



# Strategic Plan 2025

and beyond



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# Introduction

Downtown Indiana, the voice of business owners, property owners, and community stakeholders will soon celebrate 100 years since its founding in 1926. The organization became known as the Downtown Indiana Businessmen's Association or DIBA by 1972 and was registered as a Pennsylvania 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Downtown Indiana, a Non-profit Corporation, was incorporated in 1987.

Good leadership, planning, and collaboration have been key to continuous improvement in the thriving downtown. The next milestone of improvement will be the opening of the Welcome Center, a new headquarters for the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, the Indiana County Tourist Bureau and Downtown Indiana, a Non-profit Corporation, at the corner of Sixth and Philadelphia Streets.

Indiana continues to be one of the most attractive downtowns in Western Pennsylvania. Festivals and parades of regional notoriety bring thousands of visitors to Indiana, including the It's a Wonderful Life Festival and Parade, the IUP Homecoming Parade, the Westsylvania Jazz and Blues Festival, the Italian Festival and many more. Businesses continue to find creative ways to promote and welcome visitors so that they return to shop in the many attractive boutiques and specialty shops Indiana has to offer. New business continues to emerge, including via the third generation, passionate business leadership in the new Upstreet ACE Hardware, a new anchor store, and Create & Curate, a unique retail experience featuring a collection of apparel, jewelry, and note cards, among other things, created by local artisans and led by an emerging local entrepreneur. Downtown Indiana leads the way in communication, coaching, and collaboration with businesses and strives to improve this effort in the years to come.

Downtown Indiana has a four-decade history with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) and five successful Main Street and Elm Street programs. An arts culture in the town has been generated by the Artists Hand and Fox Clark Galleries, the Indiana Theater, with movies and live performances, the Theater building housing many artists' studios, the Jimmy Stewart Museum and Theater, and The Indiana Playhouse.

A planning session was held January 11, 2025, to create a plan to provide direction to and increase the motivation and involvement in the board of directors and committee member volunteers. Several meetings and pre-work by the Executive Committee assisted with a productive planning day.

Fourteen board members/business owners/stakeholders provided written feedback prior to the session, and the plan itself was conceived by 25 participants who are passionate, dedicated leaders in Downtown Indiana. There is a need for new and increased funding to grow the business community and maintain the facades and historic structures as well as the seasonal decorations that provide a welcoming atmosphere to Philadelphia Street. Funding for an expansion of streetscape is a priority from 1<sup>st</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> Street, and a more intentional physical connection between IUP's campus and the downtown business district is at the top of that list. A plan for permanent resident (non-student) housing in the downtown would be welcomed; although outside Downtown Indiana's core mission, the organization will champion the initiative, seeking guidance from the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development, along with collaboration with the Borough, County, State Rep. Jim Struzzi and State Sen. Joe Pittman for implementation of any available resources. Committee chairs will collaborate with all entities.

This plan will be used as a management tool for Downtown Indiana and updated annually by the Board of Directors.

Ellen S. Ruddock, Director Emerita  
Facilitator

# Acknowledgements from DI's Executive Committee

As members of Downtown Indiana's Board of Directors, we are excited to introduce this strategic plan—one that reflects the board's and our stakeholders' sincere commitment to one another's and our community's wellbeing. Acknowledging there are challenges to confront, we believe Indiana is well situated to continue building on the unique assets and opportunities that make it a desirable place to live, work, visit, and invest. This plan provides high-level direction and practical recommendations for ways the Downtown Indiana organization and its volunteers and stakeholders can contribute to that ongoing development.

Throughout this plan, you'll find references to the Main Street America program and the Pennsylvania Downtown Center. The Main Street America program offers a proven framework for downtown revitalization and economic growth. Through its Four-Point Approach, including Design, Economic Vitality, Organization, and Promotion, the program helps communities improve public spaces, strengthen local businesses, foster partnerships, and celebrate and promote local assets and culture. The Four-Point Approach plays a central role in the way Downtown Indiana is organized and how we plan and prioritize our work. And, as Pennsylvania's official Main Street America coordinating program, the Pennsylvania Downtown Center provides resources and support for organizations like ours as we implement the Main Street America framework.

We are also excited about getting to do this work alongside our community partners. Downtown Indiana and the Indiana County Chamber of Commerce entered into a formal partnership in 2022, and that partnership is paying dividends for our organization and for our stakeholders. We work closely with the Indiana County Tourist Bureau on many of our events and initiatives, none more visible than the It's a Wonderful Life celebration. And with the help of the Indiana County Office of Planning and Development and the Indiana County Development Corporation, we will soon move into the Indiana Welcome Center with the Chamber and the Tourist Bureau, located right in the middle of downtown. We are also working closely with the Indiana Borough and IUP on initiatives ranging from redeveloping the 8<sup>th</sup> Street corridor, more intentionally connecting campus with downtown, to the STATIC dollars program, which allocates student activity dollars for spending specifically in downtown restaurants and retailers. And we're all fortunate to have Senator Joe Pittman and Representative Jim Struzzi working on our behalf, providing resources and support to make all of it happen.

Personally, we all think Indiana, PA is a pretty cool place, certainly worth investing in. We have an exceptional quality of life. It's affordable, family-friendly, and safe. There's a lot to do – dining, retail, arts and music, and recreation. And, what makes it truly unique is that those who live and work here take ownership for making it so. Whether that's owning a small business here, volunteering with one of Indiana's many community development organizations, or simply deciding to prioritize dining and shopping locally, we all play a part. Our hope is that the Downtown Indiana organization, through its events and initiatives and collaborative work, motivates others to invest in and take ownership for our wonderful community.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Ellen Ruddock for investing her time and sharing her expertise while facilitating the planning discussion, and to the participants, for investing the time and energy to guide and prioritize Downtown Indiana's future work through this action plan. We look forward to continuing to work alongside all of you.

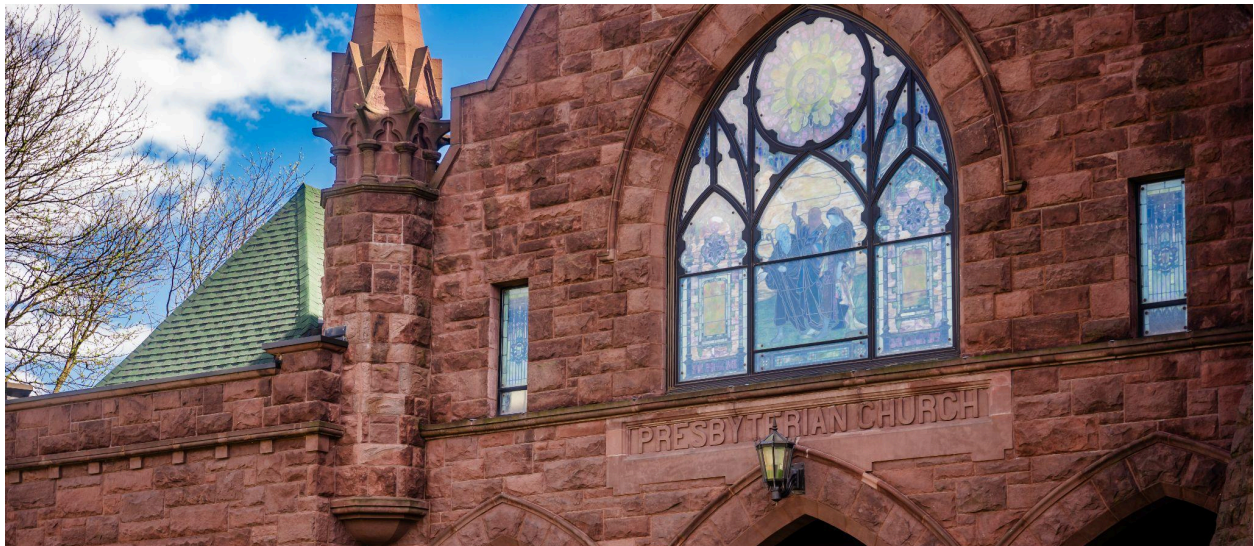
Chad Martin, President  
Joe Kinter, Vice President  
Shanna Scordo, Second Vice President





## Mission and Vision Statement

Downtown Indiana is a Main Street America, non-profit organization supporting a vibrant, thriving central business district and surrounding community by preserving and promoting its unique history, assets, businesses, and events, helping to make Indiana, PA a wonderful place to live, work, visit, and invest.



# The Main Street Approach

The Downtown Indiana organization follows the approach outlined by Main Street America. This approach acknowledges that every community and commercial district is different, with distinct assets and a unique sense of place.

The work it suggests is organized according to four strategies, which correspond to Downtown Indiana's working committees, including: **Design, Economic Vitality, Organization, and Promotion**. Additional details about the committees' objectives are listed below, along with the current and planned future initiatives Downtown Indiana will pursue within each committee.

## Design Committee

**Committee Chair:** Ryan Chadwick, Gardener, EarthCraft Landscaping

The Design Committee aims to create an inviting, inclusive atmosphere, celebrate historic character, and foster accessible, people-centered public spaces. It supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart. *See Appendix for current plans.*

- Current initiatives include:
  - Planting and caring for Philadelphia Street flower baskets.
  - Maintaining current and developing a plan for renovating gateway signage, which welcomes visitors along the primary corridors.
  - Installing and maintaining holiday lights on downtown buildings.
- Ongoing and future initiatives include:
  - Installing and helping to maintain streetscape convenience elements spread throughout the entire downtown, including trash cans, pet waste bag dispensers, cigarette butt receptacles, benches, and flower planters, with a specific focus on enhancing the West End of Philadelphia Street.
  - Creating and facilitating a facade grant program to improve/maintain signage and other street facing infrastructure

## Economic Vitality Committee

**Committee Chair:** Dana Henry, Economic Development Chief, Indiana County Center for Economic Operations

The Economic Vitality Committee aims to build a diverse economic base, catalyze smart, new investment, and cultivate a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem. It supports a community's transformation by safeguarding the financial viability of the commercial district. *See Appendix for current plans.*

- Current initiatives include:

- Collecting and summarizing data about properties and tenant businesses within the central business district and identifying opportunities for intervention and further investment.
- Collecting feedback from property and business owners and working with local economic development organizations to identify opportunities for ongoing support and further development
- Ongoing and future initiatives include:
  - Create, maintain, and leverage a central business district business inventory & database of local demographic and economic indicators; specifically:
    - Create and maintain a business inventory. Develop and regularly update an inventory of businesses in the district, categorized by industry, to assess the current mix and identify gaps.
    - Collect and analyze local demographic and economic data to understand consumer purchasing power and identify key trends. Assess the influence of IUP, remote working, location-flexible retirees, and tourism on local commerce. Evaluate recent developments and near-term opportunities, and outline/understand their potential impact on the local economy.
  - Research similarly-situated communities and identify applicable lessons. Specifically, identify 10 mid-Atlantic communities similar to Indiana; study their economic conditions, business mixes, and successful strategies; and identify lessons that can be applied to Downtown Indiana's business development strategy.
  - Develop a Downtown Indiana business prospectus, which defines Downtown Indiana's unique identity and highlights its assets, opportunities, and risks.
    - Leverage input from this strategic plan and other community plans, such as Indiana Borough's recently completed comprehensive plan.
    - Clarify desired improvements and prepare a plan for addressing current challenges.
    - Create a detailed business proforma that summarizes the information that's been collected and can be distributed to businesses that may be well suited for locating in/around Downtown Indiana.
  - Create a business and property clearinghouse
    - Collaborate with Indiana Borough, Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, and Indiana County Office of Planning and Development to create a clearinghouse that connects businesses and available properties. Facilitate the matching of prospective businesses with appropriate spaces in the district.
    - Identify and proactively recruit businesses that align with the district's identity and help enhance its viability. Use the business prospectus to articulate the benefits of operating in Indiana's central business district.

# Organizational Committee

**Committee Chair:** Zack Morrow, Chief Financial Officer, Patron's Mutual Insurance Company

The Organizational Committee aims to build leadership and strong organizational capacity, ensure broad community engagement, and foster partnerships across sectors. It supports a community's transformation by providing a sustainable foundation for collaboration and buy-in, both internal and external. *See Appendix for current plans.*

- Current initiatives include:
  - Reviewing and updating bylaws to reflect current organizational structure and priorities
  - Building board and committee continuity and strength by actively recruiting volunteers to support committee chairs.
- Ongoing and future initiatives include:
  - Systemize and structure the Downtown Indiana organization's internal operating processes and systems, creating accountability and ensuring continuity across employees and from one board to the next.
  - Re-apply for the Main Street America and Pennsylvania Downtown designations and identify ways Downtown Indiana can leverage the resources that are available to member organizations.
  - Work closely with the Finance Committee and Fundraising Coordinator, develop and oversee a sustainable fundraising strategy. Build and nurture relationships with potential funders for Downtown Indiana's programs and projects. Identify and leverage available grant funding to supplement the resources that are collected locally.
  - Building and maintaining relationships with key local stakeholders, including with:
    - Indiana Borough, to facilitate beautification efforts and plan/execute events in/around the central business district.
    - Indiana County Chamber; Indiana County Tourist Bureau; and Indiana County Development Corp, to leverage public resources to bring about positive change in/around the central business district.
    - Indiana Arts Council and Indiana Theater, to increase the visibility of the significant arts-oriented initiatives/programming those organizations put on.
    - IUP, to create and strengthen relationships between businesses and faculty/students.
    - Indiana Farmer's Market, to highlight the strength of Indiana's micro agriculture businesses while promoting the capabilities and creativity of the chefs who own and work at Downtown Indiana restaurants and pubs.



# Promotion Committee

**Committee Chair:** Chelsea Fabin, Customer Service Manager, Lucy Rae Gifts & More

The Promotion Committee aims to market the district's defining assets, communicate unique features through storytelling, and support a buy-local experience. It supports a community's transformation by positioning the commercial district as the best place for people to shop, work, live, connect, and have fun. *See Appendix for current plans.*

- Current initiatives include:
  - Plan and execute more than 20 downtown events that highlight local businesses and attract residents and visitors to those businesses, including events such as Arts Walk, Taste & Tour, Third Thursday, Italian Festival, Oktoberfest, Wine & Spirits Walk, and the It's a Wonderful Life Festival portfolio of events.
  - Create and maintain a robust digital presence with significant community engagement, highlighting the downtown establishments and their offerings, including/especially as part of the events that aim to increase visibility for these establishments
- Ongoing and future initiatives include:
  - Develop mechanisms to better evaluate the impact of Downtown Indiana events on local businesses. Track metrics like sales data, foot traffic, and community engagement to assess how effectively events are driving economic activity.
  - Determine the most effective marketing and promotional tools to engage target audiences, focusing on platforms and methods that resonate with local and regional consumers. Specifically:
    - Create regular opportunities for storytelling as a core strategy to connect with the audience, highlighting the unique aspects of the community, its businesses, and its history to create an emotional bond with locals and visitors.
    - Take the lead on buy local campaigns, to reinforce the community's sense of place and pride in its assets. Focus on the benefits of supporting local businesses and fostering a buy-local culture, enhancing community identity and supporting local commerce.
  - Continue revamping Downtown Indiana's website, attempting to make it a key resource for businesses, residents, and especially visitors. Ensure it is user-friendly, informative, and visually appealing, and regularly update the site to reflect current initiatives and keep content fresh.
  - Continue strengthening the partnership with the Indiana County Tourist Bureau to leverage combined resources, infrastructure, and expertise for attracting visitors to Downtown Indiana. Work together on events and promotions that enhance tourism and support local businesses.

# Main Street Transformative Strategies

The Main Street Approach is centered around Transformation Strategies. A Transformation Strategy articulates a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown's economy. Main Street America provides some "ready-to-use" strategies — called Catalyst Strategies. Catalyst Strategies can be adapted to a wide variety of places – many can exist at any price point (e.g., Apparel or Home Furnishings); a few are organized around an existing institution (e.g., College Town or Military Installation). All can be further customized to local needs.

The DI BOD and strategic planning participants determined the following Catalyst Strategies were most applicable to Indiana, PA. Contributors also identified practical ideas that build towards each of these Catalyst Strategies, and they identified opportunities for collaboration/cooperation with others in the community whose activities align with the Strategies.

## Family Friendly

**Catalyst Strategy framework, from Main Street America ([link](#))**

- Description: Focuses on local families; characterized by family-friendly events and businesses
- Customers
  - Families, particularly with babies and young children at home
  - Grandparents
  - Teens
- Special considerations
  - A daytime strategy
  - Most active on weekends
  - Appropriate for communities with young demographic, growing families
- Benefits, tradeoffs
  - Offers products and entertainment locally
  - Helps engender positive downtown experiences for young people
  - But: Not compatible with strategies dependent on bars and nightlife
- Example activities
  - Add kid-scale street furniture in public spaces
  - Offer internships to high school students
  - Show family films outdoors on weekends
  - Expand business mix with gifts and toys

## Catalyst Strategy ideas and opportunities, from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants

- Ideas to build toward this Catalyst Strategy
  - Add kid-scale street furniture in public spaces
  - Offer internships to high school students
  - Show family films outdoors on weekends
  - Be mindful that infrastructure is accessible for kids, elderly, and vulnerable population
  - Attract and plan for diverse businesses, activities and events offering experiential opportunities for all, including children and family-friendly things to do
  - Create and foster more opportunities for individuals and families to find community and quality of life through the organization's events and initiatives
  - Add family-focused retail (puzzle shop and supplies, toy store)
  - Add multi-generational-friendly experiences (Arcade, indoor playground, kids' learning center/museum)
- Opportunities for collaboration (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - Indiana Free Library
  - Indiana Area School District
  - Indiana University of Pennsylvania, including/especially with faculty/staff/students in the College of Education

## College Town

### Catalyst Strategy framework, from Main Street America ([link](#))

- Description: Makes connections between business district and anchor educational institution.
- Customers
  - Students, faculty, staff at college/university
  - Returning alumni, visiting parents
  - Tourists/visitors
- Special considerations
  - Residential institutions differ from commuter schools
  - Strategy may work better where educational institution already a center of community life
- Benefits, tradeoffs
  - Builds on existing economic anchor
  - No new parking demand (in many cases)
  - But: Can be associated with nuisance issues (e.g., noise, drinking)
- Example activities
  - Install college flags, pennants downtown
  - Establish direct liaisons to university admin and student body
  - Set up loyalty card

## Catalyst Strategy ideas and opportunities, from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants

- Ideas to build toward this Catalyst Strategy (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - Install college flags, pennants downtown
  - Establish direct liaisons to university admin and student body
  - Set up loyalty card
  - College-focused store with items from IUP, Pitt, Penn State, sorority, fraternity items
  - Renovate and develop the 8th street corridor, focusing on improving the physical connection to IUP
  - Walkable/bikeable, affordable housing for grad students, undergrads, faculty, and staff
  - Improve and formalize communication channels with IUP and DI
  - Organize and promote communication and engagement with IUP, during orientation and welcome week and beyond
  - Attract sizeable conferences and prioritize attendee experiences
  - Promote events that bring our primary and secondary schools together with IUP students.
  - Parents that come to visit from outside the community need places to stay, eat, relax, be active, and shop. Let's be more intentional about connecting here.
  - How can we better accommodate alumni who return for university events?
  - Ensure the link is a two-way connection... put more focus on how we can support the campus's programs, such as connecting with their Community Music School, helping to promote sports camps, music camps, etc., bringing a component of those programs into the downtown to help promote them.
  - Engage fraternities and sororities in community service.
  - Be a connector to help find a place for interns to get experience within our downtown
  - Recognize that "nightlife" for many college students doesn't look the way it used to. Figure out what else the students want, and figure out a way to deliver it.
- Opportunities for collaboration (from Strategic Planning session)
  - IUP Administration
  - IUP Co-op
  - IUP Museum
  - IUP Community Music School
  - IUP on-campus sports organizations
  - IUP sororities & fraternities



## Arts – Visual and Performing

### Catalyst Strategy framework, from Main Street America ([link](#))

- Description: “Arts” involves all creative industries, incl. film, music, dance, fine art, theatre, etc.
- Customers:
  - Demographically diverse; may be shaped by ethnicity, income, etc.
  - Some sales business-to-business (rather than consumer)
- Special considerations:
  - Different from “Entertainment districts”, though some overlap.
  - Creative industry workers often keep odd hours, enlivening the district.
- Benefits, tradeoffs:
  - Arts industries can make use of hard-to-use spaces.
  - Arts often serve as a draw for other types of businesses.
- Example activities:
  - Create a public arts strategy
  - Pair artists with retailers for window displays
  - Launch an “open studios” day
  - Develop live/work space

### Catalyst Strategy ideas and opportunities, from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants

- Ideas to build toward this Catalyst Strategy (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - Create a public arts strategy
  - Add more murals on downtown businesses and in the parking garage
  - More music venues (speakeasy, rooftop venue)
  - Add Arts-based retail (craft/sewing/yarn shop, artisan store)
  - Bring back Arts Festival
  - Partner to create cooperative events with:
    - Our museums and galleries
    - Music and other events at the Theater and other venues
    - Live performances at the Indiana Players
    - Jimmy Stewart Museum
  - Pair artists with retailers for window displays
  - Display art in vacant store fronts
  - Launch an "open studios" day
  - Develop live/work space
  - Stage (?)
  - Live music events and a full calendar
- Opportunities for collaboration (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - Indiana Arts Council
  - Indiana Theater
  - Indiana Players
  - Jimmy Stewart Museum

- o Indiana Area School District - primary & secondary school visual art, theater, and music programs
- o IUP Center for the Arts
- o IUP Community Music School
- o IUP Museum

## Sports & Recreation

### Catalyst Strategy framework, from Main Street America ([link](#))

- Description: Connects outdoor activities - camping, boating, hiking, climbing, hunting, etc - with supporting businesses and amenities. This includes outfitters and equipment sales, restaurants and food services, accommodations, and others.
- Customers:
  - o Outdoor enthusiasts
  - o Varied spectrum of ages and abilities, and travel lifestyle preferences
- Special considerations:
  - o While frequently associated with youth, many outdoor enthusiasts are seniors traveling without families or children
- Benefits, tradeoffs:
  - o Connects the downtown to those who use nearby outdoor or recreational attractions
- Example activities:
  - o Install wayfinding signs from nearby trails or paths to downtown
  - o Install a climbing wall (or ice-climbing wall) downtown
  - o Work with sporting equipment businesses to offer guided tours

## **Catalyst Strategy ideas and opportunities, from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants**

- Ideas to build toward this strategy (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - Equestrian equipment, clothes & supplies shop
  - Outdoor recreation/tour/adventure shop (kayak, ski, bike)
  - Electric scooters and bike rental, particularly close to Hoodlebug trail head
  - Connection to our local parks with more walkability and bike-ability
  - A creek walk
  - Promote our prime features, such as close access to outdoor recreation, good air quality, safety, and walkability
  - Other Ideas (from Board):
  - Mini golf
  - Promote a disc golf tournament at white's woods course (highly regarded)
  - Collaborate with Tourist Bureau to host a Tour-de-Indiana County for mid-atlantic cyclists (our roads are considered ideal for road bikers)
  - The Junior golf tour (AJGA... basically the PGA tour for junior golf) signed a 3-year commitment to play at Indiana country club, noting that they prioritized bringing their events to communities that engage with them, not just take advantage of the fact that 80 golfers and their families are coming. Ideas could include sponsorship-funded downtown dollars for the participants and their families (they all get \$20-\$50 downtown dollars to spend in our downtown).
  - Capitalize on the regular softball tournament, wrestling tournament, Charlie Hogan hockey tournament, etc.
  - Offer more intentional connection of our community kids (and the kids from the surrounding county schools) to the sports camps at IUP, and find a way to connect an event that attracts the parents downtown
- Opportunities for Collaboration / Cooperation (from DI BOD and Strategic Planning participants)
  - IUP
  - On-campus sports organizations
  - Sororities & Fraternities
  - State, municipal, and community parks
  - YMCA
  - Local clubs (running, hockey, flag football, fly-fishing, ATV, disc golf, etc.)
  - S&T Arena
  - Primary and secondary schools
  - Horse stables
  - Sportsmen's Clubs
  - Golf courses
  - Rails to Trails
  - Indiana Walkable/Bikeable

# Guiding Principles and Values and Critical Success Factors

## Principles

Participants in the planning session identified several principles that are personally important to them and to the daily operation of their businesses and organizations. These are principles they would not sacrifice for progress.

- Sense of place
- Sense of belonging
- Support for one another
- Cooperation
- Diversity
- Integrity
- Quality
- Trust

## Values

Participant stakeholders hold the following personal values high in priority for their lives, livelihoods, and engagement with one another.

- Freedom
- Equality
- Service

## Critical Success Actors

Participants identified several factors that are necessary for progress to be made and goals to be achieved. These broad approaches are necessary for the Downtown Indiana organization to succeed in implementing the ideas contained in this plan.

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Strong leadership



# Strategic Planning Analysis

## Dreams for the Future

- An increased feeling of community goodwill
- A town full of engaged, interested citizens who want to help make the town even better
- A family-friendly, highly-accessible community, that helps provide a healthy lifestyle for all ages and abilities
- A diverse, harmonious community where residents acknowledge and support a variety of views, beliefs, and aspirations among businesses, workers, residents, and visitors.
- Something for everyone
- No empty storefronts
- A vibrant arts community
- A thriving marketplace that draws the community to shop, eat, and celebrate
- A campus as a heart of the community, physically connected, partaking in resource-sharing with Downtown Indiana and other community organizations in mutually beneficial relationships
- A recreational paradise for outdoorspeople and sports enthusiasts
- A go-to community for remote workers to relocate

## What already makes Indiana special/strong?

- High quality of life
- Friendly, welcoming, safe community
- Beautiful, charming, historic downtown
- Affordable housing and cost of living
- Walkable, bikeable neighborhoods
- Great schools
- Many natural resources
- Beautiful parks and trails and recreational facilities
- Preservation and promotion of our unique history, including Jimmy Stewart
- Unique cooperation between government and community
- Invested, passionate, supportive locals
- A stable economy
- Anchor institutions include IUP, IRMC, and regional banks
- County seat

## What challenges are we up against?

- Communication breakdown.
  - How can we mass-market when people so often don't read their emails?
  - How do we stay apprised of what other groups are doing, to avoid double-work or double-booking the same day for an event?

- Lack of volunteers
  - How can we more effectively build Bench Strength for our board and committees? Lack of engagement with young leaders, burnout of overworked volunteers, and low number of interested citizens all make this task difficult.
- Funding
  - DI is supported by fundraising. Where will additional funds come from to support the larger projects we wish to complete?
  - Who will write grants?
- Online threats
  - Online shopping continues to threaten brick-and-mortar stores in our downtown. How do we help them leverage their strengths, and/or engage in online selling to bolster their sales?
  - Why aren't our events being seen by more people? How do we utilize our online presence to better inform and motivate?
- Urban Sprawl
  - The majority of growing businesses are located on the urban sprawl margin in White Township. How can we encourage / facilitate more development in our downtown?
  - Our downtown restaurants are losing the dining crowds to these businesses
- Social isolation
  - How do we pull more people out of their isolation and connect them with others in our community? Specific challenges exist around the elderly, disabled, and those who work from home, those who suffer from mental illness, and students of all ages.
- Threats to Anchor Institutions
  - Declining university enrollment, work-from-home employment
- Lack of appropriate housing
  - Housing for young professionals, college faculty and staff, single parents, retirees, the disabled, and the elderly, are in very short supply
- Stuck in our ways
  - We may be stuck in our ways simply because "that's the way it's always been done." Issues such as limited store hours/days in downtown, the resistance of selling online to bolster brick-and-mortar sales, etc.

## What infrastructure improvements do stakeholders want?

- Extend and improve the downtown streetscape
  - Extend to include 100-400 blocks, 10000-12000 blocks, and south 7th street. Add more flower baskets, planters, trash cans and other receptacles.
  - Improve downtown streetscape and tree bed maintenance by adding dog waste receptacles, cigarette receptacles, and more trash cans. Outsource the weed control service. Implement a plan to manage the waste. Implement a sustainable plan for watering baskets
- Update/replace holiday lights on buildings
- Develop IRMC Park into a space that can be used all year long

- Close to traffic. Add a cover/roof/pavilion. Add an attractive feature such as a splashpad, water feature, or fire feature(s).
- Add wayfinding and signage
  - Include signs to direct people downtown from the perimeters, signage for parking garage, and reimagine the Welcome to Indiana corridor signs

## What other improvements do stakeholders want?

- Events
  - Expand community events to cover months of January-June
  - Rotate events to include different areas of Downtown and the Borough (For example, “stroll the streets” event monthly with music, food, etc.
- Housing Improvements/Additions
  - Development of high-density, high-quality housing (non-student and non-Section 8 housing) within the central business district
  - Continued revitalization of dilapidated properties
- Maintain and improve buildings and facades throughout Downtown
  - Encourage Borough to create/enforce ordinance requiring property owners along Philadelphia Street to maintain their properties
  - Redevelop and/or repurpose vacant buildings for redevelopment
- Find ways to weave a “Sense of place” throughout town
- Parking
  - Parking meters can give 15 free minutes customer courtesy
  - Voucher program for the parking garage
- Accommodate/attract remote workers to relocate here
  - Provide non-traditional workspaces
  - Focus more on capturing worker flexibility
  - Workshare space for entrepreneurs and remote workers
  - Seek out ways to support technology-focused small businesses
  - Storage units for online sellers

## What other businesses do stakeholders want?

- Accommodations:
  - Bed & Breakfast
  - Boutique downtown hotel
  - *Noted a trend of increased short-term rentals like AirB&B, VRBO*
- Restaurants/Bars, etc.
  - Farm-to-table restaurant
  - Adult oriented pub and/or speakeasy
  - LAN café (gaming)
  - Rooftop bar/restaurant
  - Cigar lounge
  - More outdoor dining spaces
- Shopping: Fresh foods

- Year-round, indoor/outdoor farmer's/fresh food market
  - Gourmet foods stores
  - Full-service bakery
  - Butcher
  - Cheese monger
  - Ice cream shop
- Shopping: Other
  - Target
  - Fleatiques
  - Furniture and home goods store
  - Clothing store focused on affordable & upcycled clothing



# Organizational Structure and Contact Information

## Staff

- Executive Director: Sam Kenly

## 2025 Board of Directors

- President: Chad Martin, Vice President, Small Business Advisor Team Leader, S&T Bank
- Vice President: Joe Kinter, Principal, Bates White Economic Consulting
- Second Vice President: Shanna Scordo, President, EarthCraft Landscaping
- Treasurer: Andrea Kanick, Operations Group Manager, First Commonwealth Bank
- Secretary: Carrie Kinter, Teacher, Indiana Area School District
- Design Committee Chair: Ryan Chadwick, Gardener, EarthCraft Landscaping
- Economic Vitality Committee Chair: Dana Henry, Economic Development Chief, Indiana County Center for Economic Operations
- Organization Committee Chair: Zack Morrow, Chief Financial Officer, Patron's Mutual Insurance Company
- Promotions Committee Chair: Chelsea Fabin, Customer Service Manager, Lucy Rae Gifts
- Marketing Coordinator (ex officio): Molly Sarver, Planner, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- Volunteer Coordinator (ex officio): Samantha Walker, Co-Owner, Romeo's Pizzeria and Mediterranean Kitchen

## Contact Information

- Downtown Indiana, a Non-Profit Corporation  
1019 Philadelphia Street  
Indiana, PA 15701  
724 463-6110  
[www.downtownindianapa.org](http://www.downtownindianapa.org)  
[sam.kenly@downtownindianapa.org](mailto:sam.kenly@downtownindianapa.org)

# Strategic Plan and Report Contributors

## Report Facilitator

- Ellen Ruddock, Director Emerita

## Strategic Planning Session Participants

- Chad Martin, President
- \*Joe Kinter, Second Vice President
- \*Andrea Kanick, Treasurer
- \*Carrie Kinter, Secretary
- Sam Kenly, Executive Director
- \*Shanna Scordo, Design Committee Chair
- \*Dana Henry, Economic Vitality Committee Chair
- Zack Morrow, Organization Committee Chair
- Chelsea Fabin, Promotions Committee Chair
- \*Molly Sarver, Ex Officio Director, Marketing Coordinator
- Byron Stauffer, Jr., Executive Director, ICOPD
- \*Steven Lomax, Vice President, ICC
- Shagufta, Hauge, Intern, ICC
- Hastie Kinter, Owner Lucy Rae, ACE Hardware
- Nick Karas, Owner, NAP's Cucina Mia
- \*Janie McKirgan, Executive Director, Jimmy Stewart Museum
- \*Veldora Rice, Executive Director, Indiana Theater
- Jean
- \*Samantha Walker
- \*Shelly Rosborough, Co-Owner, William & Mary Gift Shop
- Dr. Jeff Raykes, Co-Facilitator, Consultant

## Other Contributors

- \* Rose M. Strittmatter, Corporate & Board Services Manager, First Commonwealth Bank
- \* Dan Fleming, Owner, Horizons Media
- Bill Arrowwood, Field Representative, Pennsylvania Downtown Center

## Report Designer

- Kaycee Newell, Newell Graphic Arts

\* Indicates those who participated in the written survey regarding their involvement with Downtown Indiana in preparation of the strategic planning session.

# Goals and Action Plans

## Goals for 2025

The goals for 2025 have been adopted by the Four Mainstreet Committees and detailed in the Plan of Action to follow.

- Apply for Mainstreet designation
- Succession planning incorporating committee objectives
- Adopt/implement strategic plan
- Choose and apply for ONE collaborative grant that would benefit multiple organizations
- Develop a communication strategy for DI, Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureau
- Expand sponsorship
- Expand annual meeting membership to include former board members and stakeholders
- Document clear objectives for committee chairs and officers
- OPEN A WELCOME CENTER – add borough planning office in the same space
- Formalize 3-5 key partner relationships with signed agreements
- Expand streetscape to West End with flowers, lights, trash cans, and plants
- Take care of animal feces, sidewalk and tree bed maintenance
- Solve the watering issue with a larger container for water

## Goals for 2030

The goals listed are in no particular priority. They are identified from careful review of the dreams, analysis and wish lists of their work with an optimistic view of what can be achieved in the next five years.

- An America 250 celebration plan
- Adopt and implement a strategic plan
- Bridge the gap in communication between DI and the Indiana community members
- Create a centralized hub of information and resources
- Streamline communication
- Stage, lighting, a water feature, and more plants
- Develop an identity – lean in on the arts community and think about geography
- Wayfinding Signage Program of welcoming and directional signage
- Succession planning
- Intentional connection and expansion between IUP and DI
- Continue to expand events and promotions – implement and measure the effectiveness of events
- Apply for Mainstreet designation and sustainability
- Expand annual meeting to include former board members and stakeholders
- Fundraise for flowers and replace Christmas lights/decorations
- Boutique hotel
- An ordinance change or addition to allow perpendicular signage

## Plan of Action for 2025

ORGANIZATION
Goal: DI has submitted the application for Main Street designation
<p>Benefits from achieving the goal and/or losses to be avoided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential marketing and operational dollars</li> <li>- Reputation benefit</li> <li>- Internal accountability and consistency</li> <li>- Guidance and access to community resources</li> <li>- Access to industry standards</li> <li>- Access to grants</li> </ul>
<p>Obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time/discipline</li> <li>- Filing requirements/reporting infrastructure</li> <li>- Turnover</li> <li>- Personnel</li> <li>- Meeting goals</li> </ul>
<p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All-in/bust days</li> <li>- Establishing documentation procedures</li> <li>- Succession planning</li> <li>- Establishing expectations for personnel</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contact Bill Arrowood for application requirements – target date of 2/15/25 (Joe)</li> <li>- Gathering application materials – target date of 3/31/25 (Zack)</li> <li>- Establish documentation procedures – target date of 6/15/25 (Team)</li> <li>- Complete application – target date of 8/15/25 (Zack and Joe)</li> </ul>

<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Goal: DI has implemented the strategic plan by tracking progress toward 2025 goals in monthly board meetings and/or special meetings
Benefits from achieving the goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Achieving goals</li> <li>- More effective publicity to the community</li> <li>- Focused effort of Board and Executive Director</li> <li>- Ability to efficiently utilize resources</li> <li>- Community improvement</li> <li>- Consistency</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unclear responsibilities and expectations</li> <li>- Distractions from mission</li> <li>- Time</li> <li>- Dissent with plan itself</li> <li>- Lack of community buy-in</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Board position descriptions and responsibilities</li> <li>- Reinforcement using the strategic plan</li> <li>- Listening and aligning goals</li> <li>- Proceduralize the feedback process</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Change Board meeting format for goal accountability – target date of 3/15/25 (Zack)</li> <li>- Set appropriate timeline for goals – target date of 3/15/25 (executive team)</li> <li>- Develop and send community feedback survey – target date of 5/31/25 (Organization committee and staff)</li> <li>- Complete and adopt the plan – target date of 3/15/25 (executive team)</li> <li>- Schedule and execute mid-year long-term planning meeting – target date of 7/31/25 (team)</li> </ul>

<b>ORGANIZATION</b>
Goal: DI has completed a plan for succession focused on ensuring continuity by recruiting personnel and developing volunteers
Benefits from achieving the goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Historically, a strong organization</li> <li>- Distributed responsibilities</li> <li>- Brand consistency</li> <li>- Breadth of involvement</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time</li> <li>- Lack of volunteers</li> <li>- Lack of investments and variance of investment level</li> <li>- Improper sub-committee delegation</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discipline</li> <li>- Prioritization</li> <li>- Clear expectations</li> <li>- Engagement from volunteer coordinator</li> <li>- Wider berth of volunteer sources</li> <li>- Creating delegation infrastructure</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop sub-committee delegation procedures – target date of 6/30/25 (committee chairs)</li> <li>- Fill vacant board seats – target date of 2/28/25 (Executive committee)</li> <li>- Recruit 2-4 new committee members – target date of 4/30/25 (committee chairs)</li> </ul>

ORGANIZATION
Goal: DI has formalized relationships via a written agreement with 7 key partners – Borough, IUP, Theater, Tourist Bureau, YMCA, Jimmy Stewart Museum, Indiana Farmer’s Market
Benefits from achieving the goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearer expectations with partnering organizations</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Time</li> <li>- Personnel</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask for help from potential partners to draft key elements of the agreements</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop reference list of partners – target date of 2/28/25 (Zack, Sam)</li> <li>- Develop engagement agreements – target date of 12/31/25 (Zack, Sam)</li> <li>- Sub-step: meet with each partner to inform the agreement development process – target date of 6/30/25 (Zack, Sam)</li> </ul>

PROMOTIONS
Goal: DI has developed an effective and collaborative communication plan for businesses, organizations, and agencies
Benefits from achieving the goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Informed partners and community</li> <li>- More involvement from businesses and partners</li> <li>- Keeps all stakeholders positively engaged</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff has to implement too many forms of communication</li> <li>- Each person/business has their own communication preference</li> <li>- DI needs sufficient staffing to reach all people in the preferred manner</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Streamline communication method to TWO choices (1. Email, 2. In-person flyer/contact information)</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DI communicates through email or in-person/flyer option ONLY – target date is 3/15/25 (Chelsea/Sam)</li> <li>- DI surveys all stakeholders for preferred method of communication, send email and then follow up with those that do not respond –target date is 5/31/25 (Chelsea/Sam)</li> <li>- DI will create a Google Sheet with the collected survey results target date is 6/30/25 (Chelsea, Carrie, Joe)</li> <li>- Collaborate through preferred communication method, all committees will use this communication manner (ongoing as of 7/1/25, via staff, Promotions Committee chair)</li> </ul> <p>* Method of tracking progress – Google Spreadsheet</p>



PROMOTIONS
Goal: DI has expanded the Annual Meeting attendance on September 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2025 by including former board members, volunteer, and stakeholders
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More people will be involved and engaged</li> <li>- More people will learn about DI and the organization</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedule conflicts</li> <li>- Lack of past board members addresses?</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan it early</li> <li>- Share date ASAP</li> <li>- Communicate date and invitation through partner organizations</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Select venue – target date of 2/28/25 (Sam/Joe/Chelsea)</li> <li>- Invitation list expanded to include past board members and additional community sponsors like IRMC, IUP, Reschini Group and banks – target date of 2/28/25 (Sam/Joe/Chelsea)</li> <li>- Finalize speaker and awards – target date of 3/31/25 (board discussion/decision, Executive Committee responsible for outreach)</li> <li>- Send “save the date” – target date of 5/31/25 (Chelsea/Sam)</li> <li>- Formal invitation sent out – target date of 7/31/25 (Chelsea/Sam)</li> <li>- Design meeting program –target date of 7/31/25 (Sam/Joe/Chelsea)</li> <li>- Collaborate with Design committee for décor – target date of 7/31/25 (Sam/Joe/Chelsea/Shanna)</li> </ul>

<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>
<p>Goal: DI is collaborating with Indiana County Development Corporation, Indiana County Chamber, and Indiana County Tourist Bureau to plan and execute a Grand Opening for the new Welcome Center</p>
<p>Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding partnerships</li> <li>- Coordination of services</li> <li>- Shared resources</li> <li>- Central location for connection and collaboration</li> <li>- Avoid financial loss</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
<p>Obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parking accessibility</li> <li>- Communicating purpose and mission and preparing marketing, new announcement</li> <li>- Access to needed resources</li> <li>- Securing a name</li> <li>- Opening and inviting guests</li> <li>- Moving and organizing partner organizations</li> <li>- Visitor parking</li> <li>- Motorcoach parking</li> </ul>
<p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enhance parking meter</li> <li>- Empower group opportunities to volunteer</li> <li>- Create a marketing/communication plan</li> </ul>
<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan and design building and signage – target date of 2/14/25 (Byron, Dana)</li> <li>- Roof updates, broken windows HVAC – target date of 6/30/25 (Byron/Dana)</li> <li>- Operational plan – target date of 2/28/25 (Dana)</li> <li>- Welcome reception, Grand Opening night– target date of end of 6/30/25(Dana and Welcome Center partners)</li> </ul>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Goal: DI is proactively leveraging the County's database of property owners; to identify whose properties are vacant and engage with them about filling those spaces
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided -
Obstacles -
Solutions -
Action Steps -

<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>
Goal: DI continues to build on Indiana Borough's database of businesses in the central business district, including by identifying their characteristics (i.e., what type of business), owners, and contact information
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal – ensure we're reaching out to and staying in touch with all of the business district's small businesses</li> <li>- External – provide residents and potential visitors with lists of restaurants, retailers, etc.</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> </ul>

DESIGN
Goal: DI has streetscape convenience elements spread throughout the entire downtown, including the west end. Items to include trash cans, pet waste bag dispensers, cigarette butt receptacles, benches, and flower planters.
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building cohesion into the west end will make existing businesses feel more connected to downtown, and could lead to additional interest in starting businesses in that area.</li> <li>- Improved aesthetic by helping to manage trash, dog debris, cigarette butts.</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding.</li> <li>- Push back from streets that don't get attention in this round of development.</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meet with borough, meet with Senator Pittman.</li> <li>- Include any disgruntled businesses in communications re: future development.</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build an itemized wish list with pricing and proposed locations by Q1</li> <li>- Determine funding plan Q1</li> <li>- Draft a larger plan for additional streetscape elements to be installed over the next 3 years Q1</li> <li>- Purchase and install by end of Q3</li> </ul>
Method of tracking progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Checklist of # of desired fixtures and their locations.</li> <li>- Check off list as completed.</li> </ul>

DESIGN
<p>Goal: DI has a professionally-produced wayfinding and gateway signage plan in-hand and ready to present at annual meeting</p> <p><i>Form a group of stakeholders and hire a consultant to develop a wayfinding and gateway signage plan, design a style of signage that fits our identity.</i></p>
<p>Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will build cohesion in the community and bring more traffic downtown.</li> <li>- Investing in a consultant group will make more efficient use of time and dollars.</li> </ul>
<p>Obstacles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Might be difficult to get all stakeholders to agree on a design, might run into right-of-way laws when approaching landowners.</li> <li>- Could be pushback against spending the money on a consultant.</li> <li>- Funding.</li> </ul>
<p>Solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep lines of communication open about benefits of hiring a consultant.</li> <li>- Get very clear on our visual/aesthetic goals prior to hiring consultant.</li> </ul>
<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Form a group of stakeholders Q1</li> <li>- Approach / partner with borough Q1</li> <li>- Write a grant application by Q2</li> <li>- Hire consultant Q3</li> <li>- Deliver final wayfinding &amp; gateway plan by Q1 2026</li> </ul>
<p>Method of tracking progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Check in at monthly DI meeting using quarterly goals below as a guide</li> </ul>

DESIGN
Goal: DI has obtained permission from the Parks Dept / Shade Tree Commission for DI to outsource the tree bed maintenance to a private company and fund it
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consistency, improved relations with downtown businesses</li> <li>- Helps alleviate some of the parks department's workload</li> <li>- Allows for skilled professional to provide consistent results</li> <li>- Allows downtown to consistently put its best face forward</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financing and permission.</li> <li>- Possible power struggle with borough.</li> <li>- Apathy.</li> <li>- Union pushback.</li> <li>- Perceived conflict of interest if DI engages EarthCraft.</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explaining the benefits</li> <li>- Getting endorsements/support from downtown businesses</li> <li>- Getting Ryan's (Borough parks/outdoor maintenance department) buy-in on the front end</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedule preliminary meeting with Ryan and Nichole to discuss by end of Jan</li> <li>- Follow steps needed to get approval from borough council / shade tree commission and follow up regularly to get answers</li> <li>- Determine financing by end of Feb</li> <li>- Obtain written permission by end of March</li> </ul>
Method of tracking progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Follow monthly goals listed above, follow up regularly as needed</li> </ul>

DESIGN
Goal: DI has a sustainable flower basket program
Benefits from achieving goal and/or losses to be avoided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enables flower baskets to be kept at optimum health for the longest period possible</li> <li>- Ensures continued return on investment</li> <li>- Allows flower program to continue sustainably for future years</li> <li>- Allows community to visibly engage in care of something they love</li> </ul>
Obstacles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not getting enough sponsors or volunteers</li> </ul>
Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting super organized and using a good software for managing volunteers</li> <li>- More outreach directly to potential sponsors</li> <li>- Set reasonable price point to fit lower budgets</li> </ul>
Action Steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Establish an Adopt-a-Basket program</li> <li>o Execute on the sponsor banner</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Watering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Establish a volunteer sign up /management process</li> <li>o Build a robust group of volunteers</li> <li>o Engage community</li> <li>o Purchase of a bigger water tank</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Planting, Hanging &amp; Removal</li> <li>- Establish a consistent calendar and plan that can easily be replicated year after year</li> </ul>
Method of tracking progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flowers are alive and well</li> </ul>



# Appendix: Strategic Planning Data

## Dreams for the Future

Participants identified dreams for the future of Downtown Indiana. Dared to dream, the individual dreams are diverse and lofty. Participants agree there are no bad ideas here!

### Eateries, pubs, retailers, and experience-oriented businesses

- No empty storefronts, home to a variety of shops, and stores full of people
- Boutique hotel
- Farm-to-table restaurant, indoor/outdoor farmer's/fresh food market, more gourmet food options
- A thriving marketplace that draws the community to shop, eat, and celebrate
- A "college" store with items from IUP, Pitt, Penn State, sorority, fraternity items
- Activities and experience-based businesses like arcades and indoor playgrounds
- Kids space, including a large venue to attract children
- "Something for everyone"

### Other businesses

- Technology-focused small businesses
- More resources for workers with locational flexibility, including workshare space for entrepreneurs, remote workers and storage units
- More generally, more opportunities for individuals and families to better themselves financially

### Arts, events, etc.

- Expand community events, especially in January-June and to include different areas of Downtown and the Borough
  - For example, build on Third Thursdays – "stroll the streets" event monthly with music, food, etc.
  - Increase collaboration with businesses for planning and executing better and more events
- Grow the art culture in Downtown
  - More cooperative events with museums and galleries
  - More promotion of live music events and events at the Theater
  - Create murals on the girders throughout the parking garage
- Plan and execute an event that draws 25,000+ people

## **Recreation and Transportation**

- Electric scooters and bike rental, particularly close to Hoodlebug trail head
- Connection to our local parks with more walkability and bike-ability; a creek walk
- Accessible infrastructure that allows kids, elderly, and vulnerable populations to move freely
- Wayfinding signage and directions throughout Downtown, including to parking garage

## **Tourism and Relocation**

- Indiana already is and further becomes a destination because of the experiences
- Indiana is well suited to be a destination for segments of the workforce looking to relocate

## **Physical Infrastructure Improvements**

- Ideas for IRMC Park
  - Close IRMC Park to traffic
  - Cover IRMC Park and/or add a pavilion
  - Add features, such as a water feature, a splashpad, and/or a fire feature
- Streetscape improvements
  - Renovate and develop the 8<sup>th</sup> street corridor, focusing on improving the physical connection to IUP
  - Extend streetscape (get rid of overhead wires, add lamp posts, trees, tree beds, benches and trash cans) to include:
    - Philadelphia Street, from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> and from Clymer Ave through 13<sup>th</sup> Street
    - South 7<sup>th</sup> Street
  - Lights outlining all the buildings in the central business district
- Streetscape maintenance
  - Better maintain streetscape, including garbage cans, tree beds, and streetlights
  - Maintain and improve buildings and facades throughout Downtown, including through a Borough ordinance requiring property owners along Philadelphia Street to maintain their properties
- Other ideas
  - Development of high-density, high-quality housing (basically, non-student and non-Section 8 housing) within the central business district
  - Continued revitalization of dilapidated properties

## Community Engagement

- Increase engagement with the Downtown Indiana organization, including through recruiting businesses, workers, and residents who are more involved in planning and executing the organization's initiatives
- Improve communication among the organizations and individuals invested in the community
  - Be a community advocate on issues like parking, borough relationships, and affordable housing for students, workforce, and senior citizens, including through the new Welcome Center
  - Expand communication of activities and offerings (who is doing and offering what)
  - Deliver best business customer service in Indiana County
- Increase the feeling of community goodwill
  - Joy on people's faces
  - Attract and plan for diverse businesses, activities and events offering experiential opportunities for all, including children and family-friendly things to do
  - Create and foster more opportunities for individuals and families to find community and quality of life through the organization's events and initiatives
  - Facilitate and support increased diversity among businesses, workers, residents, and visitors; foster harmony and acknowledge/support different people having different views and aspirations
  - Welcome and engage with all who want to help make the area memorable, inviting, and inclusive

○

# Wish List of New Businesses for Downtown Indiana

If one could wave a magic wand and produce an increase in variety and number of new businesses to Downtown Indiana, this is what the participants would want to see immediately.

- Eateries and pubs
  - Fresh food
    - Full-service bakery
    - Butcher
    - Cheese monger
    - Fresh food market
    - Upscale gourmet food store
    - Year-round farmers market
  - Prepared food
    - A LAN café
    - Farm to table restaurant
    - Ice cream shop
  - Pub
    - Adult oriented pub and/or speakeasy venue
    - Rooftop venue/a bar on the rooftop of the theater building
- Retail stores
  - Artisan store
  - Clothing store focused on affordable & upcycled clothing
  - “College” store with IUP, Pitt, PSU, fraternity, sorority items
  - Craft/sewing/yarn shop
  - Fleatiques
  - Furniture and home goods store
  - Puzzle shop and supplies
  - Toy store
  - Target
  - Equestrian equipment, clothes & supplies shop
  - Outdoor recreation/tour/adventure shop (hiking, kayak, ski)
- Experience-oriented businesses
  - Boutique hotel
  - Cigar lounge
  - Bed & Breakfasts
  - Arcade

# Analysis of Strengths, Assets, Opportunities, Threats, Concerns, and Issues

Participants gave careful consideration to identifying the pros and cons of the business district, the organization responsible for its growth, and the challenges to the vitality of both.

## Strengths

- Anchor institutions
  - Indiana Regional Medical Center
  - Indiana University of Pennsylvania
  - Regional banks' corporate headquarters
  - Unique cooperation between government parties
- Business district
  - Attractive and unique façades
  - Live music events and full calendar
  - Outdoor dining spaces
  - Sense of place dotted through town
  - Supportive community towards local businesses
  - Vibrant downtown
  - Welcoming atmosphere
- Community
  - A stable economy built on a university, hospital, and courthouse,
  - Access to recreation
  - Affordable
  - High quality of life
  - Homer City generating station
  - Invested, passionate locals
  - Safety
  - Walkability, air quality
- Downtown Indiana organization
  - Communication between DI and other nonprofit organizations
  - Tight-knit board with low drama

## Assets

- Small businesses
  - Boutiques
  - Great restaurants
- Art
  - Arts culture
  - Art galleries
  - Murals throughout Downtown

- Live music events
  - Indiana Players Playhouse
  - Indiana Theater and Indiana Theater building
- Experiences
  - Jimmy Stewart Museum
  - Indiana Free Public Library
  - Crosswalk audio welcome
  - Walking tour
- Physical infrastructure
  - IRMC Park
  - Old Courthouse clock tower
  - Historical buildings
  - Parking garage
  - Flexible spaces

## Opportunities

- Downtown Indiana organization
  - Consistent brand and messaging tone
  - Improving fundraising and sponsorship dollars
  - Pursuing and administering grants
- Community engagement
  - Improve collaboration across businesses/organizations, particularly those located in or with interest in Downtown
  - Improve and formalize communication channels with IUP and Indiana Borough through formal liaison
  - Increase promotion of Downtown businesses and events
  - Grow Downtown events, including prioritizing America 250 celebrations
- Parking
  - Parking meters can give 15 free minutes customer courtesy
  - Voucher program for the parking garage
- Physical infrastructure
  - Beautify facades
  - Redevelop and/or repurpose vacant buildings for redevelopment
  - Develop high-density, high-quality housing within the central business district
- Tourism and relocation
  - Focus more on capturing worker flexibility
  - Attract sizeable conferences and prioritize attendee experiences

## Threats

- Downtown Indiana organization
  - Lack of human resources to increase grants and funds
- Downtown businesses
  - Businesses and employees that are represented here (at the planning meeting)
  - Hours of operation for downtown businesses are not geared towards the work force
  - Lack of e-commerce friendly websites
- Community engagement
  - Disengagement of community – competing events happening outside downtown
  - Lack of communication with those who want similar improvements
- Anchor institutions
  - Declining university enrollment
  - Loss of anchor institutions (large employers like banks and hospitals)
  - Loss of high-paying jobs, generally
- Workforce
  - Work-from-home employment
  - Lack of retention of people in urban vs rural living
- Physical infrastructure
  - Lack of investment to purchase buildings like the Bown Hotel
  - Lack of appropriate housing - walkable and affordable housing for grad students, young professionals, college professors, retirees, and elderly
- Administrative/municipal
  - Zoning and ordinances for student housing
  - Food truck ordinance

## Concerns and Issues

- Business and investment
  - Frustration with businesses having accountability (lack of advertising and efforts should be proactive rather than reactive)
  - Frustration with lack of support for long-term businesses that have a potential of growth (investment and expansion)
  - Insufficient process, resources for onboarding new businesses.

- Community engagement
  - Frustration with encouraging community and collaboration
  - Frustration with encouraging volunteers and community service engagement
  - Frustration with feeling heard as people are interacting with organizations
  - Frustration with an open mindset to diversity and inclusion
  - Businesses don't read emails
    - Solution: Create a template for marketing campaigns for conversations between organizations)
    - Solution: Simplify information stream and expectations, create a central calendar, use common branding (same language throughout businesses and organizations)
  - Lack of engagement with young leaders (both those that are always involved and those who are not participating)
  - Lack of communication with students from high school, community college, IUP
- Safety
  - Rare incidences of danger from population coming from out of town

## Areas of Needed Improvement

- Downtown Indiana organization
  - Utilize consistent branding and better coordination of messaging about initiatives and events from the new Welcome Center
  - Seek and apply for available grants
- Downtown businesses
  - Improve video content for marketing
  - Coach businesses to be more involved and proactive in Downtown Indiana
- Community engagement
  - Creative collaboration and better communication
  - Stagger events that happen on the same day
  - Increase communication and engagement with IUP students – orientation meetings and events throughout welcome week
- Physical infrastructure
  - Expand the scope of the streetscape
  - Improve the information board at IRMC Park



## Trends

- Business trends
  - People want internet information quickly and before making a decision
  - Losing the lunch crowd business with a work-from-home population
  - Growing business areas, particularly outside of Downtown – Texas Roadhouse, Raising Cane's, Primanti's
- Community engagement trends
  - Everyone is coming together – “it takes a village” mindset
  - Social connection and isolation
  - Fresh ideas from local politicians
- Trends for workers
  - Instances of anxiety, depression, and burnout, as examples of mental health issues, are on the rise
- Trends for tourism
  - An increase in Airbnb's and short-term rentals in the area