

# QUALITY OF PLACE

## Downtown Redevelopment



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# WHY INVEST IN RURAL DOWNTOWNS?

## Bringing Back Main Street

According to the National Main Street Center, every \$1 invested in local Main Street programs generates \$33 in additional investments. Rural downtowns offer many amenities that homebuyers are looking for. In fact, more than half of Americans would choose to live in a smaller house in a more walkable neighborhood. Specifically, retirees are increasingly interested in moving to small towns, as these places offer a lower cost of living and tend to be less congested, compared to larger cities.

Downtowns offer a space for local entrepreneurs to sell their goods and services. Approximately 55 percent of small business owners say that the “buy local” sentiment has helped them compete with large companies because many people are interested in purchasing goods made close to home. Internet access also plays a large role, as it allows businesses to offer products online and thus expand their reach without relocating. This is valuable because small communities tend to have lower rents than larger cities. Finally, rural downtowns offer an affordable tourist destination for those wanting to learn more about history and culture.

Before making significant investments, communities should create a clear vision of what they want their downtown to become. When creating a community vision:

- **Engage stakeholders**
  - Stakeholders include residents, local elected officials, local government agencies, local businesses and property owners, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, civic groups, school districts, colleges and universities, etc.
  - People living and working downtown can provide “insider information” on its condition and functionality, which can be used to create a successful revitalization strategy.
  - Building consensus among different interests lays the foundation for partnerships to help improve downtown, increasing the likelihood that the vision will be realized.
- **Determine community assets**
  - Rural downtowns have physical, cultural, and economic assets they can leverage to attract new investment.
  - Examples include access to waterways and natural areas, access to locally grown agricultural products, historic buildings and landmarks, proximity to major

metropolitan areas or regional transportation routes, affordable housing opportunities, cultural events, etc.

- Identifying these assets will help communities develop their vision and distinct brand.

- **Conduct a market analysis**

- By studying local and regional economic trends, communities can develop a realistic vision of how they can generate new investment within their downtowns.
- When conducting a market analysis, communities should determine the local trade area, study demographic data, identify existing businesses, attractions, and other economic assets, and survey business owners and customers.

Revitalization plans outline steps that communities can take to make their downtowns more vibrant. To maximize effectiveness, plans should be:

**1. Comprehensive** | Plans should consider a range of issues affecting downtown, including land use, infrastructure, and accessibility. Before developing recommendations, the community should thoroughly examine existing conditions, market trends, and population and employment projections. The study area should encompass the entire downtown, as defined by community members.

**2. Actionable** | The plan should include a clear, locally supported vision and identify strategies for improving downtown. Not only should there be realistic long-term strategies, but short-term ones that can be implemented immediately. Cost estimates for proposed projects should be included to help communities more easily pursue funding opportunities.

**3. Supportable** | To solidify the community's vision and help ensure implementation, the plan should be endorsed by the City Council, any Economic Development Corporations (EDC), the Chamber of Commerce, and/or other local stakeholders that influence the community's physical and economic development. Identify the potential roles different groups can take to help implement the plan and encourage inter-organizational partnerships.

**4. Measurable** | The plan should include measures of success – quantifiable data points that can be tracked over time.

Visitors first experience downtown from the street. Crafting an attractive, pedestrian-friendly streetscape is critical for creating a favorable perception of the area and encouraging visitors to spend time downtown and patronize nearby businesses.

## **ELEMENTS OF ATTRACTIVE, PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY STREETScape**

### **1. Pedestrian improvements**

Sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian signals make walking safe and appealing. Decorative paving that reflects the area's cultural and architectural history delineates pedestrian areas.



*Example of pedestrian improvements.*

### **2. Landscaping**

Trees along sidewalks shade pedestrians and improve the area's appearance. Placing planters along the street is a low-cost way to create immediate visual interest and demonstrate the community's commitment toward improving downtown.

### **3. Lighting**

Lighting improves the visibility and safety of the street and draws attention to nearby businesses. Banners and other decorative features attached to light posts highlight events and different aspects of the community.

#### 4. Street furniture

Well-designed benches, trash cans, and bicycle racks make spending time downtown more pleasant. Outdoor dining generates activity along the street, while providing restaurants with additional seating and increased visibility.



*Example of street furniture.*

#### 5. Façade Improvements

Improving the appearance of downtown buildings enhances the perception of the area, while highlighting its unique history and architecture. **Decorating the windows of vacant buildings provides visual interest and helps prospective owners and tenants imagine what types of businesses could be located there.**



*Example of façade improvements.*

## 6. Public Art

Murals and other public art promote the community's cultural assets, while stimulating public engagement and creating an overall more appealing streetscape and can stimulate public engagement.

To generate immediate excitement downtown, communities can implement some simple, low-cost solutions aimed at improving the areas appeal:

### 1. Bicycle racks

Placing bicycle racks near businesses and other destinations encourages people to bike downtown, reducing the number of automobile trips and the need for additional parking.

### 2. Temporary road diets

Use cones or planters to create temporary bike lanes or curbside parking, allowing communities to test different design strategies without making significant investments in new infrastructure.



*Example of road diets.*

### 3. Staging vacant buildings

Vacant storefronts make downtowns unattractive. Lighting the windows of vacant buildings and adding holiday decorations, art, or other unique features creates a more vibrant streetscape.



*Example of staging a vacant building.*

### 4. Lighting

Trees or buildings wrapped in lighting or highlighted with accent lights create an appealing ambiance at night.

### 5. Trees and greenery

Trees, flowers, and other greenery can be added along barren streetscapes. Potted plants can be placed in strategic locations and repositioned as needed.

# MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed-use development is a useful tool for encouraging compact development, innovative land use management, and efficient multimodal transportation systems. Development projects may be classified as “mixed-use” if they provide more than one use or purpose within a shared building or development area. With this type of development, the ground floor might house retail establishments while the second floor is used for professional office or residential space.

## Mixed-Use Benefits

### **BENEFITS OF MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **1. Economic**

There is a clear connection between walkable environments and economic vitality. Mixed development that promotes a walkable built environment can help revitalize a downtown, increase investment, lead to higher property values, promote tourism, and support the development of a flourishing business climate.

#### **2. Low Infrastructure Costs**

Traditional zoning ordinances can result in large, single use residential developments. These developments often require costly and redundant municipal infrastructure to function, while furthering dependence on non-renewable energy sources. It's estimated that municipalities can save up to 38 percent when serving compact development instead of large lot subdivisions.

#### **3. Increased Tax Revenue**

As communities become denser, they gain more tax revenue per acre. With the introduction of mixed-use development, tax revenue can increase up to 10 times.

#### **4. Operating Budget Costs Savings**

Mixed-use development also reduces ongoing costs for services like police, fire, and trash. While much of the savings come from a reduced distance to travel Charlotte, NC found that fire department response times would be faster, and fewer stations would be needed with a better-connected street grid and closer set homes.

## **5. Environmental**

Compact growth uses less land than sprawled development. With the incorporation of mixed-used development, undeveloped land can be preserved. Reducing sprawl also reduces car usage and greenhouse gas emission, positively impacting the environment.

## **6. Health**

A growing body of research suggests that the built environment is an important, but often ignored, social determinate of health. A neglect of community design principles and lack of walkable infrastructure can lead to less active lifestyles and a greater chance of chronic obesity and related diseases amongst residents.

### **Bringing Back Main Street**

## **CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT**

### **1. Limited Parking**

Development regulations may require certain amount of parking be available for businesses and other uses, but it may be difficult to meet these requirements in downtowns. One solution is to allow and encourage shared parking between different uses, decreasing the need for additional parking spaces. For example, offices can share parking with restaurants, as they often have different parking demands at different times of the day.

### **2. Zoning**

To encourage a greater variety of uses within a single building or property, communities can use mixed-used zoning classifications for downtown areas. Form based codes can also be used to ensure that new development is architecturally compatible with existing buildings.

### **3. Building Codes**

Historic buildings can house a variety of uses but rehabilitating them to meet modern building codes can be costly. With this, some communities have adopted alternative building standards for historic structures, such as the International Existing Building Code (IEBC).

IEBC additional resources:

- [2018 International Building Code | American National Standards Institute PDF for Purchase](#)

- [2018 International Building Code \(ICC IBC-2018\)](#)

# WAYS LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN FOSTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

- Identify opportunities for redevelopment to take advantage of existing infrastructure
- Identify provisions within zoning and other regulatory codes that prohibit mixed-use development
- Adopt form-based codes that provide a set of design regulations that give form to features of the built environment and foster pedestrian safety
  - A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation.
  - Communities should focus on making neighborhoods more uniform and appealing on the outside, and put less emphasis on inside use (i.e. set standards for shape, texture, color, size of the exterior of the building, the number of windows and doors and the styles of them, and the required features of the surrounding landscape such as trees, light posts, fences, pavement, etc.)
  - Example of a form-based code = Peoria, Illinois
- Prepare a market analysis to estimate the supply and demand for new residential, commercial, and industrial business opportunities
- Provide a combination of financial and regulatory incentives to mixed-use developers such as permit fee reductions, tax abatements, expedited development approval process or density/floor area bonuses
- Provide regulatory flexibility regarding building height, housing density, floor area, lot coverage, yard setback, landscaping and other zoning provisions for mixed use developments in targeted growth areas (downtowns, main streets, town centers, etc.)
- Consider modern approaches to parking management such as shared parking, maximum parking standards, fee-in-lieu programs, shared vehicles, and bicycle parking
  - Fee-in-lieu programs = allows developers to pay some fee lieu of providing a portion of the number of parking spaces ordinarily required by the city's zoning ordinance

## Fostering Mixed-Use Development

# EMERGING TREND: COMPLETE STREETS

An emerging trend within the mixed-use development literature is that of complete streets. Complete streets are streets for everyone. They encompass a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated and maintained in a way that enables safe and convenient travel for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation.

A complete street may include sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.

## Complete Streets Work in Rural Communities

There is a need for complete streets in rural areas.

Rural communities tend to have a higher concentration of older and low-income individuals, both of whom are less likely to own a car. In fact, “limited transportation alternatives” was a common concern throughout several of the ROI Quality of Place plans produced by the Radius counties. People with limited transportation options have little choice – travel along roadways with few pedestrian accommodations or stay home. This is of great concern, as these people can soon become isolated from the community and the economy.

Further, children in rural areas are more likely to be obese than those in urban areas. Providing safe opportunities for walking and biking is key for keeping kids healthy and active. It should be noted that complete streets will look different in rural communities than they do in more urban counterparts. For example, roads surrounded by agricultural use may be “completed” by simply providing wider shoulders to allow for safe biking and walking.

## Best Complete Streets Initiatives of 2017

## KEY IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Adopt a complete street policy
  - Adopting a policy formally establishes commitment to complete streets.
  - The strongest complete street policies call for the implementation steps listed below.
- Restructure related systems
  - Make accommodating all users a routine part of transportation planning and operations.
  - This could include incorporating a complete street checklist into decision making processes.
- Develop new designs
  - Communities may revise existing designs to reflect current best practices in transportation design or they may adopt national or state level designs.
- Offer training opportunities
  - These trainings should educate transportation staff, community leaders, and the general public so that everyone understands the importance of complete streets.
  - Trainings could focus on complete street design and implementation, community engagement, and/or equity.
- Create a committee to oversee implementation
  - The committee should include both internal and external stakeholders as well as representatives from advocacy groups, underinvested communities, and vulnerable populations such people of color, older adults, children, low income communities, non-native English speakers, those who do not own or cannot access a car, and those living with a disability.
- Create a community engagement plan
  - The plan should incorporate equity by targeting advocacy organizations and underrepresented communities.
  - The best community engagement plans use innovative outreach strategies that don't require people to alter their daily routines to participate.
- Implement your complete street project
  - After taking these key implementation steps, jurisdictions can incorporate a complete street approach into all transportation projects as routine practice.

**REMEMBER: Not every street can be revised by complete street standards – be practical!**

# COMPLETE STREET EXAMPLES

## La Cruces, New Mexico

The city created a complete street policy that calls for the consideration of complete streets when developing, modifying, or updating city plans, manuals, regulations, and programs. The Master Plan now calls for road diets, converting one-way streets into two-way streets (a switch that slows car traffic and encourages more foot traffic), and adding wider sidewalks, bike amenities and a public plaza. They have also adopted a form-based code. Rather than focusing on what happens inside of buildings, form-based codes focus on the physical form of buildings to create streetscapes that matches the community's vision

## Quebec City, Quebec

**“By clearly showing that not all streets present the same level of interest for investing time, energy, and financial resources into their redesign, the effort deployed will be proportional to the streets’ potential role in creating an integrated network for active transportation options and improvements to the well-being of its residents as well as the natural and built environments.”**

**-Peter Murphy, Urban Designer, Québec City**



Results of Québec City’s prioritization analysis. Streets in red offer the most potential for integrating the city’s Complete Streets approach, followed by those in orange and yellow. Streets in blue and green offer a relatively lower potential. Image courtesy of Francis Marleau-Donais / UMRsu.

The city created a mapping tool to help identify which streets needed complete street improvements. To develop the tool, the city invested funds from its annual operating budget and partnered with researchers from Laval University. The tool examined criteria related to complete streets, including tree coverage, transit options, bike networks, pedestrian circulation, social and economic disparities, security, and degree of street connectivity. Using this information, the tool ranked streets on a scale from 1 to 10 and mapped the results. The city prioritized streets that

ranked poorly and thus needed redesigned. The city also used the tool to explore which design components would create the greatest potential benefit.

Once the city identified the streets with the greatest potential for change, the streets underwent a second, more complex analysis. The city formed a standing committee composed of transportation, engineering, planning and environmental professionals to conduct this second analysis. The committee examined additional criteria including land use, mixed use zones, community and health services, heat islands, grocery stores and restaurants, access to schools and recreational facilities. The committee also conducted public outreach to build further consensus on the mapping tool's results.

## Philadelphia

The city created Philly Free Streets, which is a one-day event where the city temporarily closes a 10-mile stretch of streets and opens it up for residents to explore. They partner with community leaders to design and install pop-up pedestrian plazas, parklets (small parks), and murals.



## Warsaw, Missouri

### Warsaw's Complete Streets Policy

Warsaw is a rural community with roughly 2,000 residents. The town gradually created a comprehensive trail system along its waterfront with connections to the downtown core, historic sites and recreational facilities throughout the region. The trail network has helped strengthen

Warsaw's identity and has attracted over \$4.5 million in private investment. Warsaw successfully implemented its extensive trail network and kicked off a broader complete street program by using a three P's approach: planning, partnerships, and personnel. Warsaw developed its Trail Masterplan through a collaborative planning process between town staff, community members, and landscape architecture students from Drury University. Warsaw curated strong partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, including MODOT and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Finally, Warsaw took steps to empower town personnel to implement projects on the ground. The town held trainings for parks department employees to equip them with the skills needed to maintain their own trail projects.

Even with this approach, large grants remained out of reach for the small town because of strenuous matching fund requirements. Warsaw got around this by going after smaller pots of funding to gradually build out its network in 1,000 to 1,200-foot increments. Warsaw successfully secured more than 45 grants over the course of two decades to support planning studies, downtown facade and streetscape improvements, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. These grants came from a variety of programs, including TAP (Transportation Alternative Program), RTP (Recreational Trails Program), and CDBG (Community Development Block Grant). Warsaw also went after creative sources of funding such as water preservation grants from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The town is also submitting applications for TIGER funding to convert four major downtown streets into Complete Streets.

By gradually building out trail network connections to regional attractions that people already used, Warsaw demonstrated the value of having walking and biking facilities.

## **Bonita Springs, Florida**

New roundabouts, on street parking, trees, and stamped concrete (a road treatment that makes



the road feel like cobblestone) all contributed to slowing traffic. The city improved the downtown area for people who walk by adding wider sidewalks and additional benches. Adding benches is a simple measure that can be taken to encourage older adults to walk to their destination by

providing a guarantee place to rest along the way.

The project also included innovative, sustainable stormwater treatment like pervious pavers for on street parking, which help reduce pollution from stormwater runoff and relieve pressure on the storm sewer system.

The city provided incentives for the economic redevelopment of downtown. The city paid businesses who created new jobs in the downtown area or improved their landscaping or revamped their building facade (improvements that make it more enjoyable for people walking or biking). The city also gave rent subsidies to businesses who located in downtown during construction. The zoning code also incentivizes developers to include landscaping, public art, public spaces, affordable housing, and sustainable construction methods within their upcoming development projects.

## South Bend, Indiana

Overview video: [South Bend Adopts Smart Streets Initiative](#)

The city converted seven downtown routes from one way, four lane speedways into two-way complete streets. The redesigned streets include a variety of traffic calming measures such as landscape medians, street trees, curb extensions, raised crosswalks, protected bicycle racks, bus shelters, and pedestrian scale lighting. The project also replaced three major intersections with roundabouts.



The project makes use of innovative new technologies. Certain intersections are equipped with traffic signals that use thermal technology to detect cars and

people. These traffic lights signal based on real time information to reduce congestion. LED lights were embedded directly into the pavement to improve visibility at major crosswalks. Permeable pavement was added in new parallel parking lanes to absorb stormwater and reduce flooding in

the streets. The city invested an initial \$1.4 million from its Major Moves budget, a statewide program to fund improvements to Indiana’s road network.

Ultimately, the Common Council of South Bend approved a \$25 million bond to fund the remainder of the project. The city plans to repay these bonds with increased revenue from property taxes thanks to new investment downtown. Already, the project has attracted about \$100 million in new investment.

## Huntingburg, Indiana

Market Street Park – 2019 Quality of Place Innovation Award Winner

- [2019 Quality of Place Innovation Award: City of Huntingburg, Market Street Park](#)
- Video on award winning Market Street Park: [Quality of Place Innovation Award](#)



With just over 6,000 residents, the City of Huntingburg is no stranger to the challenges facing small communities in the Indiana Uplands. Chief among those challenges is figuring out how to preserve small town historic charm while growing in ways that keep the community culturally vibrant and economically viable for residents and businesses. Years of community wide planning and strategizing, along with critical partnerships, have culminated in Market Street Park, a new public space that serves as the centerpiece of Huntingburg’s past and future.



The design of Market Street Park embraces the community's spirit of place, creating a signature space for festivals and events, as well as providing a more fitting setting for the Old Town Hall landmark. Market Street Park is already attracting new investment to downtown Huntingburg. A vacant building directly adjacent to the park was recently leased and renovated into a business incubator. The private developers of the incubator project cited the park as the deciding factor in choosing a location – proof that investing in quality of place brings tangible results.



*Huntingburg's Market Street Park.*

# EMERGING TREND: COWORKING SPACES

Coworking spaces are essentially shared workspaces. They offer affordable office space for those looking to escape the isolation of a home office or coffee shop. In rural communities, coworking spaces can act as a third space, or a space where people can spend time apart from being at home or in the office. This can be an important part of building a sense of community in a city or town.

Overview video: [Welcome to the Future of Work](#)

[Here are Three Reasons COVID-19 Makes Coworking Spaces Even More Important](#)

## Will COVID-19 kill coworking spaces?

There are at least three reasons why the coworking industry should emerge from this pandemic stronger and more important than ever.

### 1. Remote workers need a place to work

Coworking spaces help host relocated remote workers. After several months of working from home, people will be eager to work from anywhere else.

### 2. Resource coordination for small business

Coworking spaces are an important support structure for small businesses. These spaces are also well positioned to help direct assistance from various local emergency relief funds. If you are a mayor or chamber of commerce, you should turn to your local coworking spaces to see (1) how they can help support the local economy and (2) how you can support them.

### 3. Community is key to recovery

As we move into a future defined by social distancing, community ties could fray. Business owners and workers will need social networks and local connections more than ever to regain their footing.

A coworking space can be a commercial venture or a service created by local agencies. Even churches and libraries have started experimenting with the concept. Small towns are finding coworking office opportunities in unused spaces such as economic development centers or educational facilities.

Great resource for finding rural coworking spaces in Indiana and throughout the United States:

### **Coworking Spaces Around the World**



*Example of a coworking space.*

## **HOW TO GET STARTED**

1. Connect with people who work from home, coffee shops, the library, or any other alternative space
2. Begin holding work together days (for example every Friday from 10 to 2)
3. You do not need a special place for these meet ups
4. Soon there will be a need that can be met by a small-town coworking space

# EMERGING TREND: OUTDOOR DINING

## Outdoor Dining and Sidewalk Cafes

### **Benefits of outdoor dining**

- Increases available seating = increases potential sales = increase potential tax revenue
- Puts activity on the street, which creates a greater sense of safety and community
- Increases dining options for pet owners

### **Things to keep in mind**

#### **1. Establish outdoor dining permits**

Typical elements include (1) purpose & definitions, (2) application requirements & fees, (3) indemnification or “hold harmless” clause, (4) allowed activities & hours of operation, (5) alcohol beverage requirements, (6) maintenance & liability, and (7) enforcement procedures.

#### **2. Clearly define borders**

Some cities have no border rules while others require permanent barriers. Moveable chains, fencing, and planters can be used to temporarily define areas. For narrow sidewalks, some cities are using sidewalk pavers.

#### **3. Residents in mixed use building may face additional noise**

Restaurants can abate noise with awnings, umbrellas, landscaping or noise baffles.

#### **4. Current trends**

Restaurants are being regulated on a district level (rather than individual permits). This has a simplified, online permit application. Designs for enclosures and heat lamps that extend the

outdoor dining season into fall and winter. Many restaurants are offering special patio menus to simplify logistics and are growing herbs in the planters that define the area.

## 5. Hot Button Issues

- Noise
  - Restaurants can abate noise for nearby residents with awnings, umbrellas, landscaping, or noise baffles
  - Cities can minimize the noise pollution for diners with strategic road closures and construction management
- Allocation of sidewalk space as a growing number of users compete for space
- Panhandlers and vendors disturbing sidewalk dinners

## Outdoor dining initiatives in response to COVID-19

### Los Angeles: LA Announces Outdoor Dining Plan

Los Angeles announced that it would allow parking lots and sidewalks to be used as outdoor dining areas, a move aimed at increasing seating for restaurants reopening with reduced indoor capacity. The temporary program will cover sidewalks and parking lots initially, potentially expanding to include streets and parklets based on interest from restaurants and local business associations.

Outdoor dining permits, for which eligible restaurants can apply, will be issued immediately and last for 90 days. Long Beach and Palm Springs have adopted similar measures.

### Tampa Bay: Cities Open Streets and Redefine Their Purpose and Focus



Tampa's local economic recovery plan has enabled restaurants and businesses to expand into sidewalks, streets and parklets so that they can reopen while adhering to social distancing guidelines. Tampa is still in a state of emergency, which grants the mayor powers to enact changes to help the city maneuver through the crisis and

change ordinances that would otherwise prohibit them from occupying the public right of way. The executive order does not require Tampa businesses to get a permit prior to making these socially distant changes, but the city closely manages what they are doing.

## **Kansas City**

Kansas City has also enacted a three-part outdoor dining program. The first element allowed residents to apply online for a permit, essentially a modified block party permit that shuts down single block stretches of neighborhood street. Then, the city implemented over 100 automatic pedestrian crossings to reduce points of contact as residents walk around. Last, the city organized three large road closures that extended several blocks.

## **Other Downtown Initiatives**

### **Kendallville, Indiana: The Alley**

This project was undertaken by the Youth Advisory Council, a local youth leadership organization that learns about city government but also helps raise money and complete community-



betterment projects around town. The council decided to renovate the alley between The Strand and the then antique shop into a new gathering space. The team earned the approval of the building owners and city government and coordinated a construction plan with contractors.

The \$15,000 project started to take shape last year, with the mural getting painted, alley torn up and paved, and picnic tables set. A personalized arch was also put up at the entrance to create a gateway. The project was finished this summer with planters, garbage cans, overhead lighting and security cameras.

# EMERGING TREND: FARMERS MARKET

## Building Healthy Foundations for Farmers Markets

Between 2008 and 2010, the number of farmers markets increased more than 30 percent. The demand for local food continues to rise. Communities can make cost-effective investments in community health, economic diversity and entrepreneurial success by investing in farmers markets. Government involvement spans a wide spectrum. Some governments host and manage the markets. Others simply host markets on municipal property, with limited personnel involved in operations. Others offer some in-kind services (advertising, signage, parking spaces, research, sponsorship, or reduced rent).

Farmers markets offer real-time feedback, allowing producers to adapt to changing consumer demands. These markets also act as retail anchors that increase foot traffic to neighboring businesses and attract new merchants to underutilized areas.

**Oregon State University found that spending at surrounding businesses depends on the proximity of the business and whether the hours of the market coincide with the business hours. Consumer bases can be expanded by word of mouth, low cost marketing, and by accepting non-cash forms of payment.**

Farmers markets increase access to healthy foods, educate consumers about nutrition, and empower both children and adults to ask questions about what they eat and how it's grown. They can also act as forums for civic engagement, volunteerism, and the development of social capital. In fact, farmers markets are a great place for local governments and civic groups to communicate with attendees through handouts, booths or presentations.

When farmers markets accept federal food assistance benefits like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) they become more accessible for all. The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) found that \$10 in new SNAP benefits can generate as much as \$10 in economic activity. When spent at farmers markets, this money can be recirculated within the local economy.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

- Overdependence on volunteers for management responsibilities and community education
- Inconsistent and often confusing permitting and licensing procedures
- A lack of farmers market specific zoning and permitting
- Limited ability to invest in SNAP infrastructure and ongoing associated costs

Governments can reduce redundancies and conserve resources by organizing a comprehensive plan that delineates the roles and responsibilities of all who are involved in establishing and maintaining a farmers market.

By identifying underutilized space, a city can dedicate spaces specifically for farmers markets and complementary purposes, such as urban farms and community gardens. In an effort to increase the accessibility of these spaces, free and convenient parking should be located nearby.

Long-term, minimal cost leases allow farmers markets to better plan, with some assurance that they won't be asked to relocate as soon as an attractive bid for redevelopment competes for the site.

Creating simple permitting processes for market operations, street closures, and the use of parking lots eases confusions for all. Defining the utility of farmers markets to the broader community allows them to distinguish themselves from other special events that may need frequent permit renewal. Annual permits that are applicable to the market (rather than each individual producer) are easier to apply, collect, and enforce. Collaboration with county agencies and neighboring communities to develop common forms can help ensure consistency and reduce the likelihood of inadvertent violations.

Because farmers markets strive to keep their fees as affordable as possible, most find that they need to identify other revenue sources. If farmers markets are classified as nonprofit programs, municipalities can donate matching resources. Operating or project-specific financial support are not the only ways that cities can foster farmers market sustainability. There are several

opportunities to provide in-kind support including staffing, storage space, office space, signage, parking, electricity, restrooms, water, waste disposal, or street closures. Providing grant writing assistance is another in-kind service that most local agencies are suited to provide. Governments can also commission research on the impact of farmers markets. This information can help future decision making and increase chances of acquiring grant support. One available tool to help understand economic impacts is the [Sticky Economy Evaluation Device](#).

Some local businesses may feel threatened, with the perception that farmers markets compete for space and patronage. Studies of economic impact indicate that merchants on the periphery of farmers markets (even grocery stores) experience increased sales on market day. Conflicts can arise when neighboring merchants feel that a farmers market is encroaching on their sales, whether or not such infringement is real or perceived. Ensuring open communication among stakeholders is often the first step to facilitating partnerships with local actors. Local governments can help maintain the integrity of farmers markets by making sure that only farmers are selling farm products. This ensures traceability of the farm goods.



*Example of a stand at a farmers market.*

**Specific markets might benefit from becoming more centralized. For example, shoppers can come to the market, swipe their cards at the main booth for a certain amount of money, and can be given tokens to spend at any booth. At the end of the day or week, vendors exchange the tokens for cash. This system can help overcome the logistics, financial, and staffing challenges associated with implementing and advertising SNAP.**

Governments can provide a host of support services to farmers. This might involve signage or developing directories of farms. Offering to assist farmers in diversifying their production and facilitating relationships with county farm bureau officers or the Purdue Extension can also be particularly useful for farmers.

County governments may find it more cost-effective to partner with neighboring counties and city governments on regional marketing campaigns for farmers markets.

When licensing requirements differ from county to county, are duplicative or contradictory with state licenses, or are altogether inappropriate both market managers and farmers have a hard time understanding what's allowed.

One helpful resource for jurisdictions that are re-evaluating sanitation policies related to farmers markets is "From the Field to the Table: Suggested Food Handling for Farmers Markets, Fairs, and Festivals". It contains food sanitation guidelines and recommended policies for sanitation departments as well as recommended practices for farmers and market managers.

While a variety of private funding opportunities exist, there are three significant funding programs within the USDA that support local food projects at the community and state levels:

- Farmers Market Promotion Program
- Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
- Community Food Projects

#### **From the Field to the Table | Food Handling Guidelines**

**In the Radius region, many farmers markets have the potential to attract local Amish vendors, lending an air of authenticity and visual interest that can attract more shoppers.**

# STEPS TO GROW A SUCCESSFUL FARMERS MARKET

## Six Steps to Growing a Successful Farmers Market

### **1. Choose the right location**

- Setting up booths in a parking lot will rarely work.
- People go to farmers markets for the ambiance,
- For some, the experience is a bigger draw than the fresh produce.
- Work to find an area that pairs green space with retail options.

### **2. Choose the right time**

- Farmers often sell their produce at more than one market during the week.
- Look at the times of other surrounding markets and try to differentiate.
- Consider weekday, evening markets and weekend, morning markets.

### **3. Hire the right team of leaders**

- They are key to recruiting the right mix of producers, creating the ambiance consumers want, organizing weekly entertainment and marketing those events, structuring weekly booth rentals, managing contracts, and ensuring compliance with licensing regulations.
- In the Radius region, being able to communicate and coordinate with Amish farmers is crucial.

### **4. Understand the financial commitment**

- Farmers markets will need some type of support from the city.

# EMERGING TREND: MOBILE FARMERS MARKETS

## Will a mobile farmers market work for your community?

Mobile farmers markets are vehicles (usually refrigerated trucks) filled with locally sourced produce. They sell items in areas that have limited access to locally produced, healthy foods. The YMCA of Great Grand Rapids (Michigan) has launched a mobile farmers market call the Veggie Van.

Overview video: [YMCA Veggie Van](#)

The Veggie Van received grant funding from the WK Kellogg Foundation. Additional financial support was secured from the USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Michigan Department of Economic Development and the Redwoods Group.

The coordinator of the Veggie Van and manager of the YMCA's agricultural programs provides advice to communities thinking about starting a mobile farmers market. It builds strong and strategic partnerships with host sites.

The Veggie Van stops at 20 scheduled sites per week and each one has a host site coordinator. Engaged coordinators who are invested in the project are essential for success.

**Seek sites that are highly trafficked by the same people each week, such as retirement communities, schools, or places of work (rather than retail establishments).**

Have a repertoire of marketing tools, such as posters and flyers, weekly newsletters, a presence on social media, promotional events, and informational presentations, and let your host site coordinators elect which strategies will work best for their site.

The Veggie Van is special because it brings high-quality, locally sourced products into communities with limited access to good food. Source high-quality products from trusted suppliers and stand behind your products. Make sure your customers know that quality is guaranteed and that if they are ever unsatisfied you will replace their product or offer reimbursement. It is much cheaper to replace a pint of raspberries than to lose a customer or lose the trust of an entire site because of a poor experience.



Veggie Van

Prepare for a time consuming, costly, and extremely rewarding experience. Operating the Veggie Van successfully is not a part time gig. It requires the investment of time, money, and passion on behalf of the coordinators, drivers, and partner associations

Financial sustainability appears to be a challenge for many mobile farmers markets, as most receive grant funding or other private contributions. Some mobile farmers markets are selling fresh produce wholesale to restaurants, schools, hospitals, and corner stores to expand sales. In the case of the Veggie Van, the YMCA's goal is to reach financial sustainability after its third year of operation.

# INDIANA UPLANDS FOOD NETWORK WEBINAR: AGGREGATING AND DISTRIBUTING PRODUCE

## Lost River Market presents Orange County Farm to Health Initiative

### Programs Currently Happening

#### 1. Community Produce Packages

This is 6-week program to provide community members with basic cooking and nutrition education (three flights). Participants receive six boxes of local produce and everything needed to cook it. Six cooking and nutrition classes are offered (these classes correspond with each box of produce). Classes have shifted an online format with COVID-19.

- [Cooking Matters](#), a national organization, curriculum is offered
- [Indiana Uplands Food Network Facebook](#)

#### 2. Community Supported Agriculture



**Lost River MARKET & DELI**  
Community Supported Agriculture

**Support the growers in your community!**

 <b>Locally Grown Produce</b> There is no better way to experience the farming season than taking home fresh, local produce grown by your neighbors.	 <b>Specialty Goods</b> Specialty boxes & full shares receive additional local goods such as honey, maple syrup, and even prepared foods!	 <b>Local Farmer Benefit</b> When you buy a C.S.A share you are investing in a local farmer and taking on some of that farmer's risk throughout the growing season.
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**Local farmers receive 70% retail value for all produce sold through the C.S.A., that's 20% higher than average wholesale pricing.**

This is a 20-week celebration of local produce in Orange County There are three boxes customers can choose from:

- o Half share produce only box
- o Half share specialty box (produce plus local items)
- o Full share specialty box (twice as much produce plus local items)

### **3. Harvest of the Month**

This is a 24-month program to bring awareness to locally grown produce. Each month a new vegetable or fruit will be featured. As part of the program, Lost River Market will be partnering with Paoli schools to provide educational information and access to local produce to use in school lunches.

### **4. Community Kitchen**

Local farmers and entrepreneurs have access to a community kitchen located at Paoli First Presbyterian Church. The space will allow people to create and sell value added products and will act as a site for community cooking classes (post COVID-19).

### **5. Farm to Table Dinners**

Farm to Table Dinners features local food, local chefs, and local music.

### **6. Farmer Training**

Food Safety allows farmers to develop food safety training and develop incentives for farmers to complete training. Lost River Market found that farmers were not interested in completing training. They instead have one staff member who has completed the food safety training and oversees the farmers they partner with



*Farm to table dinner at Lost River Market*

Season Extension provides training and incentives to expand the growing season of local farmers. Lost River has provided basic infrastructure to farmers, such as covers to keep the frost off plants.

Working with local farmers to create and sell value added products is important for the market.

## **Community Benefit**

For every \$100 you spend at locally owned businesses, \$68 will stay in the community. When you spend that same \$100 at a national chain, only \$43 stays in the community.

## **Key Community Partners**

- Southern Indiana Community Health Care
- Paoli Schools
- First Presbyterian Church of Paoli
- Orange County Community Foundation
- IU Center for Rural Engagement

## **Potential Challenges**

- Communication with Amish growers
- Currently, a staff member goes farm to farm with a list of things he is wanting to buy and things he's hoping to get next week

# OTHER DOWNTOWN EVENTS

## Outdoor Movie Nights

\*Mentioned in at least one quality of place plan

Outdoor movie nights bring people together. The uniqueness of an open-air cinema naturally attracts audiences. Movies can be shown in the same location or in different locations each week. The best way to attract large audiences is with free admission. Cost can be recouped by selling concessions and with sponsorships.

### How to Host an Outdoor Movie Night

#### 1. Reserve your date and location well in advance

- Start planning 2-4 months in advance
- Check school and community calendars to make sure your night doesn't conflict with other events
- Decide on locations with an ample amount of space (preferably green space)

#### 2. Select your planning team

- Concessions coordinator
- Sponsorship coordinator
  - A slideshow of sponsor advertisements should be created
- Cleanup crew

#### 3. Secure the equipment

- Outdoor cinema companies are available but normally book up quickly
- Make sure you understand what is included (screen, projection, audio, power, and insurance)
- Ask for reference to their three most recent events
- Rental companies in Indiana
  - Fun Flicks
  - Indy Big Screen

#### 4. Obtain your public performance license

- You need a license to show movies in public, **whether or not you charge admission**
- Remember to consider your audience when choosing your movie

#### 5. Before the show

- Your movie should arrive from the licensing company no later than 2 days before the event
- Test the movie to make sure there aren't any problems with the film and the equipment

#### 6. Night of the show

- Provide the outdoor cinema provider the copy of the movie
- Announce any other upcoming events before the movie begins



Example of an outdoor movie night

## Food Truck Fridays

\*Mentioned in at least one quality of place plan

This event can be held in the same location as farmers markets. Counties such as Greene and Lawrence might recruit trucks from Bloomington.

### Bloomington Food Trucks

### List of Indiana Festivals (2020)



Food truck Fridays in Bloomington, Indiana

# WAYS TO MEASURE SUCCESS

## Bringing Back Main Street

To measure the success of revitalization efforts, communities can track economic health using pre-determined indicators:

- Amount of public and private investment
- Changes in property values
- Sales tax revenue
- Hotel occupancy rates
- Business mix (local versus chain)
- Number of attendees at downtown events
- Vacancy rate: commercial buildings
- Vacancy rate: residential buildings
- Percentage of streets with sidewalks
- Surveys of attendees

# FUNDING

## Municipal Grant Writing

### Basic Grant Writing Principles

#### 1. Follow directions

- More is not always better!
- Filling a grant proposal with unrequested information can be a good way to have your submission pushed to the bottom of the pile.

#### 2. Start early

- Work backwards from the deadline to create a grant schedule.
- Start building a budget of project items early.
- Make sure to only include items that are allowable for the grant.
- Show how you will acquire items which are not fundable under the grant.
- In addition, make sure you understand if there are percentage caps for certain items in the grant.
- For projects such as infrastructure improvements, determine if any design or feasibility study is required ahead of time.

#### 3. Make friends

- Find out who the appropriate person is at the funding organization and call them.
- Make sure you have a very clear understanding of the project and what you are requesting before you call.

#### 4. Write clearly and persuasively

- Don't underestimate the importance of sentence structure, word choices, and proper grammar.

- Be mindful of including too much technical jargon (know your audience and tailor your writing accordingly).
- Incorporate white space to enhance readability.
- Take the time to effectively use relevant figures, charts, diagrams, and photographs (a condensed and simplified way to convey large amounts of information).
- Break up long paragraphs by inserting headings, subheading, and bullets (large blocks of text can become tiresome to readers).

## **5. Define your project well**

- Create a clearly defined picture of what your project will look like once completed and what role the grant will play in the project's success.
- Define overall project goals and objectives, project milestones in measurable terms, and talk about who will benefit from your project and what will happen if you do not secure this funding.

## **6. Think like a reviewer**

- Make things easy, enjoyable, and interesting to review.
- Remember that many grant application reviewers make up their minds very quickly in the review process.

## **7. Proofread!**

- Read your writing two or three times then find a fresh set of eyes.
- At least one proofreader should know little to nothing about your project.
- In addition to getting input on spelling and grammar, ask the proofreader if they understood your project vision and funding request.

## Other Tips for Successful Grant Writing

- Use a storytelling approach (with supporting statistics).
- Incorporate case studies of real clients that your city has served.
- Take advantage of online thesauruses to expand your command of new words and capture the reader's attention.
- Write to government funding agencies and request (under the Freedom of Information Act) copies of funded grant applications.
  - Use these documents as examples of how to write an award-winning grant application.
- Research proven best practices for your proposed solutions and incorporate language from the experts.
- When you find the best practices, look for the evaluation results of previously implemented programs similar to yours.
  - Know what works and what doesn't work before you write your proposed solutions.
- Eliminate multiple drafts from your writing habits because the most creative words are often the first words you type.

## Specific Funding Opportunities

### Downtown Development

**The Rural Business Development Grant** program from the USDA provides funding for projects that benefit small businesses in rural areas.

- Small businesses have fewer than 50 workers and less than \$1 million in gross revenue

**Rural Community Development Initiative** grants help support community and economic development projects in rural areas.

**The Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant** program provides funding for clean drinking water systems, sanitary sewage and solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in rural areas. Better storm water drainage is an element of complete streets.

**The Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant** program provides funding for rural projects through local certain utility organizations. This is also available for Indiana specifically.

Link for Indiana specific: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-economic-development-loan-grant-program/in>

Planning grants are funded with **Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** dollars from the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs. The goal of the program is to encourage communities to plan for long-term community development. Community leaders can apply for projects relating to infrastructure, broadband, downtown revitalization, and community facilities.

### The National Park Service Main Street Facade Improvement Grant

- Short term goals
  - Preserve historic resources in rural communities
  - Generate tangible economic benefits by increasing sales of local businesses
- Long term goals
  - Demonstrate the power of coordinated, small scale facade improvements on local economies

- Support the attraction of private investment in downtown by reinvigorating its image as the central location for business
- Help communities retain local talent and recruit external talent through sustainable economic development
- Spur economic growth in the greater community
- Generate examples of successful facade improvement projects to serve as a resource library for local communities

**The Downtown Enhancement Grant** program is designed to foster innovative approaches to activities which support and promote community-based planning, pre-development, and research initiatives. Qualifying projects are ones which promote economic development in the downtown areas and will enhance the quality of life in the community

**Community Change Grant** funded projects must demonstrate that they will show increased physical activity and active transportation in a specific community, work to engage people and organizations new to the efforts of walkability, and demonstrate a culture of inclusive health (could be used to create complete streets, which improve the walkability of a community).

### **Support for Farmers/ Farmers Markets**

**The Agriculture Innovation Center** program provides technical and business development assistance to agricultural producers seeking to engage in making or producing value-added agricultural products.

**The Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant** program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community (does not include private, commercial, or business undertakings). Note that examples of essential community facilities include local food systems such as community gardens, food banks, community kitchens, food hubs, or greenhouses.

**The Farmers Market Promotion** program funds projects that develop, coordinate, and expand direct producer to consumer markets to help increase access to local produce.

**Community Food Project (CFP) Competitive Grant** program is designed to increase food security in communities by bringing the whole food system together to assess strengthens, establish linkages, and create systems that improve the self-reliance of community members over their food needs.

The **Value-Added Producer Grant** program helps agricultural producers enter into value added activities related to the processing and marketing of new product. The goals of this program are to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income.