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MONTGOMERY, TEXAS

5-Year Strategic Action Plan

APRIL 2025

About Us

Who We Are

Downtown Strategies, a division of Retail Strategies, exists to provide realistic, implementable strategies to communities for revitalizing their downtowns. Led by a team of downtown revitalization practitioners, our combination of real-world experience, plus expertise in real estate and retail uniquely qualify us to assist communities with backfilling vacancies, increasing tourism, and enhancing the sense of place in their downtowns. Serving rural communities in 26 states, Downtown Strategies is the leading national firm for downtown revitalization planning with an emphasis on real estate and retail.

5-Year Plan

At Downtown Strategies, we believe that action and implementation are more important than a flashy 20-year vision. Our process is based on our team's experience as practitioners. Our team members have been in your shoes as community leaders and how what it is like to manage downtown revitalization efforts.

Most communities do not suffer from a lack of ideas, they struggle with knowing where to start when it comes to implementing their ideas. Rather than brainstorming everything that you could ever potentially do in your downtown, we focus on a five-year timeframe. This plan is designed to help you identify where your community should focus its energy and effort in the near-term. Implementing these short-term, doable strategies will incrementally shift the trajectory of your downtown and create the spark that you desire.

Our Team

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Our Partnership

In the Summer of 2024, the Montgomery Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) partnered with Downtown Strategies to develop a short-term strategic vision for Downtown Montgomery.

The focus of the vision was to enhance and accelerate the current revitalization efforts occurring downtown; provide a shared vision for community organizations and stakeholder groups; and spark action from existing master plans and long-term visions.

As part of the Discovery Phase of the process, Downtown Strategies conducted an in-market Strategic Visioning Workshop including a Stakeholder Input Session that hosted a diverse mixture of business owners, property owners, active volunteers, and downtown residents. The input and observations gathered throughout the Discovery Phase informed the strategies outlined in this 5-year Action Plan. The strategies are practical, tactical, asset-based, and market-driven.

Partnership Began	August 2024
Strategic Visioning Workshop	November 2024
Market Analysis Presentation	February 2025
Strategic Plan Delivered	April 2025

Focus Areas

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In this 5-Year Action Plan created for Downtown Montgomery, Downtown Strategies identified 4 Focus Areas for downtown initiatives. Each focus area was identified based on feedback received during the in-market Strategic Visioning Workshop, as well as the consultant team's expertise and analysis. The 4 Focus Areas for this 5-Year Action Plan include:

Policy & Administration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for downtown.

Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that create a vibrant and inviting place for people.

Tourism & Promotion

Smart promotion initiatives position downtown as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases the community's unique characteristics.

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality involves analyzing the retail and real estate as the foundation of downtown's redevelopment opportunities and creating a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators.

Plan Focus

OVERVIEW

Long-term planning and streetscape projects are currently being developed for Downtown Montgomery. Kendig Keast Collaborative is currently leading a major code update for the City of Montgomery. Their scope includes a Future Land Use and Mobility Plan, interim ordinance updates, and a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The update will also include guidelines for historic districts and historic areas as allowed by Texas State Law. Elements that impact the aesthetics and character of Downtown Montgomery, such as signage, parking landscaping, and design standards, are being addressed by Kendig Keast Collaborative so those details are not included in the scope of this 5-year Strategic Action Plan.

An existing Downtown Master Plan was created by Gunda Corporation and White Oak Studio in the early 2020s. A refined streetscape plan is currently being developed specifically for McCown Street by the firms of Ardurra and Kimley-Horn. The master plans create a long-term vision for Downtown Montgomery and include major infrastructure enhancements. The city is moving forward with the McCown Street plan because the corridor is the venue for numerous key community events and activities.

Since long-term design enhancements are being outlined in the streetscape and master plans, Downtown Strategies focused on identifying short-term interventions that will enhance the aesthetics, walkability, connectivity, and overall vibrancy of Downtown Montgomery. Short-term, temporary, and interim strategies that can be implemented incrementally over time to build toward the long-term visions outlined in the other plans were also identified. Finally, Downtown Strategies identified gaps or areas that were not being addressed through the other planning processes.

Examples of established plans and deliverables that are currently in development.

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FOCUS AREA 1

Policy & Adminstration

Policy & Administration involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

# 1.1 Action Teams

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

How many times has your community been through strategic planning? Are they jaded that not enough was accomplished afterwards? Implementation is a key focus of our process at Downtown Strategies. In our combined decades of practical experience, creating Action Teams is the most proven method to successful implementation. As the accompanying Project Mapping Workbook details, the Core Team should eventually assemble an Action Team for each Focus Area in this Action Plan. These teams may be represented by existing committees or boards, or they may be newly created groups of volunteers and staff. At the core, following the process of working through the workbook within each team will set your community up for maximum success.

In Montgomery

In Montgomery, the first Action Team should be formed with the mission to rejuvenate the downtown, thereby creating a vibrant atmosphere for business and social activities. The Action Team should work in conjunction with the City and MEDC and other entities and asset owners in the community to identify areas of need and steps to take to move forward from the 5-Year Strategic Action Plan. Action Team structure should eventually follow the focus areas of this plan; thus, the following teams should be established over time: Policy & Administration, Design, Tourism & Promotion, and Economic Vitality.

The team should rely on recommendations and strategies within this plan as their work plan, meet regularly, encourage collaboration and diversity, and keep themselves accountable for realistic timing of implementation of their various work plan. Having merchant representation on the Action Team will be critical, and communication with stakeholders is key, and notes and minutes should be kept for accountability and transparency.

The consultant team has developed a Project Mapping Workbook, which will be provided during the Implementation Jumpstart and demonstrates how Action Team members can use this plan to spark action and guide revitalization efforts in the focus area of Downtown Montgomery. The next phase of our partnership will provide support in getting the Action Team launched.
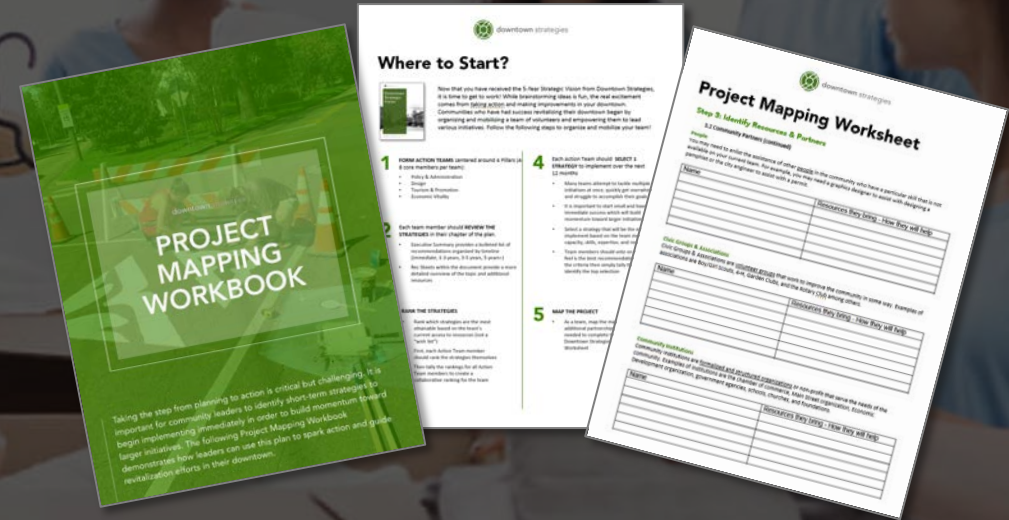
Downtown Business Association

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

A dedicated Downtown Business Association is essential for Montgomery's revitalization because it creates a focused entity where business stakeholders directly shape downtown's future through collective action. Unlike chambers or city government with broader mandates, a Downtown Association channels business owners' intimate knowledge of local market conditions and customer needs into targeted improvements. This peer-led organization fosters mutual accountability, cultivates leadership within the business community, and creates a unified voice for downtown interests. A well-structured Downtown Association empowers businesses to lead rather than simply react to initiatives, ensuring revitalization efforts reflect the practical needs of those with the most invested in downtown's success.

In Montgomery

The key to successfully launching a Downtown Business Association is starting with action rather than organization, building trust through visible results, and gradually formalizing only as needed to sustain momentum. This approach addresses the historical tension between members and non-members by focusing on downtown-wide benefits rather than exclusive services:

Initial Formation Strategy

- Begin with project-based engagement rather than formal structure (such as through an first Action Team)
- Identify 3-5 "quick win" projects from this strategic action plan that address visible downtown needs
- Ask the City and MEDC to host a no-obligation "Downtown Project Night" focused specifically on implementing these projects (similar to the Project Mapping Workshop Downtown Strategies will host for the first Action Team)
- Emphasize that attendance doesn't require joining anything—just participating in specific improvements

Building Momentum Through Action

- Assign specific roles that match business owners' skills and time constraints
- Document and celebrate small successes through social media and local press
- Host a follow-up gathering that reviews accomplishments and introduces the next set of projects

Gradual Formation

- After 2-3 successful project cycles, introduce light structure through quarterly planning meetings
- Create basic communication channels (email list, social media group, text alert system)
- Establish a rotating project coordinator role to distribute leadership responsibilities
- Develop simple project selection criteria based on your strategic action plan

Sustainable Structure

- Keep membership structure minimal initially—focus on participation over dues
- Consider a tiered investment model rather than traditional membership
- Establish that all downtown businesses benefit from and are promoted by association efforts
- Create a memorandum of understanding with the City and MEDC defining roles and resources

City and MEDC Role

- Provide administrative support and meeting space during formative stages
- Offer seed funding for initial projects contingent on business participation
- Connect association leaders with successful downtown organizations in similar communities
- Commit to implementing specific recommendations from the business association

Establish a TERZ

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TERZ) in Texas is a powerful tool for revitalizing rural downtown areas by leveraging future increases in property tax revenue to fund public improvements. In a TERZ, the local government designates a specific geographic area for redevelopment and captures the incremental growth in property taxes generated by new development or property value increases within that zone. These funds are then reinvested into the area to support infrastructure projects, such as upgrading streets, utilities, and public spaces, which can attract private investment. For rural downtowns, a TERZ can be a strategic way to address infrastructure gaps, enhance the area's appeal, and create a more vibrant environment that encourages new businesses to set up shop, ultimately spurring economic growth and long-term revitalization.

In Montgomery

Montgomery is poised to experience tremendous growth over the next 5-10 years, so establishing a baseline for property taxes now before that growth occurs is prudent to capitalize on projected development. Establishing a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TERZ) involves several steps that require careful planning, collaboration with stakeholders, and legal procedures. Below is a high-level overview of the key steps Montgomery should take to establish a TERZ:

Establishing a TERZ

1. **Identify the Area for the TERZ:** The first step is to identify and designate the specific area in the city that will be targeted for revitalization. This area should have potential for growth and improvement but may require infrastructure upgrades, environmental remediation, or other public investments to attract private development. Naturally, the downtown borders present the ideal area for the TERZ.

2. **Conduct a Feasibility Study:** A feasibility study is typically conducted to assess the area's potential for economic. This study evaluates the projected increase in property values, potential private investment, and the types of public improvements needed. The study should demonstrate that the zone will benefit from the infrastructure improvements funded by the TERZ, leading to future property tax growth that will support ongoing revitalization efforts.

3. **Draft a Development Plan & Budget:** The city must prepare a detailed development plan for the TERZ, outlining the public improvements that will be funded by the tax increment revenue. This plan includes a budget for infrastructure projects, timelines, and the expected return on investment. The plan also details how the increment funds will be collected and managed. The plan should prioritize improvements that will have the most significant impact on the revitalization of the area and outline how the funds will be spent over time.

4. **Obtain Approval from City Council:** After the development plan is created, the city must present it to the local governing body (usually the City Council) for approval. This step involves holding public hearings where stakeholders can express their opinions and ask questions. The City Council must pass an ordinance formally establishing the TERZ and approving the development plan, including the proposed boundaries, financing mechanisms, and improvements to be funded.

5. **Submit Plan to TX Comptroller's Office:** Once the city council approves the TERZ plan, it must be submitted to the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts for review and approval. The Comptroller will review the plan to ensure it meets all statutory requirements and that the proposed improvements align with the state's guidelines for tax increment financing. This step is required for the legal establishment of the TERZ, and the Comptroller's office will assess the financial feasibility of the project.

6. **Implement the Development Plan:** Upon approval by the Comptroller, the city can begin implementing the development plan. This involves initiating public improvement projects such as road construction, utility upgrades, streetscape beautification, or other infrastructure enhancements within the designated zone. The city will need to carefully manage the project and track the use of tax increment funds to ensure that improvements are completed as planned and that the zone remains attractive to private investors.

Revitalization Incentives Package

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Strategic financial incentives are essential catalysts for downtown revitalization, providing the critical push that transforms business and property owners' aspirational ideas into tangible improvements. Well-designed incentive programs like Vibrancy Grants and Innovation Funds (detailed on the next two pages, create multiplicative effects far beyond their modest investments by leveraging private capital, establishing visible momentum, and signaling municipal commitment to downtown prosperity.

Vibrancy Grants expand traditional façade improvement programs into comprehensive storefront enhancement tools that address not just building appearances but the overall sensory experience of downtown through improved lighting, signage, outdoor seating, planters, and artistic elements that collectively enhance street-level vitality.

Meanwhile, **Innovation Funds** provide flexible financial resources to support creative and entrepreneurial projects that drive growth and revitalization in the downtown area. These funds empower business owners, developers, and community stakeholders to propose tailored ideas that meet the unique needs of their community, from launching new businesses and upgrading operations to implementing technology solutions or creating community-driven events. By encouraging entrepreneurial creativity and local solutions, Innovation Funds help foster economic diversification and attract private investment, ensuring that public dollars stimulate long-term, sustainable growth in ways that go beyond traditional incentives.

In Montgomery

Montgomery's historic downtown stands at a pivotal moment where targeted financial stimulus can transform latent potential into vibrant reality. Rather than wait for perfect funding conditions, start with these complementary programs at achievable funding levels, document their impacts, and use those early successes to build support for expanded incentives in subsequent years. The transformative energy generated by even a handful of storefront enhancements and innovative community-driven projects will create momentum that attracts additional investment, visitors, and entrepreneurs to downtown Montgomery, making these initial incentives the foundation of a self-reinforcing cycle of downtown revitalization.

1.4 Vibrancy Grants

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

Vibrancy Grants are transformative downtown revitalization tools that expand beyond traditional façade improvement programs to holistically enhance the sensory experience and overall vitality of downtown districts. While maintaining the core function of improving building exteriors, these grants encompass a broader range of eligible improvements including artistic elements, lighting enhancements, outdoor seating areas, greenery, signage upgrades, and creative window displays—all elements that collectively animate streetscapes and create compelling pedestrian environments.

Typically structured as matching grants ranging from $500 - $10,000, Vibrancy Grants incentivize property and business owners to invest in improvements that not only beautify individual storefronts but contribute to a cohesive downtown atmosphere that attracts visitors and encourages longer stays. The "vibrancy" designation signals that these grants aim to stimulate energy, activity, and visual interest rather than simply repairing building façades, making them particularly effective for downtowns like Montgomery's where basic occupancy exists but businesses need encouragement to elevate their street presence and contribute to a more dynamic downtown experience.

Eligible vibrancy projects include but should not be limited to:

- Exterior paint improvement
- Planters/pots
- Landscaping/potted plants
- Sandwich board or A-frame signage
- Custom business signage
- Professionally hand-painted window signage
- Outdoor merchandise displays
- Outdoor dining

- Outdoor seating
- Exterior lighting enhancements
- Interior storefront display lighting enhancements
- Creative exterior storefront modifications
- Public art (murals, sculpture, etc. – designs and locations require prior approval)
- Activities (cornhole, oversized outdoor games, etc.)

Focus Area 1: Policy & Administration

An Innovation Fund is a financial tool designed to support creative and entrepreneurial projects that drive economic growth and revitalization in a community. An Innovation Fund allows local businesses, property owners, and organizations to propose ideas for projects that will enhance the downtown area, such as new businesses, infrastructure improvements, public art, or tourism initiatives. The fund provides flexible financial incentives, like grants or low-interest loans, to help bring these ideas to life. Rather than following a prescribed development plan, the fund allows the community to propose solutions that are tailored to its unique needs and resources, encouraging local ownership and fostering innovation. It's an effective way for a rural city to stimulate growth, attract private investment, and make its downtown a more vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and visit.

How These Funds Work:

- **Flexible Funding:** Stakeholders (businesses, developers, nonprofits, community groups) can propose a variety of projects, from tech-driven innovations to arts and culture initiatives.

- **Evaluation Process:** Each proposal is evaluated on its potential to stimulate economic growth, create jobs, enhance public spaces, and foster long-term revitalization. The city or managing entity assesses each project individually.

- **Broad Focus Areas:** These funds are often open to a wide range of project types, from infrastructure improvements to arts, business incubation, green spaces, and public events.

These flexible funding models are designed to encourage creativity and risk-taking, allowing cities to harness new ideas and address the unique challenges they face. Each city's program is tailored to its needs, but the overall goal is the same: foster innovation that will contribute to economic vitality and the long-term sustainability of the downtown area.

Kansas City, MO Innovation Fund

Overview: Kansas City launched the Innovation Fund as part of a broader effort to encourage community-driven innovation in the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods. The program funds projects that focus on improving quality of life, creating jobs, and enhancing public spaces. The fund is open to both established businesses and community organizations proposing ideas that meet local needs.

Example Projects: The fund has supported initiatives such as urban farming programs, community art projects, and creative placemaking efforts that engage local residents in shaping their environment.

Impact: The Innovation Fund has contributed to the city's economic growth by supporting projects that directly benefit the local community, encourage collaboration, and attract both residents and visitors to the area.

New Orleans Business Alliance (NOLABA) "Catalyst Fund"

Overview: The New Orleans Business Alliance administers the Catalyst Fund, which focuses on funding innovative projects that contribute to community development and economic growth. The program allows local organizations, businesses, and entrepreneurs to propose projects that address key challenges in the community, such as vacant properties, public space improvements, and local entrepreneurship.

Example Projects: The fund has supported cultural initiatives, public art installations, and economic development projects aimed at revitalizing underdeveloped neighborhoods in New Orleans.

Impact: By supporting community-driven ideas, NOLABA's Catalyst Fund has empowered local residents to create projects that reflect the culture and spirit of New Orleans while driving economic revitalization.

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FOCUS AREA 2

Design

Thoughtful design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the downtown district apart.

Focus Area 2: Design

In order for downtown districts to be truly successful they must be walkable, well connected, and accessible to everyone. The accessibility of sidewalks, intersections, crosswalks, and storefront areas throughout downtown are critically important. Additionally, the visual definition between pedestrian areas and vehicular travel lanes and parking areas is important in creating a well-defined, safe space for all. Cities must ensure that travel lanes and parking stalls are properly striped; crosswalks are bold; curb lines and intersections are clearly defined, and corners are accessible.

Improving connectivity can involve creating visual connections and creating a gateway entry experience into the district. This is especially important for downtowns located along or adjacent to major highway corridors. A proper gateway entry creates a welcoming environment for visitors and helps grab the attention travelers passing by the district.

In Montgomery

Long-term infrastructure enhancements are being planned for Downtown Montgomery that will serve as a vision for the streetscapes of the district. These plans illustrate the importance of enhancements such as brick pavers, landscaping, street trees, and public spaces. However, infrastructure enhancements require extensive funding and resources to implement. So, short-term enhancements should be installed to incrementally improve the walkability and aesthetics of the downtown core while working toward large-scale enhancements. Short-term strategies can range from basic maintenance projects to the use of temporary or interim enhancements to test or pilot aspects from the long-term master plans. Using temporary materials allows the city to test various concepts prior to making major investments in permanent infrastructure. Additionally, the community should implement strategies that create a welcoming gateway entry into Downtown Montgomery in order to better connect the district with the Highway 105 corridor.

2.1 Take Small Steps

Focus Area 2: Design

Short-term and interim enhancement:

- Better define the edges of roadways and intersections through cleanup efforts, debris removal, edging, landscaping, and basic enhancements.

- Install Texas flags on the utility poles along Liberty Street from Highway 105 to Clepper Drive to create a gateway entry experience. Flags can be expanded to other streets over time as resources allow. An alternate treatment would be to alternate between Texas flags and American flags.

- Consider the addition of custom streetlight banners along utility poles throughout the downtown core. The banners should showcase the updated brand and color palette mentioned in Strategies 3.1 and 3.2.

- Paint bold crosswalks at all core downtown intersections. In addition to improving pedestrian safety, the treatment will better define the intersections and create visual connections throughout the district.

- Use thermoplastic street striping (or basic street paint as a low-cost, temporary option) to add star icons to the Liberty Street /Caroline Street and Liberty Street/College Street intersections as a temporary treatment related to the existing master plan.
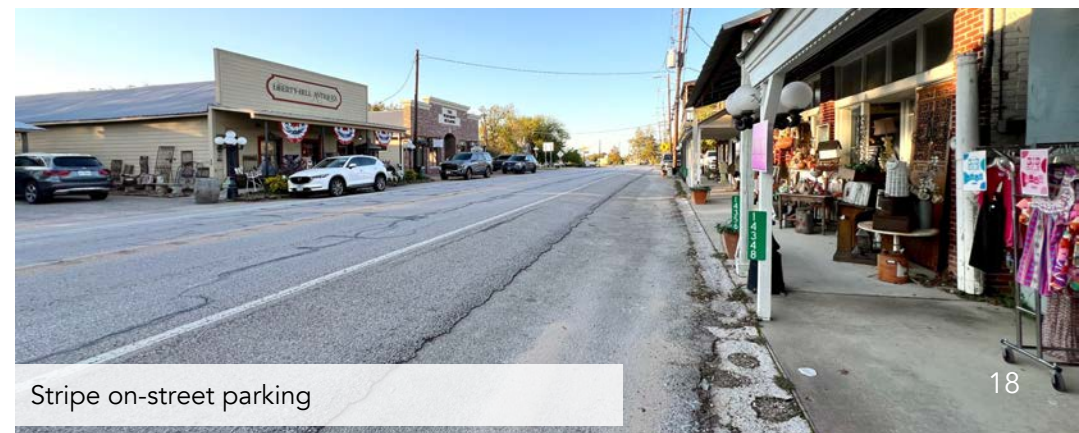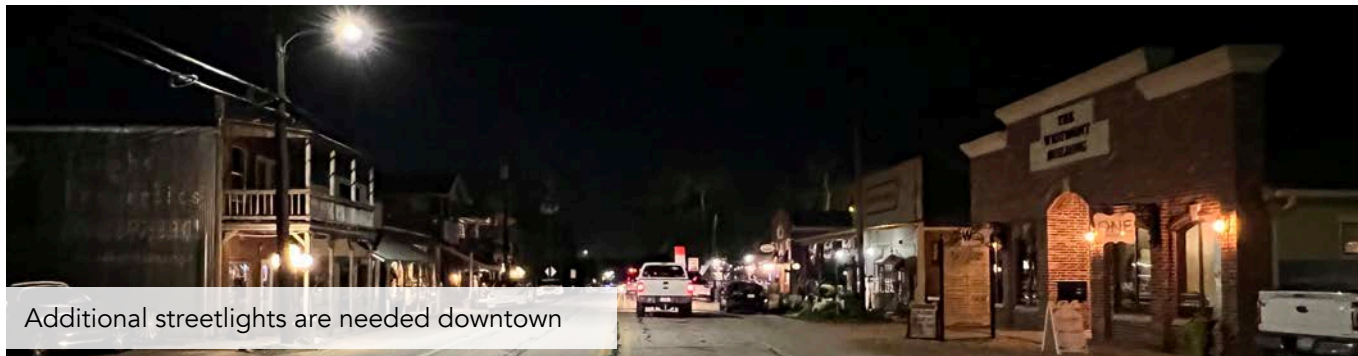

Gateway entry experience

Intersection painting

Remove debris and create clear edges

Focus Area 2: Design

- Host a walkability tour with elected officials, Public Works staff, MEDC board members, and downtown stakeholders to identify barriers to walkability throughout Downtown Montgomery. Participants should be challenged to navigate downtown using a stroller and wheelchair. The tour should focus on the Liberty Street, McCown Street, and Pond Street corridors from Highway 105 to College Street. This experience should highlight simple, short-term improvements that can be made in the short-term as well as long-term needs.

- Add railing between the sidewalk and parking area to better delineate the entrance into the parking lot at the Liberty Street and College Street intersection as well as the Cozy Grape parking lot. This should include narrowing the curb cut ingress/egress area to a proper width.

- Work with property owners and business owners to better define the areas between the building and street. This could include improving existing hardscape areas, converting gravel parking to paved parking, adding landscape areas, and other improvements. The transition from the street to the doors of the businesses is very important in creating a quality experience for customers.

- Explore opportunities for adding additional streetlights to Liberty Street and other core downtown streets. Currently there are only 1-2 streetlights in the core downtown which is challenging for creating a safe and vibrant nighttime environment.

- Explore options for properly striping parallel on-street parking spaces along the right-of-way along Liberty Street if it does not require TXDOT approval.

Better define parking lot entry and pedestrian connections

Convert gravel areas into paved connections

Additional streetlights are needed downtown

Stripe on-street parking

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Emphasize Outdoor Activity

Focus Area 2: Design

Vibrant downtown districts showcase activity throughout the day as well as a healthy night life scene. Daytime activity includes showing "signs of life" along the downtown sidewalks with merchandise displays, sandwich board signs, engaging storefront displays, and other vibrancy elements. A vibrant nightlife scene is created through lighting and outdoor dining. In fact, outdoor dining and outdoor seating adds activity throughout the day and greatly contributes to the perceived vibrancy of a downtown district.

In Montgomery

Local restaurants such as Krawfish Kai have large outdoor dining areas along their storefronts. The Cozy Grape added small bistro tables along their storefront; Slice of Amish added a small courtyard space adjacent to their storefront, and H Wines Winery's recently converted a small parking lot into an outdoor dining area is an excellent example of converting underutilized areas into spaces for people. These types of additions and conversions should be celebrated and encouraged through policies, incentives, and educational campaigns because they add to the vibrancy, character, and ambiance of Downtown Montgomery. The MEDC should create inspirational mood boards and material showcasing examples of "beer gardens" and "social yards" to encourage business owners to continually elevate their spaces with string lights, colorful umbrellas or shade sails, flexible seating, potted plants and landscaping, artificial turf, and outdoor games.

Examples of Outdoor Dining
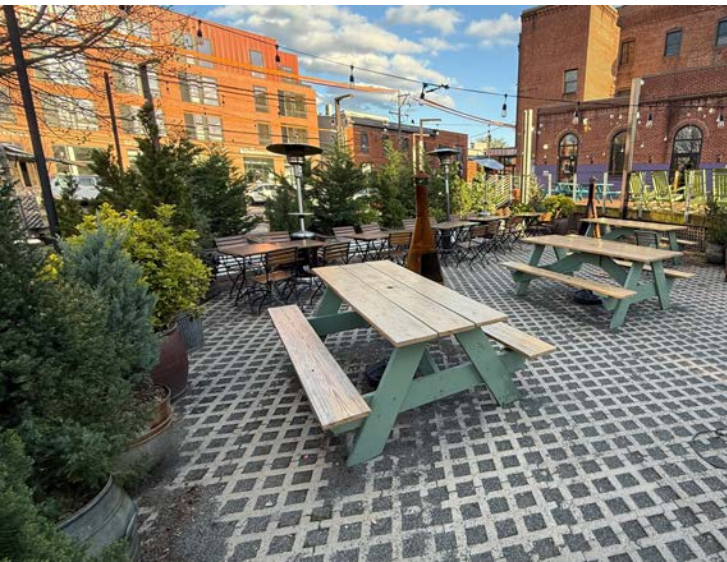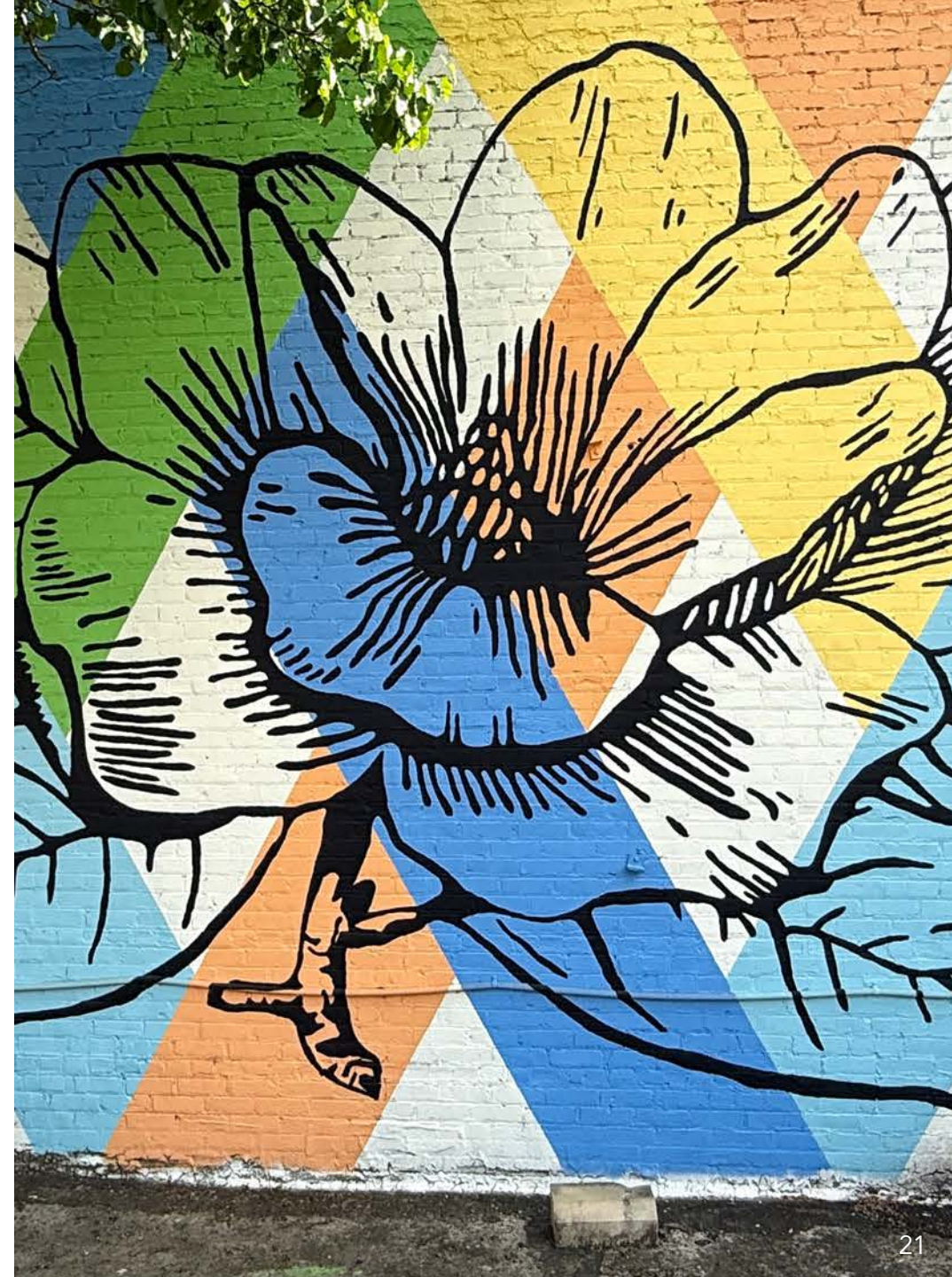
Create Engagement Opportunities

Focus Area 2: Design

Public art is an important aspect of creating a vibrant downtown. Murals are popular form of public art in downtown districts and have long been used to showcase the history of the community. Current trends use art in a more modern way. Many downtowns are using public art as a way to engage visitors and create a unique experience capitalizing on popular trends. Many businesses and communities are realizing the importance of being "Instagrammable" in order to attract visitors and customers. Our current culture, influenced heavily by social media, strives for photo op locations and unique experiences. Public art can be used to create a foundation for this type of activity.

Selfie wall murals, artistic backdrops, selfie stations, and engagement features can be used to create "Instagrammable" destinations and generate word-of-mouth promotions through social media outlets. Selfie wall murals are public art installations that create a photo op through post card "Welcome" messages or a simple artistic backdrop. Selfie stations and engagement features can be created through temporary installations during high traffic events or as semi-permanent installations. Today's generation value authenticity over kitschy (like the world's biggest ball of yarn).

In Montgomery

Although Montgomery has a few public art installations, there are tremendous opportunities for creating engagement features through arts installations. Although more on the kitschy side, the goat and water well installation is an example of using an artistic installation to tell an authentic local story that is unique to Montgomery. In the short-term, Downtown Montgomery should focus on a few key public art installations designed to highlight unique aspects of the community.

Focus Area 2: Design

Lone Star Flag Mural

Montgomery's claim to being the birthplace of the Lone Star state flag of Texas is special. Texas has one of the most recognizable flags in the country and is a large part of the state's identity and brand. Street art, benches, stamped concrete, and other elements throughout downtown feature the flag and star theme. Star details should continue to be used in elements throughout the historic core and the overall community. In the short-term, a highly visible location for a Lone Start Flag-themed mural should be identified within Downtown Montgomery. The mural should be simple and bold and placed in a location that allows opportunities for photos and selfies. Include "Montgomery, Texas" in the mural so social media traffic serves as a form of organic marketing for the community. The site will likely become a popular photo op destination for regional visitors as well as locals for milestone moments like graduations and birthdays.

Goat Murals

The goat legend is a funny, quirky, and authentic story for Downtown Montgomery. Many downtown businesses have references to goats in their storefronts including some custom painted concrete goat sculptures. The community should be very cautious not to overuse the goat theme, small references to the goat will create intrigue and interest for visitors and customers. A mural or series of small murals should be installed that reference the goat. This should be a simple, bold, modern, and potentially quirky style rather than a traditional mural that can also serve as a photo op backdrop. This could become a popular photo op due to the popular term "G.O.A.T." which refers to the "Greatest of all time." As an addition or alternative, a series of small goat murals could be painted throughout downtown that over time will create a fun engaging experience for visitors to "Find our goats" as a fun scavenger hunt type of activity. This could continue to build over the years through small installations. For example, Downtown Blacksburg, Virginia has a collection of life-sized frog sculptures scattered throughout the downtown core as a way to showcase the natural watershed flowing through the center of the city. Each of the "16 Frogs" has a name and is featured on a custom map and website. Although a small, simple gesture, the frog installation creates a unique, engaging experience for Blacksburg residents and visitors.

State flag mural

Quirky goat mural concepts

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Create Engagement Opportunities

Focus Area 2: Design

Lone Star Flag Selfie Station

A selfie station should be installed in Downtown Montgomery that highlights the city being the birthplace of the Lone Star Flag. The station would become an engagement feature and popular destination for visitors and help build the gateway entry experience into downtown. In addition to the flag, the feature should promote Downtown Montgomery.

Selfie stations can be fabricated by sign companies, but some communities have engaged the local school district's vo-tech program to allow students to create the installations. Others have utilized simple, low-cost plywood panels or cubes for temporary installations. Semi-permanent installations can be fabricated using metal of fiberglass.
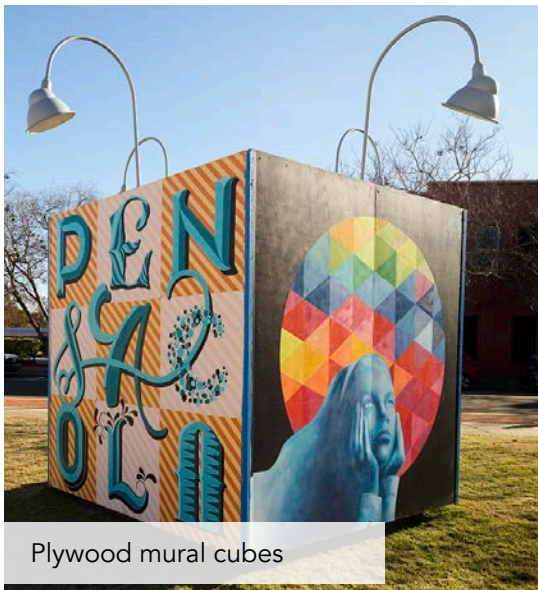
The Pensacola Museum of Art in Pensacola, Florida, organizes CUBED which is an annual event featuring artwork from local and regional artists on 8'x8' plywood cubes.

Metal selfie station

Plywood mural cubes

Plywood mural cubes

Metal guitar sculptures

Fiberglass selfie station

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2.4 Add Vibrancy with Lighting

Focus Area 2: Design

Decorative lighting enhancements are relatively low-cost projects that create a tremendous visual enhancement for downtowns. Ambient lighting from business signage, storefronts, string lights, streetlights, and other projects create a vibrant nighttime environment. Many downtowns accentuate the downtown buildings by installing rooftop lighting along the upper parapets. This creates nighttime vibrancy and creates a cohesive look within the downtown area. This type of project does take coordination with the property owners and requires a legal agreement between the city (or lead organization) and the property owners. A current trend is to install overhead string lights to add ambient lighting and serve as a vibrancy element to activate the district. These sites often become popular photo op destinations.

In Montgomery

String light installations add immediate vibrancy to downtown districts and immediately become popular photo op destinations. Downtown Montgomery would benefit greatly from string light installations as a way to enhance the nightlife environment, add ambient lighting to the area, and generate excitement locally. The Liberty Street corridor and McCown Street are ideal locations for overhead string lights, also known as "festoon lighting." These relatively low-cost installations can add vibrancy and excitement in the short-term while long-term infrastructure enhancements are finalized. Current infrastructure in Downtown Montgomery creates challenges for string light installations, but various options should be explored.

2.4 Add Vibrancy with Lighting

Focus Area 2: Design

Liberty Street
Cities typically connect string lights to existing utility poles or to buildings in order to create an interesting overhead installation. The varying heights and irregular spacing of buildings create challenges for connecting to existing buildings. Regularly spaced utility poles are only located along the east side of Liberty Street which does not allow for a crisscross or diamond pattern installation. If additional streetlights are added, this may create opportunities for cross-street installations. Although adding additional visual clutter is not ideal, some communities add metal posts or utility poles specifically for string light installations. Adding 2-3 poles along the west side of Liberty Street would likely be sufficient for an attractive crisscross pattern installation.

McCown Street
McCown Street is most commonly used for downtown events and festivals. The city is currently working with Ardurra and Kimley-Horn to create a detailed streetscape plan for the corridor which will include decorative street art, expanded pedestrian areas, street trees, and a shared deck along the rear entrances of the businesses along the west side. The updates will create a very welcoming and inviting space for activity and community events. McCown Street is the perfect location for an overhead string light installation. String lights should be added above the street as well as along the shared deck space. If the streetscape improvements will be completed within the next 5 years, the city should install the string lights as part of that project. However, if it will take longer than 5 years to begin the permanent streetscape improvements, then the city should install short-term infrastructure (metal posts, guide wires, etc.) to support a cross-street overhead string light installation.

Parapet Lighting
As an alternative to cross-street overhead string lights along Liberty Street, the MEDC and/or city could work with property owners to install parapet lighting along the rooftops of the downtown buildings. This "skyline" lighting showcases the architecture of the buildings and creates an inviting and vibrant downtown atmosphere. Typically, the lights are connected to the city's streetlights, so they operate along with the streetlights. A "Light up Liberty" campaign could be launched to build support and potentially fundraising for the project. This type of installation does require legal agreements with the property owners.

2.5 Better Utilize the Community Building

Focus Area 2: Design

In Montgomery

Downtown Montgomery does not have a courthouse square or common green space for community events and activities. McCown Street currently serves as the venue for festivals and events and plans are underway to further enhance the streetscape to better facilitate activities. Although the improvements to McCown Street will be great assets for the district, Downtown Montgomery has an opportunity to capitalize on a greatly underutilized asset. The "Community Building" located along Liberty Street between College Street and Clepper Drive offers tremendous opportunities for Downtown Montgomery. The property is located at the northern terminus of McCown Street which will connect well to future streetscape enhancements. The grounds, bordered by a beautiful sone wall, feature mature trees and large areas of green space creating a park-like atmosphere. The building, although dated and in need of upgrades, could be a perfect venue for hosting events and activities. The city should plan for future investments into the Community Building property and building so it can serve as the core park space for Downtown Montgomery.

Short-term enhancements could include:
- Wrapping the trunks with string lights or adding canopy lights or uplighting to the mature live oaks on the grounds of the Community Building.

- Prioritizing basic cosmetic upgrades to the interior of the Community Building.

- Hosting a variety of small-scale events, including potentially a special edition of the farmers' market on the site.

Existing Community Building Property

Wrapped string lights
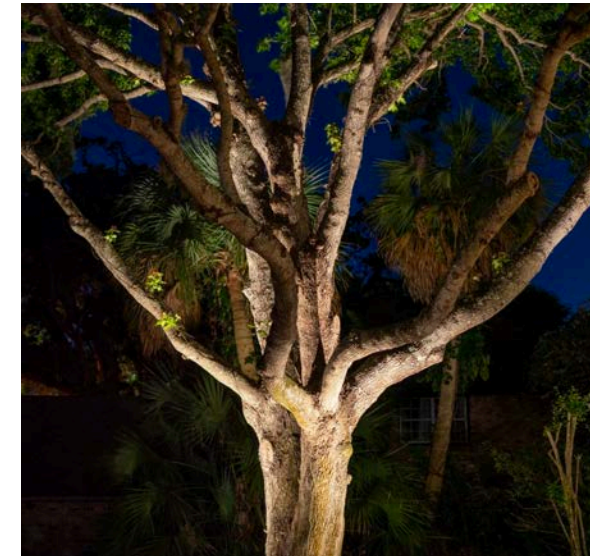
Uplighting on landmark tree

downtown strategies

FOCUS AREA 3

Tourism & Promotion

Smart promotion initiatives position your Downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Creating a strong brand is a crucial component of any organization or business. Although it is often overlooked, it is also important for communities to have a strong brand that captures the unique qualities and character of the place. Oftentimes cities and towns overlook the important role those logos and graphics play in promoting the overall community.

A strong logo is only the beginning. A "brand" is an entire messaging package that captures the unique personality of the community through logos, graphics, events, promotions, color palettes, messaging, and other material. Every community is different, so every brand package is different. Some communities have a single brand that serves as an umbrella for all external messaging. Others have a family of brands that work in unison to promote the various assets of the community. It is important to engage a qualified professional to determine the appropriate strategy.

In Montgomery

Montgomery's proximity to Houston, Conroe, and College Station, as well as the projected growth of the community, creates tremendous opportunities for external marketing. Promoting the quality of life and Downtown Montgomery will be key in attracting visitors, new residents, potential entrepreneurs, and customers into the community. The "Historic Montgomery, TX" and "Visit Montgomery TX" social media profiles are actively promoting the community. However, Montgomery lacks an external brand for the community.

An external brand is intended for an external audience. While a strong logo or wordmark is important, the brand package should also include a collection of resources including a color palette, font family, and logos/graphics for events, promotions, etc.

University seal (internal)   *University logo (external)*

City of Montgomery Seal

*Graphic used throughout downtown*

Create a Strong Brand

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Montgomery has some amazing stories that would help build a strong, unique brand. The history of the Texas Lone Star Flag and the legend of the downtown goat are unique stories that can be combined with the quality-of-life components of access to small town lifestyle, authentic Texas experience, access to outdoor recreation and lake life, and a quaint historic downtown. Montgomery should enlist the services of a qualified graphics designer who specializes in community and downtown marketing and branding to create a logo and brand package for tourism and promotion efforts. The Montgomery brand should be used as an umbrella brand for the community regardless of the organization in order to create a unified "voice" for tourism and promotional efforts.

There should be a standardized brand package for Montgomery and Downtown Montgomery that can be used by the various organizations leading downtown and tourism activities. Standardizing fonts and color palettes for downtown promotions across the various organizations can set the foundation for a unified voice, but a professional brand package would create a firm foundation for promotional efforts. The brand should be used by all key organizations involved in promoting downtown and events. Each organization can continue to lead various events and activities; however, the promotion of the events should follow the brand package guidelines in order to create a cohesive message for the consumer.

As part of the brand package, a brand extension highlighting the "Birthplace of the Texas Flag" should be developed. A licensing agreement should be created so that local merchants can create and sell Montgomery merchandise using the updated brand.
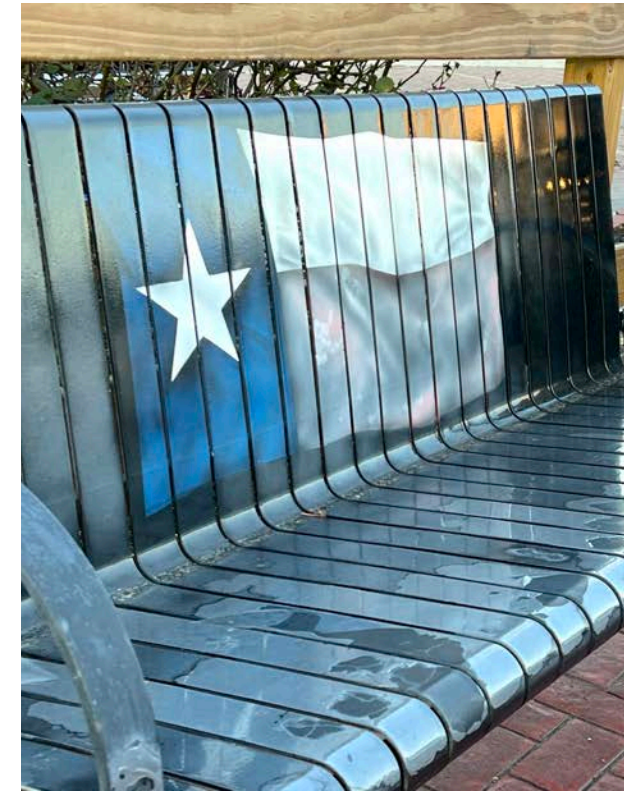
3.1 Create a Strong Brand

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Case Study

Stephenville, Texas is home to a tremendous number of unique assets. It is home to the Rodeo Walk of Fame, it claims to be the Cowboy Capital of the World, has an active downtown square, beautiful brick streets, and is home to Tarleton State University (TSU).

While community leaders appreciated the importance of these assets, they realized that they were not fully capitalizing on them and that they were not adequately telling the unique story of their community. The city logo was a basic wordmark that had been copied from a consultant report years previously. Through their partnership with Downtown Strategies, Stephenville was connected to a premier community marketing and branding firm and trusted partner Arnett Muldrow and Associates.

Arnett Muldrow partnered with Stephenville to develop a custom brand package that captured the unique assets, stories, and character of the community. The updated brand gave them a suite of material to use for promotions and physical enhancements to better market the community as a destination. It also allowed them to better connect with TSU students and campus visitors.

Learn More
[Arnett Muldrow and Associates](#)

Example components from the Stephenville, Texas brand package developed by Arnett Muldrow & Associates through a partnership with Downtown Strategies.

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

In Montgomery

"Historic Montgomery, TX" and "Visit Montgomery TX" social media profiles are doing a great job of marketing the community through promotions of events, shop/eat local, photos, and other types of posts. The increased activity is positive and the city's recent investment in promoting the community is impactful. However, currently there is little consistency among promotions and social media graphics for community events and activities. Graphics use different fonts, color palettes, and design styles. While the content is creative and diverse, the lack of a cohesive style should be addressed.

In the short-term, the "Historic Montgomery, TX" profile should adopt a font family and color palette to create a unified and consistent promotions. This creates a firm foundation for creating a recognizable brand. Although an updated brand package should be created as outlined in Strategy 3.1, a short-term approach is to use the existing graphic used throughout downtown showcasing "Montgomery: Birthplace of the Texas Flag" can be used to guide design decisions. Using the logo, color palette, and fonts from the graphic is an easy short-term way to create unified and cohesive promotions.

Also, for communities without graphic design expertise on staff, Canva is an excellent free tool that can be used to create graphics, flyers, and other promotional material using their existing templates which can be customized. Note: always customize the fonts and color palettes rather than using the stock templates.

When creating social media graphics, flyers, posters, advertisements, and other promotions the following fonts and colors should be used:
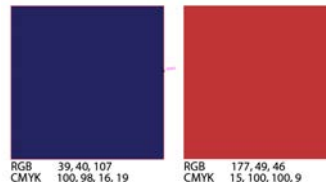
Font Family

Whitin

Whitin

Avenir

Avenir

Primary Color Palette

|	
RGB 39, 40, 107 CMYK 100, 98, 16, 19	RGB 177, 49, 46 CMYK 15, 100, 100, 9

Develop a unified style

Examples of promotional material from the Water Valley Main Street Association. Although these promotions are from a single organization, the use of a consistent color palette and standardized family of fonts creates a cohesive brand and unified voice for Downtown Water Valley, Mississippi.
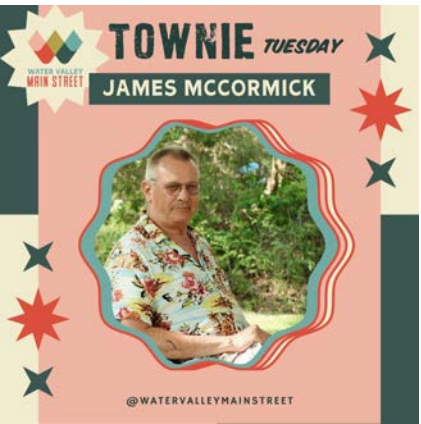
Develop a unified style
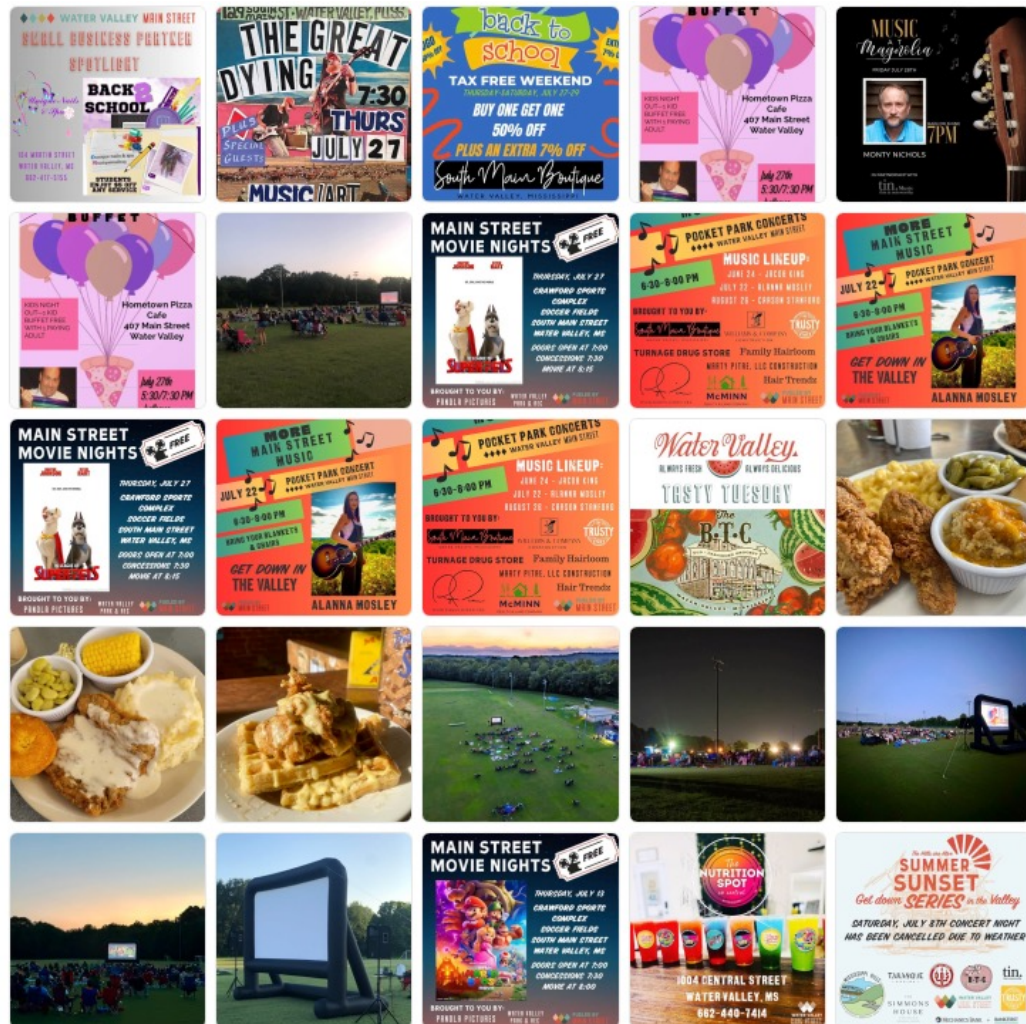
Water Valley Main Street's Facebook feed **before** a consistent brand package was implemented. The lack of a unified style created a chaotic and unrefined presentation.
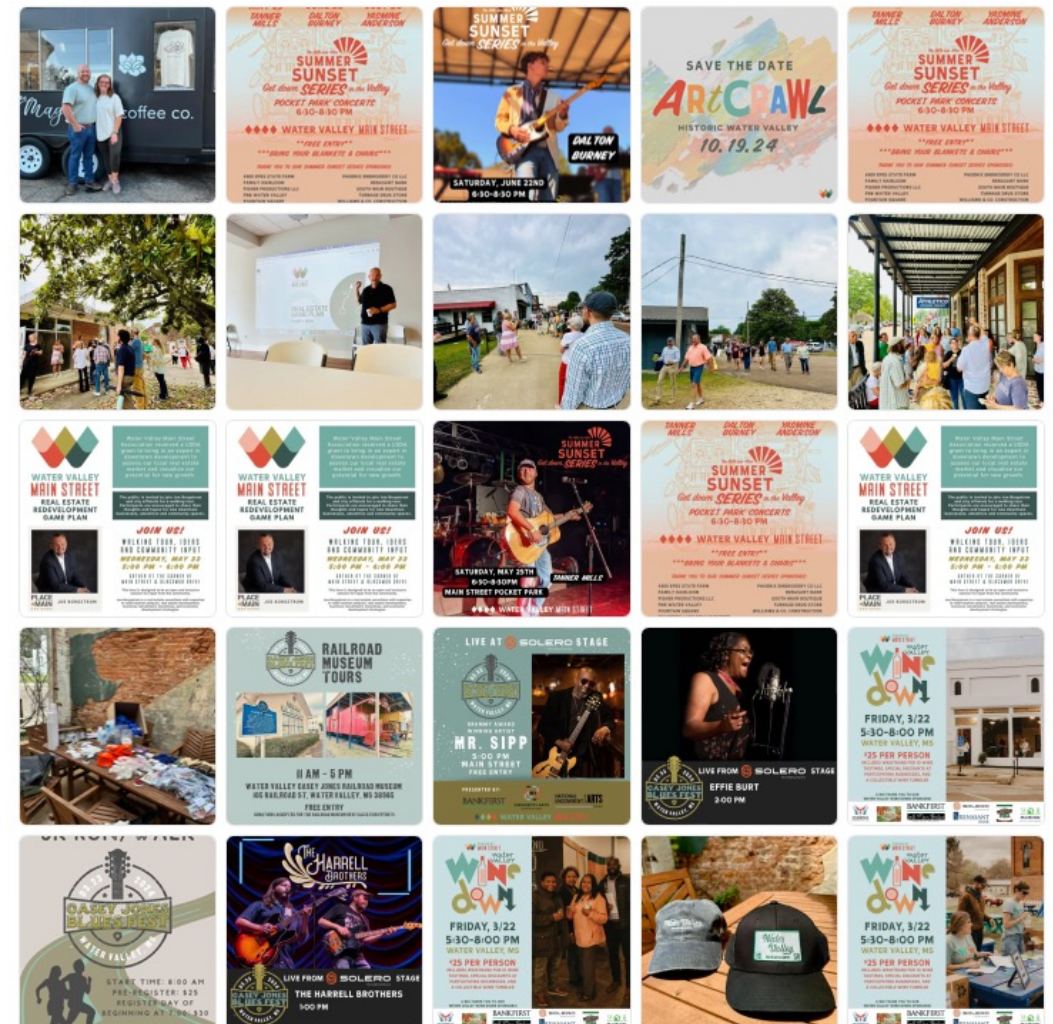
Water Valley Main Street's Facebook feed **after** a consistent brand package was implemented. Promotions now use a standardized family of fonts and color palette, which present a cohesive, consistent, unified, and recognizable brand.

3.3 Host Regular Micro-events
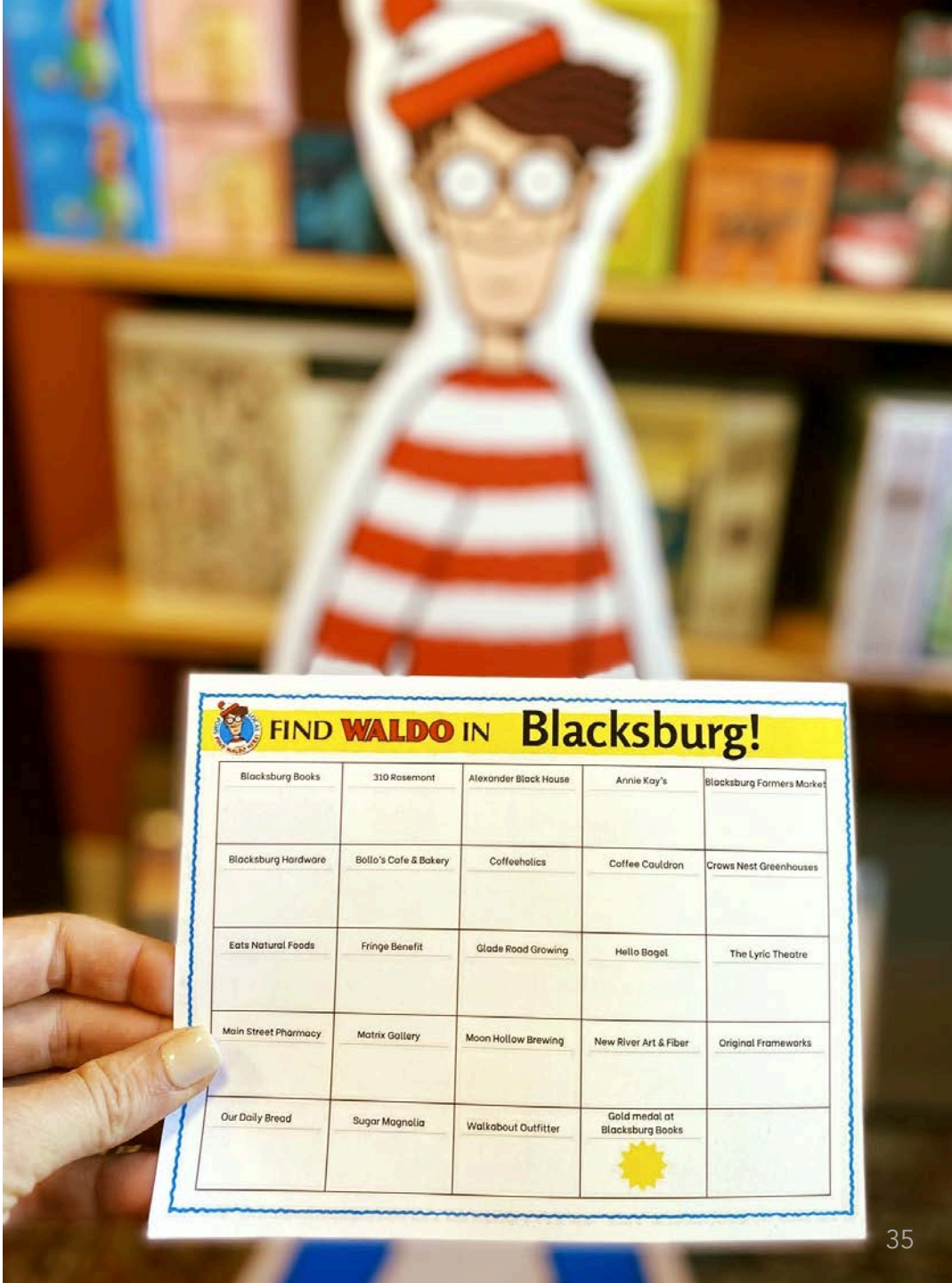
Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

In simple terms, tourism involves connecting visitors with retailers, restaurants, and other businesses. This can take place through large community-wide events and festivals or small-scale retail promotional events such as wine tastings or farm-to-table dinners. Rather than large events and festivals that require extensive planning and resources, the largest return on investment can often come from small, simple but targeted promotional events. These are often referred to as micro-events or small-scale promotions. Micro-events can be focused on anything. The sillier the better in most cases. Simply give people a reason to come downtown and visit a local retailer or restaurant.

Social media opens the door to free and inexpensive outlets for promoting events, stories, businesses, etc. Using this tool to tell your target audience about your businesses, downtown activities, improvement projects, etc. is key to communicating a positive message about the downtown area and generate a positive perception. Social media is a key tool in promoting micro-events and engaging promotions.

In Montgomery

Downtown Montgomery is the primary location for a number of community events throughout the year. The current slate of events, such as the Lone Star Dance, demonstrate that locals yearn for quality downtown events. The key to a successful event is to provide a unique **experience** for the participants. Current trends in tourism, dining, and downtown revitalization focus on the customer/visitor experience. Authenticity, uniqueness, and quality are important.

Additionally, it is important to constantly invite customers into the downtown core. Large festivals are great, but local businesses often benefit more from regular small-scale events rather than periodic large-scale festivals. So, the best return on investment, especially given the limited staff capacity in Montgomery, will come through hosting micro-events and small-scale promotion that rely on coordination with businesses and basic social media promotion. Sometimes these promotions are planned as add-on activities to existing events.

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

In Montgomery

Montgomery should incorporate a number of micro-events and small-scale promotions into the scope of work for downtown in order to intentionally connecting the dots between the customers/visitors and the downtown businesses without overextending staff time and resources. Start with 1 new pilot micro-event this year with the goal of launching 4 (one per quarter/season) pilot promotions within the next 2 years.

Many communities host micro-events and small-scale promotions that are fairly generic such as seasonal open houses, First Friday events (or your chosen day of the week) that occur on the first Friday of each month, or sip-and-shop events. These types of events are easy to model and are well received from the public. It is also important to create micro events that tap into the unique personality of the community. Montgomery's link to the Lone Star Flag, legend of the goat, and authentic Texas experience offers opportunities for creative expressions through these promotions.

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Some examples of micro-events and small-scale promotions could include:

Regular Open House Event
Downtown retailers and restaurants agree to coordinated extended hours one day per season (could also occur monthly if desired). Special discounts can be offered, and the event is heavily promoted on social media, traditional media, and storefront posters. The organizing group should also highlight participating businesses by including their name/logo on promotional material, graphics, maps, or through social media highlights. Participating businesses should decorate their storefront accordingly and include outdoor signage or displays to add vibrancy to the sidewalks.

Potential event names: Spring Goat Walk (chalk goat prints or silly goat-shaped signs could be placed outside of participating businesses), Spring Open House, Second Saturdays, etc.

Downtown Poker Run
Similar to a sip and shop event, a Poker Run activity could be incorporated into an engaging and interactive experience. Each participating restaurant and business would receive a deck of cards. Each customer that spends over a certain amount would receive a card. The goal is to create the best poker hand possible with the cards collected through the event. Once they collect 5 cards, they turn in their hand to the event organizer. The best hands receive prizes. This engaging event creates a fun experience for customers and an economic impact for local businesses.

Baa-zar Market
This coordinated downtown event could involve all types of retailers and restaurants. This event could be supplemented with vendors, like from the farmers' market or local festival vendors, or simply include downtown merchants. This simple extended hours event could be a weekend event, Saturday event, or evening event. The Baa-zar Market is very similar to the Open House-style events but branded in a creative way. "Baa" is a reference to a goat sound and creates opportunities for endless goat puns in the marketing and promotion of the event. Promotions could include puns such as "Stop kidding around," "Be part of our herd," or "Come graze our downtown." It could also include a scavenger hunt or passport type activity where customers are encouraged to "Get your Goat" by collecting goat stickers at participating businesses. Stickers could be given for every purchase over a certain threshold (for example sales over $10). Everyone with a certain number of stickers is entered into a drawing for a prize. Note: using gift cards from local businesses as a prize ensures that they will return to downtown in the future creating additional impact.

Potential event names: If the goat theme is not desirable, references to the Lone Star history could add an authentic flair. "Moonlight Market," "Shop under the Stars," or "Lone Star Market" would also allow for creative promotions on social media. Encourage outdoor activities like outdoor dining, live music, etc. to create a lively atmosphere.

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Night of the Arts

Montgomery has a creative artistic scene, but it is not widely recognized locally. The Lone Star Dance is a popular event, but other local businesses are hosting art classes, art galleries, dance classes, etc. Packaging these activities into a coordinated micro-event would bring more awareness and create a unique experience. A "Night of the Arts" could combine the art classes with salsa dancing, line dancing, live music, and other artistic expressions. Art classes could be conducted outdoors, and open mic night could attract local musicians to showcase their talent, and local experts could host dance classes for attendees. Local and regional artists could also set up in or outside of local businesses to create an Art Crawl component to the event.

Progressive Dinner

This culinary-focused promotion could create a unique experience that capitalizes on Montgomery's unique culinary offerings. Each downtown restaurant and retailer with culinary offerings (winery, cheese shop, etc.) could create a tasting menu highlighting an appetizer, entrée, and dessert or promotional material could organize participating businesses into those categories. Customers would explore the different offerings at various restaurants and culinary destinations as a progressive dinner. This would allow them to taste different restaurants, specialty items, and shop local retailers while exploring Downtown Montgomery.

Potential event names: "Grazing Goats" Progressive Dinner – plays off the legend of the downtown goat that would wander in and out of local establishments.

Sip & Shop Events

These events can take a variety of forms depending on the community. Most offer tastings of alcoholic beverages, wine being the most popular but could also include craft beer or cocktails/mocktails. However, communities have incorporated a variety of treats including Cookie Strolls, Bacon & Bourbon Walks, hot chocolate and cider, and other non-alcoholic options. Customers are offered a tasting at each location. Note: If alcohol is involved, the state Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) rules and permitting requirements will apply. Oftentimes these are ticketed events which offset costs and can serve as a fundraiser. Branded or sponsored tasting cups are commonly used as well. The Farmer's Daughter's Wine Down Wednesday activity demonstrates a local desire for these types of events.

Potential event names: Stars and Sips (star-shaped balloons, signs, and sidewalk chalk stencils could be placed outside of participating businesses), Wine Down Downtown, Montgomery Sip & Shop, etc.

3.3 Create a Community Calendar

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Every community struggles with communication. Many communities are seen as being boring with limited activities, but that is rarely accurate. The reality is that most communities have regular events and activities, and many businesses host creative activities that go widely unnoticed by the general public. Organizing a community calendar to serve as a central portal for all community activities can help engage a broader audience and promote the quality of life in the community.

In Montgomery

During the Stakeholder Input Session hosted by Downtown Strategies, the audience discussed the need to a coordinated community calendar. This subject arose after several downtown stakeholders shared a variety of activities that were occurring in Downtown Montgomery that a large portion of the community was unaware of. Dance classes, art classes, cooking classes, etc., are occurring in the community, but many are unaware. Additionally, civic groups host activities such as chili cookoffs, wild game dinners, volunteer cleanup days, etc. that should be promoted to a broader audience. Montgomery should establish a community calendar where local organizations, businesses, and residents can submit events and activities for inclusion. Criteria for eligible activities should be established.

Learn More

The Greater Starkville Development Partnership (GSDP), which is the umbrella community development organization for economic development, chamber of commerce, tourism, and Main Street agencies, hosts the community calendar for events in Starkville, Mississippi. The GSDP developed processes and criteria for event selection and criteria. The web-based calendar is able to be filtered by event type, date, etc.

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

In Montgomery

During the Stakeholder Input Session facilitated by Downtown Strategies, participants discussed the long-standing junior high school historical scavenger hunt. The project engages students in learning the history of Montgomery by solving riddles and clues about key historic sites. The students explore the community and present their findings. Locals love seeing the students explore the community and expressed several opportunities for expanding the project and connecting the students to other community leaders and organizations like the Montgomery Historical Society and Montgomery County Historical Commission.

Since the project has such a strong local connection, it could be expanded in order to have a broader reach within the community and enhanced experience for the students. The Junior High School project should be expanded into a community-wide tradition with interactive and fun tourism activities designed to celebrate history, build community pride, and attract visitors.

"Montgomery Rewind"

A series of weekend activities that celebrate the history of Montgomery. Specific focus should be placed on collecting stories and the history of downtown buildings and properties to be displayed in creative ways. Various activities could also be incorporated into the event in an effort to expand the school project into an engaging and experiential community event.

Visual Displays

Historic photographs and artifacts could be displayed in storefront windows.

The First State Bank
...not open to the public. However is one of the most frequent visited in Montgomery, located on Lib... ...e Weller of Montgomery has been restoring the structure to its original state. This pictur... ...on of how it must have looked in the early 1900's.

TOWN OF MONTGOMERY

FOUNDED IN JULY, 1837 BY W. W. SHEPHERD INCORPORATED IN 1848 MONTGOMERY COUNTY WAS CREATED DECEMBER 14, 1837 JAMES MITCHELL, PLEASANT GRAY, WILLIAM ROBINSON, ELIJAH COLLARD CHARLES BARNETT, JOSEPH L. BENNET DR. B. B. GOODRICH, D. D. DUNHAM AND HENRY FANTHROP, COMMISSIONERS, SELECTED MONTGOMERY AS THE COUNTY SEAT AND IT REMAINED AS SUCH UNTIL 1889

IMPORTANT TRADE CENTER BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Erected by the State of Texas 1936

Focus Area 3: Tourism & Promotion

Historic Walking Tour

Montgomery has created a self-guided historic walking tour of key sites throughout the community. The clickable map allows readers to learn about historic sites. Students could expand on this resource as part of "Montgomery Rewind." Students could use their research to create signs, posters, or sidewalk stickers with QR codes that link to the existing historic walking tour site. Using visual elements will call attention to the historical resource and engage the students in a downtown enhancement projects. A volunteer organization in Old Town Camarillo, California created the "Heritage Walk" which included sidewalk stickers placed throughout the downtown core, a map, and website to tell the story of the community. The South Main Historic District in Memphis, Tennessee developed posters with creative branding and QR codes that were displayed in storefront windows throughout the district.

An added experience could involve the creation of a "Past Port" for visitors to mark every site they visited. Those that completed a certain percentage are entered for a prize.

Wax Museum

Students become historical characters and perform short, dramatic monologues or scenes at various historic sites downtown or in neighborhoods. The school district drama teacher and department could be enlisted to help with costumes and scripts. Actors could be paired with local businesses to create an engaging and interactive walking tour of downtown which would help link visitors with the local businesses. The characters could tell the stories of prominent local figures or the historic buildings themselves.

Many communities host a similar event during the Halloween season with "Voices from the Past" ghost stories events. Visitors explore the local cemetery as local theatre actors or students dress as prominent members from the community and tell the unique stories of the person or community. The Lee University History Department in Cleveland, Tennessee leads an annual historical and educational walk in Fort Hill Cemetery.

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FOCUS AREA 4

Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Farmers markets are powerful catalysts for downtown revitalization, serving as economic and cultural anchors that drive foot traffic, connect local producers with consumers, and create vibrant community gathering spaces. When strategically integrated into downtown areas, these markets generate spillover benefits for surrounding businesses, activate underutilized spaces, and reinforce a sense of place that celebrates local identity. A successful farmers market like Montgomery's can become the heartbeat of downtown revitalization efforts, transforming the urban fabric through regular, dependable community engagement.

In Montgomery

The Montgomery Farmers Market is successful and vibrant and provides a unique service to the community and opportunity for gathering and purchasing fresh foods and products. Ideally, the market would be located downtown, particularly on McCown Street or on the grounds of the Community Building at the east side of Liberty Street between College Street and Clepper Drive. If relocation is not an option, there is an opportunity to utilize the success of this market as a catalyst for Downtown Montgomery by expanding the market with complementary downtown experiences that leverage the market's existing success:

1. **Create a Seasonal "Downtown Harvest Festival" (Quarterly)**
   - Host expanded versions of the farmers market downtown on McCown Street for each season
   - Include cooking demonstrations using seasonal produce from market vendors
   - Feature live music from local artists on a centrally located stage
   - Add special elements for each season (spring plant exchange, summer watermelon eating contest, fall pumpkin carving, winter holiday market)

2. **Establish a Monthly "Twilight Market" at the Community Building**
   - Host an evening market (4-8pm) at the Community Building grounds on the first Friday of each month
   - Install ambient lighting with string lights throughout the grounds
   - Focus on prepared foods, farm-to-table experiences, and artisanal goods
   - Incorporate wine tastings from local wineries and craft beer vendors
   - Schedule acoustic performances near outdoor seating areas

St. Luis Obispo, CA Night Market

Montgomery Farmers Market

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

3. **Develop Direct Business Connections**
   - Create a "Market-to-Main Street" program connecting downtown restaurants with market vendors
   - Organize special menu items at downtown restaurants featuring ingredients from market vendors
   - Develop cross-promotional materials highlighting market vendors and downtown businesses
   - Establish a branded program where downtown shops can identify as "Market Partners"

4. **Design a Cohesive Experience**
   - Create consistent branding connecting all market experiences
   - Develop pedestrian pathways and signage guiding visitors between market and downtown businesses
   - Install permanent infrastructure at the Community Building grounds to support regular events
   - Implement a digital marketing strategy promoting all market activities

These downtown market experiences can serve as powerful incubators for entrepreneurial growth and business vitality in Montgomery's downtown core. By creating lower-barrier entry points for micro-businesses and food entrepreneurs, these events allow vendors to test concepts, build customer bases, and gradually scale into permanent storefronts.

Meanwhile, established downtown businesses benefit from the increased foot traffic and cross-promotional opportunities, often experiencing significant sales increases during market events. The cyclical nature of these markets—whether seasonal festivals or monthly twilight gatherings—creates predictable revenue opportunities that help businesses plan inventory and staffing while encouraging downtown property owners to activate vacant spaces with pop-up shops or temporary installations.

This market-driven approach to downtown revitalization fosters an entrepreneurial ecosystem where businesses at various stages of development can find their footing, potentially leading to increased property values and a more resilient downtown economy that reflects Montgomery's unique agricultural heritage and community identity.

Downtown Winters, CA
Harvest Fest

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Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Almost every downtown desires to have more retailers, restaurants, and other businesses. Ideally this growth would happen organically as the perception and reputation of the downtown shifts to become a destination. Building a strong sense of place within the downtown is important. The downtown should be clean, inviting, safe, and attractive. The properties and buildings should be well maintained and ready for tenants. The area should be active and frequently used for events. While all of these elements are important pieces of the puzzle, communities can also take an active role in recruiting businesses to the downtown by assembling a Business Recruitment Packet with concise information an entrepreneur would need while considering relocating or opening a new business downtown. A Business Recruitment Packet contains information relevant to recruiting a potential business in an easy-to-follow format. The packet should include:

- Market analysis data summary
- Map of the downtown district
- List of focus properties with real estate information, if applicable
- Guide to necessary approval processes
- Guide to available incentives and programs
- Point of contact information

In Montgomery

As the community continues to grow, the business environment in Downtown Montgomery will likely look very different in the next five years. With increased interest from entrepreneurs and developers, Downtown Montgomery could become an attractive destination for retailers or restaurants from neighboring communities or regions looking to open secondary locations or introduce new concepts. Having a well-organized guide and informational packet ready would make a strong first impression and streamline the process for potential businesses.

This presents an excellent opportunity for the Montgomery Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) to take the lead. Additionally, providing a simple, accessible cheat sheet that outlines the permitting and approval processes would be highly beneficial. With the city already working on updates to its codes through a consultant, this is the perfect time to promote these changes, ensuring stakeholders are informed and able to navigate the process easily.
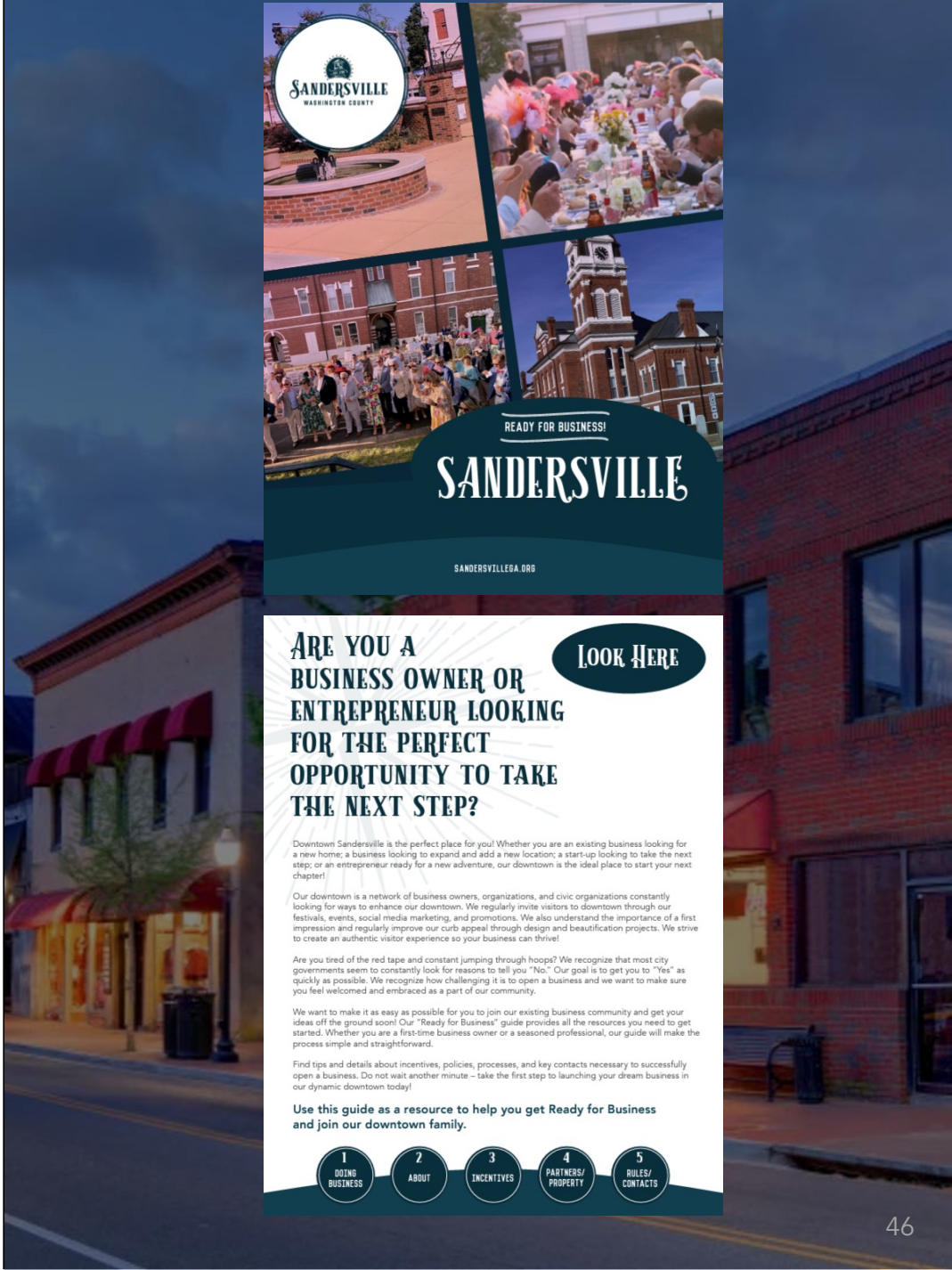
Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Traditional downtown businesses must embrace digital modernization to remain competitive in today's retail landscape. In an era where consumers increasingly research online before visiting physical locations, downtown Montgomery businesses that lack digital presence essentially remain invisible to potential customers despite their prime physical locations. Digital modernization isn't merely about establishing a website but creating a seamless omni-channel experience that bridges online discovery with in-store visits. Businesses that adapt to modern technological and marketing practices can leverage their unique downtown character while expanding their reach beyond geographic limitations, capturing both local loyalty and visitor interest. Without this digital evolution, even well-established downtown businesses risk declining relevance as consumer behavior continues to shift toward digitally-informed shopping experiences.

In Montgomery

Consider the following partnerships and programs to incrementally provide support to Downtown Montgomery's existing small businesses:

1. **University Partnership Program**
   - Partner with Sam Houston State University's College of Business or nearby Lone Star College to create a "Digital Main Street" initiative
   - Arrange for business/marketing students to provide hands-on assistance to downtown businesses as part of course credit
   - Host monthly workshops led by university faculty covering topics like digital marketing, e-commerce integration, and social media management
   - Develop a mentorship program pairing tech-savvy students with downtown business owners

2. **Retail Strategies' Small Business Support Platform**
   - Implement the on-demand, self-led training platform with 5 learning paths
   - Supplement the digital platform with monthly in-person cohort meetings where businesses working through similar modules can share experiences
   - Provide incentives for completion such as matching grants for implementing digital upgrades
   - Highlight success stories from businesses that have completed the program to encourage participation

Small Business Modernization (cont.)

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

3. **Google Business Profile Accelerator Program**
   - Organize a concentrated effort to ensure every downtown business has an optimized Google Business Profile (utilize the worksheet Downtown Strategies has provided as a jumpstart)
   - Provide professional photography services for businesses to enhance their online listings
   - Establish a review management workshop helping businesses solicit and respond to online reviews
   - Create a "Montgomery Downtown Digital Directory" highlighting businesses with complete online profiles

4. **Micro-Grant Digital Transformation Program**
   - Establish a fund providing matching micro-grants ($500-2,500) specifically for digital upgrades
   - Eligible expenses could include website development, point-of-sale system upgrades, and digital marketing campaigns
   - Require grant recipients to complete specific modules of business training as a prerequisite
   - Partner with local banks or credit unions to provide low-interest loans for larger technology investments

5. **Downtown Tech Ambassador Program**
   - Identify digitally advanced business owners who can serve as peer mentors
   - Create a "Digital Champion" recognition for businesses that excel in online engagement
   - Establish a monthly roundtable where businesses can share best practices and challenges
   - Develop a tech resource library with equipment and software downtown businesses can borrow or test

These modernization initiatives can help Montgomery's downtown businesses bridge the digital divide while maintaining their unique character and strengthening the overall downtown economy.

4.4 Google Business Profile

Focus Area 4: Economic Vitality

Having a current Google Business Profile is essential for a local mom-and-pop business because it enhances visibility and credibility in an increasingly digital marketplace. This profile allows businesses to appear in local search results and Google Maps, making it easier for potential customers to find essential information such as operating hours, location, contact details, and services offered. An updated profile can significantly influence customer decisions, as it provides an opportunity to showcase positive reviews and high-quality photos, helping to build trust and attract new clientele. Google Business Profile can differentiate a local business and contribute to sustained growth and customer loyalty in the following ways:

Increased Visibility: Businesses with a complete Google Business Profile are 70% more likely to attract local visits compared to those without.

Customer Engagement: About 56% of consumers who find a local business through Google search are likely to visit the business within a day.

Call to Action: Listings that include a phone number can see up to a 25% increase in call volume, as consumers prefer to connect directly for inquiries.

Positive Impact of Reviews: Approximately 84% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. A high number of positive reviews can significantly boost conversion rates.

Enhanced Local Search Rankings: Businesses with optimized profiles can rank higher in local search results, driving more traffic. Listings that rank in the top three local search results can account for 30% of click-through rates.

Click-Through Rate (CTR): Listings with photos receive 42% more requests for directions and 35% more click-throughs to their websites compared to those without images.

Conversions from Posts: Businesses that regularly post updates on their Google Business Profile can see up to a 10% increase in engagement from potential customers.

User Intent: Around 78% of mobile local searches result in an offline purchase, indicating that a strong online presence directly influences consumer behavior.

In Montgomery

Share the Google Business Profile guide, provided by Downtown Strategies as a supplement to this Action Plan, with downtown business owners as a jumpstart to the implementation of the previous strategy (4.3.) Encourage businesses to claim their presence on Google and update their own Google Business Profile.