City of Sharonville
Downtown Strategic Master Plan
SHARONVILLE DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN

City of Sharonville

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Sharonville’s City Council provided funding for this project.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Sharonville Downtown Strategic Master Plan (plan) was commissioned by the City of Sharonville in response to renewed interest in downtown revitalization by public officials, business owners and residents. This plan provides a vision and strategic action plan for immediate and long-term downtown revitalization.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The plan was developed in coordination with a Downtown Steering Committee (DSC). Five DSC working meetings were held to develop an overarching vision and define revitalization goal statements.

DSC members reviewed alternative plans and selected a preferred development concept - see Figure 3.1. The DSC also prioritized action strategies as found in the Action Plan - see Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

DSC membership consisted of downtown residents, property owners, business owners and public and quasi-public officials. The City formed the DSC to generate a plan that has broad-based policy support from a diverse group of downtown stakeholders.

PREVIOUS PLANNING EFFORTS

The following preceding planning efforts were reviewed and their findings informed the development of this Downtown Strategic Master Plan.

- US 42 / Lebanon Road Corridor Study, June 2002
- Main Street Reading Road Corridor. January 2001
- City of Sharonville Comprehensive Plan. November 1984

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

This plan provides immediate and long-term strategies covering a five-year implementation period. Planning updates should occur in subsequent five year intervals to analyze past actions, evaluate new conditions and reassess opportunities.

Though strategic, the Master Plan gives the city and its partners a flexible policy framework. It is recognized that implementation will occur as resources and opportunities warrant and not necessarily in priority order as defined by the plan.
Revitalization takes decades. The city must demonstrate persistence and develop partnerships with downtown business and property owners, chamber leaders, and residents. Private sector participation is essential for success. The city will likely take on a larger leadership role initially to accelerate revitalization efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION

The creation of a catalytic development organization to carry out implementation activities on the city’s behalf is essential. The framework provided an Urban Revitalization Corporation is best suited to carry out implementation in downtown. In this case, Sharonville Urban Revitalization Corporation (SURC) will act as a catalytic, not-for-profit development company focused on increasing investment in downtown consistent with Master Plan vision and goals. SURC will bring private sector leadership and solutions to the table coupled with the best in public sector economic development leadership and tools needed to remove new investment obstacles. Board members and partners need to possess development, marketing, and finance related skill sets to successfully guide SURC.

An Implementation Committee of Council is also recommended. The Implementation Committee will provide an oversight role to help move the plan forward in a timely manner.

EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

The following analysis of existing conditions laid the foundation for policy development.

Location and Boundaries
Downtown Sharonville is located on US 42 in northern Hamilton County in southwest Ohio. Downtown enjoys great regional access to I-75, approximately 1.5 miles to the west, and I-275, 1.5 miles to the north.

The outer dashed line shown on Figure 1.1 on page 8 identifies the larger study area boundaries. The solid line shown on Figure 1.1 and the adjacent graphic identifies the focus study area called the “Loop”. The Loop is named in recognition of the circular one-way street configuration created by the Reading Road and Main Street one-way pair.
Circulation and Access
US 42 connects downtown to neighboring communities and the interstate highway system including I-275 and I-71. Sharon Road connects downtown to I-75 to the west. Sidewalks are available throughout downtown but gaps are found along Creek and Walnut Streets east of Main Street. A Norfolk Southern railroad on the west side of the study area provides a planned port of entry for Ohio’s proposed 3C High Speed Passenger Rail system.

The Downtown road system utilizes a block grid system. One-way streets on Main and Reading tend to carry regional traffic through downtown and at times encourage speeding. Traffic calming measures are explored in this plan to make downtown more enjoyable for pedestrians but the one-way street configuration will stay intact.

Land Use and Land Cover
Downtown and its surroundings contain a diverse mix of public, residential, retail, office and industrial uses, as indicated on Figure 1.1. This diversity reflects downtowns historic land use pattern. Though once accepted, land use incompatibilities created by a mishmash of commercial and industrial uses can be viewed negatively by potential investors in the downtown area.

Land use, within the Loop as shown on Figure 1.2, is generally comprised of a desirable mix of “Office,” “Public” and “Commercial” uses. Notable examples include the Sharonville Arts Center, US Post Office and Anton’s Ice Cream, Already Coffee Café and Blue Goose.

Residential uses are located on the east side of Main Street within the Loop and to the east and south of the Loop.

Figure 1.2 gives an overall snapshot of building density and impervious surface (e.g., parking lots, sidewalks) and pervious surfaces (e.g., lawns, parks) locations.
Single family residential neighborhoods dominate the landscape to the east of downtown while railroad and industrial uses dominate to the west. A large Hamilton County park, Sharon Woods, offers green space and premiere recreational resources. As Figure 1.2 shows, additional green pockets exist within the study area that could be connected in the future.

**Parking**

*Figure 1.3* identifies downtown parking lot locations and their usage based on a point-in-time survey taken on Thursday, May 21, 2009 between 12:00 and 1:00 PM. The survey indicates that ample parking spaces exist to handle Noon hour activity on a typical weekday. Localized parking capacity issues may exist occasionally during peak business hours at parking lot locations shaded black on *Figure 1.3*.

Overflow parking is available on adjacent parcels but such arrangements require cooperation between neighboring business and property owners. The city also owns a large public lot located in the northwest quadrant of the Reading Road and Creek Street intersection. On-street parking is available on the east side of Main Street and in limited amounts on Reading.

**Civic Assets**

As *Figure 1.4* shows, numerous public, institutional and greenspace uses are located in downtown within walking distance defined as a five-minute and ten-minute walk. These uses are important civic assets that attract workers, residents and visitors to downtown. A major principle in urbanism is to cluster as many amenities in a concentrated area as possible. Clustered amenities create what is referred to as an “upward spiral” of businesses, sites, events, etc., that tend to attract and retain people longer over other venues that lack similar amenities. The theory is linked to economics as Americans generally spend more time and thus money in interesting, pedestrian-orientated places.
Historic Preservation

Five buildings have been identified as being historically significant and should be preserved to the extent possible. On-going maintenance is essential. Additions are acceptable provided such improvements offer a harmonious design with the original structure. These units, due to their historical significance, provide an important linkage to Sharonville’s proud past. New buildings developed elsewhere in the downtown are not required to duplicate historic architecture. Buildings that have gained a historical status include:

1. Dr. Beekley House  
2. 12 Mile House  
3. Already Coffee Café  
4. Depot Square  
5. Oddfellows Hall  
6. Arts Center

Physical Image

To the average passerby, downtown appears quaint offering a reasonably attractive setting with a handful of thriving businesses and public uses. Upon closer examination, downtown’s image suffers from an obvious mish-mash of architectural styles and varying degrees of building maintenance. The sidewalk and streetscape system is in disrepair and, combined with prominently located utility poles, diminishes downtown’s image as a première pedestrian place.

Downtown is tired looking. Building and infrastructure investment is needed. Such improvements do not change market demand but it can change market perception. Improving downtown’s physical image is a likely pre-requisite step needed to change market perception. This is not a call to spend millions of dollars on a fancy streetscape project. This section does recognize structural weakness as it pertains to downtown’s physical image.
Brand Image

Downtown exhibits repeating railroad themed elements to the extent that it creates a defacto downtown “brand” image. The following pictures taken in downtown emphasize this point.

As envisioned in Chapters 3 and 4, Downtown will be a highly developed multi-modal center where land use and multiple transportation modes are integrated in a compact urban form. Roads, highways, greenways, sidewalks, and passenger rail will converge in Downtown Sharonville. This transportation and livable community theme needs to be further developed and refined into a cohesive brand identity that is uniquely owned by the City.
Figure 1.1: Land Use

Legend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed-Use</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Home</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/Institution</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Family</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right-of-way</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study Area
- Focus Area (The "Loop")
Figure 1.2: Land Use and Land Cover

Chapter 1: Introduction

Office 32%
Commercial 23%
Institutional/Public 21%
Mixed-Use 10%
Single-Family 7%
Vacant 3%
Multi-Family 4%

Legend
- Focus Area (The "Loop")
- Sidewalk
- Parking
- Roadway
- Greenspace

Building Use
- Commercial
- Public/Institutional
- Multi-Family
- Mixed-Use
- Office
- Single-Family
- Vacant
Figure 1.3: Parking

Legend
- Parking Lot Utilization:
  - 0 - 25%
  - 25% - 50%
  - 50% - 75%
  - 75% - 100%
- Building
- Focus Area (The "Loop")

- Used 38%
- Empty 62%
CHAPTER 2
VISION, THEMES AND GOALS

This chapter defines the plan vision, overarching revitalization “themes” and goals that were developed collaboratively by city officials and the Downtown Steering Committee (DSC). Figure 2.1 summarizes the vision, themes and goals that were developed for this plan.

VISION

The vision for the plan is simply stated as “Establish Downtown as a Destination.” Though simple in form it does guide all plan recommendations towards a singular end state. Plan themes and goals detail how the vision can be achieved.

THEMES

The vision in this plan, Downtown is vibrant destination, is further expressed as three broad planning themes. Planning themes were developed after carefully analyzing downtown attributes and opportunities and constraints. Because plan themes represent a collective vision for revitalization, they are broad and timeless.

GOALS

Goals are general statements that create a bridge between the idealistic theme statements and the action-oriented tasks of the Strategic Action Plan (Chapter 4). Goals must be attainable yet ambitious in their focus.

Goals must address opportunities and constraints and work towards implementing plan themes. Goals can address opportunities and constraints by:

- Pursuing opportunities that are a good fit for downtown’s strengths
- Overcoming weaknesses to pursue opportunities
- Using opportunities to leverage strengths and overcome constraints

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Opportunities and constraints were identified and analyzed early in the planning process. They grew out of the existing conditions analysis and maps that are provided in Chapter 1. Opportunities and constraints are summarized in Table 2.1.

Opportunities reflect downtown’s positive attributes. They are current assets that can be leveraged as part of the City’s on-going revitalization efforts.
Constraints reflect downtown’s negative attributes. They are current liabilities that must be mitigated as part of the City’s on-going revitalization efforts.

**Figure 2.1: Vision Statement, Themes and Goals**

**Vision**

*Downtown is a Vibrant Destination*

**Theme A**

*A Unique Downtown Experience*

**Goal A**

A. Create a critical mass of retail activity.
B. Develop high-quality urban amenities, programming and events.
C. Create attractive downtown gateways and corridors.

**Theme B**

*A Walkable and Functional Downtown*

**Goal B**

A. Create a user-friendly downtown.
B. Encourage pedestrian-friendly development.
C. Make downtown multi-modal.
D. Calm traffic, improve access and circulation.

**Theme C**

*A Downtown with an Indigenous Market*

**Goal C**

A. Increase downtown’s daytime population.
B. Increase residential population density.
C. Brand and market downtown.
THEME OVERVIEW

Theme A: A Unique Downtown Experience
This theme describes the ideal downtown as a premiere “urban” neighborhood that offers a comfortable, livable community environment for its residents, businesses and visitors. A critical mass of revitalized area within downtown is needed before downtown can be vigorously marketed within the region. The four quadrants of the Reading Road and Creek Street intersection is a priority investment zone. A diverse, mixed-use environment is needed at this central location to give downtown legitimacy. *Table 2.1* includes the opportunities and constraint that relate to Theme A.

Theme B: A Walkable and Functional Downtown
This theme addresses several related needs to improve regional access, wayfinding, and creating a park-once-and-walk environment. Downtown is relatively easy to get to but those unfamiliar with downtown likely pass through as part of their travels or normal routines. Enhanced gateways and wayfinding to businesses and parking lots are needed to make downtown more accessible.

Pedestrian-friendly streets are envisioned with wide walks, shade trees, awnings, street furniture and traffic calming transposed against interesting urban architecture, public art and greenspace. Reading Road must present a vibrant street scene with a mix of ground floor retail, restaurants, art and niche specialty shops. *Table 2.1* includes opportunities and constraints and goals that relate to Theme B.

Theme C: A Downtown with an Indigenous Market
This theme aims to attract new residents and workers to downtown to strengthen the downtown market for retail and restaurant uses as a vibrant commerce center. Downtown, as the artistic and creative center of Sharonville, should attract additional residents incrementally as amenities are added over time. Increased residential population and density is needed to support downtown businesses during evening hours and on weekends. Additional office workers are needed to support downtown businesses during weekday working hours. *Table 2.1* includes opportunities and constraints and goals that relate to Theme C.
**COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Collaboration among the city and a broad based partner base is essential. The City cannot implement this plan alone and only a committed effort by all stakeholders is essential to realizing success. Working together may be seen as a steep challenge or as a unique opportunity to work towards a common goal.

Collaboration can take many forms. Ideally, business and property owners will be embolden by this plan and invest in downtown. Unified political support for projects can go a long way to secure funding for projects and capital improvements. Working together focuses efforts and achieves goals faster. Again, a catalytic development organization, Sharonville Urban Revitalization Corporation in this case, is essential to meeting plan goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme A: A Unique Downtown Experience</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five buildings are registered as historic structures giving downtown a connection to its past.</td>
<td>Downtown Sharonville lacks architectural character. Newer buildings do not match the style or scale of older buildings. Several buildings lack windows on at least a portion of the ground floor.</td>
<td>A. Create a critical mass of retail activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sharon Woods frontage on US 42 represents an opportunity to create an attractive parkway as the northern gateway to downtown.</td>
<td>The western frontage of Lebanon Road contains marginal uses and underutilized properties that do not present a positive northern gateway.</td>
<td>B. Develop high-quality urban amenities, programming and events.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The railroad underpass on Sharon Road west of downtown could be painted with a mural to create a western gateway to downtown.</td>
<td>Sharon Road's railroad overpasses and underpasses and heavy industry create a negative impression for those entering downtown from the west and I-75.</td>
<td>C. Create attractive downtown gateways and corridors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern entrances are generally attractive and include views of viable housing and greenspace. Creek Rd is part of an attractive greenway along Sharon Creek and terminates into Depot Sq.</td>
<td>The southern gateway, though enhanced by the City Building and gateway signage, terminates a stretch of underutilized commercial structures in Evendale and includes some poorly maintained housing on the west side of Reading Road.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area between Sharon Creek and Main St adjacent to the Reading/Sharon Road intersection provides an opportunity for gateway landscaping. Solutions could include clearing brush and moving landscaping further away from the roadway, opening views of the creek.</td>
<td>Portions of downtown are within the FEMA 100-year floodplain potentially limiting what can be done in such areas. Steep slopes hinder development east of Main Street and south of Creek Road.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There appears to be ample parking for downtown businesses. Several lots are underutilized due to vacant structures, brief peak hours of operation (e.g. the VFW hall, churches) and suburban parking ratios.</td>
<td>Most downtown businesses are not &quot;destination&quot;-oriented but are instead appointment-based.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The area around Depot Square has the potential to be a vibrant, central activity node for downtown. The square has a central location to downtown and is already surrounded by several viable retail and restaurant businesses.</td>
<td>Downtown lacks sufficient density to create a vibrant destination district. Retail is distributed over too broad of an area and many buildings are single-story and single-use. Additionally, several parking lots create dead spaces along Reading Road, the primary retail corridor.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Theme B: A Walkable and Functional Downtown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The City plans to rehabilitate downtown streetscaping.</td>
<td>On-street parking is only provide on one side of Reading and Main and is not marked on the pavement on Main Street.</td>
<td>A. Create a user-friendly downtown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-foot sidewalks along Reading Road between Cornell Road and Sharon Road provide a comfortable walking environment.</td>
<td>The width of Reading Road and Main Street combined with one-way traffic encourages speeding and detracts from pedestrian safety and comfort. Additionally, they discourage drivers from slowing down and noticing local businesses.</td>
<td>B. Encourage pedestrian-friendly development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively short blocks provide for a pedestrian-scale environment, help to calm traffic and aid circulation between Main and Reading.</td>
<td>Several newer developments have been built with buildings set back from the street and parking located in front. This creates &quot;dead spots&quot; that detract from the pedestrian ambience of downtown.</td>
<td>C. Make downtown multi-modal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ohio Hub Passenger Rail Plan includes a North Sharonville location. Such a station could have considerable economic benefit for downtown by providing a market for existing businesses and generating mixed-use transit-oriented redevelopment.</td>
<td>Narrow and/or missing sidewalks outside the Loop discourage walking to adjacent neighborhoods and community facilities. The wide expanse of the Reading Road/Lebanon Road intersection and the relatively narrow sidewalks form a hard barrier to pedestrian movement north of downtown.</td>
<td>D. Calm traffic, improve access and circulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The one-way &quot;loop&quot; system, in combination with two-way east-west streets, generally works well in moving traffic into, through and around downtown. It also contributes to downtown's identity as &quot;The Loop&quot;.</td>
<td>Excessive curb cuts on all sections of Reading Road and Main Street create numerous conflicts for automobiles and pedestrians.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There appears to be ample parking for downtown businesses. Several lots are underutilized due to vacant structures, brief peak hours of operation (e.g. the VFW hall, churches) and suburban parking ratios.</td>
<td>The municipal parking lot is underutilized, partially because it is hidden from view and partially because there is abundant private parking in downtown.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The City has developed preliminary plans to realign the Reading Road/Lebanon Road intersection and create a grade-separated railroad crossing on Reading Road.</td>
<td>Narrowing of US 42 NB to one lane creates backups and congestion on Main Street.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Theme 3: A Downtown with an Indigenous Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viable neighborhoods are located within a five-minute walk of downtown. Neighborhoods to the east include an upscale modern subdivision as well as an older neighborhood with viable older housing.</td>
<td>Neighborhoods to the south of Sharon Road show signs of deferred maintenance. Several single-family homes front directly on a busy, four-lane stretch of Reading Road with narrow setbacks and multiple individual curb cuts.</td>
<td>A. Increase downtown’s daytime population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharonville’s residential population has a relatively high median income when compared to the rest of the metropolitan area.</td>
<td>The residential population is aging and is either stable or declining.</td>
<td>B. Increase residential population density.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharonville’s daytime (employee) population is nearly double its nighttime (resident) population.</td>
<td>Downtown Sharonville is competing with several suburban downtowns as well as the Northern Lights district to attract restaurants and entertainment uses.</td>
<td>C. Brand and market downtown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown is located near several regional and local civic assets, including the Community Center, Gower Park, Sharon Woods, the City Building, and the Sharonville branch of the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Public Library.</td>
<td>Downtown lacks regional notoriety as an entertainment or leisure destination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharonville’s Convention Center and hotel concentration provides a visitor base that may benefit from downtown services and/or entertainment.</td>
<td>The city lacks a dedicated staff position to market and sell downtown.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Sharonville is a &quot;working downtown&quot; with several office and service-oriented uses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharonville already has the beginnings of a &quot;brand&quot; for its downtown, derived from the historical importance of the railroad in this community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Development Plan Chapter offers flexible policy guidance on matters of downtown land use, transportation and revitalization. *Figures 3.1 and 3.2* illustrates the preferred plan for downtown revitalization as developed by the Downtown Steering Committee (DSC) and as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council.

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Critical Mass
The plan calls for developing a critical mass of retail activity at the Reading Road and Creek Street intersection. This strategy revitalizes the center of downtown, building on a position of strength, and works outward over time. Developing a critical mass of retail activity is necessary before the downtown can be marketed as a true destination.

Increased Density
Markets grow by taking market share from competing venues or by experiencing household growth. Though both forms of market growth are encouraged, the City recognizes the need to increase mixed use commercial and residential density in downtown.

![Downtown Sharonville](image1)
![Downtown Montgomery](image2)
![Hyde Park Square](image3)
Pedestrian Amenities
It is also important to create a pedestrian-friendly “park once and walk” environment. This goal can be achieved through traffic calming, adding on-street parking, filling gaps in the street wall, developing pedestrian paths (i.e., greenways) that connect to the downtown sidewalk system and to Sharon Woods. A multi-use plaza that incorporates Depot Square is planned to cross Reading Road and continue east on Creek Street.

Train Station
The State of Ohio successfully requested grant money to develop the Ohio Hub 3C Passenger Rail System. Sharonville will receive one of eight rail stations planned for phase one development. This plan incorporates the rail station into an overall downtown revitalization strategy. The city and its partners will market land located close to the station for high density commercial and residential development.

LAND USE
The land use strategy is shown on Figure 3.1 and is summarized in the following land use designation descriptions:

Downtown Core Mixed Use
Downtown Core Mixed Use, shown as “red” on Figure 3.1, is planned along Reading Road and Creek Street. Mixed Use permits a variety of commercial and residential uses within the same building or district. Uses on the first floor are limited to retail and food service to generate ground floor activity and a vibrant street scene. Office and residential are permitted on upper stories. Non-retail uses and retail service uses that do not generate pedestrian activity should be directed to the Support Mixed Use District.
Support Mixed Use
Support Mixed Use is shown as “orange” on Figure 3.1. This designation surrounds the Downtown Core Mixed Use District on three sides. Retail and office uses are permitted as stand alone-uses or in mixed-use configurations within the same building. Residential units are permitted on upper stories. As its name implies, land use within this designation are intended to support the retail businesses found in the Downtown Core Mixed Use District.

Support/Live Work Mixed Use
Areas planned as Support/Live Work are indicated in “orange” with a black stripe on Figure 3.1. Residential, office, and retail services are permitted as stand-alone uses or in mixed use configurations within the same building. This district is the most flexible and permissive allowing the market to dictate use. The following pictures represent different “Live-Work” unit designs where the occupant owns or rents first floor commercial space and an upper story residence.

High Density Residential
High Density Residential is designated as “brown” on Figure 3.1. Higher densities are desired near Sharonville Station to support downtown’s 3C Passenger Rail Stop. Minimum densities of 15 units per acre or more are desired. Limited commercial uses such as convenience orientated retail are also permissible when developed under a master development plan.

Greenspace
A major goal of this plan is to enhance and add additional greenspace (“green” on Figure 1.3) in downtown.
Develop green corridors around the downtown following streams and stormwater drainage patterns. To further enhance downtown as a premier pedestrian node within Greater Cincinnati, add paths adjacent to streams that loop and provide a pedestrian-only access to Sharon Woods.

Develop a new downtown park immediately west of Depot Square. This park should be designed as a formal downtown park with high-quality materials and amenities. A multi-use performing arts pavilion is anticipated to house the city’s summer concert series and other events.

**TRANSPORTATION**

The Reading/Main one-way pair will remain intact although traffic calming and intersection capacity improvements are planned.

**Intersection Improvements**

North bound traffic on Main Street backs up at Cornell as motorist queue in the right-hand turn lane to access I-275 via Lebanon Road (US 42). This plan calls for one more right hand turn lane at this intersection and one additional north-bound travel lane on Lebanon Road. A boulevard treatment is also planned on Lebanon Road starting at Sharon Woods.

**Passenger Train Station**

*Figure 3.1* provides a conceptual but preferred location for the train station. *Figure 3.2* provides a conceptual development framework for the train station in downtown including pedestrian and vehicle access and parking.

Exact plans are not available at this time, but station facilities will likely be modest at first until resources are available to construct additional amenities such as connected office space, retail and concessions. Minimum station requirements include security lighting, a platform, overhead cover, ticket kiosk and parking. It is in Sharonville’s long-term interest to develop a uniquely branded station that is connected to downtown amenities and offers ample conveniences to create a comfortable environment.

Sufficient parking for automobiles and transit buses is incorporated into the conceptual plan shown on *Figure 3.2*. The station can expand as ridership and demand increase over time.
The train station has the potential of increasing investment interest on nearby properties, potentially accelerating the City’s goal of sustainable downtown revitalization. It is anticipated that people and businesses will be attracted to the station. The City must proactively work to ensure the Sharonville stop is uniquely defined. Likewise, the City must work with property owners and developers to redevelop adjacent parcels into transit-orientated uses including retail, office and residential.

**Traffic Calming**
Calming traffic on faster moving one-way streets is important to create a more comfortable and pedestrian friendly downtown. This can be accomplished by narrowing travel lanes, adding on-street parking, adding bump-outs at intersections and stopping traffic more frequently.

**Pedestrian Paths**
Add pedestrian paths where indicated as “yellow” dotted lines on Figure 3.1 to provide multiple forms of pedestrian circulation and access to storefronts, adjacent neighborhoods, the Community Center, downtown parks and broader open spaces provided by Sharon Woods.

**Vehicular Access**
Parking is a vital to the lifeblood of downtown businesses. Parking must be easy to find in ample amounts. Figure 3.1 conceptually shows the location of parking behind building fronts. Ideally, access into an interior off-street parking lot needs to be limited to one curb cut per block face. Figure 3.2 provides additional detail on how off-street parking lots are accessed and connect with cross-access easements.

**GATEWAYS**
Gateway enhancements are needed to communicate a stronger sense of arrival. Primary gateways are planned at north and south downtown entry points shown as “red dashed” lines on Figure 3.1.

Additional gateway enhancements are planned before entering downtown. The intent of these enhancements is to signal a subtle change in the landscape before entering downtown.

Examples of secondary gateway enhancements include planned improvements to the Sharon Road Bridge just west of downtown and adding a center landscape median (boulevard treatment) to Lebanon Road.
Decorative wayfinding signage incorporated in the streetscape in and before downtown can help brand the downtown, increase visual interest and direct people to one of downtown’s unique attributes.

**DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Building stock modernization is needed to overcome structural and functional obsolescence. This plan and *Figure 3.2* does not advocate demolition and redevelopment over enhancement, expansion, and adaptive reuse. It does advocate for flexibility and private sector creativity and solutions.

**Historic Preservation**

With a few exceptions, downtown’s building stock lacks architectural or historical significance. Those buildings that have been deemed significant as defined by the Sharonville community are shown on *Figure 3.2*. These structures enjoy special protection and must be preserved to the extent permitted under the law.

**Existing Buildings**

Existing building shown in “brown” are not protected. The intent of *Figure 3.2* is to show one possible development outcome where some buildings are reused/enhanced while others are demolished and redeveloped.

**New Buildings**

Proposed buildings shown in “salmon” identify infill opportunities on existing parking lots and in some cases on underutilized structures.

**Urban Design**

Collectively *Figures 3.1* and *3.2* idealize downtown’s urban form and pedestrian friendly development pattern with existing and proposed buildings placed on road right-of-way lines and parking lots located behind structures.
Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are not exact duplicates. Variability is offered to avoid a “set-in-stone” message. The intent, themes and principles are more concrete and, if applied consistent with the plan, the final outcome will resemble Figures 3.1 and 3.2.
Figure 3.1 Preferred Land Use Plan
Figure 3.2 Development Concept
CHAPTER 4

ACTION PLAN

The Strategic Action Plan tables are intended to focus City, SURC and partner implementation efforts in a focused and coordinated manner. All stakeholders should use this chapter to plan staff activities, prioritize actions, budget for capital and operating costs, and to track progress. This Action Plan is presented in table format and summarizes all plan recommendations in an easy to use format.

HIGH PRIORITY ACTIONS

Table 4.1 Prioritized Action Plan starting on page 4.2 lists “high priority” actions as prioritized by the Downtown Steering Committee (DSC).

ACTION PLAN

Table 4.2 Strategic Action Plan on page 4.3 lists actions under theme and goal statements. The table prioritizes each action; identifies leaders and partners; provides timeframes and lists available implementation tools.

Actions
Actions are steps or tasks that must be undertaken in order to achieve individual revitalization goals.

Leader
The task “Leader” identifies the key organizations that are individually responsible for implementing the identified action task. Coordination with partners is a primary duty. The designated leader is not necessarily responsible for funding but should be part of a funding solution.

Partners
The “Partners” column identifies organizations that can help with the implementation of a particular goal and action. The City must be able to approach projects on a collaborative basis given limited funding and resources.

It is for this very reason that a catalytic development corporation, Sharonville Urban Revitalization Corporation (SURC) is created. SURC will serve as the city’s development arm and as an organization that can uniquely bring both public and private solutions to the table.
Year Start (Priority)
This plan has a five-year implementation schedule. Not all actions will be implemented within this timeframe. This plan provides a flexible policy framework for implementation. Priorities can and will likely change over time. Deviations from the priorities established herein should be made only after such changes are carefully considered and all related partners mutually agree.

A prioritized approach to plan implementation is necessary because the magnitude of work outweighs available resources. The “Year Start” column assigns one of three levels of priority:

- High Priority Actions start within 2 years (shown as green on Table 4.2)
- Medium Priority Actions start within 3 to 4 years (Shown as yellow)
- Low Priority Actions start within 4 to 5 years (Shown as red)

The City, SURC and partners will pursue “High” priority actions first. “Medium” priority actions are anticipated to start about three years after plan adoption or as resources become available. “Low” priority actions will receive attention only after High and Medium priority actions are significantly underway.

Not all actions will be implemented during the five-year implementation period. Those action items remain unfinished will be re-evaluated as part of a Downtown Strategic Master Plan update.

Implementation Resources
This column describes funding, regulations and other resources that are potentially available to implement each task. A description of implementation resources is included at the end of this chapter.
Table 4.1 High Priority Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.C.3</td>
<td>Develop a downtown webpage showcasing downtown businesses, events, commercial and residential real estate availability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.A.3</td>
<td>Target businesses that are likely to succeed in downtown and invest in a recruitment and attraction program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.A.4</td>
<td>Implement creative incentives to encourage small retailers to locate to Downtown Sharonville.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.C.1</td>
<td>Create a series of gateway elements that create an arrival experience for those driving into downtown—not just entry signage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.B.1</td>
<td>Educate Sharonville officials, residents and staff on the importance of creating a pedestrian friendly downtown. Design focus must shift towards the pedestrian first and the automobile second.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.B.2</td>
<td>Modify Building &amp; Zoning Codes to support retail &amp; restaurant establishments. (Outside eating and sales, signage, beautify / screening, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.D.1</td>
<td>Work with ORDC to develop the 3C passenger rail train station in downtown Sharonville. Strive to develop the highest quality station found along the 3C route. Include ample amenities and connect the station to downtown via well defined pedestrian paths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.B.3</td>
<td>Program downtown with numerous smaller events such as summer outdoor movies and concerts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.A.1</td>
<td>Design and install wayfinding signage from the interstates and other major business districts to market Downtown and make it easier to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.B.2</td>
<td>Close Creek, Reading and Depot Square for large events and festivals. Closure will require a traffic plan and special streetscape considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.D.4</td>
<td>Develop an integrated greenway system that preserves natural features and greenspace and provides a potential pedestrian/biking linkage to Sharon Woods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.C.1</td>
<td>Undergo a branding strategy for downtown and use branded concepts in collateral material, webpage, and stationery. A transportation theme was cited frequently in planning meetings that included rail, depot, and the “loop.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.A.3</td>
<td>Encourage ground floor office uses inside the Loop but outside the downtown core.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.B.4</td>
<td>Require build-to-lines, façade transparency and articulation and rear parking. Consider adopting a concise set of downtown design guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.C.2</td>
<td>Enhance blighted/underutilized properties at Gateways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1The above fifteen high-priority actions are also included in Table 4.2 on the following page. Though not included in the list of actions prioritized by the Downtown Steering Committee, perhaps the highest priority action is the establishment of catalytic development corporation as mentioned elsewhere throughout this plan.
### Table 4.2 Action Plan – Theme 1

**Vision:** Downtown is as a Vibrant Destination

**Theme 1: A Unique Downtown Experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal A</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.A.1</td>
<td>Acquire, assemble, land bank and develop property in order to enhance retail opportunities. Hire a master developer that offers the best understanding of the project and presents sound firm and project financials.</td>
<td>City, CIC, EDO</td>
<td>HCDC, Businesses, Development Professional</td>
<td>Land Bank</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.2</td>
<td>Push infill development on existing parking lots to add additional ground floor retail activity and close gaps in the urban street wall.</td>
<td>City, SURC</td>
<td>Brokers, Chamber, Developers</td>
<td>Revolving Loan, Incentives</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.3</td>
<td>Develop a retail strategy and target businesses that are likely to succeed in downtown and invest in a recruitment and attraction program.</td>
<td>EDO, SURC</td>
<td>Brokers</td>
<td>Retail / ED Consultants</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.4</td>
<td>Implement creative incentives to encourage small retailers to locate to Downtown Sharonville.</td>
<td>Council, EDO</td>
<td>SURC, HCDC, Developers</td>
<td>Revolving Loan, Incentives</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.5</td>
<td>Identify and attract a downtown signature anchor tenant similar to Montgomery Inn in downtown Montgomery. Uses attract people, not streetscapes.</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Brokers, Consultants</td>
<td>Revolving Loan, Incentives</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.6</td>
<td>Push all new retail investment into the downtown core investment zone until a critical mass of retail is achieved.</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Revolving Loan, Incentives</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.7</td>
<td>Study possibility of adding a dinner theater train or heritage tourism train similar to Lebanon, Mason and Monroe Rail Railroad.</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.A.8</td>
<td>Reposition the bank building at Reading and Creek when available for restaurant and/or retail use.</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>Revolving Loan</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal B: Develop High Quality Urban Amenities, Programming, and Events**

| 1.B.1                   | Develop a premiere public space/park in downtown. This facility does not have to be large but use of thoughtful design and high quality materials is important. | SURC, EDO       | Hamilton Co. Parks, ODNR, Businesses | ODNR/OEPA Grants, Donations | 2.00       |
| 1.B.2                   | Close Creek, Reading and Depot Square for large events and festivals. Closure will require a traffic plan and special streetscape considerations. | SURC, Engineering | Planning                           | Events Coordinator     | 1.67       |
| 1.B.3                   | Program downtown with numerous smaller events such as summer outdoor movies and concerts. | Parks and Rec    | Arts Foundation, Chamber           | Events Coordinator     | 1.44       |
| 1.B.4                   | Commission a study to determine the feasibility of developing an outdoor performing facility in the new park that is of a regional scale. | SURC, EDO       | Arts Foundations, Consultant       | Ohio Cultural Facilities Commission | 3.11       |
| 1.B.5                   | Develop and program an outdoor performing arts facility (outdoor pavilion). | SURC             | Arts Foundation, Chamber           | Ohio Cultural Facilities Commission | 3.56       |
| 1.B.6                   | Support the art center’s idea to develop a downtown sculpture garden. | Arts Foundation  | Chamber, City                       | Artists, Design Firm   | 3.44       |
| 1.B.7                   | Work with Fine Arts Center to implement public art in downtown and other public places, including outdoor art. | Art Foundation   | SU RC, City, Chamber                | Artists, Foundations   | 2.67       |
### Table 4.2 Action Plan – Theme 1

**Vision:** Downtown is as a Vibrant Destination

#### Theme 1: A Unique Downtown Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL C:</th>
<th>Create Attractive Welcome to Downtown by enhancing Gateways and Corridors</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.C.1</td>
<td>Create a series of gateway elements that create an arrival experience for those driving into downtown—not just entry signage.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering Planning</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Design firm, TE Grant</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C.2</td>
<td>Enhance blighted/underutilized properties at Gateways.</td>
<td>Zoning, Building</td>
<td>Property Owners, Businesses</td>
<td>Marketing, Enforcement</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C.3</td>
<td>Enhance the streetscape by extending themed gateway elements throughout the loop including decorative street lights and signage.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>ODOT</td>
<td>Design firm, TE Grant</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C.4</td>
<td>Construct special (i.e., different) streetscape and road treatment at the Creek and Reading intersection to provide a strong sense of arrival at downtown’s Depot Square.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>ODOT</td>
<td>Design firm, TE Grant</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.C.5</td>
<td>Apply special paving/streetscape treatment on Creek Street to create a multi-purpose street that can be closed for special events.</td>
<td>Planning, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>ODOT</td>
<td>Design firm, TE Grant</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.2: Action Plan – Theme 2

**Vision:** Downtown is a Vibrant Destination

**Theme 2: A Walkable and Functional Downtown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL A:</th>
<th>Create A User-Friendly Downtown</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.A.1</td>
<td>Design and install way finding signage from the interstates and other major business districts to market Downtown and make it easier to find.</td>
<td>Planning, Engineering</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>TIF, Design Firm</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.2</td>
<td>Connect all parking lots via inter-parcel access agreements.</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Chamber, Property/business owners</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.3</td>
<td>Develop parking lot design standards so all parking lots have consistent use of lighting and landscaping throughout the downtown.</td>
<td>Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.4</td>
<td>Develop strong pedestrian linkages from parking lots to storefronts. Incorporate raised walks, striping and special lighting.</td>
<td>Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.5</td>
<td>Remove utility poles and other obstacles from downtown sidewalks. These poles are unsightly and potentially hazardous.</td>
<td>Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Duke Energy, Businesses</td>
<td>TE Grant</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.6</td>
<td>Provide ample pedestrian amenities such as gardens, art, flowers, attractive landscapes and benches and trash receptacles, etc.</td>
<td>Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Arts Foundation, Chamber</td>
<td>TE Grant</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.A.7</td>
<td>Relieve congestion and back-ups on Main Street by improving Lebanon Road. Add a second right turn lane on Main for Lebanon Road traffic as part of the Lebanon Road Parkway as envisioned in Strategy 1.C.4</td>
<td>Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>OKI, ODOT</td>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOAL B: Encourage Pedestrian Friendly Development**

| 2.B.1 | Educate Sharonville officials, residents and staff about this plan, particularly on the importance of creating a pedestrian friendly downtown. Design focus must shift towards the pedestrian then the automobile. | SURC, EDO | Chamber | Presentation Materials | 1.33 |
| 2.B.2 | Modify Building & Zoning Codes to support retail & restaurant establishments. (Outside eating and sales, signage, beautify/screening, etc) | Planning | Chamber | Presentation Materials | 1.33 |
| 2.B.3 | Encourage businesses on rear lots to relocate on frontage streets. | SURC, EDO | Businesses | Legal | 2.11 |
| 2.B.4 | Require build-to-lines, façade transparency and articulation and rear parking. Consider adopting a concise set of downtown design guidelines. | Planning | Chamber | Presentation Materials | 1.88 |
| 2.B.5 | Require a two story minimum in the loop to create pedestrian framing. | Planning | Chamber | Presentation Materials | 2.78 |
| 2.B.6 | Require future development to maintain consistent scale and character. Do not require themed or period architecture. | Planning | Chamber | Presentation Materials | 2.11 |
### Table 4.2 Action Plan – Theme 2

**Vision:** Downtown is a Vibrant Destination  

**Theme 2: A Walkable and Functional Downtown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL C: Calm Traffic, Improve Vehicular Access and Circulation</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.C.1 Implement on-street parking on both sides of Reading Road &amp; Main Street inside the Loop.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering</td>
<td>Businesses, ODOT, Chamber</td>
<td>TE Grant, ODOT Issue II</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.2 Reduce road lane width on Reading and Main in the loop from 12 feet wide to 11 feet wide.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering</td>
<td>Businesses, ODOT, Chamber</td>
<td>ODOT Funds</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.3 Consider installing a raised speed table at the Reading &amp; Creek intersection to slow traffic and provide a heightened sense of arrival.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Businesses, ODOT, Chamber</td>
<td>TE Grant</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.4 Transform Lebanon Road to a 5-lane parkway with a landscape center median and tree-lined greenbelts on both sides from the loop to I-75.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>ODOT</td>
<td>TIF, TE Grants</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.5 Extend downtown's block grid westward from Lebanon Road to the Sharon Creek to relieve loop road congestion and provide additional access.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Post Office, Chamber</td>
<td>TIF</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.6 Create a connector road linking Sharon Road to Walnut Road to relieve loop road congestion and provide additional access to downtown merchants and the proposed passenger rail train station.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Post Office, Chamber, ODOT, ORDC</td>
<td>TIF, State Infrastructure Bank, ODOT</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.7 Install curb bump-outs at intersections to narrow pedestrian crossings and add civic space. Start at Downtown's Core: Creek &amp; Reading.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>TIF, TE Grants</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.C.8 Close all curb cuts and limit access to one midblock entrance point on each block face when feasible. Require cross access easements.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering, Planning</td>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>ODOT Issue II, Legal</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| GOAL D: Make Downtown Truly Multi-Modal | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|
| 2.D.1 Work with ORDC to develop the 3C passenger rail train station in downtown Sharonville. Strive to develop the highest quality station found along the 3C route. Include ample amenities and connect the station to downtown via well defined pedestrian paths. | SURC, EDO | ORDC | TIF, ODOT Grants, ARRA, Private Equity | 1.33 |
| 2.D.2 Work with area transit providers to schedule bus routes and connections to and from the train station. | Planning | SORTA | Transit Grants | 2.33 |
| 2.D.3 Develop dedicated pedestrian/bike facilities that connect downtown to Sharon Woods Park path system. | SURC, Planning, Engineering | Sharon Woods | TE Grant | 2.00 |
| 2.D.4 Develop an integrated greenway system that preserves natural features and greenspace and provides a potential pedestrian/biking linkage to Sharon Woods. | SURC, Planning, Engineering | Sharon Woods | Clean Ohio | 1.67 |
| 2.D.5 Create a non-motorized connection that goes under the Sharon Road bridge. Make passage underneath the bridge more pleasant by adding lightings and attractive landscaping. | SURC, Planning, Engineering | Property Owners | Clean Ohio, Design firm | 2.00 |
| 2.D.6 Extend sidewalks into adjacent neighborhoods where missing. Add sidewalks on both sides of Creek to the Community Center. Add sidewalks on both sides of Cornell, if cost effective. | SURC, Planning, Engineering | | CDBG | 2.89 |
### Table 4.2 Action Plan – Theme 3

**Vision:** Downtown as a Vibrant Destination  
**Theme 3:** A Downtown with an Indigenous Market

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL A: Increase Downtown’s Daytime Population</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.A.1 Create unique incentives to attract an office user or users on the north side of Sharon Road, west of Reading Road.</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Chamber, HCDC</td>
<td>Legal, ED Consultant</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.A.2 Designate the area located between Lebanon and Reading Road for office redevelopment just North of the Loop.</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Property Owners</td>
<td>Legal, Comp Plan, Zoning</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.A.3 Encourage ground floor office uses inside the Loop but outside the downtown core.</td>
<td>EDO, Planning</td>
<td>Brokers</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL B: Increase Residential Population Density in and Close to the Loop</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.B.1 Allow for higher density market-rate single family attached units/condos and apartments downtown adjacent to the loop.</td>
<td>Planning, EDO</td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.B.2 Acquire and consolidate properties in and close to the Loop.</td>
<td>SURC</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Land Bank</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.B.3 Encourage or require multi-story construction inside the loop. Upper stories can be constructed for residential units and/or offices.</td>
<td>Planning, EDO</td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Revolving Loan, Incentives</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.B.4 Require adequate and dedicated parking for residential units located inside the Loop.</td>
<td>Planning, EDO</td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.B.5 Encourage live-work arrangements along east side of Main Street. Live-work units support the creative class and telecommuters.</td>
<td>EDO, Planning</td>
<td>Developers</td>
<td>Zoning, Land, Incentives</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL C: Brand and Market Downtown</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
<th>Potential Resources</th>
<th>Year Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.C.1 Undergo a branding strategy for downtown and use branded concepts in collateral material, webpage, and stationery. A transportation theme was cited frequently in planning meetings that included rail, depot, and the “loop.”</td>
<td>SURC, EDO</td>
<td>Businesses, Chamber</td>
<td>Branding Consultant</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.C.2 Incorporate iconic features of branding strategy into gateway enhancements, streetscape, signage, and banners, etc.</td>
<td>SURC, Engineering</td>
<td>ODOT</td>
<td>Design Firm</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.C.3 Develop a downtown webpage showcasing downtown businesses, events, commercial and residential real estate availability.</td>
<td>SURC</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td>Communications Firm</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.C.4 Market downtown to Sharonville Convention Center users and area hotels.</td>
<td>EDO</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.C.5 Institute a hotel concierge training program.</td>
<td>EDO</td>
<td>Chamber</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

The ingredients needed for downtown revitalization is generally constant. A strong organization with the right mix of marketing, incentives and economic development programs are always essential. Public sector leadership and investment is needed initially until market perceptions change and private sector participants engage the downtown. Getting public sector participation is the ultimate goal. The city must introduce investors, developers, and real estate professionals to downtown.

The City needs to develop an economic development organization, policy and program for revitalization based on local conditions and resources. Agreed upon incentives and programs should be used to reward development proposals that comply with plan vision, goals and recommendations.

Organization

Development Organizations. Development organizations provide leadership, remove obstacles and reduce private-sector risk until sustainable revitalization is achieved. Development organizations can be private or quasi-public. In any case, these organizations often underwrite catalytic, game-changing development projects.

In this particular case, a Community Development Corporation structure appears best suited to lead the revitalization effort in downtown. Sharonville Urban Revitalization Corporation or SURC is one possible name for such organization. These types of organizations are common in urban areas including the City of Cincinnati.

Its board members should have public sector representation but most positions need to be filled by proven private sector leaders who have development related knowledge in areas of finance, banking, marketing, real estate development, and business and are interested in downtown revitalization, ideally in Sharonville.

These leaders will combine their talents to create and oversee the operations of a not-for-private development company. This organization has the ability to hire professional help, purchase and own real property, apply for state and federal grants and finance projects.

Strategic and Capital Planning. City Council sets an overall policy directive each year for downtown revitalization. This policy should translate into annual departmental capital improvement plans and departmental strategic plan goals. Department heads need to update Council on a monthly basis.
Implementation Committee. A coordinated approach among various stakeholders is important to achieving plan goals. An Implementation Committee should be established as an advisory body to help maintain communication, coordination, and cooperation among participating interests. This body can also be tasked with keeping the city and its stakeholders focused and on schedule. Membership should consist of a broad cross section of downtown interests and development related professionals. The committee should act as public-private partnership.

Developers. Work with a master developer or a team of developers to tackle the more difficult aspects of revitalization. Developers bring skill-sets the public sector typically does not contain in-house. The City and its partners will need to provide financial and political support until such time that market conditions improve.

Networking
Network with retailers, developers and brokers. Network with retail consultants, developers and real estate brokers to learn about opportunities within the region and inform people about downtown opportunities.

Engage Local Groups. Engage civic groups such as the Downtown Business Group and the local Chamber of Commerce to become active participants in the downtown revitalization process.

Peer Groups. Network with communities that have successfully revitalized their downtowns to learn about leading revitalization practices, management strategies and market trends that could be realistically duplicated in Sharonville.

Financing
Special Assessment (SA). A SA is an additional property tax that applies to a limited geographical area and can be used to fund public improvement projects or ongoing public services that benefit the assessed properties. The assessment is charged by front foot of property, percentage of tax valuation, a proportion to the benefits received, or some combination thereof. Special assessment districts can be created voluntarily through a petition signed by property owners of at least 60% of the front footage or 75% of the area of real property within the proposed district. Alternatively, City Council can initiate an assessment without authorization of property owners. Voluntary special assessment districts can assess 100% of project costs to property owners, while involuntary (City-initiated) districts have legal limits on the assessment amounts.

The advantage of a SA is that it generates income for enhanced improvements and services in an area without relying on the City’s General Fund. The disadvantage is that a special assessment increases the tax burden for property owners.

Special Improvement District (SID). A SID is similar to a special assessment in terms of the method of tax assessment and the potential uses of revenues. The difference is that a SID
involves the creation of a non-profit organization with a Board of Directors that oversees the collection and spending of assessed revenues. Creation of a SID must be voluntary and requires the same petition as a special assessment district. A SID also requires the creation and approval by City Council of a plan for public services, improvements, and financing.

A SID has similar advantages and disadvantages of a special assessment district, but a SID permits property owners within the SID boundaries to control collection and spending of revenues.

**Bonds.** General obligation bonds are issued for a specific community projects and are paid off using property tax revenues. Revenue bonds are issued for construction of projects that generate revenues. Bonds are retired using income generated by the project.

**Tax Increment Financing (TIF).** A TIF district raises funds by capturing the incremental property tax from increases in property value over time. Existing property tax collection and distribution is frozen at current levels, while the increment is diverted to a special fund that can be used for public infrastructure improvements. The City must create and oversee a TIF district through legislation and creation of the fund to receive TIF revenues.

The advantage of a TIF district is that it generates income without relying on the City’s General Fund or increasing taxes for property owners. A disadvantage of TIF is that revenues are dependent on future property value increases and are difficult to predict unless a specific development project is underway in the district. Additionally, a TIF may divert future property tax increases from the City’s General Fund, the School District, County agencies, and other recipients of property taxes.

**Grants**

*Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and NatureWorks Grant Programs.* The Ohio Department of Natural Resources coordinates distribution of grants available for park development and land acquisition. The maximum grant for development varies from grant cycle to grant cycle. In the future, the City may wish to seek funding for acquisition of land principally for open space and natural resource preservation purposes.

*USEPA/Clean Ohio Brownfield Grants.* Federal and State grants are available to assess, clean and redevelop sites with environmental contamination. Since redevelopment is often complex and costly, these grants are highly useful in facilitating redevelopment projects that are thwarted by environmental issues including asbestos. The City must apply to the State or USEPA for these grants.
Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grants. TE grants are available from the federal government to fund a range of transportation enhancement projects, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transportation beautification projects, and historic preservation projects. The City must apply through ODOT to receive a TE grant. A potential use of TE grants would be enhancements to the historic train depot.

Historic Tax Credits. The Historic Tax Credit program is a partnership between National Park Service, Internal Revenue Service and State Historic Preservation Office. A property owner can apply through the State Historic Preservation Office to receive credits of 10% to 20% against income taxes for the rehabilitation of a historic structure. The rehabilitated structure must house an income-producing use. The Historic Tax Credit can substantially reduce the cost of restoring a historic structure. Ohio passed its own Historic Tax Credit that can be combined with the Federal version for additional savings.

Donations. Donations provide an alternative means of funding improvement. As an example, the Short North district in Columbus, Ohio has raised funds through donations of Business Association members as well as fundraising efforts of the Short North Foundation. The Short North Business Association membership has a broad membership that even includes some members who do not live or operate a business in the Short North, but have an interest in the success of the neighborhood.

The Short North Foundation is an organization that was recently created to raise money for pocket parks and enhancements throughout the neighborhood. Managers of the organization have been trained in fundraising tactics and have already successfully implemented several projects.

Development

Development Agreements. Although there is no explicit legislative authority for such agreements, many communities have used development agreements to achieve a mutual understanding between the developer and community concerning the conditions under which development can occur. Development agreements are often negotiated as part of a planned development or redevelopment project allowing the community and developer to address complex issues that cannot be adequately addressed on a typical site plan. Development agreements might prove useful to achieve desired developments, especially if or when a mixed use development is proposed.

Shared Parking Access Easements. An access easement allows public access to parking on private property. Access easements, combined with improved signage will formalize and facilitate a shared parking arrangement and improve the convenience for visitors.

Zoning. Amendments to existing districts of creation or new mixed use districts and/or overlay districts may help to implement land use-oriented tasks in the Strategic Master Plan.
Zoning that permits or even requires transit-oriented design around the proposed train station is an example.

**Marketing and Recruitment**

*Collateral Material.* Collateral materials provide concise information regarding plan vision and goals; economic development programs and incentives; and contact information. A brochure with plan goals and policies would make an attractive alternative to the full plan for distribution to the regional development community.

*Training of hotel concierges.* Neighborhood leaders in locations such as the Short North in Columbus have found success in working with concierges in nearby hotels to help in marketing the district. Armed with the proper information, hotel concierges can become a valuable resource by explaining to hotel guests the businesses and amenities that are available in downtown. Concierges can help to steer visitors towards downtown.

*Small Business Incubator.* Economic development professionals and downtown business managers find it difficult to “recruit” successful independent businesses found in other downtowns. Recruitment of chain establishments can pump life into a downtown, but too many can erode a downtown’s uniqueness and inflate rents.

An alternative approach is to grow businesses rather than recruit them. Building relationships with small business incubators may help to steer successful start-ups toward downtown.

*Ohio Small Business Development Center (SBDC).* Another potential source of small, independent businesses, as well as a source of help for existing businesses, is the Ohio Small Business Development Center at the Hamilton County Development Corporation. The SBDC was created to provide ongoing consultation, educational, research, and informational services to existing small business owners and potential entrepreneurs. SBDC’s provide consulting services such as:

- Start-ups
- Finance and Accounting
- Marketing
- Sales and Advertising
- Operations Management
- Government Procurement
- Business Law
- International Trade
- Human Resource Management

**OTHER INCENTIVES**

*Facade Improvement Program.* A Downtown Facade Improvement Program is designed to stimulate private investments that contribute to a higher quality downtown aesthetic. Facade Improvement Programs offer low interest loans and/or grants for qualifying applicants. Grant or loan amounts typically range from $5,000 to $15,000 and require a dollar for dollar local match. Some communities also provide a combination of loans and grants.
Revolving Loan. Revolving loans provide below market interest rates to qualified businesses. Funding should be linked to businesses with solid financials and sound business plans that have strong potential to meet downtown revitalization goals. Programmatic and underwriting requirements need to be determined before a revolving loan program is established. A wide range of revitalization activities could qualify under such a program including higher density residential construction, purchase of capital equipment, jobs creation, façade improvements, interior improvements, and parking, etc.

Revolving funds can be and often are used in conjunction with grants or to leverage grant dollars, particularly when grants have low maximum ceilings. Loan dollars are typically seeded by the originating entity – in this case the City or SURC. The loan pool can be opened to private investors. Investors will receive a small rate of return but long term benefits can enhance investment value such as increased property values and improved business. The loan pool can grow as payments are made over time. Findlay, Ohio recently created a revolving loan fund that was seeded by the State of Ohio. Local philanthropists and investors added additional funds. Investors in the fund meet monthly to consider business requests for funds.

Linked Deposit Accounts. A linked deposit account requires public backing, pre-approved financial institution participation and credit worthy applicants to apply for business loans. The City or SURC purchases a certificate of deposit from a financial institution and accepts a lower rate of return which in turn is used to buy down the interest rate charged to the business loan applicant.

Job Creation Tax Credit. Job creation tax credits are attractive because they provide additional revenue to businesses depending on the number of jobs that are created over a specified period. The purpose of the tax credit is to incent businesses who grow or locate new jobs in downtown.

Public Wi-Fi. Numerous communities across the country have established public domain Wi-Fi hot spots as an economic development tool. The system can be provided free of charge or paid through nominal fees charged to the consumer or businesses located in the hot zone.

Property Acquisition. Public ownership of land, controlled by the City or a Community Improvement Corporation, can serve as a powerful revitalization tool. Downtown development, with numerous small lots and property owners, is more difficult than suburban, large lot development. The intent is to assemble development parcels and convert land into a more productive use.

Acquired land assembled into development parcels can be used for public purposes such as libraries, parks and parking lots. Development parcels can also be used to attract developers to downtown. Property acquisition undertaken by the city or SURC removes private sector obstacles including uncertainty, prolonged development schedules and increased property carry-costs.

Property ownership also gives the public sector leverage to expect a specified level of performance in terms of land use and building design. Property can be used as a finance contribution to help underwrite the overall development, sold at a discount or even gifted as an incentive.
The city should explore establishing a land-bank program that takes advantage of streamline tax default foreclosures pursuant to the Ohio Revised Code.

*Waive Permit Fees.* Some communities waive or refund part or all of the development fees charged by the local government as an additional incentive to attract businesses downtown. This can be done on a case by case basis or in all cases that meet minimum criteria.