

Monmouth, Illinois

Downtown Report

STRATEGIES FOR A REVITALIZED BUSINESS DISTRICT



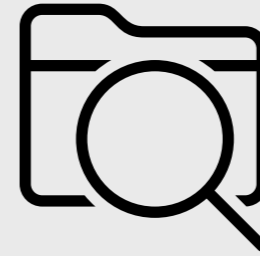
BACKGROUND

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.

OBJECTIVE

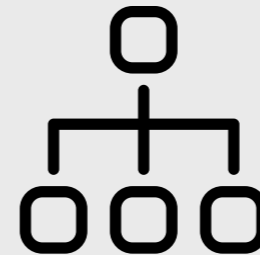
The objective of the Downtown Report is to provide the City of Monmouth with an outside analysis of observations as it relates to the building conditions, business mix, and brand essence within the historic downtown business district.

It also aims to provide City staff and community stakeholders with viable recommendations for stabilization and growth in the short term by determining what is missing, preparation that is needed to take place and how to achieve the desired level of success.



Evaluate

the current conditions of a designated territory in the downtown district.



Build

on the assets that already exist and find new ways to position downtown for success.



Develop

a series of recommendations to guide future investment strengthening downtown.

BOUNDARIES



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.

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.

OBSERVATIONS

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

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.



Buildings

ROOFING, STRUCTURAL, FACADE
& INTERIOR CONDITIONS



Businesses

STOREFRONT EXPERIENCE



Branding

AESTHETICS, IDENTITY & PROMOTION

OBSERVATIONS



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.

OBSERVATIONS



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.



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.

OBSERVATIONS



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.



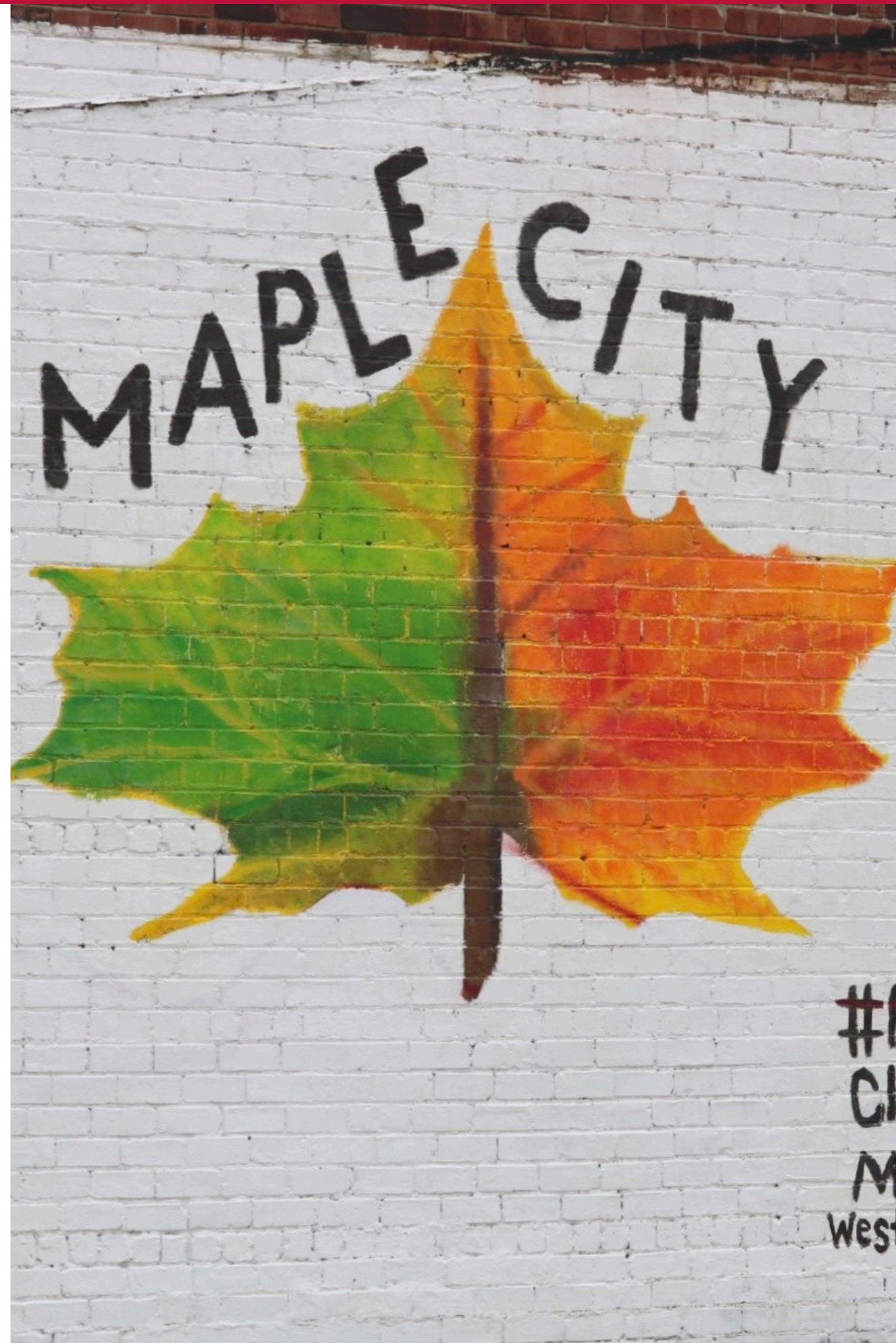
GATEWAYS

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.

SENSE OF PLACE

Memorable downtown districts are acknowledged for having a “*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 designated 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, a smell of diverse restaurants, or a set of unforgettable sounds from events taking place within the downtown setting.



BUSINESS MIX

Directory Of Downtown Businesses & Surrounding

Shopping

Antiques, Gifts & Jewelry:

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

Clothing & Accessories:

Rossey'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

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

Architecture & Engineering:

Jones Surveying & Engineering

Staffing & Recruiting:

Industrial Trade Services (ITS)

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

Legal:

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

Laundry:

Maytag Just Like Home Laundry

Media:

Prairie Radio Communications

Pharmacy:

Axline Health Mart Pharmacy

Specialty Products & Design:

Kellog Printing
Shyvel Photography

Telecommunications:

Alpha Omega Computer Sales &
Service
Computer Technology & 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

01. Strengths

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.

02. Weaknesses

Lack of vibrancy during weekday and evening hours. Absence of code compliance and design standards. Roundabout moves traffic through downtown quickly.

03. Opportunities

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.

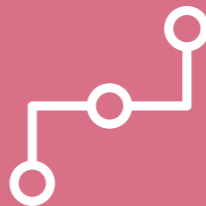
04. Threats

Approximately one half of buildings within the study area exhibit some condition of blight and are in a detrimental condition to commerce or tourism in the district.

01.



02.



03.



04.



WHAT'S MISSING?

During the discovery phase of this study, the team concluded that although downtown Monmouth is attracting new and returning economic activity, there is still a need for more attractions and amenities to distinguish it as a competitive regional destination.

These are a few aspects of what is currently missing and suggested additions to enhance the vibrancy and promote a greater sense of place.



Third Places

Coffee shop, artist workspace and fresh food cafe.



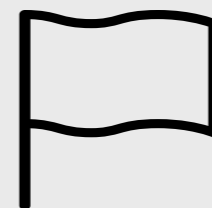
Entertainment

Movie theater, pool hall, comedy club and live music venue.



Interactive Spaces

Makerspace, media lab, collaborative working space, and a dedicated artist studio space.



Placemaking

Art installations, bike facilities, wayfinding signage, sustainable building elements.



VACANT TO VIBRANT

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 responsibility to carry on the legacy to ensure its future success. Fortunately, the city elected officials and city staff have a strong desire to preserve, maintain and enhance the historic downtown business district.



VACANT TO VIBRANT

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 reoccurring 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 downtown district: **Buildings**, **Businesses**, and **Branding**.

BUILDINGS



DEMONSTRATION BLOCK

Every revitalization project needs to pick a place to start. Concentrated efforts in a smaller one block area make a big impact quicker. 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

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.



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. Insert other destination-based businesses: brewery, coffee roaster, 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 business storefront appearance. A well-branded and memorable business has the ability to stay with a consumer for many years.



WAYFINDING & DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Branded wayfinding and directions 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. 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. Market what makes it unique and how it is the only place to find the specific experiences they are seeking.



CATALYTIC SITES

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

CATALYTIC SITES



PATTON BLOCK
88-90 PUBLIC SQUARE



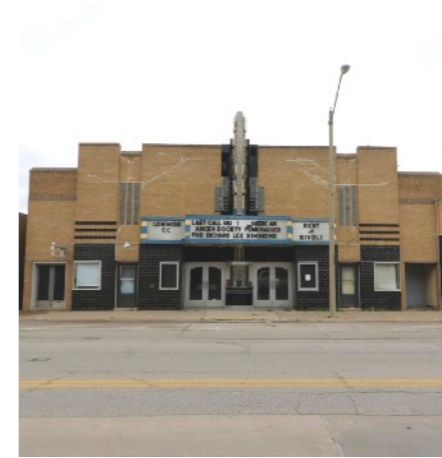
WEIR MOTOR CO
201 N MAIN ST



VAUGHN JEWELERS
200 S MAIN ST



JC PENNEY
227 S MAIN ST



RIVOLI THEATER
219 S MAIN ST



EB COLWELL & CO
118 E MAIN ST



241 S MAIN ST
241 S MAIN ST



112 S 1ST ST
112 S 1ST ST



124 S 1ST ST
124 S 1ST ST



226 S MAIN ST
226 S MAIN ST



227 S A ST
227 S A ST



COUNTY BUILDING
112 N MAIN ST

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Technical Assistance Grants, Downtown Technology Grant, Business Improvement Grant

BRANDING - 15%

Recommended funding level = \$75,000

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

CHECKLIST



2019

- Develop new building stabilization & upper-story living programs.
- Coordinate small business bootcamps & entrepreneurial workshops.
- Create downtown business assistance, storefront & micro-loan programs.
- Select block or corridor to begin demonstration projects.
- Establish a potential site as a new artist workspace, studio and/or gallery.

2020

- Facilitate redevelopment of Vaughn Jewelers to retail space.
- Recruit new businesses (*restaurant, coffee shop, pet grooming & supplies, women's boutique*).
- Host "Monmouth Market Day" event with food, craft vendors, artists, and musicians into public space.
- Re-position the Rivoli as the premier event space in downtown.
- Test a pilot retail incubation & pop-up space in EB Colwell & Co building.

2021

- Cultivate artisans to form DIY maker space.
- Begin rebranding of downtown Monmouth.
- Implement new parking management & signage strategy.
- Recruit new businesses (*specialty retail, distillery, outdoor & recreation store*).
- Enhance public realm with creative placemaking projects.

2022

- Execute "Monmouth Made" & collective marketing campaign.
- Recruit new businesses (*bookstore, children's boutique, specialty foods*).
- Work with school district to create artistic branded banners for street lights.
- Redevelop Warren County Building into a destination small business.
- Develop minority-owned small business incubation center.

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