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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Castle Main Street organization acts as a catalyst to develop and sustain a unique and thriving downtown for residents, business merchants, property owners and visitors so that the communities of New Castle and Henry County, Indiana flourish. New Castle Main Street is a nationally accredited program through the Main Street America program.

The organization is the primary entity supporting existing businesses and the creation of new businesses within the downtown areas. As a tool for supporting downtown business, New Castle Main Street is the leading marketing and promotion agency for downtown events, and opportunities. Additionally, they are empowered to act as the convener and champion of development by preserving healthy relationships with local stakeholders including the City of New Castle, New Castle- Henry County Economic Development Corporation, Henry County Tourism and the New Castle Chamber of Commerce.

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

In anticipation of the LA Jennings Building, located at 11th Street and Broad Street, being refurbished with four new restaurants and 20 apartments, the City of New Castle prepared a downtown master plan in 2014. At that time the plan was focused on providing 'quick and strategic' actions that maximized investment and connections within the downtown area.

In 2020, the organization prepared a strategic action plan that was intended to guide leadership and oversight at an organizational level. The final 4-Point Approach to Main Street and Downtown Development plan engaged residents and business owners to better understand local aspirations and needs. From that engagement the organization then developed a vision for downtown that was shared by the city and downtown stakeholders.

The final component of the strategic action plan included the development of goals, activities and measurable outcomes around the themes of economic vitality, design, promotion and organization.

Following their local successes, including over two dozen new businesses opening in downtown, New Castle was awarded a \$2 million PreservINg Main Street Community Development Block Grant in 2023. The program, which is intended to help rural communities revitalize downtown areas, is a partnership between the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), Indiana Landmarks and Indiana Humanities.

The program is intended to provide New Castle, and other awarded communities, with an additional economic development tool that supports improvements to historic buildings as well as capacity and leadership building opportunities to ensure downtown improvements continue.

With the PreservINg Indiana Main Street grant funding physical improvements in the downtown area, the opportunity to think beyond structural and façade repairs was available to the city and the New Castle Main Street organization.













CONTINUED WORK

As a compliment to the PreservINg Indiana Main Street grant process, the process to update New Castle's downtown master plan began in early 2024. The ten-month process was developed to create a clear set of actions for the city and the organization that would support the development of a revitalized, rehabilitated, and active downtown.

The process included four key phases of work, with public engagement and outreach occurring throughout the ten-month period. Through the process the following key activities occurred which informed the development of the final commitments, intentions and recommendations.

The plan was developed to culminate various aspirations, ideas and actions into one cohesive plan that could guide policy, program development and investment into the area.

Following the planning process, the plan was reviewed by the planning committee, New Castle Main Street staff, and leadership at the Redevelopment Commission to ensure that the information and actions aligned with City-wide priorities. Since the plan has been reviewed and approved by local leadership, it should be utilized as a guidebook when making decisions related to downtown development, infrastructure and programming.

- Educate and inform: The demographic and economic conditions of both the community and downtown were reviewed and examined. This review provided insights into the individuals who live, work and visit the downtown area, and the impact the downtown area has on the larger community.
- Idea creation: Working with the planning committee, a series of redevelopment and revitalization strategies were reviewed to see how various investments and enhancements could be made throughout the area.
- Strategy development: The most impactful strategies were advanced and combined to formulate a comprehensive redevelopment and revitalization action plan that focused on improvements to business, housing, connections, activities and leadership.
- 4. Implementation and execution: To provide more specific direction to the city, New Castle Main Street and local stakeholders, a series of recommendations were developed to outline the most transformative efforts that could be undertaken within the next 3-5 years.

ENGAGEMENT

The planning process relied heavily on the input and guidance of a volunteer planning committee. The 18-member group met four times over the course of the ten-month period to review data, discuss ideas, formulate strategies and finalize recommendations.

To supplement the group's review and dialogue, the two specific surveys were used to collect information on concerns, ideas and areas of priority. Additionally, one public open house was held to share information and proposed strategies.

The planning process also relied on information and engagement taken from previous planning processes which included:

- New Castle Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2014)
- New Castle Downtown Strategy (2014)
- City of New Castle Housing and Livability Study (2014)
- New Castle Comprehensive Plan (2018)
- New Castle Main Street 4-Point Approach (2021)
- Indiana Main Street Transformation Strategy (2023)

Online Business and Property Owner Survey

With the assistance of New Castle Main Street and the Chamber of Commerce, a survey was shared with business owners within the study area. The survey ran for approximately two months with the organizations providing at least two reminders regarding the opportunity. The survey allowed business owners to outline why they chose to locate within downtown, how their business receives deliveries, what amenities their customers utilize today, and what amenities or improvements they feel downtown needs. In total 24 responses were received through the on-line link.

Online Resident Survey

With the assistance of New Castle Main Street, a second survey was shared with the general public. The survey ran for approximately one month and aligned with the public open house. The survey allowed residents to provide information on their visits to downtown, the amenities they associate with the downtown area, and the improvements they would prioritize in the future. In total 51 responses were received through the on-line link.

Public Open House

On October 29, 2024, a public open house was held to review proposed scenarios for downtown improvements. Additionally, all existing information collected during the study was shown for context.

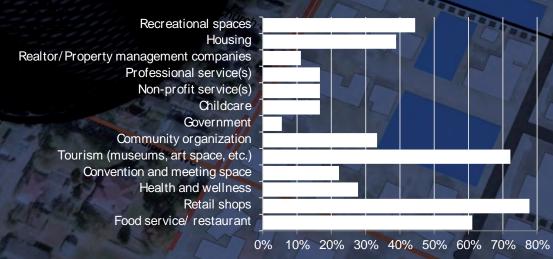




Why did you decide to locate your business within downtown?



What types of future development or businesses would best support your current business operations?



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

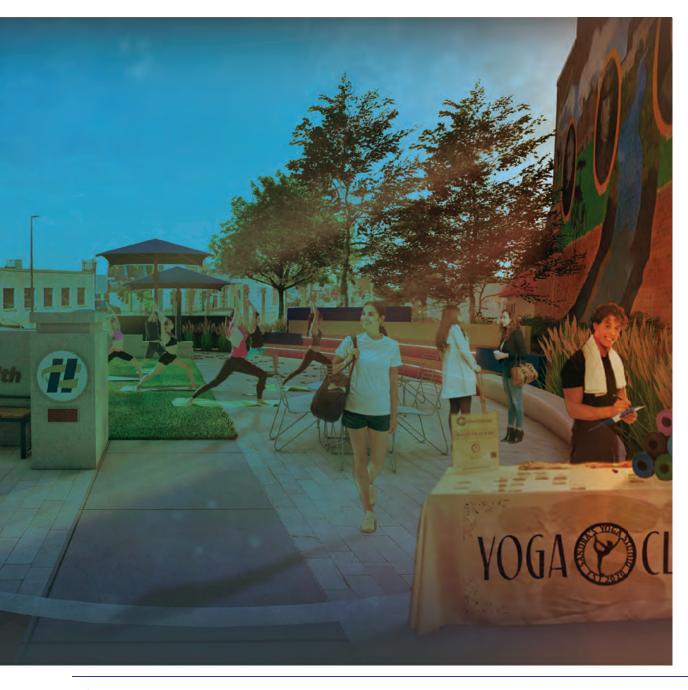
Quality of buildings
Vacant buildings & storefronts
Landscaping & beautification

Why do you choose to visit downtown businesses over any other option?



Which amenities would you like to see more of in the future?





The planning process resulted in a shared intention for downtown.

As a larger community, we intend for downtown New Castle to remain a vibrant and active district that provides a welcoming environment for individuals, families, and entrepreneurs to connect with one another, provide unique and creative offerings, and experience the culture and history of our community.

The intention, or goal for downtown, was shared amongst all agencies and parties that participated in the process. To provide further definition, a series of commitment statements were developed around the themes of Business, Housing, Connections, Activity and Leadership. Through these five categories, a well-rounded and comprehensive set of short-term recommendations were developed to guide activities over the next 3 to 5 years. The recommendations summarized to the right are further detailed in Section 3 of the plan.

OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

BUSINESS- Supporting an innovative and dynamic mix of businesses.

P. 58	Provide continued funding to the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP).
P. 60	Create and implement a community-wide wayfinding program.
P. 62	Provide a map-based business directory of downtown New Castle businesses, shops and destinations for easy navigation and promotion.
P. 64	Monitor the need for an incubator or co-working space for start-up businesses who wish to locate downtown.

HOUSING- Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

P. 66	Expand the existing business directory on the New Castle Main Street website to include residential amenities.
P. 68	Market the use of the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP) as a way to support residential improvements and adaptive reuse efforts in upper floor renovations.
P. 70	Support and incentivize the rehabilitation of existing upper story units for residential development.
P. 72	Work with the development community to create shovel-ready sites for downtown housing developments and expansions.

CONNECTIONS- Creating safe and comfortable, multi-modal connections.

P. 74	Improve accessibility in the downtown core.
P. 76	Improve pedestrian infrastructure within the downtown district by improving and enhancing sidewalks and multi use paths.
P. 78	Redesign and reconstruct Race Street to serve as a multi-modal and flexible event corridor.

ACTIVITIES- Curating year-round destinations, events, and activities.

P. 80	Use both "lighter, quicker, cheaper" and permanent improvements to activate and enhance the space around the county courthouse.
P. 82	Expand the site boundaries of existing programming and seasonal events to include the surrounding streetscapes and alleys as a pilot effort.
P. 84	Build a network of improved public open spaces using alleyways, vacant properties and underutilized lots.

LEADERSHIP- Organizing and empowering community leaders and volunteers.









DEFINING THE STUDY AREA

Historically, downtowns have served as the symbolic city center by establishing 'Main Streets' which focused necessary retail and support services to one key area of the city or town. Local 'Main Streets' were often anchored by a 'square' where community administrative services were provided and where community events were held. As development within the community expanded outward, the central area remained the focus of the community and kept residents and visitors well-connected to one another, and to the community's history.

At a basic level, many communities were formed with these same simple building blocks:

- A primary street where businesses were grouped.
- A central area where community services were located.
- Adjacent residential opportunities.
- Open areas for recreation and community events; and
- A set of infrastructure that allowed individuals to move about the area efficiently.

At the beginning of any community's development, the 'main street' thrived. Not because of any strategic planning, investment or programming, but because the area provided the primary needs for residents and visitors to the area. As communities grew outward, the vibrancy of downtowns across the country waned, because they didn't have that built in success factor since community growth also included more amenities, additional businesses and spread-out destinations.

With decades of outward growth occurring, often local downtown communities suffered through periods of vacancy, deterioration and neglect. However, today, communities are refocusing their investment efforts on their historic downtowns to promote local history and cultural opportunities, prioritize aging infrastructure, and improve overall quality of life.

The community of New Castle and the downtown area have a similar history and seek a similar outcome for the future. Using the historic building blocks, the city has worked hard in recent years to revitalize and redevelop its primary business areas, gathering spots and connecting corridors.

THE NEW CASTLE COMMUNITY

Community Context

New Castle, Indiana is located approximately 50 miles east of Indianapolis along I-70 and 30 miles south of Muncie and serves as the county seat of Henry County. New Castle was founded in 1821 by Ezekiel Leavell and quickly rose to support a prominent manufacturing industry that included the production of automobile parts. In 1907, the largest automobile assembly plant in the world opened in New Castle, Indiana. The Maxwell-Briscoe and later Chrysler Plant manufactured and assembled cars until 2009, and at the time it was constructed was the largest automotive manufacturing plant in the nation.

While the manufacturing industry in the area has subsided, today, both Henry County and New Castle continue to boast ample opportunities for year-round activities. With basketball as a center focus to the broader community, destinations such as the Hoosier Gym in Knightstown, the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame and the world's largest high school fieldhouse in New Castle provide entertaining experiences throughout the county, but also within the heart of the New Castle community.

New Castle and Henry County are also communities rich in transportation history. In 1827 the Historic National Road was constructed through the southern part of the county and beginning in the 1850's over 7 rail lines were established over a 50-year period. These

transportation types helped make New Castle one the region's leading industrial centers. The area is still well connected, with rail and vehicular routes. An active rail line bisects the New Castle. community and helps define the eastern edge of the downtown area. A more notable impact are the four primary vehicular corridors that run through the community and provide connectivity to the broader east central Indian region. State Route 3, which runs north-south, provides immediate access to I-70, and connectivity to Muncie and Rushville. Broad Street (SR 38), which runs eastwest, bisects the downtown area, and forms the north side of the city square. Broad Street remains a highly trafficked corridor, with thousands of vehicles traveling through the downtown area daily.









THE DOWNTOWN AREA

Defining the downtown

Today, downtown New Castle is a unique blend of old and new, with accents that show what the future can hold. The historic fabric of the area is represented in the 64 contributing buildings within the central business district. The New Castle Commercial Historic District developed between about the 1849 and 1941, and includes many excellent examples of Italianate, Classical Revival, and Commercial styles of architecture. Notable sites of interest include the separately listed Henry County Courthouse. Other notable buildings include the L.A. Jennings Building (1877), Odd Fellows Hall (1875, c. 1895), Murphey Building (c. 1870), Knights of Pythias Building (1891), Masonic Temple (1892), Bradway Building (1902), former United Brethren Church (1863, 1883), Citizens State Bank Building (1923), S.P. Jennings and Sons Handle Factory complex (c. 1890), and Coca-Cola Bottling Building (1905, 1941). The district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

Downtown areas often are subjective since their boundaries are flexible and often differ based on individual perceptions. In the case of New Castle, the Commercial Historic District has largely been seen as the downtown core. As development increased, and the need to create a visual transition in character between the greater New Castle community and the historic downtown core became more evident, a 'transitional' zone was identified. This transitional zone included an

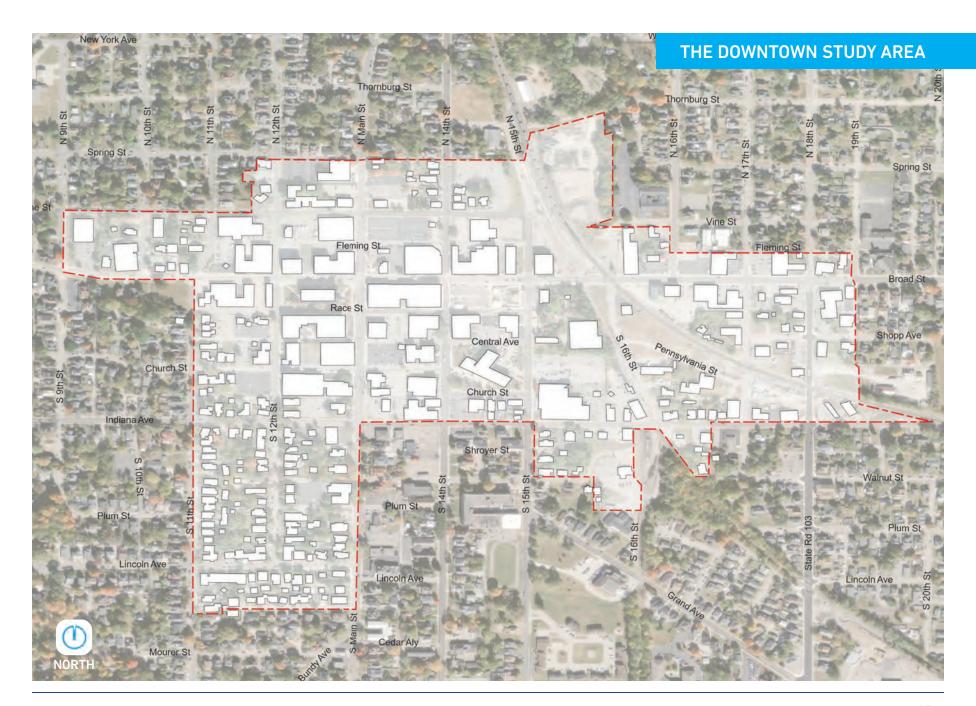
area that was roughly one block in either direction off the historic district. To the east, the buffer expanded to approximately three to four blocks along Broad Street since this area was identified as a key visual gateway into the historic area.

At the onset of this planning effort, two additional transition areas were added to the visual definition of downtown. The parcels at 10th and Broadway and the residential neighborhood south of Indiana Avenue along Main Street, were both identified as important areas for visual character and growth opportunities.

While not all areas of the study area are viewed as part of 'downtown', the study area offers opportunities to focus on the historical areas of the downtown area, while also planning for expansion and development of the larger downtown district.







DOWNTOWN DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics and Market Conditions

The following pages provide an overview of demographic and market conditions for the New Castle and the downtown study area specifically. For the purposes of this analysis, the data used is from the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Censuses and demographic reports from Esri Business Analyst for estimates and projections for 2023 and 2028 data, respectively. As defined, the downtown study area boundaries match those outlined earlier in this document.

Population

The population of New Castle in 2020 was 17,396, which represents a 3.4% decline from the 2010 population of 18,013. By comparison, downtown New Castle saw a slightly larger decrease in population (6%, or 47 individuals) between 2010 and 2020. In the last three years, the overall community has seen a 0.3% decline in population, while downtown has seen a 0.8% decline. While both areas have historically seen a decline, by 2028, it is projected that the population for New Castle will continue to decrease by an additional 5.5% from 2020. The downtown area is projected to remain flat.

The population projections could be impacted by the median age for both the community and the downtown area. The median age of New Castle residents was 40.2 in 2010 and has continued to increase. In 2023, the median age within the community had increased 4.7% since 2010 to 42.1. The downtown area is younger, by approximately 4-5 years. In 2010, the median age of a downtown resident was 35.6. While the median age of downtown residents is also increasing, (5.62% since 2010), the overall demographic is projected to remain younger than that of the community.

Education

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education that an individual completed. Moreover, this information can give insight into the workforce of an area, as well as potential income levels of the population. High levels of post-secondary and advanced degrees can indicate white color and management jobs with higher levels of income, on average; high levels of high school degrees but lower levels of post-secondary and advanced degrees can indicate higher levels of blue-color jobs such as service industry and manufacturing.

The downtown area of New Castle and the city as whole have commensurate levels of education; however, there are more people living downtown that have at least some colleges, but no degree (26.4%) compared to the rest of the city (20.9%). Overall, 10.6% of the population in New Castle has a bachelor's degree and 6% hold a graduate or professional degree; in the downtown area the residents that have a bachelor's degree is similar (10%), but only 3% of residents hold a graduate or professional degree.

New Castle Population 18,500 18,000 17,500 16,500 16,000

2020

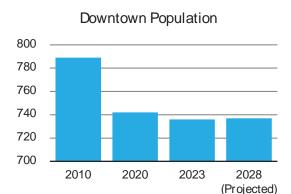
2023

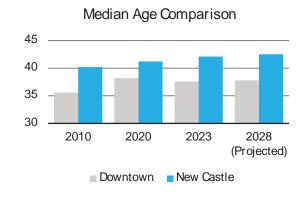
2028

(Projected)

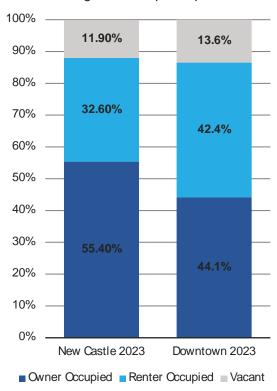
15,500

2010





Housing Ownership Comparison



Income

The median household income in 2023 for the city was \$48,969, compared to \$36,482 for the downtown area. Those figures are projected to increase by 2028, where the projected median household income for the city is \$53,704 and \$47,802 for the downtown area. This represents a 9.6% projected increase in median household income for the city; however, it is projected the downtown area could see an increase in median household income by 31.02% by 2028.

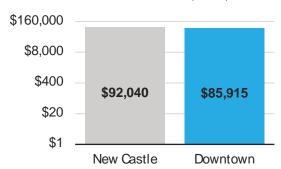
Housing

There were 8,605 total housing units within the city limits of New Castle in 2023; and 354 (4%) within the downtown area. The city saw a 4.2% decline in housing units (355 units) between 2010 and 2023. The downtown area also saw a decline during the same period; however, it was only 2.2% (8 units). Housing units are not expected to see growth or decline by 2028 city wide, and projections for the downtown area are expected to stay flat as well.

In the city limits in 2023, 56.6% of all housing units were owner-occupied, 32.6% were renter-occupied, and 11.9% were vacant. The downtown area consists of 44.1% owner-occupied housing units, 42.4% renter-occupied, and 13.6% were vacant during the same period. Between 2010 and 2023, the downtown area saw a 2.1% increase in owner-occupied housing units, which is similar to the increases in owner-occupied housing units the city saw (2.4%).

The median home value for New Castle in 2023 was \$92,040, and in the downtown area it was \$85,915. The average home prices for each area in 2023 were a bit higher, at \$127,751 and \$102,597, respectively. It is important to note, however, that average home values may be skewed due to outliers in the data, and the median home value is seen as more reliable due to its representation of the middle of all home values in an area.

Median Home Value (2023)



Market Conditions

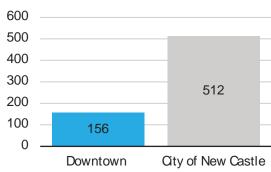
There were 668 total businesses in the city of New Castle in 2023. Of those, 156 (were located within the downtown area. The businesses in the city during this time employed 7,214 people, with 1,466 within the downtown area. While the businesses located downtown accounted for 22.2% of the total number of businesses in 2023, they employed 24% of all employees. Many employees within the downtown area work within 'public administration'. Nearly 43% of downtown employees (628) are employed at one of the 33 organizations related to public administration. By comparison, the community employs 1,227 individuals in 'public administration' roles total. With 51% of the city's public administration working in the downtown area, the area serves as the primary center for these county and community services.

Second to 'public administration', the downtown area has approximately 48 retail or service-oriented businesses. These businesses, which make up 17% of the community's retail and service industry, employ slightly more than 300 individuals.

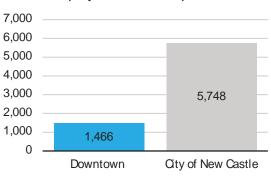
The city saw a total sales volume of \$835,082,000 in 2023, of which \$73,933,000 were from the downtown area. This difference is likely due to the large number of municipal and non-profit organizations located in the downtown area.

According to the US Census Bureau, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is used by federal agencies to classify business establishments to collect and publish statistical data related to the US business economy. The largest industries in terms of number of businesses represented in New Castle in 2023 were retail trade (120), "other services, excluding public administration" (99), followed by health care and social assistance (82). Public administration was the industry with the most employees in 2023 (1,227), followed by retail trade (1,137), and health care and social assistance (1.103). For the downtown area, the industries with the largest impacts in terms of numbers of businesses in 2023 were public administration (33), retail trade (21), and "other services, excluding public administration" (18). Public administration had the highest number of employees in the downtown area in 2023 (628), followed by retail trade (179), and health care and social assistance (109).

Business Count Comparison

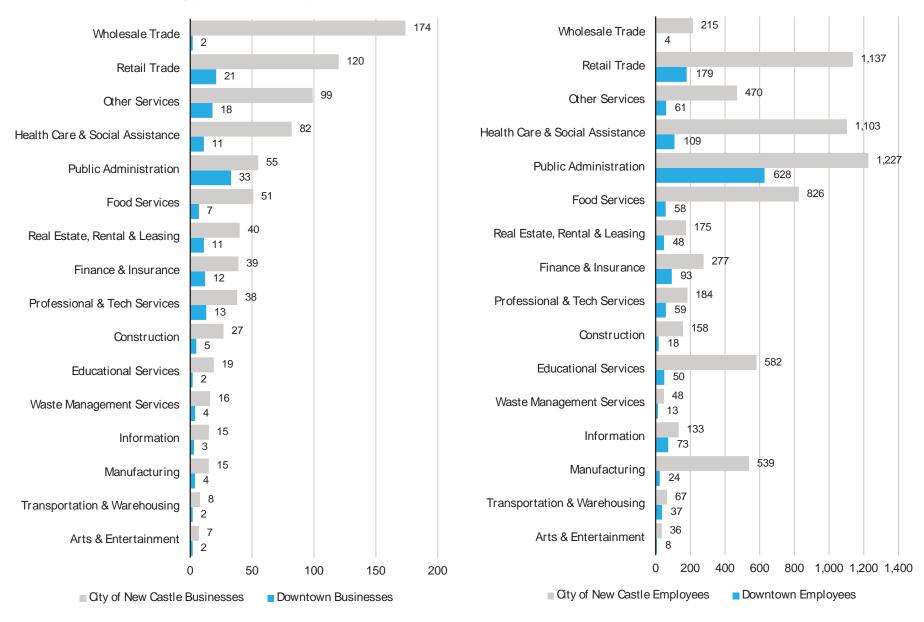


Employee Count Comparison





Employee Count Comparison







PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The following pages reflect the physical inventory of the downtown study area. The inventory was developed through field inventory, aerial imagery, Indiana Department of Transportation traffic information, and local insight. The information has the potential to change frequently based on redevelopment efforts and market response to construction, rentals and property purchases. The planning team, to the best of their ability, has worked to ensure that the information presented is accurate.

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Condition and Occupancy

A good portion of the study area is designated as a historic district by the National Register of Historic Places. The area is represented by 64 contributing buildings within the central business district. The New Castle Commercial Historic District developed between about the 1849 and 1941, and includes many excellent examples of Italianate, Classical Revival, and Commercial styles of architecture.

Recent efforts have been made across the community to revitalize and redevelop downtown buildings and storefronts. These efforts have been locally supported by the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP). The BRAP program is designed to help fund improvements to properties in downtown New Castle. These grants will be matched with private investments to assist owners in restoring the appearance of their buildings, creating jobs, and building business diversity within New Castle.

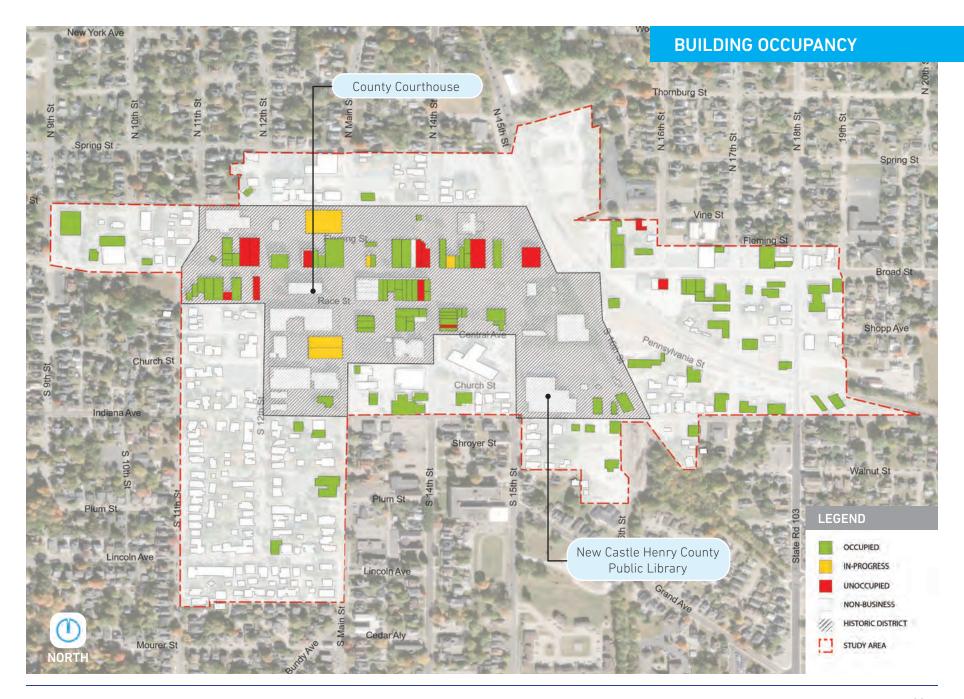
The local focus and investment have shown themselves to be successful, seeing that the majority of public or commercial buildings are occupied or in a state of redevelopment.

A few key structures that front Broad Street are still unoccupied. While unoccupied, the structures themselves seem to be sound and in good condition.









BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Businesses

Within the historic structures, are new and thriving businesses which offer a diverse mix of restaurants, shopping and entertainment opportunities. As these businesses have continued to grow, the downtown area has begun to see a resurgence of redevelopment efforts within the building structures.

Commercial services, which include grocery stores, discount stores, banks and professional services are located throughout the study area. Several have frontages along Broad Street. The businesses that front Broad Street, between 11th Street and the rail line, are often first floor store fronts within historic buildings. Businesses that are outside of that core Broad Street area are often more suburban in design with parking lots located between the building and structure.

The study area has two businesses that offer daily grocery items. Dollar General, on the west end is located at 9th Street and Broad Street. Harvest Market, on the east end, is located at 18th Street and Broad. Harvest Market, a family-owned market, offers a full range of fresh foods and is the area's closest grocery store.

At the intersection of Broad Street and 14th Street are most of the area's retail and dining establishments. All are located within first floor storefronts and offer direct access to the streetscape. Outside of this intersection are a few outlying restaurants which include Jack's Donuts,

Ky's Kreations, Old Icehouse Tavern, and the Mad Hyena Bar and Grill.

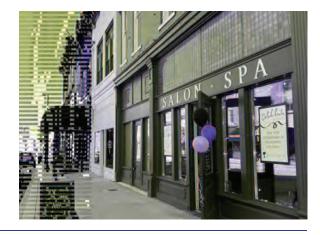
Adjacent to the rail line are an isolated set of light industrial uses which include indoor and outdoor storage facilities.

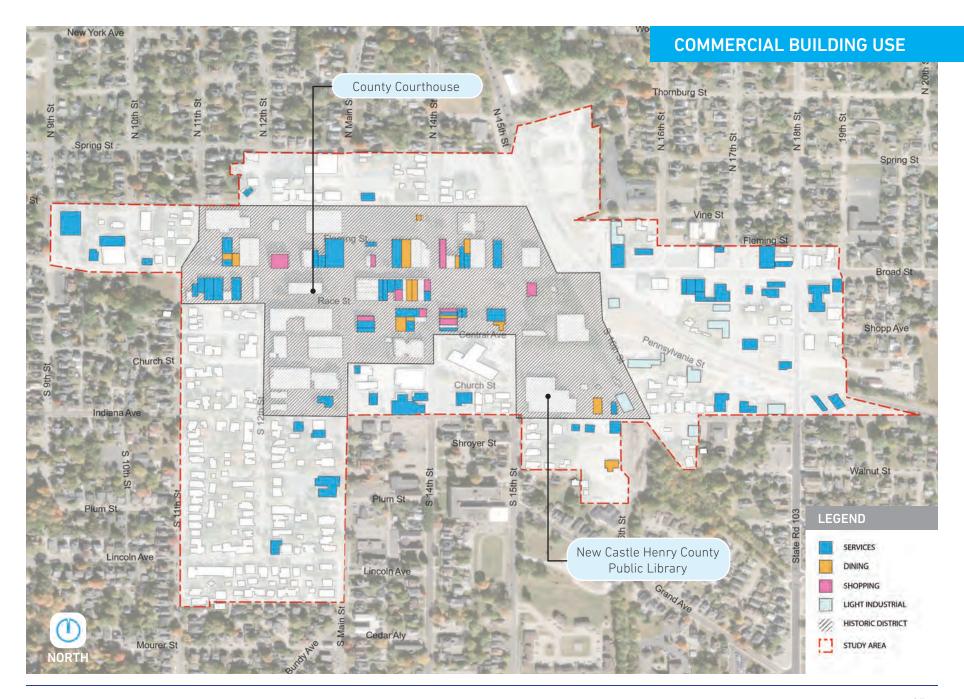
The consistency of the area's dining and retail businesses supports a strong central district, especially when considering the opportunities to redevelop currently vacant first floor storefronts.

The limited availability of service and professional services throughout the study area serves as an opportunity to grow the personal and daily services area of commercial development to better serve downtown residents and families.









BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Supporting Uses and Development

The study area has one primary residential neighborhood which is located south of Indiana Avenue. The homes within this area are predominately detached, single family residential homes. Front yard setbacks are between 15-20 feet, with side yard setbacks being between 5 and 10 feet in width.

Smaller pockets of residential development are located along Indiana Avenue between 15th Street and 17th Street, between 10th Street and 11th Street along Broad Street and north of Vine Street between 12th Street and 14th Street. The homes within this area are predominately detached, single family residential homes. Front yard setbacks are between 15-20 feet, with side yard setbacks being between 5 and 10 feet in width.

A small number of multi-family homes are located within the study area. A smaller structure is located at the intersection of 10th Street and Vine Street. While a larger complex is located at the intersection of Central Avenue and 15th Street.

Upper floor residential is also occurring along Broad Street in select buildings.

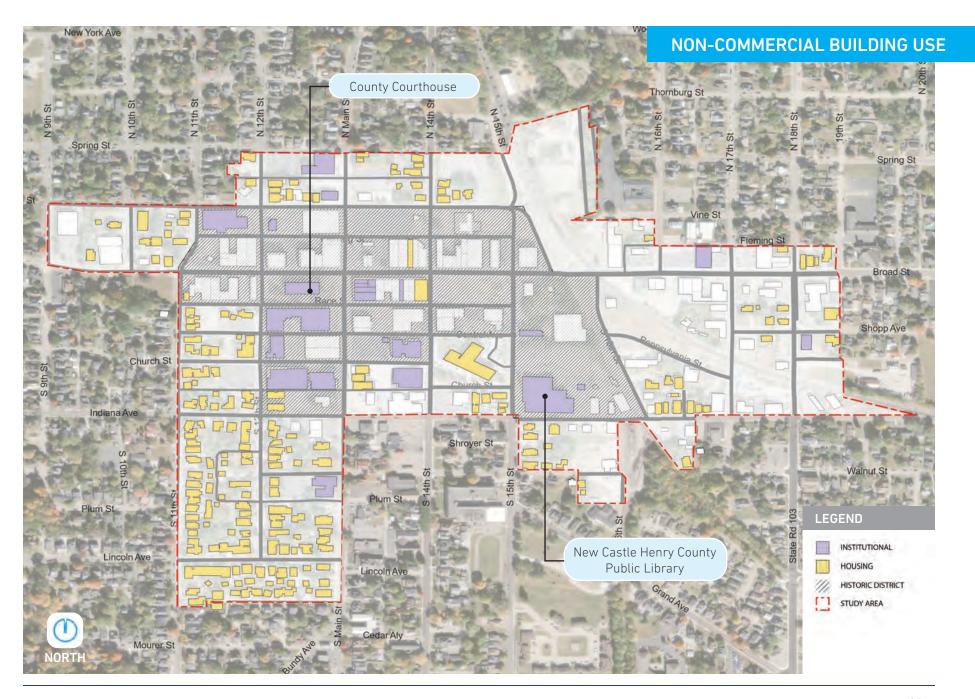
To support the residential uses throughout the area, few personal service facilities and establishments are available. As shown previously, commercial development is limited to dining facilities, small retail shops and professional offices. Other buildings within the area are largely institutional, meaning they provide governmental or public services.

The largest institutional uses in the area are the county courthouse, city hall, the public library and numerous religious institutions.









PROPERTIES AND PARCELS

Underutilized Lots and Properties

While the area has active businesses and residential uses, there are numerous "dead zones" along primary corridors and within primary commercial areas. These underutilized areas are often used as surface parking lots for adjacent property owners and businesses, with some offering public parking and others private.

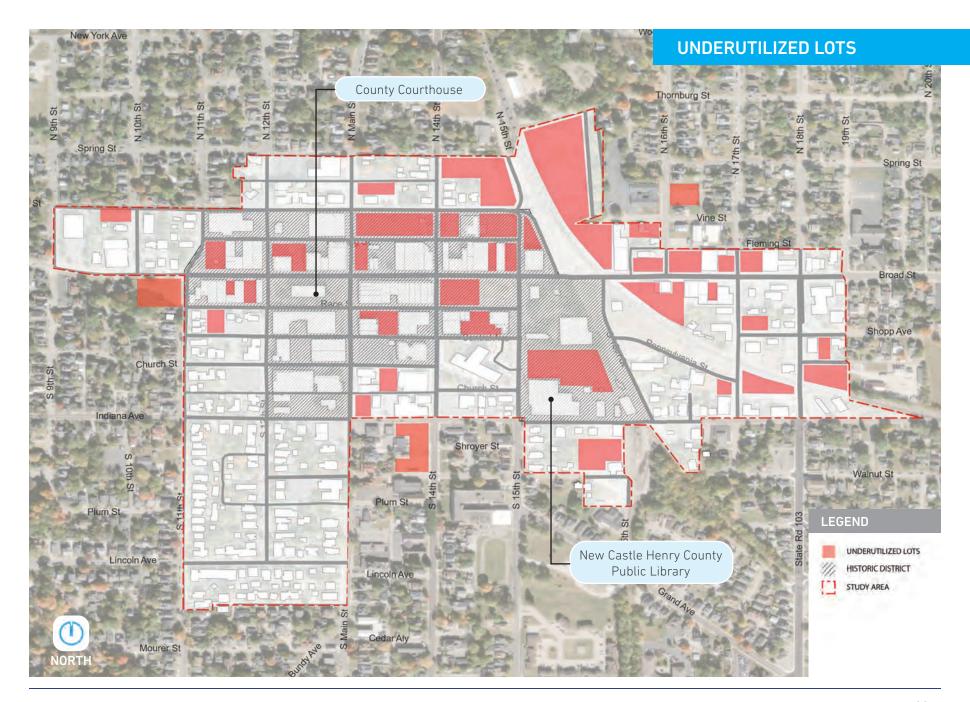
In some cases, specifically along Broad Street and Race Street, underutilized lots were formed by the removal of a building or structure.

These underutilized areas often contribute to a sense of blight or deterioration due to their inactive nature and overall appearance. By minimizing these perceived vacancies in the streetscape and building façades by implementing enhancements or using the sites for future development a more connected and activated downtown area could be achieved.









CONNECTIVITY

Vehicular Transportation

Nearly 10,000 vehicles travel through downtown New Castle daily. Broad Street, or SR 38, provides an east-west connection to SR 3 and is well traveled by residents, tourists and delivery vehicles. SR 103, which intersects with SR 38, east of the rail line, provides north-south connectivity through the community.

Broad Street consists of two travel lanes and a parallel parking lane on either side of the corridor. Pedestrian sidewalks are available on both sides of the roadway, although the width varies slightly along the length based on the façade of the adjacent building.

SR 103 also has two travel lanes, but this corridor lacks parallel parking. No decorative street lighting or public amenities are along this roadway.

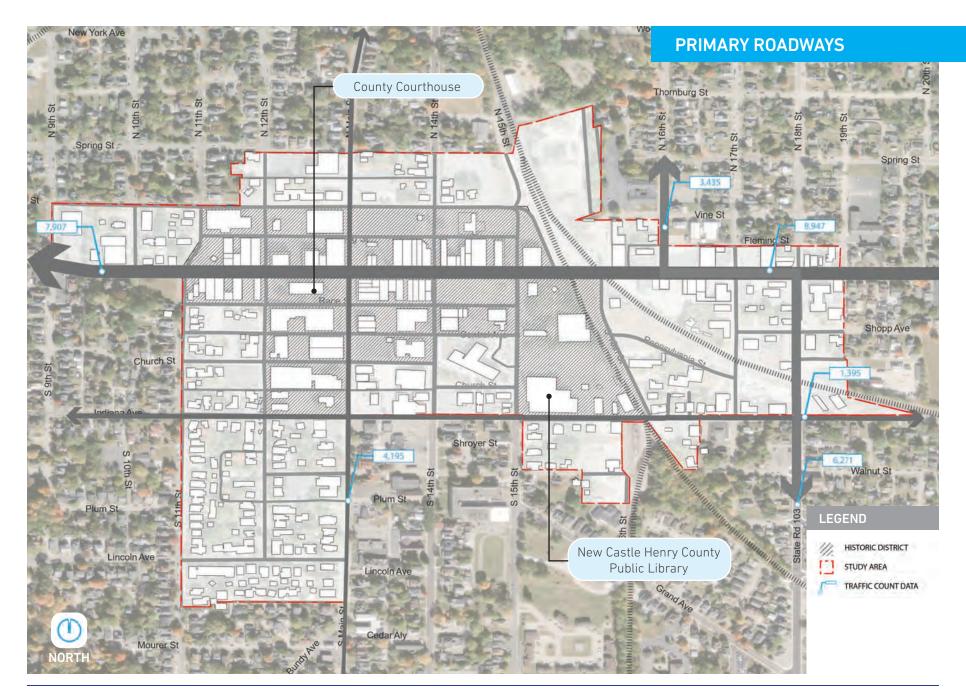
Other corridors within the study area offer two travel lanes and parallel parking. In all onstreet parking areas, no meters exist, and street markings are limited.

A primary divider within the area is the rail line that runs north-south. The line cuts through the downtown east of 15th Street and created crossings at Broad Street and Indiana Avenue. Today, the perceived boundary of downtown stops at the rail line, and the development east of the corridor is seen outside of the downtown district.









CONNECTIVITY

Sidewalks and Pathways

Sidewalks are present along both sides of the Broad Street corridor. These sidewalks are in good condition outside of one block extending from 9th Street to 10th Street.

Within the sidewalk facilities along Broad Street are streetlights, stoops, stairs and outdoor signage for adjacent businesses. These amenities, which contribute to the character, impede the pedestrian walkway in some areas. These impediments compromise accessibility in specific areas.

Along Broad Street, pedestrian crosswalks include markings and signals. In other areas of the downtown, crossing standards vary, with some only providing a marked path and no visible signal.

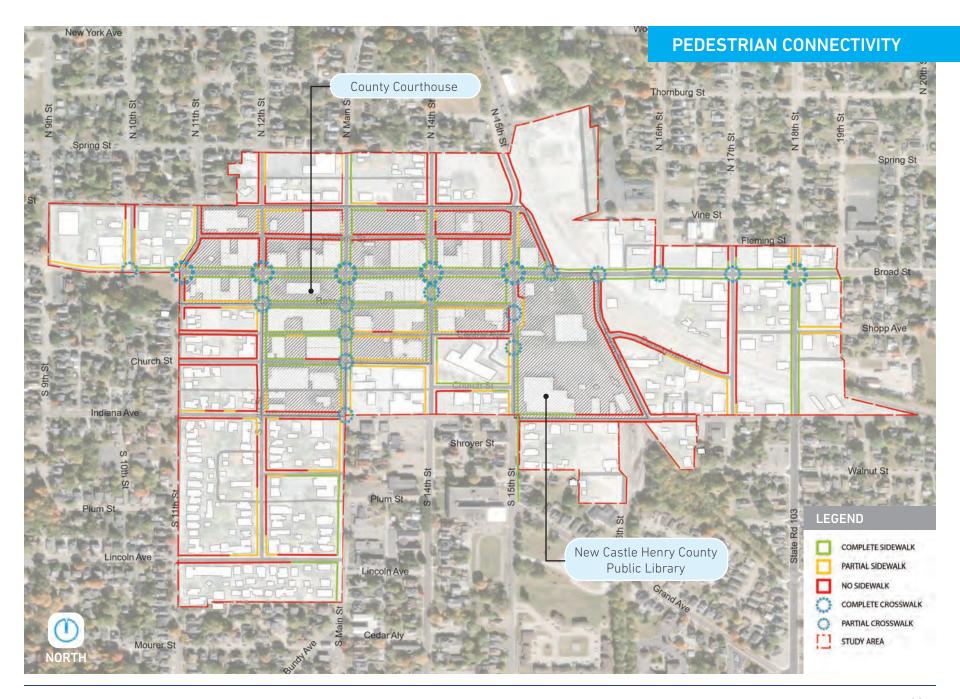
Sidewalks extend south from Broad Street, providing connectivity to institutional and commercial uses along 12th Street, Main Street, 14th Street and 15th Street. Facilities are also present along Race Street, Central Avenue and Church Street.

Outside of this core area, sidewalks and their condition deteriorate considerably. Limited connectivity is present in the residential and commercial areas, or in areas along Indiana Avenue.









CONNECTIVITY

Public and Private Parking

On-street parking is available along Broad Street as well as many other corridors within the area. On-street signage is not metered, and pavement markings are not always consistent throughout the area.

Outside of on-street parking, multiple surface lots exist to accommodate daily, evening and seasonal events. There are three primary public lots, which are located between 14th Street and the rail line.

The central parking area at 1400 Plaza is highly used during the day and evening. The proximity to downtown businesses and public open space is desired. The parking lot also is used for events throughout the year.

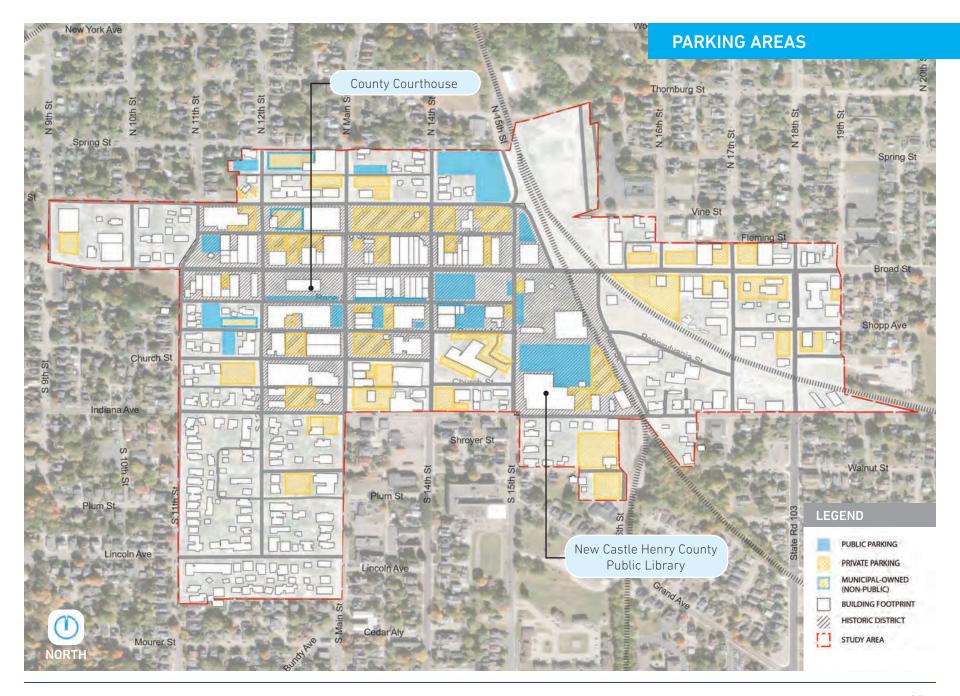
Additional surface lots along 12th Street are owned by the city and could offer flexible opportunities for events and seasonal events.

Overall, signage to public parking areas is minimal. To improve the awareness of available parking, signage should be used to identify areas and navigate visitors to the opportunities in a consistent way.









DESTINATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Gathering Places

While the area's shops, restaurants and offices do serve as destinations for residents and visitors, the study area offers limited attractions outside of those retail inspired opportunities.

The 1400 Plaza at Broad Street and 15th Street serves as a primary gathering area for downtown. The area which includes an overhead awning, performance stage, public parking, and supporting amenities is used throughout the year for events large and small.

The Arts Park, located next to the Arts Center along 15th Street, offers outdoor space and art installations. The site is open to the community and offers rental options for small events and meetings.

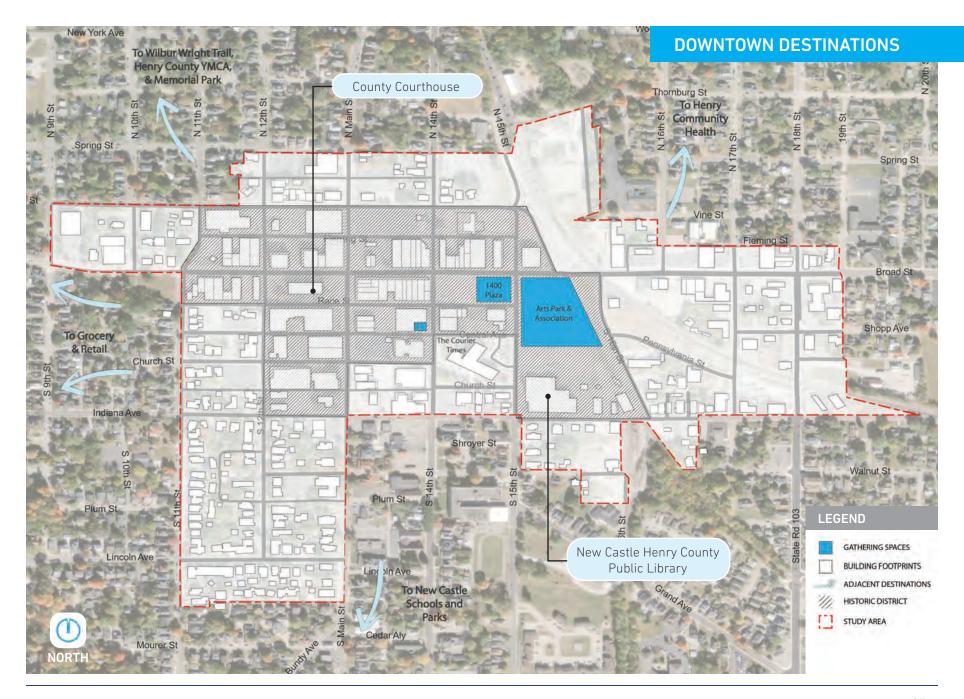
Outside of these two larger spaces, smaller pocket parks and plazas are of interest to the community. Sites such as The Courier Times offer smaller, more intimate gathering areas as a part of their development and feature green space and pedestrian furniture.

Outside of the downtown area there are multiple destinations to consider including grocery and retail stores, health and wellness facilities and outdoor recreation spaces. While no physical connections exist to these destinations, outside of vehicular roadways, currently, the proximity of these amenities to downtown is still prominent.









DESTINATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Downtown Programming

As a primary component of their management and oversight of the downtown area, New Castle Main Street plans and facilitates numerous events throughout the year. While the activities and events are a cornerstone of downtown's success, the organization's ability to also facilitate planning, feasibility and capacity building work also increases the momentum of downtown's growth.

















INTENTIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Downtown Commitments



Business



Housing



Connections



Activities



Leadership

Rather than adopting a loft vision for the future, the master planning process defined and built consensus around a shared intention for the downtown area. While a 'vision' is something you hope to achieve, an 'intention' is something you intend to carry out. With the continued momentum forward over the last several years, the city and the New Castle Main Street team felt that outlining a direct plan was critical.

The various ways our organizations intend to support this shared intention culminated in our statements of commitment. Again, rather than a lofty goal that was hard to measure, our commitment statements are the agreements or pledges we as a city and organization make to downtown and the downtown community.

Together we are committed to improving and advancing the downtown community by making strategic enhancements within the area.

These commitments are outlined on the following pages and illustrated with maps and supporting graphics to convey the intended character, development and level of activity within the downtown of the future. Potential partners are also identified to outline how various agencies, departments and organizations can participate in the implementation process.



What will we do?

We will encourage mixed-use development.

We will support adaptive reuse.

We will preserve and improve existing downtown building structures and facades to retain the historic character of the area.

We will increase street-level vitality by encouraging the active use of ground floor space in the downtown core.

We will enhance business recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts.

Who can help?

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle- Henry County Economic Development Corporation

New Castle- Henry County Chamber of Commerce

New Castle Planning Commission

Indiana Landmarks

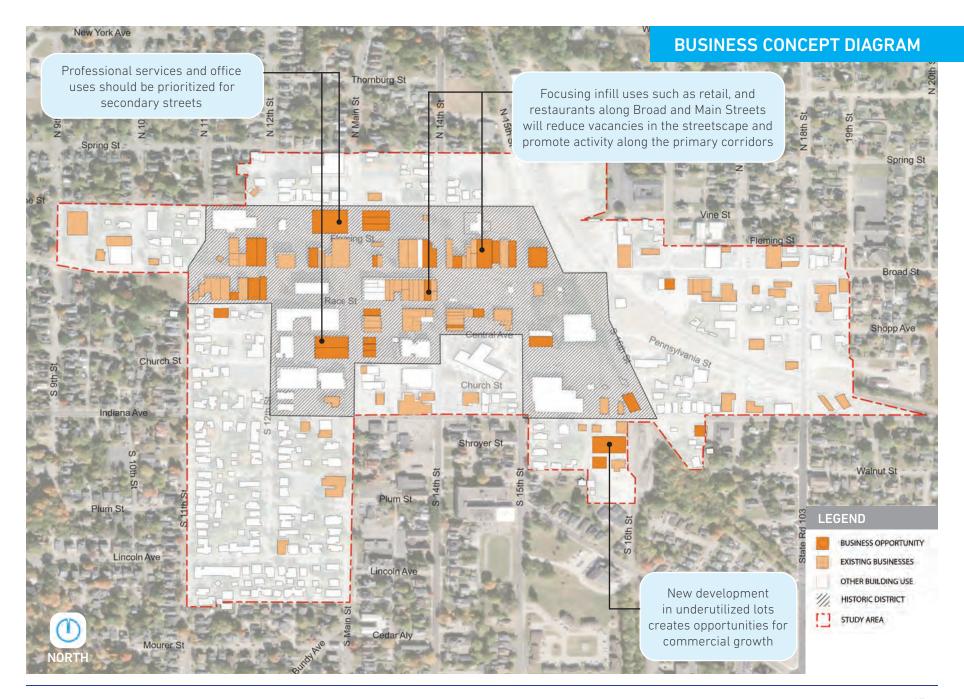
What will it look like?

A dynamic mix of businesses within the downtown area doesn't just mean a handful of active buildings. Instead, it includes consistent street facades with active first-floor storefronts, and other anchoring businesses throughout the downtown area.

Future business uses should be prioritized along Broad Street to ensure a consistent and activated street façade. Businesses, including shops, restaurants and bars, with evening and weekend activities should be prioritized within these first-floor spaces. The upper floors should be reserved for office space and residential opportunities.

The blocks off Broad Street, specifically Race Street, Main Street and 14th Street, should focus on building revitalization where possible to extend the streetscape activation off Broad Street. Businesses with evening and weekend activities are preferred within these first-floor spaces. The upper floors should be reserved for office space and residential opportunities.

Buildings south of Central Avenue and east of the rail line should focus on infill and redevelopment activities. Uses should focus on residential services, professional offices and daily needs including childcare, and personal health and wellness to better support individuals and families living within the area.





HOUSING

Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

What will we do?

We will encourage the conversion of upper floors in existing buildings to accommodate current and future residential needs.

We will support the development of housing that suits a variety of household incomes, sizes, ages, and lifestyles.

We will invest in underutilized land to build greater density in the area.

We will use housing and amenities to attract the growing variety of workers needed for current and emerging downtown jobs.

We will encourage the development of public and private initiatives that support residential living.

Who can help?

New Castle Housing Authority

New Castle- Henry County Economic Development Corporation

New Castle Planning Commission

Banks (Local Financing Partner)

What will it look like?

Improvements including streetscape and sidewalk repairs, along with neighborhood scaled lighting will create a comfortable and safe environment for residents.

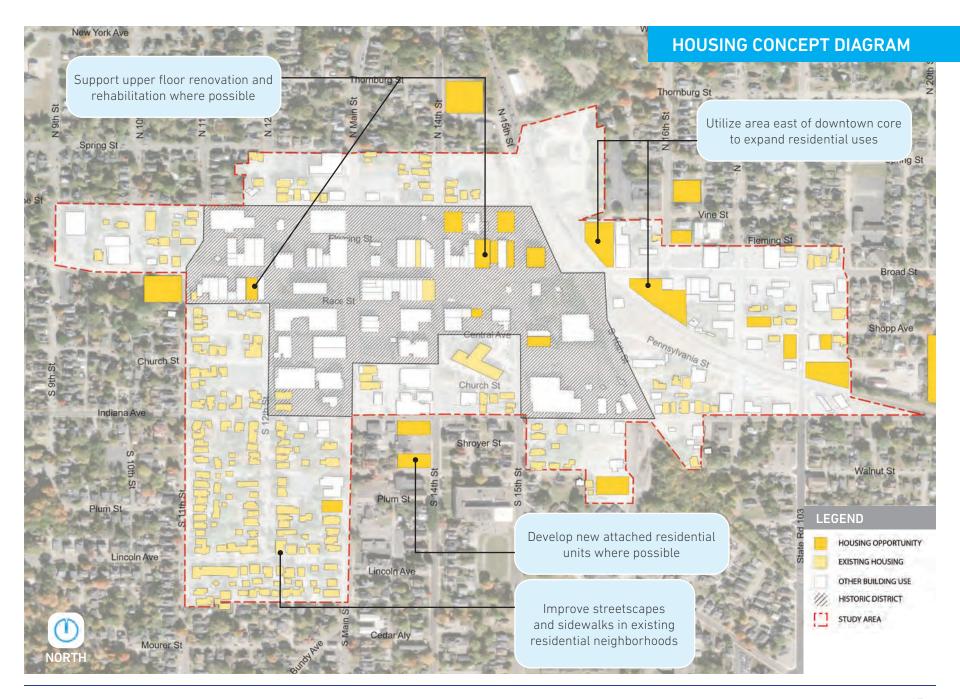
Programs including owner occupied rehab, and home improvement loans can be implemented to create mechanisms for local homeowners to improve their structures and properties in cost effective ways.

Upper floor units should be targeted for residential conversions to further activate existing structures along Broad Street. These units can be offered for rent or purchase depending on market conditions and developer interest.

Specific sites should be targeted for the development of new residential facilities, including multi-family, townhouses, and single-family development. Attached units should be located closer to the primary downtown corridors of Broad Street, Main Street and 14th Street. Detached units should be located along secondary streets and can serve as a transitional development between downtown and the existing residential community.

Design character of new residential development should match the surrounding character.

When possible, local development incentives can be leveraged to incentivize new residential development within the downtown area.





CONNECTIONS

Creating safe and comfortable, multi-modal connections.

What will we do?

We will create attractive gateways for downtown and its emerging neighborhoods

We will improve the downtown walking and biking network.

We will develop auto-free zones during events to facilitate movement and activation.

We will ensure that future streetscape improvements are designed to enhance pedestrian safety, accessibility, and comfort by providing sufficient space for pedestrian needs and uses.

We will develop new unified parking management strategies to increase the overall parking capacity downtown

Who can help?

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

Indiana Department of Transportation

New Castle Street Department

New Castle- Henry County Economic Development Corporation

What will it look like?

Decorative streetlights, banners, plantings and streetscape furniture will be used to support the activation of building facades along Broad Street.

Vine Street, Church Street, 12th Street, Main Street, 14th Street and 15th Street will also receive decorative enhancements since these corridors serve as secondary points of entry into downtown.

Race Street will utilize a flexible streetscape to allow the city to reorganize access at businesses and parking lots, while also creating a useable area for the community.

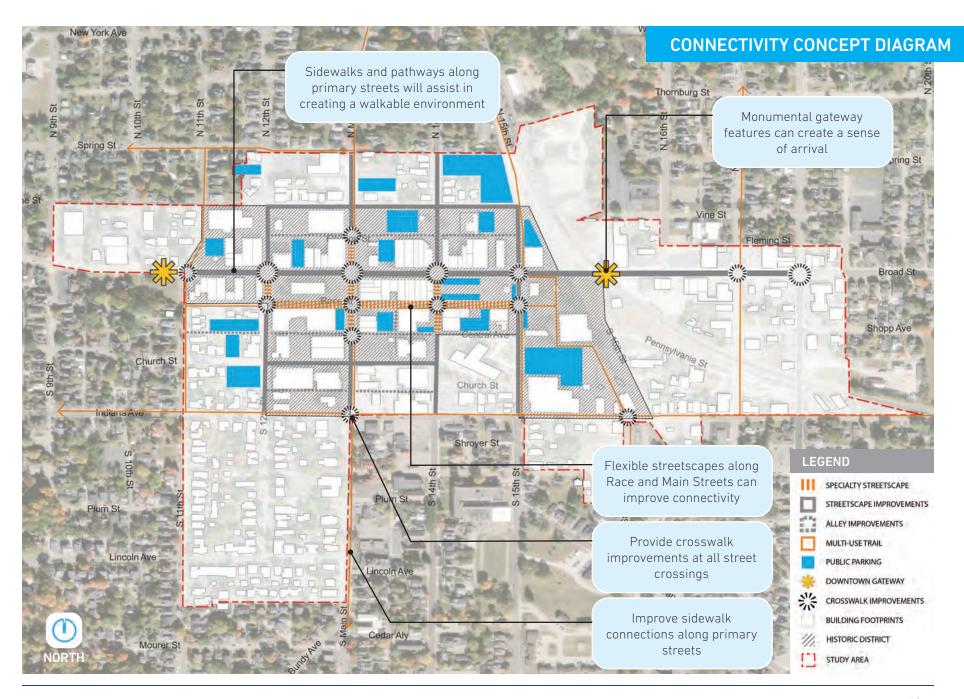
To facilitate deliveries and even pedestrian movement, alleyways will be improved to better accommodate vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Multi-use path or wide sidewalks will be implemented throughout the area.

Pedestrian and vehicular intersections will be upgraded and improved to ensure that all are well marked, signed and signaled.

New downtown gateways, that feature signage and public art, will be placed on either end of Broad Street noting the downtown boundary in an artistic and unique way.

Wayfinding signage will also be located throughout the downtown area to amplify navigation.





Curating year-round destinations, events, and activities.

What will we do?

We will support existing points of interest and develop new destinations to attract people downtown.

We will seek opportunities to improve and expand the network of connected community gathering spaces.

We will program and activate underutilized areas such as alleys, vacant properties, and streetscapes.

We will provide and promote highquality, year-round activities that cater to a wide group of ages, cultures, and interests.

We will promote Downtown New Castle's history, events, and business through branding and marketing in consistent ways.

Who can help?

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle- Henry County Chamber of Commerce

Building Owners

What will it look like?

The courthouse square and surrounding streetscapes will be improved to encourage everyday gathering.

Underutilized and/ or vacant parcels will become public spaces through the development of pocket parks, urban plazas and small gathering areas.

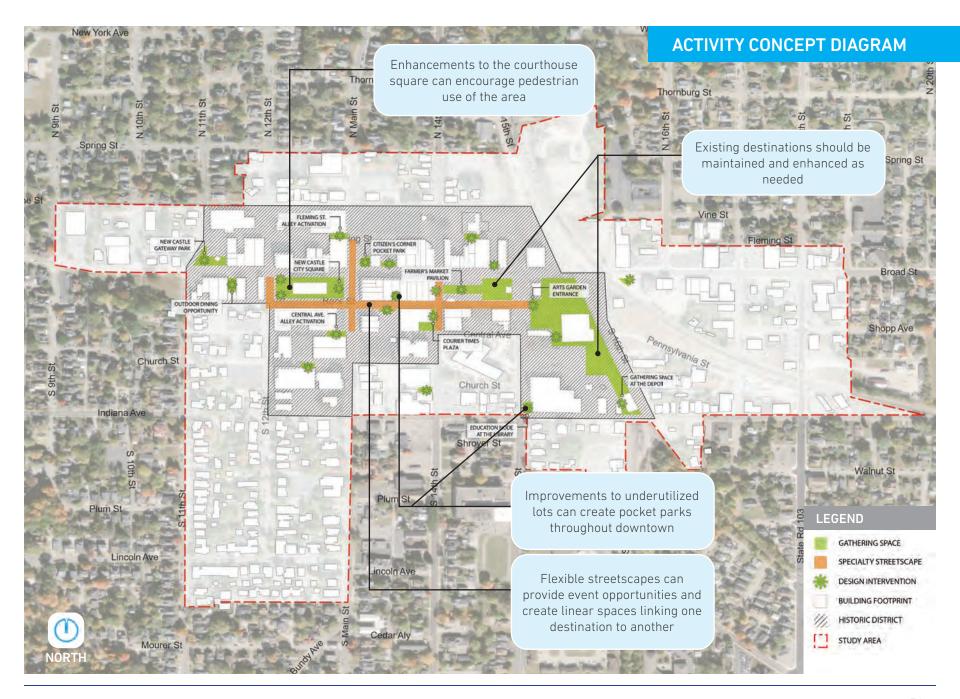
The pocket parks and plazas will bridge the vacant gaps along Broad Street and will help in create a consistent streetscape frontage along the highly traveled corridor.

Existing destinations such as 1400 Plaza and the Arts Park will continue to be well maintained and improved to serve the community.

Expanded green space at 1400 Plaza will link the public outdoor and event space to the downtown district.

Race Street and a portion of Main Street will remain open to vehicular traffic, but the roadway will be re-purposed for use during daily and seasonal events. Providing a flexible streetscape option will allow the city to reorganize access at businesses and parking lots, while also creating a useable area for the community unlike any other space.

New pocket parks and plazas will be used for seasonal events, and daily exhibits and will be included in downtown wayfinding.





LEADERSHIP

Organizing and empowering community leaders and volunteers.

What will we do?

We will establish a mentor program to pair new entrepreneurs with successful Downtown business owners.

We will provide support to building owners by offering a continued building renovation assistance program.

We will strengthen partnerships with economic development partners to increase downtown marketing capacity.

We will strengthen Board participation through leadership training, community outreach, and volunteer recruitment.

We will increase the organizational capacity of New Castle Main Street using diverse committees and volunteerism.

Who can help?

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle- Henry County Economic Development Corporation

New Castle- Henry County Chamber of Commerce

What will it look like?

Downtown business owners would have a comprehensive support system that includes training, cooperative partnerships and capacity building programs. Through this support system, downtown businesses can establish themselves, grow, and expand to better serve the community.

Downtown structures throughout the area will be able to take advantage of building rehabilitation programs to ensure that exterior and interior spaces are safe and structurally sound.

A new incubator space downtown will allow for local businesses to grow in a safe and controlled way, while also giving them an opportunity to locate in the downtown area.

The New Castle Main Street organization has developed a comprehensive financial strategy to fund programs and physical improvements on an annual basis. Included within the program is the ongoing support and expansion of local programs including the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP).

The New Castle Main Street organization will have a wealth of volunteer and financial support. The leadership of the board seamlessly transitions year after year, with new members signing on regularly.















RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this Downtown Master Plan is to build upon previous implementation successes and outline measurable actions that will continue New Castle's efforts to develop a more livable, walkable, and vibrant core. While the preceding section outlined the City's primary intentions towards the downtown area, this section outlines the short-to mid term steps that should be taken to advance efforts and put ideas into action.

The specific actions outlined on the following pages are intended to serve as guideposts for the City and their strategic partners for the next five years. While the recommendations are somewhat broad, additional steps, timelines and partners are listed to further define the actions and intended outcomes. The strategies are intended to provide multiple ways to make both small and large improvements.

Recommendations, and all implementation efforts, should be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the organization's efforts are aligned, and being used efficiently. The listing shown in this section is not prioritized, and is subject to change based on public opinion, local interest and available resources.



Provide continued funding to the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP).

Why is this important?

BRAP is a program that was designed to help downtown New Castle businesses renovate their buildings to better downtown. BRAP was created by New Castle Main Street, the New Castle Redevelopment Corporation (RDC) and the New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation (EDC). New Castle Main Street is a nonprofit organization that serves as the community development corporation. The organization was appointed by the RDC to manage and implement the Building Assistance Renovation Program (BRAP).

The program was renewed in 2025 with \$175,000 in funding through 2026. The funds are provided through an biannual allocation by the RDC and is structured as a forgivable loan program.

While recent fund has declined, it is attributed to the overall success of the program within downtown.

What are the next steps?

Continue to track funded projects to determine the change in downtown metrics.

Share the stories of previously implemented BRAP projects with the community and to the Redevelopment Commission.

As needed review the award criteria and selection process to ensure that application scoring is reflective of downtown needs.

Implement a mentorship and technical assistance program to assist new applicants who are interested in utilize the program.

Address how repeat applicants should be differentiated within the program.

The time frame

0-18 MONTHS	1.5 - 3 YEARS	3+ YEARS
The complex	rity	
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increase in number of awards granted

Increase in number of building repairs

Increase in building efficiency (MEP systems)

Increase in number of new businesses

Increase in number of jobs within downtown

Retention of existing businesses

Increase in property value

Potential partners

City of New Castle

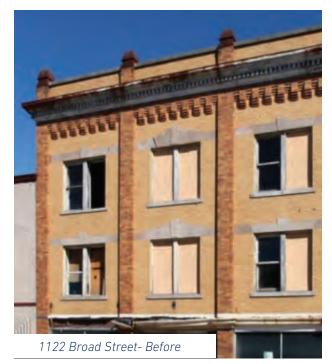
New Castle Main Street

Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Program Participants

Building Owners







BRAP PROJECT IMPACTS









Create and implement a community-wide wayfinding program.

Why is this important?

Wayfinding signage assists in navigating people to and from specific locations. It also allows those same individuals the opportunities to discover new destinations and establishments.

Wayfinding can be an effective tool for communities, and specific districts, to safely manage the movement and flow of people, identify public parking, improve experiences, and contribute to a sense of wellbeing and security.

The wayfinding master plan serves as a management, design, and implementation guide for placement of vehicular, pedestrian, gateway and parking related signs as key wayfinding assets for the city. Key implementation steps include a phased implementation plan that focuses on community-wide and downtown destinations, public parking, and community entrance points.

What are the next steps?

Form a design committee to review and approve the community branding and signage standards.

Develop and approve the destinations for all community-wide signs with an emphasis on the downtown district.

Develop a cohesive signage family that includes signage of multiple scales and technologies.

Work with community agencies to identify opportunities for interpretive or storytelling signage.

Execute a first phase of signage within downtown.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
The complex	rity	

LOW MEDIUM HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increased visits to downtown destinations

Increased use of local brand and visual identity

Increase in local tourism

Creation of safe connections to downtown destinations

Potential partners

City of New Castle New Castle Main Street

New Castle- Henry County Chamber of Commerce

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Historical Society/ Indiana Landmarks

Indiana Department of Transportation









SIGNAGE PRECEDENT IMAGES







Provide a map based business directory of downtown New Castle Main businesses, shops and destinations for easy navigation and promotion.

Why is this important?

Like a comprehensive wayfinding system, a detailed map of the downtown area will provide a full view of what the area has to offer in terms of dining, shopping and entertainment. In addition to improving overall navigation, a detailed downtown map can increase the "sticky factor" of downtown. By showing visitors the wealth of options for shopping, dining, and culture, visitors will be enticed to slow down, stop and linger in the downtown community.

While the New Castle Main Street website has an accurate listing of restaurants, retail shops and activity destinations, they are listed as individual entries. By having a visual map on-line, and one that could be printed, the identification of local businesses and the navigation in and around the area will help create a well-connected downtown district.

What are the next steps?

Update the existing business roster to ensure that contact information is accurate for all establishments.

Prepare a two dimensional map that shows locations of businesses, restaurants and places of interest. Color code the information based on service type.

Utilize the map on wayfinding signage kiosks, as a printed piece left in businesses and restaurants and in common public areas.

Investigate the use of technology to provide a digital map, or web based map for visitor use.

The time frame

The complexity

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increased use of local brand and visual identity

Increase in local tourism

Increased visits to downtown destinations

Increased sales revenue

Potential partners

New Castle Main Street
Redevelopment Commission
New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation
Henry County Destination Development
Business Owners





Monitor the need for an incubator or co-working space for start-up businesses who wish to locate downtown.

Why is this important?

The previous pop-up business location that was located near 11th Street and Broad Street offered a low-risk opportunity for local entrepreneurs who wished to locate their retail establishment downtown.

The location, was a rousing success, with many small businesses taking advantage of the opportunity to establish their reputation and grow their services over time. Many of these businesses have moved out of the popup location and established storefronts within downtown.

With the location closed, the downtown area could use a new incubator space to assist local start-ups, or those who wish to expand into the downtown district. Currently, the interest in such a space is minimal, largely due to the success of the program itself. However, ensuring that these tools are available in the future is critical to local business success.

What are the next steps?

Establish a platform for local entrepreneurs to reach out for business assistance or technical support.

Continue to track overall spatial and business support needs amongst local businesses and entrepreneurs.

Identify priority locations for potential incubator or co-working spaces and discuss options with building owners.

As demand requires, establish a support program that provides business support services, co-working spaces, cooperative purchasing and incubator storefront space within downtown.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
T1 1		

The complexity

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
-----	--------	------

What will we accomplish?

Increase in number of jobs within downtown

Retention of existing businesses

Increase in downtown activity

Increase in number of new businesses

Lower vacancy rates in downtown storefronts

Increase in communal work spaces

Potential partners

New Castle Main Street

Redevelopment Commission

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Business Owners

Former pop-up shop tenants









HOUSING- Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

Expand the existing business directory on the New Castle Main Street to include residential amenities.

Why is this important?

While the New Castle Main Street website has a listing of restaurants, retail shops and activities within the downtown district, expanding this listing to better highlight daily residential amenities like childcare, grocery stores, and health and wellness options may be beneficial to residential growth.

For those interested in moving downtown it would appear that these daily resources are not available within downtown district. While they may not be established in district today, they are within close proximity and easily accessible by vehicle, bicycle and in some instances on foot.

By including these personal care and service establishments in an overall listing of downtown establishments, visitors and local residents can better understand how their personal needs can be met in an outside of the downtown district.

What are the next steps?

Identify common residential needs (daily, weekly and monthly) and identify local destinations and establishments that can fit those criteria.

Create a roster of contact information for agreed upon establishments and destinations.

Add this information to the New Castle Main Street website as a set of supporting businesses and locations.

Coordinate this information into the wayfinding program and map-based products outlined within these downtown strategies.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
The complex	itv	

LOW MEDIUM HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increase in population living in downtown

Increase in downtown activity

Identification of downtown residential needs

Improved communication amongst local businesses

Potential partners

New Castle Main Street
New Castle Redevelopment Commission
New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation
Henry County Community Foundation
Henry Community Health
Henry County Hospital Foundation



RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT AMENITIES









HOUSING- Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

Market the use of the Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP) as a way to support residential improvements and adaptive reuse efforts in upper floor renovations.

Why is this important?

The existing Building Renovation Assistance Program (BRAP) has been instrumental in improving retail and commercial spaces downtown.

While the program currently supports residential improvements, the options are limited and the program primarily supports improvements geared towards commercial businesses.

As the program continues, and commercial oriented improvements are minimized, efforts may be needed to expand the scope of the BRAP program.

Using BRAP funds to undertake feasibility studies, architectural concept studies, high level space planning efforts and minor construction limits the risk on building owners or development investors. By limiting the list, and providing quantifiable needs and benefits, residential projects may become more viable.

What are the next steps?

Identify success stories from previous BRAP projects that supported residential development.

Using successes of previous efforts, establish parameters and goals for residential projects and funding applications.

Discuss the programs intentions surrounding feasibility studies, space planning and residential construction with interested building owners/ partners.

As interest grows, identify if a different program or funding stream is more appropriate for residential improvements.

The time frame

0-18 MONTHS	1.5 - 3 YEARS	3+ YEARS
The complex	ity	
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increase in number of awards granted
Increase in number of building repairs
Increased residential units on the market
Increased variety in residential units in

Increased variety in residential units in downtown

Increase in property value

Decrease in building vacancy rates

Potential partners

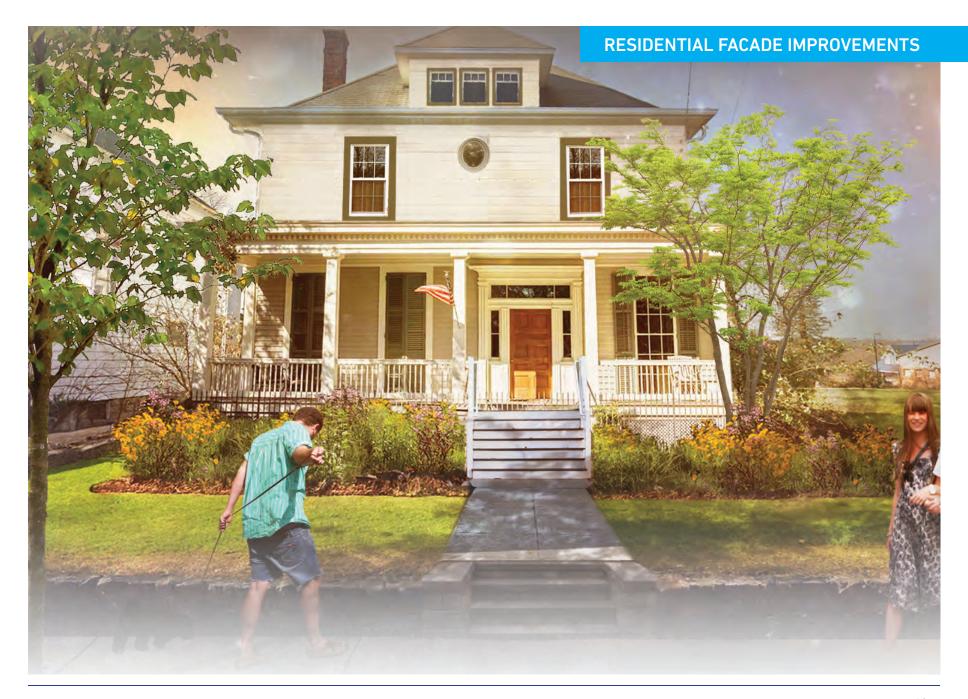
City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Former BRAP Awardees





HOUSING- Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

Support and incentivize the rehabilitation of existing upper story units for residential development.

Why is this important?

While many of the historic structures downtown have active first floor uses, upper floors remain vacant or underutilized.

The rehabilitation and redevelopment of these spaces is often slow and cumbersome due to unforeseen structural concerns, complicated spatial needs and funding availability. By finding innovative ways to support building owners in their attempts to redevelop upper floor areas into residential units of varying sizes, the downtown housing market can grow.

While financial assistance and incentives are always welcome, support can also come through technical resources, grant application assistance, and collaboration by bringing together multiple building owners to ensure that efficiencies with planning, design and construction can occur.

What are the next steps?

Identify available upper floor spaces that

Gain an understanding of the interest and concerns related to renovations from the perspective of building owners.

could be renovated or redeveloped.

Explore available programs and incentive options that could be applicable to residential redevelopment.

Provide technical assistance when possible to building owners to explore programming, design and funding applications.

Market available incentives and funding opportunities to advance work.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
The complex	rity	

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increase in number of building repairs

Increased residential units on the market

Increased variety in residential units in downtown

Increase in property value

Decrease in building vacancy rates

Potential partners

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Financial Institutions

Historic Preservation/ Indiana Landmarks













HOUSING- Providing attainable housing and necessary support services.

Work with the development community to create shovel-ready sites for downtown housing developments and expansions.

Why is this important?

While improving existing neighborhoods will increase the community's residential appeal, building new residential units is the best way to increase the overall diversity and quantity of residential offerings.

While upper story renovations can provide new apartments and condominiums, the number of units available will be limited to the number of existing structures within downtown.

The long game, and the way to greatly improve the quantity and diversity of housing in the area is to develop new single family homes, or attached units on undeveloped parcels. While developing new residential units is complicated and costly, there are opportunities the City can take to slowly progress this initiative at a pace that is manageable and realistic.

Engaging the downtown community in the process of identifying existing conditions, establishing best practices and developing long-term relationships will all create a strong foundation for future investment.

What are the next steps?

Establish a housing task force to advance the expansion of housing within downtown.

Establish housing best practices with residential developers and real estate experts.

Compare local and regional housing development trends against local policies and development procedures.

Identify priority sites for future housing development and document the ownership, policy and infrastructure needs of each site.

As funds are available, secure priority sites and reduce administrative and infrastructure barriers for future development partners.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
The complex	rity	

LOW MEDIUM **HIGH**

What will we accomplish?

Increase in developed parcels in downtown

Increased residential units on the market

Increased variety in residential units in downtown

Increase in property value

Potential partners

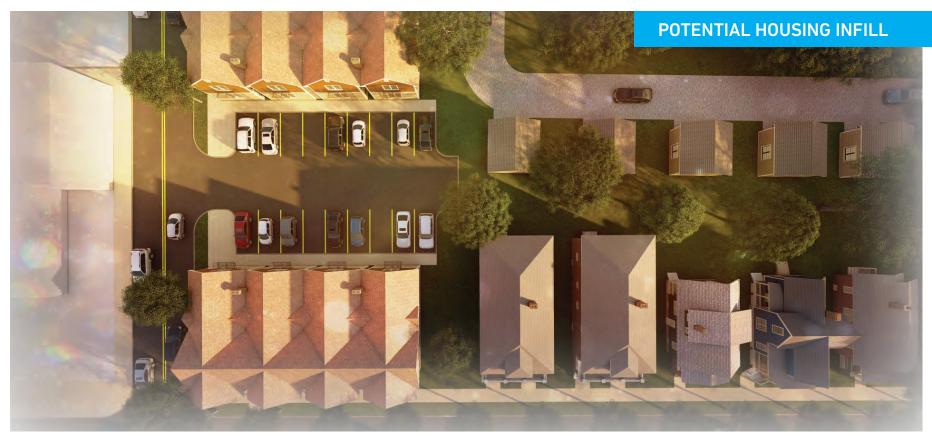
City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

Financial Institutions







CONNECTIONS- Creating safe and comfortable, multi-modal connections.

Improve accessibility in the downtown core.

Why is this important?

Throughout the downtown area, the existing sidewalks are often narrow, full of obstacles including light poles, street signs and temporary business signage. In some places they are nonexistent.

Along Broad Street, the sidewalk is wider, but that space is also home to streetlights, street signs and building stoops, all of which create impediments to pedestrian movement. These narrow walkways and cluttered points along the right of way create pedestrian paths that are not readily accessible to individuals with mobility concerns. If downtown visitors have difficulties moving through the area, they may be reluctant to return.

What are the next steps?

Conduct an accessibility audit to determine which areas of existing pedestrian infrastructure within downtown pose accessibility challenges or limitations.

Prioritize the locations to determine which areas should be reviewed and enhanced first.

Using either paid or probono design services, identify design alternatives and necessary improvements in areas where accessibility is reduce or non-existent.

Identify funding sources to support improvements. As funding allows, make improvements to advance accessibility in the area.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+	
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS	
The complexity			

LOW **MEDIUM HIGH**

What will we accomplish?

Improved connectivity across and along primary pathways

Encourage pedestrian movement in business areas

Create safer walkways throughout downtown

Improve accessibility along public right of ways

Potential partners

City of New Castle New Castle Main Street New Castle Street Department Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Historic Preservation/ Indiana Landmarks





CONNECTIONS- Creating safe and comfortable, multi-modal connections.

Improve pedestrian infrastructure within the downtown district by improving and enhancing sidewalks and multi-use paths.

Why is this important?

Downtown communities are generally at a small enough scale that pedestrian movement is not only wanted, but it is required for the success of businesses, programming and neighborhood quality of life.

In many cases, individuals or families moving to a downtown community are in search of a walkable environment that allows them to access daily services and needs without the use of a vehicle. Within downtown New Castle, the limited sidewalk infrastructure creates gaps between residential areas and the core business district.

By investing in new walkways or multiuse paths, and by supporting the repair and enhancement of existing walkways, the district can begin to offer a strong walkable network that provides connections to residents, visitors and business owners.

What are the next steps?

Conduct a walkability study to determine which areas of existing pedestrian infrastructure need improvement and which areas lack infrastructure entirely.

Prioritize pedestrian improvements through a capital improvement plan (CIP) for downtown infrastructure. The CIP should outline sidewalk and pathways, intersection improvements, signalization, and accessible ramps at a minimum.

Seek out annual funding through grants, or direct allocations from the City of New Castle budget processing to make necessary improvements. Align pedestrian improvements to roadway improvements when possible.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
MONTHS	TEARS	TLANS

The complexity

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
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What will we accomplish?

Improved connectivity across and along primary pathways

Encourage pedestrian movement in business areas

Create safer walkways throughout downtown

Improve accessibility along public right of ways

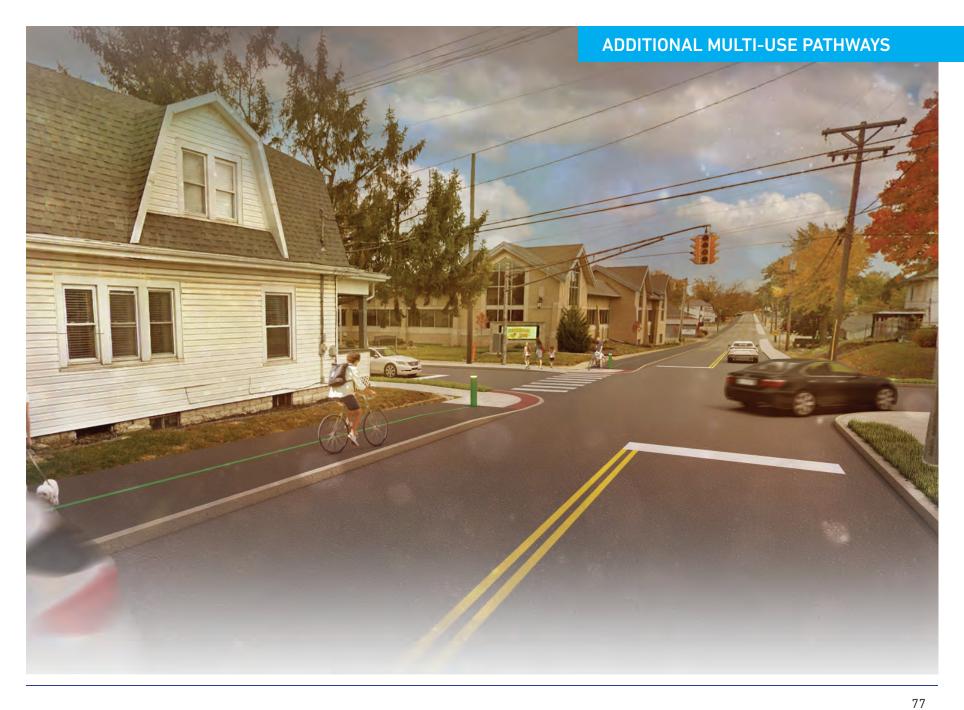
Potential partners

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Street Department

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)





CONNECTIONS- Creating safe and comfortable, multi-modal connections.

Redesign and reconstruct Race Street to serve as a multi-modal and flexible event corridor.

Why is this important?

Within downtown there are two primary areas of dense activity- 1400 Plaza and the Arts Park along the east, and the commercial businesses along Broad Street. While both areas cater to a wide range of demographics and are well programmed today, the activity centers are separate and pose limitations to scaling and growing local events.

Additionally, with the areas being programmed separately, visitors are not motivated to explore other areas outside of the specific destination or event that brought them downtown initially. By creating a more flexible and linear event space, the popular and well-visited areas of downtown can be bridged creating a more connected, and larger set of spaces for events year-round.

What are the next steps?

Test the idea of expanding events into public right of way and track opportunities and concerns.

Conduct a feasibility study to determine how the Race Street corridor would need to be reconstructed to accommodate pedestrian, vehicular and quality of place improvements.

As a component of the feasibility study document the intended costs, property impacts, and financial investment tools that are applicable to the project.

Create a long term implementation plan that identifies phased construction, source of funds and applicable action items for all participating parties.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS
The complex		

LOW MEDIUM **HIGH**

What will we accomplish?

Improved connectivity across and along primary pathways

Encourage pedestrian movement in business areas

Create safer walkways throughout downtown

Increase outdoor venues for festivals and events

Increase in downtown activity

Potential partners

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation

New Castle Street Department





ACTIVITIES- Curating year-round destinations, events, and activities.

Use both "lighter, quicker, cheaper" and permanent improvements to activate and enhance the space around the county courthouse.

Why is this important?

Large portions of downtown New Castle are open, public spaces, the most notable, the County courthouse. However in many cases, the public areas are not well used by the public.

Activating these public spaces can involve a mix of programming which can be low-cost, seasonal, or temporary improvements at first, and lead to more costly, longer term permanent design interventions.

The results, whether using temporary or longer term applications, generally yield stronger interactions between residents and visitors, a higher utilization of space and economic returns in the form of increased sales in surrounding businesses.

Activation can be viewed as a process, and not a single effort. Efforts can be done in a phased approach which tests both scale, location and type of installation.

Following the testing of "lighter, quicker, cheaper" ideas at the County courthouse, the effort can expand to other notable public spaces in downtown, and include more permanent installations.

What are the next steps?

Engage the Henry County Commissioners to discuss the temporary activation of lawn areas surrounding the County courthouse.

Identify "lighter, quicker, cheaper" alternatives that provide seating, and small gathering areas within the lawn.

Incorporate seasonal displays and destination events as appropriate to further engage the local community.

Promote the use of the lawn through small scaled events.

Track attendance and usage to refine design interventions in the future.

The time frame

0-18 MONTHS	1.5 - 3 YEARS	3+ YEARS	
The complexity			
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	

What will we accomplish?

Increased activity within public spaces

Better integration of administrative buildings

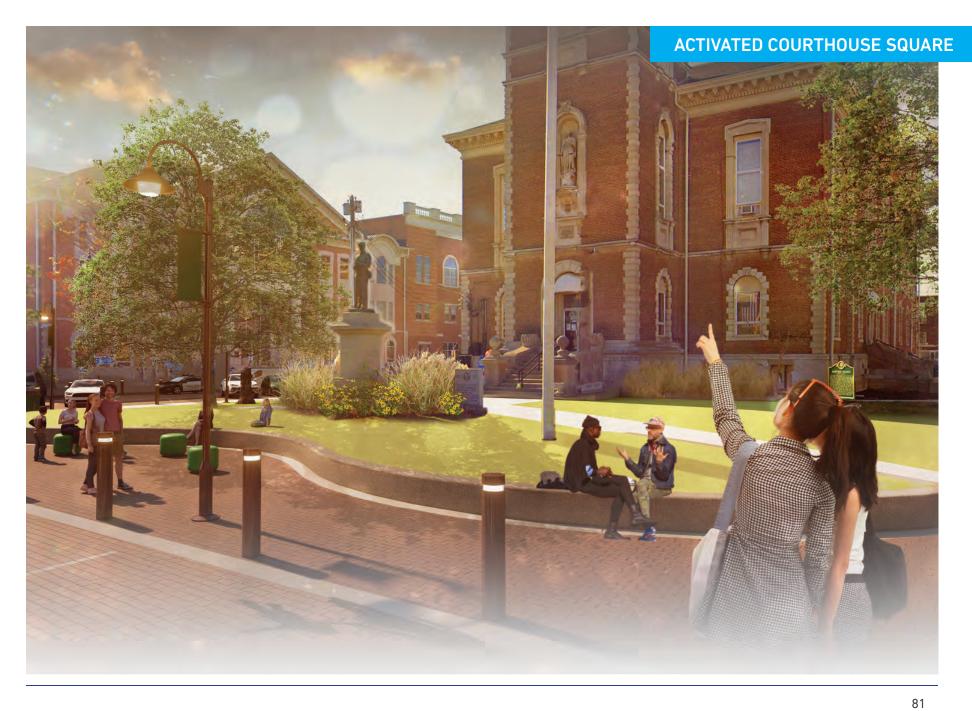
Increase in exterior event space within downtown

Increased connectivity between public destinations

Potential partners

Henry County Commissioners City of New Castle New Castle Main Street New Castle Redevelopment Commission New Castle-Henry County Economic Development Corporation Historic Preservation/ Indiana Landmarks

Henry County Community Foundation





ACTIVITIES- Curating year-round destinations, events, and activities.

Expand the site boundaries of existing programming and seasonal events to include the surrounding streetscapes and alleys as a pilot effort.

Why is this important?

Downtown New Castle historically has provided numerous seasonal and reoccurring events at a variety of scales. While New Castle Main Street is not always a lead partner, the downtown context is a central location that offers opportunities for the entire community to be involved.

With success and growth occurring across multiple events, it is important to think proactively about how downtown can provide expanded offerings to accommodate growing events or events at a new, and previously unseen scale.

While standalone parks or plazas are limited, the streetscapes and alleys that connect the existing event areas to one another offer unique opportunities to create linear event locations. These linear events, can connect individual destinations to one another, and provide activation of the greater downtown district.

What are the next steps?

Inventory the annual events held within downtown and document the lead agency.

Coordinate future needs with lead agencies to determine event growth plans and overall needs.

Identify 1-2 annual events that could utilize additional space, and prepare an organizational plan showing how the event can utilize corridors such as Race Street, 14th Street or 15th Street. Coordinate all applicable traffic, parking and accessible needs.

Execute at least one event using the pilot approach and track overall vendor and visitor thoughts and concerns.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3 3+
MONTHS	YEARS YEARS

The complexity

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
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What will we accomplish?

Expanded	local	events	and	offerings
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Increase in exterior event space within downtown

Increased connectivity between public destinations

Increase in data surrounding events and event needs

Potential partners

City of New Castle
New Castle Main Street
New Castle Street Department
Local event organizers
Local event sponsors





ACTIVITIES- Curating year-round destinations, events, and activities.

Build a network of improved public open spaces using alleyways, vacant properties and underutilized lots.

Why is this important?

Increasing residential amenities, including public open space, is a critical component to marketing downtown as a destination for living.

While 1400 Plaza and the Arts Park provide opportunities for recreation to some degree, converting smaller, underutilized lots into open spaces with varying amenities, will increase the number of options available to residents and visitors. Additionally, by converting unused or underutilized parcels into pocket parks or pocket plazas, a more continuous street façade can be developed which can support increased foot traffic along business frontages throughout the area.

While in some cases, the property may need to be purchased by the City for improvements to occur, in other cases, it could be done through a cooperative agreement or on a temporary, ownerled basis.

What are the next steps?

Create a annotated map of underutilized or vacant parcels and include property owner information.

Identify priority sites for an initial round of temporary pocket park improvements that are geared towards, displays, moveable seating, seasonal activities and sigange.

Identify grant, sponsorships or other funding opportunities to fund the pilot program.

Install improvements as funding allows. Use the opportunity to test different installation types and methods to see which are more interactive.

Track visits and impressions for future work.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+		
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS		
The constant of the				

The complexity

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
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What will we accomplish?

Increase in usable open space

Increase outdoor venues for festivals and events

Consistent streetscape facade

Increase in downtown activity

Increase in downtown connectivity

Potential partners

City of New Castle New Castle Main Street New Castle Redevelopment Commission

Building and Property Owners

Henry County Community Foundation

Henry Community Health

Henry County Hospital Foundation



POCKET PARK ACTIVATION









LEADERSHIP- Organizing and empowering community leaders and volunteers.

Develop a comprehensive funding strategy for New Castle Main Street that includes for-profit partnerships, community organizations and grant funds.

Why is this important?

Many of the recommendations in this Plan, along with ongoing committee recommendations will require investment and resources. With many initiatives on a mid to long term timeline, identifying a consistent funding program for staff, programs and marketing will be important to ensure consistency and longevity at the organizational level.

The funding strategy should include a diverse set of financial resources and programs that include annual budget allocations, cooperative partnerships, sponsorships and both federal and state grants. By creating a budget that uses diverse sources, impacts can be limited if any one source becomes constrained or is removed.

What are the next steps?

Create an accurate listing of all existing revenue streams that accounts for capital resources, technical resources, and in-kind support.

Outline potential partnership opportunities (both financial and in-kind support) with local businesses, organizations and agencies.

Pair potential partners with applicable downtown improvements based on organization mission, vision and goals.

Draft a strategic "ask" for community-wide downtown support that uses language that shows the aligned missions and goals across identified community partners.

The time frame

0-18	1.5 - 3	3+		
MONTHS	YEARS	YEARS		
The complexity				

1.004	MEDIUM	111011
LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

What will we accomplish?

Increase in available funding for downtown programs

New downtown programs

Increase in number of volunteers

Increase in board participation

Increased consistency in board leadership

Potential partners

City of New Castle

New Castle Main Street

New Castle Redevelopment Commission

Henry County Community Foundation

Henry Community Health

Henry County Hospital Foundation

State and Federal Agencies





