

GERMANTOWN DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

September 2023



CONTENTS

About This Plan	1
Acknowledgments	2
Vision	3
Topic Visions	4
List of Initiatives	5
GET BUSINESS GOING	6
SELL THE STRENGTHS	14
ENHANCE ASSETS	20
BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARDS AND INTO SERVICE	32
Implementation	42

ABOUT THIS PLAN

Goals

This plan was commissioned by the City of Germantown. The goals are as follows:

1. Establish a comprehensive framework for the public/private sector to work together to address the distressed conditions that impact the long-term viability of downtown.
2. Organize a physical improvement plan to address exterior and interior building conditions, as well as vacant and under-utilized retail/office space to attract more commercial uses.
3. Establish the historic downtown as a regional destination and activity center.
4. Enhance the current streetscape of downtown to provide a safe and attractive experience.

Process

This plan was composed by the Consultant Team in 16 weeks during the spring of 2023. Over 50 individual stakeholders were interviewed. These stakeholders hail from the business sector (including retail, restaurant, professional and personal service, manufacturing, and other small and large business types), non-profit and civic organizations, public officials and staff, and regional organizations.

The Consultant Team met with the Germantown Economic Development Committee four times seeking their guidance and feedback throughout the process. The team visited downtown Germantown several times, walking on every sidewalk and driving on every street, surveying the current conditions of downtown.

Plan Organization and Information

This plan is organized based on implementation management. There are four Topic categories which each have a collection of Initiatives within. There are 23 Initiatives total, numbered from first to last through all four Topic categories. As stated herein, responsibility for remaking downtown Germantown rests on the entire community – not just city government or a few movers and shakers.

Throughout the plan are comments in “quotation” marks and orange boxes. These are statements made by interviewed stakeholders. The Consultant Team assured all of their anonymity to encourage candor, so no quotes are attributed. The goal of having quotes in this plan is not to offend but to cite authentic opinions and concerns. Some may arouse discomfort which is often a necessary step on the journey of genuine change. Problems should be acknowledged in order to be resolved.

We have included a handful of case studies. These supply proof that other places have achieved success with their own initiatives. Germantown should use these examples as starting points, reference, and inspiration.

All photos and graphics are by the Consultant Team unless otherwise indicated.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Consultant Team would like to thank the following people for contributing their time and thoughts to this planning effort:

DOWNTOWN PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Judith Gilleland, City Manager
Tom Winning, Economic Development Committee Chairperson
Pat Higgins, Project Manager / Economic Development

Keith Brane, City Planning Consultant
Frank Dupps Jr., Economic Development Committee
Heidi Grant, Economic Development Committee
Mark Heistand, Economic Development Committee
Mike Kuhn, Economic Development Committee
Will Parsons, Community Relations Manager
Kathryn Youra Polk, Principal Planner, MVRPC
Aaron Sorrell, Community Planning Insights

CITY COUNCIL

Terry Johnson, Mayor
Brian Wafzig
Jeffrey Jones
Bonnie Koogler
Mike Kuhn
Rick Reed
Rob Rettich

MIAMI VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Martin Kim, Director of Community and Regional Planning

MONTGOMERY COUNTY LAND REUTILIZATION CORPORATION

The City wishes to thank the MCLRC for proving a grant to fund this plan.
Michael Grauwelman, Executive Director

INTERVIEWED STAKEHOLDERS

The consultant team would like to thank the following people for donating their time and thoughts to this planning effort.

Chief Dan Alldred*
Clay Alsip
Vickie Benson
Glen Bowman
Jon Burkhardt
Mindy Callahan*
Dr. Mark Cross
Kari Daniel
Frank Dupps
Ron Eifert
Tom Geglein
Ciara Goforth
Bryce Henson
Sheree Henson
Gene Hosler
Spencer Izor
Whitney Izor
Mackensie Jones
Reagan Lemke
Martin Kim
Mike Kuhn
Kelli Novak*
Chief Roy McGill*
Steve Mersch

Susan Miller
Jonathan Moore*
Jackie Ritter
Eric Sauer
Pat Schaeft
Scott Schmid
Alex Shartle
Patricia Shively*
Molly Siroki
Julie Smith
Randy Stiver*
Vickie Taylor
Tiffani Tobias*
Dominique Tussing
Jessi Uland
Greg Van Bebber
Scott Weidle
Wes Weidle
Jennifer Dean Williams
Forrest Williams
Chip Wirrig*

* Denotes City Staff

INTERVIEW VENUES

The Consultant Team would also like to thank the following locations in Germantown for hosting stakeholder meetings (and feeding us):

Alleyway Cafe
The Creamery
The Public Library of Germantown
Germantown / German Township Parks
Germantown Senior Center

Germantown – in 2028

Located in the **rolling farmland** of central southwest Ohio, Germantown was first settled by the **Shawnee**. In 1804 a group of **German speaking immigrants** chose the area as a site for a **grist mill**. By the mid-1800s milling paired with distilling as the **Mudlick Distillery** turned out 30 barrels per day of liquid refreshment. **Cigars**, often an accompaniment to a good drink also were a key industry into the 1970s, with tobacco **warehouses and factories** dotting the landscape. Though the nature of its industries has changed, **good jobs and family life** are still the backbone of this **thriving** community. The **walkable** downtown, laid out in **1814**, was placed on the **National Register of Historic Places** in 1976.

In 2028, downtown Germantown is vibrant.

Beautifully restored buildings are filled with creative **small businesses** and residents. The historic **Florentine Hotel** anchors a lively **dining and drinking** scene. Among local attractions are **art** filled **alleyways**, a bowstring truss **covered bridge** unique in the country and one of the few remaining **Lustron houses**. **Concrete lions**, sprinkled throughout the community maintain a watchful eye. Some of the best **parks and bike paths** in the region are amenities for visitors and locals alike. A **year-round** schedule of downtown **events** welcomes **all ages** and catching the latest new movie at the **By-Jo** is a popular night out.

Just a little **off the beaten path**, this **friendly** small city is definitely **worth a detour** with its winning combination of **historic charm and 21st century energy**.



GET BUSINESSES GOING

Germantown needs to get back into business, taking a step back and creating a strong integrated framework of support for both existing operators and startups. Downtown needs MORE. More businesses, restaurants, services, lodging, apartments... more of just about everything.

The community needs a long-term focus on enhancing downtown energy. This will include not only a plan for downtown infrastructure improvements but also a lively and targeted schedule of events, coordinated marketing, and a commitment to restoring and maintaining a center city which reflects Germantown's position as a community of both value and pride.



SELL THE STRENGTHS

Germantown has too much valuable information presently going unheard. The City has recently introduced a printed newsletter. Just long enough to convey a rich collection of information, this publication is now going quarterly into the homes of City residents and businesses. An initiative is underway to extend that reach Township wide.

More news please, by every medium and means available. So much of the good about Germantown - the right now, things are happening energy of this city - is going unheard. Changing that will change perceptions in essential ways, build pride, and help in the work ahead.



ENHANCE ASSETS

Downtown is quaint and historic, but its infrastructure is worn. If downtown isn't attractive, people won't want to visit. These people include not only potential customers, but also residents, business owners and tourists. For a city to thrive, it must have a healthy downtown.

Germantown is embarking on a long-term effort of renewal. This effort needs to be substantive and comprehensive. Recognize it is the work of several years and call upon the efforts and investment of many.

It's a big job but one worthwhile for such a historic and engaging Ohio city.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARDS AND INTO SERVICE

Germantown has very good historic building stock. Moreover, many of its downtown assets are intact, differentiating it from cities in which enthusiastic demolition has occurred.

But too many of those once proud buildings are rundown and wholly or partially vacant. Adding to injury, some valuable storefront space is visibly used for storage, producing an appearance of deterioration and lifelessness downtown.

Yet, those property owners who have renovated, either at street level or in upper stories, have almost universally seen economic benefit. Restored properties have both community wide and direct ownership benefits. More renovation, now.

LIST OF INITIATIVES

GET BUSINESSES GOING

1. Offer a Navigator
2. Help with Financing (case study: Lawrenceburg, IN.)
3. Clarify Processes
4. Fill Storefronts
5. Start a Street Market
6. Recruit Continuously

SELL THE STRENGTHS

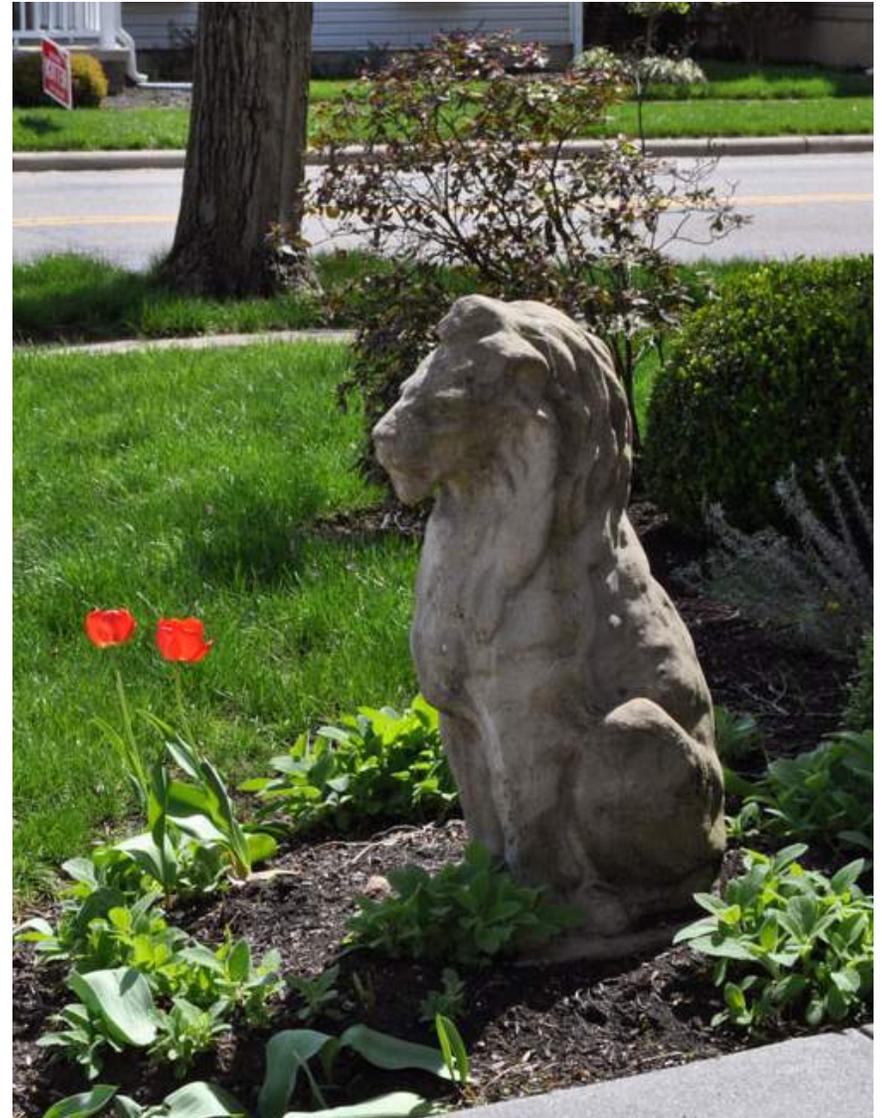
7. The Chamber of Commerce is Key (case study: Warwick, NY.)
8. Identify a Shameless Promoter
9. Celebrate Success
10. Community Awards
11. Collaborate with MetroParks and Kercher Community Park

ENHANCE ASSETS

12. Create a Wayfinding Network (case study: Bellefontaine, OH.)
13. Highlight Six Core intersections
14. Address Narrow Sidewalks
15. Add Outdoor Dining (case study: Lawrenceburg & Cincinnati)
16. Reclaim Alleys (case study: Evansville, IN.)
17. Public Art / Murals

BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARDS AND INTO SERVICE

18. Create a CIC
19. Create a Building Improvements Pre-Development Fund
20. Outsides First
21. Code Enforcement / Vacant Building Maintenance License
22. Encourage Renovation of Upper Floors (case study: Lofts 110)
23. Tourism Rentals



GET BUSINESS GOING

Initiatives:

1. Offer a Navigator
2. Help with Financing
3. Clarify Processes
4. Fill Storefronts
5. Start a Street Market
6. Recruit Continuously

Germantown has an illustrious past and, prospectively, a wonderful future. Its current state, however, could use a little brushing up.

The most pervasive opinion voiced by stakeholders was that downtown needs **MORE**. More businesses, restaurants, personal services, lodging, apartments... more of just about everything.

Given the abundance of vacant commercial real estate, and the paucity of current downtown offerings, more is a fair request.

Downtown Germantown has a great many vacant and/or underutilized storefronts. What happened? How did a once thriving small city lose its downtown mojo? Did marketplace conditions change so drastically?

For several decades Main Street retail - in small cities and large - faltered as car centric lifestyles anchored shopping in malls and strip centers. Walkable downtowns fell out of favor. Both merchants and dining establishments struggled.

During that period Germantown's beautiful center city, like that of many neighboring communities, hollowed out.

Legacy property owners, often unable to attract good tenants, let properties go fallow. Investment didn't seem to make economic sense. Properties became



“How am I supposed to open my business on Saturday night when nothing else is open?”

or remained vacant. Maintenance was minimal.

But marketplace conditions have changed again and now those trends favor Germantown.

Downtown's biggest asset is its building stock. But much of that resource is, at present, inaccessible.

New business owners reported months-long searches for suitable storefronts. They could see vacant first floor spaces but either couldn't find a landlord with whom to negotiate, or lease terms which might allow them to succeed.

Some, the very persistent ones, did finally secure a storefront. Others, unfortunately, gave up and went elsewhere.

Further, business owners who have

moved their businesses out of Germantown shared the concern that lack of critical mass affected them negatively. There simply were not enough adjacent business to attract patrons.

There is modest downtown success in residential. Property owner stakeholders who have renovated apartments rented those easily and for good rates. But too few renovations have occurred and vacant upper stories are still easily visible.

Business districts thrive as destinations where residents become regulars and visitors find a wealth of interesting places to eat and be entertained for an extended period. Density of both is any downtown's secret to success.

So, there's work to be done.

Germantown needs to get back into business, creating a strong integrated framework of support for both existing operators and startups.

That in place, the community needs a long-term focus on maintaining downtown energy. This will include a plan for infrastructure improvements, a lively and targeted schedule of events, coordinated marketing, and a commitment to restoring and maintaining a center city. The message: Germantown is a community of both value and obvious pride.

But most important, Germantown needs to unlock the doors – and the potential – of those vacant storefronts and residential upper stories.

So, what can the Germantown community do to help?

GET BUSINESS GOING

1. Offer a Navigator

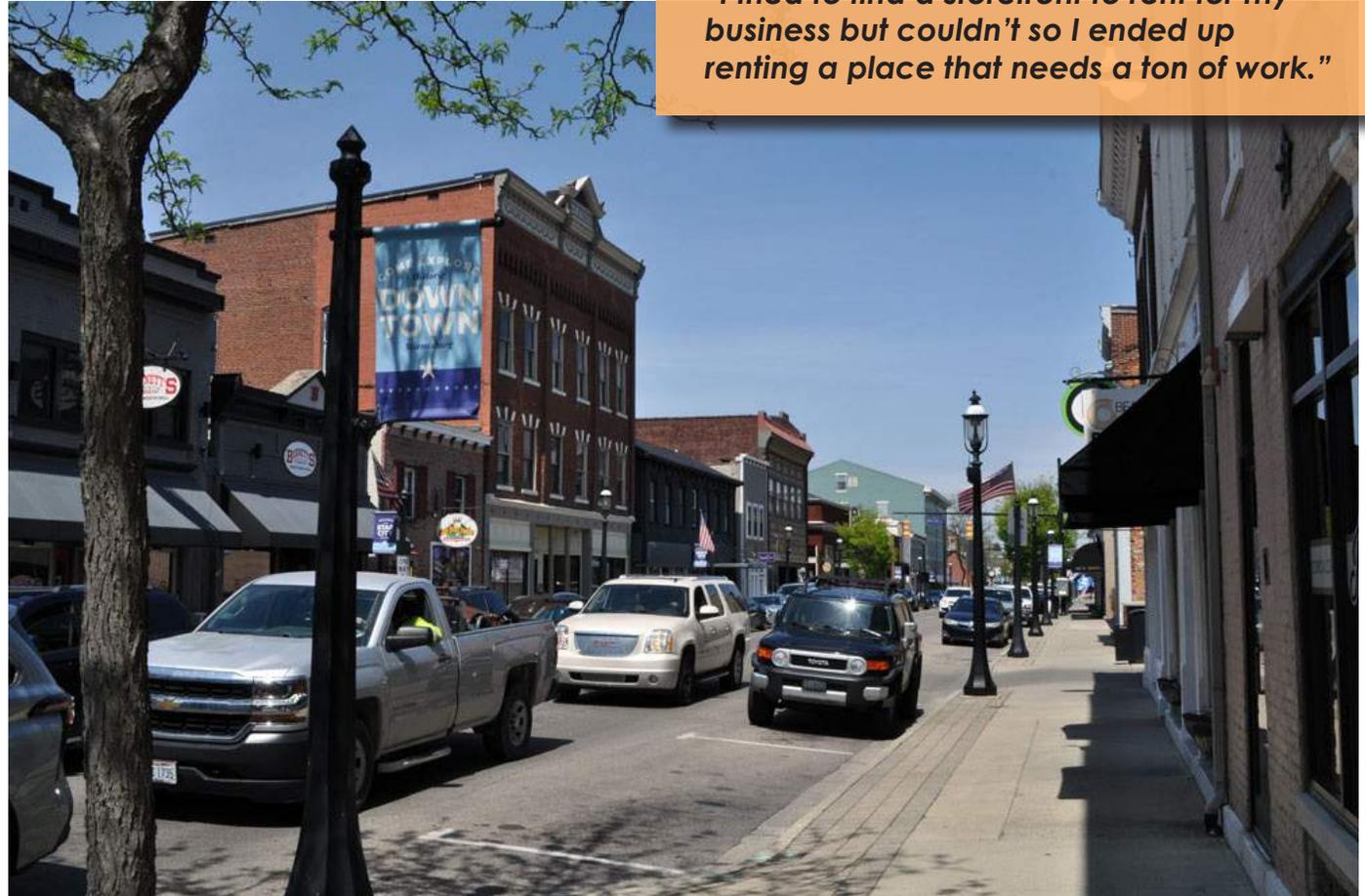
Stakeholders reported multiple challenges when trying to open businesses or renovate properties in Germantown. These hurdles range from difficulties understanding building code requirements and approval processes to executing fair leases. Once open, they continue to face issues such as promotion and marketing or operational issues like outdoor dining and trash removal. There are a multitude of conundrums that continually confront small business and property owners.

Germantown has experienced City staff, though they are few. The plans and suggestions outlined herein will represent several years of focused effort assisting building owners to ready properties for new occupants, attracting and recruiting tenants, assisting with financing and build-out recommendations as needed, and working with a cross section of leaders to ensure momentum.

In the medium and long term, these tasks might be undertaken by a paid staffer, someone serving full time as a **Downtown Manager**.

The organization *Main Street America* has a whole program for small city downtown revitalization. *Heritage Ohio* is another resource for information and guidance. But Germantown doesn't need to be part of a program to embrace the concept of a manager.

According to Wikipedia: "A *main street manager* is a professional who helps small cities maintain and improve their main street, typically through a government program or public-private partnership. Objectives may include economic, preservation, restoration, marketing, and relations



"I tried to find a storefront to rent for my business but couldn't so I ended up renting a place that needs a ton of work."

between business, consumers and the government".

The advantages of such a role are many but most notably it means there is someone whose sole every day job is to ensure that downtown thrives.

In the near term this role could be filled by a part timer and/or consultant, especially when a lot of the early

challenges will be fundamentally real estate based. Working with building owners and recruiting tenants will be important first stage initiatives.

Over time however, Germantown will need the continuing energies and commitment of one who can work daily with business owners, help prospects navigate city processes and ensure that

the customer experience is consistently excellent.

Such a person will not only help find downtown businesses, they will be constantly attentive to help them – and thus the city – succeed. They are likely to be young, but they must be capable and committed because they're going to have a big job.

GET BUSINESS GOING

2. Help with Financing

Revitalization takes money.

In the beginning, surprisingly small sums can have disproportionate impact. But building out storefronts, restoring buildings, creating contemporary style apartments is costly.

City officials should first investigate if there are any available resources which can be allocated to areas of redevelopment. Germantown has an excellent grant writer who will inevitably go searching. Some funds must come from the city, especially in early days.

But it cannot be denied that these avenues are unlikely to meet the full need. The market, via local investors and other supporters, is going to have to step up.

Family foundations may be persuaded that the goal of revitalization fits their giving model. Corporations might have wherewithal to contribute.

These suggestions must be supported by development of a structure which ensures that monies have a clearly denoted use. Even the suggestion of waste or bureaucratic spending, however misinformed, is enough to cause concern.

Later herein, formation of a CIC is discussed. That is one means by which local champions can provide resources dedicated to specific objectives.

By this or any other means determined to be useful, Germantown needs to find financial support for its downtown objectives.

CASE STUDY: LAWRENCEBURG SMALL BUSINESS ACTION GRANTS

In this Indiana city of 5,100, Lawrenceburg Main Street Inc. and the Lawrenceburg Redevelopment Commission have established a variety of grant programs for downtown small businesses.

Among these, the Small Business Action Grant is available to new and existing businesses in the Main Street District. The goal of this program is to “enhance the economic vitality of the downtown business and entertainment district through the recruitment of retail, restaurant, and specialty shops.”

Matching grants are awarded in amounts up to \$7500. For every \$1 of grant funding, the owner must provide an equal \$1 of investment.

Lawrenceburg’s Small Business Action Grants are for interior physical improvements. There are strict eligibility requirements including a minimum of one year in business and a business open not less than five days a week.

Funded projects must be completed within 6 months of grant approval.

Lawrenceburg Main Street Inc. also administers an exterior improvement program for signs and awnings. These grants also are matching, at \$2 or \$3 of grant funding per every \$1 of owner investment, depending on the grant.

Grant programs help kick-start a business district. Providing incentives, even in small amounts, encourages business and property owners to make investments. Each upgrade helps motivate neighbors to do the same.

Grants usually are structured as matching grants to ensure that owners have a stake in the investment and funds are used for genuinely impactful improvements.



GET BUSINESS GOING

3. Clarify Processes

First, create and/or alter permitting materials.

Currently the Germantown Building Department has two documents which explain the permitting process for commercial property. Information is also available on the city's website.

First is a 2-page brochure called the "Guide for Opening and/or Expanding a Small Business. Second is a 2-page technical summary with zoning and building permit applications attached.

For some stakeholders these brochures were helpful. Others though felt they failed to adequately explain a complicated process. The technical summary was judged too technical and thus intimidating.

The reality, however, is that the process of preparing premises for a commercial operation is daunting and few of the requirements are well understood by most small business operators. For restaurateurs, the complications multiply exponentially.

Many new business owners would be well served to hire an architect or other professional to help navigate the permitting processes. But their information source of first resort most likely will be the city or, once established, a Downtown Manager.

All stakeholders would be well-served by revised materials which are determinedly clear and more user-friendly.

These materials should address why various permits are necessary. They should explain that a zoning code is locally produced. Its goal is to assure the public interest is served for

aspects such as building use, size and placement, parking, and signage.

But local concerns are not the full picture.

Materials should explain that elements of the building code are mandated by the State of Ohio, premised on legitimate and legislated concerns of life safety, health, and welfare of building occupants.

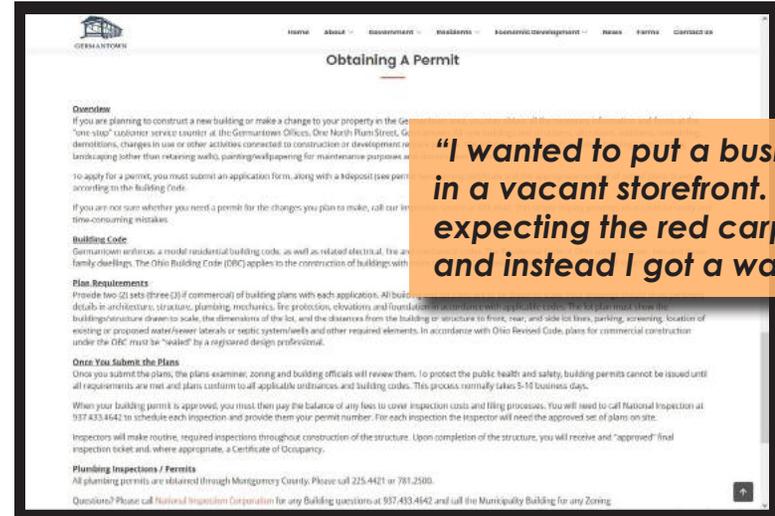
They should note clearly that building code issues can be complex and many risks posed by buildings and spaces are unrecognized by most people. Materials should also note that applicants may find they can save time, money, and headaches by consulting a registered architect or engineer prior to creating the plans required for permit applications.

Materials could have subsections specifically for certain business types. For example, a section for restaurant owners would list the permits and processes necessary for such an operation, including county health department permitting.

Graphics would be a visual means to explain key aspects of the process.

While new materials should have contact information and other data such as regulation citations, it may be beneficial also to direct applicants to a website to ensure the most current information. Information should be absolutely consistent across both methods of communication, updated as necessary.

Finally, materials should make the point, again, that successfully navigating regulatory processes is important but not always easy.



Next, create an interactive website.

The city's current website has two pages explaining permitting. Despite several people having recently completed the permitting process, stakeholder awareness of these pages was low.

Short Term Revamp:

- In the short term, Germantown should revamp key web pages.
- The Commercial Building page has permit fees at the top and an "Obtaining a Permit" section at the bottom. This should be reversed.
- The general section should be rewritten, in user-friendly language, to fully explain types of permits needed for each business type. It also should inform which permits and inspections are governed by the county.
- Remembering that citizens are rarely conversant with City procedures, the page should clearly, and sequentially, explain the process. If, for example, a zoning approval is required to begin the building permit process, this

"I wanted to put a business in a vacant storefront. I was expecting the red carpet and instead I got a wall."

should be spelled out.

- The web page also could display a process flow chart and have a checklist for various permit types. Graphics may be helpful.

Long Term Web New Build:

- Germantown needs an informative, interactive 21st century website. Such a site could explain permitting processes, host fillable forms, accept permit applications, display the status of pending applications, and issue communications to and from permitting staff (including plans examiners at the City's 3rd party consultant).
- The site could accommodate zoning, building, business, Vacant Building Maintenance Licenses, festival permits, and other types of permissions required by the city.
- It could also be a rich and current source of information about Downtown – events, businesses, and restaurants – all designed to support operators and entice customers.

GET BUSINESS GOING

4. Fill Storefronts

Downtowns are, principally, centers of commerce.

Though not, at present, in Germantown.

Already noted, there are too many vacant buildings and too few businesses. Recently, however, a few young entrepreneurs have moved in. This momentum, while slight, is significant.

How to build on it?

Develop pop-up / revolving retail.

Ultimately filling and operating storefronts is the province of the free market rather than government. But in the early days, coordinating with downtown landlords, the City may have a role in kick-starting things.

Small businesses face big challenges, especially in getting their products and ideas to market. A pop-up shop is a fully outfitted shell that can accommodate virtually any kind of retail business. These spaces are designed to allow for the testing of products and services in real-time, without the typical overhead costs and time-consuming processes that come with a long lease.

For small cities, pop up stores can be a way for great ideas to incubate before graduating to a permanent location. Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit is essential for economic development and sustainability in small towns.

The property owner can provide the structure, shelving, layout design, point-of-sale systems, and more to help each small business efficiently test their concepts without long-term commitment or expensive overhead costs.

Availability of these operating amenities, provided by a landlord or supported

by a grant or business investment program, also means the nascent small business owner doesn't have to navigate the permitting and build-out process in the early days of establishing their business.

Perhaps the city can create a short-term rent subsidy program which incentivizes the landlord to participate and make improvements while reducing the cost burden for tenants.

A pop-up supports growth within a commercial district by providing rotating retail possibilities for the community to sample. With tenant rotation every few months, there is always something new to explore. That excitement brings people downtown again and again.

For the retailer, pop-up offers a chance to understand the market and prove concept before investing in a permanent storefront and extended lease.

The Main Street Marketplace in Bellefontaine, Ohio has a variety of small office, retail and restaurant spaces available for lease to small operators. The landlord pays all the utilities (electric, gas, water, sewer trash and internet) with the tenant only responsible for monthly rent.

“Social on Main” in Mansfield, Ohio is a combination venue which boasts available spaces for retailers who want to test their concepts as well as event spaces for community meetings and parties.

Similar venues are popping up in small cities throughout the Midwest.

“We should stop fooling around ... and focus on local buildings and businesses.”



GET BUSINESS GOING

5. Start a Street Market

Germantown has several special occasions, festivals, parades, and events, including Pretzel Festival, Saturday Nights Out, the Christmas horse parade, and others. These are excellent contributors to the greater Germantown community and deserve continuing support.

However, stakeholders frequently commented that while such events may be good for general marketing, and civic pride, they don't generate much direct business downtown.

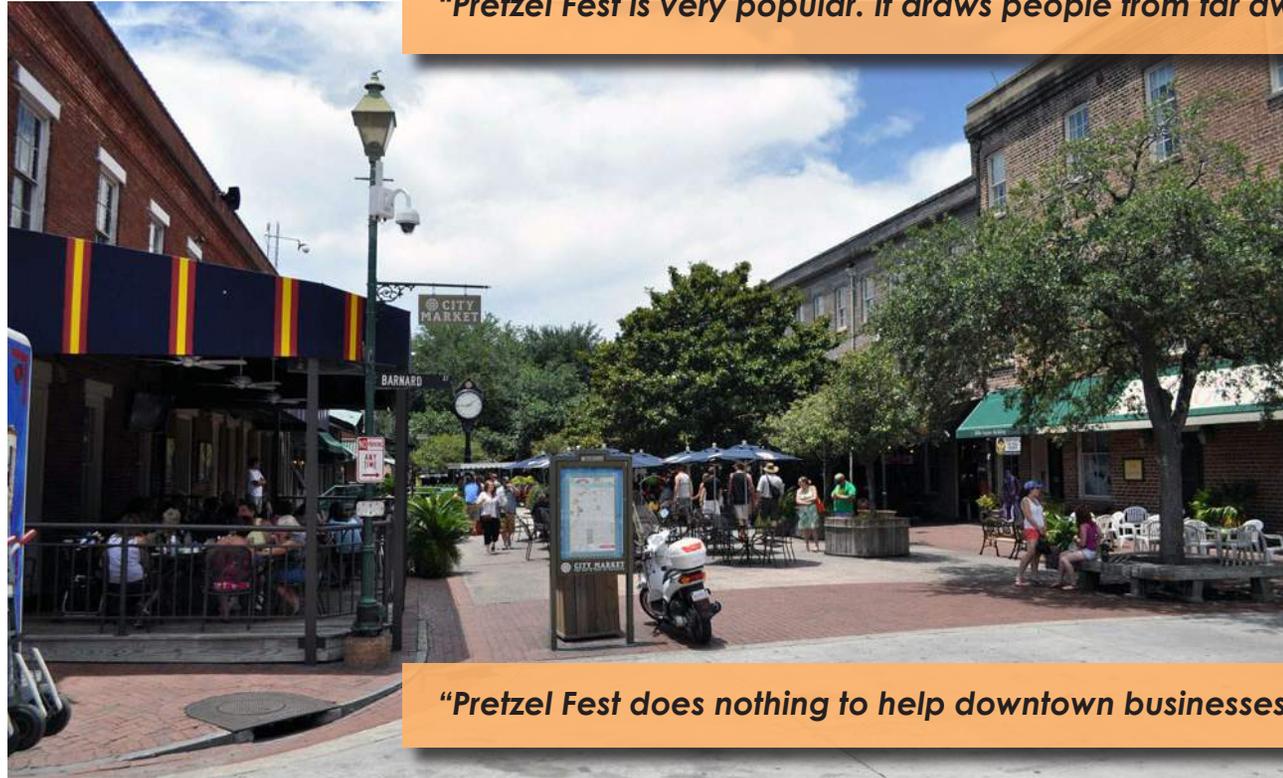
Commenters recognize volunteer time is precious and can only support so many initiatives. Nonetheless they expressed a strong desire for at least some events intended specifically to drive merchant revenues in the business district.

The problem with many events is that they are fundamentally antithetical to shopping and dining. They are entertainments, often with available street food. Attendees have a divided focus – the event, the band, the crowd, the environment. All of which serves as a barrier to retail sales.

Germantown needs at least an occasional event with a specific retail focus.

A Street Market might occupy a section of Main or Center Street, closing the area to traffic for a weekend morning and afternoon. The goal would be to reintroduce downtown as a mercantile center, not only to visitors but also to residents who may have lost the thread.

Aimed at shoppers, including both residents and visitors, in the near term such an event also has another target of equal importance. It should be a recruiting event for potential merchants.



“Pretzel Fest is very popular. It draws people from far away.”

“Pretzel Fest does nothing to help downtown businesses.”

Available downtown storefronts should be open and highlighted. Prospective retailers with a booth in the market will not only make sales on the day but have a chance to consider this locale as a good place to do business long term.

Over 200,000 people visit Germantown and Twin Creek MetroParks each year, many driving through the heart of town. This is an untapped horde of potential customers.

And there are other opportunities. The Street Market could be coordinated with other events in and around Germantown. For example, if the disc golf course at Kercher Park is hosting a weekend tournament, the Street Market

on those days should be marketed directly to tournament organizers and participants. It could host booths specifically geared toward participants such as outdoor active-wear clothing, disks, and adventure trips.

The Street Market should have colorful, abundant elements such as umbrella tables and sunshades. Planters, banners, and other visually interesting elements would proudly notify something interesting is underway.

Vendors for the Street Market can include food and drink sales, outdoor activity promotion, retail items, craft work, and even services such as knife sharpening and antiques valuation.

Handouts can highlight participants, especially existing brick and mortar retailers both within the defined area and on the fringes.

Current downtown businesses should be offered prominent signage and priority booth space if they want an operation supplemental to their store.

In high season, these should be regular occurrences – tied to events but also just to the calendar – like Final Fridays or Second Saturdays so that folks can come to expect downtown to be a lively and inviting place on a regular basis.

GET BUSINESS GOING

6. Recruit Continuously

Pop up shops are a potential source of permanent brick and mortar merchants. Street markets introduce prospective operators to our location. Both initiatives should be seen not only for their present value but also for their usefulness as recruiting tools. Our Downtown Manager should establish and maintain relationships with these prospects.

But there is also a need to actively seek out the businesses wanted.

First is understanding the definition of 'wanted'. What is lacking in downtown? What is gone and especially missed? What is admired elsewhere?

Business recruiting is best begun by developing a practical vision which ties answers to these and other questions together with available real estate. No point wanting a particular thing if there is no available spot in which to locate it.

But then again, the right retailers and restaurateurs are highly creative. What might be an unacceptable space for a chain operator could be very workable for an independent entrepreneur. And those are the ones perfect for downtown. Chains we have in abundance elsewhere.

The next step is sales – selling our community as the right place to be in business.

Known in the real estate industry as “door knock recruiting”, this is a time-consuming process. It involves making and remaking lists of possibilities, adjusting and deleting for those which have become impossible, and having seemingly endless conversations, not only with potential operators but also with anyone, anywhere who might know a potential operator.

Sometimes there's luck. Germantown has had some of that lately with those clever young entrepreneurs who proactively chose this downtown.

But usually, as in so many other things, there's just doing the work, day after day.

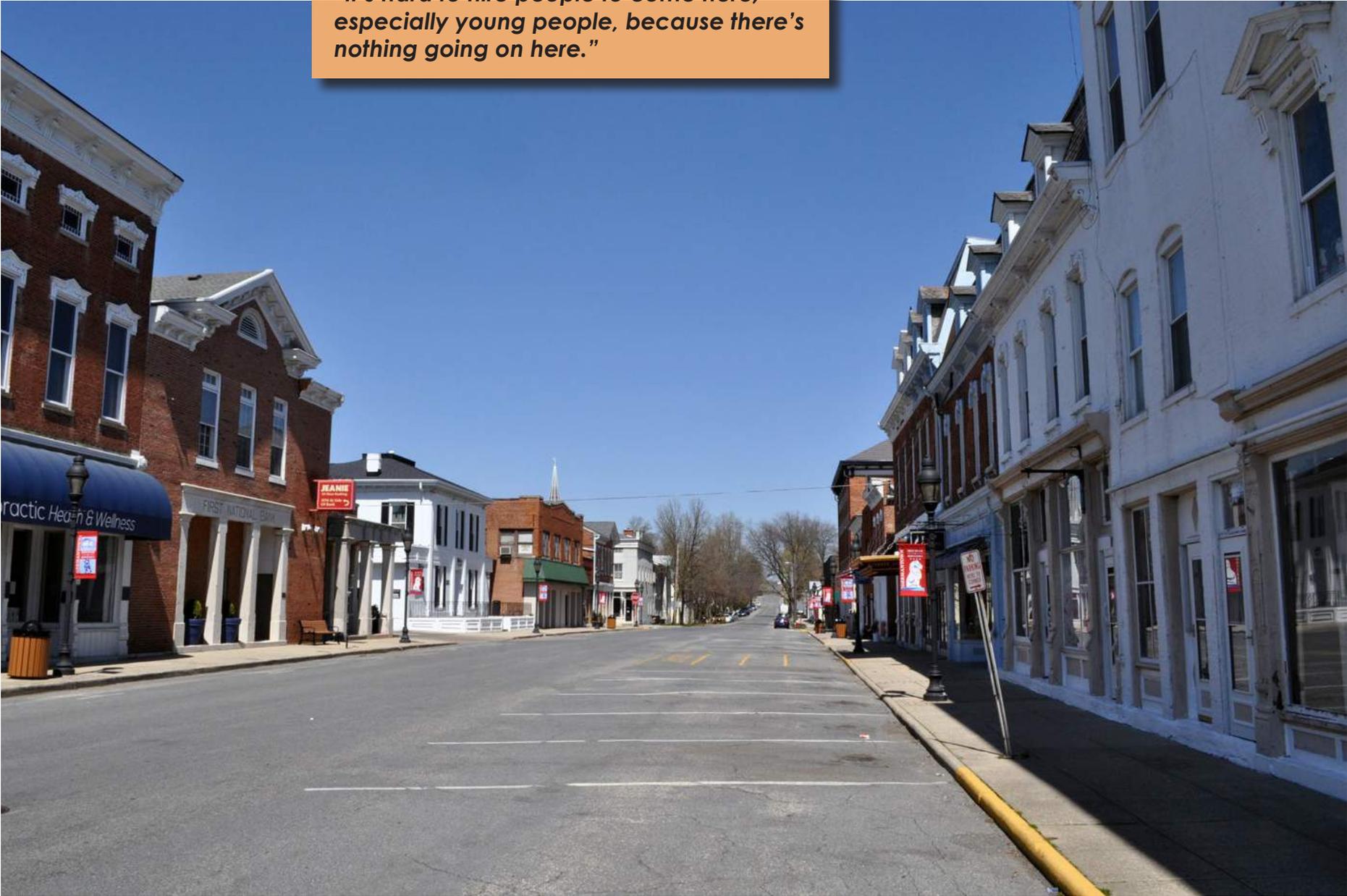
Piece by piece a city is rebuilt.

“We can only pull so much patronage from Germantown. We have to make it worth the drive from Dayton.”



GET BUSINESS GOING

“It’s hard to hire people to come here, especially young people, because there’s nothing going on here.”



SELL THE STRENGTHS

Initiatives:

7. The Chamber of Commerce is Key
8. Identify a Shameless Promoter
9. Celebrate Success
10. Community Awards
11. Collaborate with MetroParks and Kercher Community Park

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?

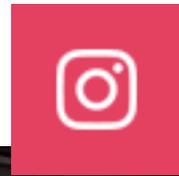
This philosophical trope signifies the importance – or lack thereof – of the unheard.

Germantown has too much valuable information presently going unheard. The City has recently introduced a printed newsletter. Just long enough to convey a rich mixture of information, such as local events sponsored by community groups, this publication is now going quarterly into the homes of City residents and businesses. An initiative is underway to extend that reach Township wide.

Printed matters because many are still most comfortable with this format and keep it around as a resource.

More please, by every medium and means available. In stakeholder sessions it became clear that so much of the good about Germantown – the ‘right now, things are happening’ energy of this city – is going unheard.

Changing that will change perceptions in essential ways, build pride and help in the work outlined herein.



“Germantown has a lot going for it. It has good parks; it’s quaint; it’s a warm, friendly community. But some are resistant to change.”

SELL THE STRENGTHS

7. The Chamber of Commerce is Key

The revitalization of a city takes a village. Often a Chamber of Commerce is the biggest driver and cheerleader.

Especially in small cities, it is important for the Chamber, city economic development professionals, downtown non-profits, and private developers to have harmonized goals, strong relationships, and open lines of communication.

An active Chamber is a connection point for businesses. It can provide a place for comradery and mentorship. It can assist in finding potential grant or tax credit opportunities or it can advocate to governments on behalf of private developers or business owners.

But to provide these services a Chamber must have a collective calling behind which all of its members are aligned and focused. Such a mission must be worthy of support and ongoing energy. Business owners have time to spend but not time to waste.

Germantown's Chamber of Commerce does not lack desire or knowledge - just capacity.

To build its capacity, Germantown's Chamber of Commerce should adopt a clear mission along with a set of focused objectives (this plan outlines several). These will provide member businesses with a reason for assembling and a series of steps for taking action.

This, in turn, will likely lead to increased membership and expanded organizational capacity.

Some of the 23 initiatives outlined in this plan can provide the Chamber with its set of objectives.

Immediately or eventually - as capacity allows - the Germantown Chamber of Commerce could spearhead the following (listed as numbered in this plan):

1. Offer a Navigator
5. Start a Street Market
6. Recruit Business
8. Identify a Shameless Promoter
9. Celebrate Successes
11. Coordinate with MetroParks
12. Create a Wayfinding Network
15. Add Outdoor Dining
23. Promote Short-term Rental

Just as important as achieving objectives is the advertisement of accomplishments. Through word of mouth as well as traditional and social media, the Chamber can promote victories and summon a preferred future. Stakeholders explained the voices of complainers and cynics too often fills the air. Let's replace that with good news and victories.

CASE STUDY: WARWICK, NY

Germantown's Chamber of Commerce can take some inspiration from the town of Warwick, New York.

Facebook and Instagram are the primary marketing tools for this lively community, with the Facebook page run by the Chamber of Commerce and the Instagram Hello Warwick Valley run by an independent 501(c)3 called Community2gether.

Community2gether is an all-volunteer group and posts to Instagram three times a week with stories, events and other promotions focused on the Warwick Valley. The Facebook page is also frequently updated. Posts are diverse and low key, but unfailingly promotion centric.



The posting strategy for both accounts has three guiding principles:

- post consistently
- post material that is interesting
- allow and encourage engagement and participation with the page

Every week, the page publishes a post featuring highlights for the coming weekend. All photos and text on the page reinforce the core message: Warwick is charming, eclectic, and lively. Highlights usually shine a spotlight on a chosen local business while also putting forward a few ideas for weekend activities, positioning Warwick as a destination.

The underlying theme is that there's always something going on here so visit anytime to experience something fun.

Additional posting tactics include such as 'day in the life' entries, giving a glimpse into what life in the village is like on a day-to-day basis.

Because of these postings, the Warwick Chamber Facebook page has built up more than 5,000 followers in the span of two years. The Instagram Account has more than 1,900 followers. On both accounts, almost all posts are liked, shared, and commented on widely.

SELL THE STRENGTHS

8. Identify a Shameless Promoter

Germantown needs someone who is focused regularly on promotion.

This position might be managed by the Chamber. Perhaps, in the beginning, even held by a volunteer.

But it's a real job and an important one. The holder needs a good sense of how to use social media, a willingness to engage widely in the community and a lot of spunky energy.

Event coordination should be part of the portfolio, managing not only those currently on the schedule but also proposing new ones large and small, targeted to defined goals.

Events are often assumed to be almost impulsive. Car lovers plan car shows: epicures look forward to food truck rallies and so on.

But well-planned events are also anchors in a marketing strategy. Who is the target audience for this one, and why? What local event, business sector or objective are we promoting by stealth?

The promoter will be the one to analyze that, build events which support specific objectives and promote them, well, shamelessly.

They will also take on the other promotional items outlined herein and add their own ingenuity to the mix.

"Germantown needs a shameless promoter"



9. Celebrate Success

As already noted, Germantown has an unfortunate tendency to undersell. There are good things happening. People need to hear more about those.

While stakeholders acknowledged strengths, the prevalent feeling was negative. Many recounted stories – both true and false - of failures from long ago.

Rumors and misinformation fill the vacuum created when good news is quiet.

Germantown should celebrate every milestone.

- New business openings should be applauded. Ribbon cuttings, organized by the Chamber of Commerce and involving the mayor and others, should be promoted in the local newspaper, social media, the Germantown Quarterly and every other possible outlet.
- A temporary, movable **New Business – Welcome to Germantown!** sign could be placed on the sidewalk in front of newcomers during their first month of operation. The Mayor, city staff and council members should be sure to visit – and ideally shop – during those early days. Then they should spread the word.
- Milestones for existing businesses also should be celebrated. Such events could include anniversaries (one, five, ten, twenty, and twenty-five years in business); re-openings, expansions, new product lines, business partnerships, and other benchmark occasions.
- New menu items are an easy way to call attention to a restaurant. Can there be a spotlight of the month on the City website? A recipe might even be included, or a brewery profile for a new beer on tap.

SELL THE STRENGTHS

10. Community Awards

Pride is effervescent, often created simply by calling attention to a cause for it. And that begins at home because everyone wants to know that their place is great.

Accolades provide appreciation to people for hard work and critical investments. They can also inspire decisions to garner distinctions in the future.

Awards named for prominent citizens of the present or past are often especially prized.

Germantown should honor its contributors. These commemorations can designate a wide range of achievements but should be made as public as possible.

Several active organizations could issue awards:

- The Germantown Historical Society
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The City government
- Social service organizations
- City Beautiful Commission

Recognitions can be annual, occasional, or singular. Some can even generate nomination to more

widely recognized honors such as state historic preservation awards.

Designations might include:

- Best Façade Renovation of the Year
- Best Interior Renovation
- Best New Apartments
- Best Property Beautification
- Good Neighbor
- Existing Business
- New Business
- Civic Organization
- Individual Volunteer

Eventually, Germantown may wish to coordinate award efforts and create an annual event. This would provide

another occasion of civic pride and could also be used as a modest fundraising anchor for civic programs.

Celebrating milestones will send a message of esteem to those living and working in Germantown. They will then become messengers of pride to others and the ripple effect will have begun.

Drown-out the naysayers with an ever growing and well-informed band of home-grown cheerleaders.



"Most of [the Mudlick Tap House] patrons were from out of town but there was no reason for them to stay or come back because there's nothing else in town going on."



SELL THE STRENGTHS

11. Collaborate with MetroParks and Kercher Community Park

More than 200,000 people visit the Twin Valley Conservation Corridor (Germantown and Twin Creek MetroParks) each year. Thousands of others visit Kercher Community Park – including families and athletic teams.

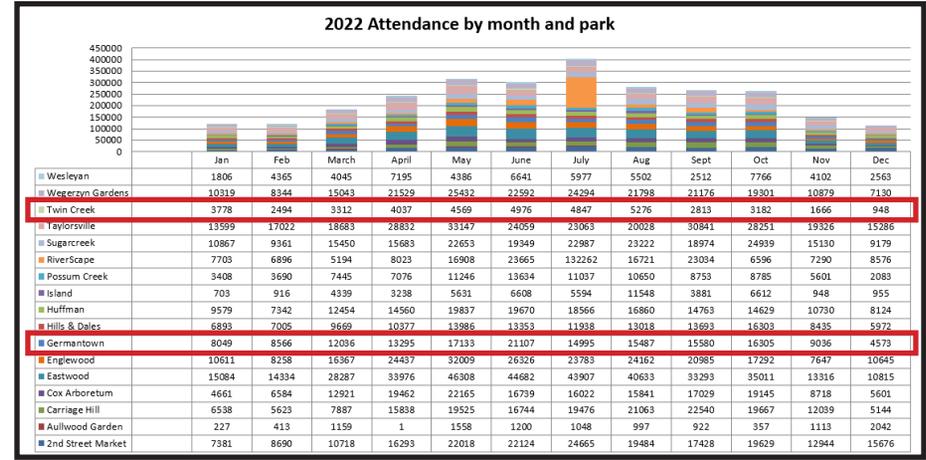
These visitors provide Germantown with perhaps its greatest economic opportunity.

All stakeholders agreed these parks are valuable, that more should be done to leverage these attractions.

More important, stakeholders felt MetroParks and Germantown should work together for the benefit of both.

Here are several ideas:

- The very easiest collaborative opportunity is to ensure that Germantown is highlighted on park websites and in their materials. A map? Modifying MetroParks graphics to name Germantown and its business district? A list of places to eat? Ice cream! Many park visitors will be out for a day of adventure. What piece of that can they obtain in our city?



MetroParks

Volunteer Opportunities

The Twin Valley offers a variety of volunteer opportunities thanks to diverse habitats, extensive trails and abundant wildlife. Engage the public as an ambassador, help maintain and monitor the trails, care for wildlife ambassadors, and more. Additionally, volunteers can help MetroParks protect the region's natural heritage through conservation efforts such as habitat restoration, bluebird monitoring and by participating in Project Feederwatch. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact volunteerservices@metroparks.org.



Where's Germantown?



It's our nature.

This park is one of 30 outstanding public locations operated by your Five Rivers MetroParks. Founded in 1962 to serve the greater Dayton area, MetroParks protects more than 16,000 acres of open space and provides year-round recreation, education and conservation opportunities. Entry to MetroParks' locations is free thanks to Montgomery County citizen support of a property tax levy.

For More Information

Administrative Offices 937-275-PARK (17275)
Website metroparks.org

Ranger Assistance

Contact the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office dispatcher at: 937-535-2580



MetroParks

"MetroParks has about 200,000 people visiting a year. Downtown could be the front door for them. We need to capture these visitors."



SELL THE STRENGTHS

- Next, is there a chance to collaborate on park improvements, including potentially creating an entrance to Germantown Park closer to downtown?
- Creating a bike trail which connects from the Great Miami Trail into and through downtown to the Twin Valley Conservation Corridor could encourage visitors to patronize downtown businesses and lodging during weekend stays.
- Coordinating and establishing park-based events, such as special hiking days or kayaking regattas, and coordinating with downtown events will enable

Germantown to become the focus of visitors' plans.

- Special athletic events and Street Market days also could be aligned for greater impact.

Each of these initiatives will take time and dedicated energies from both volunteers and, ideally, a staffer. But all have a single goal:

To transform Germantown from a pass-through place into a destination.



ENHANCE ASSETS

Initiatives:

- 12. Create a Wayfinding Network
- 13. Highlight Six Core intersections
- 14. Address Narrow Sidewalks
- 15. Add Outdoor Dining
- 16. Reclaim Alleys
- 17. Public Art / Murals



Downtown is quaint and historic, but its infrastructure is worn and its announcements sometimes meager.

Nearly all stakeholders pointed to areas in which walking or spending time is, at best, uncomfortable. Many cited other cities as examples of better, more vibrant destinations for working, shopping, and being entertained.

If downtown isn't attractive, people won't want to visit there. Those people include not only potential customers, but also residents, business owners and tourists. For a city to thrive, it must have a healthy downtown.

Germantown is embarking on a long-term effort of renewal. Leaders know this needs to be substantive and comprehensive. They also recognize it is the work of several years, calling upon the efforts and investment of many. Monies - local, state and federal - will need to be raised. Property owners must become engaged. Retail and restaurants are essential.

It's a big job but one worthwhile for such a historic and engaging Ohio city.

12. Create a Wayfinding Network

Remarkably enough, the most important task of a wayfinding program is to help folks find their way around.

At present, due to the high number of vacancies, Germantown businesses are not grouped closely together nor are they located on its most heavily traveled street. It's hard for a visitor to know that something wonderful is just up the street or around the corner.

Wayfinding signage, strategically placed throughout downtown at high-traffic nodes, will help small businesses and community assets be identified more easily. As the number of opportunities grows, signage can be adjusted to be more comprehensive.

Signage should be bold, colorful, and unique. It should generate excitement and intrigue.

Such coordinated wayfinding improves visibility of downtown and community assets for both pedestrians and traffic. It also helps visitors and even locals uncover treasures and encourages a "stop and walk" culture.



CASE STUDY: BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO

The example here shows a multi armed standard designed to be located on key corners. Individual placards identify participating businesses. This signage is available to any business or organization wishing to purchase a placard(s). A one-time fee of \$250 gets a position on both sides, a total of two placards.

Placement on multiple corners, such as, at both ends of a street, is available for an added fee.



Annual renewal is \$50 per sign location. This assessment generates modest funds for sign upkeep, streetscaping, and holiday decorations in the downtown.

There may be regulatory barriers to having such a program managed by the City. In which case an organization such as the Chamber of Commerce might take it on.

ENHANCE ASSETS

13. Highlight six core intersections

Germantown's downtown is compact – which is beneficial. Short block lengths provide a walkable street network. A tight downtown concentrates vibrancy, focusing attention on key resources.

Downtown intersections are connection points which should be leveraged to their highest potential.

Germantown's downtown streets and intersections don't, at present, capture that potential. They should be renovated to make both a safer, more comfortable place for pedestrians and a more vibrant place for commerce.

Germantown businesses and residents would benefit from improvements to downtown's six, core intersections – and their connecting streets.

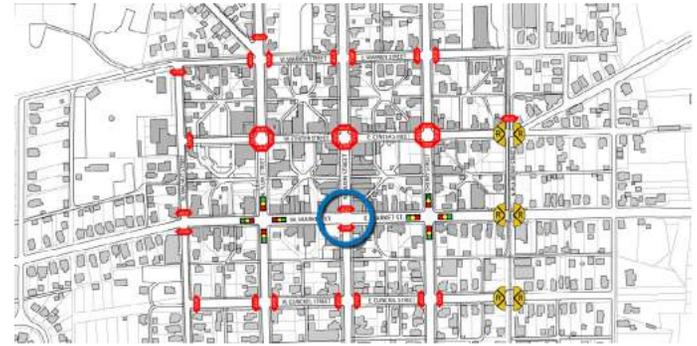
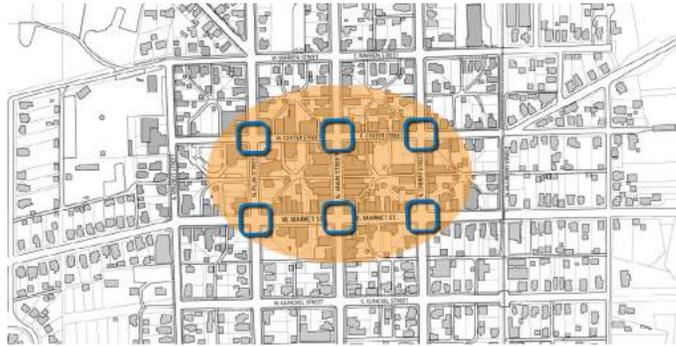
Here are 5 key recommendations (A-E):

A. Turn the intersection of Main Street and Market Street into a 4-way stop.

Main & Market is arguably the most important intersection in Germantown. Market Street (SR 725) carries about 7400 vehicles per day while Main St. and Center St., the streets it connects to, host most commercial spaces. Yet, currently the intersection of Main and Market is a two-way stop while the flanking intersections of Plum & Market and Cherry & Market have stop lights.

Germantown should change the Main and Market intersection to a 4-way stop – if not a fully signalized intersection. This will improve safety (for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists) and give drivers a moment to pause at Germantown's most important intersection.

This step should be taken immediately.



ENHANCE ASSETS

B. Erect overhead street and stop signs at Main and Market

The intersection of Main & Market is dangerously hard to see from even a short distance away. Instead, it should be heralded as the city's most important intersection; its center and primary point of connection.

To remediate this, the city can erect two overhead structures with street signs and stop signs mounted on them similar to the examples shown on the next page. This increased visibility will force drivers to slow down and also call their attention to the business district.



ENHANCE ASSETS

When combined with sidewalk bumps-outs, wayfinding signage, and beautification efforts, the final effect will be dramatic.



ENHANCE ASSETS

C. Transform the three Market Street intersections with bump-outs

The City of Germantown should construct sidewalk extensions (or “bump-outs”) at the three Market Street intersections: Plum & Market; Main & Market; Cherry & Market.

Germantown and its traffic engineering consultant should follow NACTO standards when designing and installing these.

Bump-outs create more comfortable places for pedestrians and drivers. Narrowed roadways not only slow traffic, they also decrease the lengths of crosswalks for pedestrians. They position waiting pedestrians at the front edge of parked cars (and 6” higher) and allow traffic signal poles and other vertical elements to be placed closer to the road.

They are also an easy opportunity to add beautification elements such as planters, benches, and signage at some of downtown’s most important corners.

Transforming these intersections to bump outs can be done incrementally - perhaps in 3 steps.

Phase 1 - Temporary: Using only street paint, bollards, and pre-cast curbs the City can quickly and inexpensively transform the intersection. Care must be taken however, to make the temporary installation clear and robust. Poorly executed, it might instead turn an otherwise promising idea into a problem.

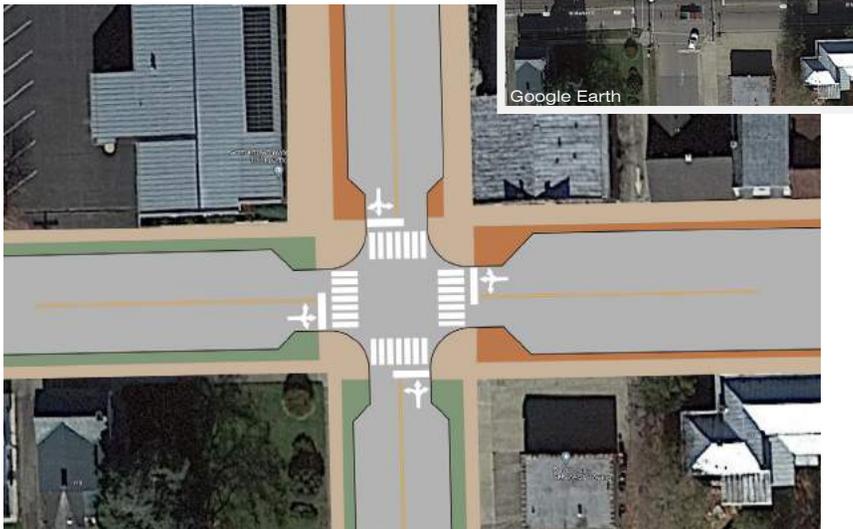
Phase 2 - Interim: The second phase might employ planters or other low structures to form the new bump outs. These planters would improve the aesthetics of downtown and its most frequently traveled street.



Possible Temporary Installation



Possible Interim Installation



ENHANCE ASSETS

Phase 3 - Final: Completion would include the construction of permanent raised concrete sidewalks, overhead traffic signage, street lighting, and planters. The final effect, when coupled with street trees and private investments such as façade improvements (as simple as paint, awnings and signage) will transform these blocks of downtown Germantown.

“I’d love to see great streetscape. The message needs to be: ‘slow your car, park it, walk around and shop.’”



[D. Modify other intersections](#)

The other three intersections in the downtown core (Center & Plum, Center & Main, and Center & Cherry) can be dramatically improved with simple designs. Crosswalks should be painted as “zebra stripes” (2’ wide white stripes painted with a 2’ maximum space between each). This form is most easily seen by drivers. Further improvements could include painting street murals on the pavement within each intersection. These painted improvements can be provided by civic groups and can be artistic and re-establish the unique brand and character of Germantown.

[E. Improve Facades](#)

Street corridors are composed of not only the roadway and sidewalks but also the façades of buildings which form them. For this inescapable reason, street corridors are the responsibility of both the public and private sector.

Building façades are part of the public realm.

Downtown Germantown’s historic building stock is largely intact. However, many buildings are not presenting in their best possible state. Even occupied buildings suffer from worn façades which results in poor curb appeal.

Façade programs and other incentives to property rehabilitation are discussed elsewhere in this plan and should be considered an integral part of the overall upgrades. More important however is that downtown buildings form a team for which the whole truly is greater than the sum of its parts.

ENHANCE ASSETS

14. Address narrow sidewalks

Downtown Germantown's sidewalks are deteriorating and, in many places, too narrow to provide more than a thin walking path. They do little to facilitate street life.

Thriving business districts usually have wide sidewalks and collector strips, the space between a curb and a sidewalk. These can hold an array of visually stimulating street architecture: trees and planters, benches, sidewalk signage, bike racks, lighting, and other ingredients.

Because in Germantown sidewalks are narrow, innovative solutions will be needed to create a more flourishing environment.

A. Street trees

As has been well studied and documented, no other ingredient of urban street corridors is as valuable as street trees. Shade (which also helps buildings resist heat gain), air quality, and raising property values are all value adds. Street trees can be incorporated downtown even with narrow sidewalks.

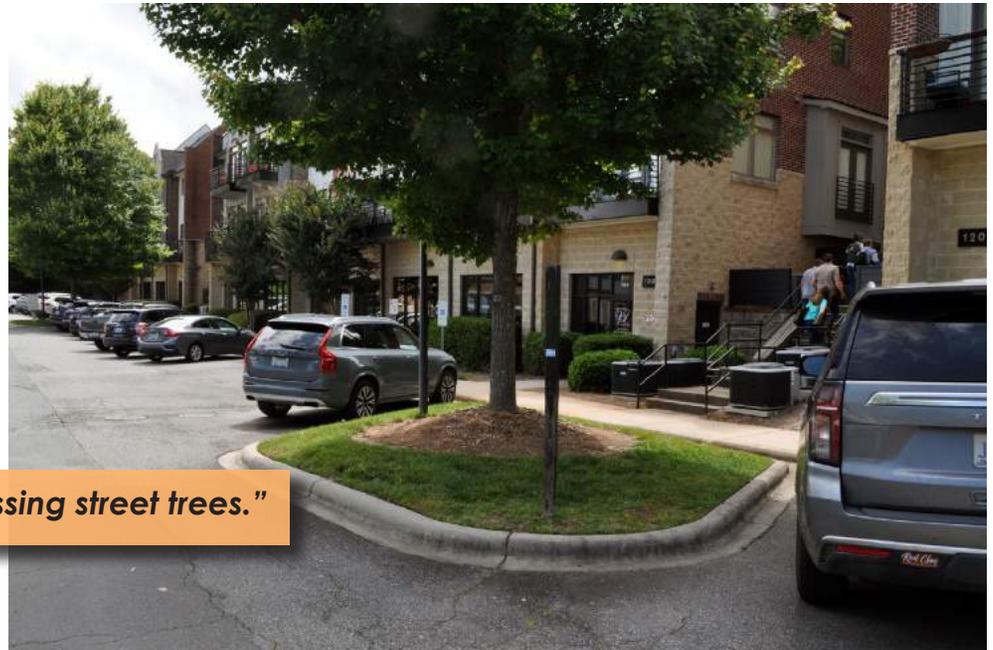
One way is to plant them in the street.

By taking no more than a parking space, a street tree can be planted with enough soil area to thrive as shown in the examples to the far right. Curbed or not, these tree wells ensure street drainage is unencumbered. In parallel parking spaces street trees can take up about half of a parking space, sometimes resulting in no loss of parking. In angle parked areas street trees can easily fit in one space. If below ground utilities are present, trees can be planted in raised planters.

"We need better sidewalks on Market Street, all over really."



"We're missing street trees."



ENHANCE ASSETS

[B. Close off Streets for Street Markets](#)

Elsewhere in this plan is the recommendation to establish occasional Street Markets. These mitigate the negative effects of narrow sidewalks simply by closing off the street corridor entirely – for an evening, afternoon, or a weekend.

[C. String Lighting and Other Effects](#)

Another way to present the illusion of a broader pedestrian realm is to incorporate string lighting or other objects across a street. This type of installation is festive and could establish a noteworthy feature. Clearances and permission from property owners are considerations to be addressed.

[D. Narrow Two Blocks of Market Street](#)

Nowhere downtown is the problem of narrow sidewalks more problematic, nor more extreme, than along the two blocks of Market Street in the downtown core.

These two blocks have roadways wider than adjacent blocks by 9 to 10 feet (5' on each side) which means the sidewalks and collector strips are narrower by that much.

Pedestrian and bicycle friendly business districts generally have reasonably narrow streets which induces slower traffic, resulting in safer more comfortable places in which to walk, shop, eat, and thrive.

Wider sidewalks allow sidewalk cafes (which can be used in conjunction with, or as a replacement for, Streeteries) street trees, streetlights, signage, benches, and other amenities.

The City should narrow the roadway in these two blocks, thereby widening sidewalks and collector strips.

Because Market Street is a state route Germantown's traffic engineer will have to work with the Ohio Department of Transportation on plans.

Narrowing the street will take time. In addition to permissions, funds will have to be sought from both state and federal governments.

Luckily, the recently passed federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act include funding for such work.

These programs may not last forever however, so planning and applications should begin as soon as possible.



Port Huron

“We need to make downtown safe and comfortable for pedestrians, and it’s not right now.”



Google Maps



ENHANCE ASSETS

15. Add Outdoor Dining

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic almost all street life was banned. But the strong desire to convene gave rise to a solution that has lived on post-pandemic: Streeteries.

Also known as “parklets”, these are constructed outdoor dining areas which occupy an on-street parking space or two.

Germantown should make the implementation of Streeteries a priority for downtown. This low-cost improvement can be quickly added for local restaurants, offering a popular dining option not widely available at present.

Benefits

Streeteries offer businesses the chance to expand their footprint seasonally without increased rent or major construction costs. Businesses heretofore without space for outdoor dining can now offer that option to customers - a boon for carry-out establishments.

Not only does this potentially increase seasonal revenues, but outdoor seating is highly visible. It brings attention to a restaurant and a district, signaling both energy and momentum. Tables with umbrellas, place settings, and patrons invite others to explore what might be happening.

Design

Most Streeteries aren't fancy. They can start with temporary barriers and a few tables. These can then be upgraded to permanent platforms, built or purchased, placed at sidewalk level. Enhancements such as lighting, planters, and even shelters for cold and inclement weather can also be added and amplified over time.



“I would love to dine outside here.”

CASE STUDY: LAWRENCEBURG, IN. and CINCINNATI, OH.

In Lawrenceburg, Indiana “streeteries” are funded and coordinated by the city’s Main Street Association. These were originally a COVID-19 measure to help businesses. There are currently two streeteries in their downtown area, with more planned.



Elsewhere, the City of Cincinnati developed a parklet initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic. To create streeteries quickly, the City initially used construction barrels as barriers and placed tables and chairs in streets. The project evolved into a full streetery program through coordination between the City, 3CDC (the local community development corporation) and the Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce.

Any restaurant in the area can get a permit to build a streetery by submitting a plan and meeting basic requirements which are spelled in the city’s application.

ENHANCE ASSETS

16. Reclaim Alleys

Germantown has a charming alley system.

This is also a wonderful opportunity to create hidden places, centers of activity off the main road and delightful small secrets.

The alleys in the eight blocks which form most of Germantown's downtown each have an east-west through alley with "spider legs" that extend to streets north and south.

Since the alley system has a very low volume of traffic, and the east-west through-alleys will remain, some of these spider leg extensions can be transformed into intimate outdoor gathering spaces without an adverse consequence to traffic.

Progressively, these alleys should be cleaned up. If located close to dining establishments they may offer locations for Streeteries.

Within the DORA, they could host small tables at which friends with beverages

might rest and converse. Closed to traffic they could have a pair of outdoor easy chairs, perhaps, another spot for quiet connection. Put musicians on a couple corners and prime folks for a Saturday night stroll.

Fireplaces, sculptures, fountains, corn-hole boards and other features could be added, creating unique environments for each. They are also wonderful venues for plants in pots and for small art projects. Add color by whatever means possible.



Abby Elpers



Facebook/Self.eAlley



Abby Elpers



Abby Elpers



Abby Elpers



Abby Elpers

CASE STUDY: EVANSVILLE, IN.

Several cities in our region have reclaimed their alleys including Louisville, Kentucky; Madison, Wisconsin; and Ann Arbor Michigan.

Evansville, Indiana has activated several alleys under their "Self.eAlley" program. Using paint, creativity, some outdoor furniture and other features, they have transformed forgotten alleys into places worthy of pride. The alleys have attracted thousands of visitors who create "Instagramable moments" which promote Evansville to others. Abby Elpers, creator of the program, states: "Mural art tells our community story, bolsters pride in citizens, excites tourists, and generates a sense of place but it also creates tangible effects like encouraging people to go outdoors and explore their surroundings,"

Visit their Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/Self.eAlley/>

ENHANCE ASSETS

17. Public art / murals

Germantown has an abundance of blank walls downtown. These are canvases begging to be celebrated with artwork.

A mural program is a popular tool in many cities, adding vitality and artistic interest to the urban core. In many cases, such a program is tied to a youth work initiative. Germantown should establish its own mural program.

Cincinnati's nationally renowned program, Artworks, has inserted dozens of murals into the landscape over the last 20 years. Designed by artists and painted by students on a summer work program, murals vary in style, theme and even execution, but all create visual interest and local color on what were previously blank surfaces.

The murals are now a destination in themselves.

The addition of murals and other public art pieces to a downtown creates a sense of place and is a sign of momentum in the district. The style of artwork, whether historical, whimsical, or modern, can help define the character of the area.

As an introductory step, if necessary, signage and artwork on mesh material can be framed and affixed to buildings. This allows for quick installation and the ability to change the artwork for continuing interest.

Although any building with a blank wall could host a mural, a highly visible wall on a main street is likely to have strong impact. A Germantown example might be at the Alleyway Café building on West Center Street.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

Initiatives:

18. Create a CIC
19. Create a Building Improvements Pre-Development Fund
20. Outsides First
21. Code Enforcement / VBML
22. Encourage Renovation of Upper Floors
23. Tourism Rentals

Germantown has very good historic building stock. Moreover, many of its downtown assets are intact, differentiating it from cities in which enthusiastic demolition has occurred.

But too many of those once proud buildings are rundown and wholly or partially vacant. Too many ground-level storefronts and upper floors, formerly active homes, are now empty.

Adding to injury, some valuable storefront space is visibly used for storage, producing an appearance of deterioration and lifelessness downtown.

It is harsh but also true that these underutilized buildings are contributing to a perception of economic decline in Germantown. They also present a hazard to life and property.

Frustration with deteriorating properties was widespread in stakeholder conversations. As noted above, potential business owners reported months of searching for ready retail space. Inevitably some gave up, and those business opportunities were lost.

Operators who had left Germantown in recent years highlighted widespread vacancy and property decline as a key reason for departure.

Yet, those property owners who have renovated, either at street level or in upper stories, have almost universally seen economic benefit.

Renovation projects pretty consistently pencil-out for profitability.

More owners need to understand those two important points:

- Vacant properties are a negative for the city overall
- Restored ones have both community wide and direct ownership benefits

Restoration projects, whose owners would like to offset tax liabilities, can utilize the National Historic District which is already in place.

Other communities have found incentives to be helpful. It is reasonable to assume that they would also be useful here. That's a carrot.

Regrettably, there may also have to be a stick.



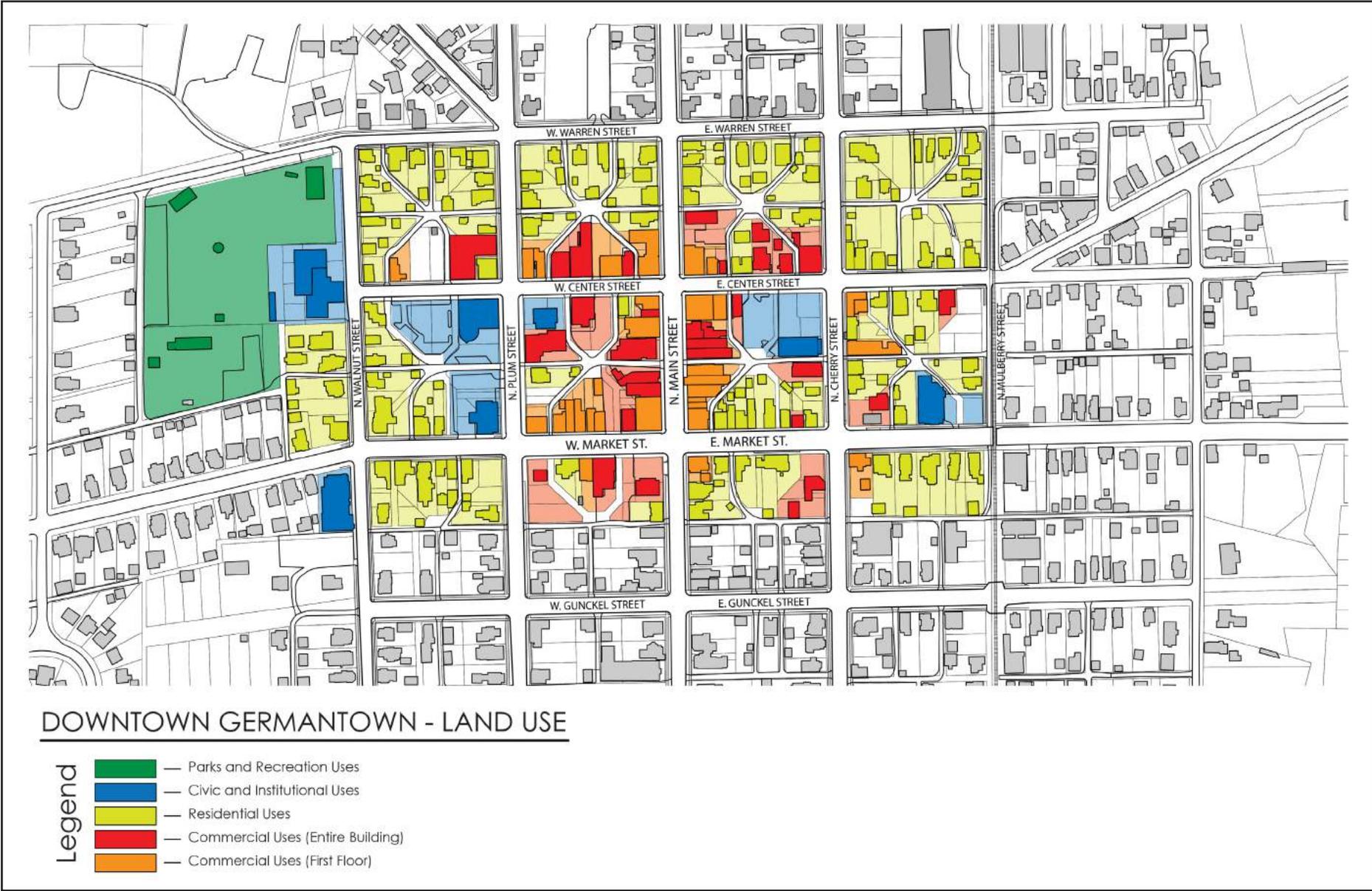
“One property owner told me: ‘If I rent out my storefront where will I store my stuff?’”



“Property Owners aren’t motivated to sell, rent, or fix up their buildings. One storefront was so bad a group of volunteers got together to paint it.”

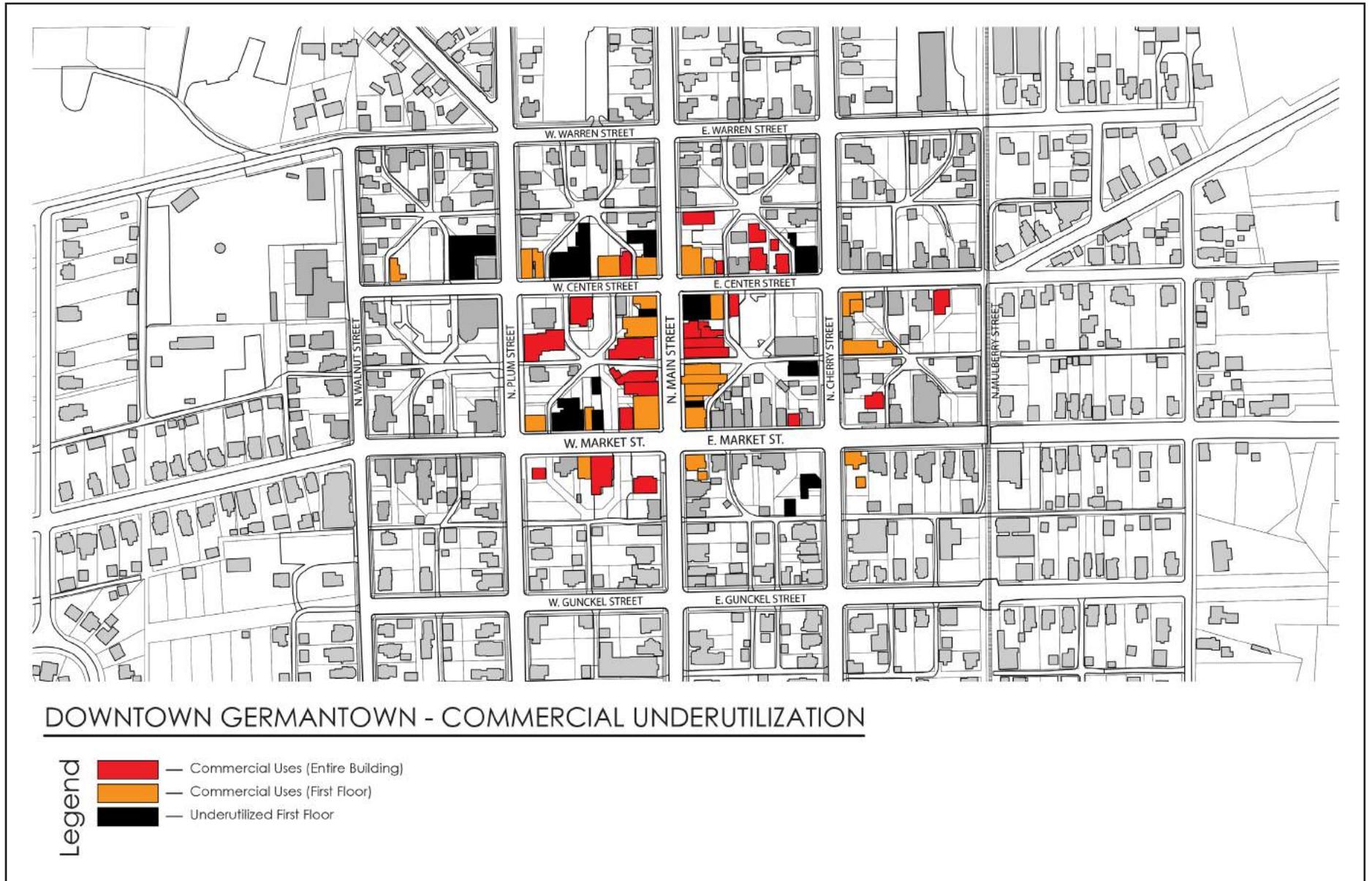
BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

Germantown's downtown is contained in just a few blocks. This is a benefit because energy and resources can be focused.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

Too many buildings downtown are underutilized however. On one hand this results in the feeling of emptiness. On the other, it provides opportunities for economic growth.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

18. Create a CIC

Germantown should establish a Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to assist with downtown economic redevelopment.

Under Section 1724 of the Ohio Revised Code, cities can establish non-profit corporations to undertake real estate and business development. That entity, while allied with the city through defined objectives, is independent, governed by a board and maintaining separate finances.

Free markets are a recognized generator of economic activity. Rarely however is that energy concentrated on the heavy lift of center city revitalization. A CIC can focus narrowly and align priorities for the public good.

Germantown's CIC could be empowered to raise and hold monies, purchase and assemble properties, incur debt, and facilitate development in a variety of ways.

If desired, it could also coordinate with Jobs Ohio, Montgomery County, and other entities.

As capacity is developed, Germantown could choose to delegate to its CIC larger authority to generate economic development throughout the city.

Initially, however, the priority should be revitalization initiatives centered on downtown.

As an example of early benefit, Germantown has several long-time owners of key properties who may wish to find a civic-minded future use for their asset.

The CIC could become their buyer of first resort, ensuring protection of the community's interests and moving this

real estate back into productive service.

Funds can come from grants but also from contributions by local donors, convinced of the benefit of CIC objectives.

As an initial step, the existing Economic Development Committee might serve as the foundational group for a CIC.

19. Create a Building Improvements Pre-Development Fund

Renovating and restoring a historic building can be a monumental task.

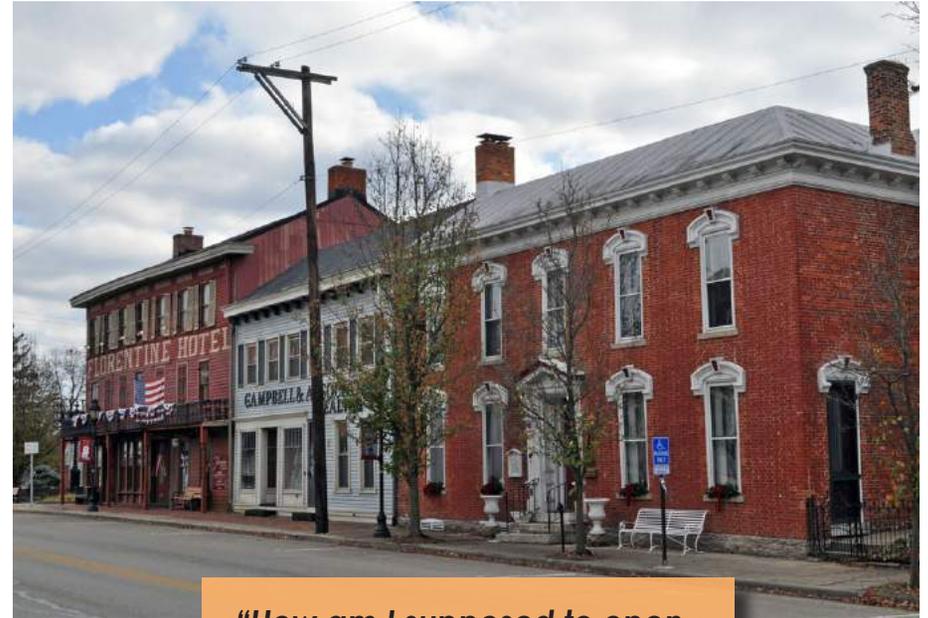
Acquiring a property, making needed repairs, and preparing it for tenant occupancy are all important steps. Each must be completed before a business can move in.

Moreover, most small businesses are looking for locations which are as close to move in ready as possible. Generally, they have neither the skills nor the resources to take on renovations. They also see those as of principle benefit to the landlord and thus an inappropriate – or unworkable – use of their limited funds.

The creation of a building improvement and pre-development fund can motivate current and potential building and/or business owners to make important capital improvements and repairs to properties that have potential in the downtown and historic district.

Even relatively modest grants can have an impact.

Examples of how these funds could be used include roof repair and replacement, engineering studies, environmental studies, pre-construction planning, schematic drawings and code review.



"How am I supposed to open my business on Saturday night when nothing else is open?"



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

20. Outsides First

Downtown façade improvement programs stimulate private investment in high-quality building improvements, while preserving historic character.

Such enhancements create a stronger community image by providing grants and/or revolving loans to building owners to upgrade the most visible element of their properties.

In many cases grants cover up to 50% of the total eligible project costs, reimbursed to the grantee after certification of eligible expenditure and verification of compliance with approved plans.

Revolving loan funds with 0% interest can be made available to assist in covering the property owner's 50% if they are unable to fund up front. Such loans would require proof of a pre-established source of funds.

Germantown's facade program of a few years ago was not widely successful. This was due to the conditions of federal funding which proved too costly, burdensome, and restrictive. A new facade program should utilize local funding from both the public and private sectors.

Tiffin, Ohio, a city of some 18,000 Buckeyes has an effective façade program. According to their website:

This grant will reimburse up to 50% of the amount of expenses directly related to qualifying building improvements, to front facades...up to a maximum match of \$10,000...available on a first come first serve basis...property owners may re-apply annually for available funds, but priority will go to first-time applicants.

Eligible Improvements:

Eligible improvements include all exterior improvements to the appearance of an eligible downtown building front façade. These improvements include:

- Awnings
- Masonry work: brick cleaning, tuck pointing, replacement
- Painting - Colors to be approved by the Architectural Board of Review
- Repair, restoration or appropriate replacement of exterior windows and doors
- Repair or replacement of roofing system (including gutters and downspouts)
- Fire escapes or exterior upper floor access
- Any other visible exterior improvements

Ineligible Improvements:

This program will not fund interior improvements, operating funds, HVAC repair, plumbing repair, sidewalk repair, furnishings or equipment, landscaping and any exterior improvements that do not follow the historic guidelines set by Tiffin's Architectural Board of Review.

Though obvious to say, facades, as the outside of buildings, are key signifiers of condition, not only of a specific structure but of the entire surrounding area.

Improving even one starts perception of momentum. Improvements to neighbors of that one, and then the next and then next, generally follow.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

21. Code Enforcement / Vacant Building Maintenance License

In developing a vibrant and attractive downtown, enforcement of city codes is an essential component, particularly in two realms.

First is “Safe and Clean”, a widely used program addressing litter, beautification and public safety. Germantown doesn’t have a noticeable problem in this area.

The other, and primary focus of this section, is code enforcement. For improvement to begin, hard as it may be, the rules must apply.

The city is strongly encouraged to take a nuanced approach to code enforcement in the downtown area. It should employ a wealth of carrots but not, if required, avoid the stick.

It is essential to address the restoration and return to safe, productive use of vacant buildings and storefronts through effective administration of property maintenance codes and the establishment of a vacant building maintenance license (VBML) program.

Code officials should be diplomatic: flexible, yet firm, balancing a proactive approach with a traditionally complaint driven one.

If violations are noted, they should be addressed rather than ignored. Address can begin with conversations. Those should be oriented to problem solving.

In most cases that light handed approach will be effective. But probably not always. Enforcement should be aggressive for repeat offenders and cases that drag on longer than reasonable.

If aggressive enforcement is required, the City should not shrink from it. Downtown buildings must be in good condition – for the economic benefit of the City and the safety of its citizens.

The city also should investigate the establishment of a vacant building licensing program (VBML).

While traditional code enforcement can address exterior maintenance, vacant property can still pose a threat to public safety if exterior elements such as roofs or foundations, things not easily seen from the right-of-way, are not secure and sealed.

Leaky roofs and windows are opportunities for the kinds of accelerated decay which could cause a building to collapse onto the street or adjoining property.

Water will always find a way.

Untended interiors also should be a cause for concern. Germantown has a wealth of historic wood frame structures downtown. A vacant building used for storage may also be an

aggregation of flammable accelerants. This could easily be an unknown risk to neighboring properties. It is also, however, a risk to safety personnel. First responders must be assured of their safety, as much as possible, when entering a vacant building in an emergency.

Fire, once started, moves even faster than water.

VBML programs typically require owners to secure their buildings, pay a fee and allow fire and building inspectors access on a yearly basis.

Some programs, such as one being developed in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, escalate fees depending on extended length of vacancy. Keep the property closed year after year and costs will continue to rise.

VBML programs are a stick to be sure. But they are also an important investment both in public safety and the integrity of a historic downtown.

It is not unknown for such a program to incentivize building rehabilitation

or create recognition of the need for transfer to more energetic new ownership.

It is worth noting here that this recommendation may be contentious. A VBML will require regulatory support. Any such changes usually generate at least a few noisy protests. Council should stand firm.

Once in place and enforced, there will be other voices of dissent. But progressively, there also will be support. And certainly, over time, there will be improvement – the goal and reward.

Nothing should be done that is not well notified, even if it does rouse those sleeping bears. Immediately after the VBML has been put in place, each downtown property owner should get a letter. This should be clear about the new regulations and the process of enforcement.

Every owner should be given a limited window (60 days) in which to prepare properties for inspection. Appropriate city officials, such as the code enforcement officer, should be available for additional explanation.

Other city leaders should direct inquiries to this official, consistently. A multitude of clarifications from various sources, some inevitably without detail, will only muddy the swirling waters.

But of all the recommendations herein, establishment of a VBML program may be the most important.

It cannot be said too often and was the concern most frequently voiced during the stakeholder interview process: vacant and underused buildings are downtown Germantown’s number one problem.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

22. Encourage Renovation of Upper Floors

Many historic buildings once held not only businesses and entertainment options but also residences. Changes to zoning codes and maintenance costs, plus a declining desire to live downtown meant that as these spaces became vacant, they often remained so.

These issues had at least two negative effects. Vacancy on upper floors is pretty obvious. No lights at night, empty windows and other signs give the game away. Which contributes to the perception of a downtown in decline.

Vacant upper floors also mean fewer folks on the streets. Reduced customers for stores and restaurants and less of the overall liveliness of daily life.

Times have changed again, and downtown living is highly desirable. Upper floor apartments with modern amenities attract both young professionals and empty nesters - many who can now work remotely. These are the new regulars for restaurants and customers for small luxuries as well as the necessities of daily life.

The renovation of upper floors usually requires utility conversions, hazardous

materials mitigation, revisions to architectural plans, state inspection and local permits. But the process can help a community, its small developers and property owners, bring unused space back into productive service.

Additionally, downtown residents tend to become involved in the surrounding community and potentially become owners and investors themselves.

As previously noted, property owners currently offering renovated apartments are finding rapid absorption. As properties come online – and even before – they offer an opportunity to

highlight Germantown's momentum.

By leveraging social media to document progress and pre-promote availability, units might be leased before they are even ready for delivery. Multiple available units, including some already occupied, might offer an opportunity to host a downtown tour of living.

Important to also note that in some rare cases, those upper stories may not be suited for residential. Renovated office is another opportunity to explore in such cases.



BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

CASE STUDY: LOFTS 110

Small town loft living makes a big impact.

The story of many downtown areas goes like this: Grand, historic buildings that once held apartments and a variety of businesses transitioned, over time, to old buildings which took any tenant they could find. Upkeep got expensive and building owners couldn't keep up with maintenance and codes.

Those who once called these buildings home and kept commerce bustling, moved to the suburbs, trading a walkable community for a car, a white picket fence, and a big patch of grass.

Businesses suffered. And so did communities as a whole.

Bellefontaine was no different, full of spectacular old architecture, but too few people to keep the local economy moving. The town needed people who appreciated quality and could support downtown businesses.

Residential had to be added back into the mix.

Fortunately, a spectacular space, the Metropolitan Building, was available for renovation. This historic 3-story structure, built in the early 1850s, was home to a variety of department stores. Then it sat empty for years.



Small Nation purchased it and the plans for Lofts110 began.

To attract tenants, renovations would require a sense of style, so designs included open floor plans, high ceilings, exposed brick walls, rafters and duct work. The 2nd and 3rd floors were converted to six 1- and 2-bedroom lofts, ranging from 800–2,200 square feet. These new homes boast panoramic views of the downtown while retaining the charm of an earlier era.

During the year-and-a-half renovation process community response was mixed. Naysayers swore loudly “that will never work here”. Many took to social media to express fears of rising cost of living and doubts that the project could succeed at all.

The naysayers were wrong.

Criticism quickly evolved into curiosity, and then pride. Every Lofts110 unit was leased long before ready for occupancy. Today there's a waiting list.

A long one.

BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

23. Tourism Rentals

Small cities are appealing for their size and simplicity. When their stories are told well, they can lure destination travelers with the same - and more - gusto as big cities, supporting their businesses and continually spreading the word about their hospitality.

People are always seeking experiences. Whether traveling for work, weekend trips, or weddings or events, lodging options that provide something special and different are prized.

Future Germantown is a natural day trip and weekender destination, charming

and amenity rich. Short-term residential rentals are a logical step to capturing some of those tourism dollars. With major employers nearby, event venues hosting weddings and special occasions, and outdoor recreation sites, demand for overnight lodging could be strong.

It is useful to note that overnight travelers spend up to four times more per visit than the average day-tripper. Further development of lodging options will also support business growth downtown.

In Downtown Bellefontaine the Owners

of Epicurean Properties are operating The Loft Above. The Air BNB listing for this spot reports a “spacious historic apartment conveniently located in easy walking distance of downtown restaurants, bars, and shops”.

That’s an enticing promise which Germantown could also offer soon.

At present, Bed and Breakfast uses are strictly regulated. It is recommended that the city refine its standards for this use, permitting “short-term” rentals as a Conditional Use with the following suggested parameters:

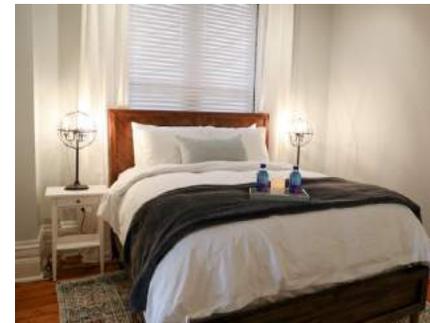
- Property must register with the city, including emergency contact information
- Property must be inspected for occupation once a year
- Property cannot have outstanding code violations (at time of application)
- Property must be current on taxes
- Property must provide proof of appropriate insurance
- Additionally, other cities have considered the duration of the short-term rental use (aka no more than 50% of the year) as well as whether it should be owner-occupied.



Moon River Bed and Breakfast



Iron Gate Inn



“In Germantown, unless you want to camp out, there’s not really a place to stay overnight.”



Moon River Bed and Breakfast

“When I go to Yellow Springs I spend the day and sometimes a night.”

BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE

Parking

Germantown's downtown is primarily zoned C-2, a Central Business District zoning designation. Fortunately, the C-2 zone does not have regulations explicitly prohibiting dwellings above storefronts. In Germantown, single and two-family housing is also permitted in the district.

One common barrier to development in small cities is parking requirements. These often require residential and commercial uses to provide parking directly on the property as a condition of permitting for renovations or new construction.

In a historic downtown, with buildings closely set, such a condition can be a strong disincentive to development and, even, conversely, an encouragement to demolition.

No one wants that.

While there are always complaints about parking, the reality is that Germantown has an excess of parking spaces downtown for most days. Special events, happening fewer than fifteen days a year, are exceptions, though what everyone tends to remember.

One way to encourage redevelopment of upper floor residential is to remove off-street parking requirements in the C-2 district for all uses. There is plenty of available, flexible parking. Space used by an office worker or retail customer during the day can be a resident's parking spot at night.

That said, downtown is going to grow. New retail and restaurants will be added and with them will come increased parking demands.

As the city analyzes parking

requirements, the following should be considered:

- Count on-street parking spaces immediately in front of the property toward meeting parking requirements
- Allow parking reductions within 1,400 feet (a five-minute walk) of a property
- Adopt a shared parking ratio reduction for buildings with multiple uses
- Align parking needs with growth. If it becomes necessary to create more parking in future, solve the problem then.

“We do not have a parking problem here. People who think there's a parking problem just think that because they can't park right in front of the store they're visiting even though they'll park 400' from the front door of Walmart.”



IMPLEMENTATION

Germantown has set itself up for a big task. Downtown has fallen not into decay but too much into disuse.

Retail and restaurant occupancy, business tenancy overall, has progressively declined for years. Both residents and visitors no longer find it a place of either delight or even of ordinary utility. Special events bring occasional short-lived vitality but without these, energy is consistently low.

Which hurts everyone.

Downtown businesses struggle, city revenues are negatively affected, building owners face income shortfalls, employers face recruiting challenges and citizens don't have either a source of local pride or a mercantile center.

Yet the opportunity is huge and not impossibly hard to grasp.

Germantown has strong leadership. Several local companies are not only dedicated supporters but also providers of well-paying jobs and local, national, and even international recognition. The inventory of historic buildings is extensive and, despite visible disinvestment, an anchor for revitalization.

There is a wealth of suggestions in this plan. In the interests of manageable length, there is an additional catalogue which was not included.

The Implementation Matrix, sampled on the last two pages of this plan, is a tool for the Germantown community to use. The interactive version should be monitored weekly by a Downtown Master Plan Manager, and adjusted whenever and however needed to generate action.

Some of the 23 initiatives outlined in this plan will take years to complete, others only months.

Three which can provide the community with substantial early progress are:

- Build some Streeteries (from Initiative #15 – *Add Outdoor Dining*)
- Paint a few facades (from Initiative #20 – *Outsides First*)
- Erect totem pole signage (from Initiative #12 – *Create a Wayfinding Network*)

Identification of these “early wins” comes with a warning however...

DON'T STOP THERE.

Communities often slow progress after achieving a bit of success. Though usually more difficult, and always in need of greater tenacity, longer term efforts are often of greater importance. High hanging fruit is worth the reach.

True change is slower but much more durable. It took years to create the current situation. Fixing it will take more than a minute.

Divvy up the work and proceed on all fronts.

Let's go.



IMPLEMENTATION

There are three additional, simple, suggestions to make:

Get started. Progress takes however long from the moment it starts.

Understand that time is a long-term ally and a short-term annoyance. Nothing good happens fast.

Don't quit. Nothing your consultants might say is more important than those two words. DON'T QUIT. When the naysayers begin to organize opposition, when progress stalls, when money seems unavailable, when whatever negative option arises, keep one simple thought uppermost: Germantown does not quit.

Since 1804, building farms, distilling whiskey, digging gravel, manufacturing machines, educating children, creating jobs, building a beautiful downtown, Germantown figures things out, perseveres, does well.

Tomorrow begins today.



IMPLEMENTATION

The matrix below should be an evolving document, identifying who in Germantown will take charge of each initiative, outlining phases and benchmark dates of completion.

GERMANTOWN DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN								
IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX								
Category		Initiative	What	Why	Where	When	Who	How
GET BUSINESS GOING	1	Offer a Navigator	Establish advisor to help business owner navigate systems at no cost to them.	Business owners need help understanding the permitting process.	12 blocks of downtown first, then other areas.	start in 2024		
	2	Help With Finance	A fund for use by new and existing businesses to start or grow.	To incentivize business opportunities in downtown Germantown.	12 blocks of downtown.	start in 2024		
	3	Clarify Processes	Revise information describing city and county permitting processes. Create a permitting website which allows permit application submissions, provides current information and status, and receives payments.	Business owners need current, easy-to-understand material describing the various permits that may be needed. An interactive website will provide convenience to the private sector and enable city staff to focus on plan review.	n/a	Materials: late 2023. Website: 2025		
	4	Fill Storefronts	Create places in existing buildings or spaces for temporary or seasonal retail establishments.	Start-up businesses need easy, low-cost options to long-term rental of brick and mortar places.	12 blocks of downtown	start in 2025		
	5	Start a Street Market	Establish a periodic street market.	A street market will provide a sense of community for Germantown, create spin-off activity for businesses, and will provide another marketing opportunity for the city.	Main Street and / or Center Street	start in spring 2024		
	6	Recruit Business	Establish strategy and hire personnel to recruit new, and retain existing, businesses which benefit the city.	Downtown needs more businesses to create the critical mass necessary to attract patrons and provide ample services to the community.	12 blocks of downtown	start in 2024		
SELL THE STRENGTHS	7	The Chamber of Commerce is Key	Elevate the Chamber's prominence, engagement, and support.	A stronger Chamber of Commerce will provide businesses with comradery, a collective voice, and opportunities for growth.	n/a			
	8	Identify "shameless promoter"	Identify the person who is well-networked, and unapologetically proud of Germantown and knowledgeable about its assets.	A shameless promoter fuels the marketing effort through personal, unorthodox channels resulting in a "buzz" that Germantown is a successful vibrant place.	n/a	start of 2024		
	9	Celebrate Successes	Market Germantown to Germantown by making the most of even smaller occasions.	To fuel community pride, expectation of success, and to create ambassadors for Germantown.	n/a	start July 2023		
	10	Community Awards	Establish community awards to highlight successes and reward achievement and perseverance by individuals and organizations.	Germantown should promote success and pride which will lead to more success and pride.	city-wide	start of 2024		
	11	Coordinate business efforts with Metroparks, disk golf course, and Kercher Park activities	Coordinate with, and create, events at these venues to attract patrons to Germantown businesses and attractions.	Germantown can get more patrons by accessing people who are already visiting town for the parks and athletic events and creating events specifically aligned with the time and demographic of those events.	12 blocks of downtown	start of 2024		

IMPLEMENTATION

GERMANTOWN DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Category		Initiative	What	Why	Where	When	Who	How
ENHANCE ASSETS	12	Create a Wayfinding Network	Construct a themed, coordinated set of signs around Germantown directing people to businesses and other sites.	Germantown should attract some of the over 200,000 people visiting town for other reasons by letting them know what businesses and attractions are in town and where they are.	Greater Germantown area	start of 2024		
	13	Highlight six core intersections and connecting blocks	Create a more pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly environment, and therefore business-friendly environment, in a focused area of downtown.	A safer, more comfortable environment for pedestrians and bicyclists will result in more people wanting to visit downtown and patronize businesses.	6 intersections and the 7 street corridors that connect them	start of 2024		
	14	Address narrow sidewalks	Mitigate Germantown's unusually narrow sidewalks by making physical changes in key streets and, eventually, narrowing 2 blocks of Market Street.	With innovative solutions to Germantown's narrow sidewalks a more pleasing environment can be created.	6 intersections and the 7 street corridors that connect them	start of 2025		
	15	Add Outdoor Dining	Build on-street dining places in front of existing restaurants and set standards for future streeteries.	Because outdoor dining is desired by patrons, and great advertising for each business and the downtown as whole, Germantown can create a vibrant environment by better utilizing a few parking spaces.	12 blocks of downtown	July of 2023		
	16	Reclaim Alleys	Establish temporary and permanent gathering places in some, lesser-used, north-south "legs" of alleys.	By creating small, special gathering places of unique character, Germantown can better leverage and promote its most unique historic asset.	12 blocks of downtown	start of 2025		
	17	Public Art / Murals	Establish program to paint blank walls with professionally curated murals.	Murals turn blank walls into assets which create a more pleasing environment and encourage people to visit Germantown and walk its streets.	12 blocks of downtown first, then other areas	start of 2024		
BRING PROPERTIES UP TO STANDARD AND INTO SERVICE	18	Establish a CIC	Establish a quasi-public entity which can facilitate the development of property.	Downtown real estate development needs an entity that pursues a collective vision which serves the public good.	12 blocks of downtown	start September of 2024		
	19	Create Building Improvements Pre-development Fund	Create a grant or low-interest loan fund which can provide patient money for small improvements to downtown properties.	Property owners need gap and incentive funding to rehabilitate buildings for new life.	12 blocks of downtown	start of 2025		
	20	Outsides First	Create a program, which identifies service entities, personnel and funding sources, that can provide paint, signage, awnings, and other improvements to the exteriors of downtown buildings.	Many facades in downtown, which are worn and adversely impacting the overall character of the city, need to be improved to provide a boost to other properties and businesses.	12 blocks of downtown	start of 2025		
	21	Code Enforcement / Vacant Building Maintenance License	Establish a regulatory program which ensures vacant buildings will be safe for first responders and neighboring properties.	Vacant building present risks to first responders who must enter them in emergencies and to neighboring properties which are at risk of catching fire or structural damage due to collapse or deterioration.	city wide	start of 2024		
	22	Encourage renovation of upper floor residential	Promote the renovation of upper story residential and office uses in downtown buildings. Revise parking standards.	Occupancy of upper stories provide more patrons for business, downtown activities, and the feel of vibrancy.	12 blocks of downtown	start of 2025		
	23	Promote short term residential rentals for tourism	Encourage property owners to engage with Air B&B or other entities to allow short-term lodging rental in downtown buildings. Revise Parking Standards.	Visitors to parks and other attraction around Germantown have few options for staying overnight, yet overnight stays will lead to more patrons for businesses and greater downtown vibrancy.	12 blocks of downtown	start of spring 2024		