



Indiana Main Street Transformation Strategy

Columbia City Connect

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Joi Austin
Senior Program Officer for
Revitalization Services



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About Main Street America

Main Street America has been helping revitalize older and historic commercial districts for more than 35 years. Today it is a network of more than 2,000 neighborhoods and communities, rural, suburban and big cities, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Main Street America is a program of the nonprofit National Main Street Center, Inc., a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Since 1980, over 2,000 programs have used the Main Street Approach, our time-tested framework for community-driven, comprehensive revitalization. Main Street America conducts research to document our impact by annually collecting statistical information on the preservation, revitalization, and economic activities in local Main Street programs throughout the country.

About the Main Street Approach

The Main Street Approach™ is Main Street America’s framework for community revitalization. Centered around Four Points (see below), the Approach offers community-based revitalization initiatives with a strategic, adaptable framework for downtown transformation that is easily tailored to local conditions. The Main Street Approach underwent a refresh in 2015 to become more responsive to economic context, strategy-driven, and outcome-oriented.

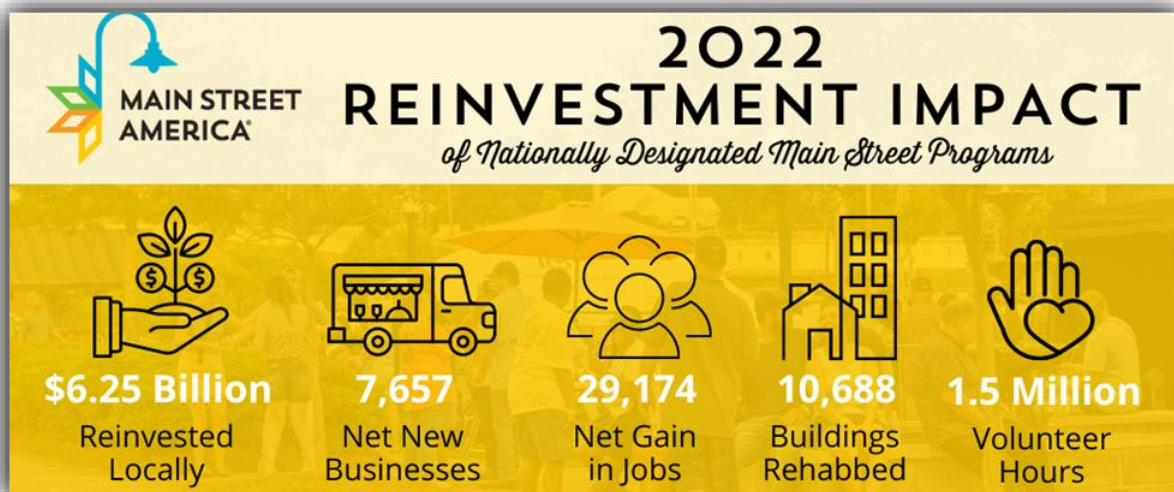


Every community has a unique set of place-based assets, anchors, and consumer markets that contribute to a healthy business district. Leveraging those assets through a targeted economic development strategy requires a thorough understanding of the marketplace. One of the best ways to help retain existing businesses and recruit new ones is to prepare information about your existing customer base and better understand potential new customer segments that could be served by your

business district. Your local commercial revitalization program provides an important benefit by developing a comprehensive analysis of the district market that aligns community vision and consumer data with strategies that drive the organization’s revitalization programming. Through the Main Street Approach, we work together with organization leaders to understand market data and develop comprehensive strategies to deliver comprehensive Main Street transformation. This approach accomplishes several goals:

- Builds local knowledge and understanding of your district’s economy to create a foundation for successful revitalization;
- Identifies current strengths of the business mix and existing business clusters;
- Supplies relevant consumer data to the revitalization program so it can help existing businesses become stronger;
- Identifies opportunities for future business attraction and business cluster expansion; and
- Builds a strategic framework for niche development, including real estate development, business development, promotions, marketing, branding, etc.

This philosophy is encompassed by the Main Street Approach Refresh. At the core of the new Main Street Approach are economically grounded “Transformation Strategies.” These Strategies articulate a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing a downtown or commercial district’s economy. They are informed by a solid understanding of local and regional market data and sustained and inclusive community engagement. Most activities within an organization’s annual workplan as part of the Main Street Approach should then be guided by Transformation Strategies and aligned with a direction and outcome. As part of our technical assistance, and to help make the new format easier to adopt, the National Main Street Center developed nearly 20 “off-the-shelf” strategies, known as Catalyst Strategies, that can be employed in a range of conditions across a variety of communities. These are, essentially, ready-made Transformation Strategies.



About Indiana Main Street

Since 1985, the Indiana Main Street Program (IMS) has been helping communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts using the National Main Street Four Point Approach, which encourages revitalization built around a community's unique heritage and attributes. Using local resources and initiative, the state program helps communities develop and provides support for the implementation of their own strategies to stimulate long-term economic growth and pride in the heart of the communities' downtown or commercial core.

In 2005, the IMS Program transitioned to the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, where it is currently managed. IMS provides access to information, help getting focused, and community support and guidance to individuals and organizations interested in downtown revitalization. It also serves as a general clearinghouse for the latest tools and techniques in downtown development. General information, project development assistance information, and other resource materials are also available. The state program is a partner, but true revitalization success is built squarely on local commitment, initiative, and follow-through.

The Indiana Main Street program support of its designated local IMS programs has resulted in significant investment and economic growth from the bottom-up in Main Street districts. Since 1985, Indiana Main Street communities have achieved:

5,723 NET new & expanded businesses
33,602 NET full and part-time jobs
\$3.9 billion in private reinvestment
\$2.4 billion in public reinvestment
10,823 building improvements
9,226 New construction
3,734 Public Improvement projects

Purpose of Transformation Strategy Visit

A Transformation Strategy service is provided by Indiana Main Street in partnership with Main Street America. The purpose is to give the local Executive Director, Board Members, committees, and city leaders, an opportunity to:

- (a) Digest community wide survey results
- (b) Understand current market data and trends through analysis
- (c) Gather feedback through focus groups of organization leaders, partners and stakeholders
- (d) Utilize all information collected to develop a strategy or strategies to guide program work

Visit Overview

Indiana Main Street in partnership with Main Street America met with Columbia City staff, board, partners and stakeholders as a part of their overall downtown strategic planning. Columbia City distributed a community-wide survey ahead of the visit, which was reviewed with staff and board members. Onsite interviews were conducted with staff, board, committee members, city leadership and elected officials, as well as property and business owners. The purpose of the onsite interviews was to gather input to understand current perceptions of, as well as future vision for the district.

Day one of the visit consisted of staff and board member review of survey and market data, community tour and focus group meetings. Day two consisted of a final debrief of all direct input received along with a recommendation for Transformation Strategies, which were determined by market-based research, business/asset inventory and community input. Further discussion of implementation through existing and new workplans took place, as well as a discussion on district boundaries to capture reinvestment statistics, which was also guided by existing TIF district boundaries.

From the visit, Indiana Main Street and Main Street America may also find more ways to work with district leadership to work towards a community-driven, implementable plan.

Key Observations

Overall:

- + Striking a balance between preserving historical foundations and fostering innovation is paramount for sustainable community development.
- + Business vitality is not merely economic; it's an integral part of the community's narrative, necessitating strategic retention and progressive outreach.
- + Aesthetic enhancements serve as visual affirmations of the town's identity, requiring detailed design guidelines and preservation practices.
- + Events and programming transcend recreation; they are strategic investments in the town's cultural capital.
- + Collaborative marketing and resource alignment form the foundation for sustainable economic development, emphasizing both the uniqueness of existing businesses and the potential for growth.

Organization:

- + The data emphasized the importance of partnership cultivation through intentional collaboration to align with partners and promote equitable small business development.
- + Advocacy for funding mechanisms for economic development initiatives was also highlighted. Additionally, the focus is on building more resources for existing businesses, fostering an inclusive environment, and aligning with economic development partners.
- + The data also suggests improvement for engaging with business and property owners to understand and develop resources for business retention, recruitment, and property maintenance and development.
- + The Main Street organization is a crucial player, providing online resources and fostering business connections. Yet, awareness gaps and communication challenges hinder its full impact.

Economic Vitality:

- + The downtown community has witnessed a notable surge in momentum, attracting visitors from neighboring cities and successfully hosting events like First Friday. Despite this positive trend, there's a recognized need to cater more to the younger demographic and teenagers, prompting a call for additional restaurant options.
- + Small businesses form the backbone of the community, and there's a keen interest in retaining existing enterprises. Efforts are directed toward the development of retention resources, while the acquisition of new customers remains a priority.
- + Property owners are encouraged to take stock of building conditions and consider alternative uses, particularly exploring opportunities for upper-story housing. The downtown vision includes not only an expansion of business hours to create a vibrant nightlife but also a strategic business mix for effective retention and recruitment.
- + Noteworthy success stories, such as Chapman's, underscore the importance of family-owned businesses and their historical connection to the community. Chapman's, starting from humble beginnings, highlights the potential for organic growth and development.
- + Looking ahead, the community envisions a gathering space, possibly an amphitheater, fostering a sense of unity. Downtown restoration and population growth are key goals, with proposals for a Food or Beverage tax in 2024 to fund park development. Placemaking initiatives, including noise reduction and streetscape improvement, aim to enhance the overall experience.
- + The responsibility for downtown's cleanliness falls on property owners, addressing issues such as dog waste. Available resources, ranging from façade grants to building structural grants, provide avenues for improvement. The community's interaction with government agencies, seeking support for small businesses through grants and upgrades, reflects a collaborative effort toward growth.
- + The downtown community is navigating a positive trajectory, focusing on inclusivity, business diversity, and infrastructure improvement. The interplay between local businesses, property owners, and government resources forms the foundation for a vibrant and sustainable downtown landscape.

Design:

- + Downtown stands as a testament to a collective commitment to preservation, with ongoing efforts to adhere to design guidelines in lighting, pedestrian spaces, and historic preservation practices.
- + Murals and pocket parks contribute to a sense of pride evident in the expanding clean-up days and the thoroughfares leading into the downtown core.
- + Navigating downtown is a deliberate experience, as reflected in wayfinding initiatives. Advocacy for responsible parking and an educational push against speeding underscores prioritization of safety.
- + Investment in infrastructure highlights dedication to walkability, supported by consistent signage, well-maintained sidewalks, and ongoing curb repairs. The built environment is not just a canvas for progress but a reflection of a commitment to preserving the essence of their community's history.
- + Additional trees and plantings are underway, which adds a touch of nature to the landscape.
- + There is pride in the limited vacancies, events like First Friday and Third Thursday, and the diversity of businesses. The movement toward downtown residential spaces signifies a positive shift.
- + Businesses choose downtown because of the support, community bonds, and a genuine desire to make a difference. Challenges persist, ranging from workforce issues to infrastructure gaps and funding constraints. However, their collective resolve remains unwavering.
- + Transforming the jail into a restaurant or mixed-use space is not just an opportunity for revitalization but a symbol of a forward-thinking approach. The downtown revitalization plan, with its grand vision of residential spaces and inviting gathering spots, promises a great future.

- + The community, eager for growth, faces workforce challenges, infrastructure needs, and funding gaps. Decision-making for building owners is nuanced, requiring careful consideration.
- + Resources like RFL from the Regional Partnership and Brightpoint's microloans are leveraged, however, challenges in communication and resource awareness persist, with the SBDC being an untapped resource.
- + Stability and rehabilitation of buildings for modern achievements pose hurdles, particularly concerning upper-story barriers such as funding, local ownership, and ADA compliance. Overcoming these challenges demands creative solutions, including architectural renderings to help the community visualize the potential of these spaces.
- + Critical to the progress are key resources such as façade grants, the revolving loan fund for primary building improvements, and support from the Capital Improvement Committee. These resources, though facing financial constraints, remain indispensable in driving the downtown revitalization effort.

Promotion:

- + The downtown community has undergone a transformative journey marked by a series of inclusive events catering to diverse demographics. These gatherings, extending into fall and winter, have fostered a sense of unity and vibrancy within the community. The extension of the First Friday atmosphere throughout the month, coupled with an emphasis on family-friendly and affordable experiences, has played a pivotal role in shaping the downtown as an accessible and welcoming space.
- + The collaborative marketing and promotional efforts with the business community, notably the Downtown Directory project, have successfully enhanced accessibility. This collective approach has not only spotlighted existing businesses but also underscored the wealth of resources available within the downtown area, fostering a strong sense of community pride.
- + Programming has been a cornerstone of the downtown revitalization, with an intentional focus on providing affordable or free family-oriented events rich in arts and cultural offerings. Initiatives such as beautification projects, First Fridays, and the introduction of new restaurants have contributed to a low vacancy rate, reflecting a community that is not only growing but doing so with a commitment to cultural enrichment.
- + Success, for community leaders, goes beyond economic indicators. It entails a downtown where every storefront is animated, offering a diverse mix of businesses that cater to varied interests. Thoughtful expansion, including the imaginative use of second and third floors for housing, is seen as integral to this vision.
- + What sets the downtown apart are the distinctive features like the renowned First Friday events, vibrant murals, and the seasonal Farmers Market. The courthouse and government functions further contribute to the unique fabric of the community.
- + Looking to the future, the downtown plan aims to gain traction despite budget constraints. Initiatives like wayfinding signs, downtown kiosks, and the activation of more winter events are in the pipeline. Collaborative efforts with Main Street continue to be a focus, emphasizing the unique architectural features that can transform the downtown into a destination comparable to larger cities like Fort Wayne. Overcoming the historical tendency to "roll up the sidewalks at 5 pm" is a priority, encouraging activities throughout the evening.

How to Use This Report

Main Street America's Transformation Strategy Report aims to guide the reader through our Four-Point Approach. It is more responsive to the economic context, community input, and how outcomes are directly measurable to revitalizing the district. One of the best ways to understand how your district is performing, help retain existing businesses, and recruit new businesses is by preparing information about the specific customer base that is currently being served and who could be served by the downtown main street district. This report looks at the following factors that help the main street program develop a comprehensive analysis of the downtown that aligns vision and consumer data with catalyst strategies that drive revitalization programming.

- Create a foundation for successful revitalization by tapping into local knowledge to understand the district's economy;
- Identify current strengths of the business mix with existing business clusters;
- Supply relevant and up-to-date consumer data to the local revitalization organization so it can help existing businesses become stronger;
- Identify opportunities for business attraction, district programming, and business expansion;
- Build a strategic framework for market niche development, including real estate development, business development, promotions, marketing, and branding, etc.

The transformation strategy can serve as the foundation of the revitalization program's work. Most activities in the local revitalization program should be guided by the recommended transformation strategy and aligned around an agreed direction and outcome.

Please remember the following:

- **Stay on the same page** — As new partners and volunteers come onboard, communicate how you got here.
- **Understand the market** —As the local revitalization program pursue new businesses and customer segments, refer to the market data.
- **Vet new project ideas** —Do they fit/reinforce identified transformation strategy?
- **Inspire** —Use this report and previous reports, case studies, and best practices to inspire when you get stuck.

Community Survey Results

For Columbia City, a survey was employed to gather input from residents, businesses, and key stakeholders from the community. Columbia City, with the help of various partners, received 524 responses.

Questions were geared toward surfacing attitudes about the downtown, challenges and opportunities the downtown is facing, desired business types and attitudes and perceptions about Columbia City. The following represents an analysis of those responses. An excel spreadsheet with each survey response is provided in the delivery of this report.

Why a survey?

Community Survey | Open to anyone who might live, work, or visit downtown Columbia City. The purpose of the survey was to obtain information, seek knowledge people possess about the district, understand community attitudes towards the district, find out shopping preferences, and learn when, why, and how often people visit the district.

What one word comes to mind as you think about things you like about downtown?



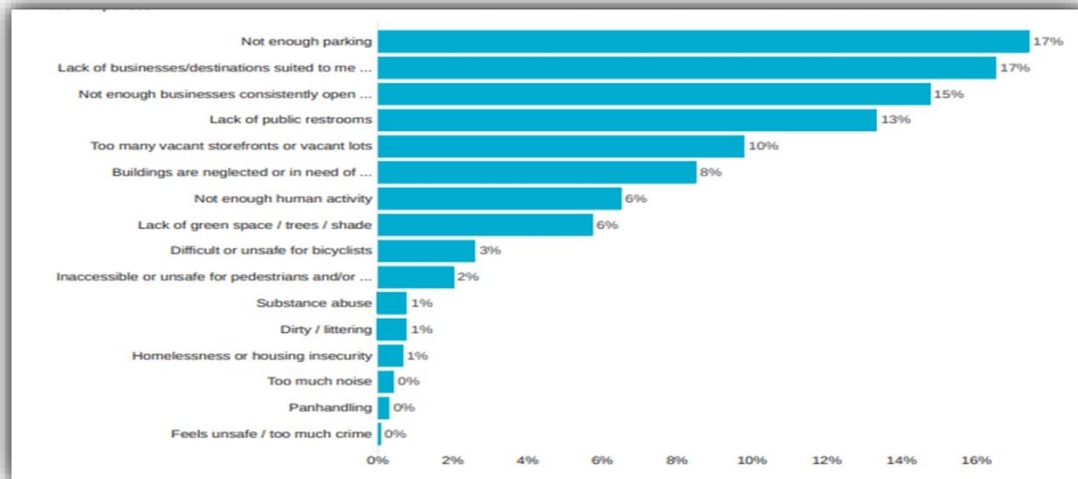
Analysis | Top words are community, friendly, small, clean, and quaint. Most respondents associated one or more positive attributes with Downtown Columbia City with an emphasis on design elements.

What one word comes to mind as you think about things you dislike about downtown?

Analysis | The top words are parking, bore [boring], traffic, restaurant, and nothing. Most respondents associated multiple attributes with Downtown Columbia City’s promotional/perceptual elements, though it is notable many respondents could not think of anything they disliked, hence the response “nothing”.



Which of the following are issues in Downtown Columbia City?



Analysis | When analyzing the overall rankings, the top concerns are:

1. **Not enough parking 17%**
2. **Lack of businesses/destinations suited to me 17%**
3. **Not enough businesses consistently open 15%**
4. **Lack of public restrooms 13%**
5. **Too many vacant storefronts or lots 10%**

The data suggests that the primary concerns for the surveyed population revolve around the accessibility and vibrancy of their local area. Topping the list, both at 17%, are concerns related to parking availability and the lack of businesses or destinations that cater to individual preferences. These concerns indicate a desire for convenient and tailored experiences within the community, highlighting the importance of local amenities and services that align with residents' needs and preferences. Additionally, the third-ranking concern, at 15%,

underscores the significance of consistent business hours, implying that residents value a reliable and dependable local business environment.

The lower-ranked concerns, such as the availability of public restrooms and the presence of vacant storefronts or lots, though less prominent, still reflect the community's focus on the overall livability and attractiveness of their area. The importance placed on public restrooms indicates a concern for basic amenities, while the mention of vacant storefronts or lots at 10% suggests a desire for a thriving and visually appealing local business landscape. Overall, this analysis suggests that residents prioritize a well-rounded and vibrant community environment, emphasizing the need for effective urban planning and management to address these concerns and enhance the overall quality of life in the area.

How serious a challenge are these issues in Downtown Columbia City?

Analysis | Using responses from the previous question regarding issues in Downtown Columbia City, the seriousness of those issues is also considered. When analyzing the overall rankings, the weighted average shows:

1. **Lack of businesses/destinations suited to me 31%**
2. **Not enough parking 21%**
3. **Not enough businesses consistently open 17%**

The weighted average analysis of the responses regarding issues in Downtown Columbia City provides valuable insights into the perceived seriousness of these concerns. Topping the list with a substantial weighted average of 31% is the lack of businesses or destinations suited to the individual respondents. This indicates that residents not only identify this as a primary concern but also perceive it as a particularly serious issue, emphasizing the importance of having a diverse range of businesses and destinations that cater to the diverse preferences of the community.

Following closely is the issue of insufficient parking, with a weighted average of 21%. While this remains a significant concern, the lower weighted average compared to the lack of suitable businesses suggests that residents may view parking challenges as slightly less severe in comparison. Additionally, the third-ranking concern, with a weighted average of 17%, is the insufficient consistency in business hours. This underscores the residents' perception that a reliable and dependable local business environment is crucial, though it is slightly less pressing than the top two concerns. This weighted average analysis not only identifies the key concerns but also provides a nuanced understanding of the perceived severity, aiding in prioritizing and addressing these issues effectively for the community's betterment.

What three business types would you like to see more of Downtown?

Analysis | **Family entertainment 12%; Casual or family restaurant 10%; Bookstore 9%**

The responses to the question regarding desired business types in Downtown Columbia City shed light on the community's preferences for enhancing the local environment. Topping the list with 12% is the desire for more family entertainment options, reflecting a clear demand for recreational and leisure activities that cater to a broad audience. This suggests a community focus on creating a vibrant and

family-friendly atmosphere in the downtown area, aligning with the earlier identified concerns about the lack of businesses and destinations suited to individual preferences. The second most preferred business type, at 10%, is a casual or family restaurant, reinforcing the importance of communal spaces for socializing and dining. This aligns with the overall theme of fostering a family-friendly environment and indicates a desire for diverse culinary options that cater to various tastes and preferences.

The desire for a bookstore, ranked third at 9%, underscores the community's appreciation for intellectual and cultural amenities. This aligns with the broader desire for a well-rounded and engaging downtown experience, where residents seek not only entertainment and dining but also spaces that promote learning and literary engagement.

These preferences for family entertainment, casual dining, and bookstores reflect a community vision for a multifaceted downtown area that caters to diverse interests and contributes to a lively and thriving local atmosphere.

The following questions are regarding shopping.

What day of the week for you most frequently shop? What time of day do you most frequently shop (not just in Downtown Columbia City)?

Analysis | The data on preferred shopping days in Downtown Columbia City provides valuable insights into the community's scheduling preferences and can inform local businesses and city planners equally. The overwhelming preference for Saturdays, with 51%, indicates that the weekend is a key focal point for residents to engage in downtown shopping activities. This aligns with the earlier identified desire for family entertainment and casual dining, suggesting that weekends are pivotal for creating a vibrant and lively atmosphere that caters to a broad range of interests. This information can guide businesses to strategically plan events, promotions, and activities on Saturdays to maximize community engagement.

The significant preference for Sunday and after 5 pm (33%) any day of the week implies a recognition that residents appreciate and desire shopping options during non-traditional hours. This insight is crucial for businesses and local authorities to consider when establishing or adjusting operating hours, potentially tapping into a market segment seeking evening and Sunday shopping experiences. The varied preferences throughout the day also suggest that a diverse range of activities, from morning shopping to late-night outings, can be accommodated to cater to different schedules within the community.

In summary, understanding these preferences allows for targeted strategies to enhance the downtown experience, fostering a dynamic and accommodating environment for residents and visitors alike.

The following questions are regarding housing downtown.

Would you like to see more housing available in Downtown Columbia City?
If not, why not?

Analysis | The data on residents' preferences regarding additional housing in Downtown Columbia City reveals a notable uncertainty, with 42% expressing indecision. This suggests a complex sentiment within the community. The 31% who oppose more housing may indicate a segment of the population with strong reservations, potentially related to existing challenges such as parking or concerns about the vibrancy and character of the area. On the other hand, the 26% in favor of more housing signals a willingness among a significant portion of the community to explore opportunities for residential expansion downtown.

When examining what factors would make living downtown more attractive, the responses emphasize the importance of a lively and engaging environment. The desire for more things to do and places to eat/shop, at 17%, underscores the community's interest in a diverse and dynamic downtown experience. The preference for businesses that are open more often or into the evening (12%) aligns with the earlier identified concerns about business consistency and contributes to the overall goal of creating a vibrant and accessible living environment. Additionally, the desire for more parking (11%) and more affordable housing (10%) suggests that practical considerations, such as convenience and affordability, play key roles in influencing the attractiveness of downtown living.

Addressing these preferences could contribute to a more appealing downtown residential experience, considering both lifestyle and practical considerations.

The following questions are regarding occupation or employment, residence, age, ethnicity, and gender of participants.

Relationship Analysis | The data suggests a diverse and active engagement with Downtown Columbia City. A significant 76% of respondents report regular visits, indicating a strong connection to the area. Furthermore, 18% reside downtown, reflecting a substantial residential presence. The 12% who work downtown highlight a mixed-use environment, suggesting that the area is not solely a residential hub but also serves as a place of employment. The frequency of visits is notable, with 49% visiting weekly, 28% daily, and 15% monthly, emphasizing the dynamic and consistent use of the downtown space. This data indicates a vibrant community with a blend of residential, commercial, and recreational activities contributing to the overall vitality of Downtown Columbia City.

Security Analysis | The overwhelmingly positive response, with 91% expressing feeling welcome, comfortable, and safe in Downtown Columbia City, underscores a sense of community satisfaction and well-being. This consensus reflects a generally inclusive and secure atmosphere, serving as a crucial foundation for the downtown area's growth and vitality. While the survey didn't delve into specific

factors that would enhance this positive sentiment, the high agreement suggests an overall appreciation for the current state of Downtown Columbia City. However, a more nuanced understanding emerges from additional responses, revealing specific concerns and improvement opportunities. Respondents express a desire for increased diversity, representation, and inclusivity, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community. Concerns about police presence, political climate, and town leadership highlight a yearning for a more diverse, inclusive, and open-minded environment. Addressing these issues through proactive community engagement and inclusive strategies could further enhance the welcoming and comfortable atmosphere, fostering a sense of belonging and safety for all residents and visitors.

Age Analysis | The data indicates the age distribution of a given population, revealing that 28% fall within the 35-44 age range, making it the most prevalent demographic. Following closely, 23% belong to the 25-34 age group, contributing significantly to the overall distribution. The 45-54 age range constitutes 20%, indicating a substantial presence, while the 55-64 and 65-74 age groups make up 12% and 10%, respectively. This distribution suggests a relatively balanced representation across various age brackets, with a notable concentration in the mid to late thirties and early forties. The data implies a diverse age structure, possibly reflecting a broad and inclusive dataset capturing a range of life stages within the population.

Gender Analysis | The gender distribution data from respondents in Downtown Columbia City provides insights into the demographic makeup of the community. With 75% identifying as women, most survey participants are female, suggesting that women play a significant role in shaping the perceptions and experiences reflected in the survey responses. The 20% of respondents identifying as men indicate a notable but lower representation. Additionally, the 4% who prefer not to answer and 1% identifying as non-binary highlight the importance of respecting diverse gender identities and preferences within the community. This gender breakdown should be considered when addressing concerns and aspirations raised in the survey, ensuring that any community development initiatives are inclusive and responsive to the varied perspectives and needs of all genders in Downtown Columbia City.

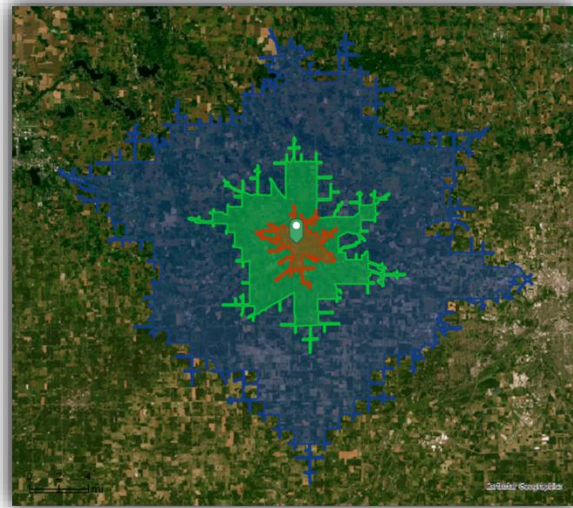
Race & Ethnicity Analysis | The racial and ethnic identification data in Downtown Columbia City reflects a predominantly white demographic, with 89% of respondents identifying as such. The 6% who prefer not to answer emphasize the importance of respecting individual privacy and choices in disclosing personal information. The distribution of the remaining 5% across various ethnicities—1% each for Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, Asian, and Other—underscores a degree of diversity within the community. While the majority identifies as white, recognizing and addressing the perspectives and needs of the 11% who identify as non-white is crucial for creating inclusive community initiatives that consider the varied experiences and aspirations within Downtown Columbia City.

Market Overview

The market overview section evaluates the market based on trying to ascertain the inherent competitive advantages of downtown Columbia City.

Together with community input, as well as current place-based assets and anchors we can develop Transformation Strategies. The following represents summary charts of collected market data based on a series of 3 drive times (5 min., 10 min., and 20 min).

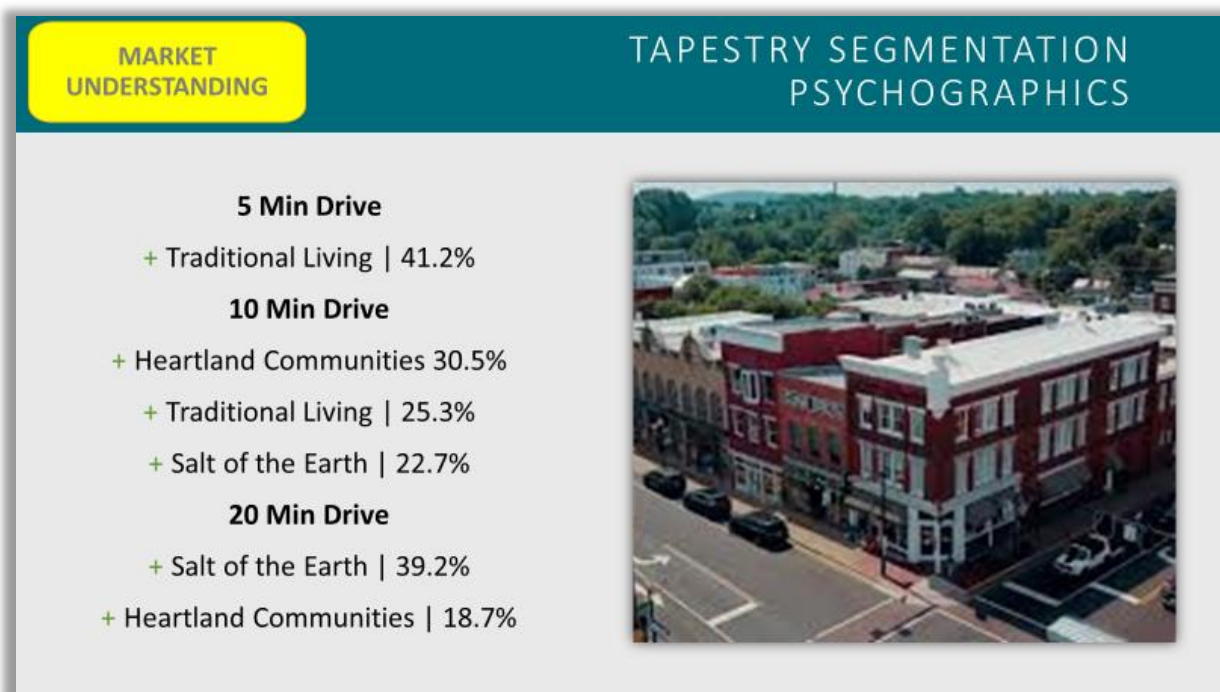
All comprehensive data provided to the local program. Map is where data was extracted.



Analysis | ESRI reports, and census data show relatively stable household incomes and household size across 5-, 10- and 20-minute radiuses. The strengths identified in Downtown Columbia City, such as average and above-average median household income within a 10–20-minute radius compared to Indiana statistics, highlight the economic vitality of the area. The escalating per capita income within a 5–20-minute radius further underscores the economic growth potential. Additionally, the concentration of the city population within a 5-minute radius suggests a central hub that can serve as a focal point for community development. However, the weaknesses, particularly higher unemployment closest to downtown, indicate a need for targeted strategies to address employment challenges in the immediate vicinity. The opportunities lie in the youngest median age closest to the core, presenting a chance to cater to the preferences and needs of a younger demographic. Examining trends, the increases in population, households, families, owner households, and median household income signify positive momentum and economic stability. The highest increases in median household income further suggest a potential for continued growth and prosperity in Downtown Columbia City. Addressing the identified weaknesses while capitalizing on strengths and opportunities could contribute to sustained positive trends and community development.



Tapestry Segmentation



Psychographics is the study of personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests, and lifestyles. Psychographic studies of individuals or communities can be valuable in the fields of marketing, demographics, opinion research, prediction, and social research in general.

Tapestry psychographic data helps communities and businesses understand consumer lifestyle choices, what they buy, and how they spend their free time. Tapestry classifies US residential neighborhoods into 67 unique segments based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The top psychographic profiles for Columbia City are used to gauge possible shopping characteristics of downtown’s largest potential shopping demographic. *Featured are the top segments.*

Traditional Living

5 &10- Minute Radius |

Characterized by a young demographic, primarily comprising two-generation families. Married couples dominate the community, with a median age of 35.5, and a labor force participation rate exceeding the national average at 63.4%. Residents demonstrate a cost-conscious approach, reflected in a lower average Budget Index of 60 compared to the national average of 100. Homeownership stands at 60%, and spending priorities include transportation, food, entertainment and recreation.

[Traditional Living Full Profile](#)

LifeMode Group: Hometown
Traditional Living 12B

Households: 2,395,200
Average Household Size: 2.51
Median Age: 35.5
Median Household Income: \$39,300

WHO ARE WE?
 Residents in this segment live primarily in low-density, settled neighborhoods in the Midwest. The households are a mix of married-couple families and singles. Many families encompass two generations who have lived and worked in the community; their children are likely to follow suit. The manufacturing, retail trade, and health-care sectors are the primary sources of employment for these residents. This is a younger market—beginning householders who are juggling the responsibilities of living on their own or a new marriage, while retaining their youthful interests in style and fun.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Married couples are the dominant household type, but fewer than expected from the younger age profile and fewer with children (Index 79); however, there are higher proportions of single-parent (Index 146) and single-person households (Index 112).
- Average household size is slightly lower at 2.51.
- Homes are primarily single family or duplexes in older neighborhoods, built before 1940 (Index 228).
- Most neighborhoods are located in lower-density urban clusters of metro areas throughout the Midwest and South.
- Average commuting time to work is very short (Index 22).
- Households have one or two vehicles.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Over 70% have completed high school or some college.
- Labor force participation is a bit higher than the national rate at 63.4%.
- Almost three-quarters of households derive income from wages and salaries, augmented by Supplemental Security Income (Index 139) and public assistance (Index 152).
- Cost-conscious consumers that are comfortable with brand loyalty, unless the price is too high.
- Connected and comfortable with the internet, more likely to participate in online gaming or posting pics on social media.
- TV is seen as the most trusted media.

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION

Heartland Communities



LifeMode Group Cozy Country Living
Heartland Communities 6F

Households: 2,850,600
 Average Household Size: 2.39
 Median Age: 42.3
 Median Household Income: \$42,400

WHO ARE WE?
 Well settled and close-knit, Heartland Communities residents are semirural and semiretired. These older homeowners are primarily homeowners, and many have paid off their mortgages. Their children have moved away, but they have no plans to leave their homes. Their hearts are with the country; they embrace the slower pace of life here but actively participate in outdoor activities and community events. Traditional and patriotic, these residents support their local businesses, always buy American, and favor domestic diving vacations over foreign plane trips.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- Rural communities or small towns are concentrated in the Midwest, from older Rustbelt cities to the Great Plains.
- Distribution of household types is comparable to the US, primarily (but not the majority) married couples, more with no children, and a slightly higher proportion of singles (Index 112) that reflects the aging of the population.
- Residents own modest, single-family homes built before 1970.
- They own one or two vehicles; commutes are short (Index 82).

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Retirees in this market depress the average labor force participation rate to less than 60% (Index 94). More workers are white collar than blue collar; more skilled than unskilled.
- The rural economy of this market provides employment in the manufacturing, construction, utilities, health-care, and agriculture industries.
- These are budget-savvy consumers; they stick to brands they grew up with and know the price of goods they purchase. Buying American is important.
- Daily life is busy but routine. Working on the weekends is not uncommon.
- Residents trust TV and newspapers more than any other media.
- Skeptical about their financial future, they stick to community banks and low-risk investments.

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION
 esri.com/tapestry

Note: This index represents the ratio of the segment size to the US size multiplied by 100. Consumer preferences are estimated from survey data by IBM Business.


10 & 20 -Minute Radius | Semirural, semiretired lifestyle with a preference for a slower pace, coupled with a love for outdoor activities and community events. Residents, primarily homeowners (69%), exhibit budget-savvy habits, allocating less than average household budgets to transportation, food, entertainment, and recreation.

[Heartland Communities Full Profile](#)

Salt of the Earth

10 & 20- Minute Radius | Residents, enjoying the outdoors and family-oriented activities, exhibit a cost-conscious approach despite having the second-highest median household income and net worth. The community allocates its highest budget after healthcare and transportation to entertainment and recreation, as well as food, apparel, and services, showcasing a well-rounded lifestyle.

[Salt of the Earth Full Profile](#)



LifeMode Group Cozy Country Living
Salt of the Earth 6B

Households: 3,545,800
 Average Household Size: 2.59
 Median Age: 44.1
 Median Household Income: \$56,300

WHO ARE WE?
 Salt of the Earth residents are entrenched in their traditional, rural lifestyles. Citizens here are older, and many have grown children that have moved away. They still cherish family time and also tending to their vegetable gardens and preparing homemade meals. Residents embrace the outdoors; they spend most of their free time preparing for their next fishing, boating, or camping trip. The majority has at least a high school diploma or some college education; many have expanded their skill set during their years of employment in the manufacturing and related industries. They may be experts with DIY projects, but the latest technology is not their forte. They use it when absolutely necessary, but seek face-to-face contact in their routine activities.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- This large segment is concentrated in the Midwest, particularly in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana.
- Due to their rural setting, households own two vehicles to cover their long commutes, often across county boundaries.
- Home ownership rates are very high (Index 133). Single-family homes are affordable, valued at 25 percent less than the national market.
- Nearly two in three households are composed of married couples; less than half have children at home.

SOCIOECONOMIC TRAITS

- Steady employment in construction, manufacturing, and related service industries.
- Completed education: 40% with a high school diploma only.
- Household income just over the national median, while net worth is nearly double the national median.
- Spending time with family is their top priority.
- Cost-conscious consumers, loyal to brands they like, with a focus on buying American.
- Last to buy the latest and greatest products.
- Try to eat healthy; tracking the nutrition and ingredients in the food they purchase.

TAPESTRY SEGMENTATION
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Suggested Transformation Strategies

The downtown community has several significant strengths that position it favorably for continued revitalization. One notable advantage is the municipal support, providing a solid foundation for collaborative efforts. With the downtown recognized as a historic district with a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, there exists a structured framework for sustained growth and development. This financial mechanism can serve as a catalyst for strategic investments and infrastructure improvements, aligning with the broader revitalization plan.

The community's commitment to revitalization is further evident through its comprehensive plan and the potential for strategic alignment. The existence of a clear plan provides a roadmap for future development, and the opportunity to align various initiatives ensures a cohesive and purposeful approach. The emphasis on pedestrian-focused future development aligns with contemporary urban trends, promising a more walkable and vibrant downtown core.

Supporting the business ecosystem, the presence of resources for small businesses and property owners is a crucial strength. These resources, including façade grants and a revolving loan fund, can alleviate financial barriers and incentivize improvements, contributing to the overall aesthetic and economic enhancement of the downtown area. The community's existing historic building stock, coupled with longstanding businesses serving as destination anchors, adds character and authenticity to the downtown, enhancing its appeal to residents and visitors alike.

Moreover, the engaged community, with a regular influx of visitors attending weekly or daily, creates a dynamic atmosphere. The success of new promotional events, such as First Fridays, Third Thursdays, and the Farmers Market, underscores the community's adaptability and responsiveness to evolving preferences. Additionally, the incorporation of pocket parks and activated alleyways demonstrates a commitment to creating inviting public spaces, fostering a sense of community and contributing to the overall vitality of the downtown area. These strengths collectively position the downtown community for continued success in its revitalization endeavors.

To build upon all Columbia City's current strengths and success, the following strategies are recommended by Main Street America and Indiana Main Street to guide Columbia City's work priorities for the next 2-3 years.

- 1) Cultivate a supportive environment for small business, including property owners and overall entrepreneurs
- 2) Prepare opportunities for youth, young families, and older adults

Both goals can be achieved through quantitative and qualitative efforts:

Quantitative Efforts: Building Informed Foundations

The strategy for downtown involves a comprehensive approach that melds both quantitative and qualitative efforts. Quantitative endeavors focus on the systematic collection and dissemination of data to inform decision-making and resource development. This encompasses initiatives such as sharing community survey and market data, as well as conducting targeted business-specific surveys. The goal is to prioritize programming and gain insights into the diverse needs of businesses across various stages of their lifecycle. Collaborative efforts with partners for an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem self-assessment are pivotal, fostering a holistic understanding of the business landscape.

A key element of the quantitative strategy involves creating a comprehensive database comprising local, regional, and statewide partners, along with their available resources. Housed in a centralized repository promoted by all partners, this database streamlines accessibility to vital information, fostering collaboration and optimizing resource utilization. These quantitative efforts form the bedrock for informed decision-making and strategic resource allocation, providing a solid foundation for the downtown community's economic advancement.

Qualitative Efforts: Engaging the Community for Sustainable Growth

Complementing the quantitative approach, qualitative efforts are geared towards actively engaging the community and drawing consumers into existing businesses. A storytelling campaign, highlighting the narratives of local businesses, serves dual purposes by fostering a sense of connection and acting as a powerful marketing tool. Advocating for the downtown revitalization plan and involving businesses in shaping its direction ensures a community-driven approach that reflects local values.

Qualitative efforts extend to considerations of cohesive design elements for future streetscapes, enhancing the visual appeal and overall ambiance of the downtown area. Collaborating with the Regional Economic Development Corporation (REDC) to secure possible funding for business retention and expansion efforts, particularly permanent interior improvements, adds a crucial financial dimension to support businesses' long-term success.

Moreover, a cohesive marketing and communications plan, involving strategic partnerships to promote businesses and activities, amplifies the community's presence and attracts a broader audience. Extending programming into the fall and winter months not only sustains engagement but also informs future wayfinding efforts, enhancing the overall experience of the downtown area.

The recommended strategy combines quantitative precision with qualitative engagement, creating a synergistic approach that not only gathers and utilizes data effectively but also actively involves the community, promotes local businesses, and envisions a vibrant and sustainable downtown future.

Recommendations for action based on community survey input, focus groups, and market analysis.

After review and analysis of community survey, focus groups and market evaluation, recommendations are made for committee and board consideration. Suggestions can be included in existing work plans, or additional action can be taken.

Next step actions to consider:

- + Establish Data-Driven Initiatives:
 - Develop a structured plan for collecting and sharing quantitative data, incorporating community surveys, market data, and business-specific surveys. Ensure the information collected is accessible to all stakeholders involved in the revitalization efforts.
- + Collaborate on Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Assessment:
 - Engage with partners to complete an equitable entrepreneurial ecosystem self-assessment. This collaborative effort will provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing business landscape, identifying areas for improvement and growth.
- + Create a Comprehensive Resource Database:
 - Develop a centralized database that catalogs local, regional, and statewide partners along with their available resources. This shared resource hub, promoted by all partners, will facilitate collaboration and streamline access to essential information.
- + Implement Storytelling Campaign:
 - Launch a storytelling campaign showcasing the narratives of existing businesses. Utilize various mediums, such as social media, local publications, and community events, to draw consumers into these businesses and foster a sense of connection.
- + Advocate for Downtown Revitalization:
 - Advocate for the downtown revitalization plan, involving businesses in the decision-making process to ensure a community-driven approach. Consider cohesive design elements for future streetscapes to enhance the visual appeal of the downtown area.
- + Engage REDC for Funding Support:
 - Collaborate with the Regional Economic Development Corporation (REDC) to explore funding opportunities for business retention and expansion efforts. Focus on permanent interior improvements to enhance the long-term viability of businesses.
- + Develop Cohesive Marketing and Communications Plan:
 - Establish a comprehensive marketing and communications plan that involves partners to collectively promote businesses and activities. This plan should extend programming into the fall and winter months to sustain community engagement.
- + Encourage Youth and Family Entrepreneurship:
 - Implement youth entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with local schools and organizations. Develop initiatives specifically catering to the needs of young families, creating a supportive environment for a diverse range of entrepreneurs.

Summary

Thank you to the staff, board, and community stakeholders for hosting Main Street America and Indiana Main Street on this Transformation Strategy visit and for all the great efforts you are making in Columbia City. The downtown with all its assets and traffic generators is in a great position to leverage as part of its revitalization vision.

The next steps to the process are recommended as follows:

- + Review the summary report and aligned Transformation Strategies. Continue to use your strategy much like a business plan. As things change with new projects getting completed or a new catalytic development, go back and review and adapt as necessary but stay consistent with the market vision you have outlined and adopted.
- + Work Planning
 - Evaluate current work plan activities and determine which aligns with the newly adopted strategy and which do not. Either eliminate or delegate activities to partners that do not align with the new strategy. Consider developing a “Strategy Screen” like [this example](#) from the Sites of Consciousness.
 - Identify additional activities that directly align with the selected strategy.
 - Board should ensure work plan balance across the four points, which may mean saying “no” to some opportunities that arise.
 - Evaluate each project or activity for level of inclusivity and accessibility.
- + Your program is off to an incredible and impressive start. Don’t forget while you are moving fast to stop and celebrate all that you have already accomplished. Congratulations on all your efforts!



National Main Street Center
53 West Jackson Blvd. Suite 350
Chicago, IL 60604
mainstreet.org



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