



Appendix B: Case Study Evaluation

The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission prepared this appendix as part of the “*Plymouth Downtown Design Standards and Guidelines Project Recommendations*” report.

December 2022

Case Study Evaluation

To help inform the direction of the downtown design project (and any resulting recommendations), the BLRPC conducted case study research to learn about the kinds of programs, ordinances, funding tools, and incentives the Ad-Hoc Committee’s selected case study communities administer or have implemented to ensure their downtowns thrive aesthetically and/or functionally.

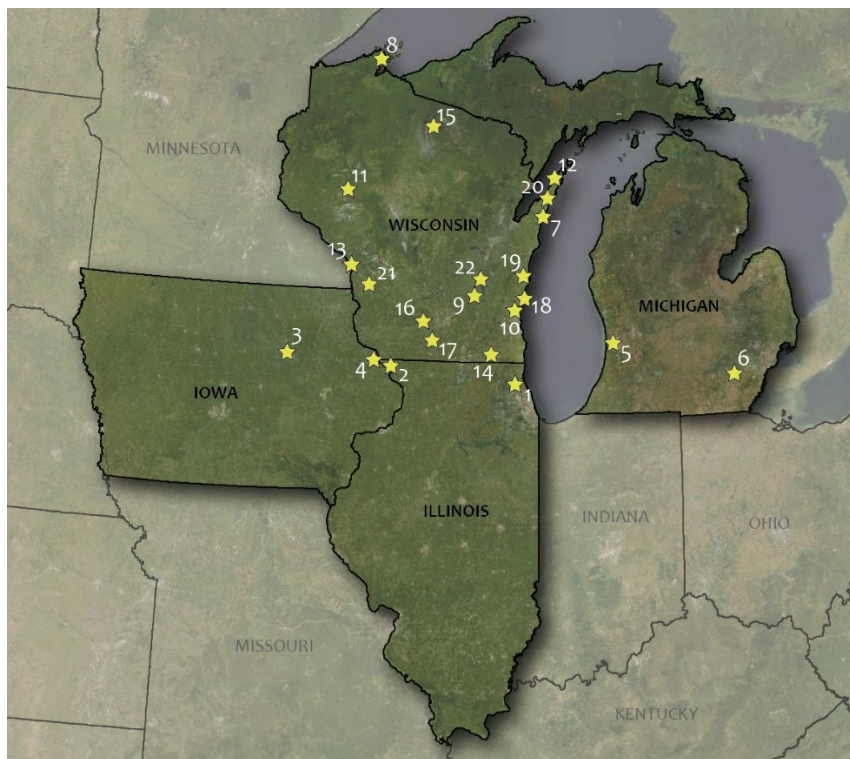
This appendix presents the results of the case study evaluation task. It includes the following sections:

- **Case Study Communities Selected:** This section identifies the 22 case study communities selected by the City of Plymouth’s Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee.
- **Key Themes:** The BLRPC identified a few key themes to summarize the evaluation of case study communities. For each key theme, the BLRPC identified a series of strategic questions for the Ad-Hoc Committee to consider as they develop and refine project recommendations.
- **Case Study Findings and Details:** To provide a record of this research, this section documents the findings and details of the case study evaluation.
- **Interview Records:** Notes from the case study interviews, conducted by BLRPC, are provided for future reference and further context.

Case Study Communities

The City of Plymouth’s Downtown Design Ad-Hoc Committee identified 22 communities (see Exhibit 1) to learn more about. Most of the communities were in Wisconsin (73 percent).

Exhibit 1. Location of Selected Case Study Communities



1. Long Grove, IL
2. Galena, IL
3. Cedar Falls, IA
4. Dubuque, IA
5. Holland, MI
6. Ann Arbor, MI
7. Algoma, WI
8. Bayfield, WI
9. Beaver Dam, WI
10. Cedarburg, WI
11. Chippewa Falls, WI
12. Fish Creek, WI
13. La Crosse, WI
14. Lake Geneva, WI
15. Minocqua, WI
16. Mount Horeb, WI
17. New Glarus, WI
18. Port Washington, WI
19. Sheboygan Falls, WI
20. Sturgeon Bay, WI
21. Viroqua, WI
22. Waupun, WI

Key Themes

The BLRPC summarized three key themes following the case study research. For each key theme, the BLRPC identified a series of strategic questions for the Ad-Hoc Committee to consider (on December 9, 2021) as they develop and/or refine project recommendations.

| Key Theme Overview | Strategic Questions |
|--|--|
| <p>Champions are integral to successful downtown.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the City interested in serving in a champion role? If yes, can this be accomplished with existing staff or is a new hire (e.g., a downtown liaison) necessary? • Is the City willing to support the formation of a Business Improvement District? • Establishing a non-profit organization is not likely to be led by the City. However, is the City of Plymouth interested in further exploring how to become a Main Street America member, or a Wisconsin Connect Communities or Main Street member. |
| <p>Good design is not an accident.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ad-Hoc committee has already discussed the recommendation of a downtown design overlay district. Are there other actions that the committee would like to recommend that could help beautify the entire district, or a specific place/element within the district? • Are protocols to enforce compliance with the overlay district standards (if ultimately implemented) something that the committee would like to recommend? • Should establishing an Architectural Aesthetics Committee be recommended (e.g., to review applications for design compliance, to provide design assistance/feedback, etc.)? |
| <p>For incentives to be viable, they must be well funded and consistently promoted.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the Ad-Hoc committee interested in exploring a recommendation regarding Plymouth's existing façade improvement and/or signage grant? (e.g., modifying program requirements, grant amounts, or identifying a new funding source) |

Case Study Findings and Details

This section presents the findings and details of BLRPC’s case study research, organized by key theme. Findings are generally based on an initial rapid assessment, documented in Exhibit 4.

THEME 1: Champions are integral to successful downtowns.

Defined here, a champion is an individual, group, or organization that has a stake in the downtown area and is/are willing to shepherd downtown-specific initiatives, projects, and programs. The evaluation of case study communities helped to identify champions as business improvement districts, non-profit organizations, Main Street program members, and government staff. We also learned that many champions began as small group (such as a steering committee).

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

In Wisconsin, a business improvement district (BID) can be formed if a property owner within the proposed boundaries petitions the municipality to form a BID. Before the BID can form, the municipality must establish an assessment rate, boundaries, and an operating plan. They must hold a public hearing. A vote to form the BID, by the local legislative body, can occur if the property owners (having more than 40 percent of valuation of all property in the proposed BID) do not oppose the BID or operating plan via a filed petition.

With that context in mind:

- Many of the evaluated communities had a business improvement district (BID) or zone in their downtown. BIDs are advantageous in that they produce revenue to fund specific projects and services. The BIDs evaluated offered a range of services including the administration of economic development initiatives; beautification projects; business assistance; downtown marketing and promotion services; event, hosting, planning, and management services; and much more.
- Some BIDs use revenue to fund specific business/property owner incentives, such as façade improvement grants and rent assistance. *(Note: more on this topic in Theme 3)*
- Each BID had a board of directors (ranging from seven to 13 members). Some had one or more staff overseeing operations/administration of the BID. In the example of the Waupun BID, “BID staff” were City employees and the Executive Director of their Chamber of Commerce. In the example of Ann Arbors BIZ, operations and administration was contracted out to two consultants (both working less than full-time).
- Each BID levied a tax assessment as their primary source of funding. Of the assessments levied per \$1,000 of assessed values, rates ranged from \$1.50 to \$2.01. The City of Waupun (with a levy rate of \$1.50) mentioned their rate was too low given the total valuation of eligible properties in the district. Some BIDs received other sources of funding (e.g., membership fees, license and permit fees, charges for service, donations and sponsorships, interest and rent, advertisement revenue, participant fees from events, and funding allocated by a government entity).
- Based on advice in the interviews, a community looking to establish a BID for the first time should:
 1. Establish a BID steering committee comprised of people that stakeholders know and trust. The committee should be the salesperson for the BID. They should keep

communication open with all the district stakeholders, common council members, and department heads (striving for as many one-on-one conversations as possible). They should become very familiar with the state law about BIDs.

2. Identify BID services wisely. Do not duplicate services provided by another entity. Make sure services selected are desired by the property owners paying the assessment (this will help with your value proposition). Allow for some flexibility in services offered to account for changing needs and district conditions over time.
3. Take the time that is necessary to identify an assessment rate that is sufficient to cover the intended services and that “feels right” to the district stakeholders. The steering committee/champion should spend ample time communicating to stakeholders what they will get in return for paying the additional assessment.
4. If/when the BID is implemented, ensure the board of directors is composed of small and large property owners which represent the number of and variety of businesses in the district.

Please see Exhibit 5 for a comparison of attributes from the different BIDs evaluated.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS / MAIN STREET PROGRAM MEMBERS

Some of the communities had a non-profit organization working to improve the look, feel, and/or business climate of their downtowns. In evaluating these organizations, we learned that:

- Their missions focused on economic development within the downtown area as well as improving the quality of life of the downtown area. Tending to the “image” of the downtown area was an important focus.
- Core services offered included downtown advocacy, marketing and promotion, event planning and management, business attraction and assistance, historic preservation, downtown revitalization, beautification, and community organizing services.
- Most of the organizations received revenue through membership fees. Membership fee rates ranged from \$50 to \$3,000. Many of the organizations also accepted donations.
- The organizations maintained modest- to large-sized boards of directors (between seven to 21 members). Some maintained small staff teams (between two to four people). Some of the organizations also maintained committees (between three and five committees).

Please see Exhibit 6 for a comparison of attributes from the different non-profit organizations evaluated.

Importantly, we learned that many of these non-profit organizations were also certified Main Street program members. In analyzing this model, we found that:

- A range of similar Main Street program options exist. They offer a variety of benefits in exchange for an annual fee (ranging from \$95 to \$375). For example, Main Street America offers three distinct membership programs (see Exhibit 2). Wisconsin’s Economic Development Corporation

(WEDC) offers a Connect Communities membership program and a Wisconsin Main Street program.¹ To become a member, you must apply through a competitive process.

- Main Street programs can be linked to a variety of organization structures including a business improvement district, a government institution, or a non-profit organization.
- Of our case study communities evaluated, five communities were Wisconsin Main Street members (La Crosse, Viroqua, Chippewa Falls, Sheboygan Falls, and Port Washington) and four communities were Wisconsin Community Connect members (Waupun, Lake Geneva, New Glarus, and Beaver Dam).

Exhibit 2. Main Street America Program Membership Options and Benefits Offered

| | MSA Community \$375 | General Member \$295 | Allied Member \$525 | Friend of Main Street \$95 |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Main Street News | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| State of Main | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Conference Discount | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| The Point | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| MSAI Discount | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Online Resource Center | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Free Webinars | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Digital Library | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Preservation Job Board | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| NTIS Insurance Packages | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| MSA Sub-license & Branding | ✓ | | | |
| Priority Access to Grant Programs | ✓ | | | |
| Group Conference Registration Discount | ✓ | | | |
| Conference Exhibiting Discount | | | ✓ | |
| Member Mailing Lists | | | ✓ | |
| Promotion & Advertising Opportunities | | | ✓ | |

Source: Main Street America.

HIRED STAFF

Municipality staff can serve as effective champions as well. For example, the City of Waupun had a full-time Economic Development Coordinator (who was originally hired on part-time). This person helps with

¹ Benefits include access to regional workshops on pertinent topics, annual conference programming, regular webinars, case studies and best practices, regional networking events, manager and board orientation and training, and toolkits on relevant topics (such as market analysis, volunteer management, event production, design guidelines, marketing, etc.).

city-wide economic development initiatives, but also served as the City’s downtown BID liaison, helping to build up and promote downtown programs and businesses.

THEME 2: Good design is not an accident.

Well-designed downtowns are the result of the community’s hard work, target programs, and ongoing investment.

WRITTEN DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

Nearly half of the communities evaluated had either written design standards or guidelines for their downtown. Guidelines were typically established as part of an individual planning document whereas standards were typically codified in zoning ordinances/development codes via an overlay district.

- The chart on the right (Exhibit 3) highlights the most/least common elements addressed in the design standard and guidelines documents. For example, the three most common elements addressed in design documents were (1) building materials and colors, (2) storefront facades, and (3) windows and display windows. The full evaluation is summarized in Exhibit 7 and Exhibit 8.

- Groups responsible for reviewing buildings for compliance with design standards, for providing design recommendations, and/or for approving applications include the zoning authority for the municipality (e.g., the Zoning Administrator); a special design review board, commission, or committee; the community development authority; and/or the municipality’s plan commission or city council.

Exhibit 3. Elements Addressed in Design Standard and Guidelines Documents

| More Common | Less Common |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and colors • Storefront facades • Windows and display windows • Building form and design • Mechanical equipment, loading docks, and refuse container concealment • Awnings and canopies • Signs • New infill buildings • Landscaping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighting • Roof form • Surface parking lots • Building orientation • Private sidewalks and walkways • Fencing and retaining walls • Rear façade • Decks, patios, and porches • Outdoor dining • Bicycle racks • Stormwater runoff |

DESIGN ASSISTANCE

Some communities offer design assistance to provide a resource to property owners who are seeking design help on their buildings. For example:

- The Holland Downtown Development Authority “provides up to \$600 of free design services for applicants who wish to consult with an architect or designer before beginning to restore or rehabilitate their property. This program is available to any building owner or tenant (with owner approval) in the Downtown Development Authority district. At least 25% of the space must be used for commercial purposes.”
- Because Cedar Falls is a member of Main Street Iowa, downtown property owners in Cedar Falls can receive expert design assistance via Main Street Iowa.

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- Port Washington Main Street offers free design assistance. They work with the Wisconsin Main Street Design Specialist. Buildings are selected by Port Washington Main Street (or building owners may request a drawing). They receive five free drawings per year.

ENFORCEMENT

Several communities had design standards or guidelines, but we do not know the extent to which they all enforce their standards. However, here are two examples:

- The City of Waupun indicated that they do not enforce their design standards unless they are ensuring compliance as a condition of a property owner receiving façade improvement grant money.
- The Village of New Glarus' does enforce their design standards. If a property owner violates the design standards, written notice is given to the violator by the building inspector. The building inspector identifies a "reasonable time" for the violator to correct the issue. If the violation is not corrected, the violator is punished by a civil penalty in the amount of not less than \$10 nor more than \$1,000 for each infraction, and any offending building, structure, walkway or lighting, utility or part thereof shall be removed at the owner's expense.

THEME 3: For incentives to be viable, they must be well funded and consistently promoted.

Multiple communities provide incentives in the form of grants and/or (less commonly) a zero to low-interest loan. We evaluated those incentives that were specific to businesses and property owners located in the downtown area (see Exhibit 9). We found that:

- Most of the grant programs funded façade improvements and/or signage projects. A limited number of programs funded sidewalk improvements, design assistance, planning assistance, and financial consultation services.
- Of the grants for exterior façade improvements, maximum awards offered ranged from \$1,500 to \$20,000.
- Grants for signage typically ranged from up to \$250 to up to \$1,500. In some cases, communities offered a specific signage grant, while other communities listed signage as an eligible project through their broader façade improvement grant program (with an award cap for signage).
- In addition to award caps for signage projects, some of the grant programs capped awards for improvement projects that involved exterior painting, awnings, and decks/patios.
- Programs were administered by the applicable government agency, the downtown development authority, or a Main Street organization (e.g., a non-profit).
- Common sources of revenue allocated to these programs included tax incremental district (TID) revenue and business improvement district (BID) revenue.
- Common ways that communities promoted the incentives were through word of mouth, regularly occurring meetings (e.g., one-on-one meetings and a membership meetings), direct outreach to new businesses, and outreach through letters.
- Lack of funding or not enough funding is the core challenge in making these incentives more viable.

Exhibit 4. Rapid Assessment of the 22 Case Study Communities

| City and State | | Pop. 2020 | Main Street Program | Design Guidelines or Standards | Incentive Program(s) | Downtown TIF District | Downtown BID | Champion(s) |
|----------------|----|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| Algoma | WI | 3,243 | n | n | n | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Algoma Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Ann Arbor | MI | 123,851 | y | y | y | y | y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main Street Ann Arbor Destination Ann Arbor City of Ann Arbor, Downtown Dev. Dept. |
| Bayfield | WI | 584 | n | n | n | n | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bayfield Chamber of Commerce |
| Beaver Dam | WI | 16,708 | n | n | y | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown Beaver Dam, Inc Chamber of Commerce City of Beaver Dam, Ec. Dev. Department |
| Cedarburg | WI | 12,121 | n | n | n | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cedarburg Chamber of Commerce Festivals of Cedarburg, Inc. City of Cedarburg, Ec. Dev. Department Architectural Review Board |
| Cedar Falls | IA | 40,713 | y | y | y | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cedar Falls Community Main Street City of Cedar Falls, Ec. Dev. Division |
| Chippewa Falls | WI | 14,731 | y | n | y | n | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce City of Chippewa Falls, Planning & Ec. Dev. Dept. Chippewa Co. Ec. Dev. Corporation Chippewa Falls Main Street |
| Dubuque | IA | 59,667 | y | y | y | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Dubuque, Ec. Dev. Department Dubuque Main Street |
| Fish Creek | WI | - | n | n | n | n | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fish Creek Civic Association |
| Galena | IL | 3,308 | n | y | n | n | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Preservation Commission Galena Chamber of Commerce The Galena Foundation |
| Holland | MI | 34,378 | n | n | y | n | y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City of Holland, Ec. Dev. Department Downtown Development Authority |
| La Crosse | WI | 52,680 | y | y | y | y | y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown La Crosse City of La Crosse, Planning and Ec. Dev. Dept. |
| Lake Geneva | WI | 8,277 | n | y | n | y | y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lake Geneva Business Improvement District |
| Long Grove | IL | 8,366 | n | n | n | y | y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village of Long Grove Ec. Dev. Commission Historic Downtown Long Grove Business Assoc. |
| Minocqua | WI | 411 | n | n | n | n | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let's Minocqua Visitors Bureau & Chamber |
| Mt Horeb | WI | 7,754 | n | y | n | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mount Horeb Area Chamber of Commerce |
| New Glarus | WI | 2,266 | n | y | y | y | n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Glarus Chamber and Visitor |

| City and State | | Pop. 2020 | Main Street Program | Design Guidelines or Standards | Incentive Program(s) | Downtown TIF District | Downtown BID | Champion(s) |
|-----------------|----|-----------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| Port WA | WI | 12,353 | y | y | y | n | y | • Port Washington Main Street |
| Sheboygan Falls | WI | 8,210 | n | n | y | n | y | • Sheboygan Falls Chamber-Main Street |
| Sturgeon Bay | WI | 9,646 | n | n | n | n | n | • Destination Sturgeon Bay |
| Viroqua | WI | 4,504 | y | n | n | n | n | • Viroqua Chamber Main Street |
| Waupun | WI | 11,344 | y | y | y | y | y | • City of Waupun Ec. Dev. Department • Business Improvement District Board |

Exhibit 5. Evaluation of Downtown Business Improvement Districts

| City | BID Name | Org. Type | Established | Mission and Core Services | Sources of Funds | Levy Rate | Budget Context | Admin. |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| Ann Arbor | Main Street Biz | Non-profit | 2010 (and expanded in 2013) | To create a Business Improvement Zone that will improve Main Street's cleanliness, safety, and beauty thereby maximizing its attraction for business investment, providing a unique consumer experience for downtown shoppers and residents, and keeping it a viable tourist destination. Core services include (1) snow removal, (2) sidewalk sweeping, (3) handbills and graffiti removal, and (4) landscaping. | Tax assessments | \$21.75/linear foot of sidewalk abutting the property AND \$.0882/commercial SF of commercial area in the building on that property | Projected assessments over 10-years were \$2,998,800 and \$314,591 for FY 21-22. | 13-member board of directors 2 staff listed |
| Holland | Downtown Development Authority | Public | 1984 | To manage and strengthen Holland's downtown district on a variety of fronts, including design, streetscape and amenities, new development, the public parking system and public planning and policies. Core services include (1) providing loans to improve exteriors and interiors of downtown buildings, (2) recruiting new businesses, (3) enhancing ambiance (e.g., assist with window displays, provide sidewalk hanging banners program, decorations and music, underground electrical expansion programs), and making presentations to promote downtown. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax assessments, 94% • Licenses and permits, 2% • Interest and rents, 2% • Charges for Services, 1% | \$1.6034 per \$1,000 of assessed value in the DDA District AND Additional special assessment to support public parking in the Downtown CBD | Proposed budget (funding sources) FY 20-21 = \$219,250 | 12-member board of directors |
| Lake Geneva | The Lake Geneva BID | Private-Public Sector Initiative | 1991 | To preserve Lake Geneva's character, host memorable experiences for guests and residents, and create a safe fun environment. Core services include (1) planning of events, activities, community initiatives, special activities; and (2) enhancing downtown with decorations, planters, and street beautification. | Tax assessments | \$1.80 per \$1,000 of assessed value | Unknown | 7-member board of directors |

| City | BID Name | Org. Type | Established | Mission and Core Services | Sources of Funds | Levy Rate | Budget Context | Admin. |
|------------------------|---|--|-------------|--|---|---|----------------------------|---|
| Long Grove | Historic Downtown Long Grove Business Association | Non-profit | Unknown | To preserve Long Grove’s historic character, host memorable experiences for guests and residents, and create an environment where business can thrive. Core services include (1) providing design and beautification services, (2) supporting open spaces and customer amenities, (3) providing economic development services (including attracting new partners), (4) marketing, and (5) promoting and hosting activities and events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax assessments • Memberships fees (ranging from \$250 to \$2,500) • Sponsorships • Donations • Cooperative advertising • Participant fees from events | Unknown | Unknown | 8-member board of directors |
| Port Washington | City of Port Washington Business Improvement District Board | Public, in Partnership with Non-Profit | 1994 | To facilitate development and redevelopment within the Port Washington downtown area. The BID board contributes up to \$66,000 to Port Main Street Inc. to perform services, including: (1) BID operational services and performance reporting, (2) promotions and events, (3) business development, (4) design services, and (5) marketing services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax assessments • Additional financial support from the City | \$2.010347202 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation | Unknown | 9-member board of directors |
| Waupun | Business Improvement District Board | Public | 1988 | No mission found. Core services include (1) marketing, promoting, and advertising businesses in the BID, (2) upgrading the physical appearance of downtown, (3) developing informational and educational programs to show the advantages of doing business downtown, (4) coordinating educational, technical, and training assistance programs for downtown businesses, (5) and developing and implementing the business recruitment plan for downtown Waupun. | Tax assessments | \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation | Budget (2021): \$25,731.44 | 10-member board of directors, appointed by Mayor 4 staff member (e.g., city staff + ED of Chamber of Commerce) |

Exhibit 6. Evaluation of Non-Profit Organizations with a Downtown Focus

| City | BID Name | Org. Type | Established | Mission and Core Services | Sources of Funds | Admin. |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| Ann Arbor | Main Street Ann Arbor | Association | Unknown | To keep our neighborhood businesses strong and vital. Core services include (1) advocating for a clean and convenient downtown, (2) communicating about downtown planning and development, (3) organizing and facilitating events, (4) supporting police foot patrols for neighborhood safety, (5) beautifying and improving the downtown landscape, (6) networking with area businesses, (7) maintaining communication between municipal entities and businesses, and (8) promoting downtown businesses and downtown. | Membership fees (variable rates from \$50 to \$1,000) | Unknown |
| Cedar Falls | Community Main Street, Inc. | Non-profit | 1987 | To foster economic vitality, and to preserve and promote the historic image and character of the downtown, while improving the quality of life in Cedar Falls. Core services include (1) hosting events and activities, (2) marketing spaces for lease, and (3) providing beautification services, and providing business services. | Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District funds and donations | 21-member board of directors 4 committees |
| Chippewa Falls | Chippewa Falls Main Street | Unknown | Unknown | To improve the community's quality of life by strengthening the Downtown as the center of the community through Organization, Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring. Core services include (1) revitalizing downtown, (2) assisting businesses, and (3) supporting historic preservation. | Unknown | 7-member board of directors 2 staff |
| Dubuque | Dubuque Main Street | Non-profit | Unknown | Dedicated to the development and ongoing support of downtown as the place to live, work & play. Core services include (1) providing business services, (2) managing the farmer's market, (3) supporting historic preservation, and (4) hosting and promoting events. | Unknown | Board members unknown 3 staff |
| La Crosse | Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. | Non-profit | 1990 | To oversee, coordinate and facilitate the revitalization of La Crosse's central business district. Core services include (1) marketing and promoting initiatives, (2) advocating for the downtown, (3) supporting beautification and public/private investment partnerships, and (4) supporting economic vitality initiatives to support new and existing businesses. | Membership fees (variable rates from \$75 to \$3,000) | 19-member board of directors 4 staff |
| Port Washington | Port Washington Main Street | Non-profit | Unknown | To enhance our community identity and heritage, further develop a center of activity and ensure economic stability. Core services include (1) conducting strategic marketing efforts, (2) promoting downtown events, and (3) administering community activities and economic development efforts. | Unknown (does accept donations and receive ad revenues) | Board members unknown 5 committees |
| Viroqua | Viroqua Chamber Main Street | Non-profit | 1989 | Dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of the Viroqua community through leadership, facilitation, and collaboration. Core services include (1) overseeing student scholarship and volunteer/business recognition banquet programs, (2) supporting the business community, (3) supporting historic preservation, and (4) promoting community-wide events. | Unknown | 12-member board of directors 3 committees 3 staff |

Exhibit 7. Elements Addressed in Design Standard and Guidelines Documents

| City | Framework | Awnings and Canopies | Materials and Colors | Windows and Display Windows | Storefront Façade | New Infill Building | Building Orientation | Building Form and Design | Rear Façade | Decks, Patios, and Porches | Signs | Lighting | Roof Form | Outdoor Dining | Fencing and Retaining Walls | Mechanical Equipment, Loading Docks, and Refuse Container Concealment | Surface Parking Lots | Private Sidewalks and Walkways | Bicycle Racks | Landscaping | Stormwater Runoff |
|-------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Ann Arbor | DT Design Guidelines | y | y | y | y | y | y | y | n | y | n | n | n | n | n | y | y | y | y | n | n |
| | DT Character Overlay Zoning District | n | y | y | y | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n |
| Cedar Falls | CBD Overlay Zoning District | n | y | y | y | y | n | y | n | n | y | n | y | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n |
| | DT New Construction Design Guidelines | y | y | y | y | y | y | y | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | n |
| | DT Design Guidelines | y | y | n | y | y | n | y | n | n | y | n | n | n | n | y | n | n | n | y | n |
| Dubuque | Old Town Neighborhood Overlay District | n | y | n | y | y | n | y | n | n | n | y | n | n | y | y | y | y | n | y | n |
| Galena | Highway 20 Corridor Design Manual (for the downtown transition area) | n | y | y | y | y | y | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | n | y | y | n | n | y | y |

| City | Framework | Awnings and Canopies | Materials and Colors | Windows and Display Windows | Storefront Façade | New Infill Building | Building Orientation | Building Form and Design | Rear Façade | Decks, Patios, and Porches | Signs | Lighting | Roof Form | Outdoor Dining | Fencing and Retaining Walls | Mechanical Equipment, Loading Docks, and Refuse Container Concealment | Surface Parking Lots | Private Sidewalks and Walkways | Bicycle Racks | Landscaping | Stormwater Runoff |
|------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|----------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|
| La Crosse | Design Standards for the Downtown Commercial Historic District | y | y | y | y | y | y | y | y | n | y | y | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | y | n |
| Lake Geneva | Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District | y | y | y | y | y | y | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | n | y | n | n | n | y | n |
| Mount Horeb | Design Standards | y | y | y | y | n | n | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | y | n |
| New Glarus | Swiss Architectural Theme | n | y | y | y | n | n | n | n | n | n | n | y | n | n | y | n | n | n | y | n |
| Port Washington | Downtown Port Washington Design Guidelines | y | y | y | y | n | n | y | n | n | y | y | n | n | y | y | y | n | n | y | n |
| Waupun | CBD Design Guidelines | y | y | y | y | n | n | n | n | n | y | n | n | y | n | y | n | n | n | n | n |

Exhibit 8. Regulatory Context, Design Standards and Guidelines

| City | Framework | Review Body | Regulatory Context |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| Ann Arbor | DT Design Guidelines | Design Review Board | Review is mandatory. Compliance is voluntary but encouraged. |
| | DT Character Overlay Zoning District | zoning authority | Buildings/additions built after '17 on lots zoned D1 or D2 (primary or secondary street frontages) must comply with design standards. |
| Cedar Falls | CBD Overlay Zoning District | zoning authority | Unknown |
| | DT New Construction Design Guidelines | Unknown | Compliance is recommended. |
| | DT Design Guidelines | Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council | Used in conjunction with the overlay district ordinance. Preliminary design feedback is offered as a free service prior to formal review. Formal review: Any substantial change to exterior appearance or building character will require review and approval by the P&Z Comm. & Council. |
| Dubuque | Old Town Neighborhood Overlay District | Unknown | These standards take precedence over the site design standards set forth in Chapter 13 of the municipal code. |
| Galena | Highway 20 Corridor Design Manual | City Council, Zoning Board of Appeals | Manuel describes design standards and guidelines using the terms: "required" and "prohibited" to define mandatory elements and "preferred" and "discouraged" to define discretionary elements |
| La Crosse | Design Standards for the Downtown Commercial Historic District | Unknown | Applies to existing and newly constructed buildings in the district. The preservation planner may issue of Certificate of Appropriateness on minor work projects (before issue of building permit). The Historic Preservation Committee will review major work and issue a Certificate of Appropriateness w/in 45 days of application filing. |
| Lake Geneva | Downtown Design Overlay Zoning District | Design Review Commission - OR - Downtown Renovation Review by Zoning Administrator | Applications which involve renovation or change of exterior appearance are subject to Downtown Renovation Review. Applications which involve only a change in appearance are subject to Downtown Design Review. Applications which involve a modification to physical configuration of building are3 subject to Downtown Project Review. |
| Mount Horeb | Design Standards | Unknown | Design review is required in some cases (see 17.14(2)) |
| New Glarus | Swiss Architectural Theme | Design Review Committee | Standards apply in C-1 and C-2 zones, as well as new construction (except SF homes). The Swiss Architectural Theme includes criteria to use in granting/denying approval of a design (the criteria are not meant to be exhaustive). |
| Port Washington | Downtown Port WA Design Guidelines | Unknown | Guidelines are intended to be suggestions which are encouraged by the downtown business district. |
| Waupun | CBD Design Guidelines | Community Dev. Authority | These standards rely on the standard zoning review process. |

Exhibit 9. Evaluation of Façade Improvement Grants and Similar Downtown Incentives

| City | Program | Uses of Funds | Funding Range | Match | Eligibility | Administrator | Revenue Source |
|----------------|----------------------------|--|---|-----------|---|---|---------------------|
| Ann Arbor | Building Vault Fill | Fill and sidewalk restoration | Up to \$10k per vault | N/A | Properties within the DDA footprint | Downtown Development Authority | Unknown |
| | Public Art Matching Grant | Murals and other public art installations | Unknown | Yes | Unknown | Downtown Development Authority | |
| Beaver Dam | Downtown Grant | Façade or exterior building improvements (with a useful life of 10+ years) | Unknown - but, for façade paintings: min. \$2k and max. 50% | Unknown | Non-residentially zoned property within TIF #6 | City of Beaver Dam | TIF revenue |
| Cedar Falls | Façade Grant | Permanent building improvements and murals | Up to \$2.5k | Yes - 1:1 | Property owner or sponsored tenant of an existing commercial building located in CMS district | Partnership between City of Cedar Falls and Community Main Street | City of Cedar Falls |
| Chippewa Falls | Downtown Façade Loan | Façade improvements, some landscape improvements | Between \$5k and \$30k (with a 0% fixed rate) | N/A | Properties within designated downtown boundaries of eligible towns, villages, and cities. Applicants must demonstrate ability to repay the loan and provide acceptable façade design plans that comply with design guidelines adopted by local governments. | Chippewa County Economic Development Corporation | Unknown |
| Dubuque | Facade Grant | Façade improvements | Up to \$10k | Yes - 1:1 | Properties located in the Greater Downtown Urban Renewal District (but cannot be a single-family home and must be the rehabilitation of an existing structure) | City of Dubuque | Unknown |
| | Financial Consultant Grant | Hiring a financial consultant to analyze project feasibility | Up to \$15k (grant shall not exceed 10% of total costs) | | | | |
| | Planning and Design Grant | Pre-development costs associated with a project | Up to \$10k | | | | |
| Holland | Low Interest Loans | Interior and exterior building improvements | Variable (with below market rate interest rates) | N/A | Owners and tenants of downtown properties | Holland MainStreet/Downtown Development Authority | Unknown |
| | Design Assistance | Consultation with an architect or designer before property restoration or rehabilitation | Up to \$600 | Unknown | Owners and tenants of downtown properties (where at least 25% of the space is used for commercial purposes) | | |

| City | Program | Uses of Funds | Funding Range | Match | Eligibility | Administrator | Revenue Source |
|-----------------|---|--|---|-----------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| La Crosse | Elevate Downtown Façade Improvement Grant | Façade improvements | Up to \$20k for historic buildings and up to \$10k for non-historic buildings (but, up to \$1k for awnings and signage) | Yes - 1:1 | Properties within the downtown district | The City of La Crosse | Unknown |
| New Glarus | Façade Improvement Grant | Façade improvements for commercial, mixed-use, and multifamily structures which maintain Swiss theme | Up to 50% of project costs or max. \$5k per property (alternative amounts approved on a case-by-case basis) | Yes - 1:1 | Properties within TID #4 | Village of New Glarus | TIF revenue |
| Port Washington | Sign Grant | Signage | Up to \$250 | Yes - 1:1 | Properties within the Port Washington Main Street's district | Port Washington Main Street | Unknown |
| | Façade Grant | Façade improvements | Up to \$1.5k | | | | |
| Sheboygan Falls | Sign Grant | Signage | 50% of sign design, up to \$500 | Unknown | Properties within the Downtown Historic District and the Cole Historic District | Sheboygan Falls Chamber-Main Street | BID district |
| Waupun | Downtown Targeted Reinvestment Grant | Interior commercially zoned building improvements | Up to \$10/SF with a maximum award of \$20k per parcel. | Yes - 1:1 | Property owners within TID #3 | City of Waupun | TIF revenue |
| | Downtown Revitalization Grant | Façade improvements to commercial buildings | Up to \$10k per parcel, (but up to \$1.5k for new signage, awnings, decks, and patio vertical elements) | Yes - 1:1 | | | |
| | BID Façade Improvement Grant | Façade renovations | Up to 2,000 | Yes - 1:1 | Commercial property owners and businesses in BID district | Business Improvement District Board | BID revenue |

Interview Records

This section documents notes from the interviews conducted as part of this research task. Documentation is organized by organization:

- City of Waupun (Waupun, WI)
- Main Street BIZ (Ann Arbor, MI)
- Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. (La Crosse, WI)
- Cedar Falls Community Main Street (Cedar Falls, IA)
- Sheboygan Falls Chamber – Main Street (Sheboygan Falls, WI)
- City of La Crosse (La Crosse, WI)

City of Waupun (Waupun)

With Sarah Van Buren, Economic Development Coordinator on 11/17/2021

- 1. Can you tell me a bit about Waupun’s downtown business improvement district? Specifically, what the City’s role is?**
 - a. How does the BID garner support and buy-in?**
 - b. What are the services, and any challenges maintaining those services?**
 - c. Do you have any advice for a community looking to establish a BID for the first time?**
- The downtown BID is operated by the City of Waupun; the board is appointed by the mayor.
 - The BID is a result of past efforts which included a collective group (City officials, community members, representatives from Project Rescue Inc.)
 - The board includes 10 members – dislike that the membership is an even number (for voting purposes). There are six representatives from inside the BID boundaries, and four at large representatives (from anywhere in community). The board includes a good mix of property owners and business owners. Terms are staggered 3-year terms (helpful in ensuring a good transfer of knowledge).
 - Tax assessment rate is very low. It has not changed since the BID was created. Because of the low rate and the number of eligible properties in the district boundaries, they do not receive a lot of funding.
 - o Some members understand the importance of increasing the assessment rate to meet growing needs and to diversify services. However, the BID needs to first do a better job at promoting and marketing the BID’s services and the value the BID brings. Need to explain to the district: If you want to do these things, we need to raise the assessment by \$X amount, to pay for these new services/projects.
 - o Mentioned the state average BID assessment rate is around \$3 per 1,000 AV
 - Their operating plan was recently updated (previously wasn’t updated since 1988 – and it needs to be updated annually).
 - o They were previously allocating 95% of their funding toward façade improvement grants and 5% toward beautification (e.g., landscaping planter boxes)
 - This was seen as slightly problematic because the grants only help the entities that apply and get approved for funding while other projects could potentially help a greater area (e.g., downtown market analysis, pop up program).

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- Trying to diversify use of their funds for training, new programs, etc. (Needed to help the board make this mind shift)
 - WEDC Main Street representative came to conduct a downtown visioning exercise with the CDA and BID to help inform the kind of services they should be offering. Questions posed included: (1) if you had a million dollars to spend in downtown, what would you use it for? (2) If you had unlimited dollars for your hours, what would you want to do? It was an amazing process to generate ideas that would allow them to develop a new operating plan.
 - They want to become a Main Street Community, so they are currently aligning their goals to four pillars per the Main Street America approach
 - 2. Can you tell me a bit about your available incentives for downtown property owners (e.g., targeted reinvestment grant, downtown revitalization grant, BID façade improvement grant, others)?**
 - a. How often are each used?**
 - b. How are they funded? (e.g., revenue streams)**
 - c. Lessons learned / challenges in administering the grants?**
 - Regarding the BID grant (i.e., reimbursement grant), they received fewer requests for funding than they had money for. (Before diversifying their use of funds, they received about \$8k in façade requests on average – so they were accumulating a balance). Reasons the grants were highly used:
 - Incentive is maxed out at \$2k – wasn't that helpful
 - People didn't realize it was out there
 - They needed to do more educating on how property owners could double up on other available grants
 - Lessons learned regarding use of funding for pop-up program (see Question 4 for more information about the program). While the program was a success in 2020, in 2021 nobody applied for the program. (City was very shocked because they did more promotion than they did in 2020, they had more interest in 2021, walked more people through the space, etc.)
 - They discussed using 2021 funds to carry into 2022 budget (with hopes of operating two programs at different times of the year)
 - However, they realized the reason for lack of interest was due to poor condition of the interior building.
 - BID doesn't normally cover costs for internal improvements. But they decided to unfreeze 2021 funds for a business attraction program. They go matching funds from CDA to pay for the needed improvements to the interior of the building.
 - Needed flexibility in how to use funding to meet the changing service demands for the area
 - Other incentives offered:
 - During COVID they found out hardly any downtown business had a website, ability to do online sales, or a way of communicating to consumers outside of Facebook > they brought in Fox Valley Tech to provide some training in those topic areas
 - 3. The influence of the central business district's design requirements?**
 - a. When were they established? Who would you measure their success since being established?**
 - b. What process was employed to establish buy-in for the design standards?**
 - c. Would you say the design standards are the biggest factor adding to the overall design of the downtown?**

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- Their design guidelines are outlined in an ordinance (which helps) and were last updated in 2017
 - Technically, when property owners are making improvements, their design concept must be presented to CDA for approval. Once it is approved, they can go to apply for a BID or CDA façade grant.
 - The CDA takes design requests very seriously. If design standards are not met, they will sometimes approve the project contingent on including the missing design elements. The building inspector/zoning administrator also reviews requests.
 - The challenge with making sure property owners comply with the standards: Unless the property owner is going to apply for grant funding – they often will not know if the design guidelines will be adhered to or completed
 - o For example, “neutral colors” is a design guideline. A property owner got approval for windows to get a grant. The CDA/City had no idea they were also going to be changing the color of the building. Now it is a non-neutral color and they received angry calls from the public asking why CDA approved project. They were just as surprised as the public (because it was never approved).
 - There’s no enforcement of the guidelines. They want to enforce the guidelines, but do not know how to do that. They often do not know the guidelines will not be adhered to until it is too late. “Then what?”

4. Other projects programs, regulations, and/or investments that have influenced how downtown Waupun looks today? (e.g., The biggest factors influencing form/function)

- In the last three years, lots of positive changes
 - o In 2020, the BID started a pop-up program – to give entrepreneurs a chance to expand into a commercial space with less risk. The BID provided a specific set of money to pay for rent and utilities for a new downtown business for 4 months. Goal was to fill a vacant space, help adjacent business owners, and allow the business selected for the program to try out a physical space risk free (to hopefully sign a lease on their own when the program ends)
 - Timed their program to run through mid-November to February (to take advantage of holiday time and a slower season)
 - Program was successful in the first year – business owner signed a longer-term lease
- In 2020 Waupun received Connect Community award for redevelopment that occurred in 300 block of Main Street. This led to private investment trickling into 400 block and improvements at the bowling alley which created a pocket-park.
- Developed a Downtown streetscaping plan – installed new seating and trash receptacles this year
- Worked with local high schools to develop banners (installed summer of 2020) and a mural

Main Street BIZ (Ann Arbor)

With Betsy Jackson, Consultant on 11/16/2021

1. How did the BIZ garner support and buy-in to establish itself in 2010 and expand itself in 2013?

- Originally the BIZ included the blocks facing Main Street only. In 2013, it tripled in size.
- The original champions (steering committee) were consistent about communicating the value of their core services (outlined in the next question).
- The steering committee was very diligent and careful about designing an assessment methodology and selecting an assessment rate.
 - o Assessment methods are dictated by state law in Michigan. They developed and evaluated 13 different formulas before landing on options that the steering committee felt comfortable promoting.
 - o Once BIZ was established, the board could increase the assessment rate (by 2% per year) but could not modify the formula without a vote. Formula without a vote). They only increased the rate twice since being established – and once by only 1%. They also waived half of the assessment in the past because they didn't want to expose the BIZ to criticism since it was sitting on a lot of reserve money). This also showed transparency and showed they were responsible stewards of public money.
 - To protect themselves, the Board created a policy that said if the BIZ was going to waive a tax bill, they needed to have enough money in the bank to cover next year's services.
 - Owner-occupied housing use to be exempt from the assessment, but state law changed and now an assessment on owner-occupied homes is optional. When renewal for the BIZ comes up in 2023 – the board will need to decide whether it will impose an assessment on owner-occupied homes. (There is a little heart burn about these homes not paying because there are some many condominiums being built in the BIZ).

2. Can you tell me about your services and any challenges you face in maintaining core services (specifically, around funding and staffing)?

- In determining services (which need to be documented in BIZ plan), the steering committee identified a specific set of services. They didn't want a broad scope of services. They wanted to limit their services but do them so well that it kept the downtown area competitive with other shopping areas. They also didn't want to duplicate any service already being offered or provided by the City of Ann Arbor. Their services are:
 - o Sidewalk snow removal (not just the areas that should be privately maintained, but also the crosswalks and curb cuts which tended to be forgotten because it was any single property owner's responsibility).
 - o Sidewalk sweeping (2 – 3 times per week)
 - o Landscaping
 - They provide a fixed dollar contribution to their Merchant's Association to pay for landscaping needs along Main Street
 - When the BIZ was expanded, they bought a bunch of large planters to put in the expanded area, so the landscaping style mimicked Main Street.
 - The BIZ maintains the landscaping in the expanded area and the BIZ provides funding to the Merchant's group to maintain landscaping on Main Street.

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- Graffiti removal is on request in public spaces only (e.g., on the landscape planters)
 - Services are contracted out to a single vendor. Services are billed by frequency. Vendor selected was lowest bidder.
 - There have been attempts to have the BIZ collect garbage in the alley, but BIZ has forestalled anything beyond the scope. The City is technically supposed to do this (it's just not at the desired standards that private property owners want).
 - The BIZ tries to keep overhead costs down (between 10% and 14% of the total budget).
 - The BIZ does not have any employees. Two roles are contracted out (operations consultant and administrative consultant). These two consultants earn a fixed monthly rate for a specific subset of tasks. They do not get paid anything close to a full-time salary.

3. In what ways, if any, does the BIZ partner or work with other groups – City of Ann Arbor, Downtown Development Authority, or Destination Ann Arbor?

- Doesn't work too closely with other groups, although they don't ignore other groups.
- The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is their fiduciary partner.
 - Michigan law allows BIDs/BIZs to solicit payments in lieu of taxes (i.e., a tax-exempt organization makes a voluntary payment totaling the assessment they would have otherwise been on the hook for if they were to be a private entity). The BIZ area doesn't have many large tax-exempt properties, except for City-owned parking areas – so the DDA pays an equivalent of assessment on those parking areas (e.g., about \$30,000 per year)

4. Do you have any advice for a community looking to establish a BID for the first time?

- Make sure the assessment formula is very fair
- The leaders (e.g., champions) forwarding the idea to the intended district need to keep be the “sales people”—and they need to understand that that is their role. They must educate others and explain “hey, here's why it's worth it to me to pay this additional assessment”
- The champions:
 - Must be the people who will also be paying the assessment
 - **Be very familiar with the state law;** be able to speak about the law with authority and address concerns, stereotypes/conspiracies, and questions
 - Must include a group that is composed of small and large property owners (otherwise the “bigger” properties with try to call the shots). The leaders/steering committee should represent the number of and variety of commercial properties in the district.
- It is helpful to have a champion that knows everybody. Every state law has some role for local government in decision making. The BIZ had one behind the scenes woman who made sure individual meetings were held with the mayor, every council member, the head of every local department, as well as with the DDA. Good approach – got everyone on board and in agreement before the vote was needed.
 - This same approach wasn't followed when trying to pursue the expansion – and the expansion barely passed because same effort wasn't made.
 - This approach is time consuming and labor intensive, but worthwhile.
- The public and private can be suspicious of the other. You need someone who can work with both sectors and it's not always obvious who that person is.
- Need to keep communication open to stakeholders (those that are/will pay the assessment. Communication needs to be ongoing and include basic level marketing to city leadership, the property owners, and tenants (e.g., quarterly letters).

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- Communication / marketing should be its own line item in the budget – it doesn't need be a lot of money, but it's important. You need some way for stakeholders to provide input or identify concerns too.
 - It's important to have legal council on the board of directors to give general advice about open meetings laws, etc.
 - When determining services, you need to be firm about the ones that are absolutely fixed and the ones that are more flexible – document in bylaws
 - A BID is more tied to City government than their BIZ. In Michigan a BID needs budget and assessment formula approved annually by city council.
 - No matter what the state law says you can do, you are always dealing with human beings – half of the process is psychotherapy – figuring out how to make everybody feel good about the finished product.
 - Sometimes you need to be prepared to massage others ego's – don't expect everyone to be on board by just showing and discussing the spreadsheets. You need to be able to explain the value of a BID different to different people – as stakeholders will all see things differently.

Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. (La Crosse)

With Terry Bauer, Executive Director (written comments offered) on 11/15/2021

1. How did Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. form and grow over time?

DMI was chartered in 1990. It is structured with an Executive Director, a 30-hour support person (Events and Promotions Coordinator), and 2-4 unpaid interns each semester from UW-La Crosse or Viterbo University. We have an active Executive Board and Board of Directors, all of whom are community business leaders. We have 4 committees, Organization, Promotion, Economic Development, and Design.

2. Can you tell me about your services and any challenges you face in maintaining core services (specifically, around funding and staffing)?

I have been here one year on the 30th of November. I have worked on reducing our prior strategy of revolving chairs with employees. To add stability, I've contacted the Chamber of Commerce to see if we could share a marketing/graphic artist person. I'm looking at a bookkeeping service that would provide the same person (or accounting firm) managing our weekly accounting. I have created a few revenue streams to supplement our membership income. We sold Valentine Gift Packages, did an employee gift promotion with Mayo Clinic Health System, and are currently selling Downtown Decks. Downtown Decks are a deck of cards that are comprised of 51 different businesses and each card has a special discount on it. We expect this to be a great fundraiser for us. We do also receive funding from both the City and County of La Crosse.

3. Can you tell me about the Elevate Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program?

The City of La Crosse took this program over and manages it.

It has been extremely beneficial for downtown as many buildings have been and continue to be updated and improved.

4. Can you tell me about the extent to which your organization collects donations for projects/programs?

We haven't done this since I've been here. However, we are participating in the Bundle Up promotion, that collects new or slightly used warm clothing.

5. Do you have any other thoughts about the factors that have influenced how downtown La Crosse looks today?

The Governor's Bounceback Grant program has been very positive for our downtown. We have had 14 new downtown business receive a \$10,000. Grant. That has helped change the look of downtown having those vacant store fronts filled.

Other –

- Job description of executive director – to ensure that empty downtown store fronts are filled, that we continue to experience economic growth, that the Downtown Mainstreet membership grows, that we create new revenue streams, that we successfully execute our events and promotions, and attend City, County, and neighborhood meetings to represent Downtown Mainstreet. Salary ranges from \$45,000 to \$70,000 based on experience and talent.
 - o **Note: another Executive Director job description (from Port Washington Main Street) was found online. This job description is pasted on the following pages for reference.**
- Beautification and Design Committee is currently working on street banners, murals, and other art works around downtown. The beautification aspect also includes our person that daily, except on Tuesdays, cleans up the downtown streets.
- Formal descriptions of each of the committees are copied below

Organization: MEMBERS receive a free listing and page on our website:

www.lacrossedowntown.com Members of DMI benefit from the promotion of their services to the community through our SOCIAL MEDIA listings and our eNEWSLETTER. There are many opportunities to promote your business, and numerous occasions to network with other businesses. Attend our MONTHLY MEETINGS to stay informed on issues and upcoming events. ROUNDTABLE EVENTS provide us the opportunity to share best practices and dig deeper on important issues. Members are invited to experience QUARTERLY SOCIALS as an opportunity to network with other businesses and learn about their stories of SUCCESS. We all work together to strengthen our central business district and renew our downtown neighborhood.

Promotions | Events: PROMOTION creates excitement in the downtown district. Street festivals, retail events, and image development campaigns are some of the many ways that we encourage consumer traffic in the downtown district. MARKETING entices the community and visitors to SHOP, EAT, PLAY! EVENTS promoted downtown are Open Houses, Eat Week, Downtown Walk Around, Summer Days, Street Dances, Historic Downtown Day, Downtown Trick or Treat, Holiday Events, Small Business Saturday, Santa's Workshop, Annual Fundraisers, Downtown tours. MEMBERS can participate in the downtown gift certificate and discount card program to promote your business to thousands of downtown employees, college students, and out of town visitors. All member employees enjoy these same DISCOUNTS.

Design | Beautification: DESIGN involves creating an environment where people want to shop and spend time. First impressions can have a lasting influence. Rehabilitated buildings, attractive storefronts, enticing window displays, clean streets and sidewalks, properly designed signage, façade improvements, placemaking, as well as beautification and art projects present an appealing IMAGE to potential customers, tenants, and investors. ENHANCE Grants offer up to \$500 matching grants for paint and fix-up, signage and awnings. ELEVATE Façade grants offer up to \$20,000 matching grants for façade improvement. Our DESIGN and BEAUTIFICATION program works with the city to improve our downtown through graffiti and pigeon control, floral and tree planters, banners, and overall CLEANLINESS.

Economic Vitality: ECONOMIC VITALITY involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Sharpening the competitiveness of our traditional merchants, recruiting new businesses, creatively converting unused space for new uses, promoting downtown living, and NEW BUSINESS assistance program are examples of our initiatives. We work to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and a downtown district that grows greater each day. LAUNCH LA CROSSE offers assistance programs for new business start-up, incubation and expanding businesses. The program works to cultivate small business and fill empty storefronts. IGNITE new business grants offer up to \$5,000 in a competitive new business grant contest. ACCELERATE Business grants offer up to \$5,000 in a competitive existing business grant contest.



Port Main Street, Inc. Executive Director

Does making a difference in a community through your efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for one of the 36 Main Street Communities in Wisconsin, right on Lake Michigan, sound like your passion?

Port Main Street is searching for such an energetic individual to join the team to lead and execute a comprehensive downtown program.

1. Community Development - knowledgeable in the principles driving a community's economic development, 28 blocks and over 125 businesses (all sizes), effectively communicate strategies to the Board of Directors and others regarding economic development, business retention and recruitment efforts, all to develop a center of activity and ensure economic growth.
2. Program Operation - Manage and/or execute all aspects of the Main Street Program: including daily operations, purchasing, systems of records and the documents/records, budget tracking, bookkeeping, prepare all reports required by funding agencies and the Wisconsin Main Street (WEDC) program and by the National Main Street Center, execute the board's decisions, provide follow up reports and analysis.
3. Program Oversight - marketing materials, press releases, grant writing, fundraising, planning of events and festivals, media relations, and overall promotion of Port Washington.
4. Historic Preservation - enhance the identity of Port's small town charm while preserving a sense of history as well as coordinate and collaborate with Port's Historical Society.

The selected individual will collaborate with a variety of stakeholders.

- Board of Directors (Board), officers, committees, volunteers
- Port Washington Business Improvement District (BID) property and business owners
- Supporters without Voting Rights (Supporters)
- Local business community at large, service organizations and local and state government officials

Candidates holding the following qualifications will be considered;

- Bachelor's Degree in Business Management or equivalent
- Ability to manage multiple priorities, groups and initiatives
- Engage with key representatives in the community to build lasting relationships
- Resourceful and creates efficiencies using technology or other cost-effective measures
- Effectively delegates work to a diverse mix of volunteers yet held accountable for obtaining results
- Must have strong interpersonal skills as well as excellent verbal and written communications skills

Cedar Falls Community Main Street

With Maribel Barry, Office Coordinator on 11/19/2021

1. Can you tell me about your façade grant program, and any other property/business owner incentive you might offer?

- Business owners and property owners are both eligible for the grant (though business owners will need property owner permission if they do not own the property).
- The program sees a healthy mix of existing and new businesses applying and using the funding. However, businesses and property owners do not take enough advantage of the opportunity.
- Use of the program typically fluctuates (years with large downtown events would typically see increased interest).
- Three awards were granted in 2021, while two were granted in 2020.
- Applications are reviewed by a Design Committee that is made up of business owners, architects, and others who have knowledge and interest in reviving downtown.

Funding

- Funding comes from the City of Cedar Falls. The downtown area is in a SMID district (like a BID district).
- Funding levels fluctuate from year to year. Community Main Street has considered dedicating some of its own funding to bolstering the pot.
- The organization annually applies for the Main Street Challenge Grant, an award of up to \$75,000 through Main Street Iowa for revitalization. Each community can only submit one application each year.
 - o The Design Committee reviews applicants to select one winner to then be submitted to Main Street Iowa.
 - o Cedar Falls Community Main Street tries to have conversations early with potential applicants to give plenty of time to prepare a solid application.
 - o The group has seen success with 10 awardees so far.

Promotion

- Cedar Falls Community Main Street meets with business owners quarterly and will remind the owners about the grant program and their eligibility. Letters are also sent out to business owners quarterly.
- The group also contacts property owners biannually.
- Because Cedar Falls is not a massive city, the group regularly is aware of things going on in town and has relationships with the business and property owners, allowing for tailored approaches.

Improvement

- Cedar Falls Community Main Street would like to have more funding made available. The organization has considering setting aside some of its budget to contribute to the fund used for the grant program.
- They do not do a lot of formal promotion and would consider some targeted marketing, though it was mentioned that word of mouth seems to be the most successful source of applicants.
- Success has come through early conversations, so they would like to continue the regular conversations with business and property owners.

Sheboygan Falls Chamber – Main Street

With Shirl Breunig, Executive Director on 11/19/2021

1. Can you tell me about your sign grant program, and any other property/business owner incentive you might offer?

- The sign program provides funding for business signs depending on the cost of the sign.
 - o Signs under \$1500 can receive \$250
 - o Signs over \$1500 can receive \$500
 - o Many businesses looking to have a vinyl sign will pay for it on their own as the cost is cheap enough.
- This program is frequently used, mostly by new businesses, but existing businesses are also eligible.
- Applications are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Committee (note: the downtown is a historic preservation area).
- A typical year will see three to five applications, but in 2021 more than five awards have been provided.
- Limited funding is available, and it is awarded on a first come, first served basis.
- The City of Sheboygan Falls uses its BID District to fund the program. (More funding is desired so the program could award larger grant amounts.)

Promotion

- The executive director attends plan commission and city council meetings to become aware of any new businesses being permitted. She contacts newly approved businesses to let them know about the opportunity.
- Word of mouth is also largely used with property owners letting their new tenants know about the program.

City of La Crosse (La Crosse)

With Julie Emslie, Economic Development Administrator on 12/1/2021

- The Façade grant program has two components, one is the Downtown area and the other is the Northside area
- They regularly see four to five applications per year.
- Funding awards vary.
 - o Max awards are \$20,000 at a 50 percent match, meaning the applicant must also put up \$20,000 or more.
 - o Awards for the side of a building are capped at 25 percent.
 - o Max awards for awnings/signage is capped at \$1,000.
- Most applicants are existing businesses.
- La Crosse has a historic downtown with certain aesthetic requirements. Accordingly, applications are reviewed by a committee that is made up of architects and industry experts.
 - o The committee communicates any suggested/required changes to the City, who then communicates them to the applicant.

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- The committee has often provided helpful feedback to make sure an applicant best matches the desired feel for the downtown.
 - The City of La Crosse would love to expand the program to cover the whole city.
 - Staff would like to see an additional “tier” of funding available where they can give more money out to more expensive projects.

Funding

- Funding derives from the City’s tax incremental district and the City’s Capital Improvement Program.
- About \$150k was set aside for the program initially. An additional \$100k was allocated to the program in 2018, 2019, and 2020. No funding was set aside for 2021 or 2022 (the fund didn’t need it).
- Money is reimbursed at the completion of the project after being reviewed by staff to ensure requirements are met.
- Projects have one year from the award date to complete the project, but a one-time extension of six months is possible.
 - Projects can begin before the applicant applies, but only costs incurred after the award is granted are eligible for reimbursement.
- About \$350k has been awarded since 2017 supporting \$12 million in project costs.

Promotion

- There is no dedicated promotion of the project.
- Word of mouth is the primary source of applicants.
- The fact that the program leads to tangible, visible results has been huge for promotion. The City of La Crosse can point to a nice façade in the downtown and say that they helped fund that project.