATS

While parks, parklets, and pocket parks are designed to offer greenspace in an otherwise grey area, they are challenging to activate on a frequent enough basis that they add to a street-level vibrancy.



BRANDING

AESTHETICS, IDENTITY & PROMOTION

Memorable historic downtown business districts are acknowledged for having a certain intangible “sense of place” which have a strong identity or character felt by local residents and visitors. This is an attracting force that pulls people to a specific area by using deliberate attempts to trigger sensory perceptions. These can be things like a certain aesthetic of how the buildings look, a feel or texture of the streets and sidewalk furniture, the smells of diverse restaurants, or a series of memorable sights and sounds from festivals taking place within the downtown setting.



Downtown Monmouth is absent a true identity at the moment. There are no strong daily indicators to suggest that this is a lively and vibrant place to spend a few hours or weekend.

The most notable investments in establishing a branded experience for the downtown have been made in Central Park with the fountain, roundabout, and festivals on the square. However, with limited programming it often sits underutilized.

Due to the nature of the public square and roundabout, there is a relatively low pull factor to draw you in one way or another once you are in the core of the district.

Additionally, details to command the attention to let one know that this area is special such as Market Alley, monuments, and vintage murals are placed at various intervals sparingly throughout.

Visitors to the area may not receive the full experience or may become disoriented of where points of interest are located. Although historic markers can be found, little attention is paid to wayfinding and directional signage.

Without inducing more foot traffic, this leads to less frequent visits and loss of stay power.

BUSINESS MIX

Directory Of Downtown Businesses & Surrounding

Shopping

Antiques, Gifts & Jewelry:

Maude Speckle belly's
Pallet Creations
Rhinestone Jewelry & Boutique
Treasure Trove

Clothing & Accessories:

Rossy's Dollar Plus

Groceries & Markets:

Arlette Asian-African Foods
Asian Grocery Store
Exotique Bio County Market
International
Guadalajara Grocery & Restaurant
La Pequenita Restaurant & Grocery
Save A Lot
Supermercado Cuatro Hermanos

Home & Furnishings:

Vickroy's Furniture

Music:

The Music Factory

Specialty:

Bottlery
Flowers Are Us
Market Alley Wines
MC Sports

Dining

Bakeries & Donuts:

Flourpot
La Flor de Trigo
Maple City Donuts

Bars & Nightlife:

1st Ave Lounge
Bijou Pub
Danny's Tap
Denovo Beverage of Monmouth
JB's Woodshed
Tootie's Downtown Lounge
Varsity Club

Coffeeshops:

Central Mountain Coffee

Restaurants:

Alfano's Pizzeria
El Dulce Helado
Italian Village
Maple City Restaurant
New China Buffet

Entertainment

Activities:

Maple City Tumblers

Venues:

Buchanan Center For The Arts
Fusion Theater
Rivoli Theater

Services

Accounting & Tax:

Richard Lee CPA
H&R Block

Architecture & Engineering:

Jones Surveying & Engineering

Banking, Financial, Insurance & Real Estate:

Bi-County Insurance
Country Financial
Maple City Realty
Midwest Bank
Midwest Financial Services Group
Sean Stevens
Security Savings Bank
State Farm Insurance Agent: Jon Ferguson
Stanton Insurance
Wells Fargo
Western Illinois Realty
Western Illinois Title

Barbershops, Hair Salons, Nails & Tanning:

F&A Barbershop
G Cutz Barbershop
Handsome Devil's Barbershop
Maple City Barbershop
MR Nail & Spa
B. Parlour
Rae's Place Family Hair Care
Red's Barbershop
The Salon Company
The Laws of Hair

Construction & Building Materials:

Columbia Decorating Center
Peoples Do-It Center
Pro Solutions Landscaping
Robbins Resource Management
Tinkman's Electric
Todd Construction

Funeral Home:

Turnbull Funeral Home

Healthcare:

Adam E Sandberg, DMD
Kehoe Eye Care
Maple City Chiropractic
Monmouth Chiropractic Clinic
Stephen A Johnson, DDS
Steven Murman DDS
Warren County Dental Clinic

Laundry:

Maytag Just Like Home Laundry

Legal:

Beal, Pratt & Pratt
Clark, Glasgow & McClintock
Spears & Spears
Thomas R Siegel
Whitman Law Office

Media:

Prairie Radio Communications

Pharmacy:

Axline Health Mart Pharmacy

Specialty Products & Design:

Kellog Printing
Shyvel Photography

Staffing & Recruiting:

Industrial Trade Services (ITS)

Telecommunications:

Alpha Omega Computer Sales & Service
Computer Technologies & Repair
Frontier Communications
George Harvey TV
MTC Communications

Organizations

Agencies, Service Groups & Nonprofits:

Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
Monmouth Early Learning Center
Monmouth Public Library
Pattee Foundation
Strom Senior Center

Churches

First Baptist
First Lutheran
First United Methodist
Greater Life Pentecostal
Immaculate Conception Catholic
Heritage Bible
The Crossing
Trinity Anglican

Schools

Immaculate Conception Catholic
Monmouth-Roseville High School

Government

Monmouth City Hall
Monmouth Park District
United States Postal Service
Warren County Courthouse
Warren County Health Department
Warren County Sheriff's Office & Jail

SWOT ANALYSIS

MAPLE CITY



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West

Strengths

As the county seat of Warren County, downtown Monmouth is uniquely situated on a large public square surrounded by neighborhoods to each side. Numerous assets exist through the community including; large, quality employers, a reputable college, hospital, art center, theater, library, and airport.

The vast majority of the historic building stock has been preserved and is in stable enough condition to begin necessary maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation for modern purposes. Several promising characteristics are exhibited that downtown Monmouth still has the ability to draw entrepreneurial energy are seen by the acquisition of existing businesses, expansion of a business into a vacant storefront, and presence of an emerging minority-owned small business scene.

An overwhelmingly positive response was received by the team regarding the desire to see potential redevelopment of properties in downtown and to have a stronger retail and restaurant business mix. Several upgrades to the streets and infrastructure projects are in the planning stages with strong community support. Past surveys and plans note a need for a structured parking management strategy which current space accommodates for without unnecessary demolition of tax generating structures.

Weaknesses

During the site visits, the team noticed an overall lack of vibrancy during standard business hours and in the early evening hours. This is in part due to the current business mix which contains a heavy focus of professional services with relatively few shopping, dining, and entertainment options.

In-town automobile traffic bypasses downtown using the roundabout in the public square designed to expedite the flow in either direction. The resulting behavior leads to the reduction of stops into the historic downtown business district. This means that the business community will continue to have to work harder than ever before to gain attention and attract visitors to the area. Without a real sense of place or high connectivity to key points of interest leads to people seldomly interacting with downtown. Directional wayfinding does not exist and storefront signage of destination businesses is hit or miss.

The compliance to building code, adoption, and adherence to a common set of commercial design standards has been absent. Visible blight and neglect are prevalent on each block of the surveyed area. Resources and incentives to stimulate positive results are extremely limited and inadequate to alleviate the situation. Without intervention to remedy these issues, this situation may continue to send a mixed message to property owners and also to visitors entering the district.

Stakeholder groups indicated that not much progress has been made towards reinvestment in downtown and that there is a lack of unified actions between the municipality, educational institutions, and large employers.

Opportunities

The majority of business owners surveyed indicated that even though the current market is not yielding the maximum desired results for their business, they still desire to stay in downtown Monmouth.

An increased coordination of regional activities and events with the added collaboration of key stakeholders can potentially drive more traffic to downtown while increasing the economics of existing businesses. Valuable local human capital to assist with projects, programs, and initiatives exist within the community.

Downtown living is a vital component to commercial activity. By providing an increased standard of housing variety and adding a “eyes on the street” component of security, the historic downtown business district has a chance to grow incrementally. National real estate trends documented by the National Association of Realtors indicates a strong demand for living options in compact, walkable downtown districts. There are over 40 parcels in the study which present an upper-story loft or apartment living opportunity and a true live, work, play experience.

The perception that working with the City of Monmouth in regards to redevelopment of buildings and opening businesses is currently negative. However, with a few updates to current procedures and removal of barriers at City Hall - the reputation of the local government can be seen as a collaborative partner to stimulate activity.

There was a strong desire to see the small business pitch competition come back. Many believed this to be an easy “quick win” to creating awareness around entrepreneurship. Programming this event through a partnership between the City of Monmouth, Monmouth Area Chamber of Commerce, and Monmouth College would indicate a unified approach to the public that each plays a role in development of the local economy.

Threats

The visible appearance of blighted buildings on every block in downtown Monmouth poses a threat to current economic activity as well as future efforts to attract new consumers and businesses seeking to open. Currently, approximately one half of properties within the study area are exhibiting common signs of blight.

Well-merchandised window displays and active storefronts entice passersby to enter into a business. However, when a person who is driving past or walking along the sidewalk perceives an appearance of emptiness or blight, they are less likely to engage the district.

A diverse cultural community is one of the happy surprises when entering into downtown. Without engaging and embracing the various groups in a productive manner downtown stands to lose the uniqueness that comes with each ethnicity.

The pull-factor to draw in residents and visitors to downtown Monmouth is very low. Establishing an identity of the downtown while creating quality of life opportunities may prevent further deterioration.

VACANT TO VIBRANT

What's missing?

During the discovery phase of this report, the 353 Court team concluded that although downtown Monmouth is attracting new and returning economic activity, there is significant potential to increase more attractions and amenities to distinguish it as a competitive regional destination. Below are aspects of what is currently missing and suggested additions to enhance vibrancy and promote a greater sense of place.

THIRD PLACES

Vibrant downtown environments contain a healthy mix of third places, which differ from a primary residence or secondary work place as they are more social in nature and encourage people to linger for extended durations. Existing needs in Monmouth could include a local coffee shop, artist workspace, and fresh food cafe.

ENTERTAINMENT

To provide memorable experiences in downtown, it is encouraged to have enough entertainment for residents and visitors on nights and weekends. Local examples could be a movie theater, pool hall, comedy club, and a live music venue.

INTERACTIVE SPACES

Similar to third places and entertainment uses, interactive spaces are about creating an experience beyond just a unit of consumption. As indicated throughout the survey period, there is a need for spaces that are educational and hands-on. These types of facilities would include a makerspace, collaborative working space, and a dedicated artist studio space.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Placemaking features capitalize on what already makes downtown Monmouth unique and instills community pride by using design elements to heighten the overall atmosphere. Art installations by local artists can enhance visual aesthetics of the area. Incorporating sustainable building materials such as seating to cohesively branded wayfinding signage and waste receptacles links the natural environment to the built environment.







How do you get there?

The past has left present day downtown Monmouth with a great starting point to begin revitalization efforts. As stewards of this community asset, the property owners and business operators share the responsibility to carry on the legacy to ensure its future success. Fortunately, the current elected officials and city staff have a strong desire to preserve, maintain and enhance the historic downtown business district.

Given the abundance of historic building stock, cultural heritage and eclectic mixture of small businesses, downtown Monmouth has every opportunity to strengthen its power of place

to draw in new visitors and regular recurring activity from its residents. Leveraging existing efforts, amenities and incentives will reduce redundant activities and shorten the time needed to get to the level of vibrancy in the district.

The following three categories are used to organize the recommendations for the historic downtown business district:

- **Buildings**
- **Businesses**
- **Branding**



Buildings

The issues observed in the buildings are problems that are not self-correcting. Given recent observations, more intervention is necessary in the building stabilization process.



Businesses

Existing businesses should not be overlooked during the attraction, startup, and growth conversation. Small storefront enhancements can go a long way in retention strategies.



Branding

The historic downtown business district is adorned with wonderful architecture and connects with a rich farming history. Positioning downtown to be the place of the future and point of progress is key.

Buildings



DEMONSTRATION BLOCK

Every revitalization project needs to pick a place to start. Concentrated efforts in a small one block area can make a big impact quickly. The best place to start is where the property owners are the most willing to help and site control is easier to gain. Begin with beautification activities such as cleanup, facade upgrades, and site improvements.



STABILIZE STRUCTURES

To begin to effectively address stabilizing the buildings themselves, the roof and exterior envelope must be weatherproofed. Proper sealants around exposed openings and repairs to mortar must be made simultaneously to ensure future structural integrity. Installation of commercial windows and doors are also included in this aggressive initial phase.



UPPER-STORY LIVING

As the demand for living downtown increases, set aside funding for interior improvements should be made to rapidly incentivize rehabilitation of upper-story units. Defining what work qualifies under these programs will be outlined in separate guidelines created by city staff and will also need to be in compliance with modern building standards.



FLEXIBLE RETAIL & OFFICE SPACE

In today's retail world, space that adjusts with the growth of the business is needed more than ever. By readying vacant spaces to be a "vanilla box" future tenants can open more easily than with significant remodeling. Likewise, preparing office space to be more collaborative and dynamic with an open flow floorplans makes establishing professional services more affordable than lengthy rehabilitation of buildings.



ART INSIDE & OUT

Art has the ability to draw customers to your business and heighten the overall experience in your business. Incorporating murals and sculptures on the exterior of a building adds an element of intrigue to what may be inside. Local photography and paintings hung throughout the interior builds that local story that there are many talented and creative people living in town.

Businesses



STRONG BUSINESS CULTURE

Integral to the success of any downtown is its local culture. It is important to remember that assistance, mentoring, and funding is necessary to support ongoing efforts to establish entrepreneurs, artists, and a robust small business climate. Every town requires the early-stage pioneers that are the champions to lead a sustaining revitalization.



STRATEGIC CLUSTERING

Pairing similar business types in a coordinated matter allows for a clustering effect to obtain a critical mass of certain categories: shopping, dining, entertainment, and services. Orchestrating such an undertaking to locate boutiques near boutiques or restaurants in a row allows a consumer to process what is in a downtown district making it simplified to where they wish to go next.



MAKER-FIRST MENTALITY

An attraction strategy to obtain and cultivate new business within a district is one thing, a maker-first mentality to approaching business attraction takes things to the next level. That is to say, not just a place to buy bread, but a bakery that bakes fresh bread daily and sells, delivers, and wholesales its bread. Insert other destination-based businesses such as: brewery, coffee roaster, cannery, creamery, etc.



CAFE SEATING & OUTDOOR MERCHANDISING

Draw from the sidewalk in with outdoor cafe seating and storefront merchandising. Great streets across the country have allowed their businesses to create intimate settings eating al fresco and promoting sidewalk sales. These elements increase curb appeal and soften transitions from building facade to sidewalks and parking spaces.



COORDINATED BUSINESS HOURS

Typical hours of operation are inconsistent with activating space during weeknights and weekends when visitors to the area are more likely to be present. Creating a unified schedule between retail and restaurants sets an established period when businesses are more likely to be prepared and consumers can participate.

Branding



CONSISTENT THEME

Developing a consistent look and feel is important in delivering an exceptional experience. For the highest concentration of businesses and pedestrian activity in a community, the downtown deserves a well-disciplined design aesthetic to make it a special place. A cohesive and continuous theme helps set it apart from other destinations in the minds of visitors.



STOREFRONT BEAUTIFICATION

Curb appeal is one of the best ways to increase potential visits and sales. Improving signage to include blade signs, cleaning or updating awnings, adding exterior lighting, and creating tasteful window displays are easy ways to polish a businesses storefront appearance. A well-branded and memorable business has the ability to stay with a consumer for many years.



WAYFINDING & DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Often times a community will go out of its way to say what you are not supposed to do in a downtown, however, branded wayfinding and direction signage can play more of a role to attract the behavior you desire in your downtown. Establishing an identity of place with elements such as street signs, kiosks, and gateways point people in the right direction leading to a positive economic impact.



FUN & INVITING PUBLIC SPACES

Making downtown a place where people want to stay and linger can be challenging in climates where outdoor environments are unpredictable. Public parks and plazas need to be programmed frequently in order to activate them to their highest potential. Developing fun and inviting public spaces with multiple ways to engage and interact with them in spite of the weather makes them more endearing to residents and visitors alike.



MARKET THE EXPERIENCE

A brand is a certain essence based off of perception. In most cases it is earned. Downtowns invoke certain feelings that are created in many experiences - dining at a restaurant, enjoying an event, shopping at a great boutique. Visitors to downtown are more interested in the many things to do because of the experience that they are left with. Sell the feeling of downtown. Market what makes it unique and how it is the only place to find the specific experiences they are seeking.

Downtown Monmouth

CATALYTIC SITES

A market strategy to leverage existing assets and coordinate investments into the downtown historic business district for maximum impact.

In addition to the site work and surveying that the 353 Court team has undertaken during the spring and summer of 2019, it also required analysis into previous research and reporting in order to identify catalytic site opportunities.

During the information and fact-finding phases of this report, the following documents were reviewed to gain insight and context to aid with these suggestions:

- 2013-2018 City of Monmouth TIF Audits
- Monmouth Courthouse Commercial Historic District
- 2015 Monmouth Downtown Revitalization Development Plan
- 2016 Downtown Monmouth Improvements Framework
- 2016 Primary Retail Trade Area Gap/Opportunity Analysis
- City of Monmouth Financial Incentives Programs

This section presents site-specific big picture strategies in order to realize the aspirations of the community. It is important to recognize that the physical transformation of the downtown is a long-range proposition. Several early action projects are able to be seized in the near-term that can establish a new standard.

The vetting of potential projects is reliant upon analysis, capacity, viability, and support. Therefore, in order to test future feasibility, each level of site, market, economic, and political factors will be calculated during the development phases of a project.

Given that downtown is a community space which bridges public and private uses, much consideration was made to create enhancements to heighten the sense of place described in previous sections.



Patton Block

88-90 PUBLIC SQUARE

Reinvigorating this historic asset that dates back to 1891 is more than nostalgic. The Patton Block affords three stories of a downtown opportunity to add a restaurant, offices, and collaborative workspace.



Weir Motor Co

201 N MAIN ST

Previously used as an automobile dealership with two floors of open space, a redeveloped building could serve as an events or community space. Playing off of its historical roots, a car collectors museum or antique auto sales floor would be able to utilize the raw square footage.



Vaughn Jewelers

200 S MAIN ST

A prominent location with a storied past, the Vaughn Jewelers building is currently city-owned which allows for a variety of creative uses. The second floor could be utilized as tech office space, and the main floor is best served as storefront retail.



241 S Main St

241 S MAIN ST

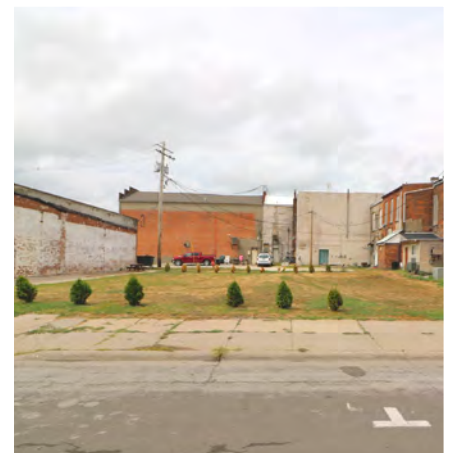
Past uses include a variety of auto service businesses. This former service station property could be adaptively reused as an art space, restaurant, fresh market, or creative professional services office space.



112 S 1st St

112 S 1ST ST

Site of a former restaurant is positioned to optimize the public space of Market Alley. Due to its size and current layout, it is best suited for restaurant uses with accessibility to greenspace adjacent.



124 S 1st St

124 S 1ST ST

Recently demolished mixed-use buildings made way for greenspace. Unprogrammed at the moment, it would be ideal to sell to new owner of 112 S 1st St. Conversion into parklet containing parking is considered with formal parking management strategy.



JC Penney

227 S MAIN ST

Recent plans for this building have included an art gallery with retail supplies and studio space. Positioned near the Fusion Theater, Rivoli Theater, and in close proximity to the Buchanan Center for the Arts, this concept would strengthen the arts-inspired community.



Rivoli Theater

219 S MAIN ST

Formerly a teeming theater and cinema hub, downtown Monmouth has one such gem left. An open floor plan suggests a variety of uses. Future plans for the site could harken the past with movies, comedy, concerts, and performing arts.



EB Colwell & Co

118 E MAIN ST

Once dubbed “the Marshall Field’s of western Illinois,” the former department store space has the potential to be a retail incubation launching pad. With its linear storefront windows, shops and artisans of all sizes could get their start and find a permanent home here.



226 S Main St

226 S MAIN ST

Two-story building adjacent to the Fusion Theater has the potential to serve as a cafe or restaurant in the future. Currently bank-owned, it has ample parking in rear and adjacent.



227 S A St

227 S A ST

The potential for this site to be a multi-faceted space for a minority-owned business center is strong. Culinary and retail entrepreneurs could test their ideas on-site while fostering a sense of community.



County Building

112 N MAIN ST

Not presently listed for sale or lease, the former City Hall building and current home to the Warren County Coroner has become relegated to storage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BUILDINGS

Recommended funding level = \$325,000

Percentage of overall budget - 65%

The issues observed in the buildings are problems that are not self-correcting. Given the recent observations, greater intervention is necessary in building stabilization. Hence going forward, there is an urgent need to develop and implement downtown design guidelines, building maintenance and repairs standards strategies.

To begin to effectively address stabilizing the buildings themselves, the roof and exterior envelope must be weatherproofed. Proper sealants around exposed openings and repairs to mortar must be made simultaneously to ensure future structural integrity. This is the first line of defense which protects any future interior improvements and solidifies investments made to individual properties. Installation of commercial windows and doors are also included in this aggressive initial phase. At minimum, any building improvements made in downtown should include commercial-grade, energy-efficient storefronts, as well as a structural assessment and necessary structural stabilization.

Improvements to the building facade which include signage, awnings and accessories should be considered secondary to shoring up the structural condition of the building. However, as it is still much needed, a program to aid merchants in improving their storefront experience will increase the sense of place recommendations in downtown branding efforts.

As the demand for upper-story living in downtown increases, a set aside matching grant for interior improvements should be made to incentivize rehabilitation of upper-story units. Defining what work qualifies under these programs will be outlined in separate guidelines created by city staff and will also need to be in compliance with new standards.

Assistance programs:

- Downtown Building Stabilization Program
- Storefront Improvement Program
- Upper Story Living Grant

BUSINESSES

Recommended funding level = \$100,000

Percentage of overall budget - 20%

The businesses that currently occupy downtown Monmouth must not be overlooked during the conversation of building stabilization programs and revitalization strategies. By working together with the stakeholders of this area, it will not only create a positive working environment, but one that has a sustainable future.

It is important to support and retain existing business as well as position downtown to attract new entrepreneurs. By taking steps to increase the capacity of individual business owners through entrepreneurial coaching, mentoring and succession planning, the district collectively becomes much stronger. Watering the seeds that are already present will ultimately help the brand of downtown Monmouth grow and connect beyond the region.

Assistance programs:

- Startup Business Grant
- Signage Enhancement Program
- Business Improvement Grant

BRANDING

Recommended funding level = \$75,000

Percentage of overall budget - 15%

Monmouth's historic downtown business district is adorned with wonderful architecture and located in a beautiful, natural setting. Telling the story of downtown Monmouth while also sharing the activities and events happening with an audience outside of the region is vital for gaining the level of attention needed to drive traffic to the local businesses and the general area.

Clearly delineating the area's attractions and amenities in a branded fashion will enhance the identity of the district as a viable place to attend. Pursuing a cooperative advertising strategy that is inclusive of the downtown is suggested in order to promote the entire area at a lower cost level building the brand.

In tandem with branded materials is the launch of placemaking efforts to enhance the district with artistic and creative touches. In addition, executing a series of events that are specifically targeted to draw people in at coordinated times throughout the upcoming months.

Assistance programs:

- Downtown Monmouth Wayfinding & Signage
- Civic Placemaking Grants
- Downtown Event Series