

A street scene in Long Prairie, Minnesota, featuring a clock tower, a red pickup truck, and a helicopter on display. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter. The title text is in a light blue color.

LONG PRAIRIE'S DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN

THE BLUEPRINT FOR FUTURE GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE DOWNTOWN FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS.

ADOPTED JUNE 2018

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PRESENT AND PAST COMMISSIONERS OF EDA

Bryan Haugen - President
Jon Kringen - Vice President
Heather Luebesmier - Secretary
Lilah Gripne - City Council, Commissioner
Don Rasmussen - Mayor, City Council, Commissioner
Joel Anderson - Commissioner
Trevor Zastrow - Commissioner
Allan Ulbricht – past Commissioner
Dennis Breitenfeldt – past Commissioner

CITY STAFF

Brenda Thomes - Long Prairie City Administrator, LPEDA Treasurer
Don Rasmussen - Mayor, City Council
Lilah Gripne - City Council
Tony Towle - City Council
Devin Hines - City Council
Randy Mechels - City Council
James Ruiz - past City Council

PROJECT LEAD

Stephen Miller

COUNTY STAFF

Rick Utech - Executive Director, Todd County Development Corporation

STEERING COMMITTEE

Phillip Gould
Bob Klick
Sherry Kutter
Jaime Villalez
Jeremy Weber
Sara Weber
Dave Freeman
Jackie Och
Luan Thomas-Brunkhorst
Jose Garcia Hernandez

SOURCEWELL

Planning and Zoning Team

Executive Summary

The Downtown Vision Plan will serve as the blueprint for future growth and economic development within the downtown over the next 10 years. The Vision Plan represents the next stage of the city's ongoing interest and efforts to revitalize Downtown Long Prairie. **This plan will provide a framework for future decision-making for elected officials, various boards and commission, city staff, and residents.** Past planning efforts identified the need to redefine Central Avenue as a destination for retail and entertainment and identified the challenge that the downtown is hidden and unenticing, as it sits adjacent to Highway 71. Past planning efforts suggested infill development and gateway concepts and encouraged improved walkability and downtown housing. This vision seeks to provide overall direction for redevelopment efforts in the downtown and identifies implementation measures to guide the city's actions regarding public improvement, investment, regulatory and programmatic tools. The recommendations contained within the Vision Plan will influence the formation and evolution of future program development, and serve as the guiding document for future project initiatives and improvements to strive to make Downtown Long Prairie a dynamic district within the heart of Long Prairie and Todd County.

This Vision Plan was created using a three-tiered approach. Background data and existing conditions were compiled, an assessment of the downtown characteristics was completed, and community outreach helped the team determine the appropriate direction for goals, policy, and implementation strategy development.

Simultaneously, a retail trade analysis was conducted by the University of Minnesota Extension office.

Study Area

The Downtown Vision Plan studies a 10-block area. This study area was defined by the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and sits within the Downtown District, as noted on the city's land use plan. The study area is nestled along First Avenue North/Highway 27 and Lake Street/Highway 71, from 1st Avenue North to 1st Avenue South and then stretching east to Todd Street. As noted, the downtown district encompasses a much larger area, extending further south to 2nd Avenue South. For reference, this boundary is noted on all maps throughout the plan.



Our Vision|

“A downtown that is continuously evolving to serve a growing and diverse community.”

INTRODUCTION

A photograph of a brick building with a covered walkway featuring arches and columns. The word "INTRODUCTION" is overlaid in large, light blue, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image. The building has a classic architectural style with a series of arches supported by columns. The walkway is enclosed by a dark metal railing. The overall scene is captured in a slightly desaturated, blue-tinted color palette.

Introduction

The City of Long Prairie, which was named after the river flowing through the city, is located in central Minnesota. Long Prairie has a population of 3,497 and is the county seat for Todd County. The city is located at the junctions of US Highway 71, TH 287 and TH 27 with Long Prairie's downtown corridor located just off well-traveled highways. For the purposes of this scope of work, the downtown study area is generally comprised of 10 blocks and defined as Highway 71 from First Avenue North/Highway 27 to First Avenue South, between Todd Street and Lake Street/Highway 71.

Seeing the gradual closing of businesses and buildings exteriors becoming more stressed, the city began looking for a new tool to assist with the revitalization and vibrancy of downtown. A project of this magnitude requires a great degree of planning and public involvement, so the city contracted with the National Joint Powers Alliance (NJPA) to help coordinate the plan. Working with project staff, the city looked to organize a committee to bring local expertise and experiences together.

The desired conditions section describes the long-term outcomes identified by project participants and desired aspirations for the future. A series of guiding principles, a visioning statement, goals, and policies were formed to articulate the vision.

Guiding Principles: broad concepts that guide the decision-making regarding development, redevelopment, public investment, and program development in the downtown.

Vision Statement: a phrase or sentence that described the general desired outcome for the study area for the next 10 years.

Goals: general statement that describes facets of the vision statement. These goals can be directed towards physical or social aspects of the study area, geographic areas or toward community members and stakeholders.

Policies: describes actions made to achieve the goal and identify steps towards completion.

Steering Committee

The steering committee was comprised of 12 members representing the local business community, citizens at large, local government, and other various Commission members within the City. The role of the steering committee is to build consensus and support regarding the various topics, approaches, and policies outlined in the downtown vision plan project.

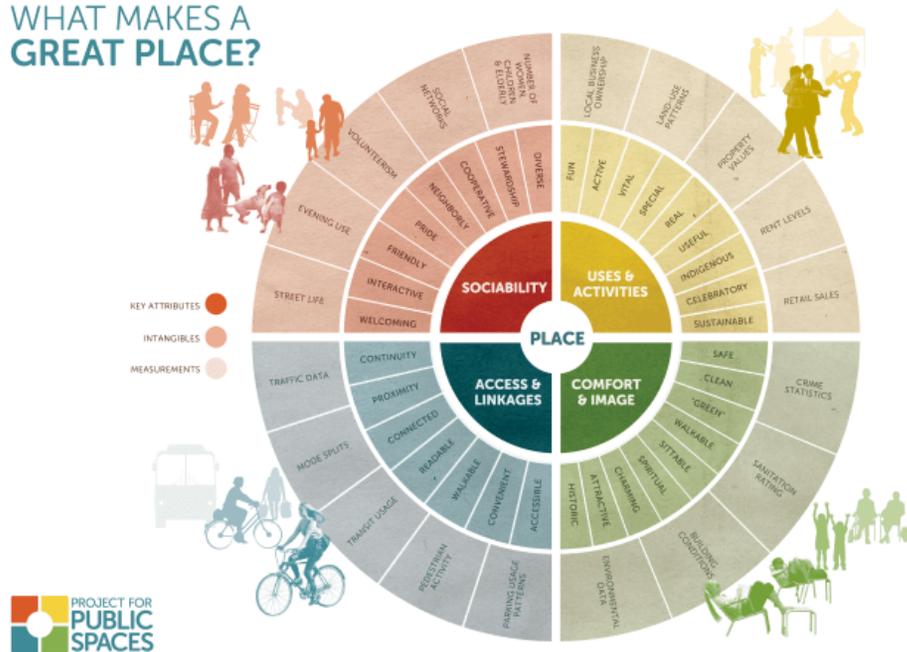
Initially, the committee participated in a number of exploratory exercises, such as mapping successful and underperforming areas and touring the downtown area. The steering committee participated in the development and deployment of a community survey and public listening session, and evaluated the feedback from each forum. Finally, the committee developed goals, policies, and implementation strategies for the vision plan. A series of leading themes was identified from community participation and formed the basis of the planning efforts.

Purpose

The plan will provide a framework for future decision-making. The goals, policies, and standards will provide an overall direction to be followed and will be used to drive investments and redevelopment efforts in the downtown. Specific implementation measures will be developed to guide the City's actions regarding public improvements, investment, and redevelopment efforts over the next 15-year horizon.

The goal of this project is to develop a plan for revitalizing the downtown through targeted development initiatives, economic development programs, and other special programs that will encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings and new infill development, as well as new business development.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



is comfortable and has a good image; and 4) it is a sociable place, one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit. (pps.org).

Placemaking is a simple concept that seeks to create great places – the types of places that residents and visitors use, seek, and interact with on a daily basis. These places can be used for celebrations, for the arts, for connecting people and interaction, for cultural experiences and the generality of an enjoyable sense of place. Places that attract and create opportunities for social interaction also create opportunities for economic activity. The Project for Public Spaces outlines 11 elements that are key to transforming public spaces into vibrant community places, whether that be parks, plazas, public squares, streets, sidewalks, or a consortium of outdoor spaces that have public uses in common.

1. The community is the expert.
2. Create a place, not a design.
3. Look for partners.
4. You can see a lot just by observing.
5. Have a vision.
6. Start with petunias: lighter, quicker, cheaper.
7. Triangulate.
8. They always say, “It can’t be done!”
9. Form supports function.
10. Money is not the issue.
11. You are never finished.

The recommendations contained within this plan will influence the formation and evolution of these programs, and serve as the guiding document for future project initiatives and improvements to be undertaken within the downtown.

The plan will act as a guide for future land use and development decisions as well as assist the city with strategic investment in the planning area. Recommendations provided address specific and detailed short-, mid-, and long-term projects and programs designed to implement the plan’s recommendations and associated funding strategies. Associated funding strategies, including the utilization of available state and federal economic development programs and grants, are included in the plan.

Guiding Document Resources

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, the Project for Public Spaces has found that to be successful, they generally share the following four qualities: 1) they are accessible 2) people are engaged in activities there 3) the space

In addition to the key elements for transforming a public space, the Project for Public Space provides 10 ways to strength the social fabric of the community and how to jump-start economic development by creating and sustaining healthy places.

1. Improve streets as places.
2. Create squares and parks as multi-use destinations.
3. Building local economies through markets.
4. Design buildings to support places.
5. Link a public health agenda to a public space agenda.
6. Reinvent community planning.
7. Utilize the Power of 10.
8. Create a comprehensive public space agenda.
9. Start small and experiment, using a “lighter, quicker, cheaper” approach.
10. Restructure government to support public spaces.

Throughout the document, elements of the above placemaking fundamentals are referenced. The concept of placemaking holds an identifiable role in the goals and policies.

Key Elements of Downtown Revitalization

There are slightly different meanings to “revitalization” and “redevelopment.” For the purposes of this report, downtown revitalization and downtown redevelopment will be used interchangeably.

Revitalization implies bringing back to life a downtown neighborhood that has faded in its importance. This practice typically involves aesthetic improvements and rebuilding blighted sites and refurbishing obsolete and dysfunctional buildings into new uses. A façade improvement, for example, gives new life to an old and unappealing building. A downtown streetscaping project brings life to the downtown by making it walkable and thus increasing the foot traffic in the area.

Redevelopment is the act of improving the functionality of a building, a site, or an entire neighborhood. A historic building may be remodeled from its original residential use into a commercial and residential property.

Past Planning Efforts

The Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2016 and provided some guiding language for downtown redevelopment efforts. The Comprehensive Plan includes the following goals and policies to support this effort:

Land Use Goal #1

- › Encourage the best possible use of existing sites within the City. When a plan is presented and commercial and industrial needs cannot be met within the City limits, the City shall contact Long Prairie Township to cooperatively pursue annexation.

Continued growth in the downtown area:

Transportation Goal #3

- › Assist the downtown area in planning and providing off-street parking.
- › Examine the possibility of expanding downtown surface parking facilities to ensure the highest possible utilization.
- › Work with downtown businesses to encourage greater utilization of existing off-street parking sites.

Economic/Community Development Goal #1

- › Maintain the Long Prairie Downtown/Highway 71 Business District as the center of commercial activity and social interaction. Improve the links between the downtown area and Highway 71 to give travelers further opportunities to visit the downtown businesses.

Economic/Community Development Goal #2

- › Support downtown landowners to continue to improve building conditions, facades, and the general appearance of the downtown commercial area.

Community Input

A community survey was available for participation during July and August. **Two hundred fourteen** survey responses were collected, and a common set of themes emerged. An open house was deployed in October to collect additional input, which was attended by around 40 members of the community. Feedback from the community serves as the foundation of this plan and directed the steering committee's development of the goals, policies, and implementation strategies. From these two sources the committee was able to develop a series of leading themes:

VITALITY & VARIETY

Survey respondents support a coordinated effort to ensure that downtown Long Prairie offers its residents, business owners, and visitors a unique, pedestrian experience that makes Long Prairie a destination in central Minnesota. Providing a variety of restaurants, services businesses, and shopping options was among the largest categorized "needs" by survey respondents. Respondents back a concerted effort to craft a brand that identifies Long Prairie from its peer cities and within the region and state.

VIBRANT STOREFRONTS

Respondents support a coordinated effort to improve the numerous vacant storefronts. The improvement of facades could offer a unique pedestrian experience, add vibrancy to the streetscape, and welcome visitors to the downtown core.

PRESERVATION

A cherished asset of the downtown is its unique architecture. Programming and grants could be offered to assist in the preservation of historic structures in downtown. Respondents believe that the historic building architecture is an asset that makes Long Prairie a unique destination.

DIVERSITY

An asset of the downtown core is the diverse offerings of retail, services, and restaurants. The diversity among downtown restaurants and cuisine can be utilized to leverage tourist spending and downtown visits. Additionally, an ethnic food and cultural center can increase the capture of visitor, worker, resident, and family spending.

COLLABORATION

Respondents urge residents, businesses owners, elected and appointed officials, and city staff on the importance of collaboration and the important role it plays in supporting our local businesses and revitalization efforts. Business owners are looking for support from Long Prairie residents and understand that importance of a "buy local" campaign.

ATTRACTIONS & GATHERING SPACES

Long Prairie boasts its variety of historical buildings, museums, and Veteran's Memorial. Survey respondents support a collaborative effort to develop a town square, or central gathering space where community (and pop-up events) celebrations can occur year-round.

RECRUIT NEW BUSINESSES

Community members support efforts to expand service businesses, retail and restaurants and recruit new opportunities to the downtown. A diverse economy provides a wide range of investment opportunities.

ACTIVE LIVING

Parks, open spaces, and trails contribute to a high quality of life for residents. Respondents support efforts to expand and develop opportunities to encourage active lifestyles in the downtown. Healthy food options, farmers' markets, open spaces, trails, and pedestrian networks are ways to add to improve the quality of life for Long Prairie residents and visitors alike.

^^ Above: The leading theme were formed through survey responses and open house feedback.

>> Right: A series of interactive "comment bubbles" where created in an effort to entice engagement and capture the three study areas through the lens of the 1) visitor and patron 2) resident and 3) business owner.

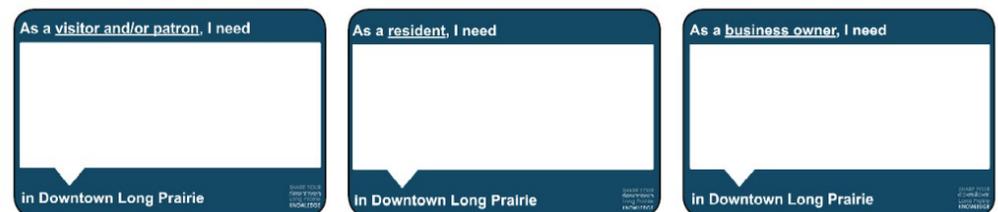
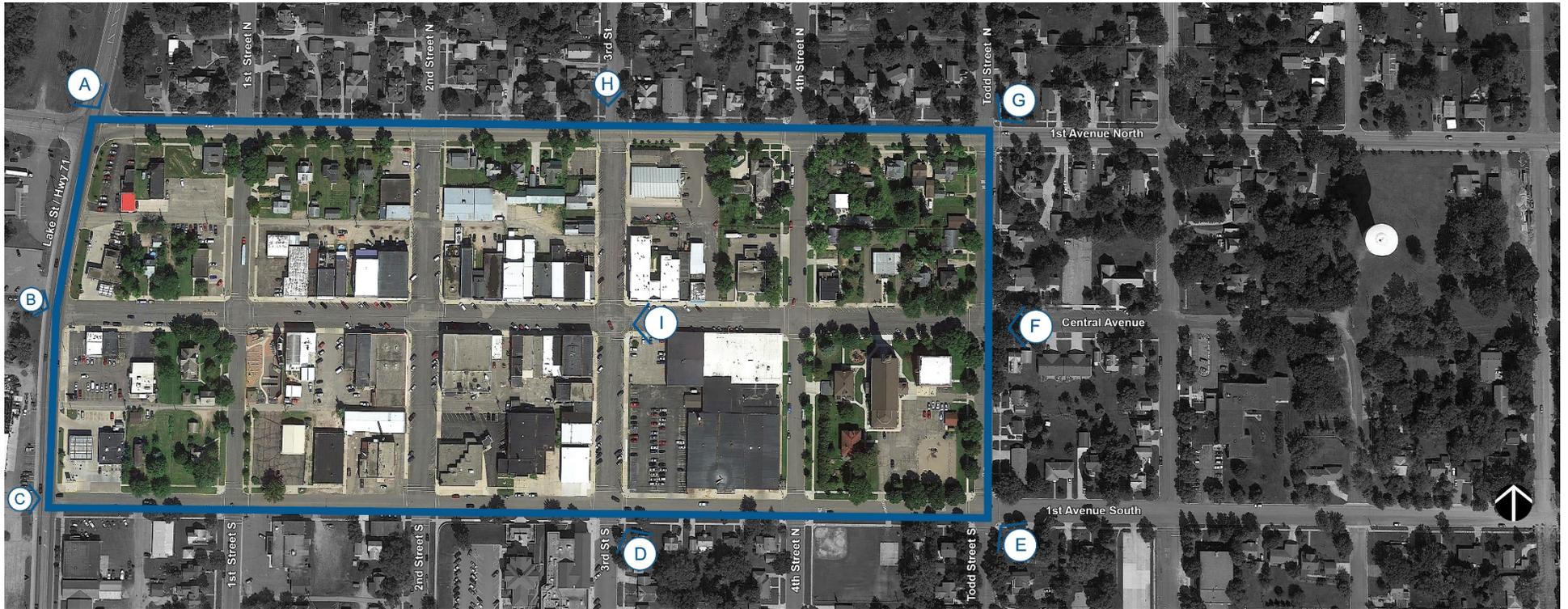


PHOTO INVENTORY



DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN - VICINITY MAP



[EXISTING] CONDITIONS



Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions

This chapter provides a brief overview of downtown Long Prairie's current conditions, opportunities, and constraints.

Downtown Location and Context

Long Prairie is the county seat in Todd County and is home to just over 3,400 residents (ACS 2014, Long Prairie Comprehensive Plan). The City of Long Prairie has experienced a slight decrease in population since 2010 as Todd County experienced a similar trend. US Highway 71 passes through Long Prairie, directly adjacent to the downtown district and serves as a major corridor. Improvements to the highway have recently been completed. Expanded commercial business and professional offices have developed along the corridor in recent years, providing travelers easy access to fuel and food options. Highway 27 and US Highway 71 intersect adjacent to downtown Long Prairie. These two highways serve as regional connectors and should be seen as significant assets as these corridors bring customers into the community.

The downtown is developed around Central Avenue, the backbone of Downtown Long Prairie. The downtown study area encompasses ten city blocks. However, the Downtown District boundary on the city's Land Use Plan illustrates a different boundary from what is considered the "area of study." For this reason, the land use designation boundary has been illustrated on all subsequent downtown maps. Included within these blocks is a mix of traditional two-story commercial structure, mid-century single- and two-story commercial structures and single-family residential.

Major landmarks in the downtown study area include the post office, St. Mary's Church, the Christie House, and the Veteran's Memorial. Directly adjacent to the study area is the historical Todd County Courthouse.

^^ Above: The leading themes were formed through survey responses and open house feedback.

>> Right: A series of interactive "comment bubbles" were created in an effort to entice engagement and capture the three study areas through the lens of the 1) visitor and patron 2) resident and 3) business owner.

As noted, the principle and minor arterials should be considered a significant asset to the community; however, they do pose a hurdle for residents and visitors who are interested in accessing downtown's amenities. These highway thoroughfares have created unintended boundaries and hurdles for residents to access the downtown from the north and from the west.

The development character of the downtown core, specifically Central Avenue, is lined with commercial storefronts in traditional buildings. Various surface lots exist within the downtown study area with the majority located along the Third Street corridor. Central Avenue has retained a number of unique historic buildings that are clustered at the intersection of Central Avenue and Third Street, which are both a commercial building with traditional architecture, as well as a residential complex in a historic building.

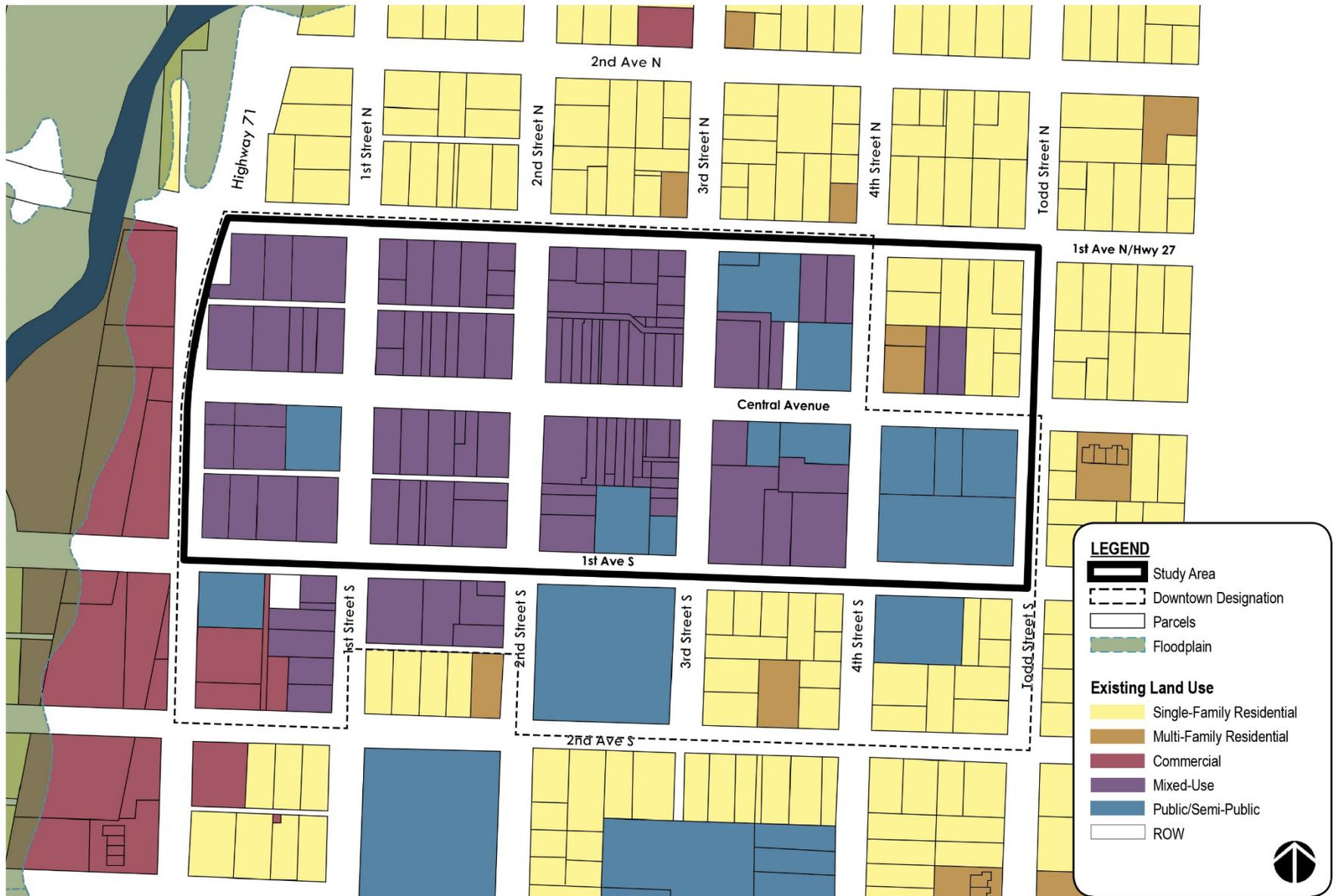
There is a substantial number of vacant storefronts and buildings, particularly in the historic buildings. These empty storefronts in such iconic buildings represent a vast opportunity missed for downtown revitalization.

There are a number of vacant sites in the downtown core, as well as the downtown edges. These vacant sites, as well as underutilized sites, can provide valuable opportunities for the city to attract, guide, and support redevelopment projects that will strengthen downtown as a cultural, civic, commercial, and recreational center for the community.

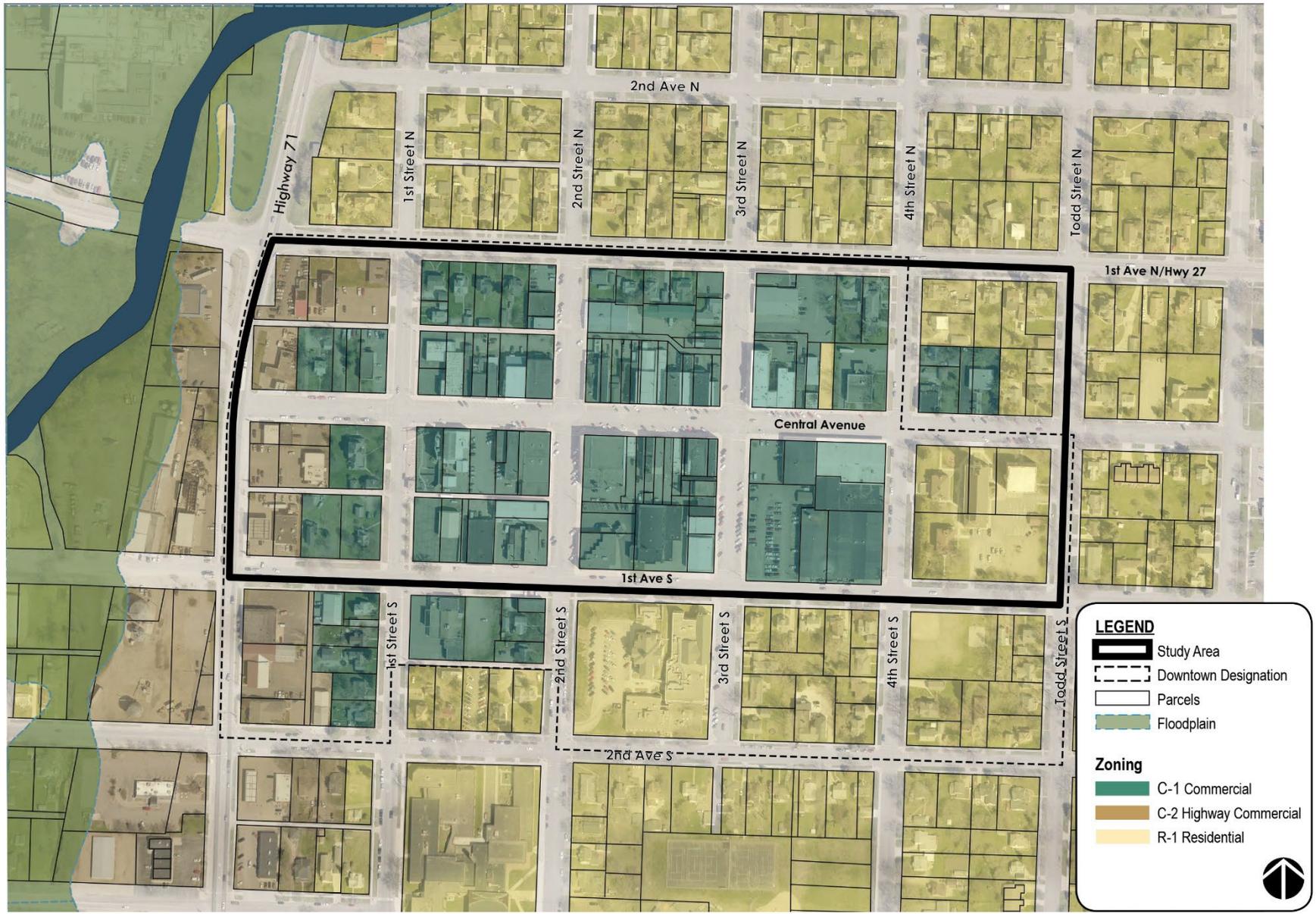
Commitments to keeping the downtown as the civic and culture center for the community is evident through the various civic assets, including the city library, post office, adjacent school district and Todd County Courthouse.



EXISTING LAND USE



EXISTING ZONING



PARCEL OWNERSHIP



LEGEND

- Study Area
- Downtown Designation
- Parcels
- Floodplain

Existing Land Use

- City of Long Prairie
- Long Prairie Housing Assoc.
- Post Office
- Todd County
- School District

DOWNTOWN PARKING ANALYSIS



SIDEWALK NETWORK AND PARK/OPEN SPACE STUDY



Current Land Uses

The downtown study area currently contains a diverse mix of land uses including commercial, public/semi-public, multi-family residential, and single-family residential. There are vacant properties scattered throughout the study area. The commercial land uses include traditional downtown retail, service, and office uses in the downtown core.

Land Use Conflicts

Although land uses within the downtown are largely compatible with one another, the existence of commercial land abutting single-family residential properties creates the potential for conflict. Ideally, intensity of commercial uses should transition from more intensive uses with a higher traffic demand to lower intensity uses adjacent to residential areas. For example, these transition areas could include professional office or service uses and multi-family properties. These uses typically have hours of operation and traffic that do not interfere with single-family residential uses.

Zoning and Historic Properties

The map illustrates the current zoning district designations within the downtown study area. The primary zoning districts are C-1 (Commercial) and R-1 (Residential).

The City of Long Prairie is home to various noteworthy historical landmarks. Landmarks can be described as man-made buildings and structures that reflect the culture, history, and significant architecture of the area and its people. The following historical buildings are located on the National Register of Historic Places:

Todd County Courthouse: This architecturally significant structure was built in 1893. It is located at 215 First Avenue South. The Todd County Courthouse is a historic place of government and politics in the City of Long Prairie and Todd County.

Reichert Building/Reichert Hotel: Built in 1902-03, this building is located at 20 Third Street North. This building is historic as a location for commerce activities in Todd County.

Long Prairie Downtown Vision Plan

Long Prairie is home to other historically significant structures. Though not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Christie House is another historic landmark located within the city. This Queen Anne-style house has both colonial and Victorian elements. The interior is decorated in the arts and crafts style and includes many antique furnishings. The home is open for tours and is located at the corner of Central Avenue and First Street South.

Public Property Ownership

Public/semi-public property within the downtown study area includes the City of Long Prairie, Todd County Historical Museum, Long Prairie Housing Association, Todd County, United States of America, and ISD 2753.

Pedestrian Networks

The majority of the streets in the study area have sidewalks. There are currently no multi-use trails or bike lanes throughout the study area. Various green and open spaces exist directly adjacent to the study area. Connections should be sought to join residents and visitors to area open space.

Public Parking

The *downtown parking analysis* map illustrates existing on-street and off-street parking throughout the downtown study area. All streets within the study area provide on-street parking. Angled parking is provided along the majority of Central Avenue, as well as additional angled parking opportunities on the east side of the study area. Off-street public parking lots exist adjacent to the Todd County Courthouse and the library.



Long Prairie Retail Trade Performance

As a part of the Downtown Vision Plan the city of Long Prairie worked with the University of Minnesota Extension to complete a Retail Trade Analysis. The following is a summary of components of the report. The 2015 sales tax data found within the report was pulled from the Minnesota Department of Revenue in an effort to measure the current retail health of Todd County and Long Prairie. Due to data constraints, only a full analysis of Todd County was available but only limited analysis for Long Prairie.

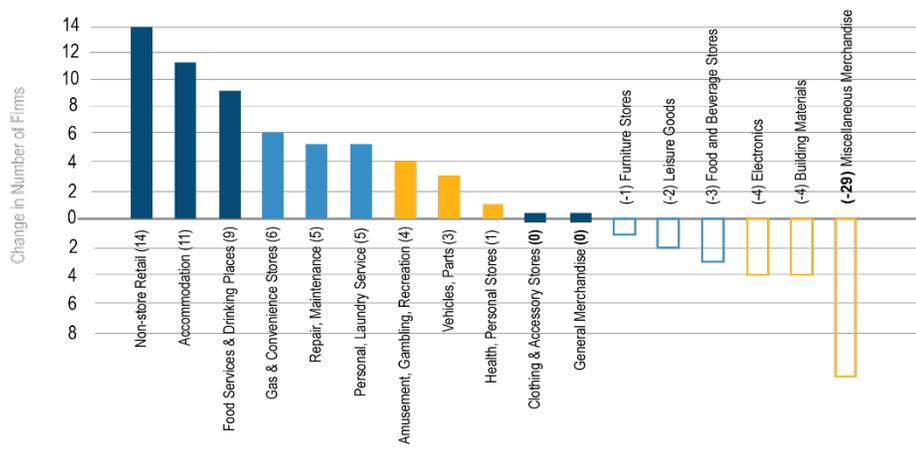
Location

Long Prairie sits between the regional economic hubs of Alexandria, Brainerd and St. Cloud as well as smaller regional centers like Wadena and little Falls. Retail and serve sales are lost to these areas.

The city's retail establishments account for slightly less than a third of all Todd County retail firms. Agriculture is a prominent factor in Todd County's

Change in No. of Businesses in Todd Co. by Category (2003 - 2015)

Long Prairie Retail Trade Analysis, 2018



¹ Long Prairie Retail Trade Analysis, 2018, Minnesota Extension Service, Page 4.

economy, “both in terms of straight-forward commodity production and adding value via processing to different ag commodities; this focus can also be seen in the city’s economic activities.¹”

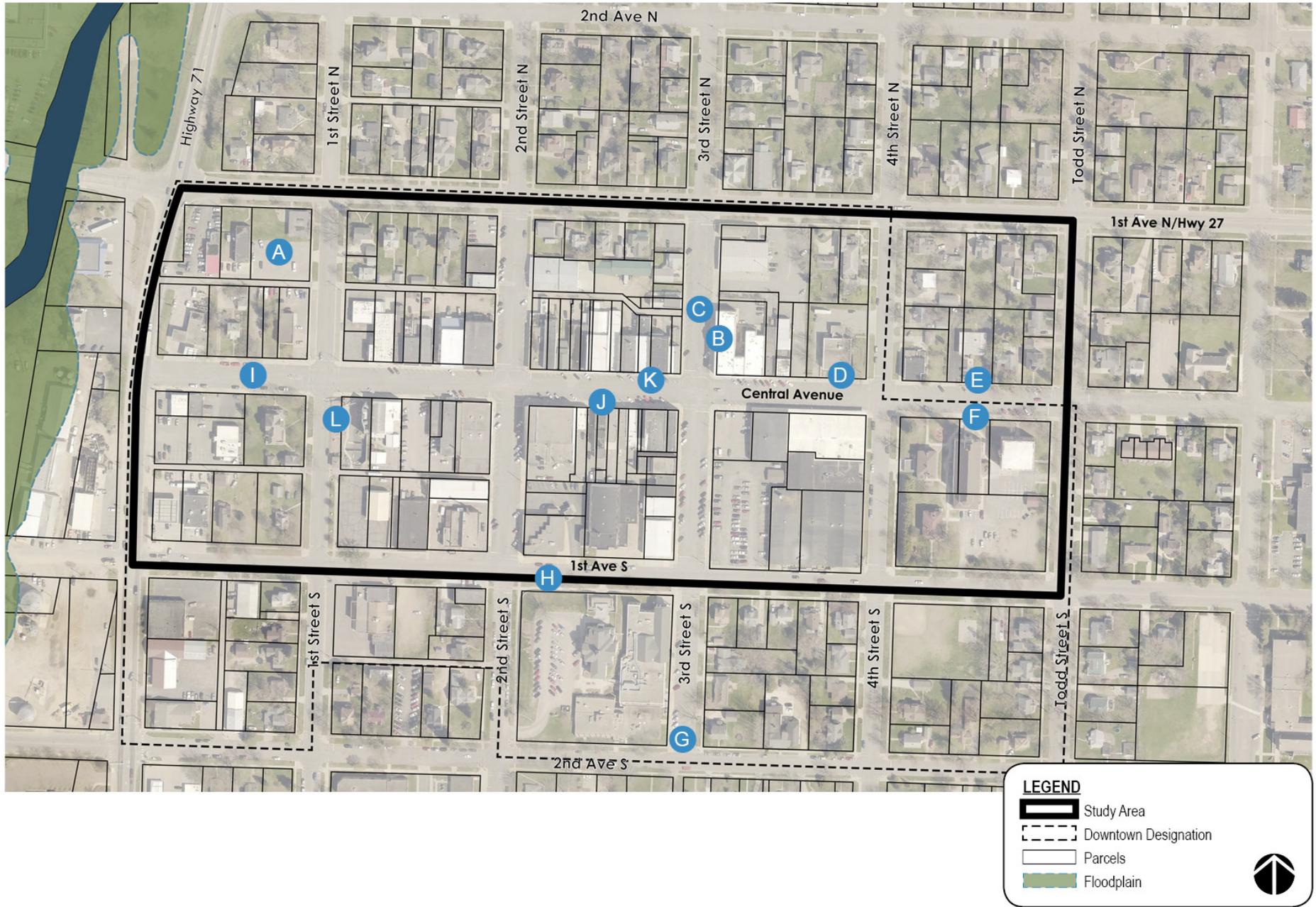
Between the years 2003 and 2015, retail and service businesses in Todd County saw an increase in the number of firms from 449 in 2003 to 500 in 2015. The year 2010 had the highest number of firms with 547. In a county where farming and manufacturing are strong, Todd County has the foundation to grow its retail and service sectors. *Retail and Service* industries accounted for eleven percent of all wages, employ twenty-four percent of the total workforce and represent thirty-eight percent of all businesses in the county.²

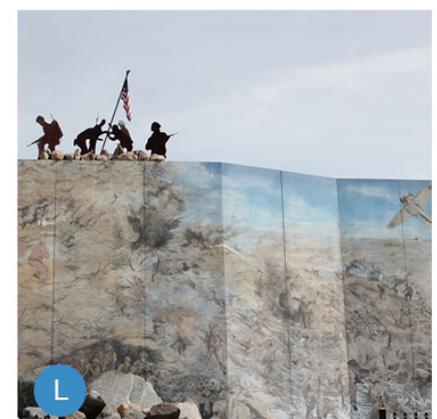
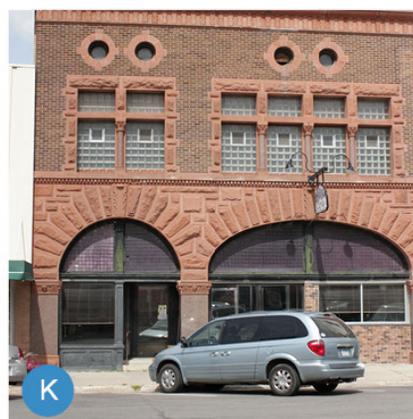
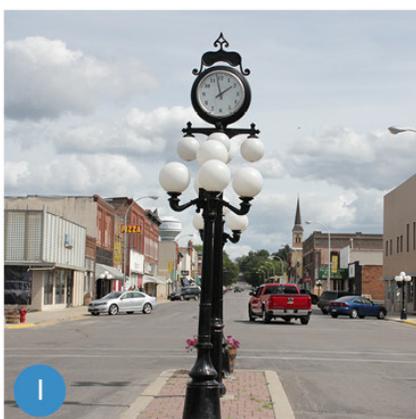
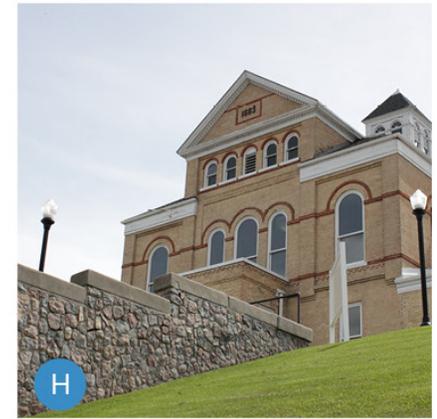
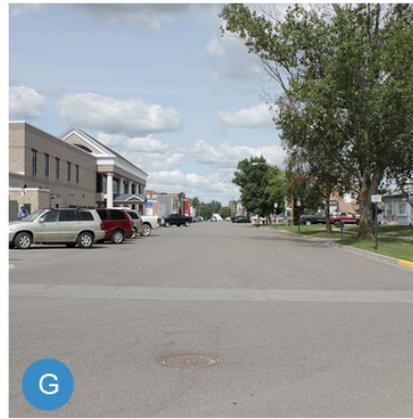
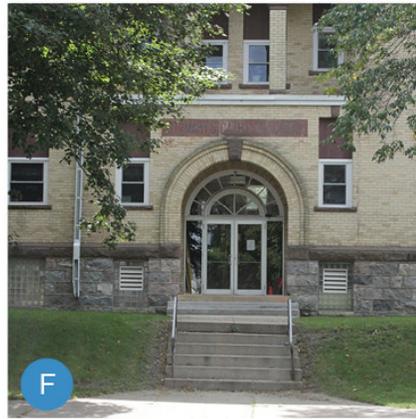
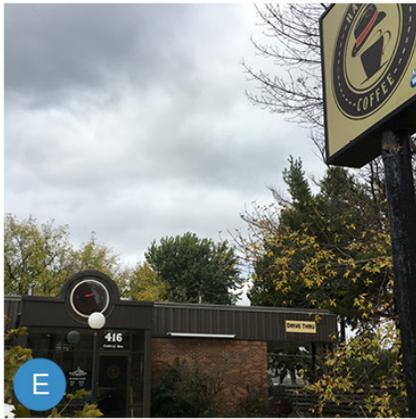
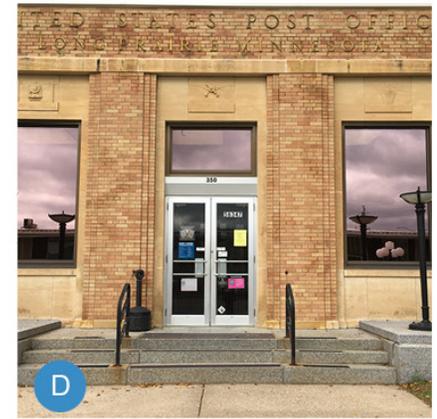
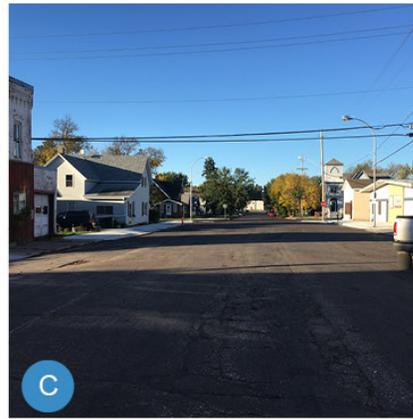
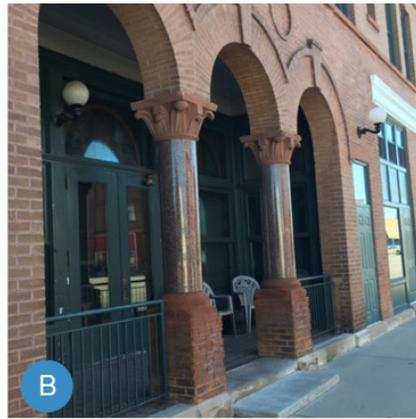
The trade analysis outlines that opportunities exist to better improve retail and services. It’s recommended that Long Prairie leaders consider the following:

- 1 Explore potential business opportunities highlighted by pull factor and surplus/leakage measurement.
- 2 Differentiate the Long Prairie and Todd County retail mix development in contrast with surrounding counties.
- 3 Identify local retail sales opportunities through comparison with outside-of-county prices, convenience, travel, and other factors.
- 4 Develop retail and service businesses might build on the county's strengths in agriculture, manufacturing, and educational services.

² US Census Bureau, 2015 County Business Patterns

PHOTO INVENTORY





Issues and Opportunities Analysis

The following downtown issues and opportunities were identified by the project steering committee, city staff, and select appointed officials. These issues and opportunities were identified early in the project process in an effort to provide guidance for the exploration and creation of leading themes, and goals and policy development.

A SWOT analysis (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) was conducted at steering committee meeting #1. Their responses are as follows:

TABLE 1 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

Downtown Built Environment

Buildings/structures, land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure

Strengths and Opportunities	Empty storefront	Rehabilitation
	Housing	Service-oriented businesses
	Existing spaces	Ethnic food and restaurants
	Age of buildings	Veteran's memorial
	Christie House	Church
	Old paint store	Post office
	Historical buildings	Investment opportunities
	Store hours	Revitalization
	History and story	Prices of buildings
	Wellness initiatives	Downtown housing
	Opera house	First National Bank
	Furniture store	Reichert Building
	1930s-style architecture	Hospital

Weaknesses/Threats	Parking	No town square or gathering spaces
	Signage	Old structures
	Emptiness and vacancies	Soil contamination
	Negativity/nay-sayers	Culture clash
	Apathy	Street condition (32 years old)
	Highway 71	Green space
	Seating/gathering areas	Sidewalks
	Walkability	Building age
	Street lamps and lighting	Big box stores and online shopping
	Limited support for historical presence	Housing
	Business hours	Low number of customers

TABLE 2 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

Overall Downtown Study Area

Open space, programming, urban design, form, arts and culture, multi-modal transportation, circulation, marketing, recruitment, etc.)

Strengths/Opportunities	Farmer's market	Promotion of agriculture
	Diversity	Community events (MS Bike, County Fair, Prairie Days)
	Collaboration	Bus/transit
	Amish products	Increasing tourism
	Partnerships (Chamber)	Hours of operation
	County service clients	Arts center location
	Todd County Museum	Rehabilitation opportunities
	Christie House	Existing businesses outside study area
	Veteran's memorial	Church
	Cinco de Mayo	Downtown charm

Weaknesses/Threats	Presence of people (vacant and quiet)	Colors/aesthetics
	Art/murals	Contamination
	Negativity and animosity (3)	Nay-sayers
	Money available (general)	Funding availability
	Project improvement needs	Housing

[CASE] STUDIES



STEWARTVILLE, MINNESOTA

POPULATION: 6,189

STRATEGIES: Façade Improvement Program

Stewartville's Economic Development Authority (EDA) was established to attract, promote, and develop an economically sound future for the community. The EDA provides ideas, information, venture capital, financial packaging, and expertise in business development and retention, focusing on projects that aim to make Stewartville a better place to live, work, and do business. In keeping with the above stated objectives, the EDA established a façade improvement program with the intent to enhance and improve the visual aesthetics of the community. This program was designed to encourage owners to restore existing properties and enhance the general character of the property. The program has two parts, part I is a forgivable loan up to \$7,500 per building, with dollar-for-dollar match requirement. Part II is a revolving loan available for projects over \$15,000 at zero percent APR; fund limit and term determined on a per project basis. Participation in part-one satisfies owner equity requirements of the loan program. Eligible projects include:

- Rehab/replacement of exterior windows visible from public areas that enhance the character of the building.
- Rehab/replacement of exterior doors visible from public areas that enhance the character of the building.
- Replacement of missing decorative building features.
- Rehabilitation or replacement of historic rooflines (such as corbels, parapets or other decorative or historic features of materials consistent with the historic nature of the building).
- Rehabilitation or replacement of roof covering materials if visible from public areas and decorative or historic in nature.
- Historic preservation-related items that require specialized care or expertise such as tuckpointing and cleaning.



- Removal of non-historic materials or additions to otherwise historic buildings.
- Awnings with either historic qualities or that add to the character of the building.
- Signage.
- Ancillary decorative lighting.
- Screening of unsightly features such as utility connections, dumpsters, etc.
- Other permanent, fixed, above ground decorative features that enhance the visual aesthetics of the City.

NEW LONDON AND SPICER, MINNESOTA

New London, Minnesota

POPULATION: 1,376

Spicer, Minnesota

POPULATION: 1,198

STRATEGIES: Business Retention and Expansion

The New London-Spicer Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) Program was a comprehensive and coordinated community approach to assisting existing businesses by visiting local businesses and learning their concerns. The BR&E program built awareness of issues that face businesses and builds capacity for the community to address these issues. The program also assisted local leaders and community members in working together to provide solutions to business concerns.

The New London-Spicer BR&E Program has six objectives:

- To demonstrate support for local businesses
- To help solve immediate business concerns
- To increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy
- To establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development
- To build community capacity to sustain growth and development
- To develop and foster a relationship with existing businesses

Participants in the New London-Spicer BR&E Program visited 61 businesses. Visits were conducted from July to August 2014. Each Community's EDA reviewed, and selected businesses based on knowledge of business longevity, new, and expansion. Businesses were selected from within the city and township areas, being mindful of keeping selection numbers even throughout the communities. This sample was designed to select businesses that represent the variety of business types within each community.



Reviewing the completed interview forms individually for follow-up opportunities was an important step for the BR&E program. This was probably the single most important activity that a BR&E initiative can do – responding appropriately and confidentially to businesses on issues such as business relocations, concerns with public service, needs for resources, etc.

New London-Spicer sent the completed interview guides to the University of Minnesota for tabulation and analysis. A summary of the data was prepared for the state research review meeting, where a group of 22 individuals reviewed the results and composed project ideas that might respond to business and community needs. The Research Report identified four overarching strategies as a strategic framework of issues for New London-Spicer to consider for implementation. It also provided a list of potential project ideas under each strategy.

JORDAN, MINNESOTA

POPULATION: 6,143

STRATEGIES: Downtown Grant Programming

The City of Jordan established a fund to assist building owners with improvements that align with the community vision for downtown Jordan. The vision is to encourage continuation of a viable downtown by allowing prime retail sales and service uses, office, entertainment facilities, public and semi-public use and in special circumstances, residential use. Additionally, the city seeks and to preserve and build on the historic character of the downtown using the historic and natural resources available to create a tourist destination and provide a unique blend of retail and service businesses for the convenience of local residents. The grant funds are available to properties within the C-2 Zoning District and can be used for improvements to the exterior of buildings including brick replacement and repair, window and door replacement/repair, awnings and signs, exterior steps/entrances, landscaping and parking and other visible improvements as described in the Jordan Design Standards Manual. The City of Jordan EDA offers \$2,500 matching grant for projects with a total cost of \$5,000 or more and \$5,000 matching grant for projects with a total cost of \$10,000 or more. Each grant is matched dollar for dollar by the applicant. The amount of the loan (without interest) is due and payable to the City of Jordan EDA one year following the distribution of loan funds.

The purpose of Jordan's Design Standards Manual is to establish minimum standards for the design and construction of Jordan's Central Business District. The standards are intended to establish guidelines for improvements to existing buildings and to guide development of new construction in the Central Business District.



The standards are applicable to the exterior rehabilitation or improvements of buildings. They do not apply to interior modifications. The Design Standards within the manual are intended to preserve and create quality, historic spaces, and continue the unique quality of Jordan's central business district.

HUGO, MINNESOTA

POPULATION: 14,000

STRATEGIES: Downtown Design Guidelines

The Hugo Downtown Design Guidelines are intended to provide direction to new development in downtown. Similar to Long Prairie, the City of Hugo had to define the Central Business District (CBD) and develop planning controls due to expanded commercial area and auto and highway-oriented design. The design guidelines provide a baseline for quality in order to revitalize and expand the downtown business district. The document provides a series of goals, requirements, photos, and illustrations to depict the desired conditions of the downtown realm.

The plan outlines the following sections:

- General design standards
- Land use
- Streets, public space and amenities
- Architecture
- Parking and service areas
- Signage
- Open space and stormwater management

Signage Guidelines

The Hugo Design Guidelines provide recommendations for signage. Downtown signage is a great way to integrate character into the downtown realm but should be carefully regulated by the city. Awning signage, projecting or hanging signage and wall signage designs could improve the pedestrian experience in Downtown Long Prairie. The Downtown Design Guidelines contain great examples and city staff should explore possibilities for signage within the downtown.



FERGUS FALLS, MINNESOTA

POPULATION: 13,419

STRATEGIES: Master Planning Efforts and Downtown Riverfront Council

The City of Fergus Falls completed a Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan in 2017. The city seeks to transform the downtown and riverfront into a vibrant gathering place. The plan seeks to complete the following objectives:

- Establish a community-based vision for the future of downtown and the riverfront.
- Identify ways to improve the riverfront and better connect it to the community, downtown in particular.
- Envision improved and expanded public spaces throughout downtown and make the riverfront desirable for all residents, businesses and visitors through a variety of enhancements.
- Identify opportunity sites for potential new development and provide development concepts.
- Provide a guide for future investment efforts in downtown and the riverfront.
- Establish the community's top priorities for achieving this master plan.

The Fergus Falls Downtown Riverfront Council was formed in 2015 to bring together citizens who share an interest in advancing the downtown riverfront. Tasked with advancing the Downtown and Riverfront Master Plan, the Council is working to complete the following through their *project downtown renaissance plan*:

- Identify and assist local emerging businesses to fill vacant store fronts.
- Assist existing businesses in need of technical or financial help.
- Identify non-local business prospects and assist them in locating to Fergus Falls.



- Assist property owners (landlords) to stabilize and improve their properties.

The city has begun the design development for a series of improvements to the downtown riverfront. This project, which includes river trail access, an amphitheater, riverbank improvements and a riverwalk balcony, seeks to begin the transformation of the Fergus Falls Riverfront into a community asset. Through the identification of project improvements, the city will begin to strengthen downtown businesses and attract new investments, create a vibrant gathering place with multiple uses, and will continue to attract visitors to the community.

LEWISTON, PENNSYLVANIA

POPULATION: 8,300

STRATEGIES: Public Private Partnerships, Downtown Investments

Since revitalization efforts began, public and private entities have re-used vacant structures, renovated public and private buildings, redeveloped former industrial sites, improved public spaces, and attracted new businesses to a transformed downtown. Revitalization began with the conversion of a closed department store into the Mifflin County Regional Business Center, a project that demonstrates Lewistown's success at forging public-private partnerships. Working with the Greater Lewistown Corporation the city developed a study and proposal for the 54,000 square-foot building's adaptive re-use. Tenant leases funded the operations, with Lewistown Hospital committing initially to lease 10,000 square feet of space for off campus mental health services along with Penn State and Cooperative Extension Service. Later, Mifflin County located various offices in the new center. By 2003, over 100 employees worked in the building which has maintained about 95 percent occupancy. Public and private investment has continued through the years, expanding the available office and commercial space available in downtown Lewistown. For example, a private developer invested \$2.5 million to convert an abandoned warehouse into the Community Partners Allied in Social Services (COMPASS) building. The Mifflin County Industrial Development Corporation helped finance the project with tax-exempt industrial development bonds. The building houses about 75 employees, working for a variety of drug abuse, rehabilitation, and community health organizations. These workers enjoy easy access to Lewistown's riverwalk, parks, and downtown amenities.

The Design Challenge Grant Program helped pay for facade improvements at 5 East Third Street in downtown Lewistown. The Program provided over \$75,000 for facade improvements downtown, matched by \$633,202 in private investment. This fostered a vibrant and livable downtown environment, the city and County have directed \$3.4 million in local, state, and federal funding for streetscape improvements, \$300,000 for a new street expansion project, \$130,000 for the first segment of a riverwalk with



provisions for bike and pedestrian trails, \$1.5 million to upgrade street running railroad track including rail stabilization, water line replacement and street reconstruction. They have directed \$1.1 million in the construction of a new community center and \$30 million in new upgrades to the waste water treatment facility meeting Chesapeake Bay regulations serving the Greater Lewistown area. Local residents and businesses have contributed to these projects. One cornerstone project reaching completion is Mann Edge Terrace, a 31-unit elderly housing project set to open this fall on a former brownfield site in the "Elm Street" neighborhood. MCIDC, working with the multi-county SEDA-COG Housing Development Corporation, channeled \$5.5 million in private tax credits, federal, and state funds to a former manufacturing site immediately adjacent to the downtown.

GREENVILLE KENTUCKY

POPULATION: 4,300

STRATEGIES: Streetscaping Improvements, Green Space, Event Programming

In the past if you took a stroll down Main Street in Greenville on a Saturday night you would have likely walked on deteriorated sidewalks, peered into vacant storefronts, and felt enveloped by silence and darkness. Like many other small towns throughout the U.S., Greenville's downtown had slowly deteriorated. However, thanks to a receptive mayor, a proactive tourist commission, an involved local community, and a supportive Area Development District, that same walk down Main Street today has transformed. This small community built on its local assets and infrastructure, sought innovative financing, and cultivated partnerships in a challenging economy.

Greenville, Kentucky is like many other small towns. As investments and development move from the area, the downtown began deteriorating with the depreciating local economy. However, Greenville has experienced a huge resurgence, the result of a small community's strong vision for building upon its local assets and infrastructure, seeking innovative financing, and cultivating partnerships in a challenging economic environment. A citizen-supported restaurant and hotel tax established a Tourism Commission which has financed downtown façade improvements as well as free festivals and concerts, including the popular summer music series, "Saturdays on the Square". In this town of 4,300, as many as 8,000 people have been known to fill the streets of Greenville on a weekend night in the summertime to enjoy live outdoor music, find something to eat at a variety of food stands set up by local establishments, and enjoy each other's company.

Previously vacant buildings are now abuzz with activity, many now home to new retail stores and restaurants. A mature woodland area off the downtown area has been preserved as a 12-acre nature park, complete with trails, bridges, and a manmade waterfall. Sidewalks have been built and



repaired, historic-looking street lights now shine down on the streets below, planters and trash receptacles have been installed, and engraved brick pavers line new curbs. Residents in the region no longer think of Greenville merely as a county seat with a historic courthouse, but rather as an economic and entertainment focal point in Muhlenberg County.

CORTEZ, COLORADO

POPULATION: 8,500
STRATEGIES: Diversity and Collaboration

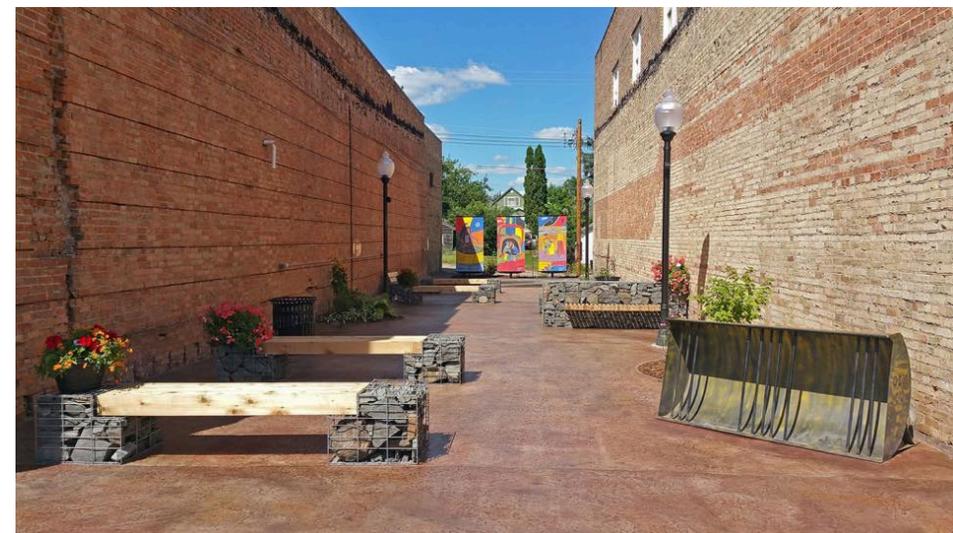
The town of Cortez, Colorado worked with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, who contributed to the design of a gateway sign at the southern entrance to town, nearest to their tribal lands, as a symbol of honor, respect, and acknowledgment. Officials also improved their outreach to Hispanic residents and with youth, such as by giving young people full voting seats on the Parks and Recreation, golf, and library advisory boards. To integrate more art opportunities within the downtown, a designated graffiti wall in the skateboard park dramatically reduced town incidents of graffiti. The town also established a new way for developers to do business by encouraging them to meet, discuss, and resolve differences with neighbors well in advance of public hearings. Officials also created a plan for the town's main street, a state highway, that set a precedent for collaboration between the town and state government.



Chisholm, Minnesota

POPULATION: 4,976
STRATEGIES: Vitality and Variety

This new pocket park in downtown Chisholm is an example of a project to revitalize downtowns. That's the kind of change that, even in small doses, that can matter to people deciding where to live and where to invest time and money.



HEAVEN

[COMMUNITY] ENGAGEMENT



Community Engagement

A downtown survey was available for public participation during July and August 2017. **Two hundred fourteen** people participated in the online survey. General responses gathered from participants were separated into three areas: 1) residential needs, 2) business needs, and 3) visitor and patron needs. The following are common themes identified by survey participants:

Resident needs:

- › Fill vacant buildings (increase number of stores/businesses)
- › Aesthetics
- › Building preservation
- › Attractions
- › More retail and restaurants

Business owner needs:

- › Affordable leases
- › Fill vacant buildings (increase number of store/businesses)
- › Quality spaces to lease
- › Signage and advertisement along highway corridor
- › Support from residents and the city

Visitor and patron needs:

- › More retail and restaurants
- › More businesses
- › Variety
- › Extended hours
- › More attractions
- › Accessibility
- › Advertising

A listening session was held in October in Downtown Long Prairie. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input from community members regarding the future of the downtown, specifically through the lens of the resident, business owner, visitor and patron. A series of interactive display boards was available for participation. The following charts contain their responses:

>> **Right:** Residents gather at the listening session to share their recommendations, opinions, and thoughts about Long Prairie's existing conditions and paint a picture for the future. A series of interactive "comment bubbles" were created in an effort to entice engagement and capture the three study areas through the lens of the 1) visitor and patron 2) resident and 3) business owner.

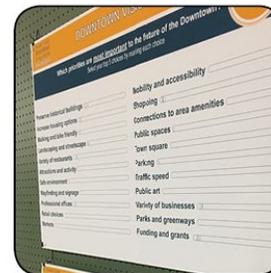


TABLE 3 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

I want in Downtown Long Prairie....

<p>More professional services. A recreation center for all ages (2). More color and lights. Community gathering place. Building for meetings. Concert area and farmer’s market space downtown (2). Wine and bistro. Weeds gone. Cleaner streets (3). Movie theater (4). Coffee shop and deli. Skateboard park (3). Escape room (2). Children’s center. Play place. Arcade (8). Cupcake store. Swimming pool. Community room for all in one building. Art and music. Amish retail. Indoor handicapped sports place. A town square. Ice cream shop (3). “Silver Alert” – help find elderly. Teen center. Roller skate rink.</p>	<p>Craft store (2). Gift shop. To see the old Motl Plumbing Building taken down. Burger joint. Soda shop. Acceptance of all modes of transportation. Another grocery store. Bike path. Community center for youth (6). Auction house. Paved bike and rollerblade trail. A coffee shop. Sports area. A craft brewery. Walking trail adjacent to Long Prairie River within walking connection to the downtown. Transportation. Skating place (3). Mall (6). Better service.</p>	<p>Places for activities (1). Sports (3). Pet store. Family. Doctor.</p>
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TABLE 4 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

As a business owner I need:

- Communication between other business owners, forming a positive co-op to feed off each other.
- More local support.
- Support of City Council and Chamber Board members.
- Signage on highways 27, 71, and 287.
- Customers who are faithful.
- More support from county commissioners.
- More support from community.

As a visitor and patron I need:

- Camping in the park – the campground across from Central-By.
- To know what attractions are around.
- A boat/canoe launch on the river and paths to downtown.

As a resident I need:

- Larger department store.
- Something for kids to do/go, e.g., community center with pool.
- Clothing store for adults and children.
- Community center for kids, adults, seniors.
- Bike and walking trails.
- Sidewalks.
- A huge co-op – Grow Everybody’s Market – look to St. Cloud’s Good Earth Co-op model.
- Places of business that are inclusive – promoting intercultural confidence.
- A telecommuter building/office space.
- Sitting areas.
- Parking.
- Transportation after 4 – 5 p.m.
- Safe routes to school and bikable/walkable community.
- Beauty.
- A place to access high-speed wifi
- Community spirit.
- Accessibility for handicapped.
- Transport (3)
- Better service.

TABLE 5 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

What do you love about downtown?

- Hometown *feel*.
- Businesses.
- Slow pace.
- Historic buildings (2).
- Main street architecture.
- Restaurants.
- Hart Mall.
- Friendly people.
- Library.
- Hats Off Coffee.
- Thrift shops.
- Burritos at Mexican shop and Pan de Vida.
- Beautiful architecture.
- History.
- Knowing the business owners.
- Much opportunity.

What would you change about downtown?

- Better sidewalks, lighting (LED), clean/update buildings (2).
- Community events in downtown.
- Fill vacant buildings.
- Variety of shops.
- Beautification projects.
- Demise of historic buildings.
- There should be a park, book, and toy store.
- Main-level retail and upper-level apartments.
- Game store or hangout place.
- Area for concerts and music.
- Variety of different restaurants.
- Have snow removal available to all businesses for a fee provided by the City. Prevent re-shoveling of curbs and would promote consistent removal in a timely manner.
- Have events in the downtown area that attract a wide audience and have downtown businesses open and inviting people in. Like farmers/craft market, live music (like salsa-fest was but downtown).

In the future, downtown Long Prairie will be:

- An eco-tourist destination.
- Green community.
- Place to visit and shop.
- A beautiful space with art and comfortable seating.
- Energy efficient.
- Loans.
- Banks that fund businesses.
- A newspaper that is involved.
- Human interest.
- Thriving.
- A great destination for residents and tourists.



TABLE 6 – DOWNTOWN LISTENING SESSION

What businesses would you like to see downtown?

Food co-op
Professional services
Recreational center
Concert area
Farmer's market
Wine and bistro
Arcade
Amish retail
Craft store
Gift shop/fabric store
Burger joint
Soda shop
Grocery store
Auction house
Craft brewery
Skating rink
Pet store
Clothing store(s)
Wellness center or gym
General store
Book store
Increased dining options

What amenities would attract you to downtown?

“ Not having so many buildings vacant, buildings that are well taken care of.

“ More dining and shopping options.

Needs as a resident:

“ The area to be cleaned up, street maintenance during winter better, full store fronts, better parking .

“ Need household goods, clothing for all ages, a nice family dining place

“ There needs to be more stores and reasons to visit downtown!

“ I'd like to see a clean, attractive environment that feels safe to bring children into. Green space with area for community gathering and a playground would be lovely.

“ Offering more for the residents so we don't have to leave town for shopping.

What are the strengths of downtown?

“ The “small town” feel. Great local businesses. A safe place to visit and shop.

“ Small enough to walk it, Plenty of empty stores for new opportunities, Room for improvement

“ The beautiful old architecture.

“ I utilize the downtown as a walking path in the spring and fall after dark due to the street lights.

“ Variety of businesses, nice flowers on sidewalks, hard working people committed to their businesses.

What are Downtown Long Prairie's greatest weaknesses?

“ Lack of variety, competitive pricing, coordinative efforts among public and private entities.

“ Empty buildings - not enough businesses.

“ 1) Empty businesses 2. Lack of overall community spirit 3. Need more events in downtown.

“ A lot of empty buildings that are quite unattractive. Not enough businesses that are What practical. Just a plain boring looking area.

“ Lack of bars/grills, physical appearance of many buildings, streets poorly maintained.

What are your needs as a business owner?

“ Maintained roads and sidewalks, more businesses.

“ A building without structural problems and affordable monthly payments.

“ Need more people to come downtown and give businesses a chance.

Participant feedback from Downtown Vision Survey. See Community Engagement Report for further responses.

A two-story yellow house with a white porch and a wooden sign for Christie House Tours. The house has a gabled roof with a central dormer window. The porch is supported by white columns and has a white railing. A wooden sign in the foreground reads "CHRISTIE HOUSE TOURS" and "JUNE - AUGUST 1:30 -". The house is surrounded by green grass and trees.

[DOWNTOWN] VISION PLAN

CHRISTIE HOUSE
TOURS

JUNE - AUGUST

1:30 -

Downtown Vision Plan

This chapter of the plan contains long-range outcomes that the community of Long Prairie wishes to achieve in the downtown by identifying key opportunities that will transform the downtown realm into a vibrant and healthy place for visiting, working, and living. It is important to note that this section is advisory in nature. The goals and policies outlined in this section are meant to provide broad guidance on future land uses and development and redevelopment opportunities as they present themselves.

Certain elements of this vision are more feasible in the near future than other initiatives. The various elements have the potential to influence various levels of change in exchange for staffing and/or financial commitment.

The vision was established through the planning process, including extensive public input, committee input, and feedback and review from elected officials.

Success of this revitalization program will require the support of civic partners, businesses, and the community at large.

There are several key points that support downtown revitalization in small cities:

- 1) **Cities need to have a long-term vision in a revitalization of their downtown.**
- 2) **City staff play a critical role in downtown revitalization.**
- 3) **Building public-private partnerships is essential to the effectiveness of downtown revitalization.**
- 4) **Cities need to be patient and commit to a long-term process to see results.**
- 5) **Mixed-use development should be prioritized in downtown development projects.**
- 6) **Quality placemaking enhances the downtown environment and helps draw people to the city center.**
- 7) **Each city must identify and build on the assets of its downtown.**

The framework for this vision is led by the following guiding themes:

VITALITY & VARIETY

Survey respondents support a coordinated effort to ensure that downtown Long Prairie offers its residents, business owners, and visitors a unique, pedestrian experience that makes Long Prairie a destination in central Minnesota. Providing a variety of restaurants, services, businesses, and shopping options was among the largest categorized “need” by survey respondents. Respondents back a concerted effort to craft a brand that identifies Long Prairie from its peer cities and beyond.

VIBRANT STOREFRONTS

Respondents support coordinated efforts to improve the numerous vacant storefronts. The improvement of facades could offer a unique pedestrian experience, add vibrancy to the streetscape, and welcome visitors to the downtown core.

PRESERVATION

A cherished asset of the downtown is its unique architecture. Programming and grants could be offered to assist in the preservation of historic structures in downtown. Respondents believe that the historic building architecture is an asset that makes Long Prairie a unique destination.

DIVERSITY

An asset of the downtown core is the diverse offerings of retail, services, and restaurants. The diversity among downtown restaurants and cuisine can be utilized to leverage tourist spending and downtown visits. Additionally, an ethnic food and cultural center can increase the capture of visitor, worker, resident, and family spending.

COLLABORATION

Respondents urge residents, businesses owners, elected and appointed officials, and city staff on the importance of collaboration and the important role it plays in supporting our local businesses and revitalization efforts. Business owners are looking for support from Long Prairie residents and understand the importance of a “buy local” campaign.



ATTRACTIONS & GATHERING SPACES

Long Prairie boasts its variety of historical buildings and museums, and the Veteran's Memorial. Survey respondents support a collaborative effort to develop a town square, or central gathering space where community (and pop-up events) celebrations can occur year-round.

RECRUIT NEW BUSINESSES

Community members support efforts to expand service businesses, retail and restaurants and recruit new opportunities to the downtown. A diverse economy provides a wide range of investment opportunities.

ACTIVE LIVING

Parks, open spaces, and trails contribute to a high quality of life for residents. Respondents support efforts to expand and develop opportunities to encourage active lifestyles in the downtown. Healthy food options, farmer's markets, open spaces, trails and pedestrian networks are ways to add to improve the quality of life for Long Prairie residents and visitors alike.

Overlying these designations is an interwoven system of new civic spaces, open spaces, connections, and enhancements to the existing network. The goals and policies in this chapter provide solutions to the desired conditions expressed by business owners, residents, visitors, and patrons.

Implementation strategies specifically address the following elements:

- > Economic vitality
- > Historic preservation
- > Visual appeal
- > Marketing image
- > Community engagement

These areas create different layers, coordinating with the other to form a comprehensive set of improvements that complement the overall vision.



Desired Conditions

The following section will provide case studies and introduce concepts in an effort to address each of the five areas noted above. The content of this chapter is dedicated to describing the purpose of various initiatives and providing examples of similar programs that can be used as models or case studies for city officials. The following five areas were developed from the public involvement process and considered for how they will influence the needs and lenses of the business owner, resident, and visitor.



>> **Right:** The following sections will include photos of examples where strategies can be deployed to meet the common vision and guiding principles set forth in the plan.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

A core strategy in downtown revitalization is to build on the positive assets of downtown and address the challenges of doing business downtown. During the community outreach phase, residents have noted the beautiful, historic architecture, the culture, cuisine and history as the core assets of Downtown and Central Avenue.

Community members support efforts to expand service businesses, retail and restaurants, and recruit new opportunities to downtown. A diverse economy provides a wide range of investment opportunities.

The major issues of downtown businesses are often:

- 1) The need for marketing to get the word out about their existence and the services they provide
- 2) Finding space for expansion in the downtown
- 3) Obtaining support with financing
- 4) Keeping up with technology
- 5) Finding good, reliable workers

-APA's PAS Report 590

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): Is an economic development program used by state and local governments to revitalize distressed downtown and neighborhoods that otherwise would not attract business investment (APA's PAS 590). The state of Minnesota has TIF-enabling legislation authorizing local government to create and use these programs for economic development. This is one successful way to supplement the resources of a local government for economic development, and the strategy should be used with care and attention. TIF should be used only where there is clear evidence that private investment in the downtown will not occur.

Façade Improvement Programs: The purpose of this program is to help businesses remodel downtown buildings to improve their aesthetics and visual appeal. Applicants provide a matching requirement. An educational component with property owners on the benefits of such a program will increase the likelihood of downtown business support, cooperation, and participation.

Rental Assistance

Rental assistance programs assist in the initial costs of a downtown business location. Depending on the structure of the program, the program subsidizes the rental cost to new businesses that choose to locate in the city's downtown and for existing downtown businesses that want to expand their rental space. Priority is given to businesses that fall under "type" categories. Typically, once businesses are approved, business owners receive rental assistance at a certain percentage of the monthly lease of the property for a portion of time, and assistance is slowly reduced over time. A maximum dollar amount is allotted per business.

Fee Waivers

Fee waivers is another downtown business recruitment tool. New businesses receive fee waivers in an effort to decrease the costs of locating downtown. The city waives the utility connection fees and the permit fees. Conditions are usually placed to pay a minimum dollar of improvements toward the building's rehabilitation.

Incubator Spaces

Community leaders are turning inside their community to nurture the talents that reside within. Another goal is to attract new talent from outside the community to create and start new businesses. Shared spaces are being used to nourish ideas and bring them to fruition. Vacant and abandoned downtown buildings are being transformed into spaces for new entrepreneurs to develop their ideas.

These spaces, known as business incubators, makers' hubs, and innovation clusters, help meet additional downtown goals: putting empty downtown buildings to use, bringing the creative class to the downtown where they patronize downtown eateries and other businesses; and hoping that entrepreneurs will choose downtown locations to launch their business – helping fill business gaps in the downtown. Incubator spaces vary in the services they provide. They provide renters basic services, work spaces, and wifi access. Others provide a full menu of professional and managerial programs (mentorship, financing advice, investor opportunities). Key attractions for such spaces are the very affordable rent, meeting rooms, and shared receptionists.

To be effective, downtown Long Prairie's economic development strategies need to be tailored to the individual needs of the community, capitalizing on the assets that exist in the downtown.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The downtown study area boasts beautiful architecture and various buildings on the historic register. Historic preservation was identified as a top asset of downtown Long Prairie, and the vision for the future retains these historic properties.

Many of these properties are candidates for façade and/or tenant improvement grants to encourage additional updates to interior space or exterior design elements. Additionally, these buildings may also benefit from funding to renovate upper unit residential spaces. The Reichert Building is the most significant example of preservation and adaptive reuse.

Leverage Historic Resources

Long Prairie boasts numerous historic properties within the downtown. These properties often have the ideal infrastructure for residential infill due to floor plans that are conducive to residential, or even office, redevelopment.

Design Guidelines

Long Prairie would benefit from downtown development design guidelines. These guidelines would not dictate standards for the rehabilitation/restoration of designated historic structures, but rather would guide new development or the renovation of non-designated structures in order to achieve an overall look and feel of the downtown area. Design guidelines may follow some historic design details that exist in the downtown, such as building material, signage, and use of awnings.

Façade Improvement Program

Such a program could provide incentives to ensure that building facades are renovated to appropriate historic standards. This program provides zero, or low-cost loans or grants for the purposes of improvement efforts.



VISUAL APPEAL

Create an attractive, walkable place.

Placemaking is the art of transforming public space into quality places.

Physical form, aesthetics, and condition is important for the perception of a downtown. These elements give people the first impression about the downtown's health. Physical change and improvements to the streetscape show tangible and visual change – communicating to residents that the city is starting to pay attention. Façade improvements and streetscaping are often the initial redevelopment projects.

Placemaking enhances the physical environment. Successful, vibrant places invite congregation and opportunities for people to interact. Placemaking strategies should be used to enliven streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks, and vacant spaces. Additionally, placemaking is about improving the function of downtown. These strategies can make downtown spaces more pedestrian friendly, enhance traffic flow, and parking. Placemaking is used as a tool for economic development by helping attract and keep talent in a community.

There is a variety of placemaking project types:

Placemaking: encompasses both public spaces, such as streetscaping projects, as well as private properties, such as façade improvements of buildings.

Strategic placemaking: examples include providing improving greenways and waterfronts, social gathering places, and places of entertainment.

Creative placemaking: examples include facilitating art communities, live-work units, public art, and theater.

Tactical placemaking: can also be called tactical urbanism. Examples include temporary transformations of spaces, such as parking spaces, pocket parks, and pop-up cafes.

It's been determined that in order to be categorized as successful places, they generally share the following four qualities: they are **accessible**; people are engaged in **activities** there; the space is **comfortable** and has a good image; and finally, it is a **sociable** place, one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit.

Integrating Art

Public art has been a source of pride and can play a major role in residents' sense of place – and sense of pride. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, publicly engaged art can help build community morale and can become central to the cultural identity of a place. In a community rich with local talent, public art projects can be a great tool for enlivening public spaces and building community pride. The arts offer many benefits: foster vibrant communities, ignite the imagination of children, have the power to uplift people's spirits, and foster emotional and mental health (National Assembly of State Arts Agencies 2017).

The arts include sculpture, painting, murals, creative signage, pavement design, street furniture, performance, and other installations.

Active living

Active living is about incorporating physical activity and movement into everyday activities. An example would include biking to work or a bike-friendly business. The following are strategies where Long Prairie can implement healthy, active living principles into the downtown:

Greenways: Trails and greenways that are connected in multiple jurisdictions can increase the number of people who use trails for transportation and recreation. Trails and greenways make sure that parks are more connected and accessible.

Complete Streets: Are designed for people of all ages and abilities who use different modes of transportation: walking biking, driving, and public transportation. Complete streets require policy changes that enable the community to design an existing complete network.

Sidewalk Zones

Sidewalks play a vital role in city life. It's the house for pedestrian movement and access. Their role is to enhance connectivity and promote walking. Sidewalks often serve as the front step of our city. Long Prairie's downtown core, Central Avenue, provides nearly eleven feet of sidewalk space.

Frontage Zone

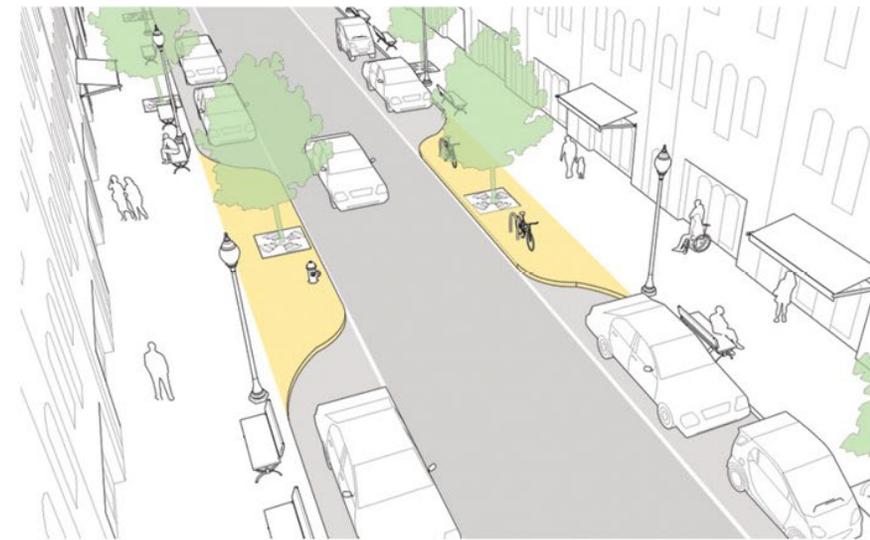
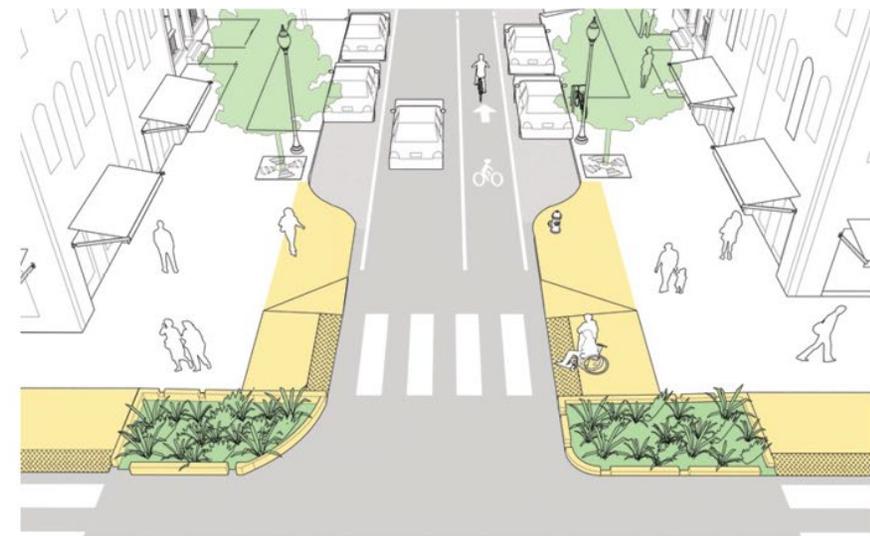
The frontage zone describes the section of the sidewalk that functions as an extension of the building, whether through entryways and doors or sidewalk cafes and sandwich boards. The frontage zone consists of both the structure and the façade of the building fronting the street, as well as the space immediately adjacent to the building (*National Association of City Transportation Officials*).

Pedestrian Through Zone

The pedestrian through zone is the primary, accessible pathway that runs parallel to the street. The through zone ensures that pedestrians have a safe and adequate place to walk and should be 5-7 feet wide in residential settings and 9-12 feet wide in downtown or commercial areas. (*National Association of City Transportation Officials*).

Street Furniture/Curb Zone

The street furniture zone is defined as the section of the sidewalk between the curb and the through zone in which street furniture and amenities, such as lighting, benches, newspaper kiosks, utility poles, tree pits, and bicycle parking, are provided. The street furniture zone may also consist of green infrastructure elements, such as rain gardens or flow-through planters. (*National Association of City Transportation Officials*).





Enhancement/Buffer Zone

The enhancement/buffer zone is the space immediately next to the sidewalk that may consist of a variety of different elements. These include curb extensions, parklets, stormwater management features, parking, bike racks, and curbside bike lanes (*National Association of City Transportation Officials*).

Curb Extension

Curb extensions visually and physically narrow the roadway. Central Avenue is 50 feet from curb to curb, providing a long pedestrian crossing distance. Curb extensions create a safer, shorter crossing for pedestrians while increasing the available space for street furniture (benches, plantings, and street trees).

Curb extensions not only decrease the overall width of the roadway, but serve as a visual cue to drivers that they are entering a neighborhood street or area. This concept increases the overall visibility of pedestrians. Curb extensions tighten intersection curb radii and encourage slower turning speeds.

>> **Gateway** curb extensions are often applied at the mouth of an intersection. When installed at the entrance to a residential or low-speed street, a curb extension is referred to as a “gateway” treatment and is intended to make the transition to a slower speed street.

>> **Pinchpoint** curb extensions may be applied at a midblock crossing to slow traffic speeds and add public space. This solution can be used as a traffic-calming treatment.

Cities can combine stormwater management features, such as bio-swales or rain gardens, with curb extensions to absorb rainwater and reduce the impervious surface area of a street.

“The sidewalk is the area where people interface with one another and with businesses.”

National Association of City Transportation Officials

MARKETING IMAGE

It is critical that the community begin to build a marketing audience. Marketing channels to share information about new events, available spaces, and other outreach efforts will be a valuable implementation tool. There are many groups and engaged stakeholders that are active supporters and patrons of downtown businesses and events. Finding ways to leverage these activities and make them visible will help increase awareness among the general population about downtown assets.

- **Enable, or provide, infrastructure that will encourage public gathering spaces such as patio cafes, flexible public spaces or temporary furniture and amenities that will generate outdoor activity – this in turn will attract additional foot traffic.**
- **Create iconic photo stops that can help convey the local brand while enlisting local visitors as a marketing ambassador.**

The first targeted marketing audience should be local brokers, real estate agents, and developers. By targeting these individuals with information on available properties and corresponding incentives, Long Prairie can begin to strengthen and help create private sector interest in infill and/or redevelopment projects.

Visitors must be able to combine numerous destinations into one visit. Long Prairie has a number of outlying destinations. City officials should build one existing cluster and destinations by creating unique sample itineraries that are designed to encourage key demographics. Examples could be a bike tour or historic walking tour of the downtown, a unique or healthy dinner at a downtown restaurant, or an art and culture outing at a local gallery. Another example could include coordinated, later business hours on Thursday evening that coincides with a Chamber event. Businesses might also choose to target specific groups in the community

through worker appreciation days, family fun days or other coordinated promotions that target daytime audiences.

To solidify the presence and strength the connection among residents, workers, and local businesses, it is recommended that regularly occurring events be held downtown, which can be collectively marketed to residents, workers, and the visitors' populations. These events might include a concert series, food truck events, or outdoor movies with locally catered food. The goals of these programs are to provide predictable programming that allows businesses to reach new audiences.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Long Prairie staff and city officials should make sure citizens have continuous opportunities for input and involvement in the revitalization process.

Commit to Ongoing Engagement:

Revitalization is an ongoing process, never truly ending. City staff and officials should engage with residents in an ongoing way and give them regular, recurring opportunities to understand what's happening and to voice their concerns. Being consistent and predictable with this process will help them build trust within the community (through local government, developers, businesses, and residents). Build social media platforms and channels for ongoing project updates and encourage community members to follow and share their thoughts online. The city should take advantage of community events to share updates and make projects visible.

Come Together Around Shared Values:

Residents and business owners participated in an open house and online survey regarding the downtown vision plan. A narrative has been written and an inside perspective has been painted of residents' and businesses owners' needs in the community. Long Prairie should continue to define a narrative for downtown revitalization that everyone in the community can share. In public events, in branding, and in project plans, city staff and officials should emphasize Long Prairie's history, diversity, and character, and how this will create positive community change. Downtown advocates should focus on the values that residents want to see in their community moving forward.

Our Vision|

“A community that is continuously evolving to serve a growing and diverse downtown.”

“More unique craftsman shops, such as breweries, bakeries, and the like.”

“If there was a bike trail or walking trail near town – that would be great to go on and to get people around the area.”

“It is a very diverse area and has a little bit of something for people with all interests... wide streets and adequate parking make it accessible for all those who go there.”

“Friendly business owners, variety of restaurants and diversity of people.”



VITALITY AND VARIETY

Places that attract and create opportunities for social interaction also create opportunities for economic activity. *Placemaking* is both a practical and philosophical practice designed to transform public spaces. The *placemaking process* is centered on observing, listening to, and asking questions of those who live, work, and play in a particular place in an effort to understand one's needs, aspirations, and vision for a space that benefits the community as a whole.

Long Prairie could benefit from deploying the placemaking process to develop spaces that can improve the public realm in an effort to maximize shared value.

Create Vibrant Spaces

In the era of online shopping, access and proximity have become more important than ever. Great public places continue to serve as crucial anchors for starting new businesses, learning new skills, sharing information, and nurturing new ideas

The following are strategies that the City of Long Prairie can invest in to aid in the development of creating desirable places through *beautifying existing spaces*:

Invest in streetscape: Repair broken sidewalks and nonconforming pedestrian ramps, and consider adding features such as street benches, planters, bike racks, street trees, and planter boxes.

Develop a downtown arts district: Organize related programming such as art markets, performances, or new programs like "First Fridays" that feature activities or entertainment.

Install public art: Public art adds another way to incorporate interest, create a focal point, and give people a reason to visit a neighborhood. Partner with local artists to hold a competition, or work with area organizations to solicit pieces.

Create easy-to-use maps and directions: Install eye-catching and easy-to-read signs that direct visitors to popular locations, ex. all museums, the library, art installations, cultural spaces, historical buildings, retail, and unique cuisine. This should include both "trail blazing" (which guides motorists to an area) and "wayfinding" (which helps pedestrians find their way within an area).

Great shops and an increase in people build off one another. The first step is to start filling empty lots and vacant storefronts. This creates a cycle that provides interest on the street level. The following strategies that the City of Long Prairie can invest in to activate empty space in the *short term*:

Create a visitors' center: Identify a vacant storefront and evaluate leasing costs in the heart of downtown and transform this space into a welcoming, engaging visitors' center.

Establish a farmer's market: Weekly or bi-monthly markets give people a reason to come downtown regularly to support small, independent businesses. Public markets help grow and connect rural economies and help to encourage development, enhance real estate development, and keep money in the local neighborhood. Markets not only help to increase access to fresh food, but most importantly, serve as gathering spaces for people from different ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic communities.

Long Prairie should consider relocating the farmer's markets to Central Avenue to bring together diverse backgrounds, promote public health, and renew downtown neighborhoods. Work with the Hispanic farming community, downtown business owners, and the Amish maker community to create a diverse offering of goods.

Create pop-up shops: A great way to fill empty storefronts is to invite local existing businesses, manufacturers, crafters, makers, artisans, or other entrepreneurs to open up a temporary pop-up shop. These flexible spaces allow business owners to experiment with a new location without the high up-front costs of building out a new retail space.

Small Scale Manufacturing

Smart Growth America produced a report discussing the emerging trend of small scale manufacturing in the downtown and neighborhood areas. This is not a new idea, but a revitalization of an old one. Manufacturing used to fill our storefronts, consisting of blacksmiths, clothing shops, tailors and breweries that once dotted the downtown neighborhoods. These businesses developed and the economy of scale eventually pushed them to seek larger buildings and industrial parks to meet their needs. With an online market and presence, the return of small-scale production is an emerging marketplace.

Small-scale manufacturing is an umbrella term that refers to all types of small businesses that produce tangible goods. This includes textiles, hardware, woodworking, metalworking, and 3D printing. It also includes hardware prototyping, consumer product design and prototyping, breweries and distilleries, and local food production and packaging. The businesses may be consumer-facing or provide products to other businesses and often have 1-30 employees (Source: Recast City)

When you are looking to start a business, the first issue you might face is the capital needed for a structure. Building a new building in an industrial park creates an uphill start to the journey. If an existing building can be revitalized in a downtown environment it may not only be cheaper, but will help bolster foot traffic, increase awareness of your product locally, and be closer to your workforce.

The changing retail landscape represents an opportunity for small-scale manufacturing to fill the gap in mixed-use districts and downtown main streets. Small-scale manufacturers are a different tenant type from traditional retailers or service providers, as hybrid businesses can simultaneously be producers and main street retailers. **They can thrive in locations that are not prime retail frontage, shapes, or sizes.** A business may sell wholesale online, but can draw attention on a block through a formerly vacant store that now shows machinery and people at work. A collection of businesses can help attract other retail investment in an area that has been neglected. In some cases, these businesses become an

experience and destination of their own, anchoring the block or development.

It's recommended that the city consider changing zoning ordinances to accommodate these businesses downtown. These businesses serve as employers and destinations in themselves. Small-scale manufacturers can be among the first businesses in target areas for redevelopment before it's feasible for traditional retail to survive. Many of these businesses have more diverse revenue sources than traditional retailers, including online sales, business to business, or specialty orders. Step one in looking at this type of redevelopment would be reviewing the local ordinance to ensure these types of business are permitted and that they would still maintain the character of the neighborhood. This might mean creating a new definition for small-scale manufacturing to the code.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The City of Long Prairie has five properties on the historical registry. The city would benefit from forming a historic preservation district that would consist of the plan's study area and expand around the Todd County Courthouse.

Design guidelines aid in defining an overall sense of place and aesthetic of the downtown realm. Such guidelines would not dictate the standards for the rehabilitation and/or restoration of designated historic structures, but rather, guide new development or the renovation of non-designated structures to achieve a desired aesthetic. Such design guidelines would outline building material, signage, setbacks, and use of awnings.

A façade improvement program would benefit the city and downtown business owners. This program would provide incentives such as no- or low-cost loans or grants to be used to ensure that facades are renovated to appropriate historic standards.

[STRATEGIC] INITIATIVES



Goals and Policies

The goals and policies in this section support the guiding principles that were developed as a product of the community engagement process. The goals and policies support the guiding principles and should be used to inform decision-making and actions. Goals are general statements that describe the community aspirations and desired conditions. Policies describe actions that can be carried out through programming and activities. Policies are an effort to achieve the goal or objective. Policies relate to the values, context, and/or place.

Goals: general statement that describe facets of the vision statement. These goals can be directed toward physical or social aspects of the study area, geographic areas or toward community members and stakeholders.

Policies: describes actions made to achieve the goal and identify steps towards completion.

All language within this chapter was formed from community input throughout the duration of this project. The steering committee assisted the project team through finalizing, editing, and strengthening the goal and policy language. It's through their efforts and advisory capacity that we were able to discuss the responsibilities of each item and craft a plan toward implementation.

The following goals and policies were developed to address our three core study areas 1) needs as a resident 2) needs as a business owner and 3) needs as a visitor and patron. Overlaid within the goal and policy language are five planning elements:

- > Land use
- > Housing
- > Transportation
- > Parks and open space
- > Economic development

RESIDENTIAL NEEDS

1. Enhance the appearance of the built environment.

P1: Create Main Street Design Standards for façade renovation and maintenance.

P2: Develop a variety of public gathering spaces that improve connections to existing public buildings and green spaces.

P3: Enhance pedestrian crossings along Central Avenue and at key intersections within the downtown.

P4: Redevelop underused frontages and surface parking lots.

P5: Reduce and eliminate the appearance of blight.

P6: Improve landscaping and streetscape amenities by introducing complete streets or green infrastructure.

P7: Continually paint downtown striping to keep it bright and fresh.

2. Leverage the growing residential base directly adjacent to and within the downtown.

P1: Develop housing with amenities that speak to different age groups, including senior, professionals, and renters.

P2: Identify areas for traditional residential development adjacent to the downtown area to include rowhouses, townhomes, or multi-family.

P3: Promote mixed-use development.

P4: Connect residents to area amenities and green spaces.

P5: Improve connectivity to existing public spaces.

3. Fully coordinate and leverage the city’s many partners to encourage volunteerism and support and to promote events and programs.

P1: Establish coordinated and extended hours for downtown businesses one day per week during the summer season.

P2: Consider various events to attract local employees during business hours.

P3: Coordinate with regional partners to offer local business training.

P4: Explore co-working spaces and/or kitchen incubator facilities downtown to expand working population, retail offerings, and additional revenue streams for businesses and existing properties.

4. Emphasize the downtown core as a cultural and economic center of Long Prairie.

P1: Revitalize and renovate existing spaces that are consistent with the historic character of the downtown.

P2: Increase the density of commercial uses through infill development throughout Central Avenue.

P3: Encourage the growth of cultural diversity of services and products, and support the expansion of businesses and new entrepreneurs in this growing market.

P4: Craft a blend of uses that will sustain commercial activity and modify programs to encourage implementation.

P5: Create a safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle environment.

5. Maintain the historic character of the Central Avenue corridor.

P1: Identify a Central Avenue Historic District.

P2: Ensure that Historic Central Avenue is the focal point of downtown revitalization efforts.

P3: Develop and fund a “Historical Building Plaque” program for every downtown building that lists its year of construction and history of its building occupants.

P4: Develop and update ordinances for the downtown area to maintain the quality of the building stock.

P5: Develop and implement a Façade Improvement Program that funds qualified projects through small grants or low-cost loans.

P6: Promote building façade renovations.

P7: Maintain the scale of buildings along Central Avenue and discourage the construction of new, single-story buildings.

6. Encourage a variety of housing options to support activity within the downtown core.

P1: Rezone or amend zoning ordinances to accommodate townhome and/or multifamily development adjacent to the downtown core.

P2: Consider opportunities for live-work spaces on Central Avenue.

P3: Create an active evening environment.

P4: Increase the sense of energy and activity in the downtown realm.

P5: Identify higher density housing in key transition areas on the fringes of the downtown area and adjacent to those boundaries.

P6: Encourage new, higher-density housing development.

P7: Support mixed-use development.

BUSINESS NEEDS

1. Increase awareness of the downtown as a destination.

P1: Enhance the major entry points to the downtown, physically, and visually.

P2: Assess the block along the periphery of the downtown for new development and re-development opportunities.

P3: Identify a transformative project along the northern and western edge of the downtown.

P4: Improve wayfinding into the downtown core.

P5: Ensure connectivity for all transportation modes into the downtown.

P6: Create a welcoming gateway for people coming into the downtown area by improving the backside of structures, alleyways, and screening storage, equipment, and mechanical areas.

2. Establish programs targeted to the preservation and refurbishing of downtown historic and commercial buildings; both interior and exterior.

P1: Encourage local financial institutions to develop a low-interest loan pool to fund downtown property upgrades.

P2: Develop a façade improvement program.

P3: Consider the benefits of adopting a historic preservation ordinance.

P4: Remove blighted buildings, rehabilitate and/or redevelopment vacant buildings.

3. Increase storefront occupancy and business vitality.

P1: Develop incentive programs to fund downtown property upgrades.

P2: Develop a matching grant program to assist business owners and buildings they occupy.

P3: Create an online shopping and dining guide.

P4: Establish a buy local campaign.

P5: Ensure that market data on retail, residential, service-based, and employment is easily accessible in an effort to support investment.

P6: Encourage clustering of comparable businesses and uses.

4. Feature the downtown in community branding and marketing.

P1: Create imagery that captures the overall activity and energy of downtown.

P2: Collaborate to co-brand existing businesses and attractions.

P3: Capture the cultural diversity of services and products.

P4: Improve wayfinding along highway corridors and at key gateways.

P5: Partner with marketing partners, bloggers, and stakeholders to increase regional awareness.

****Business goals continued on next page****

5. Redevelop underutilized and blighted places adjacent to Central Avenue.

- P1: Remove blighted buildings.
- P2: Redevelop or rehabilitate targeted vacant buildings.
- P3: Improve hardscapes to introduce and improve green infrastructure.
- P4: Rehabilitate alleyways, backs of stores and screen mechanical and storage areas.
- P5: Work with land and building owners to identify redevelopment opportunities that turn the corner onto Central Avenue.

6. Restore and remediate contaminated sites throughout the Downtown.

- P1: Identify contaminated sites within the downtown.
- P2: Seek funding opportunities for remediation efforts.
- P3: Take measures to improve identified properties that are key development sites.
- P4: Protect water quality.

VISITOR/PATRON NEEDS

1. Consider ways to enhance the overall environment by directing new development, recreation, and placemaking opportunities within strategic spaces, properties, and corridors.

P1: Consider an *art and culture district* along Central Avenue and develop guidelines that support this purpose.

P2: Develop design guidelines for the downtown that specifically addresses improvements to the pedestrian environment.

P3: Incorporate public art and placemaking principles.

P4: Encourage and support outdoor dining and sidewalk seating to add vibrancy and sense of place within the public realm.

P5: Identify and build pocket parks.

P6: Review current and future parking needs as part of the ongoing master planning process.

2. Ensure a safe, attractive, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian networks within the downtown.

P1: Cater to pedestrians in the downtown as a priority.

P2: Ensure the downtown is bikeable with adequate bicycle parking to support an active lifestyle.

P3: Improve walkability through complete-street design.

P4: Increase vegetation and greenery throughout the downtown through seasonal plantings, boulevard trees, planter boxes, and green infrastructure.

P5: Connect visitors and residents to green space.

3. Coordinate operating hours of downtown businesses to leverage visitor spending.

P1: Encourage the formation of a Downtown Association.

P2: Help coordinate and attend resident meetings and encourage city leaders and police staff to attend.

P3: Encourage coordination between businesses and residents to create regular establishment and retail hours.

P4: Develop materials that illustrate downtown amenities.

4. Increase awareness of downtown amenities by strategically placing wayfinding and signage within the downtown core.

P1: Create a welcoming gateway for people coming to the downtown.

P2: Connect the post office to the larger downtown.

P3: Create regularly occurring downtown events.

P4: Identify key intersections for signage and gateway placement.

P5: Improve the aesthetics of entry corridors and introduce softscape and decorative screening.

P6: Develop a downtown brand.

P7: Identify and develop a Town Square for events, leisure, and activities.

5. Explore innovative partnerships with key community leaders and allies regarding downtown development.

P1: Create an anchor in the downtown that serves as a destination to draw more visitors.

P2: Encourage the formation of a Downtown Association group.

P3: Work with business and property owners to monitor and enforce municipal ordinances and health and safety violations.

P4: Conduct regular walking tours with key stakeholders.

P5: Work to form an investor group to acquire and renovated dated properties.

P6: Encourage community leaders or businesses to partner with downtown development efforts and provide incentives such as naming rights and donations.

Implementation

The city should routinely monitor and evaluate the conditions in the downtown to determine if redevelopment-related programs are working. This evaluation could be done as a part of an annual reporting period. Goals and benchmark indicators should be established to assist in the assessment process. Civic leaders can use measurable indicators to gauge a downtown's health. When tracked over time, these metrics provide vital information about the progress in achieving goals and will indicate if there's a need to more direct (or redirect) action. This process can assist the city in prioritizing its budget and help modify implementation strategies.

Some indicators for measuring may be quantitative in nature, while others are more perceptual. Clear and measurable ways to indicate how well redevelopment strategies are working include:

- › **The downtown image (positive media reports on downtown)**
- › **Demographics (proportion of city's population living near downtown, demographic diversity, population density, and volunteerism)**
- › **Housing, property values, and vacancy rates (number and proportion of housing units in downtown, change in assessed values of downtown property and vacancy rates)**
- › **Economy (business starts, numbers of downtown businesses and employees, sales volumes, business turnover rates, business longevity, hours of operation, tax base growth, income growth, regulation of on-street parking, redevelop grant activity)**
- › **Civic and cultural amenities (proportion of civic and cultural amenities downtown, public gathering spaces, and events)**
- › **Design and land use (land-use mix, pedestrian and bike friendliness)**

Commit to an Incremental but Sustained Approach

Downtown revitalization is an incremental process and the outcomes are not immediately apparent. Change to the downtown realm needs to be incremental, long-term, and cumulative. Redevelopment takes a long-term commitment from both public and private sectors. Sustained commitment and patience from civic leaders are necessary to yield visible and concrete outcomes.

Roles & Responsibilities

Business and Property Owners

Individual businesses must make decisions as to how they wish to operate. Property owners decide how to maintain and improve their buildings. The downtown community also serves as the spark to uniting the downtown business community.

City Council

The Council must be committed to a sustained and incremental approach to implementing this plan. The following are scenarios where the Council will provide action:

- › Approving TIF districts
- › Levying special assessments

Council must be engaged in the redevelopment process. Actions by council can enhance the downtown. The following are examples of support and action:

- › Keep and add community events throughout the year to make downtown the centerpiece, and focal point, of the city.
- › Keep civic institutions concentrated in downtown.
- › Provide staff capacity and resources to plan and undertake projects in the downtown.

Economic Development Authority

The Long Prairie EDA should play a key role in implementing the plan. Important EDA actions include:

- > Acquiring property
- > Making loans
- > Constructing and operating facilities
- > Establishing TIF districts

Land Use Controls

The City of Long Prairie manages land use with two vital tools. The primary tools are 1) the Comprehensive Plan and 2) the adopted zoning ordinance. Both documents should be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure consistency with this plan. The Comprehensive Plan was recently updated, citing implementation strategies to address downtown planning. Focus on the zoning ordinance should occur first. A review of the existing language will ensure consistency and will allow development to occur that fit this plan.

Implementation Matrix

The following chart identifies short- and long-term initiatives within five planning elements:

- > Land use
- > Housing
- > Transportation
- > Park and open space
- > Economic development

The implementation matrix addresses the goals and policies within the plan, and provides a path for implementation for a 15-year time horizon. Prioritization of the initiatives and their corresponding timeframe and priority were provided through steering committee input and public outreach. The initiatives also indicate players within the community should hold the leadership role for implementation.

“

ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Promote the current downtown Long Prairie experience and all it has to offer.

“

ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with area realtors to help promote the business possibilities located in Downtown Long Prairie.

“

ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Develop a downtown banner program.

“

ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with MnDOT to improve downtown signage along Highway 71 and 27.

LAND USE				
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	City Role	Priority	Short or Long Term
Update zoning and subdivision regulations to conform with the Plan.		Lead	High	Short
Conduct annual review and work sessions of the Plan.	Planning Commission/City Council to review the plan yearly and identify completed tasks and potential updates.	Lead	High	Long
Review the City Code for ways to enforce façade upkeep within the downtown.	Identify blighted properties not meeting the current code.	Lead	Medium	Short
Educate landowners and residents of the existing city codes and ordinances.		Lead	Medium	Long
Support mixed-use development.		Lead	High	Long
Review sign ordinance within the downtown area.		Lead	Medium	Short
Consider <i>Main Street Design Standards</i> to establish a downtown sense of place or “flavor.”		Lead	Medium	Long
HOUSING				
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	City Role	Priority	Short or Long Term
Residential				
Identify areas that can be utilized for single-level senior housing <u>adjacent</u> to the downtown area.	Map and market these areas to the community.	Lead	High	Short
Work with developers to create low-income and market-rate housing.		Partnership	Medium	Long
Enhance pedestrian crossings at key intersections.		Lead	High	Short
Ensure dwellings are safe and habitable for renters.		Lead	High	Short
Business				
Support mixed-use development to allow residential uses above commercial uses.		Support	Medium	Long
Patron/Visitor				
Support bed and breakfast uses adjacent to the downtown area.		Lead	Low	Long

TRANSPORTATION				
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	City Role	Priority	Short or Long Term
Residential				
Identify gateway corridors for signage and placemaking features.	Update signage at major entries to downtown with clear graphics, landscaping, and/or gateway features.	Lead	High	Short
Identify and inventory all light posts needing repair and categorize places that can use additional lighting		Lead	High	Immediate
Increase biking opportunities within the downtown area to encourage active living.	Install bike racks by the storefronts.	Lead/support	Medium	Short/med
	Consider studying bike lanes in corridors throughout the downtown.	Lead	Low	Low
Business				
Strategically place new signage to direct people to their locations.	Place signs throughout highways 71 and 27 indicating the businesses downtown	Lead	High	Short
Extend striping to standard-angle parking dimensions.	Identify traffic-calming techniques to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment.	Lead	Medium	Short
Ensure that the parking availability and sidewalks are adequate for business needs.	Identify and inventory all sidewalk issues and locations needing repair.	Lead	High	Short
	Allocate funding for sidewalk improvements.			
Conduct a walking audit to develop strategies to identify missing elements for a safe, transportation environment.	Identify pedestrian ramps and conduct assessments on their compliance in partnership with city staff.	Partner	High	Short
Patron/Visitor				
Stay current on the business types and services that are found downtown.	Develop kiosks or signs that provide maps and names of local business that can be located within walking distance.	Partner	Medium	Short
Ensure crosswalks are clearly visible to ensure safe circulation.	Identify crossings that need pedestrian signage.	Lead	Medium	Short
Identify key intersections to improve pedestrian connectivity through implementing “bump-outs” or increased sidewalk width.	Shorten pedestrian crossing lengths at key intersections.	Lead	Low	Long-term

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE				
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	City Role	Priority	Short or Long Term
Resident				
Create green spaces or pocket parks on vacant lots between buildings.		Lead	High	Long
Develop murals and artwork that enhance the local traditions and themes of the area.		Partnership	Medium	Long
Expand greenspace within the downtown.	Identify an area for a town square or centrally located gathering area.	Lead	High	Short
Patron/Visitor				
Create an inviting sidewalk setting	Incorporate trees and planters in the streetscape to achieve a green environment. Establish a seasonal planting program.	Lead	Medium	Short
Create areas that all ages can utilize	Ensure children to senior age groups have areas to be outside and partake in an active lifestyle.	Lead	Medium	Long
Establish a wayfinding signage system throughout downtown.		Lead	Medium	Short
Support the development of pocket parks.		Lead	Low	Long
Identify areas for public art.		Lead	High	Short

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
Strategy	Sub-Strategy	City Role	Priority	Short or Long Term
Resident				
Work with MN DOT to increase signage along highways.		Partner	High	Short
Encourage events that bring the public together downtown.		Partner	Medium	Long
Business				
Start a Downtown Business Association group		Partner	High	Short
Establish coordinated extended business hours.	Promote that one day a week during summer months all of the downtown businesses are open past 5 p.m.	Partner	Medium	Long
	Develop Thursday evening programming with Concerts in the Park.	Partner	Short	Short
	Use Chamber Bucks as an incentive for activity.	Partner	Short	Short
Establish a Façade Improvement Program for downtown businesses.		Partner	High	Short
Champion the diverse business and culture of the downtown.		Support	Medium	Long
Encourage local financial institutions to develop innovative loan programs for capital improvement and business needs.		Partner	Medium	Long
Provide local market analysis to support investment in the community.		Lead	Medium	Short
Pursue grants to remedy brownfield sites.		Lead	High	Long
Patron/Visitor				
Establish a co-working space to give visitors a place to work while in town.		Partner	Medium	Long
Establish a downtown historic tour through signage.		Support	Medium	Long
Allow sidewalk and patio seating along Central Avenue to support a vibrant environment.		Lead	High	Medium
Establish a farmer's market in the downtown.		Partner	Medium	Long



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with BLANDIN fellows to identify community-based projects.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Conduct annual walking audits to evaluate the downtown physical environment and identify yearly projects.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Interview downtown business owners to determine appropriate financing and grant programs that fit their current and future needs.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Organize a Downtown Association.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Hold a focus group with area artists to identify a public arts plan for the downtown.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Hold a focus group with area artists to identify mural locations or sculpture locations.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Develop a downtown planting program.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Evaluate and study the ability to allow outdoor seating.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Identify appropriate locations for wayfinding signage that shows area businesses, amenities, and locations of services visitors and tourists would need.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Study and evaluate a new signage ordinance, one that adds character to the downtown.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Address walkability. Integrate wayfinding and signage that illustrates route lengths and a history walking tour route.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Interview downtown business owners to determine appropriate financing and grant programs that fit their current and future needs.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with local leaders to learn Spanish either through a class or a workshop.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Utilize “tactical urbanism” to study the effectiveness of pedestrian realm enhancements.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with the Minnesota Main Street program and commit to the program in a way the city sees feasible.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Hold a community forum to identify gateway signage locations.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Work with the MPCA, EPA’s Brownfields Program and the staff to identify funding options for environmental remediation efforts.



ACT NOW INITIATIVE |

Research traditional and non-traditional downtown financing options.



PIZZA

Yellow banner with a logo and text.

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