



CHAPTER 14

COMMERCIAL STREET

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The Commercial Street Plan is a component of the Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan and serves as a guide for the continued revitalization of one of Springfield's most iconic historic districts. The Plan establishes a community vision for a diverse, safe, and inviting mixed use area with a variety of entertainment options, restaurants, services, and retail venues, while providing a quality environment for residential living, both within the district and the surrounding neighborhoods. To create a single direction for Commercial Street, the plan provides a framework of specific recommendations and actions to help achieve the vision, acting as a unifying effort for district and city leaders alike. The plan will also guide public improvements while clearly defining the community's expectations regarding private investment and stewardship of the districts values, image, and overall commitment to the Springfield community.

PROGRESSIVE URBAN
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES

P.U.M.A.



PHOTO COLLETTE STUDIOS



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BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

As part of the Forward SGF, the City of Springfield initiated and funded an updated plan for Commercial Street. Recognizing Commercial Street's unique position in Springfield as a cherished historic district and destination attraction for the entire city, the 2022 Commercial Street Plan builds upon the last comprehensive planning strategy that was prepared in 2006.

A great deal has changed in the Commercial Street Historic District in the past 15 years, and a new plan is needed to guide the district through the next 20-years. To assist the City and Commercial Street stakeholders in the completion of the Commercial Street Plan, Denver-based Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) was engaged. P.U.M.A., a firm specializing in community planning and development, brought familiarity with Commercial Street, having worked on past planning efforts in Springfield's center city area. The Commercial Street Plan, while conducted in a separate independent process, is an integrated, contributing element of the overall Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan.

An executive Summary for the Commercial Street Plan can be found in the Forward SGF Appendix.

HISTORY OF THE STREET

Commercial Street is a six block, lineal National Register Historic District that once served as the commercial center for the City of North Springfield and later for north Springfield after Springfield and North Springfield merged in 1887. Commercial Street was a vibrant commercial center into the 1970s but declined along with downtown due to changing local and nationwide economic forces. Business activity slowly declined until the early 2000s, when a slow revival began. Since then, over the last 20 years, the district has methodically revitalized itself, building by building and business by business. Dilapidated structures were rehabbed and revived, with a focus on residential lofts initially, then secondarily, through a revival of empty street-level commercial spaces. It has transformed into an eclectic and unique dining, shopping, and artisan destination for the greater Springfield region.

Over the last 40+ years, there have been a range of significant planning efforts that the City of Springfield has undertaken on behalf of the Commercial Street Historic District. These historic planning efforts include:

- 1978: Established Commercial Street Local Historic District
- 1982: Commercial Street Historic District Development Plan and Design Guidelines
- 1983: Established Commercial Street National Register Historic District
- 1998: Center City Plan Element –Vision 20/20 Comprehensive Plan
- 2006: Commercial Street Historic District Strategy for Success
- 2006: Commercial Street Revitalization Strategy
- 2008: Commercial Street Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plan and redevelopment area
- 2009: Creation of the Commercial Street Community Improvement District (CID)
- 2009: 365-day Administrative delay on permits, demolitions and zoning amendments in addition to the creation of a Commercial Street Task Force
- 2010: Creation and rezoning of 53.5 acres to COM-1 and COM-2 Zoning Districts
- 2018: Great Places designation by the American Planning Association
- 2019: Renewal of the Commercial Street CID
- 2020: Revised Commercial Street Historic District Design Guidelines.

The 2006 STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS PLAN: THEN & NOW

Commercial Street is in a very different condition than it was in 2006, during the last planning effort. As the 2006 plan noted of conditions at the time, "Regardless of the cause, business activity has slowly declined to the present and may be at a low point with the recent closing of the 23-year-old Nellie Dunn's antique and collectible store." It continued, "Business opportunity is currently very poor...there are only 27 first floor businesses (32% occupancy rate), many struggling as did Nellie Dunn's. In other words: *Commercial Street currently lacks relevance in the regional economy.*"

This is no longer the case, as will be discussed in more detail in the following section. Many properties have been redeveloped, and businesses opened over the last 15 years. Commercial Street now has a varied mix of local restaurants, bars, retailers, services, and other unique uses. Businesses with a citywide following are now being drawn to Commercial Street. In sum, Commercial Street no longer *lacks relevance in the regional economy.* The timing is right for a new long-range planning exercise for a new and improved Commercial Street.

COMMERCIAL STREET FUNDING MECHANISMS

Commercial Street Community

Improvement District (CID): A Community Improvement District (CID) is defined as a non-profit corporation or a separate political subdivision of the state that may be created for the purpose of issuing bonds, levying taxes, and applying special assessments to finance public improvements, public services, and blight removal within a defined area. The Commercial Street Community Improvement District (CID) was established in 2009 (and in 2019 was renewed for another 15 years). The CID is responsible for maintaining the public spaces inside the district's bounds and Commercial Street's CID provides landscaping and maintenance, snow and ice removal, advertising and street banners, waste removal, event support, and seasonal decor. The Commercial Street CID operates with funds generated solely through a supplemental CID sales tax (3/8% as of June 2019) that was voted into effect by registered voters in the CID district. The CID is governed by a board of seven businesses, property owners and or registered voters residing within the District as appointed by the Mayor.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District:

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) provides for the redirection of the incremental increase in sales and property tax revenue resulting from a redevelopment project to be used for approved project-related costs, infrastructure, and capital improvements. The Commercial Street TIF was established by City Council in 2008. TIF revenues can only be used to finance public improvement projects identified in the corresponding Redevelopment Plan.

Projects funded by the TIF to-date (in full or partial) include the following:

- Frisco Lane purchase, resurfacing and added parking spaces
- Alleyways and parking lot enhancements
- Commercial Street Façade Loan Program (funds allocated; one loan approved to-date)
- Entryway signage (funds allocated but not spent to-date; public input in process)

Other projects that were identified for TIF funding, but were eventually funded by other means include:

- Streetscape enhancements
- Commercial loans to support small businesses
- Commercial Club building renovation
- Footbridge Plaza enhancements
- Public art installations
- Bike racks, pedestrian-scale decorative lighting, trash receptacles, and landscaping

COMMERCIAL STREET ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to the City and the two funding mechanisms identified above, there are other organizations also working towards Commercial Street's continued improvement and evolution. These are briefly introduced to the right:

Commercial Club:

Commercial Club has been representing the Commercial Street community and supporting community efforts for over a century. It is a civic organization made up of residents, property and business owners, and others who live, work, and play in the Historic District. Membership is open to anyone. Commercial Club is a 501(c)4, non-profit organization, led by a volunteer board. Members pay annual dues to support the club. Dues along with other donations are used to fund district advertising, assisting with community projects, and special events. The club fundraises for, installs, maintains and promotes Public Art Projects like the recent two alleyway mosaic installations, the Commercial Street City Market, and any related City Market special events. Commercial Club wrote CDBG grants for corner treatments, the origins of Commercial Street's streetscape. Other projects include construction of the Market Pavilion and Market co-op booth in collaboration with Hammons School of Architecture, and 4 visioning projects with Drury.

Commercial Street Merchants Association:

The Commercial Street Merchants Association is dedicated to providing networking, business support and assistance to enhance the environment for visitors to the historic district. The merchants group meets weekly and reviews challenges to the business environment and implements several street events each year. There are no formal membership requirements and all are welcome to participate with the primary emphasis on assisting businesses by responding to their needs. Events organized by the merchants include the neighborhood Halloween walk, Pet Stroll, Shop Small Weekend, Commercial Street Summer, Mardi Gras, Social Media Workshops and Window Decorations. The group was recently incorporated as a formal association and is the second oldest group on Commercial Street having started in 2006.

STUDY AREA

The plan study area is loosely bound by three districts depicted on the map below – the TIF District, CID, and Historic District. The plan primarily focuses on the Commercial Street corridor from Douglas Avenue on the west to Clay Avenue on the east. The study area, given the plan's focus on bigger-picture strategy rather than specific physical elements, doesn't have hard edges, and areas beyond the boundaries are taken into consideration.

PLANNING PROCESS

To help guide planners through the process, a Commercial Street Plan Advisory Committee was formed. The Advisory Committee was convened four times throughout the process to provide feedback and direction related to proposed plan content. The Advisory Committee consisted of 13 members, with diversity by business type and geography along the street.

The planning process began with a multifaceted "Discovery" phase. This included the following pieces:

1. Commercial Street Stakeholder Outreach:

This step aimed to engage a variety of Commercial Street stakeholders, including business owners, property owners, district advocates, residents, and City of Springfield representatives. This outreach consisted primarily of one-on-one interviews, held virtually due to COVID-19 considerations. Additionally, each Commercial Street organization – CID, Commercial Club, and Merchants Association – was engaged via group meetings of their boards/members.

2. Market Profile:

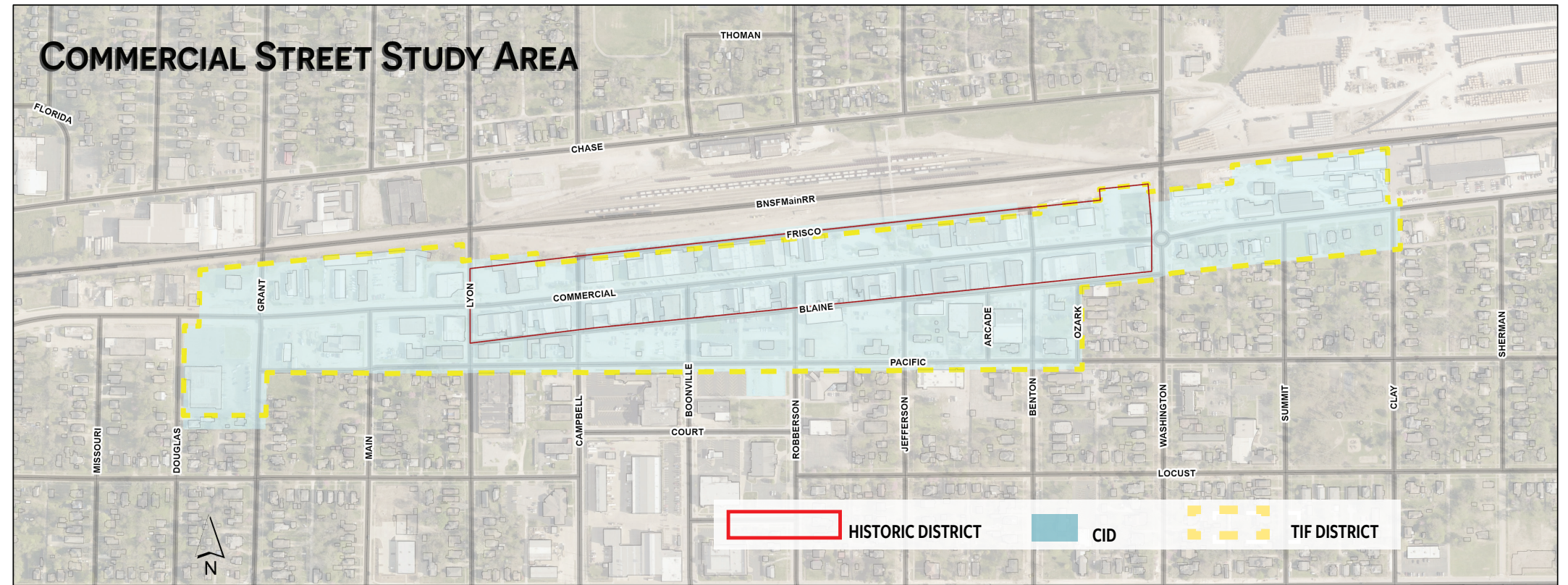
Concurrently, a market profile was completed to help inform the plan. The market profile compiled data from various sources to help identify opportunities and challenges for Commercial Street, now and in the future. The market

profile also takes a dive into data for Commercial Street's "in-place" market which consists of the five surrounding neighborhoods that are adjacent to the district, including Midtown, Weller, Grant Beach, Woodland Heights, and Robberson.

3. Community Survey:

Lastly, an online survey was administered as part of the discovery process. The survey was open to the public with the goal of gathering information from a broad audience about their experience and desires for Commercial Street. In total collected 691 responses, representing a strong cross-section of the Springfield community.

Following completion of the Discovery phase, the consultant team prepared a draft plan with findings from the initial work, plus recommendations for Commercial Street priorities and goals, as well as a delivery system to help with the plan's implementation. This draft was vetted with both the City and Advisory Committee prior to being finalized.



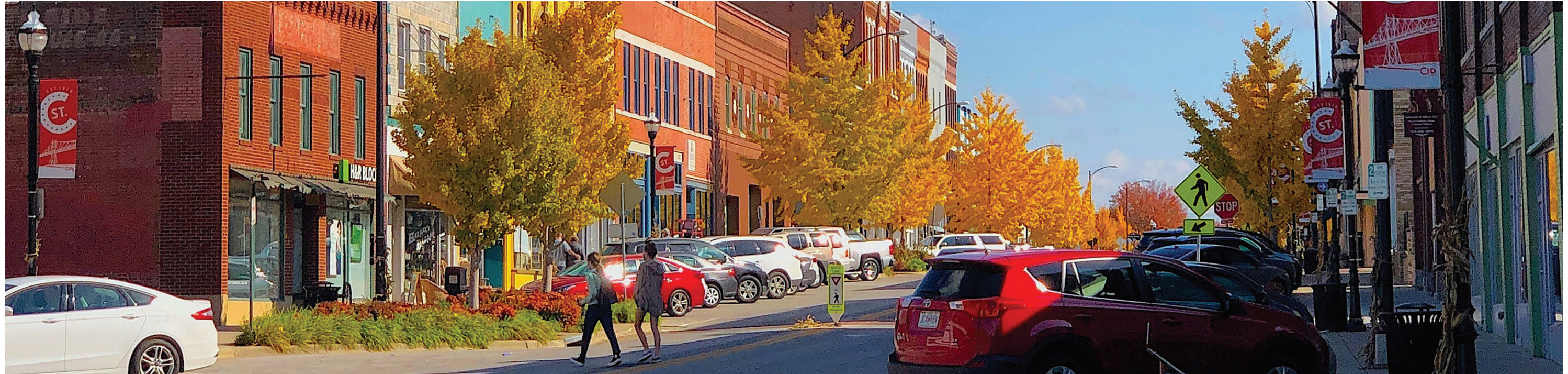


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COMMERCIAL STREET STAKEHOLDERS DISCOVERY

WHAT WE HEARD

Interviews were held with more than 20 Commercial Street stakeholders between September and October 2020. The following are key themes from this stakeholder outreach

A unique destination within Springfield and the region: Commercial Street is a true Springfield gem – a place with a unique, local, artistic and bohemian vibe that has developed into a regional and tourist attraction. It is viewed as one of the most welcoming, walkable, and diverse, parts of the city thanks to its mix of businesses on the street. It has an eclectic restaurant scene that has become a dining destination for locals and visitors alike.

While there may be other districts with some similar qualities (e.g., Cherry-Pickwick district), there aren't many other areas in the region competing with what

Commercial Street offers. Business owners pride themselves on having a unique vibe that differentiates Commercial Street from other dining, shopping, and entertainment districts around Springfield.

Acknowledgement and appreciation for the transformation that's happened over the last 15 years: While progress has been considered slow at times by some, there is also acknowledgement that the methodical nature of the street's evolution has served it well in maintaining its unique and historic sense of place. Efforts by Commercial Street volunteers to manage landscape improvements and maintenance, hold district events, update historic district guidelines, and advertise and fundraise to "save the footbridge," have had a notable, incremental impact over time while respecting the traditional development pattern, historic buildings, and cultural resources. A tightknit community of businesses has also been

cultivated; one that's supportive and complementary of each other, and one with a strong commitment to the street and its future.

The Jefferson Avenue Footbridge: This is arguably the top priority for stakeholders. This 118-year-old bridge was closed in 2016 due to safety concerns related to structural integrity of the structure. There is strong desire to get rehabilitation of the bridge completed and reopen as soon as possible. The Footbridge is a huge draw and visitor attraction, a differentiator for the district, and a critical access point for neighborhoods and residents to the north of Commercial Street. Reopening the Footbridge also has the potential to create further synergy with the Moon City Creative District that lies just north of the bridge.

Parking, and the experience of arriving in the district, are perceived as problems: Commercial Street is a long, narrow district and people in Springfield don't like to walk far to get to their destination. For the most part, parking lots in the district don't feel or look safe, and are under-lit and underutilized at times. Furthermore, most visitors arrive on Commercial Street from the south. This experience is less than ideal. In addition to problematic parking lots, the backs of buildings themselves are not all set up to create a welcoming, well-lit environment for people arriving in the district.

In addition to the above, there were other commonly cited desired improvements identified by stakeholders:

- Pedestrian-scale lighting everywhere – the parking lots, the alleys, on the street itself
- Missouri Hotel reactivation and reuse of other remaining vacant properties
- Wayfinding from other parts of town, and gateways into the district
- Need to continue to grow the number of people who live on, and directly adjacent to, the street
- The murals and alley projects are a good start, but there's more opportunity to create memorable moments and experiences along the street.

Multiple organizations/funding sources that have a role on Commercial Street: including Commercial Club, the Merchants Association, the CID, and the City/TIF. All play a unique and important role, and on a general level, they informally coordinate efforts. There are several individuals that are involved in all three Commercial Street groups. However, there is also a view that there could be improved coordination between them and occasionally they communicate mixed messages to the City. Importantly, a new generation of businesses and entrepreneurs have come to the street and there's desire to figure out how best to engage them. Some things could move faster and more efficiently, with better alignment and a more unified voice.

MARKET PROFILE

WHAT WE LEARNED

An assessment of market conditions was completed in November 2020 to help inform the Commercial Street planning process. The full Market Profile can be found in the appendix with key takeaways below. Throughout the profile data is primarily provided for two different geographies – the Commercial Street study area, and a larger in-place market area.

The In-Place Market Area is made up of the five neighborhoods that are adjacent to the Historic Commercial Street corridor: Midtown, Weller, Grant Beach, Woodland Heights, and Robberson. An in-place market boundary is used to better understand Commercial Street's potential as a neighborhood serving corridor, in addition to being a regional attraction.

COMMERCIAL STREET CONCLUSIONS

The dynamics of development on Commercial Street are expected to change and evolve. Over the last 20 years, those who purchased properties and invested in buildings on Commercial Street did so because they loved the historic building stock and there were affordable, beautiful buildings ripe for redevelopment. This was perfect for the small scale, aspiring entrepreneurs, small business owners, and artists who were able to take advantage of this opportunity. During interviews, several stakeholders referenced that they weren't initially considering Commercial Street and didn't realize they wanted to locate there, but the building and/or price was just too good to pass up. The dynamic of purchases and developments are now changing – as can be seen with some of the larger property acquisitions of late

and proposed (re)developments on the table. Commercial Street has caught the eye of more well-capitalized developers and businesses, and for good reason. This is allowing for a greater ambition in project type and complexity but also something Commercial Street is not used to. The “low-hanging fruit” properties have all mostly been snatched up, and property values have risen, making it less accessible for the type of investor that the street attracted 10-20 years ago.

The physical framework of Commercial Street has shifted since the last plan.

The 2006 Plan for Commercial Street referred to three separate sub-districts – central, east and west. The construct now can be more accurately framed as core vs. edges. The core has expanded since 2006 – from Lyon to Jefferson. This area is largely activated, has received streetscape enhancements, and has a strong mix of relatively densely packed uses. Simply, this is what most people visualize when they hear “historic Commercial Street.” The edges are less filled in with active uses, have less historic character with more industrial uses remaining, and are less active pedestrian environments. However, these are likely the areas with the most potential and where the most change is expected over the next 10-20 years.

Commercial Street's artisan manufacturing and maker ethos. Many things are made along Commercial Street's historic core, from chocolate and beer, to mountain bike components, art, and furniture, to name a few. Clean, smaller in scale, and often with a storefront component, artisan manufacturing naturally and seamlessly fits into shopping and entertainment districts. Phenix Marble Company is an example of a newer project that builds on this identity along Commercial Street. The maker ethos can be a larger part of Commercial Street's identity going forward. The Moon City Creative District, just across the railroad tracks, shares this philosophy

as well, creating an opportunity for stronger connection between the two districts going forward.

Traditional manufacturing isn't expected to disappear from the district either, as long as the railroad remains active. As the real estate and business data discussed earlier in the report shows, industrial use remains a significant part of the district's footprint. There may be opportunities to connect with some of the area's larger, more traditional industrial uses in new and creative ways as well.

Displacement is expected to become a concern for small, independent businesses. While not a problem yet, this is expected to be an increasing challenge over the plan's 20-year horizon. Rents haven't increased much over the last decade, but there are signs this could change. Market sales prices and assessed values of property have been steadily rising, and vacancy rates are next to zero on Commercial Street. Fortunately, many of the small businesses in the district own their own building – this is perhaps largest factor in preventing displacement. Furthering building ownership, along with other measures to proactively prevent displacement, should be encouraged.

Creating more residents immediately on, and adjacent to, Commercial Street will provide multiple benefits. The in-place market is a worthwhile market (discussed in more detail below), but much of it is not a truly captive market, that lives and breathes Commercial Street day in, day out. This is a key next step in Commercial Street's evolution. More residents directly along the corridor will further activate the district, putting additional eyes and feet on the street day and night, and bringing spending power to support businesses and services. New housing of varied price points and unit types should be encouraged to provide an environment that attracts culturally-mixed

demographics. Reopening of the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge is also critical here – to reestablish connection to the residential base immediately north of the district.

IN-PLACE MARKET IMPLICATIONS

The power of the in-place workforce as a market for Commercial Street businesses and events. There are a large number of workers in the in-place market; over 25,000 according to Esri estimates. This includes major economic anchors from universities to public offices, not to mention all of the downtown employees that work just outside the in-place area's boundaries. Given the industries present, many of these workers likely have significant disposable income, and are coming from all over the region to their workplace near Commercial Street. This is a strong market for Commercial Street businesses to connect to, for workday lunch, after-work happy hours, dinners,

etc. Indirectly, as stronger connections are established, these workers may be more likely to bring their family or friends to the district outside of work and on weekends. There may also be opportunity for businesses along Commercial Street to take themselves to these anchors, via services such as catering and the like.

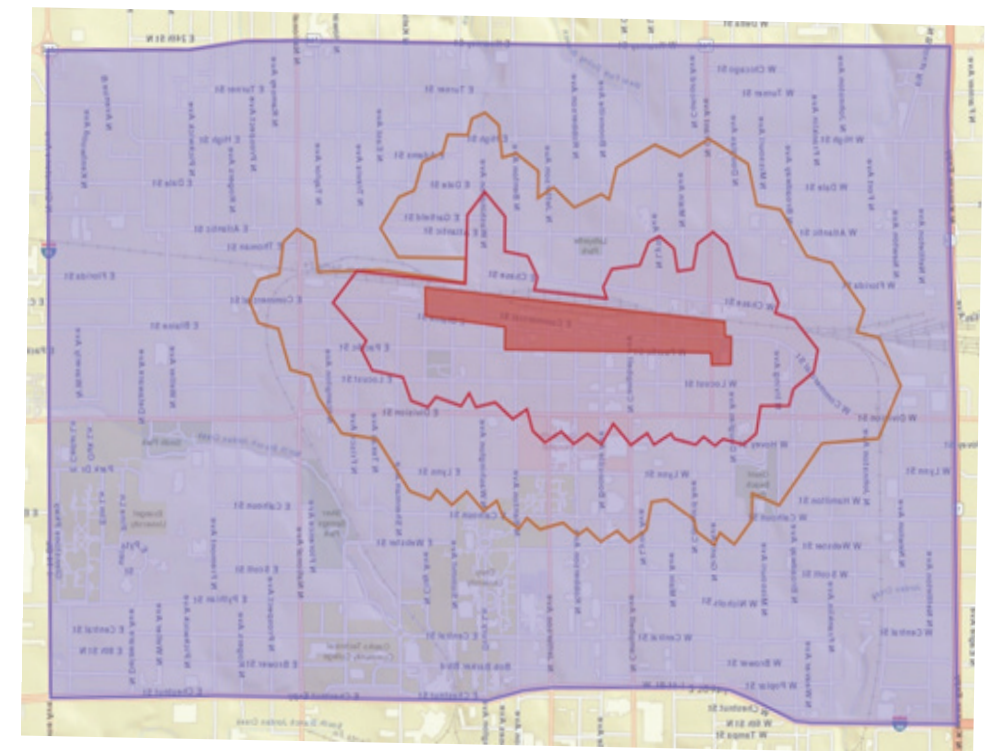
Opportunity to serve residents within the in-place market, both current and future. The in-place market is one that has been hollowed out and disenfranchised over generations, but is expected to evolve and experience growth over the next decade. Moving forward, the in-place market has potential as a strong “starter” neighborhood, offering affordable homes for those looking to buy their first home and those starting families. If this does become a growing trend, Commercial Street can be a key attraction for these prospective new residents.

Also, as the district is currently constructed, the edges of Commercial Street (as discussed earlier) help to serve the immediate neighborhoods. Uses such as the Price Cutter grocery store and Sonic Drive-In restaurant may not fit neatly into what historic Commercial Street values and how it sees itself, but it is worth considering that these businesses attract and appeal to many of those who currently reside in the in-place market.

Lastly, it is not just the businesses and what they offer that can appeal to current and future residents. Events and programming are also a key piece of this puzzle. Commercial Street should make sure it continues to be a welcoming and diverse community through its programming, from regular offerings like the Commercial Street City Market to one-off street festivals.



The map illustrates the general study area (red), five-minute and ten-minute walkshed from the CID (red and orange outlines), and the in-place market (purple). The walksheds are included for illustrative purposes, offering context and scale.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

WHAT WE HEARD

To gather broad input beyond one-on-one interviews and group meetings, an online survey was developed and open to the public. The survey asked questions about both current conditions (Commercial Street “today”) and future aspirations (Commercial Street “tomorrow”). A full survey summary can be found in the appendix.

COMMERCIAL STREET TODAY

Prior to the pandemic, 7% of respondents spent time on Commercial Street every day. A majority (53%) spent time on Commercial Street “once a week or more” or “a couple times a month.” By a very wide margin, restaurants, bars, and coffee shops most often brought respondents to Commercial Street prior to the pandemic (86%). Secondly, other popular answers included the Commercial Street City Market, shopping and art galleries, and events and festivals.

Once we’re past the pandemic, 37% of respondents expect to visit Commercial Street more often than they did prior. (Only 3% expect to visit less.) When isolating results for the northside’s 65803 zip code, the results were even more promising: 50% of 65803 respondents anticipate visiting Commercial Street more after the pandemic than they did prior.

Overall, features of Commercial Street were rated positively, predominately receiving ratings of “very good” or “good.” The highest rated feature was “the overall aesthetic and vibe,” while safety, variety of merchants, and parking had more mixed perceptions.

71% of respondents recognize and refer to Commercial Street as “C-Street” while 33% consider Commercial Street to be a part of Springfield’s Downtown.

COMMERCIAL STREET TOMORROW

The six most common words used to describe respondents’ vision for Commercial Street in the year 2030, in order, were **vibrant, historic, safe, diverse, fun, and eclectic**. The word cloud at the right represents the words respondents used most frequently to describe their vision for Commercial Street in the future, with size indicating how frequently it was used.

When asked to rate the importance of various actions that contribute to the experience on Commercial Street, a majority of respondents rated most of the actions provided as “very important.” These include:

1. Redevelop and repurpose vacant lots and buildings (78% rated “very important”)
2. Maintain the historic character (73%)
3. Maintain the “Main Street” feel of locally-owned, independent businesses (70%)
4. Ensure Commercial Street is diverse and welcoming to all (68%)
5. Focus on improving conditions in the adjoining neighborhoods (64%)
6. Grow Commercial Street as a hub of art and culture (53%)
7. More restaurants and retail (50%)



When asked to choose the ONE action (from a list of eleven) that will be most important to achieve their vision, the top choices were:

1. **Redevelop and repurpose vacant lots and buildings**
2. **Focus on improving condition in the adjoining neighborhoods**
3. **Maintain the “Main Street” feel of locally-owned, independent businesses**
4. **Ensure Commercial Street is diverse and welcoming to all**

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various public improvements that would support Commercial Street. On the whole, these actions are viewed as less important than the “experience” actions discussed in the prior two bullet points. That said, the highest rated public improvements were:

1. Provide financial incentives for existing and new small businesses on Commercial Street (47% rated “very important”)
2. Rehabilitate and reopen the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge (46%)
3. Improve connectivity and wayfinding from other parts of the city, including downtown (46%)

When asked to choose ONE public improvement (from a list of nine) that will be most important, a clear top-two stood out:

1. **Provide financial incentives for existing and new small businesses**
2. **Open the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge**

Respondents were also given the chance to provide additional ideas for improvements to Commercial Street in an open-ended format. Ideas and common themes amongst responses included:

- Outdoor space enhancements – dog park, gathering space/park, small event space/amphitheater, kid-friendly, more public outdoor seating, etc.
- Improved (perception of) safety – many called for some form of an on-the-street safety or ambassador presence
- Mitigation of, and better support for, the homeless population
- Improved entryways and gateways
- More dependable and coordinated hours for businesses
- Decorative lighting – over the street, at intersections, at gateways, holiday-themed, etc

For detailed charts and tables of results, see the full survey summary, found in the Appendix.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

WHAT WE SAW

For such a compact district, conditions vary widely within the plan study area. While site visits to the district were limited by the COVID-19 pandemic, below are takeaways from a high-level overview of the physical conditions within the study area.

The **historic architecture** is impactful. The formal Historic District extends six blocks from Washington to Lyon. As the newly created Historic District Design Guidelines note, "This six-block section is the only place in Springfield where a concentration of historic Victorian-era commercial buildings exist." While the Historic District runs these full six blocks, the areas that are most impactful are the block faces with contiguous, uninterrupted historic structures, mostly concentrated in the stretch between Jefferson and Campbell.

Streetscape enhancements over the last decade have transformed the feel on the street. The planters and landscaping, trees, mid-block crosswalks, and bike racks have all been good additions. That said, there is room for continued improvement. Some parts of the core and the edges of Commercial Street have not received streetscape improvements (not to mention side and parallel streets), making for a much less comfortable walking environment. There is also opportunity for continued enhancement in the core, such as widening sidewalks, refinishing crosswalks (and intersection stamps), enhancing landscaping, adding benches and lighting, for example.

There are **stark differences in current conditions** from Commercial Street's core to its edges. The CID and TIF (and therefore, the plan's study area) consist of stretches of Commercial Street to the east and west that bear little resemblance to the historic core. This can be jarring and disorienting to visitors less familiar with

the area. In contrast to the the photos shown to the right, these edges are characterized by large surface parking or vacant lots, extended curb cuts, wide traffic lanes, and underutilized parcels. The edges are also missing public infrastructure elements that exist in the core such as trees and landscaping, crosswalks, lighting, etc. However, these areas are also indicative of the potential for continued growth, development, and infill in the study area as a whole. These edges are where the greatest potential for transformation exists over the next 20 years, through both public and private investment.

Despite the great amount of progress over the last 15 years, there are still a number of **vacant and undeveloped parcels** throughout the study area. These include undeveloped lots (some more maintained than others), private surface parking lots, and vacant historic buildings. All can be considered opportunity sites for infill and redevelopment over the next 20 years. Further, several of the undeveloped lots are well-positioned for use as some form of a public outdoor amenity (e.g., pocket park, dog park, playground, etc.).

Blaine Street is an opportunity for both public and private enhancements. Blaine Street, running the whole length of the district, parallel to Commercial Street to the south, is a unique and prominent feature of the study area. It is a street (one-way) that functions and looks more like an alley. Running along several public parking lots to the south, it is also many people's first and last impression of the district as they arrive and depart. It has inadequate lighting and streetscaping, and it carries many of the corridor's utilities which effect the visual appeal of the street and impact what can be done for improvements. Lastly, some buildings have created rear entrances or beautification along Blaine, which illustrate the potential of turning this into a welcoming asset for the Commercial Street district.



EXAMPLES OF INTACT HISTORIC STRUCTURES

PHOTO: COLLETTE STUDIOS



STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS



EXAMPLE OF VACANT AND UNDERDEVELOPED PARCELS



BLAINE STREET

COMMERCIAL STREET PRIORITIES & GOALS

Building on the Discovery work compiled in the prior chapter, this chapter looks forward to the next 20 years on Commercial Street. Without being too prescriptive, it establishes a broad framework and roadmap for Commercial Street's continued evolution, improvement, and relevance in the regional economy.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & VISION

Commercial Street has entered a new phase of its evolution, as noted throughout the prior chapter. At the time of the 2006 plan, a place that was characterized by its many dilapidated historic buildings, Commercial Street is now an active dining, shopping, arts, and events district. It has grown into a destination for a steadily increasing mix of Springfield residents, in addition to becoming a more popular attraction for out-of-town visitors. Entering the next phase, over the next two decades, these trends are expected to accelerate.

The following Guiding Principles are intended to guide Commercial Street and its stakeholders into and through this next phase. They are underlying values that were demonstrated throughout this plan's engagement process, and they are embedded within the more specific priorities and goals that follow.

COMMERCIAL STREET WILL:

Remain diverse and welcoming to all

Offer varied and memorable experiences

Build on its historic architecture and connections to rail heritage

Continue to evolve into a regional destination for all of Springfield and its visitors

Strengthen connections with its surrounding neighborhoods, both physically and economically

Work effectively and collaboratively with the City towards common goals for the street

PRIORITIES & GOALS

Transformative Priority Projects are identified in GREEN. These are physical and specific projects that were indicated as priorities during outreach, and have the potential to positively transform Commercial Street.

GOAL 1: Guide the growth of, and investment into, a thriving mixed-use district

- 1.1. Cultivate an eclectic, thriving mix of local businesses within the district
 - Establish more dependable, consistent, and coordinated hours for district merchants.
 - Prevent involuntary displacement by supporting small independent businesses, and ensure that 'small' and 'local' can continue to flourish on Commercial Street.
 - Encourage activated ground floor uses within the Historic District along Commercial Street.
 - Better communicate package of incentives and resources available to small businesses; including not just City resources, but also State, Federal, and other unique opportunities.
 - Regularly evaluate opportunities for new programs, resources, and incentives for small businesses.
- 1.2. Bring more residents to the Street and its surroundings.
 - Utilize upper floors of existing buildings along Commercial Street for residential use.
 - Convert underutilized buildings in the district to residences, where appropriate, maintaining core retail/commercial uses on ground floors of the Historic District.
 - Develop new housing on vacant lots in and surrounding the district, where appropriate, maintaining core retail/commercial uses on ground floors of the Historic District.
- 1.3. Bring additional workers to the Street and its surroundings.
 - As an alternative to housing, utilize upper floors of existing buildings for office use.
 - Utilize ground floors, where appropriate, for office use.
 - Evaluate the need, and identify potential sites, for coworking and/or shared works pace within the district.
- 1.4. Create a more cohesive Commercial Street; prioritizing context-sensitive infill within the district, prior to expanding outwards.
- 1.5. Ensure existing redevelopment tools and processes are easy to understand by property owners.
- 1.6. Redevelop and reactivate the Missouri Hotel and its surrounding block of properties.
- 1.7. Maintain inventory of all vacant buildings and lots within the district. Conduct outreach to property owners to understand future plans. Connect owners to prospective developers and purchasers as needed.
- 1.8. Identify new ways to encourage redevelopment of vacant parcels.

GOAL 2: create a comfortable environment for people, full of memorable experiences

- 2.1. Complete streetscape enhancements throughout the district, including extensions to the east and west, and along north-south corridors connecting to Commercial Street.
- 2.2. Incorporate more public art and promote walking tours into the district.
- 2.3. Continue to work with the BNSF Railroad to obtain a section of the open space at the north entrance to the Footbridge for a development of a pocket park.
- 2.4. Ensure the entire district is well-lit. Incorporate more lighting, both functional and decorative.
- 2.5. Refurbish or redesign the artistic street stamps at intersections along Commercial Street.
- 2.6. Identify underutilized sites appropriate or temporary tactical activations to enliven the space. (See the inspirational precedent images in the Appendix for tactical pop up ideas.)
- 2.7. Create more outdoor seating, both for public use and for use by businesses to seat their patrons. Seating options include public benches along sidewalks, plaza and courtyard seating areas, and sidewalk bistro seating for businesses both along Commercial Street and wrapped around onto side streets.
- 2.8. Evaluate opportunities for widened sidewalks – to create a more comfortable pedestrian environment and create the space needed to introduce more outdoor seating. Utilize tactical, temporary pop-ups to experiment with new designs and layouts. (See the inspirational precedent images in the appendix for temporary installation and widened sidewalk concepts.)
- 2.9. Create a functional outdoor, activated greenspace on Commercial Street. Possibilities that stakeholders expressed desire for include a pocket park, neighborhood dog park, and/or children's playground.
- 2.10. Complete Blaine Street enhancements to transform it into a district asset and comfortable pedestrian environment. Various improvements, below, should be evaluated and implemented. (See the inspirational precedent images in the Appendix to generate further ideas for what is possible on Blaine.)
 - Regrade and repave
 - Bury utility lines
 - Enhance facades on buildings fronting Blaine
 - Create more entryways and seating areas for businesses along Blaine
 - Incorporate pedestrian-oriented lighting
 - Incorporate additional public art along Blaine
 - Consider changing the name of Blaine Street to "Blaine Lane"
- 2.11. Complete alleyway enhancements to all alleyways throughout the district that connect to Commercial Street. Evaluate new ways to further activate enhanced alleyways. (See the inspirational precedent images in the appendix for alleyway ideas on design and activation.)

GOAL 3: Improve physical connectivity and access to and from Commercial Street district

- 3.1. **Rehabilitate and reopen the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge.**
- 3.2. Refurbish crosswalks throughout the Commercial Street corridor. Consider enhanced, unique graphics for crosswalk designs. Incorporate crosswalk enhancements with plans for intersection stamp improvements.
- 3.3. **Complete enhancements to all public surface parking lots throughout the district to ensure they are well-designed, lit, maintained, and offer a comfortable experience for visitors.**
- 3.4. **Create Historic Commercial Street Gateways at key access points to the district.**
- 3.5. Install wayfinding to Commercial Street from key points in Springfield.
- 3.6. Evaluate the conversion of Campbell Avenue and Jefferson Avenue from one-way to two-way streets, so that all north-south connectors to Commercial Street are two-way, in coordination with citywide transportation planning efforts.
- 3.7. **Implement the Boonville Corridor Plan, and important connections between Commercial Street Government Plaza, and Downtown Springfield.**
- 3.8. Establish stronger physical connections to the nearby anchor employers—namely, Cox North, Drury University, Ozark Technical Community College, Evangel University, and City and County offices.

GOAL 4: Build on Commercial Street's maker ethos and strength in artisan manufacturing district

- 4.1. Encourage additional artisan manufacturing uses
- 4.2. Ensure land use codes allow for flexible maker spaces and artisan manufacturing uses throughout the district. The City should consider reducing or waiving fees for businesses falling in these categories.
- 4.3. Build the maker ethos into the district's various marketing campaigns.
- 4.4. Create further economic and programmatic connections with the Moon City Creative District.
- 4.5. Evaluate potential partnerships with Ozarks Technical Community College and Drury University, and opportunities to tie training programs to Commercial Street maker and manufacturing initiatives.
- 4.6. **Create a shared making/creating space for community use. Identify properties in the district appropriate for this use. There are various potential themes for a shared making space, including but not limited to woodworking, 3D printing, shared kitchen and food/drink production, arts/crafts, media, etc.**

See case studies, to the right, on The Loop in Columbia, MO and Knoxville's efforts to build its maker community.

GOAL 5: Cultivate events, programming & marketing that bring people to Commercial Street and build the district's identity

- 5.1. **Continue to grow the Commercial Street City Market, and utilize the market space as a place for additional events. As feasible, consider expansion of the Market to year-round, longer hours, additional days, or special "night" markets.**
- 5.2. Encourage events that welcome residents of surrounding neighborhoods, and invite the community to be event makers and programmers on Commercial Street.
- 5.3. Create and facilitate events and programming designed to attract the in-place workforce in surrounding neighborhoods, such as happy hour promotions, after-work activities, and other specials.
- 5.4. Create and facilitate new events tied to Commercial Street's differentiators and unique assets, namely the maker ethos of the district.
- 5.5. Maintain an up-to-date website and active social media presence.
- 5.6. Strengthen Commercial Street's identity and brand through physical cues, such as:
 - Banners
 - Streetscaping
 - Crosswalks and intersection stamps
 - Gateways
 - Wayfinding signage within district (so that all signage references Commercial Street, not downtown)



PHOTO: THEMAKERCITY.ORG



PHOTO: SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Artisan manufacturers and maker spaces are a natural fit in districts like Commercial Street.

MAKER AND ARTISAN MANUFACTURING BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The **Loop District in Columbia, MO**, predominately driven by the Loop CID, has reoriented much of their economic development strategy into creating a thriving DIY, maker district. They've received several grants for this work, from an Etsy Maker City grant to a grant from the EDA and Smart Growth America. These grants helped to fund a *Small-Scale Manufacturing Plan* for the district, designed to revitalize their economy by attracting local makers and artisans to the street. They have several bricks-and-mortar and programmatic initiatives to help further their maker economy. These include:

- A Shared Kitchen – a mission-driven space, focused on reducing barriers facing food startups, particularly for women and minority entrepreneurs.
- A Makerspace – being developed by the local community college, but a space that will be open to public use. Maker amenities will include 3D printing, woodworking space, large textile and quilting space, etc.
- A Media Center – a public access media center focused on film, podcasting, video streaming, and music; that will also offer classes and workshops.

There is much that can be learned from The Loop's progress, and there are many similarities between the Loop and Commercial Street – Missouri communities, non-downtowns within a mile of the city center, CID-based districts, etc.

For more information, visit The Loop's website: <https://theloopcomo.com/learn/>.

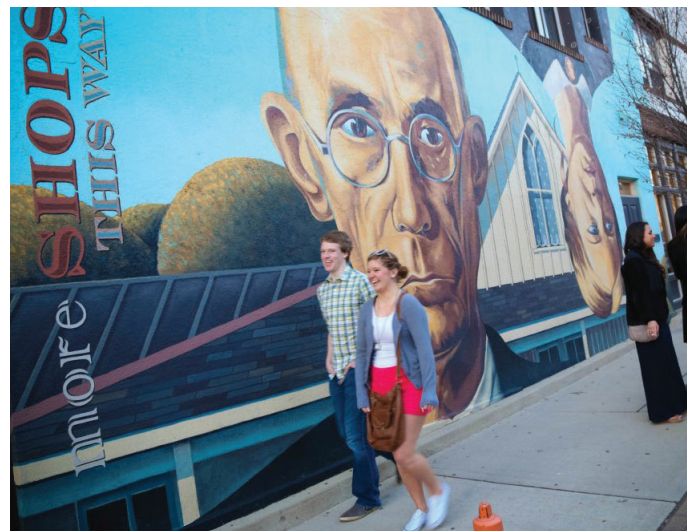
Knoxville, TN offers another example of the power of maker-based economic development. The city as a whole has branded itself "The Maker City," and as they put it, "we help makers make an independent living doing what they love." While not for a specific district such as Commercial Street, there are still lessons to be learned and inspiration to be drawn from Knoxville's work. The initiative is more than a branding effort. Led by a Maker Council, initiatives include creating new collaborative partnerships, programming, and connecting makers to opportunities and resources. There are regular meetups and lunch-and-learns, as well as a larger, Annual Maker Summit. There is a dedicated website, with a comprehensive online directory designed to connect to consumers. The Council also works closely with the City to address government policies and regulatory issues that impact maker businesses.

For more information, visit <http://themakercity.org/>.

Historic districts across the country have transformed themselves into unique and vibrant shopping, dining, and arts destinations, in similar ways to Commercial Street in Springfield. As this plan is implemented, it's helpful for Commercial Street stakeholders to have examples to look towards – to learn from the journey and transformation of other districts.



PHOTO: WWW.VISITLONGMONT.ORG



PHOTOS: WWW.SHORTNORTH.ORG

EXAMPLES AND LESSONS FROM COMPARABLE DISTRICTS

University City Loop, St. Louis: A linear, historic district located along Delmar Avenue near the Washington University campus. The Loop offers varied shops, restaurants, art galleries, live music venues, and more. There has been an arts and music theme to the growth and redevelopment of the area. In particular, its **streetscaping** and **diverse business mix** can offer ideas for Commercial Street. It's also a district that's been willing to integrate new-build and density (to varying degrees of success) into its historic fabric.

For more information: <https://universitycityloop.com/> (Additionally, while not in the U City Loop, a newly established "Delmar Maker District" is also being developed just down the street.)

Crossroads Arts District, Kansas City: Another nearby example of an urban district that has methodically and successfully transformed itself with an **arts-centric approach**. While it is now a bustling mixed-use district, the arts has remained central to its identity. The district has operated a tax abatement program that helped artists stay in the area despite rising property costs. It has also organically grown its **organizational capacity**, led by the Crossroads Community Association, that now includes a *Clean + Safe Graffiti Removal Program* that works in adjunct with a small Security Patrol.

For more information: <https://kccrossroads.org/>

Downtown Longmont, Colorado: A linear-oriented, historic small downtown that has been officially designated as a Creative District. Downtown Longmont has a **very similar physical construct to Commercial Street's** – a main street corridor, with alley-like streets running behind buildings (like Blaine Street), parking lots located behind the main street, and small mid-block "breezeways" connecting to the main street. Over the last decade, Downtown Longmont has transformed this infrastructure via its **Alleyway & Breezeway Project**. Before, the alleys existed as utilitarian corridors with overhead electric lines, visible trash receptacles and access for delivery vehicles. The breezeways had overhead structures and landscaping that hindered gathering. These areas create an inadvertent barrier for customers and visitors. The project addressed drainage issues, utilities, alley pavement, trash enclosures, and created a sense of place and identity for Downtown. The parking lots were also upgraded through the process. Businesses were also incentivized to improve their back entrances during the project through a grant program that reimbursed 25% of their improvement costs.

For more information: <https://www.downtownlongmont.com/initiatives/development-projects>

Short North Arts District, Columbus, Ohio: A well-established, mixed use district that has revitalized a historic street of High Street north of downtown. This is an example of a district with **strong organizational capacity** and a well-capitalized improvement district. It's led by the Short North Alliance, a non-profit organization that provides several services including events, communications, and two **on-the-street ambassadors**. It is also known for its identifying feature – **decorative lighted archways** that cross above the street throughout the district.

For more information: <https://shortnorth.org/>



COMMERCIAL STREET

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

GROWTH & NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRATION

The Forward SGF planning process looks at the city's geography from a number of perspectives. One of the more significant purposes of Forward SGF is to guide future land use and development in all areas of the city, including neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and mixed-use districts like Commercial Street.

Forward SGF utilizes a place-based approach to planning and development that focuses on defining what mix of uses function together to collectively establish an identifiable and memorable place rather than strictly focusing on land use on individual parcels.

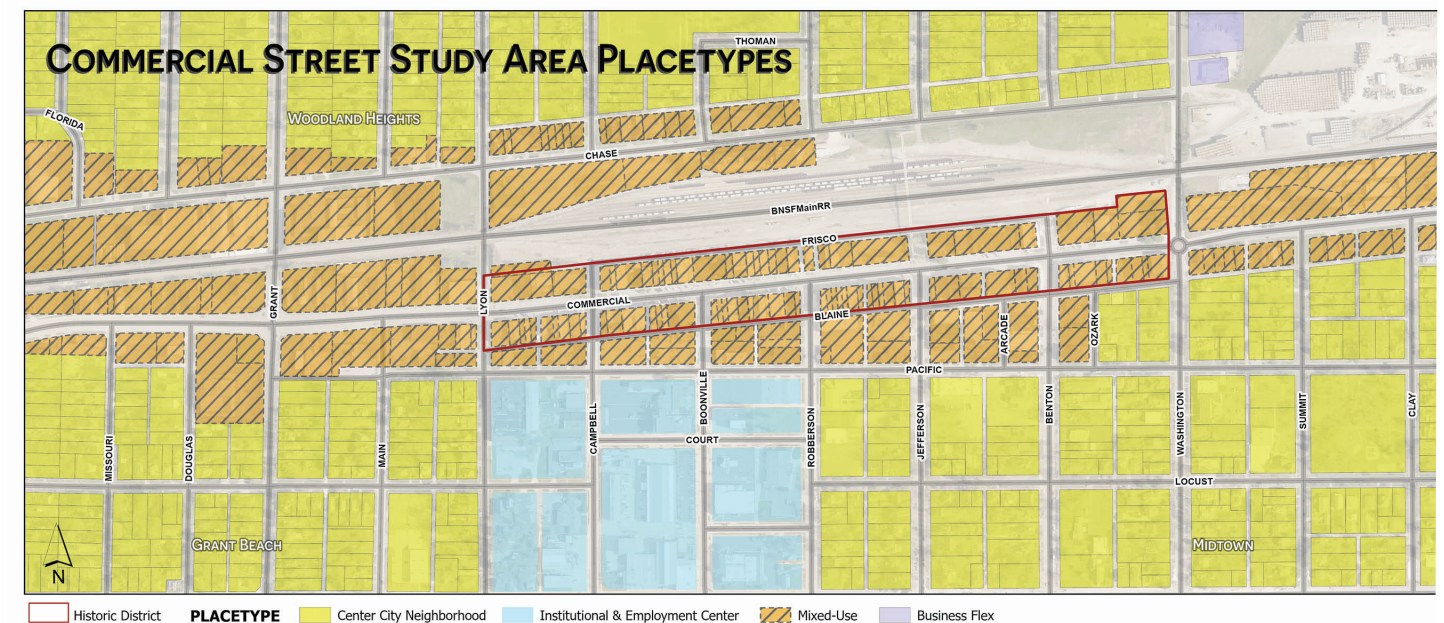
Commercial Street is designated as a Mixed Use placetype and is probably the city's best example of a successful and thriving

mixed-use district. Mixed use placetypes function as small-scale activity centers where a predominate land use pattern is not present. These placetypes provide a diverse mix of residential, shopping, services, maker spaces, entertainment, and dining options, often in the same building or in separate buildings and sites located adjacent to each other. Mixed use districts are ideally located at key cross-roads or in historic business areas where the buildings and businesses have access to a strong local customer base and benefit from a strong relationship to the street and pedestrian activity. The Mixed Use placetype accommodates the vision outlined in the Commercial Street Plan, providing the support for continued historic preservation and continued growth of the district on the east and west ends.

Commercial Street is located between several historic Springfield neighborhoods, each with a distinctive identity that is representative of its individual history, leadership, and housing mix. The Grant Beach, Midtown, and Woodland Heights neighborhoods are each designated as

a Center City Residential Neighborhood placetype. This neighborhood placetype is highly compatible with Mixed Use placetypes and districts like Commercial Street because of the concentration of homes and walkable neighborhood character and form. The Comprehensive Plan and Commercial Street Plan recognize the importance of revitalizing and preserving neighborhoods and provide guidance for transitional areas and edges where neighborhoods and special districts like Commercial Street converge. Forward SGF outlines practical applications that support these areas of transition and recommends a one-to-two-block zone on either side of both placetype boundaries to transition from one placetype to another. Zoning and design standards appropriate for each placetype should be developed to support redevelopment strategies on the edges of Commercial Street including neighborhood scale commercial and diverse housing types and densities.

In addition to the Residential Neighborhood placetypes, Commercial Street is highly influenced by the Boonville Avenue



corridor, which is strategically important as it connects Springfield's Downtown to Commercial Street. The Boonville Corridor is designated as an Institutional and Employment Center placetype. This placetype is characterized as being a local hub comprised of significant destinations, institutions, and major employment centers.

The map above illustrates the boundaries for each placetype as well as the edges and converging zones, where building types and uses transition.

Along with the plan for Commercial Street, Forward SGF includes an area plan specific to Downtown and a subarea plan for the Boonville Avenue Corridor. Both plans focus

on public improvements and strengthening the multi-modal and quality of place connections between Commercial Street and Downtown. The subarea plan for the Boonville Avenue Corridor communicates anticipated public improvements and implementation of planning strategies that will benefit the growing needs of the large landholders along the corridor.



IMPLEMENTATION

The following Implementation recommendations provide guidance for both the various organizations involved in Commercial Street's well-being and ways to grow revenue that can be dedicated to Commercial Street improvements

ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

*The overarching goal of organizational recommendations below is to **streamline and improve efficiency when it comes to collaborative efforts to grow and improve Commercial Street.***

1. Existing Organizations: The three existing organizations on Commercial Street (the CID, Commercial Club, and the Merchants Association) all play unique and important roles on the street. These should remain in place, in their current form.

2. New Resources for the CID:

The CID needs additional resources to help manage it going forward. The CID's current reliance on volunteer management is unsustainable and limits the ability for the organization to take on new and more ambitious projects and programs. Either part-time or contract staff is recommended. This will help transition the CID from a volunteer-based, undercapitalized organization into a more professional, well-funded CID that is in line with best practices both in Missouri and nationally. This will also take pressure off volunteers that will allow them to better focus on their role as board members and/or in the other Commercial Street organizations.

Several revisions to the CID bylaws are recommended, listed below. Several of these recommended changes would require amendment to the CID petition by City Council.

- Add implementation of the Commercial Street 2021 Plan to list of CID purposes in Article II
- In Article III, increase the size of the board of directors from seven (7) to "up to nine (9)"
- Provide more definition on board member requirements, including geographic representation (i.e., at least one member representing interests west of Lyon and at least one member representing interests east of Washington) and state intention that board members will represent a variety of land use types (i.e., retail, restaurant, light industrial or maker, resident, etc.)
- Add seat(s) to the board of directors to ensure representation from key civic partners, namely the City of Springfield.

- Add to the board nominating process a step that the nominating committee shall distribute a notice to seek board director interest from all eligible members (i.e., property owners, tenant businesses, and residents) in advance of developing a slate of directors for board and Mayor consideration.
- 3. Coordinating Council:** A Coordinating Council is recommended to streamline and improve efficiency amongst the three organizations working on Commercial Street and the City. The Coordinating Council could also act as "the Keeper of the Commercial Street Plan", monitoring its progress and implementation. It is suggested that the Council remain relatively small, meet on a quarterly basis, and include approximately five to seven members – one seat each for the CID, Commercial Club, and Merchants Association; and the remaining seats to Commercial Street

stakeholders at-large, appointed by the City Manager. The Council members should have strong distribution and mix when it comes to Commercial Street geography and land use. A City representative would also be heavily involved in the Coordinating Council, as discussed in the following recommendation. The primary benefit of a Coordinating Council is to streamline the process with the City of Springfield. Currently, there are too many individual lines of communication when it comes to collaboration between the City and Commercial Street entities. This can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and general inefficiencies. A Coordinating Council establishes a better structure for the City of Springfield, creating a one-stop-shop for communication and coordination.

4. City Point-of-Contact: To further streamline efficiencies, Commercial Street should have a designated City staff point-of-contact. This person should hold a 'position of influence' within City government. Functionally, this point-of-contact would be a liaison to the Coordinating Council, participating in Council meetings/communications and also attend CID board meetings. It is recommended that the designated City point-of-contact be from the Economic Development Office to provide coordination and leverage with tax increment financing (TIF) policies and expenditures.



PHOTO: SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

RESOURCES & REVENUE RECOMMENDATIONS

To implement the various recommendations put forth in this plan, additional resources are needed. The overarching goal of the recommendations below is to (create new revenue and update existing resources to create new spending power on Commercial Street.)

1. Additional CID Revenue: The Commercial Street CID operates with funds generated primarily through a supplemental sales tax of 3/8%, as of June 2019. In a normal year, this sales tax generates roughly \$50,000 annually. Historically, this money has been used predominately for landscaping, advertising, and the Commercial Street website. This total is inadequate for what stakeholders want to accomplish on Commercial Street.

It is recommended that a secondary assessment based on real property be added to the CID, to at least double its revenue. There are several reasons to consider this. As it stands now, the CID is underfunded and therefore, under-resourced. As discussed in the prior section, it is currently a volunteer-driven organization. In order to fund part-time or contract staff, additional revenue is needed. This new assessment would allow for hiring CID staff.

Second, as currently constructed the CID is reliant on sales tax. This creates a system in which some district properties do not contribute to the CID at all. There are multiple properties in the district that pay nothing into the CID because they're not generating sales tax, but still benefit from CID efforts such as landscaping, etc. Nearly all CIDs nationally (including the Downtown Springfield CID) have a revenue source based on property characteristics such as assessed value or square footage. This is generally considered best-practice nationally.

Third, this change will diversify the CID's revenue, sheltering it from the ups and downs, and uncertainty, of our economy. Nothing is more indicative of this

challenge than the COVID-19 pandemic that was in full effect while this plan was being created. If CID revenue pulls from both sales tax and also property characteristics, then the organization is more likely to be somewhat sheltered from a devastating economic impact like this pandemic, which has decimated sales in restaurants, bars, and retail.

Finally, given that the TIF is less than a decade from expiring, Commercial Street needs to start thinking about resources and operations post-TIF. The CID is a natural fit for taking over some of these improvements. In fact, it aligns nicely with the evolution of Commercial Street itself – TIFs are generally used to jumpstart redevelopment and revitalization, while CIDs are utilized as districts become more mature and self-sustaining.

There are three options to consider for creating this new revenue – creating a special assessment based on building square footage, creating a special assessment based on building and lot square footage, or an additional property tax component. Estimated assessment rates are provided below for each of these scenarios, to generate two possible revenue amounts (\$50,000 and \$75,000). 2020 data was used for these calculations.

- **Building square footage assessment:** The total commercial building square footage in the district is 771,811 square feet. To generate \$50,000, the rate is estimated to be 0.06 per square foot. To generate \$75,000, the rate is estimated to be 0.10 per squarefoot.
- **Building + Lot square footage assessment:** The total commercial lot square footage in the district is 1,266,289 square feet. Therefore, there's 2,038,100 square feet of building plus lot space. To generate \$50,000, the rate is estimated to be 0.02 per square foot of building and lot. To generate \$75,000, the rate is estimated to be 0.04 per square foot of building and lot.
- **A special assessment based on property tax:** In 2020, the total assessed value within the CID was \$6,917,600. To generate \$50,000 via a property tax component, the rate is estimated to be 0.72% (or 0.72 per \$100 of assessed value). To generate \$75,000, the rate is estimated to be 1.08% (or 1.08 per \$100 of assessed value). See table below.

- 2. In-Lieu Contribution from the City of Springfield:** Another benefit of creating a new assessment component based on property characteristics, is that it establishes rationale for a City contribution into the CID based on its ownership of property within the district. As of 2020 data, there are six parcels in the CID that are owned by the City of Springfield. While City properties are not assessed, there is precedent that the City would make a voluntary in-lieu contribution, as is done in the Downtown CID, as well as most CIDs nationally. If a square footage special assessment is created, City parcels have values for these factors. The City owns 18,769 building square feet and 98,881 lot square feet.
- 3. Small Business Support:** Small businesses in the district are in need of support, both in the near- and longer-term. In the near-term, there is need for direct support to help small businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts.

In the longer-term, as noted in prior chapters of the plan, it is anticipated that market dynamics and property values will continue to improve over the next 20 years, and therefore, there will be increased displacement pressures on small businesses. The City already offers a strong range of financial incentive programs available to businesses on Commercial Street. Incentives should continue to be oriented towards small business support. Existing program should regularly be evaluated for efficacy and possible improvements as market conditions evolve. These incentives are outlined on the following page:

Assessment Methods	\$50,000 Additional Revenue	\$75,000 Additional Revenue
Building Square Feet	0.065 per foot	0.097 per foot
Building + Lot Square Feet:	0.025 per foot	0.037 per foot
Assessed Value	0.0072 per \$1 (of assessed value)	0.0108 per \$1 (of assessed value)

Given the economic hardship and impact of the pandemic, it is recommended that any new property-based assessment not be started until 2022 or later – once we are past COVID-19's public health impacts and moving back to normal conditions along Commercial Street. In addition, updating the CID would require extensive stakeholder outreach and legal expenses – assistance from the City will be required.

- **Commercial Loan Program:** The City of Springfield has operated a Commercial Loan Program since 1984, capitalized by the federal Community Development Block Grant program. The program is currently funded through revolving loan income. There are two loan programs

- **Business Development Loan Program:** The Business Development Loan Program is designed to provide financial assistance for small business concerns and non-profit organizations to expand employment opportunities, stimulate private investment and eliminate slum and blight conditions in selected areas of the community, including Commercial Street.

- **Business Incentive/Micro Enterprise Loan Program:** The purpose of the Micro-enterprise Loan Program / Business Incentive Loan Program is to facilitate economic development through the establishment, stabilization, and expansion of micro-enterprises and small businesses.

- Additional details on these programs can be found here: <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/660/Commercial-Loan-Program>.

- **Commercial Street Façade Loan Program:** A relatively new program, the TIF funds a low-interest loan program to improve aesthetics of private property along Blaine Street within the TIF's boundaries.

- **Restore SGF:** This new effort, while not tied to small businesses specifically, is important to Commercial Street and its adjoining neighborhoods. Restore SGF is a collaborative effort to boost home ownership, and enhance, restore, and rehabilitate homes in Springfield's "heritage" neighborhoods. This includes Commercial Street and its surroundings. As a part of this effort, several incentives and assistance programs are available, including home buyer assistance programs, homeowner emergency loan programs, rental development programs, etc. Additional details on Restore SGF can be found on its [website: https://www.restoresgf.com/](https://www.restoresgf.com/).

- **Brownfields Program:** The Brownfields Program works to assess, clean up, and facilitate the redevelopment/reuse of potentially contaminated properties known as "brownfields" within the City of Springfield. The program provides incentives for qualifying properties, including free Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments, cleanup planning, technical assistance, and low-to-no interest loans and subgrants for site remediation. Several Commercial Street properties have participated in this program.

4. Prioritization for the Use of TIF: Established in 2008, the TIF is roughly a decade from sunset. Over the next decade, it will have the revenue to provide significant funding for priority projects within the district. Only Public Improvement Projects identified in the Redevelopment Plan may be funded with TIF revenues. If amendments are made to the list of eligible projects, the TIF would have to go through a formal amendment process. Due to the expenses and time associated with this process, it is recommended that the City not go through the amendment process. Instead, this plan should be used to help set priorities for allocating the remainder of TIF money over the next decade. Many of the goals detailed in Chapter 3 fall within the current TIF list, provided below:

- Frisco Lane (pave, add 60 parking spaces, landscaping and fencing)
- Streetscapes
- Refurbish Parking Lots
- Business Loan/Grant Program
- Public Restrooms
- Acquire Blighted parking Lots (willing seller)
- Renovate Commercial Club Building
- Blaine Street Improvements
- Public Art
- Acquire Blighted Buildings (willing seller)
- Footbridge Plaza Improvements (stage, lighting, landscaping, sound system, etc.)
- Public Radio Station
- Improve Alleyways

- Planters
- Gateways/Entryways (3)
- Directional Signage
- Park Benches (10)
- Cab Stands (4)

Goals from this plan that should be prioritized for TIF spending – and that fit within the approved projects list above – include:

- Streetscape improvements – including crosswalks, intersection stamps, planters, outdoor seating, and functional/decorative lighting
- Blaine Street improvements – including repaving/grading, burying utilities, lighting, and other beautifications
- Refurbished Parking Lots
- Gateways to the district
- Acquisition of blighted properties that would help further transformative projects discussed in Chapter 3 (i.e., for future use as a park/functional greenspace, or shared making/creating space)

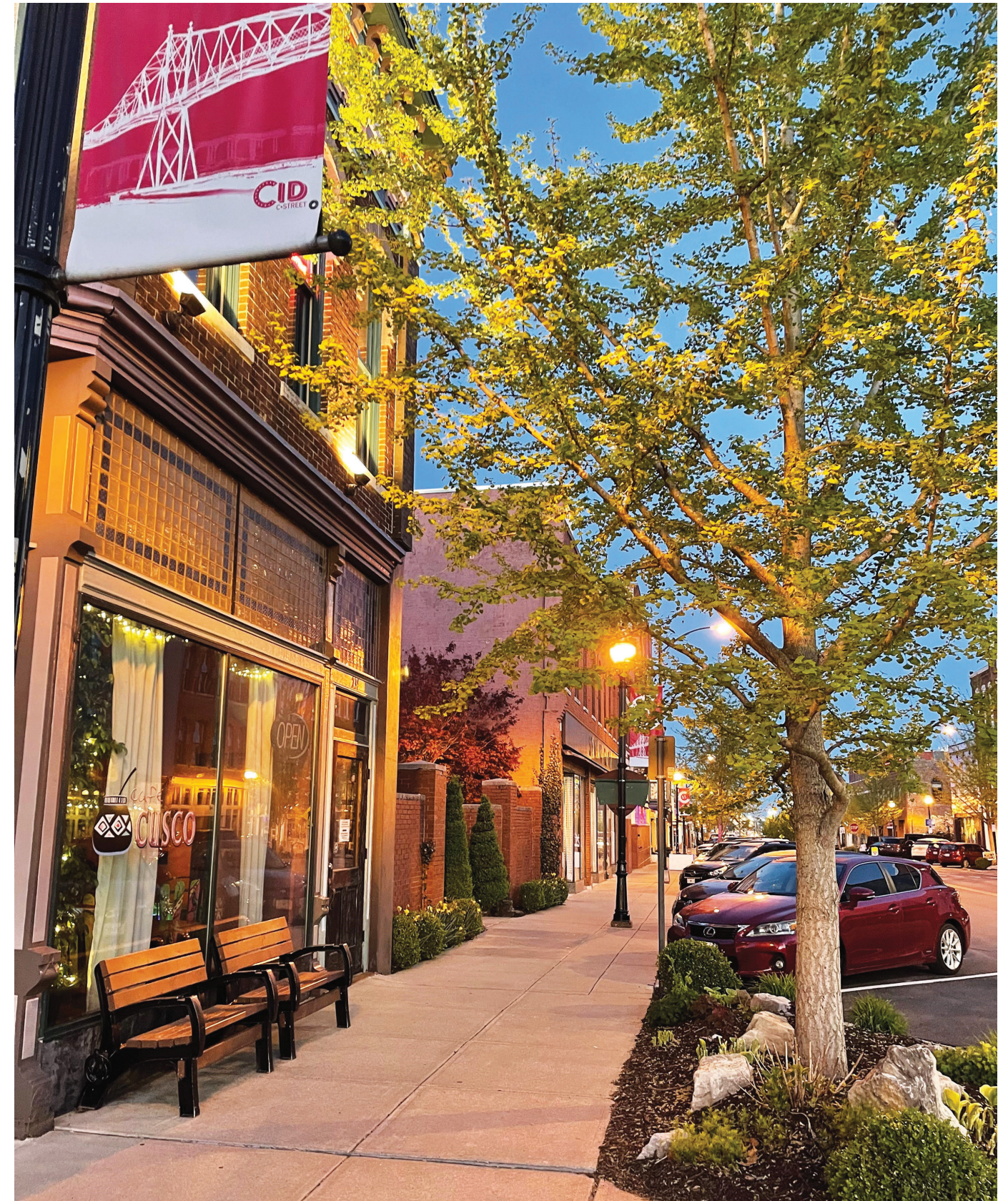




PHOTO: SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS

The following benchmark metrics are suggested to evaluate progress over the course of the plan's implementation. The following benchmarks are proposed, organized by priority area defined in Chapter 3: Commercial Street Priorities and Goals. Metrics are intended to be simple, intuitive, and relatively easy to track. The CID should lead the effort to track benchmarks, and would be an important responsibility of the proposed CID staff (as discussed earlier in this chapter). Some benchmark tracking will require coordination and cooperation with the City. The CID should determine which benchmarks are feasible and most cost-effective, and how often to report on this data to its board and other Commercial Street stakeholders.

Guide the growth of, and investment into, a thriving mixed-use district

- Number of district businesses
- Number of district residents
- Number of district employees
- Percent of businesses that are local independent
- Percent of vacant properties/square footage
- Pedestrian counts during various times, days, seasons

Create a comfortable environment for people, full of memorable experiences

- Number of outdoor seats, public and business use
- Percentage of block faces with streetscape improvements
- Percentage of block faces with pedestrian-oriented lighting
- Number of public art installations
- Well maintained landscaping

Improve physical connectivity and access to and from Commercial Street

- Parking utilization rates
- Percentage of parking lots improved/refurbished
- Percentage of alleyways improved/refurbished

Build on Commercial Street's maker ethos and strength in artisan manufacturing

- Number of artisan/small-scale manufacturing businesses
- Number of artisan/small-scale manufacturing employees
- Number of events/programs supporting this theme

Cultivate events, programming & marketing that bring people to Commercial Street and build the district's identity

- Number of Commercial Street public events/festivals
- Special event attendance/number of visitors
- Number of Commercial Street identity/brand markers throughout district
- Website statistics, social media activity/followers, newsletter recipients

